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# Family incivility and counterproductive work behavior: A moderated mediation model of self-esteem and emotional regulation☆

Qiyu Bai [a], Weipeng Lin [b], Lei Wang [a,*]

[a] Department of Psychology and Beijing Key Laboratory of Behavior and Mental Health, Peking University, China
[b] Department of Human Resource Management, Business School, Nankai University, China

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ABSTRACT

Drawing from the work–home resources model, we examined the relations of family incivility, counterproductive work behaviors (CWB), state self-esteem, and emotional regulation. Results from three-wave lagged data ($N = 284$) indicated that family incivility was positively correlated with counterproductive work behaviors, and this relationship was mediated by state self-esteem. In addition, emotional regulation mitigated the relationship between family incivility and state self-esteem. The findings suggested that family incivility, as an emotional contextual demand in the home domain, is related to negative outcome (deviant behavior) in the work context (i.e., CWB) through the depletion of the personal resource—state self-esteem, while emotional regulation is a key resource that mitigates this relationship. This paper discusses the implications of these findings with respect to applications and developments of the work–home resources model.
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Stress is one of the most important topics in organizational psychology. Although the influence of work stressors on individual attitudes and behaviors in the work context has received great concern for a long time, less attention has been given to the relationship between stressors in the family domain and individual reactions at work. Recently, a research shows that family incivility, which refers to "low-intensity deviant behaviors with ambiguous intent that violate the norms of mutual respect in the family", is negatively correlated with work performance (Lim & Tai, 2014: 351). Unlike family abuse or aggression (Pearson, Andersson, &Wegner, 2001), family incivility is a less intense and subtler chronic form of interpersonal behavior (e.g., ignoring family members from social activities, making demeaning comments about family members), which is easily ignored but has connection to other constructs (Lim & Tai, 2014). Being different from interpersonal conflicts in family, such as spousal conflict, parent–child conflict (Seymour & Lessne, 1984; Straus, Hamby, Finkelhor, Moore, & Runyan, 1998), family incivility doesn't distinguish the family members and it is more general among all members in the family.

Although the relationship between family incivility and job performance has been demonstrated, little is known about whether family incivility is linked to other work behaviors, especially deviant ones. As one of the most impactful deviant behaviors in the work context, counterproductive work behavior (CWB) has a strong connection to organizational survival

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* Corresponding author.
*E-mail address:* leiwang@pku.edu.cn (L. Wang).

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and success (Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001; Dalal, 2005; Spector & Fox, 2005). According to the work–home resources (W–HR) model (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012

their backs, or spend time on personal issues. These behaviors are typical manifestations of CWB. Previous studies (Lochman & Dodge, 1994; Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2005; Fong, Vogel, & Vogel, 2008; Papadakaki, Tzamalouka, Chatzifotiou, & Chliaoutakis, 2009) suggest that self-esteem was negatively associated with deviant behaviors. Based on the arguments above, we hypothesized:

**Hypothesis 2.** State self-esteem is negatively related to counterproductive work behavior.

Although scholars have found that family–work conflict is positively correlated to deviant work behaviors (Ferguson, Carlson, Hunter, & Whitten, 2012), to the best of our knowledge, no study has been conducted on the relationship between emotional demands in family domain (e.g., family incivility) and deviant work behaviors. The mechanism of the relationship is also unclear. According to the W–HR model (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012), contextual demands from one side of work-home interface would deplete one's personal resources and then be related to deviant behavioral outcomes in the other side of work-home interface. Based on this perspective, family incivility, as a contextual demand in home side, would deplete one's personal resources such as state self-esteem. The lack of this kind of personal resources will be related to negative outcomes in work side like CWB. Accordingly, we proposed:

**Hypothesis 3.** State self-esteem mediates the relationship between family incivility and counterproductive work behavior.

## 2. The moderating role of emotional regulation

The W–HR model suggests that individuals with key resources are less likely to encounter home-work conflict, because key resources mitigate the negative relationship between contextual demands and personal resources. Key resources are stable management resources that facilitate the selection, alteration, and implementation of other resources (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012; Hobfoll, 2002; Thoits, 1994). People who possess more key resources are better at stress coping and control (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012; Hobfoll, 2002). One typical way of stress coping and emotional control is emotional regulation (Lazarus, 1966; Gross, 2014). Emotional regulation is a stable ability to regulate emotions, which helps individuals to rapidly recovery from distress ( ).

control is one of the most salient management resources (Hobfoll, 2002). Therefore, emotional regula-
e. According to the W–HR model, the emotional regulation would serve as a key resource to buffer the
between emotional contextual demand (i.e., family incivility) and personal resource (i.e., state self-
ussed before, family incivility is an emotional contextual demand or a family stressor. Individuals with
otional regulation could choose a better coping strategy and control their emotions to respond to the
n, 2003; Lazarus, 1993). With a better coping strategy and better emotional control ability, individuals
l with home demands (e.g., family incivility). They are more able to resist family situational threats and
esteem would be less vulnerable to family incivility (Schutte, Malouff, Simunek, McKenley, & Hollander,
eople who lack emotional regulation ability are less able to deal with emotional home demands, and
esteem is more likely to be diminished by family incivility. Accordingly, we hypothesized:

nal regulation moderates the relationship between family incivility and state self-esteem, such that the neg-
tween family incivility and state self-esteem is weaker for individuals with higher levels of emotional

nal regulation moderates the indirect effect of family incivility on counterproductive work behavior via state
the indirect effect is weaker for individuals with higher levels of emotional regulation.

research model that explains our hypotheses about the relationships among all variables involved in our

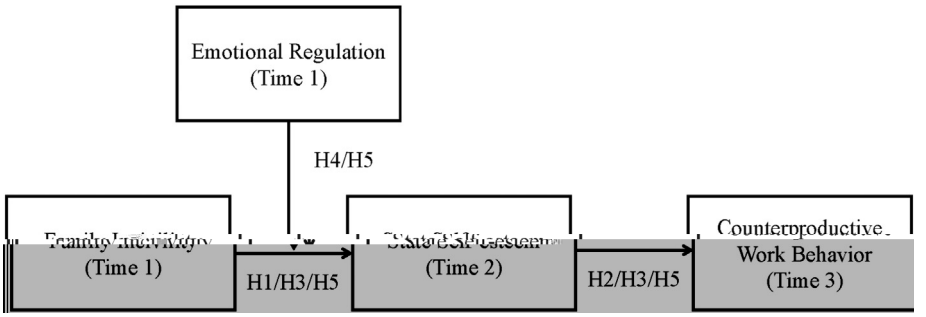


**Fig. 1.** Research model. *Note.* H = Hypothesis. H3 represents indirect effect. H4 represents moderation effects. H5 represents moderated mediation effect.

## 3. Method

### 3.1. Participants and procedure

This study was conducted in a major state-owned enterprise in China which has branches at several big cities across the country. We randomly invited 60% of the full-time employees ($N = 350$) in this enterprise as our potential participants. The voluntary participation and confidentiality was assured. We collected data via paper-and-pencil surveys at three times. At the first wave of data collection (Time 1), participants were asked to rate their levels of family incivility, emotional regulation, counterproductive work behavior (CWB), and their demographics information. At Time 2, one month after Time 1, participants rated their levels of state self-esteem. At Time 3, one month after Time 2, participants again rated their family incivility and counterproductive work behavior. Data collection was conducted at work time with the help of the human resource personnel of this company. Participants filled up the questionnaire anonymously. Each of them was assigned a subject ID number randomly at the very beginning of the survey, and they were asked to fill in the ID number each time when they participated in the survey so that we can match their questionnaires from three wave surveys.

Surveys were first delivered to 350 participants at work time, with 333 participants responded to the first survey (with a response rate of 95.0%). Among them, 313 participants completed the second survey (with a 94.0% response rate) and, of these 313 participants, 284 responded to the third survey (with a 90.7% response rate). Thus, the final sample consisted of 284 participants, with a final response rate of 81.1%. Among these participants, 64.8% were male; and 79.0% were married; the average age was 39.2 ($SD = 10.3$) years; the average years of education they received were 15.2 ($SD = 2.62$).

To investigate the potential impact of attrition, differences on study variables were tested between participants who completed all three waves' assessments and participants who did not. Results demonstrated that, compared with participants who completed all three waves of surveys, participants who dropped out were more likely to be male ($t = 2.37$, $p < .05$) and married ($t = 2.52$, $p < .05$), and reported lower emotional regulation ($t = 2.01$, $p < .05$). No significant differences emerged for any of the other variables.

### 3.2. Measures

#### 3.2.1. Family incivility

Family incivility was measured at Time 1 and Time 3, using a six-item scale developed by Lim and Tai (2014). Participants were asked to rate the extent to which their family members engage in behaviors on a 5-point scale (1 = *Not at all*, 5 = *Most of the times*). An item sample is "Put you down or was condescending to you". The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this scale in our sample at Time 1 was .86 and at Time 3 was .87.

#### 3.2.2. Counterproductive work behavior (CWB)

We used the 8-item scale developed by Dalal, Lam, Weiss, Welch, and Hulin (2009) to measure CWB at Time 1 and Time 3 (e.g., "Spent time on tasks unrelated to work") with a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the CWB measured at Time 1 and for that measured at Time 3 were .85 and .83, respectively.

#### 3.2.3. State self-esteem

Following Dehart and Pelham (2007), we measured state self-esteem at Time 2 using 10-item adapted from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). Participants were asked to rate their agreement on statements such as "During the past one month, I felt satisfied with myself" and "During the past one month, I think I was no good at all" (reversed coded) using a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this scale in our study was .89.

**Table 1**
Descriptive statistics, alpha coefficients, and correlations.

| | *M* | *SD* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Gender-T1 | – | – | – | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Age-T1 | 39.18 | 10.30 | −.18** | – | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Education-T1 | 15.20 | 2.62 | .24** | −.47** | – | | | | | | | |
| 4. Marriage-T1 | .23 | .42 | .04 | −.59** | .18** | – | | | | | | |
| 5. Family incivility-T1 | 1.22 | .48 | −.09 | .08 | −.10 | −.10 | (.86) | | | | | |
| 6. Family incivility-T3 | 1.18 | .41 | −.09 | −.03 | .10 | −.02 | .35** | (.87) | | | | |
| 7. Emotional regulation-T1 | 5.57 | 1.08 | −.13* | .14* | −.13* | −.02 | −.15* | −.03 | (.74) | | | |
| 8. State Self-esteem-T2 | 5.68 | .66 | −.02 | .01 | −.04 | .07 | −.12* | −.14* | .24** | (.89) | | |
| 9. CWB-T1 | 1.85 | .87 | .00 | −.07 | .05 | .05 | .29** | .20** | −.31** | −.28** | (.83) | |
| 10. CWB-T3 | 1.57 | .63 | −.03 | −.18** | .18** | .01 | .13* | .35** | −.27** | −.30** | .46** | (.85) |

*Note:* $N = 284$. Internal reliabilities (alpha coefficients) for the constructs are given in parentheses on the diagonal. For gender, 1 = male, 2 = female. CWB = counterproductive work behavior. T1–T3 = Time 1 to Time 3.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*3.2.4. Emotional regulation*

The 4-item scale developed by Wong and Law (2002) was adopted to assess emotional regulation at Time 1. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements such as "I have good control of my own emotions" on a 7-point scale (from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient in our sample was .74.

*3.2.5. Control variables*

We controlled for the possible effects of participants' gender, age, education, and marital status since previous research suggest that they may have significant influence on self-esteem and CWB (Fariselli, Ghini, & Freedman, 2008; Kling, Hyde, Showers, & Buswell, 1999; O'Malley & Bachman, 1983; Petrides & Furnham, 2000; Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997; Robins, Trzesniewski, Tracy, Gosling, & Potter, 2002). Moreover, since we are interested in the effect of family incivility on the subsequent change of CWB, we controlled for the effects of Time 1 CWB and Time 3 family incivility.

## 4. Results

Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alphas, and bivariate correlations for all study variables are presented in Table 1.

### 4.1. Test of measurement model

To examine the discrimination of the measured constructs, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis. Results showed that the four-factor (i.e., Time 1 family incivility, Time 1 emotional regulation, Time 2 state self-esteem, and Time 3 CWB) model fit the data well, $\chi^2(344) = 885.23$, $p < .01$, CFI [Comparative Fit Index] = .92, TLI [Tucker–Lewis Index] = .91, RMSEA [Root Mean Square Error of Approximation] = .08. All items in this model are significantly loaded on their corresponding factors. Compared with all six constrained models in which any two of the four factors were combined, the hypothesized measurement model showed a significantly better fit to the data ($784.38 \le \Delta\chi^2$ [$\Delta df = 3$] $\le 1522.89$, *ps* < .01). These results demonstrated the distinctiveness of our measures.

### 4.2. Tests of hypotheses

We tested our hypotheses using Mplus 7. Results presenting in Table 2 demonstrated that, after controlling for the effects of control variables, Time 1 family incivility was negatively related to Time 2 state self-esteem ($\beta = -.16$, $SE = .08$, $p < .05$), and Time 2 state self-esteem was negatively related to Time 3 CWB ($\beta = -.15$, $SE = .05$, $p < .01$), supporting Hypotheses 1 and 2. As suggested by Preacher and colleagues (Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007), we used Monte Carlo simulation approach to test our mediation hypothesis (i.e., Hypothesis 3). With 20,000 Monte Carlo replications, results indicated that the indirect effect of Time 1 family incivility on Time 3 CWB via Time 2 state self-esteem was .02, with a 95% confident interval of [.001, .058]. Therefore, state self-esteem mediated the relationship between family incivility and CWB, supporting Hypothesis 3.

Table 2 also shows the moderation effects of emotional regulation. We found that the interaction between Time 1 family incivility and Time 1 emotional regulation was significant in predicting state self-esteem ($\beta = .15$, $SE = .07$, $p < .05$). Fig. 2 shows the pattern of the interaction. Simple slope test demonstrated that family incivility was negatively related to state self-esteem when individuals' emotional regulation was low (simple slope = −.11, $p < .05$). In contrast, family incivility was not significantly

**Table 2**
Moderated regression analyses predicting state self-esteem with emotional intelligence as moderator.

| | M1 | | M2 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | State self-esteem-T2 | CWB-T3 | State self-esteem-T2 | CWB-T3 |
| Intercept | 5.68** (.04) | 2.43** (.27) | 4.70** (.45) | 2.32** (.28) |
| Gender-T1 | −.02 (.08) | −.08 (.06) | .00 (.08) | −.09 (.06) |
| Age-T1 | .00 (.01) | −.01* (.00) | .00 (.01) | −.01* (.00) |
| Education-T1 | −.01 (.02) | .03 (.01) | −.01 (.02) | .03 (.01) |
| Marriage-T1 | .17 (.12) | −.15 (.09) | .17 (.11) | −.14 (.09) |
| Family incivility-T1 | −.16* (.08) | −.12 (.07) | −.89* (.36) | −.13 (.07) |
| State self-esteem-T2 | | −.15** (.05) | | −.13** (.05) |
| Emotional regulation-T1 | | | −.05 (.09) | −.07 (.03) |
| CWB-T1 | | .27** (.04) | | .25** (.04) |
| Family incivility-T3 | | .41** (.08) | | .42** (.08) |
| Family incivility-T1 ×Emotional regulation-T1 | | | .15* (.07) | |
| $R^2$ | .03 | .32 | .09 | .34 |

*Note:* $N = 284$. Gender was coded "1" for men and "2" for women. Entries are estimations of the fixed effects. Estimations of the standard errors are in parentheses. CWB = counterproductive work behavior. T1–T3 = Time 1 to Time 3.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

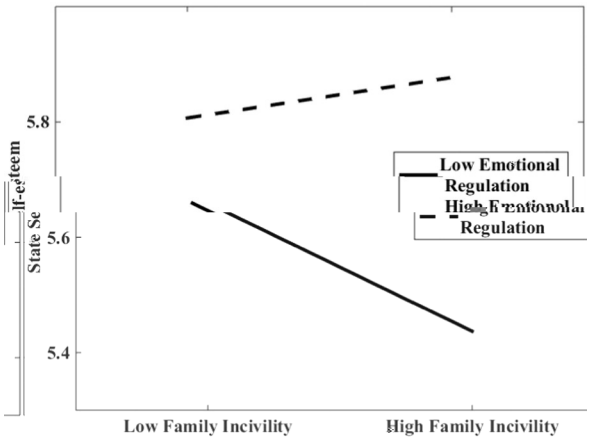


**Fig. 2.** Interaction effect of family incivility and emotional regulation on state self-esteem. High and low levels of family incivility and emotional regulation represent one standard deviation above and below the mean, respectively.

related to state self-esteem when individual's emotional regulation was high (simple slope = −.04, *ns*). In sum, results indicated that emotional regulation moderated the relationship between family incivility and state self-esteem, supporting Hypothesis 4.

We also examined the conditional indirect effects of family incivility on CWB through state self-esteem at varying levels of emotional regulation (1 *SD* above the mean and 1 *SD* below the mean) using Bauer, Preacher, and Gil's (2006) method. Results indicated that the conditional indirect effect for family incivility via state self-esteem on CWB was .10 with a 95% confidence interval (CI) of [−.002, .239] when the levels of emotional regulation were high versus .14 with a 95% CI of [.021, .302] when the levels of emotional regulation were low. The difference of the indirect effects between the two conditions was .04 with a 95% CI of [.001, .103]. Thus, Hypothesis 5 was supported.

## 5. Discussion

The results of our study provided consistent evidence supporting our arguments. Specifically, we demonstrated that family incivility was positively related to CWB through the mediator of state self-esteem. Moreover, the moderated mediation analyses showed that, emotional regulation mitigated the relationship between family incivility and state self-esteem, as well as the indirect relationship of family incivility with CWB via state self-esteem. Going beyond the previous literature that demonstrates a negative link between family incivility and job performance, we drew on the W–HR model and provided some of the first evidence indicating family incivility relates to deviant behaviors like CWB in the work context. Moreover, the mediation (i.e., state self-esteem) and moderation (i.e., emotional regulation) mechanism found in the current research offer new insights to understand the detrimental effects of family incivility in the work context.

### *5.1. Theoretical contributions*

Our study extends prior works on family incivility and the W–HR model (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Numerous research devoted attention to workplace incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Reio & Ghosh, 2009), while few studies focused on incivility in the family domain (Lim & Tai, 2014). What's more, to our knowledge, no study has been conducted on the relationship between emotional contextual demands in home domain and deviant behaviors like CWB. Our study contributes to literature on family incivility and the W–HR model by providing the first insight that family incivility is positively linked to CWB. By testing the link of incivilities in family and CWBs at workplace, our research also enriches the potential antecedents of CWB. This suggests that CWB might not only stem from individuals' attitudes toward their job or work context, but also be connected to emotional demands in the family context.

Moreover, the current study demonstrated that the depletion of personal resources (i.e., reduced self-esteem) mediated the relationship between family incivility and CWB, which offers a better understanding of the mechanism of the connections between family incivility and deviant work behaviors. The mediation finding also contributes to the W–HR model by providing some of the first empirical support for the proposition of the model that contextual demands in home side deplete one's personal resource, and then induce negative work outcomes (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). It suggests that individuals who suffer from mild deviant behavior in home domain (e.g., family incivility) are more likely to experience depletion of personal resources (e.g., state self-esteem), and thus they are more likely to demonstrate negative behaviors in workplace (e.g., CWB).

Our findings on the moderating effects of emotional regulation also contribute to the literatures on both family incivility and the W–HR model. We found that emotional regulation mitigated the effect of family incivility on state self-esteem and the indirect effect of family incivility on CWB via state self-esteem. These findings are important in that they provide some of the first insights

into how emotional regulation, as a type of key resources, may help individuals to better deal with home demands and thus make their self-evaluation (i.e., state self-esteem) less vulnerable to family incivility. In addition, the moderation findings contribute to the W–HR model by not only providing some of the first empirical supports to the proposition of the W–HR model, which states that key resources could attenuate the negative relationship between contextual demands and personal resources, but also extending the model by including a neglected factor, namely emotional regulation, as a key resource.

### 5.2. Practical implications

Several implications for managerial practice are revealed in our study. First, companies could provide Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to help employees to better cope with their family demands (Kirk & Brown, 2003). What's more, organizations can provide materials helping employees understand how family incivility breaks ties between family members and how it depletes personal resources that will spill over to workplace, leading to CWB and lower job performance (Lim & Tai, 2014). Knowledge about this effects as well as how to cope with it will make employees more able to deal with incivility in family and reduce the occurrence of CWB.

Second, emotional intelligence training would help employees manage their emotions and maintain their state self-esteem (Clarke, 2006; Salovey & Mayer, 1990) and improve emotional intelligence including emotional regulation (Nelis, Quoidbach, Mikolajczak, & Hansenne, 2009). One of the most dominant values of emotional intelligence training is to help people reduce their stress (Slaski & Cartwright, 2002). Emotional intelligence training improves one's health, well-being, and performance, and alleviates aggression and depression (Cherniss & Adler, 2000; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013; Slaski & Cartwright, 2003), which have considerable long-term benefits to employees. Emotional intelligence training will help employees understand, identify, express, and manage emotions (Nelis et al., 2009). Drawing from the results in our study, a higher level of emotional regulation, which is a dimension of emotional intelligence (Wong & Law, 2002), will weaken the linkage between family incivility and state self-esteem and further the CWB. With the benefits demonstrated above, we suggest employers to consider providing emotional intelligence training to employees.

Finally, as low in state self-esteem is a mediation mechanism of the relationship between family incivility and CWB, employers could encourage employees to find help when they sense low self-esteem happened on themselves, especially in Employee Assistance Program. Employers could also provide knowledge that invoke employees to replace their inner critic with positive voice. Moreover, practicing self-compassion may be another option to improve one's self-esteem (Germer, 2009; McKay & Fanning, 2000; Neff, 2011).

### 5.3. Limitations and future research

Our study is not without limitations. First, our findings are based on data collected from one source, which might be subjected to common method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Although it is reasonable to collect data of family incivility, emotional regulation, and state self-esteem using self-report because they are individuals' perceptions or internal states, it would be more appropriate and objective to measure CWB using others' evaluation. This concern is somewhat alleviated by the fact that the measures of the focal constructs were separated in time, which is effective for minimizing CMV (Podsakoff et al., 2003), and that the moderation effect observed in the current study is unlikely to be explained by CMV (Evans, 1985). Furthermore, we controlled for the effects of CWB at Time 1 and family incivility at Time 3 when testing our hypotheses, which provides stronger causal inference of the hypothesized relationships. Nevertheless, our study is cross-sectional in nature and we call for future research to use longitudinal design to more rigorously test the causal relationships between our focal variables.

Second, some might argue that self-esteem is a trait that generally cannot be affected by situational factors (Sommer & Baumeister, 2002; Tice, 1991). However, previous studies showed that it could be influenced by situational factors (Grimm-Thomas & Perry-Jenkins, 1994; Heatherton & Polivy, 1991; Stinson et al., 2008). Moreover, rather than measured as a general self-evaluation, we asked participants to report their state self-esteem accordiro -354(s-366(e2vr(6(-)]TJ0-w6A17(WB)-(2o;un)-34TJ0)25

the expansion and shrinkage of family incivility is highly needed. Also, other than CWB, more constructs in workplace that are influenced by family incivility need to be explored.

## 6. Conclusion

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