


# Relation of Workplace Incivility, Prosocial Motivation and Emotional Exhaustion to Thriving of Nurses

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**Background:** The study attempt to investigate the impact of individual-level factor (prosocial motivation), negative contextual factor (workplace incivility), and personal resource (emotional exhaustion) on the thriving of nurses.

**Methods:** Primary data from 215 Pakistani nurses were collected and analyzed. Data were analyzed through the Second Synthetic Grey Relational Analysis (SSGRA) and the Regression Analysis.

**Results:** We found that workplace incivility and thriving are negatively associated, whereas prosocial motivation positively influenced thriving. We also found the moderating impact of emotional exhaustion on the associations of workplace incivility-thriving and prosocial motivation-thriving. Both SSGRA and Regression Analysis revealed that the impact of prosocial motivation on thriving is more significant than that of workplace incivility, and moderation can also be found significant.

**Conclusion:** The study suggests that a suitable work environment, appropriate training, and guidance encourage emotional stability and improve prosocial motivation. Similarly, mentoring, socializing, and acknowledging the efforts of nurses' faculty are likely to cope with workplace incivility and promote their thriving.

**Keywords:** workplace incivility, prosocial motivation, emotional exhaustion, thriving, grey relational analysis

## Introduction

Finding the best-fit employees and how organizations can identify the capabilities and real potential of employees are the most critical dilemmas of discussion among academicians and practitioners in today's challenging work environment. However, literature shows that it is probable that an employee with a high level of thriving could be the best-fit person.<sup>1</sup> Organizations strive to seek the best-fit employees and enhance existing employees' performance.<sup>2,3</sup> Therefore, researchers have examined various attitudes, behaviours, competencies, and perspectives that verify whether an individual can thrive.<sup>4</sup> Nurses are the essential workforce responsible for quality health services.<sup>5</sup> The nursing faculty teaches the newly appointed nurses' ethics, code of conduct and ways to positively deal with patients.<sup>6</sup> Given that, considering the importance of the nursing workforce, the thriving of nurses is plausible to discuss. Thriving implies both growth and positive development, and a combination of learning and vitality elucidates the thriving,<sup>7</sup> where vitality is expressed as a feeling of aliveness. Thriving is a positive self-construct and is associated with many positive attributes. Such as, an individual can be healthier, happier, confident, job-oriented, and resilient if s/he intends to learn with vitality.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, workplace incivility has been found to be harmful to employee thriving.<sup>9,10</sup> In line with this, workplace incivility has been defined as

low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target where uncivil behaviors are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others.<sup>11</sup>

According to Batson (1987)<sup>12</sup>, prosocial motivation is conceptualized as volunteering to help others. An employee who does not worry about others disrupting synergy and lacks the ability to redress one's bad experiences would have low prosocial motivation. Whereas individuals helping co-workers are crammed with prosocial motivation.

This phenomenon is significant for providing an understanding of the given relationships (see the conceptual framework in Figure 1). Emotional exhaustion, in contrast, is defined as a “prolonged state of materialistic and emotional decrease that results from an enormous job or personal claims and constant stress”.<sup>13</sup> Since employees with high emotional exhaustion interpret events and people, it is most probable that emotional exhaustion weakens the prosocial motivation-thriving association, while its effect on workplace incivility-thriving may also be negatively influenced.

The application of novel methodologies to solving new problems is gaining attention in engineering and the humanities and social sciences. Soft computing techniques, such as Artificial Neural Networks, Fuzzy Set Theory, Grey System Theory (GST), and Rough Set Theory, are becoming increasingly popular. Also, even though the Smart-PLS SEM is a popular choice among social scientists, other alternatives have rarely seen application in the social science literature but have demonstrated their validity in other disciplines. For instance, the GST’s Grey Relational Analysis (GRA) is an influential mathematical technique that can serve as a non-parametric alternative to statistical techniques. It has seen widespread applications in engineering and technical problems.<sup>14–16</sup> Shahzad et al (2020)<sup>17</sup> used the GRA model and compared the results with those of the Smart-PLS SEM and confirmed the suitability of the GRA for the problems that the conventional statistical methods can solve. Javed et al (2018)<sup>18</sup>, reached a similar conclusion. The GRA has been well recognized for its ability to handle systems characterized by uncertainty or in the situation where data is recorded using real numbers (e.g., 5 = strongly agree), but it is assumed that data might contain uncertainty (i.e., 5 may be slightly less or more than strongly agree).

This study applies Grey Relational Analysis [GRA], a fundamental model of GST, to draw the correlation between prosocial motivation, workplace incivility, emotional exhaustion, and thriving and their direct impact on employees thriving under the moderating effect of emotional exhaustion also investigated. Furthermore, this study contributes in several ways from a theoretical point of view; first of all, this study explores the impact of incivility on the thriving of nursing faculty staff working in Pakistani public and private hospitals. Secondly, this study investigates the relationship of prosocial motivation with employee thriving, and finally, the moderating role of emotional exhaustion on incivility-thriving and prosocial motivation-thriving relationships by surveying nursing faculty staff of hospitals. Nawaz et al (2020)<sup>1</sup> suggested this moderating influence on concerning relationships, and the targeted population brings the novelty in this regard. The sample, consisting of nursing faculty staff working in Pakistani public and private hospitals, being targeted in this study is a contribution because, to the best of our knowledge, no study exists that explains the above-stated associations by considering nursing faculty staff of hospitals.

The study is organized as follows. Section one describes the introductory stage about the importance and purpose of the study. Section two reviews the variables in question, hypotheses development and the GRA model. The third section presents the methodology, and section four discusses the analysis and results, whereas section five discusses the conclusion with research implications. Further, a table defining the variables of the study is given below.

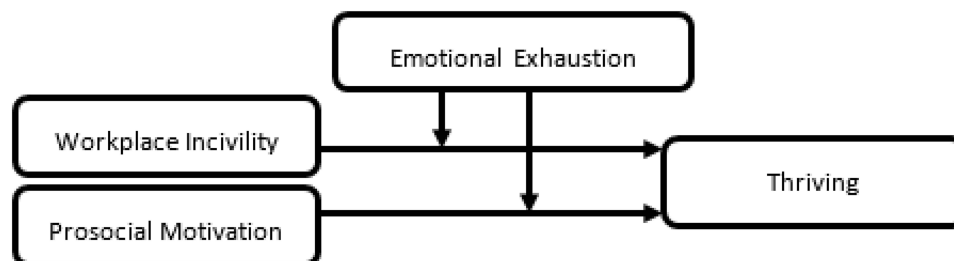


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework.

## Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

### Workplace Incivility and Thriving

Workplace incivility has been under debate for a long.<sup>19</sup> Incivility is

low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target. Uncivil behaviors are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others.<sup>11</sup>

It has become an increasingly unavoidable behavior<sup>20</sup> that subordinates must tackle at work.<sup>21</sup> A plethora of empirical studies revealed that incivility produces unfavorable consequences for subordinates and organizations.<sup>22</sup> For instance, incivility minimizes productivity,<sup>23</sup> lowers job satisfaction,<sup>20</sup> creativity,<sup>24</sup> organizational commitment,<sup>25</sup> job performance,<sup>26</sup> organizational citizenship behavior,<sup>23</sup> and quality of life.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, incivility promotes negative workplace attributes such as it maximizes employees' work-family conflict,<sup>27</sup> cognitive distraction,<sup>20</sup> and anxiety.<sup>28</sup>

The literature reveals that scholars have utilized appraisal theory to better understand the workplace incivility,<sup>29,30</sup> which may influence employee thriving. Understanding the cause of the stressors' appraisal<sup>20</sup> is essential. Given that, we suspect that encountering incivility discourages negative emotions such as sadness, anger, and fear due to negative appraisals.<sup>1</sup> Individuals experiencing uncivil behaviors are likely to feel no charm and flourishing at the workplace, while such an environment also creates social discouragement (Duffy et al, 2002).<sup>93</sup> Therefore, employees are less likely to experience a sense of vitality, reducing their ability to thrive. Consequently, it is difficult for an individual to learn actively (thrive) in such an uncivil environment. Based on the above arguments,

Hypothesis 1: Workplace incivility negatively affects employees thriving at work.

### Prosocial Motivation and Thriving

Prosocial motivation is a cognitive state where an individual feels happy to work for others' benefit without any personal interest.<sup>12</sup> This motivation and support do not demand any reward for their efforts.<sup>31</sup> The motivation to collaborate with employees to help and expand new relationships is conceptualized as prosocial motivation.<sup>31</sup> Employees with prosocial motivation are collaborative, empathetic, agreeable, and more concerned for others.<sup>32</sup> Such a concern is mandatory for skippers to help their followers. Similarly, nursing faculty should have prosocial motivation so that the follower student nurses can learn actively. Furthermore, prosocial motivation is constructed with three dimensions (i) global, (ii) contextual, (iii) and situational prosocial motivation.<sup>33</sup>

In the description of these dimensions, global prosocial motivation focuses on the employees who work for the benefit and good reputation of the whole organization. For example, an employee can assist other members (co-workers) of the organization without considering any prejudice to boost the morale and reputation of the organization. While, contextual prosocial motivation occurs when employees assist some specific group of persons in the organization because of good relationships. For example, a supervisor provides guidelines to their concerned subordinates. On the other hand, situational prosocial motivation arises when an employee gets help with a routine task. For example, a boss directs employees to complete their daily routine tasks.

A plethora of literature revealed that workers with a high level of prosocial motivation take more initiatives,<sup>34</sup> help colleagues,<sup>35</sup> maximize task efficiency, and enhance their job performance.<sup>31</sup> Prosocially motivated employees give the impression of more attentiveness.<sup>36</sup> As a result, such employees undergo their daily routines with high energy levels.<sup>1</sup> Hence, knowledge does not arise in isolation;<sup>37</sup> when workers talk to each other, they exchange ideas that can improve their ancient knowledge and make them better, although they can develop their expertise and aptitude.<sup>38</sup> Due to the positive consequences, prosocial motivation is observed as one of the spreading phenomena.<sup>39</sup> It is mainly observed that when employees works positively for the benefit of others, then in exchange (social exchange theory), their helping nature resounds in the mind of other colleagues, and hence they react accordingly. They are also expected to be energized and focused on learning and be more task-oriented, promoting an organisation's thriving environment.<sup>40</sup> Since it is found that subjective vitality is derived from the prosocial motivation,<sup>41</sup> which is what encourages to help others enthusiastically.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, on the bases of the above arguments,

Hypothesis 2: Prosocial motivation has a positive association with employee thriving.

## Emotional Exhaustion and Its Dimensions

Emotional exhaustion has been conceptualized as too many intellectual demands in the workplace that results in stress on the employee's mind, and waste their power or potential and emotional resources. Regarding history, research on emotional exhaustion, rooted in the past, as introduced by Maslach (1982)<sup>42</sup>, revealed a significant model of burnout. This model represents the three basics of emotional exhaustion. (1) The chronic state of emotional and physical depletion,<sup>43</sup> (2) Depersonalization, and (3) Diminished personal accomplishment. The first chronic state of physical depletion and emotion expressed as stress, which is established for the long term, such as extreme tiredness, is studied in professional stress, the mental disorder may cause physical symptoms (chest pain), constantly depressed about career, and fatigue. Secondly, depersonalization is defined as a lack of tactics to extend the organization's relationship with colleagues. Also, as a worker in an organization with the wrong assessment of personal qualities, these three basics are suitable for understanding the emotional exhaustion model of burnout. Some studies on the employees thriving at work arouses the need for a new variable because emotional exhaustion also affects workplace behavior, the motivation of employees, job performance, and confidence about completing tasks and challenges.

## Emotional Exhaustion and Thriving

Researchers have revealed how emotional exhaustion affects thriving.<sup>44,45</sup> In comparison, this study examines the association between incivility at work and employee thriving by considering the moderating effect of emotional exhaustion. Various kinds of behaviors of individuals are experienced in the workplace environment<sup>94</sup> Usually, two types of behaviors may fall into two categories, 1) Negative and 2) Positive. A hostile environment occurs due to job, mental stress and high work demand, usually because of emotional exhaustion.

The organization is intimidated by negative behavior through organizational prosperity.<sup>46</sup> Thus, dismissive behavior (negative behavior) may occur due to emotional exhaustion. In line, Appelbaum et al (2007)<sup>47</sup> argued that a persuasive form of behavior is dismissive behavior (negative behavior) at the workplace. If the individual is emotionally exhausted, they may go through different behaviors such as absenteeism, withdrawal, harassment, unethical decision making, laziness, and not interacting with employees, which affects the organization, and an individual in such an environment cannot flourish. Their level of thriving may go down. Consequently, due to emotional exhaustion, employee thriving may be influenced (see Figure 1), as shown in the conceptual framework. Thus, we hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 3: Emotional exhaustion has a negative association with employee thriving.

## Emotional Exhaustion as a Moderator

In real life, materialistic assumptions are unavoidable in physical investigations. A prolonged state of materialistic and emotional decrease results from a hectic job, personal claims, and constant emotional exhaustion.<sup>13</sup> It is expected that emotional exhaustion can harm employees' thriving. When employees with emotional exhaustion cannot accomplish their work role and mainly promote unfavorable behavior towards their organizations, they become upset.<sup>48</sup> It is most probable that incivility lowers the level of thriving, as discussed above, but in the presence of other factors, eg emotional exhaustion, the results might be different. For instance, the influencing intensity of thriving due to incivility may increase. It is difficult for emotionally exhausted employees to overcome incivility at the workplace because they are not energized to learn.<sup>1</sup> Thus,

Hypothesis 4a: Emotional exhaustion moderates the association between incivility and thriving, whereby emotional exhaustion at any level negatively affects the association.

Based on the above arguments, emotional exhaustion can weaken the prosocial motivation-thriving association because it is observed that the workforce's greater emotional exhaustion interprets events and people more negatively. The existing research revealed that emotional exhaustion could moderate the association of prosocial motivation and thriving, whereby emotional exhaustion at any level negatively affects this association. Thus we hypothesize that,

Hypothesis 4b: Emotional exhaustion moderates the association between prosocial motivation and thriving, whereby emotional exhaustion at any level negatively affects the association.

The definitions of all variables are provided in Table 1. The literature gaps leading to the current study have been identified and provided in Table 2.

## Methodology

### Participants and Procedures

Collecting reliable and relevant data is the foremost concern of any scientific study.<sup>49</sup> Primary information is essential to analyze the relationships defined by subjective variables or criteria.<sup>50,51</sup> Our data analysis is based on primary data collection via an on-site survey of nursing faculty staff in public and private hospitals in Lahore, Pakistan, by the first two authors. The respondents of private hospitals were 60% more than public hospitals, and the targeted population were mainly comprised of female genders. Data at each stage were collected by physical visit based on the convenience

**Table 1** Definitions of the Variables

#	Variable	Definition
1	Workplace Incivility	Workplace incivility has been defined as low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, uncivil behaviors are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others <sup>11</sup>
2	Prosocial Motivation	Prosocial motivation is defined as the individual's desire to benefit other people <sup>12</sup>
3	Emotional Exhaustion	Emotional exhaustion is a chronic state of physical and emotional depletion that results from an excessive job, personal demands, and/or continuous stress <sup>13</sup>
4	Thriving	Thriving is a psychological state in which individuals jointly experience a sense of learning and vitality at work <sup>37</sup>

**Table 2** A Quick Overview of the Existing Literature

Literature	Sample	Workplace Incivility	Prosocial Motivation	Emotional Exhaustion	Thriving	Statistical Analysis	Grey Relational Analysis
Khan et al, (2020) <sup>44</sup>	Hotel industry			√	√	√	
Abid et al, (2018) <sup>9</sup>	Different sectors		√		√	√	
Tong et al, (2019) <sup>87</sup>	Police officers	√		√		√	
Gkorezis et al, (2013) <sup>88</sup>	Private employees	√			√	√	
Rukh et al, (2018) <sup>95</sup>	Services sectors	√			√	√	
Ayaz et al, (2021) <sup>89</sup>	Hotel employee	√		√		√	
Moon & Gupta (2014) <sup>90</sup>	South Korean employees	√		√		√	
Hur et al, (2016) <sup>91</sup>	Qualitative study		√		√		
Moon & Moraise (2022) <sup>92</sup>	Bank employee		√	√		√	
The current study	Nurses	√	√	√	√	√	√

sampling technique, and the data collection procedure was identical for each hospital. For half an hour, 6–8 members of staff were arranged. Responses of survey respondents were ensured to keep their data completely confidential. To minimize the common method biases, a suggested method of two-wave time-lagged was used<sup>52</sup> with a difference of almost thirty days. At time 1, demographic variables and the predictors (prosocial motivation and workplace incivility) were computed. While at time 2, the outcome variable (thriving) and moderator (emotional exhaustion) were measured. The staff names were included to easily target the same respondent to ease the data collection process at time 2. A total of 240 respondents were targeted, while 215 responded appropriately; thereby, the response rate was stretched to 89.58% due to continuous follow-ups. As a result, there were no differences between times 1 and 2 in key and demographic variables. The design of the study was inspired by Nawaz et al (2020)<sup>1</sup>, and the computational methodology was inspired by Javed and Liu (2018)<sup>53</sup> and Shahzad et al (2020)<sup>17</sup>.

## Measures

Survey questionnaire scales were used to measure the variables whereby thriving and prosocial motivation are classified as positive, while workplace incivility and emotional exhaustion are negative phenomena.

- **Thriving:** A ten items scale developed by Porath et al (2012)<sup>24</sup> has been used to measure the employees thriving. Both dimensions of thriving (learning and vitality) have five items each. There was a sample item for learning “gradually, as time goes, I learn more” and for vitality, “I feel conscious and growing”. 5-Point Likert Scale was deployed in this regard, where 1 showed “not at all” and 5 showed “very much.” The higher score revealed that employee thriving is high.
- **Prosocial Motivation:** Grant and Sumanth (2009)<sup>54</sup> developed the five items scale to measure prosocial motivation. The sample of an item includes “I get energized by working on tasks that have the potential to benefit others”. 5-Point Likert Scale was deployed to measure prosocial motivation, where 1 expressed “strongly disagree” and 5 expressed “strongly agree”. The higher score revealed that employee thriving is high.
- **Workplace Incivility:** Cortina et al (2001)<sup>55</sup> designed the workplace incivility scale consisting of seven items. From these seven items, four items were used on neglecting and three items on perceiving individuals. A sample item for neglecting incivility includes, “you were ignored or deleted from a professional camaraderie”. On the other hand, a sample item on the perceiving individuals’ decision is “your decision on the issue you are responsible for”. A 5-Point Likert Scale where 1 for “Never” and 5 for “often” was used.
- **Emotional Exhaustion:** To assess emotional exhaustion, a scale of four items by Maslach and Jackson (1982)<sup>56</sup> was utilized. A 7-Point Likert Scale where 1 revealed “strongly disagree” and 5 revealed “strongly agree” was used. Further, the reliability of the questionnaire is reported in Table 3.

The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  values for all the concerned variables are above 0.70, but the Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for emotional exhaustion is just below the generally acceptable range, but still, it is acceptable in the social science domain.<sup>57,58</sup> According to Di Iorio (2005)<sup>57</sup> 0.70 should not be the only standard used to assess reliability, whereby the shorter scale, with the lower alpha value, actually demonstrates higher interrelatedness among items. Inspired by the literature, these four measures founded the framework of the current study and are shown in Figure 1.

**Table 3** The Reliability of the Constructs

Construct	No. of Items	Source of Items	Cronbach’s $\alpha$
Emotional Exhaustion [EE]	4	Maslach and Jackson (1982) <sup>56</sup>	0.607
Workplace Incivility [WI]	7	Cortina et al (2001) <sup>55</sup>	0.827
Prosocial motivation [PM]	5	Grant and Sumanth (2009) <sup>54</sup>	0.816
Thriving [THR]	10	Porath et al (2012) <sup>24</sup>	0.813

**Note:** Sample Size = 215; Response Rate: 89.5%.

## Grey Relational Analysis

In the 1980s, a Chinese Professor at Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Deng (1982)<sup>59</sup> proposed Grey System Theory to capture the trend of systems development while focusing on insufficient knowledge and uncertainty.<sup>60–62</sup> Later, Professors Sifeng Liu, S. A. Javed, and others helped it popularize in the world, and today it has become one of the fastest-growing research fields. Javed introduced the grey system theory to Pakistan which was successfully applied in healthcare,<sup>63</sup> project management<sup>64</sup> and manufacturing.<sup>17</sup> He is mainly known for his works on Grey Decision Making,<sup>65</sup> Grey Ordinal Priority Approach,<sup>66</sup> Grey Forecasting,<sup>67</sup> and Grey Relational Analysis (GRA), such as a Bidirectional GRA<sup>68</sup> and the Second Synthetic GRA.<sup>53</sup> Javed's Second Synthetic GRA model is a new technology of decision-making developed to resolve a significant problem resulting from Julong Deng's GRA model and Sifeng Liu's Absolute GRA model. These two models may not necessarily reveal the same rank, and thus a decision-maker may leave perplexed if he used both models. However, using the Second Synthetic GRA, this problem has been effectively solved as it allows us to achieve consensus when both models contradict each other.<sup>69</sup> To date, the GRA models have seen many exciting applications in different fields, eg, decision-making during product development,<sup>70</sup> predicting financial crises,<sup>71</sup> tourism sector,<sup>72</sup> healthcare service quality,<sup>73</sup> carbon emissions,<sup>74</sup> risk management,<sup>75</sup> hospitality industry,<sup>76</sup> economics,<sup>77</sup> customer satisfaction research,<sup>78</sup> supply chain management,<sup>79,80</sup> among others.

### Deng's Grey Relational Analysis

Deng's GRA model is the most fundamental model of the grey relational theory. If  $Y_i = (y_i(1), y_i(2), \dots, y_i(n))$  and  $Y_j = (y_j(1), y_j(2), \dots, y_j(n))$  are two data sequences representing two variables associated with a system, then the Grey Relational Grade (GRG) is given by,<sup>81,82</sup>

$$\gamma_{0i} = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{k=1}^n \gamma(y_0(k), y_i(k))$$

where,

$$\gamma(y_0(k), y_i(k)) = \frac{\min_i \min_k |y_0(k) - y_i(k)| + \xi \max_i \max_k |y_0(k) - y_i(k)|}{|y_0(k) - y_i(k)| + \xi \max_i \max_k |y_0(k) - y_i(k)|}$$

where  $\xi$  is the distinguishing coefficient. In the current study, its value is set to be 0.5.

### Absolute Grey Relational Analysis

The Absolute Grey Relational Analysis (AGRA) model is one of the popular GRA models to measure the correlation between different uncertain data sequences.<sup>83</sup> If  $Y_i^0 = (y_i^0(1), y_i^0(2), y_i^0(3), \dots, y_i^0(n))$  and  $Y_j^0 = (y_j^0(1), y_j^0(2), y_j^0(3), \dots, y_j^0(n))$  are two variables then the Absolute Grey Relational Grade (AGRG) is given by,<sup>68,84</sup>

$$\varepsilon_{ij} = \frac{1 + |s_i| + |s_j|}{1 + |s_i| + |s_j| + |s_j - s_i|}$$

where,

$$|s_i| = \left| \sum_{k=2}^{n-1} x_i^0(k) + \frac{1}{2} x_i^0(n) \right|$$

$$|s_j| = \left| \sum_{k=2}^{n-1} x_j^0(k) + \frac{1}{2} x_j^0(n) \right|$$

$$|s_i - s_j| = \left| \sum_{k=2}^{n-1} (x_i^0(k) - x_j^0(k)) + \frac{1}{2} (x_i^0(n) - x_j^0(n)) \right|$$

## Second Synthetic Grey Relational Analysis

The Second Synthetic Grey Relational Analysis (SSGRA) model is a mathematical function for comprehensively evaluating a complex system through the two afore-discussed GRA models.<sup>53,63,69</sup> If  $Y_i = (y_i(1), y_i(2), \dots, y_i(n))$  and  $Y_j = (y_j(1), y_j(2), \dots, y_j(n))$  are two variables then the Second Synthetic Grey Relational Grade (SSGRG) is given by,

$$\rho_{ij} = \theta|\varepsilon_{ij}| + (1 - \theta)\gamma_{ij}, \quad \theta \in [0, 1]$$

where  $\varepsilon$  represents the Absolute GRG,  $\gamma$  represents the GRG, and  $\rho$  represents the Second Synthetic GRG. In the current study, the value of  $\theta$  is set to be 0.5.

## Results and Discussion

In this section, first of all, the results obtained through the Grey Relational Analysis will be presented, and in the succeeding sections, the regression analysis will be executed. The Graphic Analysis will be presented in the next section, followed by a discussion on the results and findings.

### Grey Relational Analysis

Since the reliability of one of the variables (Emotional Exhaustion) was below 0.7, it can thus be argued that data contains a level of uncertainty. When data contains uncertainty, scholars have suggested using Grey Relational Analysis (GRA) and appropriate statistical methods. For example, Shahzad et al (2020)<sup>18</sup> used statistical regression methods with GRA. Javed et al (2018)<sup>17</sup> used the statistical structural equation modelling with the second synthetic GRA. First, the reciprocating operator<sup>83</sup> was used to reverse the negative direction of workplace incivility (WI). Then prosocial motivation (PM) and thriving (THR) are normalized to make their values comparable to WI. Later, based on EE intensity, the sample was distributed in three classes, ie, as the value increased, we moved from class I to III. More classes can also be created. The purpose is to observe the relationships between PM and WI as EE increases. For instance, this classification made it possible for us to observe an interesting fact, ie, as EE increases, the absolute gap ( $\Delta$ ) between SSGRG values of PM and WI tends to increase. The results of the execution of the three grey relation analysis models are shown in Table 4. It can be observed that the grey relational degree of Deng's GRA and AGRA produced different outcomes. Considering GRA for classes I, II, and III, apart from class II with the highest number of responses, the positive impact PM under EE has on THR is greater than the negative impact WI under EE has on THR in classes I, III and an overall perspective.

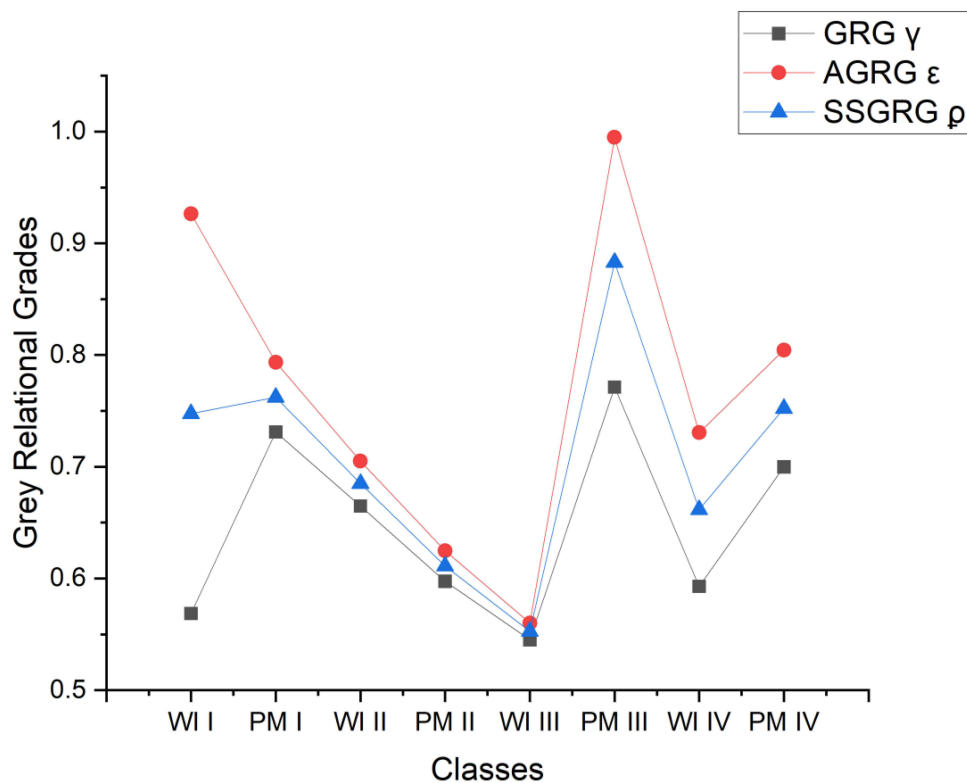
The difference can be noticed in class I from the analysis of the AGRA model, where the relationship of WI-THR under the moderation effect of emotional exhaustion is greater than the positive impact PM has on THR under the effect of EE. This difference draws the need to stabilize the result of the analysis. We lean on the opinion of SSGRA (inclusive

**Table 4** Grey Relational Analysis of the Impact of the Variable on Thriving

EE		$\gamma$	$\varepsilon$	$\rho$	$ \Delta $	Inference
Class I (N = 27]	WI	0.5687	0.9264	0.7476	0.015	PM > WI
	PM	0.7311	0.7935	0.7623		
Class II (N = 152)	WI	0.6648	0.705	0.6849	0.074	WI > PM
	PM	0.5974	0.6248	0.6111		
Class III (N = 36)	WI	0.5451	0.5601	0.5526	0.330	PM > WI
	PM	0.7712	0.9948	0.8830		
Overall (N = 215)	WI	0.5929	0.7305	0.6617	0.090	PM > WI
	PM	0.6999	0.8044	0.7521		

**Abbreviations:** WI, workplace incivility; PM, prosocial motivation; EE, emotional exhaustion.





**Figure 2** Graphical Representation of the Three Grades in the Four Classes.

proximity) as its development is established to resolve the dilemma between Deng's GRA (partial proximity) and AGRA (integral proximity) and integrate their similarities and closeness.<sup>85</sup>

The SSGRA model reveals that EE does play a moderation role in PM and WI's relationships with THR, but the role is not equally prominent. The moderation effect of EE is more evident in WI - THR relationship than in the PM - THR relationship. For instance, as the role of EE increases, the influence of WI on THR decreases. However, this decrease is not consistent with the influence of PM on THR. Overall, the influence of PM on THR is greater than the influence of WI on THR. This can be seen in [Figure 2](#) as well. The results revealed that emotional exhaustion would hinder or inhibit the development of a thriving, significantly reducing the ability to thrive compared to an employee of prosocial motivation characteristics.

## Regression Analysis

The comparative analysis provides a valuable means to have confidence in results. Thus, along with grey relational analysis, statistical analysis was also performed, and the results are shown below: [Table 5](#) shows the mean, standard deviation, and correlation among study variables. The low mean emotional exhaustion score revealed that the Pakistani hospital's nursing faculty staff are emotionally stable, and the higher mean score of thriving revealed that the thriving of Pakistani hospital's nursing faculty staff is high. The standard deviation of workplace incivility data increases while the data on other variables has moderately deviated. Furthermore, as far as linkages are concerned (see [Figure 1](#)), the correlation is negative and significant between the independent variable (workplace incivility) and dependent variable (thriving) such that ( $r = -0.163$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), conversely, the correlation is positive and significant between the independent variable (prosocial motivation) and dependent variable (thriving) such that ( $r = 0.408$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Similarly, the correlation between moderator (emotional exhaustion) and dependent variable (thriving) is negative and significant such that ( $r = -0.013$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, our first, second, and third hypotheses (H1, H2 & H3) are accepted. [Table 6](#) shows the moderation analysis to test the H4a and H4b hypotheses. Since the interaction term workplace incivility  $\times$  emotional exhaustion is significant ( $\beta = -0.132$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) thus, emotional exhaustion has a moderating influence on workplace incivility and thriving. Similarly, since the interaction

**Table 5** Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among the Study Variables

#	Variables	M (SD)	1	2	3	4
1	Workplace Incivility	2.77 (0.93)	1			
2	Prosocial Motivation	4.00 (0.74)	0.007	1		
3	Emotional Exhaustion	2.38 (0.53)	-0.071	-0.108	1	
4	Thriving	4.14 (0.62)	-0.163*	0.408**	-0.013*	1

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

Abbreviations: M, mean; SD, standard deviation.

**Table 6** Moderation Analysis

#	Variables	T	$\beta$	P-sig.
1	Emotional Exhaustion $\times$ Workplace Incivility	-1.936	-0.132	0.054*
2	Emotional Exhaustion $\times$ Prosocial Motivation	3.765	0.250	0.000**

Notes: \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ . Dependent variable = Thriving.

**Table 7** The Status of Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses	Accepted/Rejected
H <sub>1</sub>	Accepted**
H <sub>2</sub>	Accepted**
H <sub>3</sub>	Accepted**
H <sub>4a</sub>	Accepted*
H <sub>4b</sub>	Rejected

Notes: \*This hypothesis can be accepted only at 90% ( $p < 0.01$ ) confidence of interval. \*\*These hypotheses can be accepted at 95% ( $p < 0.05$ ) confidence of interval.

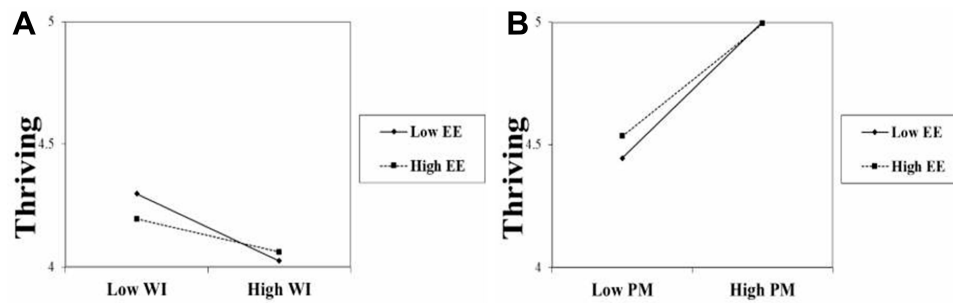
term prosocial motivation  $\times$  emotional exhaustion is significant ( $\beta = 0.250$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) thus, emotional exhaustion also moderates the association between prosocial motivation and thriving. While hypothesis H4b is rejected as the  $\beta$  value is positive. Consequently, all the hypotheses are accepted except one hypothesis that H4b, the status of hypotheses testing is given below in Table 7. To test the intensity of moderation, the graphical representation by moderation line graph is provided below in Figure 3.

Both the SSGRA and Regression Analysis revealed that the influence of prosocial motivation on thriving is more significant than that of workplace incivility, as seen in Tables 4 and 5. These insights are beneficial and demonstrate the effectiveness of the SSGRA model in observing the relationship between these variables.

## Graphical Analysis

To clarify the intensity of moderation of emotional exhaustion, the interaction between workplace incivility and thriving is illustrated by slope analysis in Figure 3A, which shows that emotional exhaustion hinders the relationship between workplace incivility and thriving. Both slopes are negative, indicating that either high or low emotional exhaustion causes an increase in incivility and minimizes the thriving level, but the thriving rate is a little higher when the emotional exhaustion rate is low. Hence, our result supports hypothesis 4a, and the hospital's higher authorities should try to minimize emotional exhaustion and workplace incivility to ensure the high level of thriving of the hospital's nursing faculty staff.

Figure 3B shows that emotional exhaustion enforces the association between prosocial motivation and thriving. Both slopes are positive, these lines also show that the thriving rate becomes high by increasing the prosocial motivation, but the thriving rate does not increase with the intensity when the emotional exhaustion rate is high. Therefore, the hospital's higher authorities should try to minimize the emotional exhaustion of nursing faculty staff to maximize their thriving.



**Figure 3** Moderation Effect of Emotional Exhaustion on (A) The Workplace Incivility and Thriving Relationship, and (B) The Prosocial Motivation and Thriving Relationship.

## Discussion

This study focused on the impact of workplace incivility (a negative contextual factor), prosocial motivation (individual level factor) and emotional exhaustion (a chronic state of physical and emotional depletion) on the thriving of nursing faculty. We examined the moderating role of emotional exhaustion on the associations of 1) workplace incivility and thriving, and 2) prosocial motivation and thriving. A cross-level interaction of workplace incivility and emotional exhaustion on thriving, and similarly, the cross-level interaction of prosocial motivation and thriving was conducted empirically. Discussed below findings provides support to the hypothesized model.

First, we found that workplace incivility negatively impacts the thriving of nursing faculty. When the nursing faculty face poor communication, and impolite behavior, it is most probable that they would be exhausted and less likely to absorb and retain the new skills, knowledge and capabilities. Second, we found that prosocial motivation positively impacts the thriving of nursing faculty. Individuals with prosocial motivation actively learn new skills and knowledge by helping their colleagues; hence, a cooperative work environment is generated in this way. Actively learning is a key requirement of nursing faculty as they have to convey and deliver to new as well as practising nurses.

Third, we also found that emotional exhaustion stimulates thriving at work. Individuals in the state of emotional depletion might not thrive due to being worn out and have no control over emotions. Finally, the results of the moderation analyses revealed that emotional exhaustion in both cases (high or low) negatively influences thriving at work. Emotional exhaustion weakens the positive association between prosocial motivation and thriving while strengthening the negative association between workplace incivility and thriving. A point occurs when emotionally exhausted individuals are less bothered by the high workplace incivility. At this stage, thriving reduces but with a low decreasing rate. Consequently, the optimal point for promoting a high level of thriving of nursing faculty would be when there is a low level of both workplace incivility and emotional exhaustion and a high level of prosocial motivation. Next, the conclusion, implications, recommendations, limitations and future suggestions are presented.

## Conclusion, Implications, and Recommendations

The factors influencing a person's ability to thrive at a given task to attain desirable results are relevant for the investigation. The study aims to evaluate the impact of individual-level factors (prosocial motivation), negative contextual factors (workplace incivility), and personal resources (emotional exhaustion) on thriving through a time-lagged study. Furthermore, we explored the moderating role of emotional exhaustion on prosocial motivation-thriving and workplace incivility-thriving relationships. Incorporating the Second Synthetic Grey Relational Analysis (SSGRA) as the backbone tool to measure the relationship within the factors reflected success with extensive insight into the study. The analytical results derived from the data collected from hospital staff members are indicated as follows. A satisfactory hypothesis was attained as SSGRA proved that workplace incivility has a negative relationship with thriving, and prosocial motivation has a positive influence on thriving. The same results were deduced from regression analysis by using SPSS. The effect of incivility on thriving is intensified when one is found under emotional exhaustion, which is very evident, as revealed by GRA. Therefore, rejuvenation should be encouraged much more often.

Additionally, the moderating effect of emotional exhaustion, whether high or low, on employees causes an increase in incivility and creates a decrease in thriving. This means that emotional exhaustion is a factor that eliminates thriving at work. The staff is, therefore, less able to thrive under such conditions.

## Theoretical Implications

The study is important for understanding the thriving in several ways. Firstly, it is reported that when incivility exists at a job, an employee's capacity to thrive is minimized. It emphasizes the significant role of a supportive work environment in fostering employee knowledge and activeness. Secondly, the study also analyzes the role of prosocial motivation as an enabler as it enhances the employee's thriving. Thirdly, we observed that employees with emotional exhaustion attributes could not thrive also, emotional exhaustion moderates the associations between incivility-thriving and prosocial motivation-thriving. Consequently, the study enriches organizational behavior and positive psychology with new evidence.

## Managerial Implications

This study offers several managerial implications for the nursing faculty staff of Pakistani hospitals. First, although a plethora of literature highlighted the negative impact of workplace incivility on thriving (eg, Pearson et al 2001;<sup>1</sup> Porath & Pearson, 2013;<sup>86</sup> Nawaz et al 2020<sup>25</sup>), the examination of this association is in the nascent stage in the health sector (see Table 2), considering this fact, this study examined and found the significant association between workplace incivility and thriving. Hence, hospital' policymakers should not tolerate uncivil behavior to promote an active learning environment. Secondly, administrators must revise their roles and nourish a productive job environment to maximise prosocial motivation. Change begins from the top level; thus, higher authorities should support the conducive job environment in a way that results in employees thriving. Also, at the individual level, emotional exhaustion decreases self-improvement, worsens the organisation's and employees' work in any organization, demotivates the employees to get a competitive edge, and creates a hostile learning environment. Thus, the study recommends that the heads of the departments of health educational intuitions should consider decreasing the emotional exhaustion of nursing faculty staff by minimizing their stress through proper training, real support, and providing an environment that encourages emotional stability. The workforce should be seen as an organization's family, not a machine's parts. In hiring employees, efforts should be aimed at those who look less depressed, and it can be judged with the aid of psychological experts on the panel.

Further, the respondents reported a problem during the survey, ie, top management usually turns a deaf ear to the staff's opinions aimed at improving organizational culture and thriving in the workplace. It was reported that thriving and other such concepts rarely see their application outside textbooks and training halls, and the main obstacle in their organization-wide practice is a lack of support from the top management. It was also found that the younger staff was more enthusiastic in communicating their grievances. Furthermore, it is not easy to judge the extent of employee prosocial motivation for the management while listening to the staff's opinion. Therefore, it is suggested that the organizational leaders improve their listening and communication skills and provide an environment where emotional exhaustion minimizes and prosocial motivation increases. The respondents at a higher hierarchy level argued that decision-making in a workplace where everyone has a distinct perspective complicates the action-oriented communication process with the staff working at a low level of the hierarchy. Thus there is a lack of consensus and uncertainty surrounding the importance of the criteria, which should be considered to improve thriving in the organization. The study recognizes top management's importance in understanding the consequences of thriving and therefore suggests that by utilizing advanced decision-making (eg, uncertainty techniques like Grey Relational Analysis), the literature on thriving is vastly expanded. With staff input, a decision support system can also be built where technology can be added to create a thriving environment. Also, hiring employees with a civil and humanistic track record and punishing uncivil employees can further boost thriving in the workplace. The role of a human resource department, free from political influences, is crucial. The hospitals may design and implement employee mentorship programs, training, and stress relief activities to equip hospital staff with the ability to shape and support a positive attitude, ensure low mental stress and provide the proper guidance, which would facilitate learning on how they can protect themselves from such depressing stages.

## Limitations and Future Research Directions

For future research, this study puts forward the following limitations. To begin with, the respondents were primarily male and from a hospital in Lahore. Therefore, the findings should be generalized cautiously. Thirdly, in our study, the job climate of respondents was civil; future research might attempt other hospitals where the climate could be less civil. Besides, demographic variables like age, gender, education, and marital status (such as job experience and designation) can influence emotional exhaustion; therefore, future studies can incorporate more variables. Also, the sample size can be increased in future studies by improving the diversity of respondents. The cross-sectional time-lagged design was based on emotional exhaustion, prosocial motivation, and incivility. Thus, future research may test causality among variables using longitudinal and experimental designs. We considered one moderator (emotional exhaustion), while future studies can consider the new best fit moderators such as political skills, forgiveness, curiosity and self-efficacy. We analyzed the negative moderation effect of emotional exhaustion on given linkages. The possibility of a positive moderation effect can also be explored in the future. Other techniques like the Smart PLS may also be used in the future.

## Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this work.

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