



Linking Interpersonal Communication with Workplace Deviance through Transmittal Mediation Effect of Interpersonal Conflict

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to find the mediation effect of interpersonal conflict between the relation of interpersonal communication and workplace deviance. The sample of the study was 233 doctors, selected from hospitals in tri-city (Chandigarh, Mohali, and Panchkula). Interpersonal communication (IC), interpersonal conflict (IPC), and workplace deviance (WPD) variables were measured using standardized scale items. In the study, PLS-SEM was used to test the hypotheses. It was found that interpersonal conflict was specifically correlated adversely with interpersonal communication and favourably with workplace deviance. Further, the findings showed that interpersonal conflict significantly indirectly affected the relationship between interpersonal communication and workplace deviance. Finally, the implications and future scope of research were discussed.

Keywords: Interpersonal communication; workplace deviance; Transmittal mediation; Interpersonal Conflict

1. Introduction

Interpersonal conflict at the workplace is a typical occurrence and may greatly influence how employees act and perform. It is crucial to research interpersonal conflict and how it affects workplace outcomes like job deviance. According to Jehn, (1995); Jehn & Bendersky, (2003), interpersonal conflict can result in several unfavorable work outcomes, such as reduced satisfaction with work, less organizational commitment, and higher intentions to leave the company. Work

deviance, which is behavior that transgresses organizational standards and rules, may also be brought on by interpersonal conflict (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Numerous research has looked into the connection between workplace deviation and interpersonal conflict.

Folger et al. (2019) describe interpersonal conflict as a dispute between two persons caused by conflicting opinions or mismatched aims. It targets a person's specific

requirements or interests. Conflicts can emerge as a result of interpersonal relationships, organisational dynamics, or community connections. Interpersonal communication, on the other hand, refers to the inclination of two people to share information, feelings, and thoughts (Beebe et al. 2018). According to Robinson and Bennett (2017), purposeful violations of organisational policies and ethical standards constitute workplace deviance. Workplace deviance refers to voluntary behaviours that breach essential organisational standards and endanger the organization's and its members' well-being. Workplace misbehaviour can be trivial or serious. It has a detrimental impact on a company's efficiency and productivity. Interpersonal conflict is widespread in the workplace and can have a substantial influence on the behaviour and performance of employees. As a result, it is critical to investigate interpersonal conflict and its effects on work outcomes such as work deviance. Employees that encounter interpersonal conflict, for instance, are more prone to indulge in deviant behavior like theft and treason, according to research by Aquino et al. (1999).

Hershcovis et al. (2007) discovered the correlation between interpersonal conflict and unproductive work practices such as harassment and intimidation. Organizations should thus be aware of how interpersonal conflict affects work deviation and take appropriate action to manage and avert conflict. To stop disputes from getting worse, managers need to be educated in conflict resolution techniques and should promote teamwork and open communication among staff members (Jehn & Mannix, 2001). Similarly, the manner in which medical personnel reacts to their wants and demands is a factor that improves performance. The tools of the communicational mix in health are based on interpersonal communication. As a result, effective interpersonal communication is required to prevent workplace misbehaviour. Considering that healthcare practises and health systems have advanced significantly in recent years, medical facilities require the use of promotional principles to aid maximise performance. As a result, the research focuses on doctors as a sample. In conclusion, research on interpersonal conflict is crucial to understanding how conflict affects

workplace outcomes like workplace deviance. Understanding the detrimental effects of interpersonal conflict on work deviance and taking action to handle conflict successfully may be beneficial for organizations.

The researchers discovered that IPC had a substantial influence on WPD. Workplace deviance can manifest itself in any way that violates organisational regulations, norms, or expectations. It encompasses theft, sabotage, absenteeism, hostility, and other behaviours. Interpersonal communication is critical in avoiding and mitigating workplace misbehaviour. The relationship between interpersonal communication and workplace deviance, and the mediation role of interpersonal conflict is an important area of research in organizational behavior and communication studies. (Zhang et al., 2016)

Gap Analysis

To the best of our knowledge, no research has ever been done on this kind of mediation. Most studies have been conducted on the effects of interpersonal conflict and workplace deviation on personal outcomes variables like job satisfaction and intention to quit (Jehn, 1995). In the context of the healthcare system, research was still required to better understand how interpersonal communication (IC) and workplace deviance was mediated by interpersonal conflict (IPC).

Moreover, to the best of the author's knowledge, no study has been done so far with specific reference to Indian cities, focussing on the work deviance, specifically in case of doctors, representing the mediation of interpersonal conflict. Hence, it adds to the body of knowledge by contributing to the extant literature.

Most of the study has been done in Western nations, which restricts how broadly the results may be applied to other cultural situations Triandis and Gelfand (2012). The effects of interpersonal conflict and workplace deviation need to be studied more thoroughly in various cultural contexts (Krambia-Kapardis & Zopiatis, 2018). More research was required to determine the ideal solutions, even though some studies have looked at the effectiveness of conflict resolution and communication skills training. Even though there were various studies conducted on

interpersonal conflict and workplace deviance, there were still several gaps in the literature. The present study was an attempt to understand the unobserved relationship between IPC, IC, and WPD.

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The topics such as communication and interpersonal conflict have garnered a lot of attention in recent years. A Plethora of studies has established a significant link between effective communication and reduced interpersonal conflict. John and Mannix (2001) found that clear and understandable communication among team members can mitigate the negative effects of interpersonal conflict on group performance. Despite the ubiquity of numerous types of deviant behaviour, most research have focused on either destructive or constructive behaviour outcomes, and relatively few studies have been conducted to uncover the causes of both constructive and destructive behaviour in organisations (Narayanan & Murphy, 2017). The findings of Haider and Yean's (2023) study give fresh insights into the behavioural factors that may be addressed to eradicate workplace deviance in the healthcare sector. Conflict is an ever-changing phenomenon that can be unpleasant, good, healthy, or even creative. As a result, it gives a chance to envision a brighter future inside the health-care system (Ahmed & Gaballah, 2023) Lim and Lee (2011) found that there is a negative relation between communication competence and workplace conflict, such that employees with higher levels of communication competence engaged in lower levels of conflict.

In addition, the negative emotions triggered by interpersonal conflict can be mitigated through effective communication skills (West and Turner, 2014). It is suggestive of the fact that communication skills training may be an effective intervention to prevent and manage interpersonal conflict in the workplace. Based on these findings, it is implied that clear and positive interpersonal communication can buffer the negative effects of interpersonal conflicts and resolve them effectively without any serious impact on work performance. Furthermore, effective communication skills training can help prevent interpersonal conflicts in the workplace, establish peace, and help to attain positive work outcomes.

Interpersonal Conflict and Workplace Deviance

Further, interpersonal conflict is found to have a positive relationship with workplace deviance (Hershcovis and Reich, 2013). In this study, employees who experienced higher levels of interpersonal conflict are expected to engage in deviant behaviors, such as theft and sabotage. Interestingly, Krambia-Kapardis and Zopiatis (2018) examined the negative emotions mediate the relationship between interpersonal conflict and workplace deviance. The employees with higher levels of conflict reported higher levels of negative emotions, which in turn led to even higher levels of deviant behaviors. Bowling and Colleagues (2015) revealed that the relationship between interpersonal conflict and workplace deviance was moderated by organizational justice, which means that when employees perceived higher levels of justice in the workplace, the positive association between conflict and workplace deviance was even stronger. Based on the above studies, it is reasonable to believe that there exists a positive relationship between interpersonal conflict and workplace deviance.

Interpersonal Communication and Workplace Deviance

Wang et al. (2020) found that employees with good communication competence are rarely found to engage in deviant behaviors, such as theft and sabotage. This fact is exaggerated by another study by Eisenberger et al. (2004) which revealed that perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between communication quality and workplace deviance. To be specific, employees with higher levels of perceived organizational support are more likely to engage in deviant behavior and this relationship is stronger when communication competence is even higher. Vigoda-Gadot and Kapun (2005) found that there is a negative association between communication openness and workplace deviance which implies that employees who communicate openly engage less in deviant behavior, such as absenteeism and theft. The above-stated literature provides us with enough evidence to theorize that effective interpersonal communication is negatively related to workplace deviance.

Besides this, Krambia-Kapardis and Zopiatis (2018) found that the relationship between

interpersonal conflict and workplace deviance is mediated by negative emotions. However, they also suggested that effective communication could be a possible mediator in this relationship. More specifically, they argued that employees with effective communication skills are better able to manage their interpersonal conflicts and therefore less likely to engage in deviance better. Not only this, communication competence has a mediating effect on the relationship between organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and workplace deviance, in which OCB is negatively related to workplace deviance, and communication competence mediates this relationship, implying that employees with higher levels of OCB are more likely to have effective communication skills, which in turn leads to lower levels of deviant behavior in the workplace (Wang et al., 2020). Based on the above-stated facts from the literature, it is reasonable to hypothesize that interpersonal communication acts as a mediator between interpersonal conflict and deviant behavior. This means when employees have better communication skills, this leads to better interpersonal relationships and reduced interpersonal conflicts, which in turn mitigates the effect of deviant behavior on the work outcomes of the employees.

1.2.1 Theoretical Framework

Conservation of Resources Theory

This study explained that an employee also seeks to maintain and adopt the resources such as social support. These resources help the employees to cope with stress and achieve well-being (Hobfoll, 1989). Interpersonal communication can be seen as a resource that mitigates workplace stress. In other words, when an employee faces a conflict, the reason can be a loss of resources (communication) which leads to workplace deviance. This theory can be considered appropriate to explain causal links in the model.

Social Information Processing Theory

This theory explains how individuals transform information about their social environment. This process affects the behaviors in the workplace (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). The primary source is information that affects interpersonal conflict and results in workplace deviance. In this

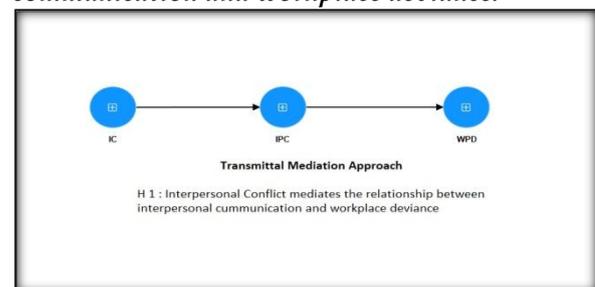
way, the theory supported the casual relationship in the model.

1.2.2 Hypothesis Development using Transmittal Mediation Approach

Theorization mediation can be divided into two approaches: transmittal and segmented. The transmittal technique was used in this study. Essentially, these approaches aid in the development of a mediation model. According to the transmittal approach, an independent variable influences the mediator variable, which in turn changes the dependent variable (Barron & Kenny, 1986). It differs from the segmented mediation approach in that it does not presume a direct relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The transmittal mediation technique is solely concerned with the indirect effect. According to Preacher and Hayes (2008), the transmittal mediation approach is highly beneficial in mediation research because it allows for the examination of a likely mediator between independent and dependent variables without considering any direct relationship between independent and dependent variables. This method aids in comprehending the mediation transmission technique.

Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses were made:

H1: Interpersonal Conflict mediates the relationship between interpersonal communication and workplace deviance.



1.3 Methodology

The study aimed to examine the mediation effect of IPC between IC and WPD. The study was conducted in Tricity (Chandigarh, Panchkula, and Mohali) as the tricity is a significant health care hub in north India, with a profusion of specialty hospitals and healthcare institutions, as well as important healthcare businesses. The sample of the study was 233 doctors. The data was collected by convenience sample technique. In the present study, three standardized scales were used.

The information regarding IPC was obtained by using 4 items from Spector and Jex (1998). IC was measured by using 5 items of the De Vito scale (2009). The information regarding WPC was obtained by using 6 items scale of Tepper (2000). The response was measured on 5 points Likert Scale. To justify the appropriation of sample size, a post hoc analysis was conducted (a feature in Smart pls software), it recommended that to obtain 90 percent power of a test with a 5 percent level of significance the minimum required sample is 50. So, in this respect sample size was appropriate. Table 1 contains the demographic information of respondents.

Variable	Group	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	91	0.408
	Male	132	0.592
Marital Status	Single	104	0.466
	Married	111	0.498
	other	8	0.03
Age	25-35	106	0.475
	36-45	66	0.296
	46-55	36	0.161
	> 55	15	0.067
Job Type	Public	138	0.618
	Private	85	0.382
Income (lacs)	< 10	63	0.283
	Oct-20	112	0.502
	21-30	32	0.143
City	> 30	16	0.072
	Chandigarh	106	45.49
	Mohali	65	27.89
	Panchkula	62	26.6

1.4 Data Characteristics

To collect responses from the respondents 310 respondents were targeted online. Among all the respondents only 275 responses were received. The collected data were subject to validation and cleaning. As per the guidelines

of Hair et al. (2014) data cleaning and validation were performed. There was no missing value in the collected data as the questionnaire was customized. It was found 35 cases in the data were unengaged responses with zero variance. Such responses were removed from the data. In the next stage 7 cases of extreme outliers were removed. The distribution of the data was examined by descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistics especially Kurtosis and skewness indicated that data was not normally distributed. Finally, it was confirmed by the Q-Q plot that the data was not multivariate normal. In the present study by assuming all these facts Partial Least Square structural equational modeling was used. It is a non-parametric technique and suitable for the present study. In the present study, Smart Pls 4.0 was used. In the present parameter estimates were obtained by applying 5000 bootstraps.

1.5 Measurement Model

The AVE was calculated to evaluate how much variance the construct elements captured concerning their corresponding constructs. Having AVE values better than 0.50, all three items demonstrated strong convergent validity (Table 2). The internal consistency of the scale items was evaluated using the CR, with a score of 0.70 or higher indicating adequate reliability (Hair et al, 2020). With CR values of 0.91, 0.87, and 0.85 for construct IC, IPC, and WPD, respectively, all three scales indicated strong internal consistency. Using standardized factor loadings, indicator reliability was tested, and all items had factor loadings larger than 0.70 (Hair et al., 2020), suggesting that they were reliable assessments of their respective constructs. It is pertinent to note that all scales are reflective, hence at the time of analysis, a few items were deleted owing to non-significant loading.

The Fornell-Larcker criteria were used to measure discriminant validity, which compares the AVE of each construct to the squared correlations between that construct and other components. The results (Table 3) indicated that the AVE values were larger than the squared correlation values, suggesting strong discriminant validity. Finally, HTMT ratios were generated to assess the extent of discriminant validity between constructs. All HTMT values were smaller

than the suggested threshold of 0.85 (Hensler et al.2015), showing high discriminant validity between the three constructs. Overall, the measuring model revealed acceptable reliability and validity.

Table 2 Indicator Loading, Convergent Validity, and Reliability

	IC	IPC	WPD	AVE	CA	CR
IC1	0.795					
IC2	0.829			0.723	0.873	0.912
IC3	0.891					
IC4	0.882					
IPC2		0.86				
IPC3		0.867		0.69	0.781	0.873
IPC4		0.774				
WPC2			0.821			
WPC3			0.785	0.67	0.756	0.859
WPC5			0.847			

Table 3 Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT Ratio)

	IC	IPC	WPD
IC			
IPC	0.484		
WPD	0.111	0.484	
	IC	IPC	WPD
IC	0.85		
IPC	-0.415	0.835	
WPD	-0.097	0.379	0.818

1.6 Structural model

The path coefficient between IC and IPC was significant, demonstrating a negative association between interpersonal communication and interpersonal conflict (= -0.41, p 0.01). The path coefficient between IPC and WPC was similarly significant, demonstrating a positive link between interpersonal conflict and workplace deviance (= -0.37, p 0.01). However, the indirect effect of IC on WPC through IPC was similarly significant (= -0.15, p 0.01), demonstrating that the link between interpersonal communication and workplace deviance is mediated by interpersonal conflict. This implies that interpersonal conflict is crucial in the link between interpersonal communication and workplace deviance. Overall, the structural model provides evidence that interpersonal communication is connected to workplace deviance, both indirectly and directly through its impacts on interpersonal conflict.

Table 4 Direct and Indirect Effect

Path	Path coefficient	T statistics	P values
IC -> IPC	-0.415	5.635	0.00
IPC -> WPD	0.379	5.332	0.00
IC -> IPC -> WPD	-0.157	4.22	0.00

The R-squared values for the predictor variables (IPC and WPD) were presented in the research. IPC had an R-squared value of 0.172 and WPD had an R-squared value of 0.144, according to the data. These results show that IPC and WPD account for 17.2% and 14.4% of the variation in the outcome variable, respectively. Another significant statistical indicator is effect size, which represents the extent of the association between the predictor variable and the outcome variable. The study used effect size to describe the strength of the association between each predictor variable and the outcome variable. The findings revealed that the impact size of IPC and WPD was moderate to high. Finally, the VIF value of the entire model was calculated, and all values were less than 3. It suggested that the model is free of common approach bias. Kock (2015).

Table 5 _Coefficient of determination and effect size

	R-square	R-square adjusted	
IPC	0.172	0.168	
WPD	0.144	0.139	
Effect Size (F ²)			
	IC	IPC	WPD
IC		0.208	
IPC			0.168
WPD			

1.7 Predictive Performance

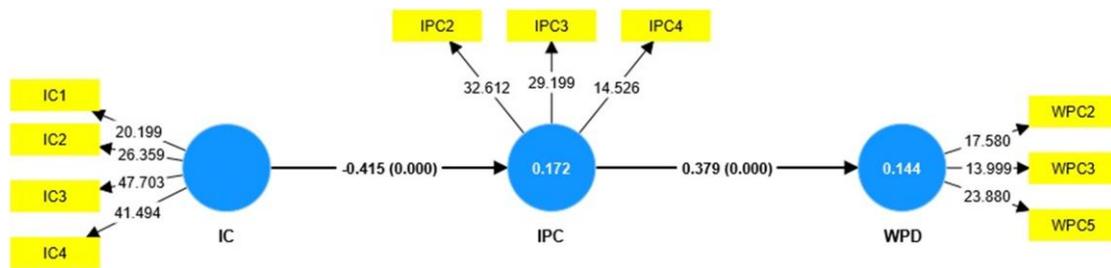
The predictive performance of the model was examined as per the guidelines of Shmueli (2016). The summary of predictive performance was obtained by applying PLS prediction analysis. As per guidelines, the sample was divided into training and hold-out samples with K = 13 folds. Based on analysis Table 6 shows the predictive summary of the results. The results showed that the Q square value for IPC and WPD was 0.15 and 0.02. According to Hair et al. (2016), a Q square

value of more than 0.02 indicate that the model has predictive relevance for the construct. The range of the Q square value provides the magnitude of predictive performance as small, medium, and large. For IPC the Q² value was 0.15 which indicates that the model has moderate predictive relevance for IPC. For WPD the Q² value was 0.02 which indicates that the model has small predictive relevance for WPD. Further, the accuracy of the model was examined by RMSE and MEA errors for PLS and LM (Linear Regression Model). The results confirmed that among most of the indicators to exogenous construct RMSE and MAE were lower in the PLS model than the LM model. Overall results confirmed that the model had a substantial predictive performance.

that the model had no problem of endogeneity. It confirmed the assumption of independence between the variables was valid. Figure 3 shows these results.

1.9 Discussion

The current study sought to comprehend the role of IPC in mediating the relationship between IC and WPD. Based on the literature, a preliminary model was created and empirically tested to investigate these correlations. Numerous forms of research have been undertaken in the field of communication to investigate the link between interpersonal communication and interpersonal conflict (Canary & Dindia, 2009). Interpersonal disputes, interestingly, are frequently proven to be efficiently handled by competent interpersonal communication.



Transmittal Mediation Approach

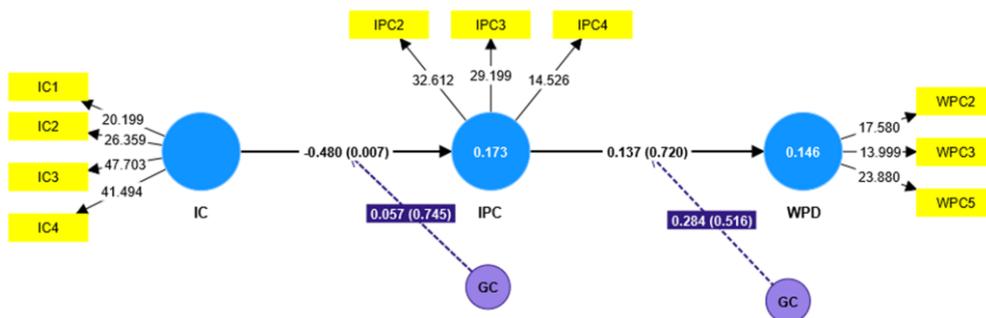
H 1 : Interpersonal Conflict mediates the relationship between interpersonal communication and workplace deviance

$$H1 = IC \rightarrow IPC \rightarrow WPD (\beta = -0.15, p < 0.01)$$

1.8 Testing Endogeneity

Endogeneity was considered the main problem of PLS-SEM modeling. It was recommended that the problem of endogeneity is not an exception. In the present study, endogeneity was addressed as per the Gaussian Copula approach. According to the approach, the copula is made on the path. The results confirmed that Gaussian Copula was not significant which reflected

Based on past research, it is plausible to conclude that interpersonal communication has a link to workplace deviance. Interpersonal conflict is adversely connected to the employment of good communication tactics (Stafford et al., 2019). Another study, Soliz and Gibson (2019), discovered that communication satisfaction mediates the association between conflict resolution approaches and relational satisfaction.



Likewise, respondents who employed more constructive conflict resolution techniques, such as collaboration and compromise, reported better levels of communication satisfaction, which led to higher levels of relationship satisfaction (Obeidat et al., 2018). Furthermore, Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2014) found a negative relationship between cultural communication ability and conflict escalation in their study.

The researchers discovered that IPC had a substantial influence on WPD. Workplace deviance can manifest itself in any way that violates organisational regulations, norms, or expectations. Previous study has found that communication is critical in avoiding and reducing workplace misbehaviour. Previous research backed up these conclusions. According to Zhang et al. (2019), supervisors that use a sympathetic, understanding, and encouraging tone in their communication have employees who are less likely to participate in workplace misbehaviour. Furthermore, openness to communication was found to be adversely connected to workplace misbehaviour (Morrison and Milliken, 2003). The mediator between interpersonal communication and workplace misbehaviour is interpersonal conflict. The findings established that a lack of communication promotes interpersonal conflict and leads to workplace misbehaviour. According to Liang et al. (2015), communication quality is adversely connected to interpersonal conflict, but interpersonal conflict is favourably related to workplace deviance. Communication quality was defined in this study as the degree to which communication is clear, honest, and respectful. Furthermore, Kim and Leung (2019) discovered that communication skill was inversely connected to interpersonal conflict, but interpersonal conflict was positively related to workplace deviance. Based on these findings, it is reasonable to infer that interpersonal communication influences workplace deviance indirectly through interpersonal conflict.

1.10 Implications of Study- Practical Implications:

The present study has some significant practical implications as the findings of the study suggest that interpersonal communication indirectly affects workplace deviance through its impact on interpersonal

conflict among doctors. Hence, there is an urgent need for healthcare organizations to prioritize the improvement of communication and conflict resolution skills among doctors. Such implementation can not only reduce the deviant behavior of workers such as absenteeism, aggression, sabotage, etc. at the workplace but also impact patient care and safety positively.

Practically, communication and conflict resolution skills can be improved among doctors through targeted training programs. Such training programs equip doctors with the necessary tools and strategies to effectively communicate with colleagues, resolve conflicts, and collaborate on patient care. An open communication and support culture must be created within healthcare organizations, where doctors feel comfortable discussing their concerns and addressing conflicts constructively.

The findings also highlight the significance of addressing interpersonal conflicts in the workplace. Interpersonal conflicts lead to workplace deviance by directly causing negative emotions, stress, and dissatisfaction among doctors (De Dreu and Gelfand, 2008). A positive workplace environment with increased productivity, job satisfaction, and quality patient care can be promoted in healthcare organizations by providing doctors with the requisite resources and skills to effectively manage and resolve interpersonal conflicts.

Theoretical Implications:

This study will be valuable in creating much-needed general theories of workplace deviance, particularly ideas describing the causes and consequences of various types of workplace deviance. It should also help in the development of aggregated metrics of workplace deviance that can be used to test those hypotheses. More broadly, it may serve as a conceptual bridge between previously unconnected realms of research and as a model for related topics of study, such as organisational ethics.

To summarize, the findings of the study suggest that due care must be given by healthcare organizations towards improving communication and conflict resolution skills among doctors to reduce workplace deviance

and to create a positive work environment. Targeted training programs and a culture of open communication and support can help achieve this goal.

1.11 Conclusion

The present study gives an insight into the relationship between three important variables viz. interpersonal communication, interpersonal conflict, and workplace deviance among doctors. As per the findings of this study, there is a negative relationship between interpersonal communication and workplace deviance. However, it has been found that there is a positive association between interpersonal conflict and workplace deviance. Majorly, the findings of the study highlight that interpersonal conflict mediates the relationship between interpersonal communication and workplace deviance. To per best of our knowledge, such a type of mediation was not tested before in the healthcare sector. The current study fills a gap in this respect. In addition, it has been revealed that there is an urgent need to provide open communication and support to doctors so that the performance and delivery of services like patient care can be improved in hospitals.

1.12 Limitation and Future Scope of Research

Primarily, this study is based on convenience sampling which limits the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, the use of self-reported data which can be subject to biases and may not accurately reflect actual behavior is one of the major limitations of the current study. Additionally, the study examined only healthcare employees which implies that its findings may not apply to other industries or populations. Future studies can consider a more diverse and representative sample, employ multiple methods of data collection, and investigate other potential moderators or mediators to study the relationship between interpersonal communication and workplace deviance. The role of other salient factors such as organizational culture or leadership can be explored, in shaping the relationship between interpersonal communication, interpersonal conflict, and workplace deviance. Finally, some effective measures to improve interpersonal communication and reduce interpersonal conflicts in the workplace can also be devised and tested to mitigate workplace deviance.

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Appendix

Interpersonal Communication Scale:

- I am able to express my thoughts and feelings effectively to others.
- I listen attentively to others and try to understand their perspectives.
- I am able to adapt my communication style to different situations and people.
- I am able to handle conflicts and disagreements in a constructive manner.
- I am able to establish and maintain satisfying relationships with others.

Workplace Deviance Scale (WDS)

- Have you ever purposely damaged company property?
- Have you ever taken longer breaks than you are allowed to take?
- Have you ever used company resources (e.g., phone, computer) for personal reasons?
- Have you ever violated company policies or procedures?
- Have you ever lied to your supervisor or coworkers?
- Have you ever taken credit for someone else's work?

Interpersonal Conflict at Work scale

- I have had disagreements or conflicts with my coworkers in the past month.
- I feel stressed or anxious when I have to interact with certain coworkers.
- I have difficulty communicating effectively with some of my coworkers.
- I feel frustrated or angry when my coworkers don't do their fair share of work.
