



WORKPLACE INCIVILITY, ORGANISATIONAL JUSTICE AND QUIET QUITTING BEHAVIOUR AMONG EMPLOYEES IN POLYTECHNICS IN SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA

OYEDEJI K. A.¹, ADEYEMI T. M.², and OJO T. O.³

¹Department of Mass Communication, Federal Polytechnic Ede, Osun State, P.M.B 231, Nigeria

²Department of Office Technology Management, Federal Polytechnic Ede, Osun State, P.M.B 231, Nigeria

³Department of Statistics, Federal Polytechnic Ede, Osun State, P.M.B 231, Nigeria

Abstract

The quality of workplace interactions and the fairness of institutional systems are central to employee engagement. This study examined workplace incivility, organisational justice and quiet quitting behaviour among employees in polytechnics in South-West Nigeria, and the relationships among them. A quantitative, survey-based correlational design was used, with a multistage sampling procedure yielding 240 academic and non-academic employees across six polytechnics. A validated questionnaire measured the constructs, and data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, multiple regression and structural equation modelling. Workplace incivility was moderate (mean = 2.64 on a 5-point scale), with 70.0% of respondents reporting dismissive or condescending behaviour. Organisational justice was moderate (mean = 3.12), with interactional justice (3.34) higher than procedural (3.02) and distributive justice (3.00). Quiet quitting was moderate (mean = 3.24), and 58.4% of respondents engaged in it frequently. Incivility was negatively associated with organisational justice ($r = -0.46$, $p < 0.001$) and positively with quiet quitting ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$); justice was negatively associated with quiet quitting ($r = -0.58$, $p < 0.001$). Organisational justice partially mediated the relationship between incivility and quiet quitting (indirect effect = 0.18, $p < 0.01$). The findings support interventions that promote civility and fairness to sustain engagement in Nigerian polytechnics.

Keywords: workplace incivility; organisational justice; quiet quitting; employee engagement; polytechnic; Nigeria

Introduction

The performance of any institution rests on the engagement of its people, and the quality of workplace interactions and the fairness of its systems are central to that engagement. Workplace incivility, low-intensity deviant behaviour such as rudeness, dismissiveness and disrespect, has been shown to damage employees' emotional and organisational outcomes, draining the discretionary effort on which institutions depend (Hur et al., 2015). Research on workplace incivility has established that it is a pervasive and consequential stressor that affects employees across sectors and occupational levels, with effects that extend beyond the immediate target to witnesses and the broader workgroup. Studies have demonstrated that incivility is associated with reduced job satisfaction, increased turnover intention, and decreased performance, with emotional exhaustion acting as a key mediating mechanism. For polytechnics, whose academic and administrative work relies heavily on such effort, the interpersonal and procedural climate matters greatly. The Nigerian higher education sector has been identified as particularly susceptible to workplace incivility due to resource constraints, hierarchical structures, and high levels of occupational stress, making it an important context for investigation.

Organisational justice, employees' perceptions of the fairness of outcomes, procedures and interpersonal treatment, is a powerful shaper of workplace attitudes and behaviour. Research demonstrates that perceived justice influences job attitudes and behaviour and that its absence is associated with harmful conduct and disengagement, while injustice and mistreatment are linked to bullying and withdrawal (Abdullah & Al-Abrow, 2023; Abou Hashish et al., 2024). The four-dimensional model of organisational justice, encompassing distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice, has been widely validated and has been shown to predict a range of employee outcomes, including job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and citizenship behaviour. Studies have demonstrated that organisational justice perceptions are negatively associated with counterproductive work behaviour and positively associated with engagement and performance. Fairness perceptions thus operate as a key mechanism connecting how employees are treated to how they respond. Research has shown that organisational justice mediates the relationship between



workplace mistreatment and employee outcomes, with perceptions of fairness shaping how employees interpret and respond to negative experiences.

Recently, attention has converged on quiet quitting, employees' silent withdrawal to the minimum required of them, as a widespread expression of disengagement. The literature identifies quiet quitting as a psychological withdrawal driven by burnout, unmet expectations and a disconnect between employee and organisation, and situates it within longstanding work on disengagement and its antecedents (Afrahi et al., 2022; Azeem et al., 2020). Research on work disengagement has identified multiple antecedents, including job demands, lack of resources, psychological contract violation, and perceived organisational injustice. Studies have shown that psychological contract violation is associated with reduced organisational citizenship behaviour and increased turnover intention, with work disengagement acting as a mediating mechanism. Incivility and perceived injustice are precisely the kinds of experiences theorised to trigger such withdrawal. The quiet quitting phenomenon has been described as a response to burnout, value misalignment, and the perception that extra effort goes unrewarded, with employees choosing to limit their effort to the minimum required rather than engaging in overt resistance or exit.

Despite growing interest, there is limited localised evidence on how workplace incivility and organisational justice relate to quiet quitting among employees in Nigerian polytechnics. Much of the relevant work is international or addresses other sectors, and quiet quitting in particular is newly studied, leaving the specific dynamics within Nigerian technical-education institutions underexplored (Afrahi et al., 2022). Nigerian research on workplace behaviour has focused primarily on the private sector and healthcare, with limited attention to the polytechnic sector, despite its distinct characteristics, including a dual workforce of academic and non-academic staff, significant resource constraints, and hierarchical governance structures. This study addresses that gap by measuring incivility, justice perceptions and quiet quitting among South-West polytechnic employees and modelling the relationships among them.

Statement of the Problem

Polytechnics in South-West Nigeria rely on engaged academic and non-academic employees, yet incivility and perceptions of unfair treatment can quietly undermine that engagement. Rude, dismissive and disrespectful conduct drains emotional resources, and where employees perceive procedures, rewards and treatment as unfair, they are prone to withdraw effort, increasingly through the silent minimalism of quiet quitting rather than open protest or exit (Hur et al., 2015; Abdullah & Al-Abrow, 2023). The difficulty is that the prevalence of incivility, the state of employees' justice perceptions, and the extent of quiet quitting, together with the relationships among them, are largely unmeasured in this context, so institutional leaders cannot see the erosion of engagement taking place or identify its drivers (Afrahi et al., 2022). This invisibility allows a corrosive dynamic to persist unaddressed, to the detriment of institutional performance and employee well-being.

The Nigerian higher education context presents particular challenges that may exacerbate these dynamics. Studies have documented that Nigerian tertiary institutions face significant resource constraints, leading to competition for limited opportunities and resources, which can foster incivility and perceptions of injustice. The hierarchical governance structures in Nigerian polytechnics, with clear status distinctions between academic and non-academic staff, and between senior and junior staff, create conditions in which incivility can be expressed and experienced differently across staff categories. Research on workplace incivility in Nigeria has identified power dynamics and organisational culture as key factors in the expression and experience of incivility, with employees in lower-status positions being more vulnerable to uncivil treatment. Additionally, the economic pressures facing Nigerian institutions, including funding constraints and the need to do more with less, may contribute to employee burnout and disengagement, creating conditions conducive to quiet quitting. These findings underscore the need for systematic assessment of workplace climate and employee engagement in Nigerian polytechnics.

Engagement underpins the teaching, research and administrative functions of polytechnics, and quiet quitting, if widespread, quietly degrades all three while signalling deeper problems of climate and fairness (Azeem et al., 2020). Research has demonstrated that employee engagement is positively associated with institutional performance, including student outcomes and research productivity, making the assessment and improvement of engagement a strategic priority for higher education institutions. By producing a rigorous, localised measurement of incivility, justice

perceptions and quiet quitting and the relationships among them, the study equips institutional leaders and human-resource functions with the specific evidence needed to target civility, fairness and engagement interventions. The beneficiaries are substantial: employees gain a healthier, fairer workplace; institutions gain restored engagement and performance; and the sector gains insight into a newly salient phenomenon. This study addresses that gap by measuring these constructs and their relationships among South-West polytechnic employees, providing localised evidence for intervention.

Aim and Objectives

Aim: To examine workplace incivility, organisational justice and quiet quitting behaviour among employees in polytechnics in South-West Nigeria, and the relationships among them.

Specific Objectives:

- i. To assess the prevalence of workplace incivility experienced by polytechnic employees in South-West Nigeria;
- ii. To determine employees' perceptions of organisational justice;
- iii. To assess the extent of quiet quitting behaviour among employees;
- iv. To examine the relationships among workplace incivility, organisational justice and quiet quitting behaviour; and
- v. To generate evidence-based recommendations to strengthen workplace civility, fairness and engagement.

Research Questions

1. What is the prevalence of workplace incivility experienced by polytechnic employees in South-West Nigeria?
2. What are employees' perceptions of organisational justice?
3. What is the extent of quiet quitting behaviour among employees?
4. What are the relationships among workplace incivility, organisational justice and quiet quitting behaviour?
5. What evidence-based recommendations can be generated to strengthen workplace civility, fairness and engagement?

Literature Review

The study of counterproductive interpersonal conduct at work has established workplace incivility as a consequential, if low-intensity, stressor. Research shows that coworker incivility is associated with emotional exhaustion and adverse organisational outcomes, draining the discretionary effort organisations depend on (Hur et al., 2015). Studies have demonstrated that incivility is a pervasive phenomenon, with surveys indicating that the majority of employees experience incivility at some point in their careers, and that it has significant negative effects on individual and organisational outcomes. Research has established that incivility operates through multiple mechanisms, including emotional exhaustion, reduced job satisfaction, and increased turnover intention, with effects that extend beyond the immediate target to witnesses and the broader workgroup. This positions incivility as a meaningful antecedent of disengagement. Studies in Nigerian work contexts have found that incivility is associated with reduced organisational commitment and increased counterproductive work behaviour, with organisational justice perceptions acting as a moderating variable.

Organisational justice occupies a central place in explaining employee responses to their treatment. Studies demonstrate that perceived justice, across distributive, procedural and interactional dimensions, shapes job attitudes and workplace behaviour, and that its absence is linked to harmful conduct and to bullying and mistreatment (Abdullah & Al-Abrow, 2023; Abou Hashish et al., 2024). The four-factor model of organisational justice, including distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice, has been widely validated and has been shown to predict a range of outcomes including job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and citizenship behaviour. Research has demonstrated that organisational justice perceptions mediate the relationship between workplace mistreatment and employee outcomes, with employees who perceive their organisation as fair being more likely to respond to negative experiences with constructive rather than destructive behaviours. Studies in higher education contexts have found that organisational justice is positively associated with academic staff engagement and performance, and negatively associated with turnover intention. Fairness perceptions thus mediate between how employees are treated and how they respond.



A third strand concerns work disengagement, of which quiet quitting is a contemporary form. Reviews of disengagement map its antecedents and consequences, and studies link psychological contract violation and dissatisfaction to disengagement and turnover intention, providing the theoretical grounding for understanding silent withdrawal (Afrahi et al., 2022; Azeem et al., 2020). Research on work disengagement has identified multiple antecedents, including job demands, lack of resources, psychological contract violation, and perceived organisational injustice. Studies have shown that psychological contract violation is associated with reduced organisational citizenship behaviour and increased turnover intention, with work disengagement acting as a mediating mechanism. This literature frames quiet quitting as a measurable behavioural outcome rather than a mere slogan. The concept of work engagement, defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption, provides a useful framework for understanding disengagement, with disengaged employees exhibiting the opposite characteristics of low energy, reduced commitment, and detachment from work.

A fourth strand addresses the emerging phenomenon of quiet quitting directly, characterising it as a deliberate limitation of effort to the minimum required, driven by burnout, unmet expectations and value misalignment. This work identifies mistreatment and unfairness among its triggers, connecting incivility and injustice to the withdrawal behaviour of interest here (Azeem et al., 2020). Research has described quiet quitting as a response to burnout, value misalignment, and the perception that extra effort goes unrewarded, with employees choosing to limit their effort to the minimum required rather than engaging in overt resistance or exit. It also underscores that quiet quitting is a newly salient and still under-measured construct. Recent studies have begun to develop and validate measures of quiet quitting, identifying dimensions including reduced work effort, psychological detachment, and minimal organisational citizenship behaviour. Research has identified organisational injustice, lack of recognition, and poor work-life balance as key antecedents of quiet quitting, with disengagement acting as a mediating mechanism. This literature provides the theoretical foundation for understanding quiet quitting as a behavioural outcome of workplace mistreatment and injustice.

Across these strands a consistent gap emerges. Much of the evidence is international or drawn from other sectors, with limited localised study of how workplace incivility and organisational justice relate to quiet quitting among employees in Nigerian polytechnics (Afrahi et al., 2022). While research has examined workplace incivility and organisational justice in Nigerian organisations, limited attention has been given to the polytechnic sector, with its distinctive dual workforce of academic and non-academic staff. Moreover, the quiet quitting phenomenon remains under-studied in the Nigerian context, with limited empirical research on its prevalence and antecedents. This study addresses that gap by measuring these constructs and their relationships among South-West polytechnic employees, providing localised evidence for intervention.

Methods

The study adopted a quantitative, survey-based correlational design. The target population comprised academic and non-academic employees in polytechnics across the six South-West states, sampled through a multistage procedure that treated institutions as clusters, selected units across academic and administrative functions, and proportionately sampled employees to yield a target of 240 respondents. The sample size was determined to provide adequate statistical power for the planned analyses, consistent with recommendations for structural equation modelling given the number of constructs and indicators involved. The multistage sampling procedure ensured representation across the six states, with one polytechnic selected from each state, and within each institution, units selected across academic departments and administrative divisions. The sample was stratified by staff category (academic vs. non-academic) to ensure adequate representation of both groups.

The principal instrument was a structured, validated questionnaire drawing on established scales, measuring workplace incivility (experienced uncivil behaviours), organisational justice (distributive, procedural and interactional dimensions), quiet quitting behaviour (withdrawal and minimum-effort indicators) and relevant background variables. The workplace incivility scale was adapted from established instruments measuring experienced incivility, including items on dismissive behaviour, condescending language, exclusion, and disrespect. The organisational justice scale was adapted from established instruments measuring distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and

informational justice, with items assessing perceptions of fairness in outcomes, procedures, and treatment. The quiet quitting behaviour scale was developed based on the emerging literature on quiet quitting, with items measuring reduced effort, psychological detachment, and minimal organisational citizenship behaviour. The instrument was reviewed by five experts in organisational behaviour, human resource management, and educational research for face and content validity, and their suggestions were incorporated into the final version.

The instrument underwent a pilot pre-test with 30 employees from a polytechnic not included in the main sample, with reliability estimated using Cronbach's alpha. The reliability coefficients were: workplace incivility scale ($\alpha = 0.85$), organisational justice scale ($\alpha = 0.88$), and quiet quitting behaviour scale ($\alpha = 0.84$), indicating acceptable to high internal consistency. For reflective constructs, composite reliability was also computed, with values exceeding 0.80 for all constructs. Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires, with research assistants available to clarify any questions. Strict anonymity and confidentiality were maintained, given the sensitivity of the workplace-climate data, with respondents assured that their responses would not be identifiable and would not affect their employment. Data were analysed in SPSS and a structural-equation-modelling package (SmartPLS) using descriptive statistics, correlation, multiple regression and structural equation modelling to test the hypothesised relationships and possible mediation, for example of justice between incivility and quiet quitting, with attention to differences across staff categories. The analysis strategy followed established procedures for mediation analysis, using the bootstrapping method with 5,000 resamples to estimate indirect effects. Ethical clearance was obtained from the institutional research ethics committee, informed consent secured from all respondents, participation kept voluntary and anonymous, and confidentiality carefully protected given the sensitivity of the workplace-climate data. This study addressed the gap by measuring these constructs and their relationships among South-West polytechnic employees.

Results

The study successfully surveyed 240 academic and non-academic employees across six polytechnics in South-West Nigeria. The findings are organised below according to the five research questions.

Research Question 1: What is the prevalence of workplace incivility experienced by polytechnic employees in South-West Nigeria?

Table 1

Prevalence of Workplace Incivility (N = 240)

Incivility Behaviour	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Experienced Incivility</i>		
Dismissive or condescending behaviour	168	70.0
Interrupted or talked over in meetings	142	59.2
Excluded from professional discussions	128	53.3
Received rude or disrespectful comments	116	48.3
Had contributions ignored or unacknowledged	134	55.8
<i>Frequency of Incivility</i>		
Experienced incivility daily or weekly	82	34.2
Experienced incivility monthly	104	43.3
Experienced incivility rarely	54	22.5
<i>Incivility Source</i>		
Senior colleagues/supervisors	124	51.7
Peer colleagues	86	35.8
Subordinates	30	12.5
Mean Incivility Score (SD)	2.64 (0.78)	



Note. Scale: 1 = Never, 5 = Very frequently.

Table 1 presents the prevalence of workplace incivility. The results show that workplace incivility is prevalent, with 70.0% of respondents reporting experiencing dismissive or condescending behaviour, 59.2% being interrupted or talked over in meetings, and 55.8% having their contributions ignored or unacknowledged. The mean incivility score was 2.64 (SD = 0.78) on a 5-point scale, indicating moderate levels of experienced incivility. The frequency data shows that 34.2% of respondents experienced incivility daily or weekly, and 43.3% experienced it monthly. The primary source of incivility was senior colleagues or supervisors (51.7%), followed by peer colleagues (35.8%) and subordinates (12.5%). These findings are consistent with the literature on workplace incivility, which has documented high prevalence rates across sectors and occupational levels. The finding that supervisors are the primary source of incivility is particularly significant, as incivility from those with power over employees' careers may have more severe consequences than incivility from peers. Research has demonstrated that supervisor incivility is associated with greater emotional exhaustion and reduced job satisfaction compared to coworker incivility. The prevalence rates are consistent with studies in Nigerian work contexts, which have found that a significant proportion of employees experience incivility, with dismissive and condescending behaviour being among the most common forms.

Research Question 2: What are employees' perceptions of organisational justice?

Table 2

Organisational Justice Perceptions (N = 240)

Justice Dimension	Mean (SD)*	Interpretation
Distributive justice	3.00 (0.86)	Moderate
Procedural justice	3.02 (0.88)	Moderate
Interactional justice	3.34 (0.82)	Moderate-High
Informational justice	3.12 (0.84)	Moderate
Overall organisational justice	3.12 (0.80)	Moderate

Note. Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree.

Table 3

Justice Perceptions by Staff Category

Staff Category	n	Distributive Justice Mean (SD)	Procedural Justice Mean (SD)	Interactional Justice Mean (SD)
Academic staff	132	3.08 (0.82)	3.10 (0.84)	3.42 (0.78)
Non-academic staff	108	2.90 (0.90)	2.92 (0.92)	3.24 (0.86)
Total	240	3.00 (0.86)	3.02 (0.88)	3.34 (0.82)

Table 2 presents the organisational justice perceptions. The overall organisational justice score was 3.12 (SD = 0.80) on a 5-point scale, indicating moderate perceptions of justice. Interactional justice scored highest (3.34), followed by informational justice (3.12), procedural justice (3.02) and distributive justice (3.00). The finding that interactional justice is perceived more favourably than distributive and procedural justice suggests that employees feel relatively well-treated in interpersonal terms but perceive unfairness in the distribution of outcomes and the procedures used to determine them. Table 3 presents justice perceptions by staff category. Academic staff reported higher justice perceptions across all dimensions compared to non-academic staff, with the greatest difference in interactional justice (3.42 vs. 3.24). These findings are consistent with the literature on organisational justice in higher education, which has documented moderate perceptions of justice,

with interactional justice often perceived more favourably than distributive and procedural justice. The finding that non-academic staff perceive lower levels of justice is consistent with studies that have documented disparities between academic and non-academic staff in terms of resources, recognition, and career opportunities. Research has demonstrated that distributive and procedural justice perceptions are strongly associated with job satisfaction and organisational commitment, making the moderate scores in these dimensions a cause for concern.

Research Question 3: What is the extent of quiet quitting behaviour among employees?

Table 4

Quiet Quitting Behaviour (N = 240)

Quiet Quitting Behaviour	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Quiet Quitting Indicators</i>		
Doing only the minimum required	146	60.8
Reduced work effort	138	57.5
Psychological detachment from work	124	51.7
Not volunteering for extra tasks	118	49.2
Reduced organisational citizenship behaviour	106	44.2
<i>Frequency of Quiet Quitting</i>		
Engage in quiet quitting frequently	140	58.4
Engage in quiet quitting occasionally	68	28.3
Engage in quiet quitting rarely	32	13.3
Mean Quiet Quitting Score (SD)	3.24 (0.76)	

Note. Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree.

Table 4 presents the extent of quiet quitting behaviour. The results show that quiet quitting is prevalent, with 60.8% of respondents reporting that they do only the minimum required, 57.5% reporting reduced work effort, and 51.7% reporting psychological detachment from work. The mean quiet quitting score was 3.24 (SD = 0.76) on a 5-point scale, indicating moderate levels of quiet quitting behaviour. The frequency data shows that 58.4% of respondents engage in quiet quitting frequently, and 28.3% engage occasionally. These findings are consistent with the emerging literature on quiet quitting, which has documented its prevalence across sectors and occupational levels. The finding that 60.8% of respondents do only the minimum required is particularly concerning, as it suggests that a majority of employees are not engaging in discretionary effort beyond their formal job requirements, which is essential for institutional performance and innovation. Research has identified burnout, unmet expectations, and value misalignment as key drivers of quiet quitting, with employees choosing to limit their effort to protect their well-being. The prevalence of quiet quitting is consistent with studies in higher education contexts, which have documented declining employee engagement and increasing withdrawal behaviour.

Research Question 4: What are the relationships among workplace incivility, organisational justice and quiet quitting behaviour?

Table 5

Correlation Matrix of Key Variables (N = 240)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Workplace incivility	1				
2. Organisational justice	-0.46**	1			
3. Quiet quitting	0.52**	-0.58**	1		
4. Interactional justice	-0.42**	0.78**	-0.52**	1	

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
5. Procedural justice	-0.38**	0.82**	-0.54**	0.62**	1

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 6
Regression Analysis Predicting Quiet Quitting

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Workplace incivility	0.28	0.06	0.32	4.67	<0.001
Organisational justice	-0.32	0.07	-0.38	-4.86	<0.001
Staff category (academic vs. non-academic)	0.12	0.06	0.14	2.00	0.047
Model Summary					
R ²	0.46				
Adjusted R ²	0.45				
F(3, 236)	48.62				<0.001

Table 5 presents the correlation matrix. Workplace incivility was negatively associated with organisational justice ($r = -0.46$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that employees who experience more incivility perceive lower levels of justice. Workplace incivility was positively associated with quiet quitting ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that employees who experience more incivility are more likely to engage in quiet quitting. Organisational justice was negatively associated with quiet quitting ($r = -0.58$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that employees who perceive higher levels of justice are less likely to engage in quiet quitting. The sub-dimensions of justice (interactional and procedural) showed similar patterns, with procedural justice having the strongest negative association with quiet quitting ($r = -0.54$). Table 6 presents the regression analysis. The model explained 46% of the variance in quiet quitting ($R^2 = 0.46$, $F(3, 236) = 48.62$, $p < 0.001$). Workplace incivility ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.001$) and organisational justice ($\beta = -0.38$, $p < 0.001$) were significant predictors of quiet quitting, with organisational justice having a stronger effect. Staff category was also a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.14$, $p = 0.047$), with non-academic staff reporting higher levels of quiet quitting. These findings are consistent with the literature on the relationships between incivility, justice, and employee outcomes, which has demonstrated that incivility is positively associated with withdrawal behaviours and that justice perceptions are negatively associated with such behaviours.

Table 7
Structural Equation Modelling Results: Mediation Analysis

Path	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	Significance
Workplace incivility → Quiet quitting	0.32**	-	0.32**	**
Workplace incivility → Organisational justice	-0.46**	-	-0.46**	**
Organisational justice → Quiet quitting	-0.38**	-	-0.38**	**
Workplace incivility → Organisational justice → Quiet quitting	-	0.18**	-	**

Note. ** $p < 0.01$. Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples.

Table 7 presents the structural equation modelling results for mediation analysis. The direct effect of workplace incivility on quiet quitting was significant ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$), as was the direct effect of workplace incivility on organisational justice ($\beta = -0.46$, $p < 0.01$) and the direct effect of organisational justice on quiet quitting ($\beta = -0.38$, $p < 0.01$). The indirect effect of workplace

incivility on quiet quitting through organisational justice was significant and positive ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.01$), indicating partial mediation. This means that while workplace incivility has a direct positive effect on quiet quitting, it also has an indirect effect through reduced perceptions of organisational justice. The total effect of workplace incivility on quiet quitting was $0.32 + 0.18 = 0.50$, indicating that the direct and indirect effects combine to explain the relationship. These findings are consistent with the literature on the mediating role of organisational justice in the relationship between workplace mistreatment and employee outcomes. The mediation finding suggests that interventions to reduce incivility should also address justice perceptions to maximise positive outcomes.

Research Question 5: What evidence-based recommendations can be generated to strengthen workplace civility, fairness and engagement?

Based on the findings of this study, several evidence-based recommendations were developed for strengthening workplace civility, fairness and engagement:

Short-term interventions (0–6 months): (1) Develop and communicate a clear code of conduct that explicitly prohibits incivility and specifies expected standards of workplace behaviour; (2) Implement a confidential reporting mechanism for incivility and unfair treatment, with protection for reporters against retaliation; (3) Provide training for supervisors and managers on respectful leadership, including how to model civil behaviour, provide constructive feedback, and address incivility when it occurs; (4) Conduct a workplace climate survey to establish a baseline and identify areas of concern; and (5) Recognise and reward civil behaviour through formal and informal recognition programmes.

Medium-term interventions (6–24 months): (1) Integrate civility and respect into performance management systems, with clear expectations for all staff and consequences for repeated incivility; (2) Review and revise human resource policies and procedures to ensure transparency and fairness, particularly in promotion, reward, and resource allocation; (3) Establish a workplace mediation or conflict resolution service to address interpersonal conflicts before they escalate; (4) Provide training for all employees on recognising and addressing incivility, including bystander intervention; and (5) Develop a leadership development programme that emphasises emotional intelligence, fairness, and respect.

Long-term approaches (2–5 years): (1) Build a culture of civility and justice through sustained leadership commitment and consistent reinforcement of values; (2) Develop a comprehensive employee engagement strategy that addresses the drivers of quiet quitting, including recognition, career development, and work-life balance; (3) Establish a system for monitoring workplace climate and engagement on an ongoing basis, with regular reporting to leadership and governance bodies; (4) Advocate for policy reforms that strengthen employment protections and promote fair treatment in higher education institutions; and (5) Develop partnerships with professional bodies and unions to promote workplace civility and justice in the sector.

Discussion

The central finding of this study is the demonstration that workplace incivility and organisational justice are significant predictors of quiet quitting behaviour among polytechnic employees in South-West Nigeria, with organisational justice partially mediating the relationship between incivility and quiet quitting. The mean incivility score of 2.64 ($SD = 0.78$) indicates moderate levels of experienced incivility, with 70.0% of respondents reporting dismissive or condescending behaviour and 34.2% experiencing incivility daily or weekly. These findings are consistent with the literature on workplace incivility, which has documented high prevalence rates across sectors and occupational levels. The finding that supervisors are the primary source of incivility (51.7%) is particularly significant, as incivility from those with power over employees' careers may have more severe consequences than incivility from peers. Research has demonstrated that supervisor incivility is associated with greater emotional exhaustion and reduced job satisfaction compared to coworker incivility.

The organisational justice findings reveal moderate perceptions of justice (mean = 3.12), with interactional justice scoring highest (3.34) and distributive justice lowest (3.00). The finding that interactional justice is perceived more favourably than distributive and procedural justice suggests that employees feel relatively well-treated in interpersonal terms but perceive unfairness in the distribution of outcomes and the procedures used to determine them. These findings are consistent with the literature on organisational justice in higher education, which has documented moderate



perceptions of justice, with interactional justice often perceived more favourably than distributive and procedural justice. The finding that non-academic staff perceive lower levels of justice is consistent with studies that have documented disparities between academic and non-academic staff in terms of resources, recognition, and career opportunities. Research has demonstrated that distributive and procedural justice perceptions are strongly associated with job satisfaction and organisational commitment, making the moderate scores in these dimensions a cause for concern. The quiet quitting findings reveal that 58.4% of respondents engage in quiet quitting frequently, with 60.8% doing only the minimum required and 57.5% reporting reduced work effort. These findings are consistent with the emerging literature on quiet quitting, which has documented its prevalence across sectors and occupational levels. The finding that a majority of employees are not engaging in discretionary effort is particularly concerning, as discretionary effort is essential for institutional performance and innovation. Research has identified burnout, unmet expectations, and value misalignment as key drivers of quiet quitting, with employees choosing to limit their effort to protect their well-being.

The correlation and regression analyses revealed significant relationships among the three constructs. Workplace incivility was negatively associated with organisational justice ($r = -0.46$, $p < 0.001$) and positively associated with quiet quitting ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$), while organisational justice was negatively associated with quiet quitting ($r = -0.58$, $p < 0.001$). These findings are consistent with the literature on the relationships between incivility, justice, and employee outcomes, which has demonstrated that incivility is positively associated with withdrawal behaviours and that justice perceptions are negatively associated with such behaviours. The structural equation modelling results showed that organisational justice partially mediates the relationship between workplace incivility and quiet quitting (indirect effect = 0.18, $p < 0.01$), indicating that incivility affects quiet quitting both directly and indirectly through its effect on justice perceptions. This finding is consistent with the literature on the mediating role of organisational justice in the relationship between workplace mistreatment and employee outcomes. The mediation finding suggests that interventions to reduce incivility should also address justice perceptions to maximise positive outcomes. Overall, the findings confirm that workplace incivility and organisational justice are significant predictors of quiet quitting among polytechnic employees in South-West Nigeria, and they provide evidence-based recommendations for strengthening workplace civility, fairness and engagement.

Conclusion

This study examined workplace incivility, organisational justice and quiet quitting behaviour among employees in polytechnics in South-West Nigeria. The findings revealed moderate levels of workplace incivility (mean = 2.64), with 70.0% of respondents reporting dismissive or condescending behaviour and 34.2% experiencing incivility daily or weekly. Organisational justice perceptions were moderate (mean = 3.12), with interactional justice scoring higher (3.34) than procedural (3.02) and distributive justice (3.00). Quiet quitting behaviour was moderate (mean = 3.24), with 58.4% of respondents engaging in quiet quitting frequently. Workplace incivility was negatively associated with organisational justice ($r = -0.46$) and positively associated with quiet quitting ($r = 0.52$), while organisational justice was negatively associated with quiet quitting ($r = -0.58$). Structural equation modelling showed that organisational justice partially mediated the relationship between workplace incivility and quiet quitting (indirect effect = 0.18). The study provides evidence-based recommendations for strengthening workplace civility, fairness and engagement in Nigerian polytechnics. The principal implication is that workplace incivility and organisational justice are significant predictors of quiet quitting, and that interventions to reduce incivility and enhance justice perceptions would significantly reduce quiet quitting and improve employee engagement in Nigerian polytechnics. Future research should extend this work in several directions: longitudinal studies to track changes in incivility, justice, and quiet quitting over time; comparative studies across different institutional types and sectors; intervention studies to evaluate the effectiveness of civility and justice interventions; and qualitative research to explore the lived experiences of employees navigating uncivil and unjust workplace environments.

Funding

This research was funded through the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) Institution-Based Research (IBR) Intervention, The Federal Polytechnic Ede, Osun State, Nigeria. The funding agency provided financial support for the execution of the study. The funder had no role in the study



design; data collection, analysis, or interpretation; manuscript preparation; or the decision to publish the findings.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this study.

References

- Abdullah, H. O., & Al-Abrow, H. (2023). Impact of perceived organisational justice, support and identity on workplace behaviour through job attitudes: Verification in the role of LOC. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 31(6), 2645–2664. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-07-2022-1686>
- About Hashish, E. A., Alsayed, S., Alnajjar, H. A., & Bakar, S. A. A. (2024). The relationship between organizational justice and bullying behaviors among nurses: The role of nurse managers' caring behaviors. *BMC Nursing*, 23(1), Article 503. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-024-01204-w>
- Afrahi, B., Blenkinsopp, J., Fernández de Arroyabe, J. C., & Karim, M. S. (2022). Work disengagement: A review of the literature. *Human Resource Management Review*, 32(2), Article 100822. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2022.100822>
- Anand, A., Dalmasso, A., & Vidyarthi, P. R. (2025). Quiet quitting: A conceptual framework and research agenda. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 46(2), 234–256. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2789>
- Azeem, M. U., Bajwa, S. U., Shahzad, K., & Aslam, H. (2020). Psychological contract violation and turnover intention: The role of job dissatisfaction and work disengagement. *Employee Relations*, 42(6), 1291–1308. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ER-05-2020-0155>
- Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2017). Job demands–resources theory: Taking stock and looking forward. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 22(3), 273–285. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000056>
- Colquitt, J. A., Conlon, D. E., Wesson, M. J., Porter, C. O. L. H., & Ng, K. Y. (2001). Justice at the millennium: A meta-analytic review of 25 years of organizational justice research. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(3), 425–445. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.86.3.425>
- Formica, S., & Sfodera, F. (2022). The Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting paradigm shifts: An overview of current situation and future research directions. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 31(8), 899–907. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2022.2136601>
- Hur, W.-M., Kim, B.-S., & Park, S.-J. (2015). The relationship between coworker incivility, emotional exhaustion, and organizational outcomes: The mediating role of emotional exhaustion. *Human Factors and Ergonomics in Manufacturing & Service Industries*, 25(6), 701–712. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hfm.20587>
- Schilpzand, P., De Pater, I. E., & Erez, A. (2016). Workplace incivility: A review of the literature and agenda for future research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 37(S1), S57–S88. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.1976>