

Respect in the Workplace:  
An Evaluation of a Short Online Intervention Program

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## **Executive Summary**

The goal of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of a short online intervention focused on enhancing respect in the workplace and reducing workplace abuse. One hundred and sixty-five employees of a long-term care facility participated in the evaluation; completing three surveys (pre-test, post-test, delayed post-test) in a wait list control group design.

Multilevel analyses showed that participation in the intervention was not associated with decreases in experienced incivility or stress – nor did participants report increased ability to recognize or deal with uncivil acts. However participation in the intervention was associated with increased reports of workplace civility (e.g., “People in my work group treat each other with respect”). Moreover, the increased civility, in turn, predicted increased job satisfaction among participants.

Characteristics of the implementation (e.g., voluntary vs, mandatory participation) potentially limited the effectiveness of the program and may have resulted in the current study underestimating the potential effects of the intervention.

Overall, results of the study show some positive outcomes of a short online intervention. Although further research is warranted, the program does seem to offer some benefits to organization in increasing workplace civility and job satisfaction.

## Respect in the Workplace:

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Organizations have become increasingly concerned with abusive behaviour in the workplace in recent years. One study reported that 71% of public service employees experienced incivility over the previous five years (Cortina, Magley, & Williams, 2001). In Nova Scotia, it is estimated that approximately 90% of employees have experienced at least a mild form of aggression in their workplace (Francis, Kelloway, Gatién, & Wentzell, 2008). These negative workplace behaviors are a concern not only because they affect employee productivity but also because they affect employee health and the health of the overall organization (Dehue, Bolman, Vullink & Pouwelse, 2012; Hansen, Hogh, & Persson, 2011; Lim & Lee, 2011; Porath & Pearson, 2010; Sakurai & Jex, 2012; Tuckey, Dollard, Saebel, & Berry, 2010). Studies show that individuals who are frequently bullied at work have higher levels of depression, stress symptoms, and blood pressure, along with decreased energy, and a decreased sense of wellbeing compared to those who are not bullied (Dehue et al., 2012; Hansen, Hogh, & Persson, 2011; Tuckey et al., 2010).

Despite the wealth of research that clearly demonstrates the negative consequences of incivility, bullying, harassment, and discrimination in the workplace, there is a lack of research on effective strategies to deal with these issues (Leiter, Laschinger, Day & Oore, 2011). For the limited workplace abuse intervention strategies that do exist, there are even fewer studies which evaluate their effectiveness (Leiter et al., 2011). The purpose of this study was to fill this gap in the literature by evaluating RespectEd's 'Respect in the Workplace' online intervention strategy targeted at reducing incivility, bullying, harassment and discrimination in the workplace. This research evaluated whether this short intervention is a viable way to increase civility in workplaces and expand the literature on empirical evaluation of intervention programs.

### **Defining Workplace Abuse**

There are a multitude of definitions and constructs related to workplace abuse. Aggression, bullying and incivility are three common related constructs that are predominant in the literature. Workplace aggression is a behavior directed by one or more people in a workplace towards the goal of harming one or more others in that workplace in ways that the intended targets are motivated to avoid, therefore making it an attempted injurious or destructive behavior (Baron & Neuman, 1996; Barclay & Aquino, 2011). There is no consensus on the definition of bullying, however, it is agreed to be a form of workplace abusiveness that can cause harm (Sperry, 2009). One definition of bullying is "the intentional infliction of a hostile environment upon an employee by a coworker or coworkers, typically through a combination of verbal and non-verbal behaviors" (Yamada, p. 480). Bullying is therefore considered an aggressive behavior as there is intent of harm. Workplace incivility, another related construct, is defined by Anderson and Pearson (1999) as "acting rudely or discourteously, without regard for others, in violation of norms for respect in social interactions" (p. 455). Incivility involves low intensity deviant acts whereby there is ambiguous intent of harm (Anderson & Pearson, 1999). Unlike bullying, incivility only sometimes falls under the definition of aggression. That is, incivility can also fall outside of the aggression construct whereby there is no intent of harm (Anderson

& Pearson, 1999). This study will use the construct “workplace abuse” to encompass incivility, bullying, aggression, discrimination and harassment. Thus, while considering the whole body of research for all related constructs, the term workplace abuse will be used throughout for parsimony.

### **Consequences of Workplace Abuse**

Workplace abuse can have a direct negative impact on employees’ mental and physical health. Specifically, research has connected workplace abuse to greater levels of emotional exhaustion (Grandey, Kern, & Frone, 2007) and psychological distress, reduced emotional and somatic well-being (LeBlanc & Kelloway, 2002), lower levels of psychological well-being, as well as reports of reduced satisfaction with health (Cortina et al., 2001; Martin & Hine, 2005; Tepper, 2000). Further, Hansen, Hogh, and Persson (2011) found that workplace abuse is not only associated with poorer self-reported health, but also manifests in a negative physiological response, as shown by an undesired change in cortisol levels (Hansen, Hogh, and Persson, 2011).

Workplace abuse may also indirectly result in negative mental health consequences for employees. For example, Oore et al. (2010) found that incivility can worsen the impact of strain on individuals in the workplace. That is, in a sample of hospital workers, those with high workload and low job control combined with incivility had a stronger connection to lowered mental health compared to those who did not experience the combined effect with incivility. Thus, incivility not only has direct negative consequences on mental health but can also act to exacerbate the negative effects of other workplace variables as well (Oore et al., 2010). Unfortunately, the consequences of workplace abuse also extend beyond the workplace, with individuals who experience workplace abuse reporting lower life satisfaction overall. Further, workplace abuse not only affects those within an organization, but can spillover on employees’ families. That is, workplace abuse can cause relationship issues and problems with work and family conflict (Ferguson, 2012; Tepper, 2000).

Workplace abuse not only negatively impacts the health of employees and their families, but it also has unfortunate consequences for organizations. These consequences can be very costly to an organization due to decreased employee productivity (Porath & Pearson, 2010; Sakurai & Jex, 2012), higher reports of counter productive work behaviors (CWBs) (Sakurai & Jex, 2012), lower normative and affective commitment (LeBlanc & Kelloway, 2000; Reio, 2011; Tepper, 2000; Porath & Pearson, 2010), reduced job or employee satisfaction (Lim & Lee, 2011; Nunez-Smith et al., 2009; Porath & Pearson, 2010; Reio, 2011; Tepper, 2000), and associated higher turnover rates (LeBlanc & Kelloway, 2002; Nunez-Smith et al., 2009; Porath & Pearson, 2010). An interesting study was conducted by Porath and Pearson (2010) that tested the impact of incivility on performance, creativity and helping behavior. They found that those in the uncivilly treated group experienced hindered concentration; they were less able to come up with creative ideas, and were less likely than the civilly treated control group to offer help to others.

Even if employees do not directly experience workplace abuse, even being in an environment where workplace abuse occurs can have detrimental individual and organizational consequences (Porath & Pearson, 2010). That is, working in an uncivil environment has been associated with decreased reports of energy, motivation, and commitment to the organization. Employees were also less altruistic, courteous, and less likely to act in the best interests of the company. Team members also reported reduced trust, feeling of appreciation or value, were less likely to seek out or accept any form of

feedback and were more likely to avoid raising concerns or asking for help (Porath & Pearson, 2010, p. 66).

Less severe forms of workplace abuse can sometimes lead to more damaging occurrences of abuse. That is, according to Andersson & Pearson (1999) incivility, a lower form of abuse, can lead to a spiral that has potential to result in more coercive action. The starting point of incivility is where norms for respect are violated. If neither party departs from the uncivil interaction of behaviors, it has the potential to spiral to a continual exchange of uncivil behavior and feelings of negative affect, loss of face, desire for revenge, anger, etc. At multiple points, either party is inherently faced with the option to depart from the spiral of negative behaviors, however, once past the “tipping point” is reached, the “exchange of incivilities escalates into an exchange of coercive actions” (p. 462). Other factors involved affect the path of the spiral and whether it cycles into coercive action or ceases to spiral on. This raises the need for interventions to inhibit this path and prevent lesser forms of abuse from escalating into more detrimental behaviors.

Employees who experience workplace abuse rarely file a formal complaint with the organization (Cortina & Magley, 2009; Sidle, 2009). Therefore, although an organization may not receive any formal notice from employees, this does not mean that the organization is free from abuse. Cortina and Magley (2009) found that incivility must persist for weeks to months and employees must appraise the incivility as fairly aversive before they seek support or report to management (p. 285). As reporting of workplace abuse is so low, it is important that organizations do not discount low reports of abuse and assume that their organization is free of concerns. Rather, organizations should examine the situation in more detail and ensure that procedures or training is in place in order to prevent any behaviors that would otherwise go undetected. As discussed, failing to address underlying issues can result in negative consequences for organizations and their employees.

### **Resolving Workplace Abuse**

Training or education about workplace abuse may help reduce or prevent its occurrence and the associated negative effects (Porath & Pearson, 2010). Schat and Kelloway (2003) found that instrumental and informational support moderated the select effects of workplace violence. This demonstrates the practical relevance of developing secondary intervention strategies to increase support and information about workplace in order to help buffer the negative consequences of workplace violence (Schat & Kelloway, 2003). Estes and Wang (2008) also argue it is beneficial to train all members of the organization about expectations for civility, effective interpersonal skills, and how to appropriately manage any conflict that does occur; all which should be promoted consistently among organizational leaders, members, stakeholders, and customers. Overall, training employees and managers can help increase their awareness about how to act respectful, and recognize and respond to signals that workplace abuse may be occurring in their organization (Porath & Pearson, 2010).

While these are suggested factors and actions that may reduce the impacts of workplace abuse or lower its occurrence, they are not defined intervention programs that can be generally implemented in

organizations. One of the few intervention programs that does exist for addressing workplace abuse is Osatuke, Moore, Ward, Dyrenforth and Belton's (2009) civility, respect and engagement (CREW) process. According to Leiter, Day, Oore, & Laschinger (2012) the objectives of CREW are that "participants become more sensitive to the impact of their social behavior on others," "participants develop effective strategies for responding to incivility and disrespect at work" and that "participants develop a deeper repertoire of supportive interactions with colleagues" (p.74).

Leiter et al. (2011) evaluated the impact of CREW and found that this 6-month civility intervention did help to reduce incivility in the workplace. This intervention also positively impacted health care workers' reports of burnout, job attitudes, management trust, and absences. In a later study, Leiter et al. (2012) found that positive changes from this civility intervention could be sustained over a one year period. Specifically, when measured one year after intervention, improvements in civility, incivility, workplace distress, and job attitudes were sustained. This is one of the few studies that have evaluated the effectiveness of an incivility intervention. The findings demonstrate that incivility interventions have the potential to create long lasting results.

According to Leiter (2013), "a major shortcoming in the thinking about intervention is the small amount of research that has objectively evaluated interventions, comparing their impact to what happens in control groups" (p. 53). Leiter et al. (2011) argue that effective interventions should not only include a "means of interrupting negative exchanges" but should also actively promote positive exchanges (p. 1270). It is suggested that improving the impact of interventions is most likely to occur through "testing procedures, noting their strengths and weaknesses, and adjusting the processes in subsequent tests. The field calls out for research projects that take action and closely monitor how events unfold" (Leiter, 2013, p. 46). Although CREW is one of the only workplace abuse intervention strategies that has been evaluated and demonstrated to be effective, it is a 6 month intervention and therefore requires an extensive amount of employee time and commitment. The current study determined if similar positive results can be elicited from Respect in the Workplace, a short online training intervention. Given that organizations prefer shorter more concise training, these findings would be of particular interest to employers.

### **Respect in the Workplace Program**

Respect in the Workplace is a program that was developed in partnership with Canadian Red Cross and the RespectED organization, a division of the Red Cross. RespectED's internationally acclaimed curriculum was used to develop this 90 minute interactive program that is available in both French and English. The Respect Group was responsible in developing the program, with co-founders being Sheldon Kennedy and Wayne McNeil. While their Respect programs were initially developed for sports and schools, they have most recently expanded scope and applicability of respect training for the workplace. The training consists of instructional slides, animated scenarios, expert clips and interactive questions and answers. A sample of some of the program sections include Positive Power in the Workplace, Managing Emotions in the Workplace, Discrimination, Workplace Harassment, Emotional Bullying, Responding, and Reporting and Documentation. There are also links that lead participants to further information as well as handouts available throughout the training for reference material. Participants are able to complete the training at a time that is convenient for them and do not have to complete the whole training in one sitting. The developers of the program state that their mission is to "empower people to recognize and prevent abuse, bullying and harassment through interactive, online

certification” and their vision is to “eliminate abuse, bullying and harassment by inspiring a global culture of respect.”

### **Overview of the Present Study**

The promoters of Respect in the Workplace argue that the program can increase respect and result in better organizational health, higher morale, less illness and absenteeism, higher attraction and retention of employees, a stronger corporate culture and reputation, as well as increased productivity and profitability. Unlike interventions that require extensive resources, this newly developed respectful workplace program is both time and cost effective. These features make it inherently attractive to organizations, increasing the likelihood that managers and employees will buy into the program. However, the Respect in the Workplace Program has yet to be evaluated or assessed according to its intended outcomes. The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of this intervention. This research has an unique impact on the field of research by demonstrating how a short training intervention can be effective in the prevention and reduction of workplace discrimination, harassment and bullying in the workplace.

### **Hypotheses**

Respect in the Workplace introduces the issues of discrimination, bullying, and harassment and informs employees what the terms mean, what is and isn't appropriate behavior, and how to effectively act if these behaviors occur. In this study, it was hypothesized that participation in the Respect in the Workplace training would result in...

- H1: ...an increased recognition of incivility from T1 to T2 and sustained recognition at T3 in comparison to the control group.
- H2: ...less experienced incivility in the workplace from T1 to T2 and maintained reduction of incivility at T3 in comparison to the control group.
- H3: ... less perceived stress by employees from T1 to T2 and maintained reduction of stress at T3 in comparison to the control group.
- H4: ... enhanced self-efficacy for employees dealing with incivility from T1 to T2 and maintained enhancement of self-efficacy at T3 in comparison to the control group.
- H5: ... increased report of civility at work from T1 to T2 and constant report at T3 in comparison to the control group.
- H6: ...increased job satisfaction from T1 to T2 and maintained at T3 in comparison to the control group.

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

All participants were employed on one of several selected units in a long-term care facility. In total, there were 413 employees who were invited to participate in this project; 243 Nursing Services employees, 72 Dietary employees, 71 Environmental employees, and 27 Leadership Team employees. Of these, 165 participated in Survey 1 making for a 40% response rate. One hundred and twenty-eight

employees participated in Survey 2 and 117 participated in Survey 3; overall, 102 participated in all three surveys. The majority of the sample (88%; n= 146) were female with only 12% male (n=19). In total, 24% (n =40) of employees were 30 years or younger, 16% (n=27) were between 31-40, 27% (n=46) were between 41-50, 26% (n=44) were between 51 - 60 years old and 5% (n=8) were over 60 years old. The great majority of employees were White (Caucasian) (76%, n=127), with the next largest groups being Indian (8%, n=13), African-Canadian (7%, n=11), and Filipino (4%, n=6). The majority indicated their highest level of education as a College certificate or diploma (58%, n=98); 10% (n=17) indicated they had a Bachelor's degree, 10% (n=16) a trades certificate/diploma, 16% High School or below (n=26), and 5% (n=8) a Post-Graduate degree.

When asked about their position in the organization, 15% indicated they were in a supervisory role (n = 25). The majority of participants (79%, n=133) were from Nursing Services, with 41% (n =69) indicating their title as a Continuing Care Assistant (CCA)/ Personal Care Worker (PCW), 13% (n= 21) a Licensed Practical Nurse, 6% (n=10) a Registered Nurse and 4% (n=6) a Nursing Manager. Only a small minority of Environmental (6%, n=10) and Dietary and Nutrition services (9%, n=15) staff participated in this study. The remaining 5% (n=8) were In Care Leadership team employees.

Employees were assigned to experimental or wait-list control groups based on the unit on which they worked. We used a form of matched block assignment in which each work unit/floor assigned to the experimental group was matched by a similar unit/floor that was assigned to the wait-list control group. Employees were split into the two conditions in this way in order to maximize the disconnection between the two groups to minimize spillover of the intervention to the control group. Those who work on different units are separated by floors and generally work only within their unit, decreasing the chances that those who completed the training would be mixed with those who were in the wait list control group. There were 92 participants in the experimental group who all participated in the training and 73 in the wait-list control group who were offered the training after all three surveys were distributed.

## **Procedure**

As an incentive to participating in the study, the organizations were offered the Respect in the Workplace training at a reduced rate. They were informed that the Respect in the Workplace training is a potential solution to the issue or potential issue of workplace abuse in their organization.

This study received ethical approval from both Saint Mary's Research Ethics Board as well as the organization's research committee before commencing. Posters were placed around employee areas to notify them of the upcoming study and to generate interest. Supervisors of chosen work units were informed about the study through information handouts and in a scheduled information meeting. Questionnaires were created using Qualtrics and were also developed in a paper format. The first page of the questionnaire contained an informed consent letter that asked participants to agree to the conditions of the study and in order to continue with the questionnaire. This letter reminded participants that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw without penalty. The final page of the questionnaire contained a feedback form that thanked participants for their participation and informed them that organizational results will be disseminated once the intervention study was complete. As an incentive to participate, every survey that employees completed entered them into a chance to win 1 of 5 \$100 Visa Gift cards, with 2 bonus chances for completing all three surveys



All participants completed a pre-test (T1) to provide baseline measures on all study variables. Pre-test surveys were offered in both online and paper formats and took approximately 15 minutes to complete. T1 Surveys were distributed and collected for three weeks in January 2014 to ensure the different rotations of employees had an opportunity to participate and that they had the online and paper survey resources needed. The primary researcher and organizational helpers distributed surveys to the employees' units for ease of completion and clarity. For those units in the experimental group, employees were invited to participate in the online training immediately after they completed Survey 1. The training and online surveys were completed on netbook computers that were provided by the researchers.

Weeks four and five involved no training or surveys. During weeks six and seven, Survey 2 (T2) was distributed via email to those who provided an email address and directly to the units for those who preferred a paper format. Weeks eight and nine involved no training or surveys. Weeks ten and eleven were allocated for Survey 3 (T3), during which surveys were again offered by email or in paper format. The researcher again was present at the organization during this time to assist with data collection. Online surveys were not offered on the netbooks for T2 and T3 as there were barriers to completion due to the difficulties encountered with use of computers and the paper surveys being the preferred option.

## Measures

Five previously validated scales described below, one scale developed for this study, and participant demographic questions were used to assess participants at all three time points. In addition to these measures, experimental group participants were also asked questions immediately before and after the online training. These questions were developed and are used by the training developers to assess participants' experience with workplace abuse and their reaction after the training. See results section for participant's responses.

**Demographics.** Standard demographic questions were used to differentiate participants based on their age, ethnicity, gender, hours of work, education, seniority, whether they are in a supervisory role, their department, work location, and work unit, as well as their job title and primary shift of work.

**Civility.** Workplace civility was measured using the Veterans' Health Administration Civility Scale (Meterko, Osatuke, Mohr, Warren, & Dyrenforth, 2007;2008) in order to assess hypothesis 5. The responses for this 8-item scale were rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). Sample items include "People treat each other with respect in my work group," and "Differences among individuals are respected and valued in my work group."

**Workplace Incivility.** Workplace incivility was measured using using Cortina et al.'s (2001) 7-item Workplace Incivility Scale. The responses were rated on 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 7 (Extremely often, more than 15 times). The introductory statement "During the past 2 months while employed by Organization X, were you ever in a situation where any of your supervisor or coworkers..." was followed by these sample question stems such as "Addressed you in unprofessional terms, either publically or privately?" and "Doubted your judgment on a matter over which you have responsibility?" Two additional items were taken from Cortina et al. (2011) which include question stems "Yelled, shouted or swore at you" and "Accused you of incompetence." Cortina et al. (2001)

reported a cronbach's alpha of .89, and many studies have reported a strong internal consistency of this scale as well.

**Stress.** Stress was measured using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). This 14-item scale assessed the degree to which situations in one's life are appraised as stressful. Questions were rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 7 (Extremely often, more than 15 times). Seven items were reverse coded resulting in high scores on this scale indicating higher levels of reported stress. Example items following the preamble "In the past 2 months, how often have you..." include, "felt nervous and stressed?" and "found that you could not cope with all of the things that you had to do?"

**Self-Efficacy.** Employee's self-efficacy about dealing with incivility was assessed using an altered version of the General Self-Efficacy Scale (Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2001). Four of the original items were retained and four were revised to reflect the self-efficacy in relation to incivility. The scale response options varied between 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). Internal consistency for the original, non-altered scale has previously shown alpha = .86 and .90 (Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2001). Sample items include: "Compared to other people, I can handle incivility very well" and "I believe I can succeed at most any endeavor to which I set my mind."

**Job Satisfaction.** To assess employee satisfaction with their job, one item was asked; "All things considered, how satisfied are you with your job?" (Warr, Cook, & Wall, 1979). As shown in a meta-analysis conducted by Wanous, Reichers, & Hudy (1997), single item measures of job satisfaction have been demonstrated to be robust, appropriately able capture the construct, and are convenient when there is limited room on a questionnaire. Response options ranged from 1 (Not at all satisfied) to 6 (Satisfied).

**Recognition of Incivility.** Recognition of workplace abuse was assessed by the item "Are you able to recognize what is considered uncivil / disrespectful behavior in your workplace?" which was created for this study. Response options range from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always).

### Method of Data Analysis

As employees are nested within units, we used multilevel repeated measures regressions to analyze the study data. Individual observations (i.e., at T1, T2, and T3) were specified as a repeated measure nested within persons that, in turn, were nested within unit. Both individuals and units were treated as random factors. we used robust errors maximum likelihood estimation to derive study parameters.

Group (trained vs. control) was entered as a fixed factor in all analyses. Following Peugh (2010), we entered a time parameter (i.e., a variable coded 0, 1, and 2 to represent the three time periods) as a fixed factor and computed the interaction of the time parameter with group. This interaction term represents the hypothesis that the groups changed at a different rate and conforms to the expectation that the intervention group would change as a result of the intervention but that there would be no change in the control group.

We first ran all analyses using a simple linear time parameter (0, 1, 2) – none of the analyses were significant although some approached significance. Based on the hypothesized pattern of change expected, we next repeated all analyses using a quadratic time parameter (0, 1, 4) and the results

reported use that term. Including both a linear and a quadratic parameter in the same model resulted in a failure to converge (note that these two parameters correlate .96) therefore models were estimated using only the quadratic change term.

### Results

To test the hypotheses, we ran a series of MIXED models in SPSS, controlling for participants' work unit. Results of these analyses are presented in Table 1.

*Table 1. Summary of Analyses (N = 155)*

<i>Recognition of Abuse</i>				
Parameter	B	SE B	t	p
Condition	-.03	.13	.23	.816
Time Sq.	.04	.15	2.70	.007
Condition X Time Sq.	-.01	.02	-.58	.565
<i>Incivility</i>				
Parameter	B	SE B	t	p
Condition	-.10	.14	-.73	.466
Time Sq	-.01	.01	-.94	.350
Condition X Time Sq	.01	.02	.77	.443
<i>Stress</i>				
Parameter	B	SE B	t	p
Condition	.09	.12	.72	.473
Time Sq.	-.02	.01	-1.44	.152
Condition X Time Sq.	.01	.02	.44	.662
<i>Self - Efficacy</i>				
Parameter	B	SE B	t	p
Conditio	-.05	.11	-.42	.675
Time Sq	-.01	.01	-.56	.576
Condition X Time Sq.	.01	.01	.81	.417
<i>Civility</i>				
Parameter	B	SE B	t	p

Condition	-.27	.16	-1.73	.085
Time Sq	-.02	.16	-1.53	.126
Condition X Time Sq.	.04	.02	2.02	.044

Hypothesis one stated that those in the training group would have an increased ability to recognize workplace abuse. However, this hypothesis was not supported. Similarly, hypothesis two was also not supported, showing the training did not significantly reduce reports of incivility in comparison to the wait-list control group. Hypotheses three and four also did not reach significance showing no statistical difference between conditions on levels of reported stress, nor for self-efficacy.

Levels of civility for the control condition were higher than those in the experimental condition but did not change significantly through the evaluation period. Reported civility among the participants in the experimental group initially stayed the same (from T1 to T2) but then increased at T3.

To test hypothesis six, we then repeated these analyses controlling for civility to measure the effect of training on job satisfaction (see Table 2). There was a significant positive effect of civility showing that participants who reported more civility were more satisfied with their jobs. There was also a significant three-way interaction between civility X time X condition. This shows that the relationship between the change in civility and the change in job satisfaction was different between treatment and control condition (i.e. time squared X civil). To see how the relationship between civility and job satisfaction changes over time for each group, we ran subsetted correlations. As shown in Table 3, the relationship strength increased between civility and job satisfaction for the experimental group, but not for the wait-list control group.

*Table 2.*

*Summary of Analysis Predicting Job Satisfaction, Controlling for Civility (N = 155)*

Parameter	B	SE B	t	p
Condition	.19	.26	.72	.470
Time Sq.	.00	.03	.00	.998
Condition X Time Sq.	-.02	.04	-.46	.648
Z-Civil	.48	.19	2.45	.015
Condition X Z-Civil	-.39	.25	-1.59	.144
Time Sq. X Z-Civil	-.04	.03	-1.37	.171

Condition X  
 Time Sq.X Z-Civil .11 .04 2.69 .008

*Table 3.*

*Correlations between Civility (standardized) and Job Satisfaction over time.*

Group	T1 (N)	T2 (N)	T3 (N)
Experimental	.20 (87)	.35** (75)	.45** (73)
Wait-List Control	.31** (54)	.49** (69)	.05 (49)

$p < .05$ ,  $p < .01$

### **Reaction Criteria**

The Respect in the Workplace training program had two built in surveys for participants; one at the beginning of the training, and another after all the training modules are complete. This is presented only for additional information and is not part of this study's main analyses. Of the 127 Northwood employees who participated in the training either as part of the experimental or wait list control group, 85% (n=108) said that discrimination, harassment or bullying has occurred in their workplace. While 65% (n = 83) said they personally witnessed it occur, 43% (n=54) said they heard about it but didn't witness it themselves. Further, 44% (n=56) said it happened to them yet only 6% (n=19) said they engaged in the behaviors themselves. A large majority (91%, n=115) of the employees believed that these behaviors have a negative effect on the person targeted as well as the work environment (95%, n=121).

Participants completed the post-survey after they completed all of the training modules. Of those that completed the training, 99% (n=115) indicated that they found the training program easy to use and 91% (n=106) reported it was convenient to complete.

Similar to the pre-survey, 91% (n=106) indicated that discrimination, harassment or bullying occurred at Northwood, with 72% (n=84) indicating they personally witnessed it occur and 43% (n=50) hearing about it but not witnessing it personally. Further, 52% (n=60) indicated it happened to them but only 17% (n=20) said they engaged in the behaviors themselves. The great majority (92%, n=107) believed the behaviors have both a negative effect on the person targeted as well as the work environment (91%, n=106). After taking the training, the majority indicated they feel better equipped to identify and respond properly to discrimination (93%, n=108; 93%, n=108), harassment (92%, n=107; 95%, n=110), and bullying (91%, n=106; 94%, n=109) on the job. Overall, 97% (n=112) of participants rated the program as either very valuable (64%, n=74) or valuable (33%, n=38).

## Discussion

In this study, we examined the effects of a short, on-line respect in the workplace training intervention. Results offered some support for the intervention suggesting that participants who had been trained (and worked in units where others had been trained) reported experiencing increased civility in the workplace. In other words, there was a stronger association between the training group and civility over time than there was for the wait-list control group. The wait-list control group reported higher levels of civility initially than did the intervention group. This may be attributed to the fact that the intervention group units were chosen by Northwood partially due to the fact that they were the units that were more likely in need of the training. The delayed increase until after T2 may be explained by the fact that civility is a measure of perceived organization level civility, which may take some time to take effect. Further, results provided support for the suggestion that employees experienced increased job satisfaction as a result of this change in experienced civility. That is, the relationship between satisfaction and civility grew in strength for the experimental group, but did not change for the wait-list control group. Use of a wait-list control design in a naturalistic setting adds considerable strength to these findings.

The results of this study may also be attributed to an increase in awareness from the intervention. That is, employees may have become more cognizant of the organization's commitment to respect, just from having a respect in the workplace training program and associated surveys. Thus, the change in civility may just be due to the fact that the organization did something to focus on respect in the workplace, thus showing the organization's lack of tolerance for disrespect and its commitment to a respectful environment. Or likewise, employees may be more aware of what it means to be respectful, thus reporting more respect overall in the organization. This may be one reason why no effect was found for a change in incivility, a more behavioral or frequency based measure of workplace abuse. Another countering explanation is the Hawthorne effect, meaning that the results of this study may simply be because a change occurred in the workplace, namely, the training and the presence of the researchers during the survey periods (McCarney et al., 2007). Despite this countering possibility, this research does find that training significantly predicts increased civility, and this change is in some way attributed to only the intervention group as the control group did not experience this same increase, even though they were also aware of the organizations efforts to change the culture of respect in the workplace.

According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (U.S. Department of Labor, 2002), the nursing home sector is the second most hazardous sector as reported by employees. With such a difficult environment to work in, turnover rates are also relatively higher with those who work in this caring occupation. Finding ways to increase job satisfaction and respect is especially beneficial for long term care workers. Given that health care workers provide care in a environment that is undeniably demanding and stressful, as found by Oore et al. (2010), focusing on civility at work may a proactive way for health care providers to impact their well-being. Our results suggest that the RespectEd intervention has this effect in long-term care employees.

With the recent launch of the voluntary National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace, employers are being increasingly challenged to become more focused on employees' health and well-being. Civility and Respect is one of the 13 psychosocial factors, and is essential to focus for

an overall healthy workplace (Mental Health Commission of Canada, n.d.). While few, there are some Canadian jurisdictions that are starting to enforce policies and resources related to workplace bullying and harassment. With the increased attention that workplace bullying and abuse has had over the recent years, there is little argument that these negative behaviors are harmful to individuals and organizations as a whole. With such increased recognition and acknowledgement of the problem, the next step is to find a solution.

Online education and training is becoming increasingly more popular as a convenient mechanism for learning. This is especially important in health care where operations cannot be shut down in order to allow for staff training. In the current context, the online training was one of the major benefits of the training as employees were able to complete the training at a time and location that worked best for them. Having access to our research computers while at work, many chose to complete during their shift. Some, however, preferred and completed the training at their homes. Online training is especially a beneficial option for working populations that are self-sufficient with computers, and work varying shifts, making training timing easier to coordinate. On the opposite side, online training may prove difficult for populations of employees who do not have easy access to the internet or familiarity with computers and on-line programs. However, as demonstrated in this sample, basic computer assistance can help those attending training online to overcome the technical difficulties and reap the associated benefits.

### **Limitations & Future Research**

There are some limitations of this study that need to be considered. One limitation is that participants did not always have the opportunity to participate in the training in a quiet environment. Rather, training was completed on the employee's work unit in their staff room or at a table in the unit area. There were many distractions present including residents needing care and staff having conversations. Therefore, the full effect of the training may not have been received due to these distractions that were present when trying to concentrate on the material.

Another concern is that the sample population used in this study had a very low working ability with computers. The researcher and project helpers had to assist employees intensively for the registration process and minor glitches throughout the training from basic computer issues. While there was generally sufficient assistance available for employees, there were more obstacles and perhaps reduced levels of self-efficacy from frustrations with use of the computer. This may have also interfered with employees' ability to get the full value out of the training.

Further, there was also difficulty matching the codes that were used to protect employees' identity. Codes were not always entered correctly by the participants at each time point, resulting in manual matching based on demographics. Some participants' responses had to be dropped due to inability to match the codes confidently. This resulted in some additional loss in data from T1 to T3. Another evident reason for dropout in this study is that employees were sometimes confused as to whether they had already completed the survey at T2 and T3 as the surveys all contained the same scales. Although measures were taken to make the study process as clear as possible (i.e. clear overview of study at start, new posters for each upcoming survey, different color survey cover pages, researcher and helpers presence on units to hand out surveys), there was still some evident uncertainty of employees. However,

the researcher and helpers were often able to clarify to employees so that they had the opportunity to provide input at all three time points.

Finally, it was clear that the organization designated units for participation in the study based, to some extent, on experienced incidents within the unit. Thus, units assigned to the experimental group reported substantially lower levels of civility at pre-test compared to the control group units. This suggests that assignment was not random and that the “problem” units were more likely to be assigned to the experimental group. Furthermore, some departments (e.g. Nursing) participated more in the study than others, which reasons for caution when generalizing the results, as individuals working in various roles may have different interests in completing respect in the workplace training, which also likely impacts the outcome that is achieved. The developers of Respect in the Workplace recommend that the training be mandatory, and as this training was voluntary, this also subtracts from the training effect that may have otherwise been observed if the training was mandatory.

Future research should continue to evaluate interventions using a strong longitudinal controlled design. While some support for the training was found in this sample of long-term care facility workers, it would be interesting to test the effectiveness of this and other respect intervention programs on various other populations. An interesting future study with a strong design would be to contrast a short in-classroom respect training to an online respect training program to determine the effectiveness over time in comparison to a wait list control group. This would provide indication as to whether the level of training involvement is a more prominent indicator of the outcomes or whether the content is the main determination of outcomes. Future research should also measure employee cynicism to determine whether it influences outcomes. Other measures of interest for future studies include employees’ reports on their own change in behavior as a result of the respect training, as well as more objective organizational indicators such as absenteeism rates and supervisor ratings.

## **Conclusion**

Using a longitudinal wait-list control design, this study was able to demonstrate partial support of the hypothesized relationships for this short online Respect in the Workplace training. However, given the limitations of intervention research, the conditions of training and assessment were less than optimal, as per the limitations addressed in this study. Therefore, it is expected that the small effect of civility that was found was actually an underestimate of the capabilities of this training. This study has implications for organizations and future research, demonstrating that there is some promise for short online interventions in targeting workplace abuse, even in less than optimal conditions due to the nature of limitations associated with organization interventions. With the strengths of cost and time effectiveness that short online training programs offer, there should be increasing interest in the expansive array of workplace training options that could be offered through the use of technology.



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