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The Influence of Organizational Incivility and Job Stress on Childcare Teachers' Turnover Intention: Moderated Mediation Effect of Gratitude

Introduction. The turnover intention of teachers who work at childcare centers and facilities is high in Korea because of workplace incivility and job stress. There is a need for research to reduce turnover intention. This study aimed to investigate whether gratitude moderates the mediating effects of job stress in the association between organizational incivility and turnover intention of childcare teachers.

Study participants and methods. The participants in this study were child-care teachers working in Chungnam province of Korea. The survey participants were 108 (49.1%) in their 40s, 85 (38.6%) in their 30s and older, and 27 (12.3%) in their 50s and older. There were 180 married people (78.6%), and 49 people (21.4%) unmarried. For analysis, we did data analysis using SPSS PC+ Win. Ver. 25.0 and SPSS PROCESS macro Ver. 3.5. We used frequency, reliability, correlation, and moderated mediating effect analysis.

Results. First, organizational incivility, job stress, and turnover intention were significantly correlated. Organizational incivility had a positive correlation with job stress ($r = .412$, $p < .01$) and turnover intention ($r = .536$, $p < .01$), and gratitude was negatively correlated with job stress ($r = -.288$, $p < .01$) and with turnover intention ($r = -.339$, $p < .01$). Second, as the result of analyzing the moderated mediation effect analysis, when the gratitude value was low (M-1SD), medium (M), and high (M+1SD), the conditional indirect effect was significant. Therefore, the moderated mediating effect of gratitude moderating the mediating effect of job stress in the link between organizational incivility and turnover intention was verified.

Practical significance. Incivility acted as a cause of increasing turnover intention, and gratitude acted as a buffer to lower turnover intention. Therefore, this study will be used as policy development data to lower the intention to turnover of childcare teachers who have experienced rudeness and to improve the quality of childcare services.

Keywords: organizational incivility job stress, gratitude, turnover intention, moderated mediation

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Introduction

Forming a turnover intention from a job necessarily precedes a person's doing so, which then faces the employer with the problem of resignation, that is, needing to replace the person who has resigned. The negative attitude that accompanies a turnover intention can reduce the efficiency of the organization because such negativity can make it difficult to provide stable services and can worsen the quality of services [1; 2]. Work-related harassment [3], and incivility in the workplace are related to turnover intention [4], so it is worth noting.

Although organizational incivility is a major factor that leads to a turnover intention, rude behavior is often overlooked in organizations because of organizational culture or hierarchical relationships [5]. Previous studies have confirmed only that incivility at work affects turnover intention in various places [4], and studies on the relationship between organizational incivility and turnover intention even if it is important are insufficient.

There is also a lack of research on how organizational incivility influences turnover intention. Given that the human rights and welfare of workers are important in the workplace, a new discussion and concrete research on the relationship between organizational incivility and turnover intention is very much needed.

We hypothesize that organizational incivility will be related to job stress. Most previous studies have reported that high job stress causes various social problems. In particular, concerning organizational incivility, not only client violence but also the violence of colleagues and superiors causes the job stress and burnout of social workers [6; 7; 8].

Service industries, such as hotels, restaurants, and aviation, are classified as industries in which stress is caused by frequent contact with customers and the use of emotional labor [9]. Among them, the role required of childcare teachers in educational service institutions is multidimensional, but social recognition and treatment are relatively low. In this situation, we can predict that the job stress experienced by childcare teachers may be worse than for workers in other fields [10].

However, job-stress research in Korea has focused on how job stress not only worsens productivity and job performance but also increases turnover intention [11]. However, we do not focus on investigating the basic causal relationship between organizational incivility and turnover intention, but rather investigate the mediating role of job stress in the association between organizational incivility and turnover intention.

Gratitude has recently become an important research topic in the fields of counseling and psychology, as well as in those of education, social welfare, nursing, children and adolescents, and business administration. People who feel grateful had better life satisfaction, subjective well-being, and positive emotions, but had negative correlations with anger, aggression, depression, anxiety, jealousy, and stress [12]. If gratitude plays a buffering role, we can predict that it may be a useful moderator for mitigating negative emotions such as psychological burnout [13].

As such, gratitude often emerged as a moderating variable in recent years, but it was difficult to find a study showing that gratitude played a moderating role in the link between job stress and organizational incivility, or a moderated mediating role in the link between organizational incivility and turnover intention. However, since gratitude is considered

to moderate the relationship between job stress and turnover intention, we intend to comprehensively analyze whether it reduces job stress and whether it plays a moderated mediating role in the path between organizational incivility, job stress, and turnover intention.

In previous studies, the relationship between organizational incivility, job stress, gratitude, and turnover intention was partially examined, but the relationships between them were not comprehensively verified using a single model and were limited in that 'when' and 'how' the main variables work was not properly identified. Therefore, we would like to explain two reasons why this study is important.

First, we want to understand how turnover intention originates. It is necessary to break away from the simple logic that turnover intention can result from an experience of organizational incivility, and then to clarify a specific process between organizational incivility and turnover intention, that is, a specific process in which organizational incivility to childcare teachers leads to the turnover intention through job stress.

Second, we intend to present an alternative about what could reduce the increase in turnover intention. Since the causal relationship between organizational incivility and turnover intention has been verified in previous studies, it is very meaningful to reduce the turnover intention and expand the discussion of healthy professional life when the human rights of workers become important. In particular, as various government policies for the protection of workers' rights come out, this study would be sufficiently timely.

Therefore, our purpose in this study is to provide policy data that can reduce childcare teachers' turnover intention by identifying the moderated mediation effect of gratitude in the influence of organizational incivility and job stress on childcare teachers' turnover intention.

Theoretical Background

1. Relationship between organizational incivility and turnover intention

The term "incivility" is the opposite of civility and means improper verbal or nonverbal behavior[14]. Looking at the definition of organizational incivility by scholars, we see that incivility in the workplace encompasses low-level verbal or nonverbal abuse that can occur in all human relationships related to work [15]. Incivility can also mean impersonal supervision and abuse within the organization [16].

Although the consensus among scholars on organizational incivility has not yet been reached, most of them agree that incivility is organizational when it occurs in the workplace environment and situation. Taking the opinions of scholars together, we can define organizational incivility as rude verbal or nonverbal behavior that occurs in the workplace.

A study conducted to understand the effect of organizational incivility on workers found it to be negative for all workers because incivility can appear as an organizational form of conflict and harassment when it occurs repeatedly and can affect the performance of organizations and individuals [14; 15].

As a predictor of incivility, resignation results when employees leave the organization [17]. But the turnover intention is a pre-departure stage of resignation; so the two concepts are not the same. Scholars have tried to objectively define turnover intention as being an intent to take action toward resignation, which can predict resignation as a pre-determining and implementing resignation [18].

In other words, the focus was on the voluntary will of employees who were thinking about leaving the current job [19; 20]. Putting these definitions together, we define turnover intention as an attitude or behavioral intention toward resignation.

In previous studies related to resignation, the turnover intention was used as a proxy for resignation rather than measuring resignation directly [2; 14; 21]. Also, since it is not easy to track employees who have left a job, and it is difficult to predict resignation behavior because of a low response rate even if it is investigated, we use the turnover intention, which strongly predicts actual resignation, as an alternative variable [22]. Therefore, we used the scale developed by Mobley[23] to measure turnover intention.

When reviewing the influence of organizational Incivility on turnover intention, from the level of simply measuring turnover intention, we judge that research intended to find specific variables that might reduce turnover intention is steadily progressing in each academic field.

Research on the relationship between organizational incivility and turnover intention shows that disrespect experienced at work is related to turnover intention [4; 24]. In addition, prior studies confirmed that the effect of disrespect at work on turnover intention occurs in various places, such as general companies, hospitals, non-profit organizations, and service organizations [4] Also, impersonal supervisory behavior, which is used as a concept similar to organizational incivility, also affects subordinates' turnover intention [25].

As such, although organizational incivility influences turnover intention, studies that have investigated the relationship between organizational incivility and turnover intention are very limited. Therefore, it is important to study turnover intention from the perspective of organizational incivility. In this study, we are trying to figure out how organizational incivility affects turnover intention and what variables can further reduce the effect in this process. We intend to deal with relationships and roles in an integrated manner.

2. Job stress: Mediating role

Job stress occurs in the process of performing a job and refers to an imbalance between the individual and the environment that occurs when the job role exceeds the individual's ability [26]. In addition, job stress is an environmental reaction of frustration and anxiety caused by the interaction of responses and stimuli by employees [27] and is a negative emotional state experienced by them [28].

Job stress is important because employee stress affects costs for both users and employees [29]. According to previous studies, when the difference between the emotions that workers must use for work and the emotions they feel increases, so that the emotions are inconsistent, stress occurs and the employee eventually becomes unsatisfied with the job [30]. In other words, job satisfaction decreases when job stress rises [31; 32].

In this study, we set job stress as a mediating variable. Prior research showing that job stress mediated the link between organizational incivility and turnover intention confirmed the mediating effect of job stress in the relationship between conflicts with clients, bosses, and colleagues and turnover intention [33]. In addition, similar studies showed that job stress caused by impersonal supervisory behavior was high and that irregular work schedules reduced job satisfaction, resulting in a stronger turnover intention [34].

In order to verify the mediating effect of job stress in the link between organizational incivility and turnover intention, organizational incivility should have a significant influence on job stress, which should have a significant effect on turnover intention. Accordingly, we reviewed studies dealing with organizational incivility, job stress, and turnover intention. First, a study between organizational incivility and job stress confirmed that conflicts with

clients, colleagues, and bosses increase job stress for social workers [7; 8]. In addition, in a study that investigated the relationship between job stress and turnover intention of social workers in elderly welfare facilities, the job stress of social workers was a risk factor that increased turnover intention [35]. In a study on the link between job stress and turnover intention for social workers, job stress also increased turnover intention [36].

As discussed above, we predicted that job stress will play a mediating role in the relationship between organizational incivility and turnover intention. Therefore, we tried to verify the mediating effect.

3. Gratitude: the moderating role

The recent emergence and growth of positive psychology have led many psychologists to pay attention to human strengths and positive aspects. In this process, the value of gratitude was rediscovered, and various empirical research results began to be published [37].

The definition of gratitude is a generalized tendency to recognize the favors of others in a positive experience and respond with positive emotions such as appreciation, as well as a behavioral tendency to extend from appreciation to contribute to the welfare of others [38].

Gratitude is the ability to recognize and appreciate the efforts and consideration of others [39], to recognize and appreciate what one is currently enjoying, and to acknowledge and appreciate that it was not from oneself, but from others. It goes from that heart to looking back at others [40].

Gratitude has recently become an important research topic in many fields. In foreign countries, there are many studies on variables that affect gratitude development [41; 42; 43], and studies of gratitude intervention programs that develop gratitude for infants and elementary school students [44] occupy a large proportion [40].

Gratitude is a personality trait that has a close relationship with subjective happiness and mental health. People who feel gratitude experience social support and improve interpersonal relationships by expressing gratitude to those who have done them favors [45]. In the process of being grateful, people's favors, the positive intentions of others, and social support are more strongly recognized [46].

In addition, the higher the gratitude, the less depression, anxiety, and loneliness were experienced. Negative emotions and emotional sensitivity were also low. and people with high gratitude had various positive traits, such as optimism, extroversion, friendship, and sincerity. It was also reported that satisfaction and well-being were high [37].

There are very few studies analyzing the moderating effect of gratitude in the relationship between job stress and turnover intention, but there have been studies in which gratitude moderates the relationship of other variables. According to previous studies, the higher is gratitude, the higher is life satisfaction, subjective well-being, and positive emotions, whereas negative correlations with anger, aggression, depression, anxiety, jealousy, and stress were found [12]. Particularly, even though gratitude is considered to be a stable temperament, it is of great clinical value [47], because it can be easily improved through various intervention methods and its training is simple [48; 49].

Therefore, if gratitude plays a buffering role, it can be a useful moderator for mitigating negative emotions such as psychological burnout [13]. However, it was difficult to find a study targeting childcare teachers. When looking at these studies, we supposed that there would be a moderating effect in the relationship between job stress and turnover intention and that a moderated mediating effect of gratitude on the relationship between organizational incivility and turnover intention through job stress.

Research method

1. Research Model

Our purpose in this study is to investigate how organizational incivility and job stress affect childcare teachers' turnover intention, and whether gratitude plays a moderated mediating role in the relationship between job stress and turnover intention. Therefore, based on the results of previous research reviews conducted so far, we established the research model in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Conceptualized research model

2. Research subject and data collection method

The subjects of this study were 234 childcare teachers selected by purposive sampling in Korea. We used a survey to collect data. It was conducted for about 8 weeks from the first week of October 2019. Of the collected data, 233 copies were used for analysis.

The survey participants were 108 (49.1%) in their 40s, 85 (38.6%) in their 30s and older, and 27 (12.3%) in their 50s and older. There were 180 married people (78.6%), and 49 people (21.4%) unmarried. The academic background was 139 (61.8%) graduates from junior colleges, 56 (24.9%) graduates from a four-year university, 22 (9.8%) graduates from high school, and 8 (3.6%) graduates from graduate school.

3. Research tools

3.1. Organizational incivility

We measured organizational incivility using a scale developed by Cortina and colleagues [50]. This scale consists of 10 questions about whether you have experienced rude behavior by your boss and colleagues within your organization, using a 7-point Likert scale. The higher the score, the greater the experience of rude speech and demeanor by a boss or co-worker within the organization. In this study, the reliability of organizational rudeness (Cronbach's α) was .955.

3.2. Job stress

We measured job stress through the scale developed by Parker and Decotiis [51] and used by An [52]. The sub-areas of this scale dealt with psychological tension, job insecurity, and excessive work; each question uses a 5-point Likert scale with a total of 13 questions. The higher the score, the higher the job stress. In this study, the reliability of the job stress (Cronbach's α) was .877.

3.3. Gratitude

For gratitude, we used the Korean version of the gratitude scale (K-GQ-6) translated by Kwon et al. [37]. Using the gratitude scale (Gratitude Questionnaire-6: GQ-6) developed by McCullough et al. [47]. Originally, this scale was supposed to use a 7-point Likert scale, but we used a 5-point Likert scale. The higher the score, the higher the gratitude. The reliability of gratitude in this study (Cronbach's α) was .845.

3.4. Turnover intention

We used a scale developed by Mobley [23] to measure turnover intention. This scale consists of a total of 5 questions, each on a 5-point Likert scale. The higher the score, the higher the willingness to leave your current job. In this study, the reliability of turnover intention (Cronbach's α) was .877.

4. Data Analysis

We did data analysis using SPSS PC+ Win. Ver. 25.0 and SPSS PROCESS macro Ver. 3.5. We used SPSS to do frequency analysis, reliability analysis, and correlation analysis between major variables. In addition, we did the moderated mediating effect analysis by using model 14 of the PROCESS macro and used bootstrapping to verify the moderated mediating effect. We designated the number of samples as 5,000 and set the confidence level at 95% when verifying the bootstrap. We set the conditions for confirming the conditional effect as M and $M \pm SD$ and analyzed the mediating and moderating variables after centering the mean.

Results

1. Correlations between major variables and descriptive statistics

We used Pearson's correlation analysis to find out the correlations between major variables; the results are shown in Table 1. Organizational incivility, job stress, turnover intention, and gratitude were significantly all correlated. Organizational incivility had a positive correlation with job stress ($r = .412$, $p < .01$) and turnover intention ($r = .536$, $p < .01$), and gratitude was negatively correlated with job stress ($r = -.288$, $p < .01$) and with turnover intention ($r = -.339$, $p < .01$). In particular, turnover intention and organizational incivility showed the highest correlation coefficient ($r = .536$, $p < .01$), followed by gratitude and organizational incivility ($r = -.517$, $p < .01$).

The descriptive statistics analysis showed that gratitude was higher than the median score of 3, and organizational incivility, job stress, and turnover intention were lower than the median score.

Table 1

Correlation and descriptive statistics

	Organizational incivility	Job stress	Turnover intention	Gratitude	M	SD
Organizational incivility	1				1.6330	.94763
Job stress	.412**	1			2.3537	.73074
Turnover intention	.536**	.506**	1		2.2560	.88672
Gratitude	-.517**	-.288**	-.339**	1	4.0167	.60766

** $p < .01$

2. The moderated mediating effect of gratitude

To grasp the moderated mediating effect by which gratitude moderates the mediating effect of job stress in the relationship between organizational incivility and childcare teachers' turnover intention, we used the SPSS PROCESS macro No. 14 model proposed by Hayes [53], as shown in Table 2 and Figure 2.

Organizational incivility had a significant effect on job stress, a mediating variable (.3174, $p < .001$), and on a dependent variable, turnover intention (.3087, $p < .001$). Therefore, job stress had a mediating effect in the relationship between organizational incivility and turnover intention.

We expected gratitude to moderate the relationship between job stress and turnover intention. The interaction term between job stress and gratitude had a significant negative effect on turnover intention (-.2084, $p < .05$). Thus, gratitude had a buffering effect that reduced the relationship between job stress and turnover intention.

In the relationship between job stress and turnover intention, we confirmed the moderating effect of gratitude, and analyzed the conditional effect of job stress, which according to the gratitude value was significant ($p < .001$) when the gratitude was low ($M-1SD$), medium (M), and high ($M+1SD$). As gratitude increased, the conditional effect of job stress decreased.

We used the Johnson-Neyman method, which is a floodlight method, to analyze in detail the conditional effect significance area of gratitude, which is a moderating variable. In the region where the gratitude value was lower than .9417, the conditional effect of job stress was significant; 88.4% of the total survey subjects fell into this region. However, the conditional effect of job stress was not significant in the areas where the gratitude value was high, including .9417. When gratitude increased, the conditional effect of job stress decreased. In the region where the gratitude was lower than .9417, the conditional effect of job stress was significant.

The result of visualizing the conditional effect of job stress by dividing gratitude, which is a moderating variable, into a high group, a middle group, and a low group is shown in Figure 2. In all three conditions of gratitude ($M \pm SD$, M), turnover intention increased when job stress increased. However, those with less gratitude had a steeper increase in turnover intention as job stress increased than did those with higher gratitude.

Three conditions ($M \pm SD$, M) were investigated according to the value of gratitude to understand the conditional indirect effect on the effect of organizational incivility on turnover intention via job stress. When the gratitude value was low ($M-1SD$), medium (M), and high ($M+1SD$), there was no '0' in the upper and lower limits of the bootstrap, so the conditional indirect effect was significant. Therefore, the moderated mediating effect of gratitude moderating the mediating effect of job stress in the link between organizational incivility and turnover intention was verified.

Table 2

Analysis of the moderated mediating effect of gratitude

Mediating variable model (DV: Job stress)						
Variables	<i>coeffect</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI*	ULCI**
Constant	-.5184	.0873	-5.9413	.0000	-.6903	-.3465
Organizational incivility	.3174	.0462	6.8654	.0000	.2263	.4085

Dependent variable model (DV: Turnover intention)						
Variables	<i>coeffect</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI*	ULCI**
Constant	1.7252	.1081	15.9650	.0000	1.5123	1.9382
Organizational incivility	.3087	.0617	5.0000	.0000	.1871	.4304
Job stress	.4176	.0687	6.0788	.0000	.2823	.5530
Gratitude	-.0744	.0877	-.8480	.3973	-.2472	.0985
Job stress × gratitude	-.2084	.0972	-2.1444	.0331	-.3999	-.0169
Conditional effect of job stress according to gratitude value:						
Gratitude	Effect	<i>se</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI*	ULCI**
-.6089	.5445	.0923	5.8966	.0000	.3626	.7265
.0000	.4176	.0687	6.0788	.0000	.2823	.5530
.6089	.2907	.0890	3.2678	.0013	.1154	.4661
Conditional effects of the job stress at values of the gratitude:						
Gratitude	Effect	<i>se</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI*	ULCI**
-1.5160	.7336	.1649	4.4489	.0000	.4087	1.0585
			...			
.8590	.2386	.1061	2.2490	.0255	.0296	.4477
.9417	.2214	.1124	1.9704	.0500	.0000	.4428
.9840	.2126	.1156	1.8384	.0673	-.0153	.4404
Conditional indirect effects of X on Y:						
Gratitude			Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI*	BootULCI**
-.6089			.1729	.0397	.0999	.2548
.0000			.1326	.0326	.0763	.2048
.6089			.0923	.0382	.0282	.1783

*LLCI = The lower bound of the indirect effect within the 95% confidence interval

**ULCI = The upper bound of the indirect effect within the 95% confidence interval

Figure 2 Analysis of the moderating effect of gratitude

Discussion and conclusion

We conducted this study to verify the moderated mediating effect of gratitude in the path of organizational incivility to turnover intention via job stress. Discussion of the results of the study is as follows.

First, the correlation analysis between major variables showed that there were significant positive correlations between organizational incivility, job stress, and turnover intention. This result is supported by studies showing that the rude behavior experienced by employees has a statistically significant correlation with job stress [54; 55], and that job stress has a positive significant effect on turnover intention [36].

Second, the moderating mediating effect of gratitude was verified from the influence of organizational incivility on turnover intention via job stress. However, it is difficult to find any research results that can support these results. The higher was gratitude, the higher was life satisfaction, subjective well-being, and positive emotions, but there was a negative correlation with anger, aggression, depression, anxiety, jealousy, and stress [12]. These findings support the results of this study.

In other words, the effect of organizational incivility on turnover intention via job stress depends on gratitude, and eventually, as gratitude increases, the effect of organizational incivility on turnover intention gradually decreases. Hence we confirmed that for childcare teachers, a high level of organizational incivility can actually influence job stress and eventually increase turnover intention.

Rather than a basic study that simply confirms the process of organizational incivility → Job stress → turnover intention, we have done a study exploring new alternative variables that can be protected or moderated. In other words, high organizational incivility eventually leads to high turnover intention; a variable to protect it is needed, and gratitude played such a role. For a childcare teacher who experiences too much organizational incivility, if the gratitude is improved, the job stress is lowered and the turnover intention can be lowered.

The conclusion of the study centered on the discussion is as follows.

First, there were significant positive correlations between organizational incivility, job stress, and turnover intention, but gratitude was negatively correlated.

Second, the moderated mediating effect of gratitude was verified from the influence of organizational incivility on turnover intention via job stress. In other words, organizational incivility to childcare teachers affects their turnover intention, and gratitude decreases the effect of the organizational incivility → Job stress → turnover intention pathway.

Given the conclusions of the study, suggestions for further research are as follows.

First, we comprehensively examined the relationship and role of related variables in the relationship between organizational incivility and childcare teachers' turnover intention, and derived policy implications for the reduction of turnover intention. Therefore, we suggest that it is urgent to develop and apply a practical program to reduce turnover intention using the derived mediator of job stress and gratitude as an alternative.

Second, in this study, gratitude moderated the relationship between job stress and turnover intention and played a moderated mediating role in the path from organizational incivility to the turnover intention through job stress. It is necessary to study other variables that can explain the relationship between organizational incivility and turnover intention.

It is also necessary to verify whether gratitude plays an alternative role as protection or moderating variable as in this research.

Nevertheless, we found the moderated mediating effect of gratitude in the path of organizational incivility to turnover intention via job stress, not a dimension that reveals the causal relationship for a simple path but to identify the process and propose an alternative to it. It is significant in that the academic discussion has been expanded and a new model for reducing childcare teachers' turnover intention has been tested.

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