Breaking the Chains: Addressing Workplace Mistreatment for a Healthy and Respectful Professional Environment.

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OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH | Kemmy Business School

HSA
An tÚdarás Sláinte agus Sábháilteachta
Health and Safety Authority

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Workplace
mistreatment

Workplace Mistreatment

It is a "specific, antisocial variety of organisational deviance, involving a situation in which one [individual] takes counternormative negative actions, or terminates normative positive actions, against another member (Cortina & Magley, 2003, p. 247).

Types of workplace mistreatment

Antisocial Behaviours

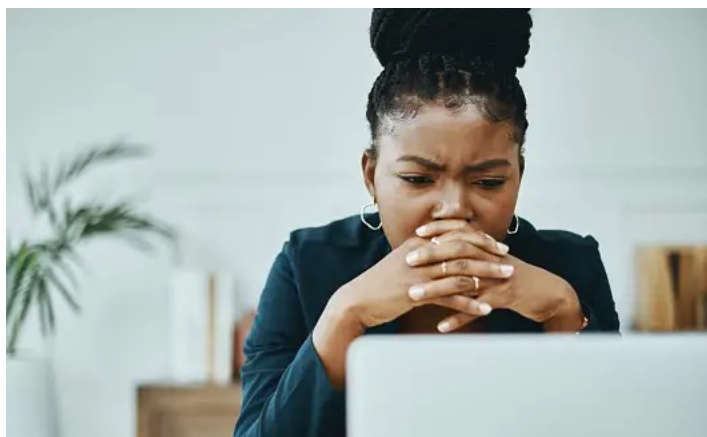Deviant Behaviours

Violence

Aggression
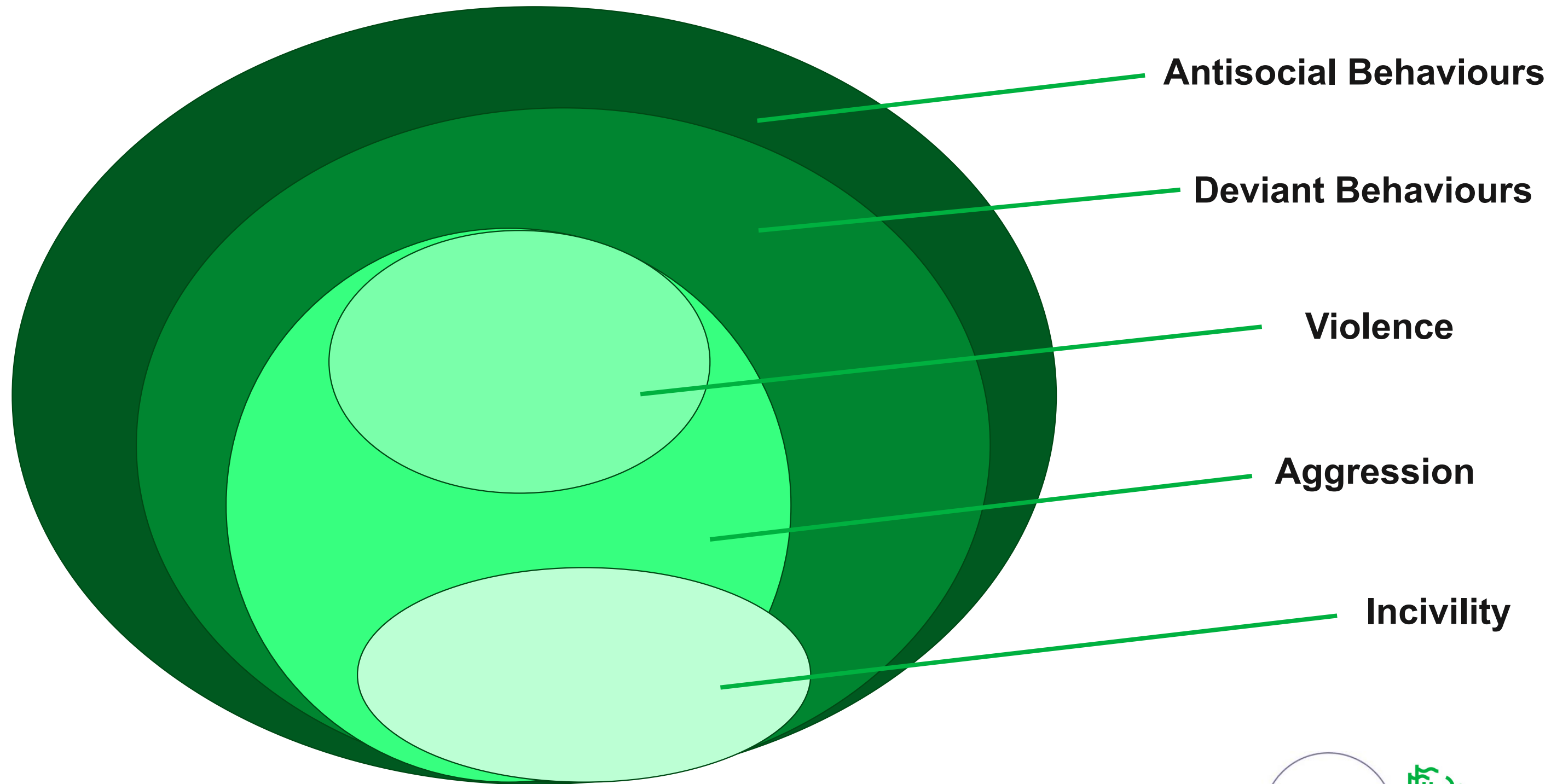
Incivility

Workplace Incivility

Mild discourteous behaviours in which the desire to harm another person is unclear (Andersson & Pearson, 1999)

It differs from other forms of workplace mistreatment
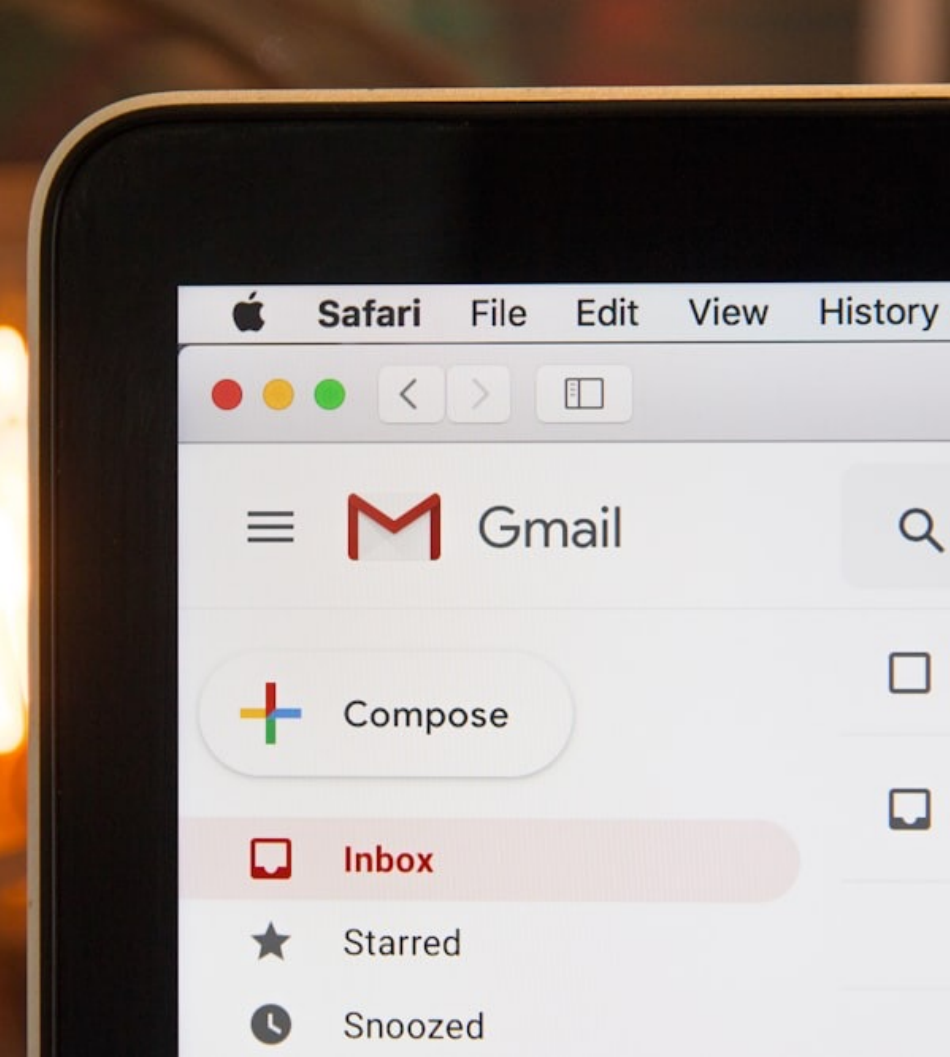
Unclear Intent

Low-intensity

Can be perpetrated by anyone
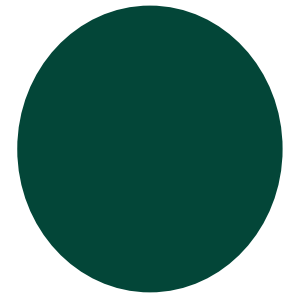
Examples of Workplace Incivility

Incivility research is a growing body of work

The impact on employee well-being

- **Low levels of energy** (Giumetti *et al.*, 2013)

- **Reduced optimism** (Bunk & Magley, 2013)

- **Increased negative emotions** (e.g., Sakurai & Jex, 2012; Yaranon *et al.*, 2024)

- **Stress** (e.g., Oyeleye *et al.*, 2013)

- **Emotional exhaustion** (e.g., Sliter *et al.*, 2010)

- **Effects spill over at home** (e.g., Lim *et al.*, 2018; Pluut *et al.*, 2022)

The impact on performance

- Workplace incivility impairs job performance by weakening the workability of nurses (Zhang *et al.*, 2018)

- Psychological well-being mediates the relationship between workplace mistreatment and job performance (Mehmood *et al.*, 2024).

- Relationship of co-worker incivility and job performance via emotional exhaustion (Rhee *et al.*, 2017).

The impact on the organisation

- Certain work conditions can increase susceptibility to workplace incivility and can lead to adverse outcomes for organisations (Welbourne & Sariol 2017).

- Reciprocal (cross-lagged) association between co-worker incivility and organisational inefficiency (Viotti, Essenmacher, Hamblin & Arnetz, 2018).

- Incivility has a pronounced daily impact on employees' exhaustion and turnover intention (Niven *et al*., 2022).
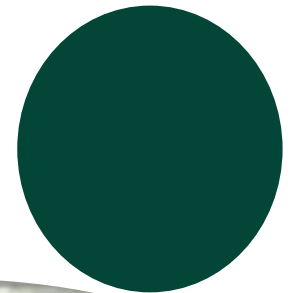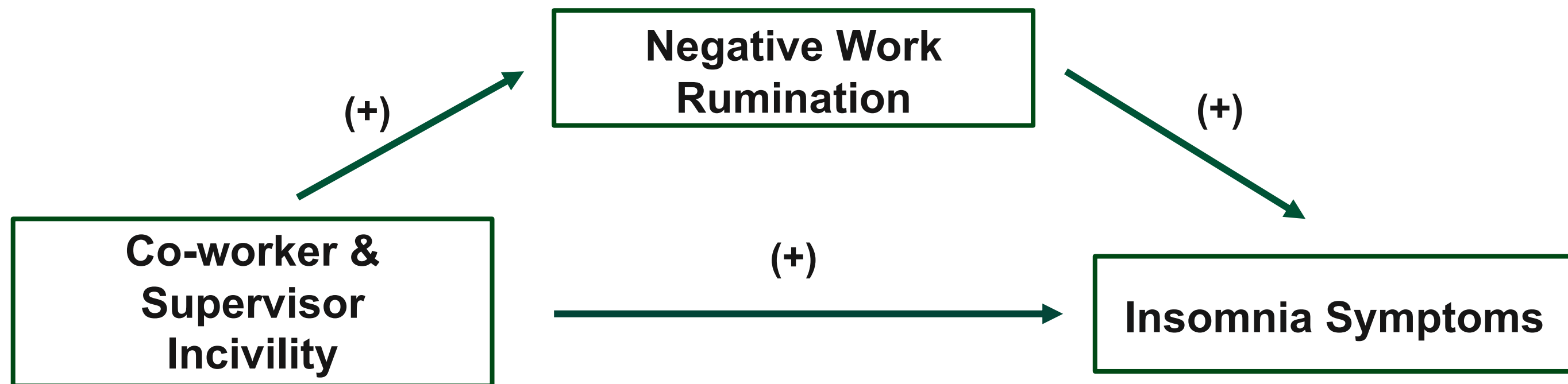
These are mild
discourteous
behaviours, but why
do they impact a
person so much?

Negative Rumination

The role of rumination

Demsky et al. (2019) investigated the indirect effect of workplace incivility on insomnia symptoms via negative work rumination
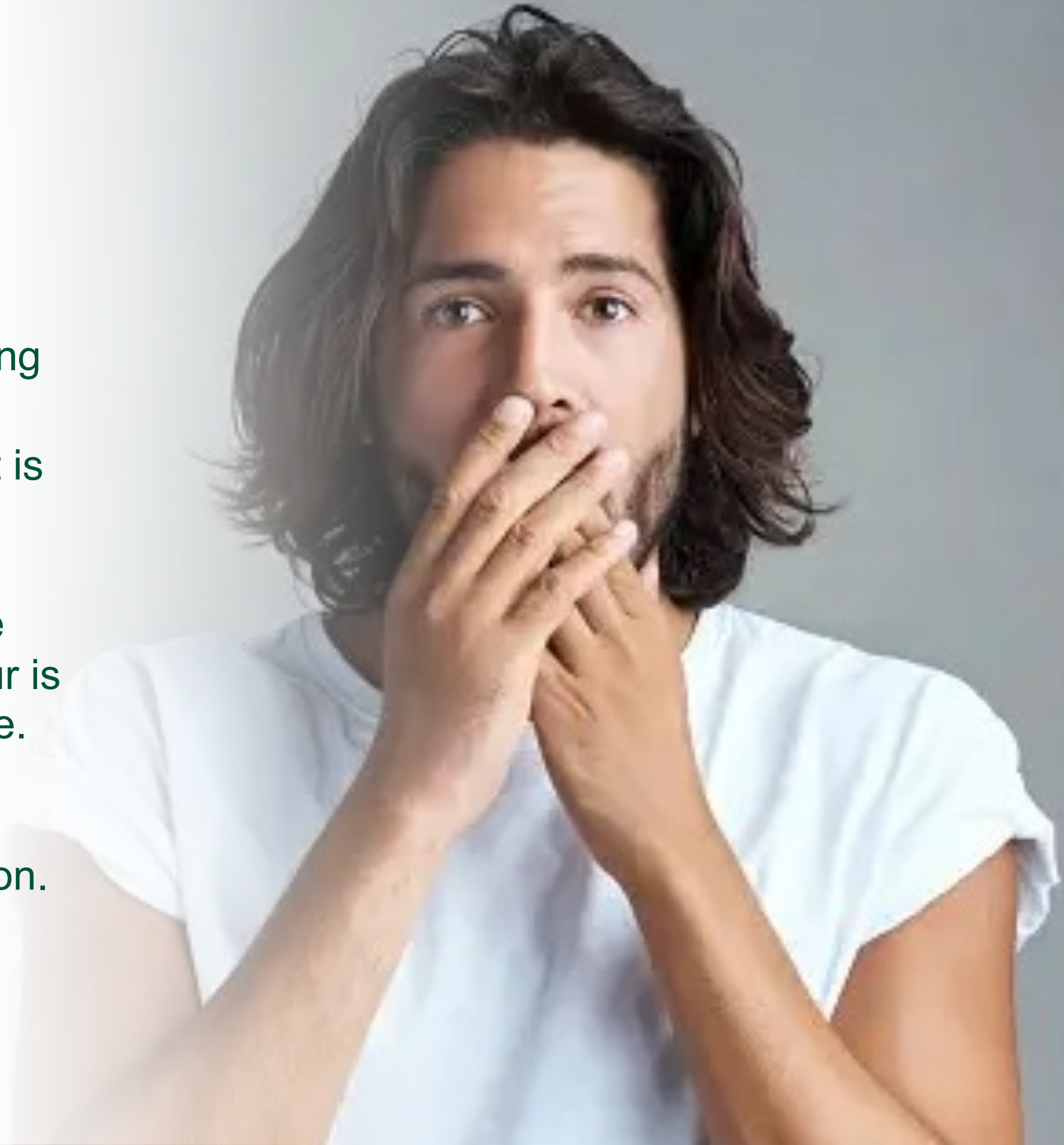
Negative Work Rumination

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Co-worker & Supervisor Incivility

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Insomnia Symptoms

Perpetrator's Point of View

Unaware that they are being uncivil – may be true

Attribute that the recipient is too sensitive

Its mildness is one of the reasons why such behaviour is pervasive in the workplace.

Covert way to carry out harassment or discrimination.

Sources of Incivility

- Uncivil episodes can be experienced from people within and outside the organisation (e.g., Wilson & Holmval, 2013)

- Research has focused on experiencing such behaviour from organisational insiders.

- Our understanding of insider incivility and its negative impact on employee well-being is more profound than outsider incivility.

Outsider Sources
(e.g., patients, customers)
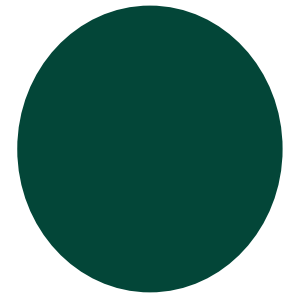
Insider Sources
(e.g., co-workers & supervisors)

My PhD Research

- **Overall Aims**: Investigate the differential effects of insider and outsider sources of workplace mistreatment (e.g., incivility) on employee well-being; examine the potential mitigating effect of personal resources (e.g., self-efficacy and resilience).

- **Study 1**: Conducted in the healthcare setting.
  - Tested (a) the impact of mistreatment frequency by healthcare workers from two sources, and (b) potential moderating roles of self-efficacy and resilience
  - 145 Irish healthcare workers
  - Three surveys (separated by 1-week intervals)
  - Trait resilience and self-efficacy (Time 1), mistreatment from the two sources (Time 2), and affective ill-being (Time 3).
  - Mistreatment frequency from insider sources predicted affective ill-being.
  - There was a significant interaction between self-efficacy and insider mistreatment frequency in predicting affective ill-being, but in an unexpected direction.

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My PhD Research

The positive relationship between insider mistreatment frequency and affective ill-being was **stronger at high levels compared to low levels** of self-efficacy.

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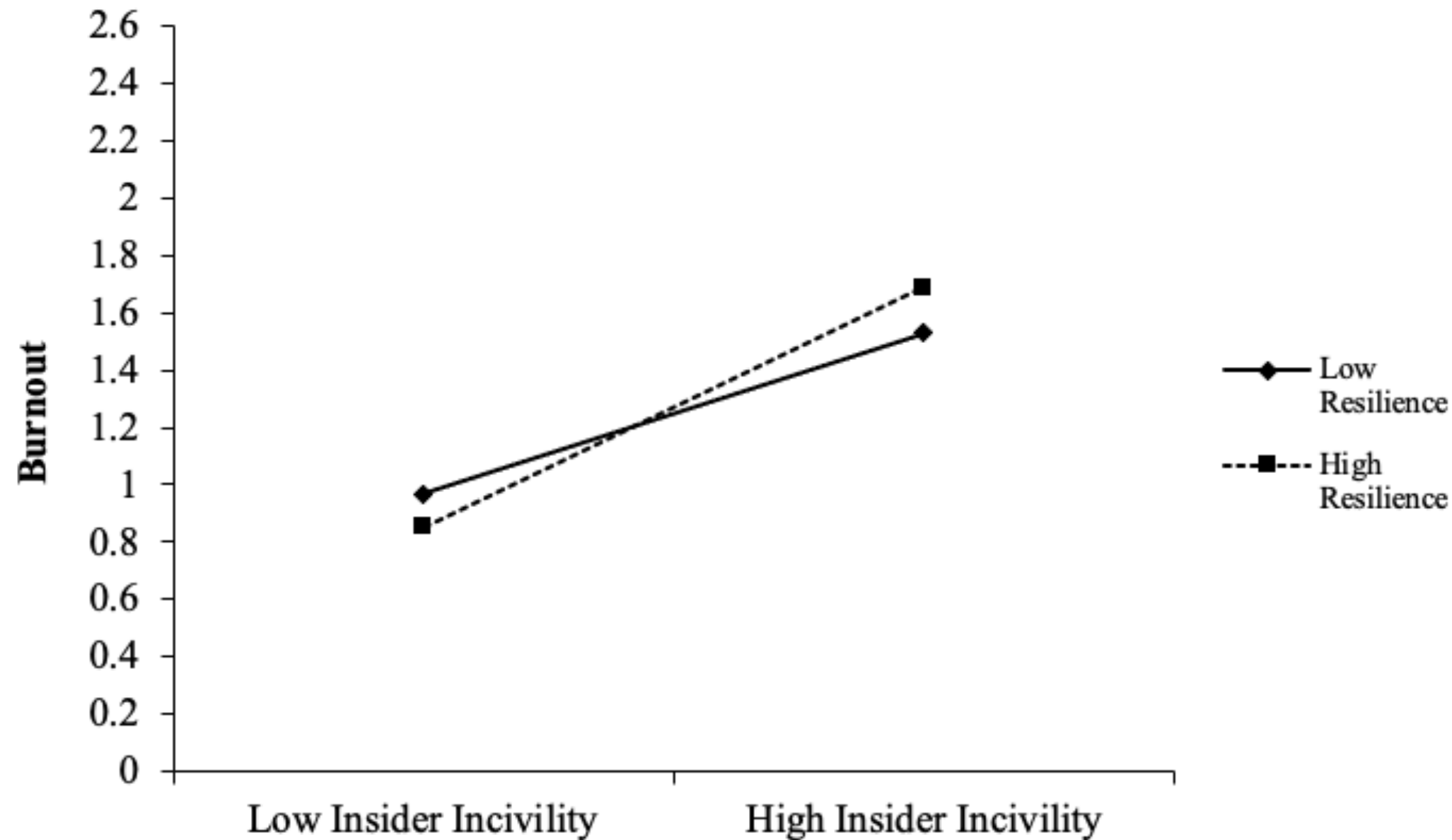
My PhD Research

- **Study 2**: Conducted in the education setting.
  - Tested (a) how experienced incivility from co-workers versus pupils' parents differentially relates to burnout and (b) potential moderating roles of self-efficacy and resilience.
  - 205 primary, secondary and special education teachers in Ireland
  - Two surveys (separated by 2 weeks)
  - Trait resilience and self-efficacy, and the two incivility sources (Time 1), burnout (Time 2)
  - Both sources predicted burnout. **Insider sources** had a stronger effect.
  - There was a significant interaction between resilience and insider incivility in predicting burnout but in an unexpected direction.

My PhD Research

The positive relationship between insider incivility and burnout was **stronger at high levels compared to low levels** of resilience.

Submitted and under review

My PhD Research

Key Findings and Discussion

- Integrated both sources of mistreatment in the analyses
  - insider sources had a stronger impact on well-being

- Interpersonal relations among co-workers
  - less transient
  - necessitate more frequent interactions than organisational outsiders.

- Elicits feelings of injustice
  - violates the norms of professionalism and respect.

- Mistreatment from organisational outsiders as **part of their job**.

Can these mild rude behaviours escalate to intense forms of workplace mistreatment?
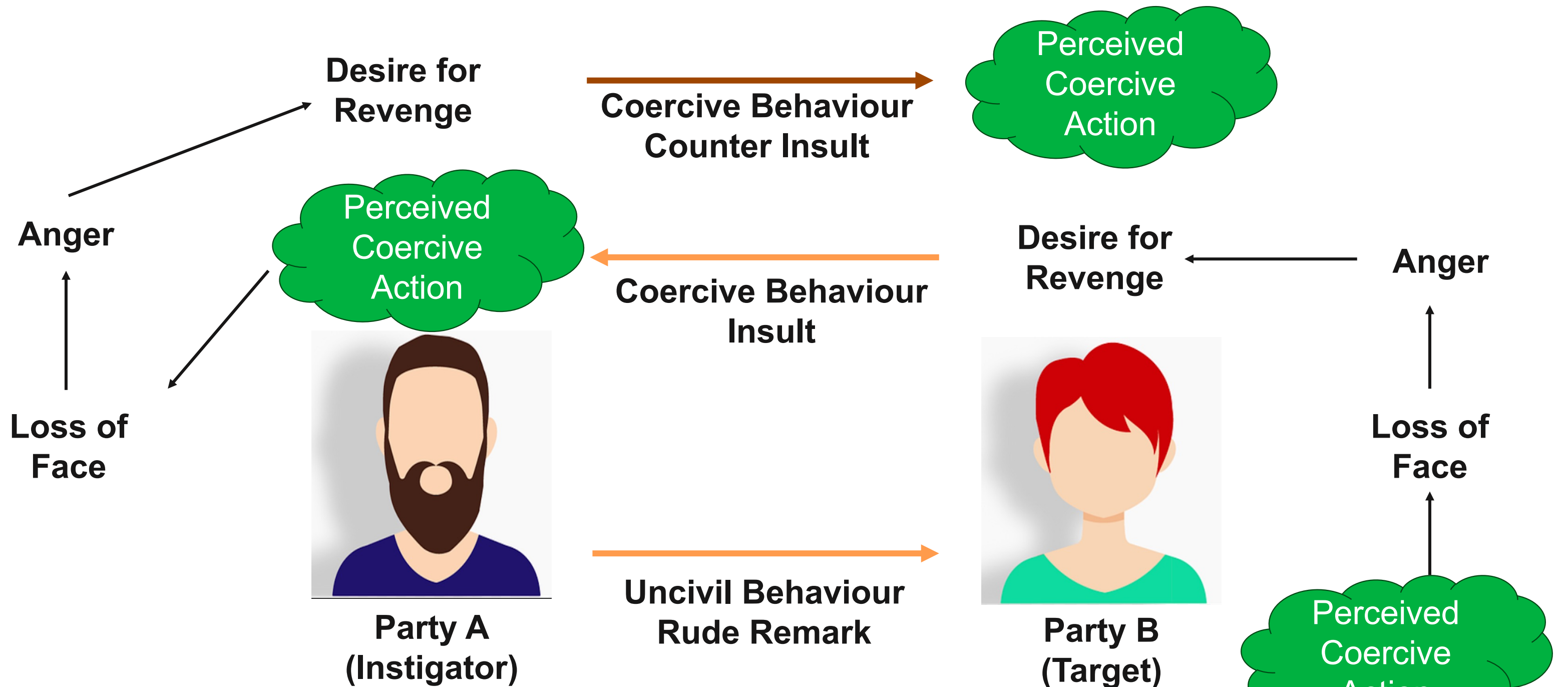
Incivility spiral

Departure Point

Desire for Reciprocation

Uncivil Behaviour Rude Remark

Departure Point

Negative Affect

Perceived Incivility

Uncivil Behaviour Thoughtless Act

Desire for Reciprocation

Negative Affect

Interactional Injustice

Party A (Instigator)

Uncivil Behaviour Thoughtless Act

Party B (Target)

Interactional Injustice

Perceived Incivility

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Incivility spiral

Incivility is a social stressor in the workplace

How can we tackle this in organisations?

Awareness

- Delineating what is acceptable behaviour and not.

- Implementation of policies

- Critical incidents
  - Create a taxonomy of unprofessional behaviours (Cullen *et al.*, 2021)
  - Potential opportunity for practitioners to draw strategy.

# How can we tackle this in organisations?

Simulation Training

- Watters and colleagues (2015)

- Interprofessional communication training using computer-generated scenarios

- The intervention led to improvement in their perceived abilities related to communication and teamwork.

How can we tackle this in organisations?

Civility Training

- Civility is an essential part of the organisational climate and influences critical organisational outcomes.

- CREW Intervention (Osatuke *et al.*, 2009).

- Identify strengths and areas for improvement with regard to civility.

- Effectiveness (e.g., Leiter *et al.*, 2012)
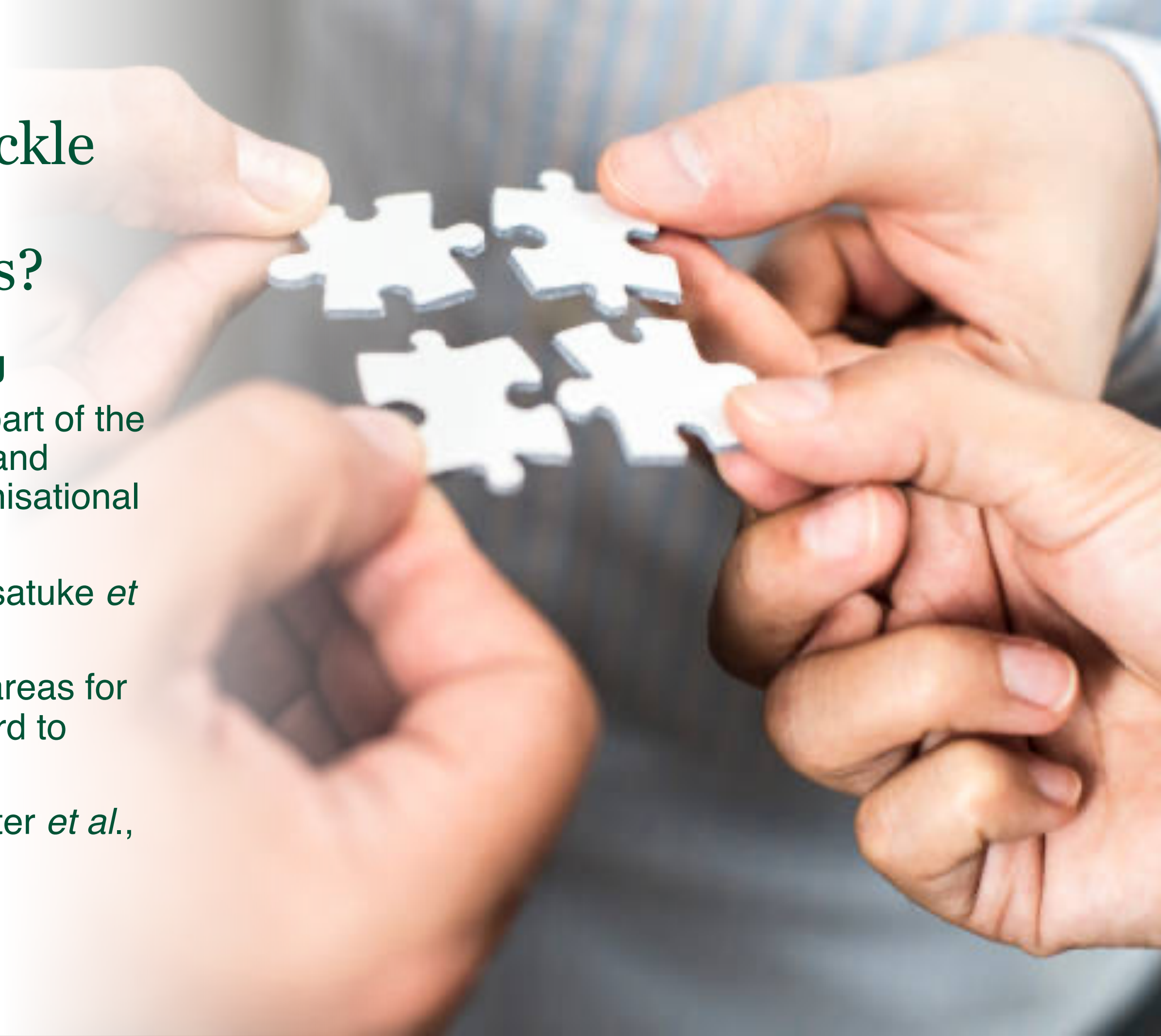
Conclusion

- Work is a social activity.
- Organisations depend on positive employee relations → effectiveness and productivity.
- Incivility remains prevalent.
- The critical role of management in the promotion of a respectful and professional working atmosphere.
  - Education and interventions

Thank you

Questions?

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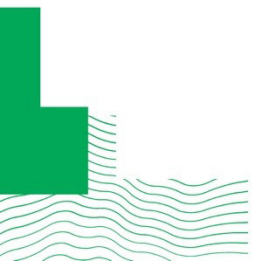
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