

Study finds consequences of co-worker rudeness are far-reaching

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A co-worker's rudeness can have a great impact on relationships far beyond the workplace, according to a Baylor University study published online in the *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. Findings suggest that stress created by incivility can be so intense that, at the end of the day, it is taken home by the worker and impacts the well-being of the worker's family and partner, who in turn takes the stress to his/her workplace.

"Employees who experience such incivility at work bring home the stress, negative emotion and perceived [ostracism](#) that results from those [experiences](#), which then affects more than their family life – it also creates problems for the partner's life at work," said Merideth J. Ferguson, Ph.D., assistant professor of management and entrepreneurship at the Baylor University Hankamer School of Business and study author.

"This research underlines the importance of stopping incivility before it starts so that the ripple effect of incivility does not impact the employee's family and potentially inflict further damage beyond the workplace where the incivility took place and cross over into the workplace of the partner," she said.

In addition, since the employee comes home more stressed and distracted, the partner is likely to pick up more of the family responsibilities, and those demands may interfere with the partner's work life. The study also found that such stress also significantly affected the worker's and the partner's marital satisfaction.

The study included 190 workers and their partners. Workers were employed full time, had co-workers and had an employed partner who agreed to complete an online survey. After completing the survey, workers were asked to have their partners complete a separate survey. The combined responses from the initial contact and the partner constituted one complete response in the database. Approximately 57 percent of the employee sample was male with an average age of 36, while 43 percent of the partner sample was male with an average age of 35. Of these couples, 75 percent had children living with them.

"Unlike the study of incivility's effects at work, the study of its impact on the family is in its infancy. However, these findings emphasize the notion that organizations must realize the far-reaching effects of co-worker incivility and its impact on employees and their families," Ferguson said.

"One approach to prevent this stress might be to encourage [workers](#) to seek support through their organization's employee assistance program or other resources such as counseling or stress management so that tactics or mechanisms for buffering the effect of incivility's [stress](#) on the family can be identified," she said.

Provided by Baylor University

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