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The effects of perceived supervisor incivility on child-care workers' job performance: The mediating role of emotional exhaustion and intrinsic motivation

Youjin Han[1] · Yeonshin Kim[2] · Won-Moo Hur[3]

Abstract
In this study, the authors examined how perceived supervisor incivility negatively affected the performance of child-care workers, focusing on emotional exhaustion and intrinsic motivation as underlying mediators. Data were collected from 321 child-care workers at 43 daycare centers in South Korea. A two-stage mediation model using multilevel structural equation modeling (MSEM) indicated that emotional exhaustion and intrinsic motivation fully and sequentially mediated the relationship. Perceived supervisor incivility emotionally exhausted child-care workers, decreased their intrinsic motivation, and reduced their overall performance. The findings highlight the need to manage workplace incivility in the child care sector. Finally, implications for organizational practice and interventions were discussed.

Keywords Emotional exhaustion · Intrinsic motivation · Job performance · Serial mediation · Perceived supervisor incivility

Introduction

Workplace incivility is defined as "low-intensity deviant behaviors with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect" (Andersson and Pearson 1999, p.457). For example, making demeaning comments, showing indifference to others' opinions, and ignoring others' greetings (Cortina et al. 2001) may be mildly hostile behaviors, but they are highly prevalent and costly, with detrimental effects on employee and organizational outcomes. Workplace incivility has been linked to a wide range of negative outcomes, including increased psychological distress (Lim et al. 2008), decreased job satisfaction (Cortina et al. 2001: Laschinger et al. 2009; Lim et al. 2008), lowered performance and productivity (Grandey et al. 2004; Porath and Pearson 2010; Sliter et al. 2010; Sliter et al. 2012), and increased turnover intentions (Griffin 2010; Lim and Cortina 2005).

Thus, the study of workplace incivility and its impacts on service organizations is a worthy topic because of the important implications for employee well-being and for optimal organizational operation (Lim et al. 2008; Giumetti et al. 2013; Vickers 2006). Prior studies of incivility management have focused on human services that require intense interpersonal involvement in institutions devoted to healthcare (e,g., Bunk and Magley 2013; Cortina et al. 2013; Laschinger et al. 2009) and education (Bibi et al. 2013; Sulea et al. 2012), but have overlooked the occupational consequences of incivility to workers in the child care sector.

Indeed, the child care sector is highly relevant for observing the negative impact of incivility, as indicated by high turnover rates that deplete service quality (e.g., Cortina et al. 2001; Phillips et al. 2000). With an expansion of working women and free child care in South Korea, more children are spending a long time in child care centers from a very early age (Chang 2013). At the same time, the number of child-care workers has also continuously increased and

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reached approximately 236,000 people (Korean Statistical Information Service 2017).

As well-documented in the literature, a stable relationship with nonparental providers (i.e., child-care workers) has become increasingly important to the quality of child care service and education (Jang and Lee 2003; Whitebook et al. 1998). Nevertheless, relatively little attention has given to child-care providers, specifically their well-being (Faulkner et al. 2016). Child-care workers should nurture appropriate growth and development through stable, intimate interactions with the young children they take care of (e.g., Nodding 1996). Unfortunately, quality caregiving has been threatened by high turnover rates of child-care providers, which are estimated to be as high as about 30% in South Korea (Ministry of Health and Welfare 2016). High turnover is reported across studies of child care in various countries (Huntsman 2008; Moon and Burbank 2004).

High staff turnover is associated with lower quality service and poorer child outcomes (Curbow et al. 2000; Whitebook and Sakai 2003; Moon and Burbank 2004). Further, researchers identified that caregiver job stress and intention to leave a job (or to quit) can be caused by organizational and work-related conditions (Barford and Whelton 2010; Baumgartner et al. 2009; Son 2009). For example, work conditions, including noise, isolation from other coworkers, and problems with supervisors may be environmental stressors for child-care workers (e.g., Baumgartner et al. 2009). In particular, lack of social support in the workplace can also be a stressor for child-care workers (Goelman and Guo 1998; Hamre and Pianta 2004). In fact, previous studies suggested the importance of the human relational factor in child-care workers' well-being and outcomes (Moon 2012; Nissiy et al. 2015). Despite this fact, there is a scarcity of empirical evidence on the relationship between perceived incivility and work outcomes among child-care workers.

To fill the gap, we studied how experiencing incivility in the workplace influences occupational and psychological outcomes for child-care providers. We focus on the experiences of employees who are targets of incivility from managers or supervisors. As indicated earlier, the effects of workplace incivility permeate the working life of targeted employees, as well as their organizations (e.g., Porath and Pearson 2010; Reico Jr. and Sanders-Reio 2011). It is worthy of notice that experiences of incivility from supervisors should be more stressful because supervisors have the power to evaluate, reward, and punish (Reico Jr. 2011). Employees tend to react most negatively to mistreatment from hierarchical superiors (Cortina and Magley 2009), but we know little about how caregivers react to incivility from supervisors.

In small-scale child care contexts, center directors and supervisors have a significant influence on the organizational structure and atmosphere of the day-to-day operations of child care facilities. In this work environment, the performance of child-care workers greatly depends on their perceived relationships with supervisors (Park and Kim 2010). Consequently, abusive supervisory behavior has obvious and profound effects.

Some researchers have investigated indirect pathways by which incivility affects employee outcomes and have shown that some stress-based emotional factors are essential for understanding the adverse consequences of incivility, such as emotional exhaustion that affects job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Cho et al. 2016; Hur et al. 2015; Hur et al. 2016; Sliter et al. 2010). However, studies investigating the relationship between emotional exhaustion and job performance have produced inconsistent results (Keijsers et al. 1995; Lazaro et al. 1985; Leiter et al. 1998; Randall and Scott 1988; Wright and Cropanzano 1998). Thus, we examined intrinsic motivation as another variable intervening between supervisor incivility and job performance. That is, motivation encourages employees to counter emotional exhaustion and to work harder to accomplish their tasks (Halbesleben and Bowler 2007).

Using affective events theory (AET) and the conservation of resources (COR) model of stress as a theoretical framework for understanding the incivility–performance relationship, we examined a model of mediating processes that link perceived supervisor incivility to job performance through two psychological mediators: emotional exhaustion and intrinsic motivation. Specifically, we propose that uncivil supervisory behavior can emotionally exhaust workers and destroy their willingness to work hard, which in turn decreases their performance. Figure 1 is an illustration of the proposed research model.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

Supervisor Incivility and its Consequences

When supervisors inflict sustained verbal and nonverbal abusive behaviors on subordinates, the subordinates perceive that they are targets of hostility (Tepper 2000). Indeed, individuals in higher organizational ranks are responsible for about 60% of all reported workplace incivility incidents (Pearson and Porath 2009). Thus, abusive behavior generally comes from higher ranks and consequently undermines the morale of lower-level employees (e.g., Estes and Wang 2008; Johnson and Indvik 2001; Keashly and Jagatic 2003; Porath and Pearson 2012).

Supervisor incivility is known to negatively affect various employee outcomes (Ambrose et al. 2002; Thau et al. 2009) such as turnover intentions (Ghosh et al. 2013; Laschinger et al. 2009), affective commitment (Laschinger et al. 2009; Smith et al. 2010), organizational commitment (Duffy and Ferrier 2003) and job satisfaction (Laschinger et al. 2009). Beyond attitudinal outcomes, experiencing incivility from a

Fig. 1 Research Model. **Note**: $^{\dagger}p$ < .10, $^{*}p$ < .05, $^{**}p$ < .01
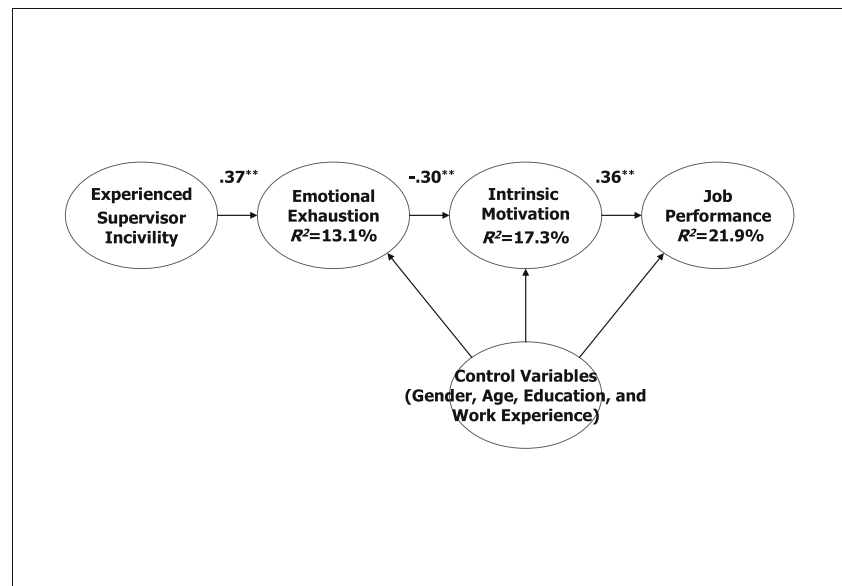
Note: $^{\dagger} p < .10, \, ^{*}p<.05, \, ^{**}p<.01$

supervisor may attenuate beneficial job commitment (Onyishi 2012), task performance (Chen et al. 2013; Giumetti et al. 2013) and citizenship performance (Porath and Erez 2007; Taylor et al. 2012). For example, employees who experience unfavorable treatment from their supervisors or coworkers tend to be unwilling to exceed minimal performance standards or extend effort beyond their specified role requirements (Lynch et al. 1999). They might even intentionally reduce their work effort and quality (Pearson and Porath 2005).

Furthermore, they may be more inclined to withhold these extra-role behaviors (e.g., Zellars et al. 2002). Thus, it has been witnessed that when employees perceive maltreatment from their supervisors or coworkers, they are likely to reduce their devotion to duty. Prior research has shown that abusive treatment from organization members indeed decreases employees' positive attitudes toward the organization and productivity (Eisenberger et al. 2010).

The Relationship between Perceived Supervisor Incivility and Job Performance through Emotional Exhaustion and Intrinsic Motivation

While a large body of research has documented the negative effects of perceived incivility on a wide array of outcomes, only a few studies have explored mediators in this relationship. As a result, there is still a poor understanding of the mechanisms underlying the effects of incivility on work outcomes (Schilpzand et al. 2016). In uncivil, unpleasant work environments, employees undergo stress trying to suppress or fake their emotions, which can often lead them to experience emotional exhaustion (Dormann and Zapf 2004; Von Dierendonck and Mevissen. 2002) and further, insufficient energy (Giumetti et al. 2013). Emotional exhaustion, a product of mental or psychological

distress, is defined as feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and entrapment and represents emotional depletion derived from excessive job demands and continuous stress (Wright and Cropanzano 1998). Based on COR theory, to explain the relationship between perceived supervisor incivility and job performance, we need to consider the emotional and motivational resources of targets of incivility.

Perceived Supervisor Incivility and Emotional Exhaustion

When supervisors, coworkers, and customers violate norms for mutual respect, the workplace becomes an environment of daily annoyance (Cortina et al. 2001). Employees who must deal with disrespectful people at work experience anxiety, anger, frustration, and injustice (Bunk and Magley 2013; Caza and Cortina 2008; Miner et al. 2012). Consequently, workplace incivility is a crucial job stressor (Lim et al. 2008). According to the theories of work-related stress and AET, workers who are frequently exposed to job stressors tend to feel more negative emotions, with adverse effects on their work-related attitudes and behaviors (Spector 1998; Spector and Fox 2005; Weiss and Cropanzano 1996). In particular, AET suggests that workplace events or experiences produce affective responses among service employees, which influence their work-related attitudes and behaviors (Weiss and Cropanzano 1996).

COR theory (Hobfoll 1989, 2001) explains that employees are strongly committed to acquiring and securing resources, defined as "objects, personality characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued by the individual or that serve as a means for attainment of these objects, personality characteristics, and energies" (Hobfoll 1989, p. 516). Individuals have

limited available physical, emotional, and cognitive resources. Thus, if workplace incivility threatens the loss of resources, indicates the potential for losing resources, or reveals the lack of sufficient resources to deal with work demands (Hobfoll 1988), burnout is likely (Cordes and Dougherty 1993; Neveu 2007; Wright and Bonett 1997). For example, when a supervisor speaks with an uncivil, condescending tone toward subordinates or ignores their greetings, the targets may feel depressed, ostracized, and useless. With threats to their social status, self-esteem (Tyler and Lind 1992), and sense of connectedness with the organization (Rhoades et al. 2001), they must invest their emotional resources in the struggle to overcome emotional anxiety and defend against threats to social and personal identities (Hobfoll 1989; Lee and Ashforth 1996). As fatigue increases and emotional resources are depleted, the result is emotional exhaustion, which is a key dimension of burnout (Maslach and Jackson 1986; Zapf et al. 2001).

Workplace incivility and supervisor incivility in particular have been positively linked with emotional exhaustion (Cho et al. 2016; Grandey et al. 2007; Hur et al. 2015; Kern and Grandey 2009; Laschinger et al. 2009; Leiter et al. 2011; Sliter et al. 2010). Targets of incivility are likely to perceive that they lack the resources and support needed to perform their work roles well (Reico Jr. and Sanders-Reio 2011). Child-care workers are particularly susceptible to daily workplace stress because child care inherently deals with a wide range of tasks (Goelman and Guo 1998; Manlove 1994) in a workplace where social support is lacking (Goelman and Guo 1998; Hamre and Pianta 2004). Notably, caregivers are more likely to display negative emotions when they feel they are being treated unfairly by their supervisor and do not have adequate support (e.g., Mill and Romano-White 1999; Ackerman 2006). Supervisors can make demeaning comments to the child-care worker, criticize the way the child-care worker does his or her job, or make excessive demands. When constantly exposed to such uncivil behaviors while in a position of low power, as a child-care worker is, feelings of tiredness and helplessness at work are likely to occur. On the basis of this previous research, we propose the following hypothesis:

> H1: Perceived supervisor incivility is positively related to emotional exhaustion in child-care workers.

Emotional Exhaustion and Intrinsic Motivation

To reiterate, the COR theory of burnout explains that individuals strive to obtain, maintain and protect valued resources including objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies (Hobfoll 1989, 2001) and that certain personality characteristics and emotional stability can serve as personal resources for meeting work demands and reducing emotional

exhaustion (Perry et al. 2007; Perry et al. 2010: Zellars et al. 2006). However, the effort to control emotional responses tends to weaken limited emotional resources. That is, when individuals experience a stressful event at work, such as incivility, they may experience a reduction in their level of energy (Kjelberg et al. 2010) because they may spend time coping with their hurt feelings and worrying about future interactions with the uncivil source, i.e., supervisor. Thus, emotionally exhausted employees are likely to abandon goal orientations and instead focus on reducing negative emotions and avoiding task failure (Barrick et al. 2003; Malouff et al. 1990). That is, continuous stress depletes emotional resources so that energy is focused on preserving and conserving remaining resources (Hobfoll 1988; Siegall and McDonald 2004), perhaps by curbing services. As COR theory might predict, experiencing incivility from a supervisor may deplete valuable resources and child-care workers may respond by reducing effort at work or by becoming less engaged in the caregiving task (e.g., Hobfoll 1989).

Intrinsically motivated individuals engage in tasks or activities because they derive inherent pleasure and interest from the work (Ryan and Deci 2000), but if child-care teachers are struggling to maintain or protect their resources after experiencing supervisory maltreatment, they will be emotionally exhausted and will be less driven by intrinsic motivations (Wright and Cropanzano 1988). It has been observed that employees who experienced rude and disrespectful treatment in the workplace showed lower levels of emotional attachment to the organization (Taylor et al. 2012). That is, experiencing incivility may decrease positive work-related emotions, which can be associated with reduced intrinsic motivation. Thus, we hypothesize:

> H2: Emotional exhaustion is negatively related to intrinsic motivation in child-care workers.

Intrinsic Motivation and Job Performance

Employee motivation is closely related to productivity, performance, and persistence (Grant 2008). Highly motivated employees tend to be highly engaged, involved, and committed in their work (Guay et al. 2000; Kuvaas and Dysvik 2009; Vansteenkiste et al. 2007) and to better cope with work situations (Keaveney and Nelson 1993). The more important predictor of success is whether employees are intrinsically motivated to find fulfillment and enjoyment in their work (Amabile 1996), or whether they are extrinsically motivated to obtain rewards or avoid punishments (Pinder 2011).

Intrinsic motivation tends to develop passion and positive feelings among employees for their work (Thompson 2000). As a result, intrinsic motivation is often linked to positive performance outcomes (Amabile et al. 1990; Baard et al.

2004; Hur et al. 2016; Sansone and Harackiewicz 2000). Intrinsically motivated people tend to be strongly interested in growth and learning (Amabile 1996) and relatively highly engaged in activities (Grolnick and Ryan 1987; Patall et al. 2008) because the work interests them (Ryan and Deci 2000), and gives them spontaneous satisfaction (Gagné and Deci 2005). Intrinsically motivated employees persist in activities that convey enjoyment and purpose (Pinder 2011). Therefore, they will expend greater efforts and persevere in intrinsically rewarding tasks, even beyond the point of direct rewards (Deci 1972). They tend to be more active learners, to be more likely to attend classes, and to stay in school (Hardre and Reeve 2003; Robbins et al. 2004). Their tendencies to work longer on tasks leads to higher academic achievement (Church et al. 2001; Gottfried 1985), job performance (Grant 2008), and test performance (Vansteenkiste et al. 2006).

These findings showing the power of intrinsic motivation prompted us to hypothesize that intrinsically motivated child-care workers are volitionally encouraged to work harder and longer because they find the work to be enjoyable and interesting. As a result, they are likely to perform well:

> H3: Intrinsic motivation is positively related to job performance in child-care workers.

Serial Multiple Mediation Model of Emotional Exhaustion and Intrinsic Motivation

Although perceived supervisor incivility has been shown to be negatively related with job-related behaviors, little is known about the process through which supervisor mistreatment can affect employee outcomes. However, these will be more powerful implications if we can provide an underlying reason for the direct relationship between perceived supervisor incivility and job performance, answering the question "why?" To this end, we examined how perceived supervisor incivility is related to job performance, focusing on the mediating variables of emotional exhaustion and intrinsic motivation. Based on the extant research and the combined rationale of AET and COR theory, we propose that experiencing incivility from a supervisor does not directly affect employees' job performance, but rather that emotional exhaustion and intrinsic motivation sequentially mediate the effect of perceived supervisor incivility on the performance of child-care workers.

It is acknowledged that workplace incivility apparently causes employees to experience emotional distress, mental health problems, lower energy and motivation, higher turnover intentions, and poorer task performance (Bowling and Beehr 2006; Bunk and Magley 2013; Chen et al. 2013; Giumetti et al. 2013; Kern and Grandey 2009; Lim and Lee 2011). More specifically, affective or attitudinal outcomes (i.e., emotional distress) might trigger behavioral outcomes

(i.e., turnover intentions and task performance) (Lim et al. 2008). Accordingly, emotional exhaustion may be a primary mediator that links employees' experience of incivility and job performance. Emotional exhaustion is a negative outcome of stress that employees cope with while performing their tasks, and it is negatively related to job performance (Cho et al. 2016; Sliter et al. 2010). Consistent with COR theory, the depletion of emotional resources elicited by incivility may lead to reduced performance because employees are unwilling to provide good service in order to conserve or regain resources at work. As such, some research has identified emotional exhaustion as a mediator linking workplace incivility to employee performance (Cho et al. 2016; Hur et al. 2015; Hur et al. 2016; Sliter et al. 2010). An employee who experiences incivility might try to recover from this bitter experience (Hobfoll and Freedy 1993), which can affect their service performance.

However, researchers have found inconclusive results regarding the relationship between emotional exhaustion and employee performance. Some have found a negative relationship (Leiter et al. 1998; Wright and Cropanzano 1998); others have found an insignificant or positive relationship (Keijsers et al. 1995; Lazaro et al. 1985; Randall and Scott 1988). To counter the problem, some researchers have suggested adding a more proximal variable between emotional exhaustion and performance (Bakker et al. 2004; Jex 1998). Empirically, Halbesleben and Bowler (2007) found motivation to be a mediator in the emotional exhaustion and employee performance relationship.

As COR theory suggests, when employees experience stress due to the loss of valuable resources caused by workplace incivility, psychological distress may result (Hobfoll 1989). Emotional exhaustion caused by perceived supervisor incivility may decrease positive emotions and instead increase negative emotions (e.g., Giumetti et al. 2013; Martin and Hine 2005). Actually, Pearson et al. (2001) found that participants who were targets of workplace incivility reported experiencing negative emotional states. It would be hard for employees in a negative mood to find their job interesting and enjoyable (lower intrinsic motivation). Also, emotionally depressed employees will be likely to be very selective in using their remaining resources (Siegall and McDonald 2004). That is, they tend to be inactive in expending the resources. In examining the link between emotional exhaustion and performance, Halbesleben and Bowler (2007) noted that motivation represents the investment of resources. In the COR model, motivation serves as an energy resource, which indicates that motivation is invested in the job to obtain other goals (e.g., good performance). Accordingly, employees who encounter resource loss or a threat to loss tend to take steps to protect their resources. Furthermore, they will be unwilling to risk further resource depletion by working hard to meet current work demands. For example, employees may keep themselves distant

from a situation that is causing emotional exhaustion to begin with, i.e., infrequent contacts with abusive supervisors or avoidance of volunteering (Freedy et al. 1992; Siegall and McDonald 2004). One obvious way in which employees might seek to protect resources is to put less effort into their work, which results in lower job performance (Wright and Cropanzano 1998). That is, their intrinsic motivation has been damaged and their job commitment has deteriorated.

In the present study, we argue that emotional exhaustion and intrinsic motivation mediate the relationship between perceived supervisor incivility and child-care workers' job performance. Our serial-mediation model better explains how supervisor-initiated incivility damages employee performance: child-care workers who are the targets of uncivil supervisor behavior are likely to feel emotional exhaustion from their efforts to deal with negative affective responses. The perception of emotional exhaustion will, in turn, undermine intrinsic motivation. Thus, workers lose interest and enjoyment in their work and lose their motivation to invest their resources in meeting job requirements. Therefore, we hypothesize:

> H4: Emotional exhaustion and intrinsic motivation sequentially mediate the effect of perceived supervisor incivility on the job performance of child-care workers.

Research Method

Participants and Procedure

The study participants were South Korean child-care workers employed by multiple daycare centers identified through the primary investigator's personal contacts. As recommended in previous research (Elicker et al. 1997; Wells 2015), we used a snowball sampling method. The snowball sampling technique is particularly effective in locating special populations where the purpose of the research relates to a sensitive issue (e.g., experience of incivility) (Faugier and Sageant 1997). Our starting point for finding contact points (i.e., the directors of early childhood education and care centers) was the primary investigator's own network. Some of the directors and supervisors who were contacted helped us find and access a larger number of directors of centers. We then personally contacted all the center directors referred by prior contact points to explain the study objectives and obtain permission for data collection. In this way, we were able to secure a total of 43 child care centers to conduct the survey. In addition, about 10 child-care providers from each center were randomly selected as respondents. This approach is often used in multilevel studies for organizations with between five and 10 people (Chen et al. 2015; Hox and Maas 2001). The average number of child-care

workers per center participating in this study was 7.47 (Min.: 5, Max.: 10).

The participants were assured that the survey would be performed in strict confidentiality and that there would be no way to identify any one response with a particular supervisor. Each respondent received a packet containing a cover letter, a self-administered questionnaire, and a stamped pre-addressed envelope. To ensure confidentiality, we instructed them to seal and mail the completed survey in the pre-addressed envelope. Respondents received gift cards for coffee worth Korean 5000 Won (about US$5) as an incentive.

Of the 430 child-care teachers who received the survey packet, 321 returned their questionnaires, a response rate of 74.5%. We used the full-information maximum likelihood (FIML) technique to handle missing values. FIML estimation is superior to other imputation techniques in that biased results can occur if missing cases are excluded (i.e., listwise deletion) (Asendorpf et al. 2014). The participants were predominantly women (99.1%), averaging 32.2 years old (SD = 8.3). The average tenure was 6.5 years (SD = 5.2). Education levels varied: graduate school (5.3%), four-year university (42.0%), two-year college (48.3%), high school (2.5%), and other (1.9%). The sample demographics for this study were not very different from ones of all child-care teachers in South Korea. According to a recent child care center and teacher census conducted by the Korea Institute of Childcare and Education (2016), the overall demographic characteristics of the child-care teachers can be described as mostly females (98.3%), with an undergraduate college or university degree (78.7%), and an average of 38.4 years old. The average tenure was 4.7 years.

Measurement Scales

The measurement scales were translated into Korean according to Brislin's (1970) back-translation procedure. Four management scholars reviewed the back-translated version of the survey items and found them to be equivalent to the original. All constructs were measured on five-point Likert-type scales (Table 1).

Experiences of supervisor incivility were measured with four items adapted from Sliter et al. (2012). Response options ranged from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). Items for experienced incivility included: "How often does your supervisor ignore or exclude you while at work?" and "How often is your supervisor rude to you at work?"

Emotional exhaustion was measured using four items adapted from Maslach and Jackson (1981). Participants indicated the extent of their agreement with each statement. For example, "I feel emotionally drained from my work."

Four items based on Gagné et al. (2010) were used to assess intrinsic motivations. Response options were 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating

Table 1 Scale items and construct evaluation

Construct	Items	λ^*
Experienced Supervisor Incivility[a]	How often does your supervisor ignore or exclude you while at work?	.87
	How often does your supervisor raise his or her voice at you while at work?	.84
	How often is your supervisor rude to you at work?	.92
	How often does your supervisor do demeaning things to you at work?	.85
Emotional Exhaustion[b]	I feel emotionally drained from my work.	.79
	I feel used up at the end of the workday.	.77
	Working with people all day is really a strain for me.	.85
	I feel burned out from my work.	.84
Intrinsic Motivation[b]	Because I enjoy this work very much.	.80
	Because I have fun doing my job.	.90
	For the moments of pleasure that this job brings me.	.92
	I chose this job because it allows me to reach my life goals.	.80
Job Performance[b]	I adequately complete assigned duties.	.83
	I fulfill the responsibilities specified in my job description.	.88
	I meet the formal performance requirements of my job.	.72

Goodness-of-fit: $\chi^2_{168} = 301.81$, $p < 0.05$; CFI = .97; TLI = .96; RMSEA = .05, SRMR$_{(within)}$ = .04

* All factor loadings are significant (p < .01);

CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted

(a): Items measured on a scale of 1: *never*; 2: *rarely*; 3: *sometimes*; 4: *quite often*; 5: *very often*

(b): Items measured on a scale from 1 *strongly disagree* to 5 *strongly agree*

stronger intrinsic motivation. For example, "because I enjoy this work very much."

Finally, job performance was measured using three items adapted from Williams and Anderson (1991) and Way et al. (2010). Participants evaluated their performance behaviors on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly disagree*). For example, "adequately complete assigned duties."

Demographics have been shown to affect levels of emotional exhaustion (e.g., Houkes et al. 2003; Lindquist and Whitehead 1986; Maslach and Jackson 1984), intrinsic motivation (e.g. Gillet et al. 2012; Hackman and Oldham 1980; Renaud-Dubé et al. 2015), and job performance (e.g. Bowen et al. 2000; Shin et al. 2015; Sturman 2003). Therefore, we controlled for age, gender, education (year), and work experience because they may mask the relationships between the constructs.

Analyses Strategy

Since the 321 child-care teachers were nested in 43 child-care centers, we conducted multilevel structural equation modeling (MSEM) using M-plus 8.0 software to accurately capture the effects of individual-level variables while accounting for the non-independence of observations within the daycare center (Bliese and Hanges 2004). We computed the intra-class correlation (ICC1), as a measure of within-group consensus, to determine whether sufficient variance occurred across the

daycare centers observed and whether a multilevel structural equation model would be necessary. The median value in organizational research is typically .12 (James 1982). All between-group variances were significant ($p < .01$), and the ICC1 values were .18 for supervisor incivility, .18 for emotional exhaustion, .16 for intrinsic motivation, and .12 for job performance, close to the suggested value of .20 (Bliese 2000). The group (i.e., daycare center) variances of measures were large enough, so MSEM was best to test the research hypotheses for the clustered data structure.

Also, we employed MSEM instead of multilevel hierarchical regression (i.e., HLM) to elaborately estimate the serial mediation effect. Step-wise procedures of mediation (Baron and Kenny 1986) or piecemeal estimation techniques (e.g., hierarchical linear modeling) may potentially bias the results because they do not allow the simultaneous estimation of all parameters. In this study, we used Preacher and Hayes (2004) multilevel structural equation models (MSEM), which combine the advantages of both MLM and SEM.

Data Analysis and Results

Reliability, Validity, and Common Method Variance Testing

The measurement scales were subjected to a commonly used validation process to assess reliability and validity. First,

construct reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Table 2). The reliability coefficients for the study variables ranged from .85 to .92, which demonstrated good internal reliability (Nunnally 1978). Second, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to verify the convergent and discriminant validity of the measures, using Mplus version 8.0 software. Model fit was assessed using five indices: chi-square/degree of freedom ratio (χ^2/df), Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), comparative fit index (CFI), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The criteria for adequate model fit were as follows: $\chi^2/df \leq 3$, TLI and CFI $\geq .90$, and SRMR and RMSEA $\leq .08$ (Hair et al. 2010; Medsker et al. 1994). Although the χ^2 value was significant ($\chi^2_{(168)} = 301.81$, $p < .05$), the other indices yielded good fit to the data ($\chi^2/df = 1.80$, TLI = .95, CFI = .96, $SRMR_{(within)} = .04$, RMSEA = .05). As χ^2 is highly sensitive to sample size, the statistical significance of the χ^2 test by itself should not be a reason to reject a model (Wang and Wang 2012). Thus, researchers have been recommended to simultaneously consider other model fit indices to address the limitations of χ^2 for the model fit test (Hair et al. 2010). Table 1 shows the factor loadings of scale items. All factor loadings exceeded .72 across the measurement model, with all t-values greater than 22.42, indicating adequate convergent validity among the measures. All measures exhibited strong reliability, with composite reliabilities from .85 to .93 (Table 2). Finally, we checked for discriminant validity among constructs as Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggested. All values of average variance extracted (AVE) were larger than the squared correlation between the construct and any others (Table 2), revealing that all constructs fulfilled discriminant validity.

When using self-reported data, researchers must use procedural and statistical remedies to control for potential biases from common method variance (CMV) (Podsakoff et al. 2012). To reduce CMV procedurally, we protected participant anonymity, reduced evaluation apprehension biases, improved item wordings, and constructed the survey to have separately measured predictor and outcome variables. As a statistical remedy, we conducted Harman's one-factor analysis (Podsakoff et al. 2012). The results of confirmatory factor analysis indicated that the one-factor model ($\chi^2_{(90)} = 2028.83$; $p < .05$, CFI = .42, TLI = .32, RMSEA = .26, SRMR = .19) was a worse fit than our measurement model. We introduced an additional latent common method factor (LCMF) for loading each item in the baseline model in addition to loading on its respective construct. LCMF accounted for 5.47% of the total variance, considerably lower than the median method variance (25%) observed in research using self-reported responses (Williams et al. 1989). Taken together, the results suggest that CMV was no serious threat to our data.

Hypotheses Testing

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics and correlations for all variables. In the MSEM analysis, all the path coefficients were estimated (Fig. 1). In the analytical model, we tested for a three-path mediated effect (Lau and Cheung 2012; Macho and Ledermann 2011; Taylor et al. 2008). This approach allowed us to investigate the indirect effect passing through both mediators in a series (H4). The results of the entire model test showed the direct path coefficients of the relationships between experienced supervisor incivility, emotional exhaustion, intrinsic motivation, and job performance (Fig. 1). Our proposed research model offers an acceptable fit to data ($\chi^2_{(218)} = 395.59$, $p < .05$: CFI = .96, TLI = .95, $RMSEA_{(within)} = .05$, SRMR = .05). Overall, the hypothesized structural model does well for explaining variance ($R^2_{(emotional\ exhaustion)} = 13.1\%$, $R^2_{(intrinsic\ motivation)} = 17.3\%$, and $R^2_{(job\ performance)} = 21.9\%$). Therefore, H1 stating the positive

Table 2 Mean, standard deviations, and correlations among variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender	–							
2. Age	−.00	–						
3. Work Experience	−.08	.48**	–					
4. Education (Year)	.06	.03	.15*	–				
5. Experienced Supervisor Incivility	−.06	.11*	.06	−.08	*.76*			
6. Emotional Exhaustion	.02	−.15*	.04	−.01	.29**	*.66*		
7. Intrinsic Motivation	−.03	.05	.02	.09	−.18**	−.45**	*.73*	
8. Job Performance	.03	.10†	.16*	.12*	−.11†	−.25**	.42**	*.66*
Mean	.01	32.19	6.52	15.02	1.39	2.86	3.72	4.01
SD	.08	8.33	5.18	1.28	.57	.91	.66	.51
Cronbach' α	–	–	–	–	.92	.90	.91	.85
CR	–	–	–	–	.93	.89	.92	.85

† $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. Numbers along the diagonal are the AVE

relationship between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion was supported ($b = .37$, $p < .01$). Also, based on the path coefficients, emotional exhaustion was negatively related with intrinsic motivation, supporting H2 ($b = -.30$, $p < .01$). Hypothesis 3 predicted a positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and job performance. Indeed, intrinsic motivation had a significant and positive relationship with job performance ($b = .36$, $p < .01$), supporting H3.

Test of Serial Mediation

Hypothesis 4 predicted that emotional exhaustion and intrinsic motivation are significant mediators in the relationship between perceived supervisor incivility and job performance. To test a serial mediation hypothesis, we estimated three additional paths: experienced supervisor incivility → intrinsic motivation, experienced supervisor incivility → job performance, emotional exhaustion→ job performance (Macho and Ledermann 2011; Taylor et al. 2008). Table 3 reports estimates of the indirect effects, along with the symmetric and 99% Monte Carlo confidence intervals for the path estimates (replication = 20, 000, Hayes 2013, Preacher and Selig 2012). The results for H4 showed that emotional exhaustion and intrinsic motivation fully and sequentially mediated the relationship between experienced supervisor incivility and job performance ($b = -.031$, 99% CI [$-.056$, $-.007$]). This finding indicates that supervisors' uncivil behaviors significantly increase emotional exhaustion in child-care workers. Emotional exhaustion, a core dimension of burnout, weakens intrinsic motivation, thereby reducing overall performance. That is, supervisor incivility negatively impacts job performance because the depletion of emotional resources lowers intrinsic motivation.

Discussion

Although the prevalence of workplace incivility is a significant threat in human service sectors, researchers have provided little information specific to the child care

Table 3 Path coefficients for indirect effect model

	Path	b	$Cl_{99\%low}$	$Cl_{99\%high}$
Total Effect	SI → JP	−.095	−.240	.051
Direct Effect	SI → JP	−.014	−.160	.131
Indirect Effect	SI → EE → JP	−.023	−.063	.017
	SI → IM → JP	−.026	−.075	.023
	SI → EE → IM → JP (H4)	−.031	−.056	−.007

SI: experienced supervisor incivility, EE: emotional exhaustion, IM: intrinsic motivation, JP: job performance, b = unstandardized coefficient

industry and its service providers. To fill the gap, we examined the effect of experienced supervisor incivility on the job performance of child-care workers in Korea. We further investigated an underlying mechanism explaining why and how supervisor incivility affects performance. Based on the related AET and COR theory research, we hypothesized that emotional exhaustion and intrinsic motivation sequentially mediate the negative relationship between perceived supervisor incivility and performance. For this serial mediation model, we applied multilevel SEM, which allows us to understand how experienced supervisor incivility and job performance are linked and what the fundamental mediators are in the chain. Furthermore, previous research has often employed single-level SEM or a mediation model, which makes it hard to account for interdependences among individuals nested within the same organization. To improve the methodological concerns, the current research adopted the 1–1-1 mediation model to simultaneously examine the three direct hypotheses and serial mediation hypothesis.

Consistent with previous findings, we found experiencing supervisor incivility to be negatively related to performance levels. As expected, emotional exhaustion and intrinsic motivation fully and sequentially mediate the negative relationship. Thus, we advanced a theoretical framework by introducing emotional exhaustion as a potential mechanism that links supervisor incivility to work outcomes. The results indicate interventions for mitigating the negative effects.

More specifically, as Table 3 shows, perceived supervisor incivility significantly increases emotional exhaustion in child care providers (H1). Emotional exhaustion, as a main dimension of burnout, significantly impacts motivational decisions about investing the remaining resources. That is, emotionally exhausted workers feel incompetent and depleted, so they lack internal motivations to put energy into their current work (H2). As predicted, intrinsic motivation significantly improves job performance (H3). Finally, serial mediation analysis confirms that emotional exhaustion and intrinsic motivation sequentially mediate the relationship between perceived supervisor incivility and performance in child-care workers (H4).

In sum, the findings of this study may suggest the importance of incivility management among the members of child care centers by empirically demonstrating how perceived supervisor incivility affects the performance of child-care workers. Therefore, both researchers and practitioners need to attend more to environmental stressors such as interpersonal mistreatment (i.e., incivility) in organizational environments where service providers may have high levels of work pressure (i.e., caregiving) from performing independent tasks and tend to have more contacts with directors or supervisors whose leadership has a greater impact on their performance (e.g., Shin 2016).

Theoretical Implications

Our findings have several theoretical implications regarding the effects of experienced supervisor incivility from the perspective of employees engaged in high-contact services. First, our serial mediations are a more robust mechanism showing how perceived supervisor incivility negatively affects job performance. That is, we take into account the emotional and motivational states of targets of incivility in order to explain the relationship between perceived supervisor incivility and subordinate job performance. As expected, child-care workers subjected to abusive verbal or nonverbal supervisory behavior are more likely to be emotionally exhausted. Consequently, they lose intrinsic motivation and show decreased performance. It is thus suggested that interpersonal supervisory behavior significantly impacts a wide range of job-related attitudes, behaviors, and work outcomes. Prior research has focused on examining an individual mediator (e.g., affect or energy level) rather than considering both mediators in the incivility-performance relationship (Sliter et al. 2010; Giumetti et al. 2013). Furthermore, supervisor incivility may be indirectly linked with job performance through the mediation of affective outcomes that are more proximal to the incivility. That is, supervisor incivility is a negative affective event that evokes negative affective and cognitive reactions, in turn causing negative distal outcomes such as poor performance.

In line with related COR theory research (e.g., Cho et al. 2016; Hur et al. 2015; Sliter et al. 2012), emotional exhaustion triggered by incivility plays a crucial role in reducing service performance. That is, the effect of supervisor incivility occurs because of the emotional responses used by the employees to cope with the unpleasant, uncivil encounter. The employees may try to put up with it or forget it (Cortina and Magley 2009) to perform their job. This coping mechanism may lead them to suppress negative emotions (i.e., frustration) and/or fake positive emotions, which may cause the emotional exhaustion associated with incivility (Sliter et al. 2010). Our study establishes that supervisors' uncivil behavior toward service employees significantly causes resource losses and ultimately damages employee outcomes if not dealt with appropriately. Thus, our findings confirm that supervisor incivility is a serious work stressor that threatens the personal resources needed for meeting job demands in many industries. In contrast, supportive supervisors can mitigate stress in subordinates (e.g., Lim 2005; Lim et al. 2008) and prevent the depletion of emotional resources or energy for doing tasks (Giumetti et al. 2013).

Second, our study plausibly explains how emotional exhaustion negatively affects job performance by suggesting that intrinsic motivation acts as a mediator. Although studies of the emotional exhaustion–performance relationship have given mixed understandings, only a few studies have considered possible mediators as a solution (e.g., Halbesleben and Bowler 2007). We contribute to the research by adding a linkage between emotional exhaustion and lowered intrinsic motivation. That is, emotional exhaustion evoked by supervisor incivility can lead to reductions in performance via lowered motivation. After supervisor mistreatment, emotionally exhausted employees are unlikely to view their tasks as interesting and enjoyable. They will resist further active work engagement to avoid further resource depletion (e.g., Sliter et al. 2012). This finding supports the contention that motivational variables may be important mediators explaining the relationship between burnout dimensions and job performance.

Finally, most previous studies have concentrated on psychological dimensions as consequences of workplace incivility. Thus, our attempt to empirically investigate the relationship between supervisor incivility and job performance extends the extant literature on workplace incivility. Further, it may serve as a preliminary step toward understanding the mechanisms by which service employees experience significant reductions in their job performance. The significant link obtained in child care settings supports the contention that supervisor incivility should be treated as a certain stressor at work that consumes valued energy resources and leads to reduced work outcomes (e.g., Reico Jr. and Sanders-Reio 2011).

Practical Implications

The results of our study have practical implications relevant to managers in the child care sector. The current study demonstrates that although supervisor incivility may be a subtle mistreatment, it can badly affect the working life of targeted employees. For example, when supervisors in child care settings treat subordinates uncivilly and disrespectfully, they have consequential negative effects on the job-related attitudes and psychological well-being of child-care workers that actually relate to caring for children. Thus, managers should recognize supervisor mistreatment as a huge stressor, and they need to develop relevant strategies to prevent this from happening. Essential, active management strategies should include recruiting, selecting, and retaining socially skilled supervisors who can interact thoughtfully, prudently, and humanely to handle problems without demeaning subordinates. For example, when subordinates are given positive encouragement, their positive feelings of competence and autonomy will enhance their job engagement and work performance (e.g., Deci and Ryan 1980; 1985). Therefore, managers should implement proactive interventions such as training programs to

enhance social skills for supervisors and should devise codes of conduct for all supervisors and child-care workers. Supervisors must be trained to know about the harmful effects of incivility and to learn specific social techniques for reducing incivility.

Second, owners and management are urged to consider the mediating effect of emotional exhaustion between supervisor incivility and performance factors (i.e., intrinsic motivation and job performance) and to find ways to mitigate emotional exhaustion in child-care workers. For example, counseling and stress management programs that reduce emotional exhaustion and increase intrinsic motivation may increase the contributions of employees who experience workplace incivility (Ferguson 2012; Sakurai and Jex 2012). Specifically, child care centers may consider allowing a short break after a supervisor is uncivil at the workers' discretion. This break may help to restore the child-care worker's mental composure or resources that were lost through the regulation of emotions. Research has shown that job control can reduce the effects of stressors (e.g., Bond and Bunce 2001).

Finally, as in other industries, child care service organizations should develop systems for monitoring and providing feedback regarding the prevalence, types, and patterns of supervisor incivility. Perhaps supervisors might be more receptive to instruction regarding appropriate manners in the workplace if they better understood the harm they cause when they mistreat subordinates.

Limitations and Future Research

Although this study has significant implications, several limitations should be considered in future research. First, we used self-reported, cross-sectional data from a single wave and source, which may inflate the causal relationships between variables. Substantial theory supports our outcome interpretations, and longitudinal research on various forms of social mistreatment provides empirical evidence similar to our outcomes (e.g., Glomb et al. 1999; Zhou 2014), but future research should be more attentive to CMV through careful research design and instruments (Podsakoff et al. 2012). The best way to control CMV is to collect data from different sources (e.g., supervisor-rated job performance) or to use a rigorous longitudinal design (e.g., four-wave survey) (Zapf et al. 1996).

Second, the nonrandom sample of child-care workers came from a single country, South Korea, which restricts the generalizability of the results. Despite some benefits such as the generation of large data sets quickly from a narrowly defined population (e.g., Spence et al. 2016), the snowball sampling method can introduce biases (Kurant et al. 2011) because it is not random. As previously presented, the researcher can be heavily involved in

developing and managing the initiation and progress of the sample. Also, respondents often suggest others who share similar characteristics (McPherson et al. 2001). Thus, the researcher should ensure that the initial set of respondents is sufficiently diverse so that the sample is not skewed excessively in any particular direction.

In addition, the sample for this study was predominantly female because of the characteristics of the job. Further study with more representative and gender-balanced samples is needed before drawing firm conclusions (Zacher and Jimmieson 2013). More specifically, future studies are recommended to use a random sampling technique and to investigate child-care workers in other countries or service employees in other industries (e.g., flight attendants, long-term caregivers, social workers, etc.) to see if perceived supervisor incivility has an influence on employee outcomes such as psychological well-being and employee performance similar to the findings of this research.

Third, monetary incentives (e.g., $5 gift cards for coffee) were used to obtain survey responses. Although there is little evidence suggesting that incentives increase response bias (Simmons and Wilmot 2004), future studies should address issues involving the proper level of monetary incentive or the type of incentive provided.

Fourth, we advance a theory about supervisor incivility by focusing on mediating mechanisms, but we ignore potential moderators. Important personal-level variables such as emotional intelligence, affect, and job-related self-efficacy seem to be related to surface acting as well as emotional exhaustion (Bibi et al. 2013; Penny and Spector 2005; Rhee et al. 2017). Furthermore, it is interesting and enlightening to consider the gender of the instigator as a moderator. National culture, as well as organizational-level variables such as support and climate may also be moderators for a more holistic model in future research.

Finally, we focused only on supervisor incivility, although child care settings feature a wide variety of sources of incivility. For example, future studies might find that incivility from coworkers and parents has considerable effects on psychological well-being and job-related outcomes for child-care workers. In addition, workplace incivility can be examined from the perspectives of the actor, target, or observer of the behavior. Targets of incivility have received much greater attention from both researchers and practitioners because of its harmful effects on their work outcomes, as well as their psychological and physical well-being. However, observers of incivility (e.g., toward colleagues) may also suffer job burnout and turnover intentions (Miner-Rubino and Cortina 2004). Thus, it is necessary to extensively investigate the impact of workplace incivility on the observers of incivility in future research.

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