Research Article

Workplace Incivility and Internal Glass Ceiling Among Women Employees: Examining the Moderating Role of Age

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ABSTRACT

Workplace incivility is a critical organizational issue that affects not only the well-being of employees but the professional relationships too. When women employees are excluded from important workplace matters and key areas, they may experience a subtle barrier of discrimination, which can lead to an internal glass ceiling and that can weaken their leadership aspirations. This type of issue is mainly evident in the Indian IT sector, where technology is deeply integrated into many aspects of employees' work. In light of these concerns, this study focuses on the association between workplace incivility and the internal glass ceiling among women employees and whether this relationship varies across age groups. A quantitative research design was adopted to describe the study variables and analyse the relationship among variables. For this study, Data were gathered from women employees at Infopark, Kerala, using a purposive sampling technique. The results demonstrated that workplace incivility may be linked to internal psychological barriers that can affect women employees' confidence in leadership roles. The analysis revealed that workplace incivility was linked to lower confidence and more frequent avoidance behaviours. No significant moderating role of age was observed in the relationship between workplace incivility and the internal glass ceiling. The findings emphasise the need for employee-friendly HR policies and workplace civility initiatives for maintaining secure environments within the organization.

Keywords: *Workplace incivility, Internal glass ceiling, Women employees, IT sector*

INTRODUCTION

The role of women in professional sectors has increased considerably, especially in industries driven by technology. In modern work environments, apart from technical skills, a supportive and harmonious work environment is required for an employee to grow fully. In this line, Robbins &Judge (2019) pointed out the importance of organizational behaviour and human resource studies that shape employees' career progression and psychological wellbeing. Workplace incivility is increasingly recognised as a significant concept that has gained increasing attention in organisational research. Workplace incivility refers to subtle, low-intensity deviant workplace behaviour such as disrespect, exclusion and unprofessional communication (Cortina et al., 2001). Existing research showed that workplace incivility is associated with less job satisfaction, reduced organizational commitment, and increased emotional exhaustion (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Such experiences may reduce women employees' expectations from the organisation. Within discussions of women's career advancement, the internal

glass ceiling highlights the role of internal psychological factors that may discourage women employees from pursuing senior leadership positions. Whereas external constraints are shaped by workplace conditions, the internal glass ceiling involves personal doubts, reduced confidence, and hesitation to seek leadership and decision-making roles. Unfavourable treatment within the workplace, including exclusion and discriminatory behaviour in the workplace may contribute to the development of internal psychological barriers to career advancement.

Therefore, understanding this relationship is crucial to identifying how workplace conditions may indirectly shape women employees' professional growth.

Despite the extensive research on the effects associated with workplace incivility on various employee outcomes, its potential role in shaping women's internal perceptions of career barriers has received less attention. The distinction is significant because the implications arising from may extend beyond immediate psychological and attitudinal responses to influence women's perceptions of their capabilities, career prospects, and advancement opportunities.

Against this background, the connection between workplace incivility and the internal glass ceiling therefore deserves further examination. Repeated negative interactions in the workplace, like dismissive behaviour or disrespectful treatment, can reduce women employees' willingness to voice their opinions and to pursue career progression. Over time, these experiences shape self-perceptions that may foster self-limiting beliefs and behaviours that can hinder women's career aspirations. This suggests that the relevance of workplace incivility should be considered beyond commonly studied outcomes such as burnout, turnover intention and job satisfaction.

The way women employees respond to workplace situations may differ across various age groups, particularly because their emotional resilience and work experience can vary. Employees at earlier career stages may feel less certain about their career direction as compared to older employees. Research suggests that age plays a dominant role in shaping employees' perceptions and responses to workplace stress (Baltes et al., 1999). Despite growing interest in workplace behaviour, limited studies have examined whether age influences the association between workplace incivility and internal glass ceiling among women employees, particularly in the IT sector context. Therefore, the present study focuses on examining workplace incivility and internal glass ceiling while also analysing the moderating role of age among women employees in the IT sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORY

In the workplace, workplace incivility often takes the form of subtle interpersonal behaviours, through behaviours such as ignoring colleagues, speaking over them, using dismissive language, or excluding them from work-related interactions. Unlike explicit aggression or harassment, incivility is generally ambiguous in nature, and this lack of clarity in intent makes it difficult to identify and address (Cortina et al., 2001). In contemporary organizational behaviour research, workplace incivility is considered a social stressor that negatively affects psychological safety and damages

trust in interpersonal workplace interactions (Schilpzand et al., 2016). Within virtual work environments, women employees may face incivility may take the form of delayed communication, hostile remarks in online interactions, or exclusion from virtual meetings. In gendered organizational settings, incivility disproportionately affects women, who are more likely to interpret subtle disrespect as meaningful and identity-threatening (Miner et al., 2012)

Workplace incivility is a complex concept that consists of various uncivil behaviours within organizations. Verbal forms of incivility can be reflected in rude comments, sarcastic responses, and other disrespectful remarks, which can negatively affect communication among employees.

Another form of workplace incivility is found in digital communication, where emails or messages are ignored, or responses are unnecessarily delayed. Workplace unfairness may take an organisational form when workloads are distributed unevenly, or their efforts are not valued. Existing literature indicates that the growing transformation of IT workplaces into digital systems has increased the scope of incivility into virtual communication channels, making it more difficult to identify (Lim & Lee,2011).

Workplace incivility is increasingly viewed as an important concept in organizational behaviour literature, referring to indirect workplace behaviours that violate the standards of mutual respect even when the intention might not be to harm (Hutton, 2006; Reich & Hershcovis, 2015). Reich and Hershcovis (2015) contributed through their study that workplace incivility is not solely a personal experience but can also impact employees indirectly through the observation of disrespectful interactions that can affect a team. Holm et al. (2015) show that workplace incivility may create a repeating cycle of negative behaviour that affects the organizational relationships over time.

Viewed from the angle of Social Exchange Theory, Rahim & Cosby (2016) indicated that it violates the mutual respect among employees and thereby reduces active involvement in the organization. Similarly, Conservation of Resources (COR) theory views workplace incivility as a source of psychological strain that exhausts employees' internal resources, leading to burnout and declining work performance (Oyeleye et al., 2013). Rahim and Cosby (2016) combine these theoretical perspectives to show that workplace incivility triggers resource loss, which leads to burnout, turnover intention, and lower performance through the loss of emotional and psychological resources. Manzoor et al. (2020) argue that workplace incivility promotes organizational cynicism, thereby influencing long-term negative employee attitudes beyond immediate emotions. More recent studies, such as Islam et al. (2026), show the importance of emotional regulation in influencing employees' responses to workplace incivility, showing that individual differences significantly shape psychological outcomes. In extending this line of research, Rehman et al. (2026) expand this discussion by highlighting that resilience and affective commitment serve as important coping resources against the adverse effects of

workplace incivility on retention and engagement.

Empirical evidence from global studies suggests that workplace incivility negatively influences employees' attitudes and behaviours, especially in terms of job satisfaction, burnout, turnover intention, and performance outcomes. Meta-analytic research by Namin et al. (2022) reveals a substantial association which is positive between workplace incivility and turnover intention; employees experiencing workplace incivility are significantly more inclined to develop intentions to leave their organizations. Oyeleye et al. (2013) found that exposure to workplace incivility is related to a great amount of stress and burnout, which further strengthens employees' intention to leave and diminishes psychological empowerment. Supporting these findings, Kavaklı and Yildirim (2022) underlined the considerable impact of workplace disrespect in occupations that require greater emotional involvement. The results of Tricahyadinata et al. (2020) suggest that workplace incivility not only affects work engagement but also contributes to higher turnover intentions, suggesting that disengagement links incivility with withdrawal behaviours.

The term "glass ceiling" was initially used to explain the invisible barriers that prevent women from reaching top leadership positions despite having enough qualifications and experience (Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986). Psychological and cognitive barriers associated with the internal glass ceiling may develop among women in response to continued gender bias, exclusion, and organisational limitations. The barriers are often expressed through self-doubt, fear of failure, reduced confidence, and limited leadership aspirations. These kinds of experiences force women to believe that leadership positions are not suited for them (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

When perceived abilities fall short of actual capabilities and women perceive career advancement as riskier than it actually is, that may lead women to limit their professional aspirations. This is commonly linked to imposter syndrome and learned helplessness in organizational psychology (Clance &Imes,1978). Hoyt & Murphy (2016) reported in their study that women often avoid high-visibility roles and are not willing to take career-related risks due to the internal glass ceiling. One possible explanation is the increasingly competitive evaluation practices and ongoing changes that take place within the organization. Women working in IT environments often engage in active participation and professional visibility, but incivility may affect career progression. Such withdrawal behaviour plays a direct role in reinforcing the internal glass ceiling effect (Miner et al., 2012).

According to Lim & Lee (2011), workplace mistreatment contributes to disengagement among women employees and career pessimism among women. Such workplace experiences may have implications for women's current engagement at work and long-term career perspectives, with potential implications for the internal glass ceiling. The literature indicates that older employees may have greater experience in emotional regulation and coping strategies, which could influence their responses to incivility (Baltes & Smith, 2003). However, such prolonged exposure to incivility may

become frustrating over time. According to life-span development theory, increasing age may be associated with stronger emotional regulation and coping resources, which could influence women's workplace responses. Sharma and Singh (2016) found that workplace incivility is associated with job satisfaction and intentions to leave, among employees working in Indian organizations.

There is still a need for greater empirical attention to workplace incivility within the Indian IT sector. Extending previous findings, Alvina et al. (2026) emphasize the dual nature of workplace incivility, suggesting that employees may view uncivil interactions either as damaging experiences or as opportunities for growth based on organizational and cognitive factors. Collectively, these findings reveal an important research gap within the Indian IT sector, where virtual teamwork, digital communication and competitive workplace cultures may heighten the manifestations and consequences of incivility.

Overall, the literature reviewed clearly demonstrates that workplace incivility is a major driver of negative employee attitudes and behaviours, including burnout, lower engagement, organizational cynicism and turnover intention. Despite the growing international literature on workplace incivility, limited attention has been given to how incivility operates in the Indian IT sector, especially among women employees navigating gender-based workplace dynamics and high-performance digital environments. Therefore, investigating workplace incivility within the Indian IT sector is both academically and practically valuable, particularly in understanding how subtle forms of workplace behaviour shape psychological well-being, career trajectories, and organizational inequality.

Current Study

Existing literature has consistently reported a positive relationship between workplace incivility and the internal glass ceiling among women professionals. It is commonly believed that repeated exposure to unprofessional workplace behaviour can undermine women employees' self-confidence and professional aspirations. Studies in psychology and organizational behaviour recognize the relevance of age in shaping workplace perceptions, coping strategies, emotional resilience, and reactions to adverse workplace experiences.

Given these differences across age groups, there is a need to examine whether age shapes the relationship between workplace incivility and internal glass ceiling. Despite this, few studies have directly investigated whether age moderates the relationship between workplace incivility and internal glass ceiling. Thus, the present study highlighted age as a potential moderator, while avoiding assumptions about the direction or magnitude of its effect.

On that ground, the following hypotheses were formulated.

H1: *Workplace incivility has a significant positive effect on internal glass ceiling among women employees.*

H2: *Age moderates the relationship between workplace incivility and internal glass ceiling among women employees, such that the relationship is stronger*

among younger women employees than older women employees.

The study included age as a moderator because workplace experiences and psychological career perceptions may vary across different age categories. Younger employees may respond differently to workplace difficulties due to comparatively limited experience and coping mechanisms when compared to older employees. Therefore, the study attempted to identify whether workplace incivility affects internal glass ceiling differently across age categories.

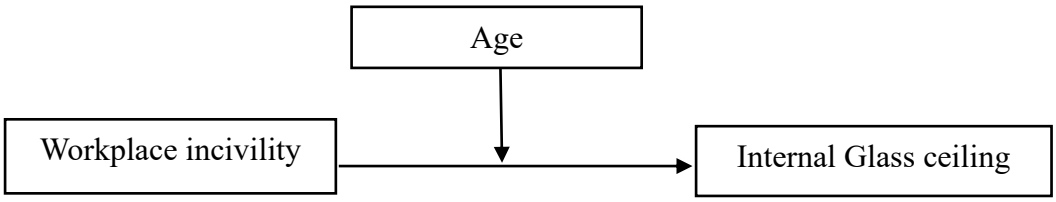


Figure 1: *Conceptual model for the effect of age on the relationship between workplace incivility and internal glass ceiling*

METHODS

Research Design

A quantitative, cross-sectional design was adopted to examine the relationship between workplace incivility and internal glass ceiling among women employees in the IT sector. A cross-sectional approach was adopted to capture respondents' perceptions and experiences at a given point in time while examining the association between the study variables. The quantitative approach provided a systematic basis for collecting and analysing data obtained through the structured questionnaire.

Study Setting and Population

The study was conducted among women employees working in IT companies located at Infopark, Kerala. Infopark was considered an appropriate study setting because it is a major technology-oriented employment hub providing a relevant context for examining workplace experiences and career-related barriers among women employees. The study population included women employees from IT companies at Infopark, with participants representing different educational backgrounds, levels of professional experience, organisational roles, and age groups.

Inclusion Criteria

The study included women employees who were currently working in IT companies located at Infopark. The study considered women employees from diverse age groups and professional and educational backgrounds eligible for participation.

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was adopted for the selection of respondents. This approach was considered suitable because the study specifically targeted women employees working in IT companies at Infopark who met the defined eligibility criteria. Respondents were approached based on their eligibility and willingness to participate in the study. Including women employees from diverse age groups and professional backgrounds helped the study assess whether age influenced the

relationship between workplace incivility and the internal glass ceiling.

Sample Size

A total of 210 questionnaires were administered to eligible respondents. Following data collection, the returned questionnaires were screened for completeness and usability. After excluding incomplete or unusable responses, 200 valid responses were retained for the final analysis. Thus, the effective response rate was 95.23% (200/210 × 100). The final sample of 200 respondents provided the basis for the statistical analyses conducted in the study.

Data Collection Procedure

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to obtain information relating to workplace incivility and the internal glass ceiling, along with relevant demographic information. The questionnaire was administered to eligible women employees working in IT companies at Infopark. Participants were informed about the objectives of the study and what would be involved in completing the questionnaire. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were provided with the opportunity to decline participation. A total of 210 questionnaires were distributed. Of these, 200 questionnaires were found to be sufficiently complete and suitable for analysis following data screening. The valid responses were subsequently coded and entered into SPSS for statistical analysis.

Measures

Workplace Incivility

Workplace incivility was measured using a six-item scale adapted from the Workplace Incivility Scale developed by Lilia M. Cortina and colleagues (Cortina et al., 2001). The original instrument was tailored to fit the organizational context of women employees in IT companies. A sample statement included, “My colleagues or supervisors treat me in a disrespectful manner.”

Internal Glass Ceiling

A self-developed five-item instrument was used to measure the internal glass ceiling, drawing from prior literature related to workplace exclusion, self-limiting career perceptions, and leadership confidence among women employees. The scale was developed to understand how workplace experiences influence women employees’ perceptions. Responses were measured on a five-point scale ranging from 1(Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree).

Ethical Considerations

An informed consent form was also distributed to the participants that clearly detailed the academic intent of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the strict confidentiality measures observed. Informed consent was secured from all participants, with strict ethical procedures implemented to protect their anonymity and ensure the overall integrity of the research.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). An initial screening of the responses was carried out to identify incomplete or unsuitable questionnaires before analysis. Descriptive statistical measures were used to present a summary of the respondents’ characteristics and the variables under investigation. Cronbach’s alpha was applied to evaluate the

reliability and internal consistency of the scales used in the study. The study employed EFA to examine the underlying structure of the measurement items and provide preliminary evidence of construct validity. Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated to examine the magnitude and direction of the relationships among the study variables. Regression analysis was performed to determine whether workplace incivility significantly predicted internal glass ceiling. Moderation analysis was used to assess whether age changed the strength of the relationship between workplace incivility and internal glass ceiling. Statistical significance was determined based on the relevant significance levels and confidence intervals.

RESULTS

In the present study, Age was included as an important demographic variable, as the study examined the relationship between workplace incivility and the internal glass ceiling. Among the 200 respondents, 30 (15.0%) were below 25 years, 68 (34.0%) belonged to the 25–35 years age group, 66 (33.0%) were between 36 and 45 years, and 36 (18.0%) were above 45 years. A relatively higher proportion of respondents belonged to the 25–35 years age category (34.0%), followed by the 36–45 years age group (33.0%). Respondents in the above-45 years age group represented 18.0% of the sample, compared with 15.0% for those below 25 years.

Table 1: *Age-wise distribution of respondents*

Age group	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Below 25 years	30	15.0
25–35 years	68	34.0
36–45 years	66	33.0
Above 45 years	36	18.0
Total	**200**	**100.0**

Source: *Primary Data*

Internal consistency of the constructs was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis. Reliability analysis indicated that the Workplace Incivility scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.805 having good internal consistency, and the Internal Glass Ceiling scale recorded a value of 0.796, reflecting acceptable reliability.

Table 2: *Reliability statistics*

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Workplace incivility	*.805*
Internal Glass Ceiling	*.796*

Source: *Primary Data*

An Exploratory Factor Analysis was performed using Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation to identify the components underlying the data. A KMO value of 0.869 provided evidence of adequate sampling adequacy. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(55) = 746.176$, $p < .001$, supporting the suitability of the correlation matrix for factor analysis. Two components emerged

from the analysis, with eigenvalues of 4.752 and 1.045, respectively. The analysis showed that the first component explained 43.198% of the variance, while the second component accounted for a further 9.500%. Together, the two components accounted for 52.698% of the total variance. Varimax rotation resulted in two components, explaining 26.529% and 26.169% of the total variance, respectively.

The extracted communalities ranged from 0.444 to 0.626, indicating a reasonable level of variance explained by the retained components. The rotated component matrix showed a clear tendency for the items to cluster into two important components, primarily workplace incivility and internal glass ceiling. Factor loadings for the items ranged from .458 to .750 on their respective components. The rotated solution indicated that the separation of workplace incivility and internal glass ceiling separated into two components, although two workplace incivility items displayed relatively similar loadings.

Descriptive Statistics and Interconstruct Correlations

Workplace incivility demonstrated a mean value of 3.33 (SD = 1.01), suggesting that women employees experienced a moderate level of uncivil behaviours in the workplace. Similarly, internal glass ceiling recorded a mean score of 3.20 (SD = 0.94), indicating moderate perceptions of self-imposed career constraints among women employees.

Table 3: *Descriptive statistics*

	Mean	SD	MIN	MAX
Workplace incivility	3.33	1.01	1.33	4.83
Internal Glass Ceiling	3.20	0.94	1.40	4.60

Source: *Primary Data*

The Pearson correlation analysis pointed to a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between workplace incivility and internal glass ceiling ($r = .788$, $p < .001$). This indicates that higher levels of workplace incivility are associated with higher perceptions of the internal glass ceiling among women employees. After controlling for age, the partial correlation analysis revealed a strong positive linkage between workplace incivility and internal glass ceiling while controlling for age ($r = .776$, $p < .001$). The slight decrease in the correlation coefficient after controlling for age implies that the association between workplace incivility and internal glass ceiling is largely unaffected by age.

Table 4: *Correlation coefficient between Workplace incivility and Internal glass ceiling*

	Workplace incivility	Internal glass ceiling
Pearson Correlation		
Workplace incivility	1	
Internal Glass Ceiling	0.788**	1
Partial correlation		
Workplace incivility	1	
Internal Glass Ceiling	0.776**	1

Source: *Primary Data;* **Note.** ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed).

Moderation Analysis

The R value of 0.79 indicates a strong overall relationship between workplace incivility, age, and internal glass ceiling. The coefficient of determination R^2=0.63 indicates that 63.02% of the variation in internal glass ceiling is jointly explained by workplace incivility, age, and the interaction effects. The model demonstrates substantial explanatory power in predicting internal glass ceiling perceptions among women employees. Thus, the regression model as a whole is statistically meaningful and suitable for interpretation.

Table 5: *Summary of the Interaction Effect of Workplace Incivility and Age on Internal Glass Ceiling*

Predictor	β	SE	*T*	*P*	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	3.1471	.1210	26.004	< .001	2.9084	3.3859
Workplace Incivility [X]	.7302	.1094	6.6742	< .001	.5144	.9460
Age (25–35) [W1]	.1033	.1401	.7374	.4618	−.1731	.3797
Age (36–45) [W2]	.0456	.1409	.3238	.7465	−.2323	.3236
Age (Above 45) [W3]	.0933	.1636	.5700	.5693	−.2294	.4160
Workplace Incivility × Age (25–35) [XW1]	−.1272	.1381	−.9214	.3580	−.3996	.1451
Workplace Incivility × Age (36–45) [XW2]	.0621	.1341	.4633	.6437	−.2024	.3266
Workplace Incivility × Age (Above 45) [XW3]	.0809	.1380	.5861	.5585	−.1913	.3531

Model Summary

R	R^2	F	P
0.79	0.63	46.74	0.00

Note. ***p < .001. Below 25 years was treated as the reference category for age.
Source: *Primary Data*

The coefficient for workplace incivility is positive and statistically significant. The evidence suggests that greater exposure to workplace incivility is linked to stronger perceptions of internal career barriers. The age categories were converted into three dummy variables (W1, W2, W3), with women below 25 years serving as the reference category. The regression results indicated that higher levels of workplace incivility were associated with stronger internal glass ceiling perceptions.

The analysis revealed no statistically significant independent effect on internal glass ceiling. Notably, the interaction effects between workplace incivility and age categories were not statistically significant for any age group. The interaction between workplace incivility and the above-45 years age category was not statistically significant (β = .0809, SE = .1380, t = .586, 95% CI [−.1913, .3531]). Taken together, the effect of workplace incivility on the internal glass ceiling remained statistically consistent across the different age categories.

The study revealed that women employees who have a high level of workplace incivility tend to experience strong internal barriers in the workplace,

particularly in terms of leadership confidence and professional growth. Thus, H1 is supported. However, the moderating effect of age on the relationship between workplace incivility and internal glass ceiling was found to be statistically non-significant. The analysis indicated that age does not significantly change the strength of the relationship between workplace incivility and internal glass ceiling. Although minor descriptive variations were observed among age categories, these differences were not statistically meaningful. Therefore, H2 is not supported.

DISCUSSION

The study sought to understand the relationship between workplace incivility and internal glass ceiling among women employees in Infopark, Kerala, while also assessing the moderating role of age. The study found a significant positive relationship between workplace incivility and internal glass ceiling, suggesting that everyday experiences of disrespect and exclusion may be related to women's perceptions of their career advancement opportunities. The present finding agrees with earlier evidence that workplace incivility is associated with psychological strain and negative workplace outcomes. Oyeleye et al. (2013) observed that employees exposed to workplace incivility experienced greater stress and burnout while Namin et al. (2022) found a positive association between workplace incivility and turnover intention based on meta-analytic evidence. Supporting these findings, Tricahyadinata et al. (2020) found that workplace incivility was associated with lower levels of work engagement and higher turnover intentions. Existing studies have largely examined how workplace incivility affects employees' psychological states, attitudes, and behaviours. The present study broadens this perspective by considering its possible relevance to women's perceptions of career advancement and pursuit of professional opportunities. The present result can be placed within the wider literature on gendered experiences in the workplace. Miner et al. (2012) emphasised the importance of recognising subtle workplace mistreatment, noting that women may be particularly affected when such experiences are perceived as disrespectful.

Lim and Lee (2011) also highlighted that workplace mistreatment was associated with disengagement and less optimistic career outlooks among women employees. These findings indicate that repeated negative workplace experiences may affect not only employees' immediate emotional responses but also their broader views of the workplace and career opportunities. Building on this perspective, the present study extends existing research by linking workplace incivility with an internalised form of career constraint rather than treating incivility solely as a workplace stressor.

This finding can be viewed through Conservation of Resources theory, particularly its emphasis on the protection and loss of personal and psychological resources. Repeated experiences of workplace incivility may draw on employees' emotional and psychological resources as they navigate negative interactions, uncertainty, and concerns about workplace acceptance. Earlier research has similarly viewed workplace incivility as a stressor that can place demands on employees' psychological

resources and be associated with burnout and other unfavourable outcomes. Continued strain on these resources may reduce women employees' willingness to seek visibility, demonstrate assertiveness, and pursue career-related opportunities. Such responses are relevant to the development or reinforcement of internal glass ceiling tendencies. These findings broaden the application of this perspective by considering how workplace incivility may relate to career-related psychological and behavioural tendencies.

The results add to the existing understanding of workplace incivility by highlighting its potential relevance that may extend beyond employee well-being to women's perceptions of career advancement. The moderation analysis provided additional evidence into the relationship examined in the study. The findings point out that age did not significantly moderate the relationship between workplace incivility and internal glass ceiling among the women employees included in the study. The results therefore indicate that the relationship between workplace incivility and internalised career barriers does not differ significantly across age categories.

This result contrasts with the view that differences in age-related changes in emotional regulation, coping resources and organisational experience may shape employees' responses to workplace stress (Baltes et al., 1999; Baltes & Smith, 2003). Although women of different ages may differ in their experience and coping abilities, the present findings suggest that these differences did not significantly alter the relationship between workplace incivility and internal glass ceiling in the study context. This finding may reflect the fact that the performance-oriented nature of IT workplaces may create similar experiences of pressure among women of different ages, in relation to performance, communication, and organisational demands. This result should therefore be interpreted with caution, since the absence of a significant moderation effect does not mean that women of different ages respond identically to every workplace experience. Overall, the study found that workplace incivility is significantly related to internal glass ceiling, while age does not significantly influence this relationship. The findings add to the literature by drawing attention to the possible link between everyday workplace experiences and women's internalised career-related perceptions.

Practical Implications

The study offers practical insights for HR managers and organisational decision-makers in the IT sector. Rather than viewing workplace incivility only as an interpersonal concern, organisations should also consider its potential connection with employees' confidence, workplace participation, and career perceptions. Organisations can support a more positive work environment by adopting practices that foster respectful communication, encouraging employee participation, offering constructive feedback, and recognising employee efforts. Developing leaders' and managers' competencies in respectful communication, emotional intelligence, gender sensitivity, and inclusive leadership could help create a more respectful workplace environment. Developing transparent reporting and resolution mechanisms can help employees seek resolution for subtle

exclusion, dismissive communication, and other forms of workplace incivility. The absence of significant differences across age groups suggests that organisational interventions should be inclusive of women employees at different career stages.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations of the present study should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, respondent selection relied on purposive sampling to ensure that they met the specific inclusion criteria of the study. However, the sampling approach may limit the representativeness of the sample and, consequently, the generalisability of the findings. Future studies could use probability-based sampling methods to achieve a more representative sample and support broader generalisation of the findings. Second, a cross-sectional approach was used with data collected at a single point in time. Thus, the results show that the variables are significantly related, but they do not provide sufficient evidence to infer causality. Future studies could employ longitudinal approaches to examine how workplace incivility and internal glass ceiling perceptions develop over time. Third, the research was confined to women employees employed in selected organisations in Kerala. While the selected setting offers a suitable context for understanding workplace experiences, the findings may have limited applicability to women employees in other regions and organisational contexts, with caution. A further limitation is the use of a common self-administered questionnaire completed by the same respondents, which may increase the risk of common method bias. Although the results support the preliminary reliability and factor structure, further research is needed to confirm the stability and robustness of the measure.

CONCLUSION

The present study assessed the association between workplace incivility and internal glass ceiling among women employees working in Infopark, Kerala, while also exploring the moderating role of age. The results showed that workplace incivility was positively and significantly associated with the internal glass ceiling, indicating that women employees who report greater exposure to uncivil workplace experiences also tend to report stronger internalised career barriers. The finding extends the existing literature on workplace incivility by drawing attention to its association with career-related psychological and behavioural outcomes, beyond its established links with burnout, disengagement, and turnover intention. However, age did not appear to be a significant factor influencing the strength of the relationship between workplace incivility and internal glass ceiling. Accordingly, the findings do not indicate that age significantly changes the relationship between workplace incivility and internal glass ceiling. Rather, workplace incivility emerges as a more relevant factor in understanding the internal glass ceiling within the study setting. From a practical standpoint, the findings point to the value of fostering respectful and inclusive workplaces s where women can participate confidently and pursue career opportunities without being discouraged by subtle workplace disrespect.

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Author Contributions

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The authors declare that generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used only to assist with language editing, grammar improvement, and manuscript formatting where necessary. All research activities, including study design, data collection, statistical analysis, interpretation of results, and scientific conclusions, were performed solely by the authors. The authors have carefully reviewed and take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the submitted manuscript.