



Interpersonal Deviance Among Co-Workers: The Role of Targets' Psychological Characteristics in Perceived Targeting

Ghislaine A. Vierstraete

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Department of Psychology
University of Groningen
Examiner/Daily supervisor:
D.P.H. Barelds

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Abstract

Interpersonal deviance (i.e., low-intensity, interpersonally harmful behaviour that violates social norms of mutual respect) remains a persistent challenge in organizational settings, with significant implications for employee well-being and organizational functioning. Although prior research has largely focused on identifying the characteristics of the instigators of such behaviour, less attention has been paid to whether target characteristics affect how targets experience such behaviour. This study adopts a novel perspective by investigating which psychological characteristics make employees more susceptible to feeling targeted by subtle deviant acts from co-workers. A cross-sectional study was conducted among 260 working adults to examine the role of self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal deviance instigation as psychological predictors of perceived targeting. Personal sense of power was included as a potential mediator in these relationships. The results indicate that higher self-esteem is associated with reduced perceptions of being targeted. Additionally, employees who frequently engage in deviant behaviour also report higher levels of perceived deviance from co-workers, highlighting the reciprocal and cyclical nature of subtle forms of interpersonal deviance. These findings underscore the fluidity of instigator–target roles and emphasize the need for early organizational interventions. Providing employees with tools to regulate emotions and communicate effectively may help prevent the escalation of deviant behaviour and reduce its harmful impact.

Keywords: interpersonal deviance, instigator, target, target characteristics, individual differences

Interpersonal Deviance Among Co-Workers: The Role of Targets' Psychological Characteristics in Perceived Targeting

Interpersonal deviance constitutes a pervasive challenge in organizational life (Freedman et al., 2024; Martin & Zadinsky, 2022). Extensive research has documented the wide-ranging negative consequences associated with experiencing interpersonal deviance for both employee well-being and organizational functioning (Alsadaan et al., 2024; Chris et al., 2022; Han et al., 2022; Li et al., 2021; Omotoye et al., 2024; Turek, 2023; Yao et al., 2022). While prior studies have largely focused on the psychological traits that drive the instigation of deviant behaviour (Ellen et al., 2021; Hershcovis et al., 2007; Pletzer et al., 2019), considerably less attention (Milam et al., 2009) has been directed toward the psychological characteristics that render individuals more susceptible to becoming targets of such behaviour. Importantly, previous research suggests that it is not the mere occurrence of objectively deviant behaviour, but rather the subjective experience of being targeted, that plays a central role in driving such negative outcomes (Karim et al., 2015; Köhler et al., 2018; Thornton-Lugo & Munjal, 2018; Vie et al., 2010). This experience is not determined solely by whether deviant acts occur, but by how individuals perceive and interpret such behaviour as well. Accordingly, one potential explanation is that a predisposition to interpret deviant behaviour as malicious may increase one's susceptibility to feeling targeted by such behaviour (Karim et al., 2015; Vie et al., 2010). As such, individual interpretation plays a central role in determining whether individuals feel targeted, highlighting the importance of examining the psychological characteristics that shape how deviant behaviour is interpreted. Identifying such psychological antecedents can provide practitioners with leverage points to disrupt harmful dynamics, thereby strengthening the case for prevention strategies in the context of interpersonal deviance. Despite this relevance, research on the psychological underpinnings of the subjective experience of interpersonal deviance remains scarce.

The present study seeks to address this gap by investigating how employees' psychological characteristics relate to their subjective experience of interpersonal deviance. Specifically, it examines three psychological variables identified in prior research as potentially influential: self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal deviance instigation. In addition, employees' personal sense of power is considered as a potential mediating variable that may help explain how these characteristics shape employees' perceptions of interpersonal deviance.

Interpersonal Deviance Among Co-Workers

Research on interpersonal deviance originates from the broader literature on workplace deviance. Workplace deviance is defined as “voluntary behaviour that violates significant organizational norms and in so doing threatens the well-being of an organization, its members, or both” (Robinson & Bennett, 1995, p. 556). Two distinct types of workplace deviance can be distinguished based on the target of the deviant behaviour: *interpersonal deviance*, aimed at individuals within the organization, and *organizational deviance*, directed toward the organization itself (Fox and Spector, 1999). Additionally, it can be categorized according to severity, ranging from minor to serious instances of deviant behaviour (Robinson and Bennett, 1995). The present study focuses specifically on minor forms of interpersonal deviance, which can be defined as low-intensity, interpersonally harmful behaviour that violates social norms of mutual respect (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). It encompasses minor actions characterized as rude and discourteous, often with ambiguous intent to cause harm (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Examples include engaging in gossip, exhibiting favouritism and unjustly attributing blame to co-workers for errors. The present study focuses exclusively on deviance among co-workers to ensure relative equality in positional hierarchy and to minimize potential power imbalances that may affect behaviour.

A substantial body of research has documented the detrimental consequences of experiencing interpersonal deviance for employee well-being and organizational functioning, including affective, attitudinal, health-related, and behavioural outcomes (Alsadaan et al., 2024; Chris et al., 2022; Han et al., 2022; Omotoye et al., 2024; Turek, 2023; Yao et al., 2022). Despite its importance, minor forms of interpersonal deviance remain a particularly complex subject of study due to two defining characteristics (Karim et al., 2015; Köhler et al., 2018; Thornton-Lugo & Munjal, 2018). First, the interpretation of such behaviour is highly subjective: what one individual perceives as harmful may be dismissed as harmless by another. In this sense, feeling targeted reflects *perceived* targeting: an individual's subjective experience of being a target of deviant behaviour. Second, minor deviance is often marked by ambiguity of intent. Although targets may interpret certain actions as intentional, this does not necessarily indicate a deliberate desire to cause harm. The instigator's motivation may remain unclear, making it difficult to determine whether the behaviour was purposeful or incidental.

Accordingly, the experience of being targeted should not be viewed solely as the outcome of objectively unjust acts; it may also reflect an individual's predisposition to interpret deviant behaviour as malicious. This does not imply that targets are to blame, but it underscores that personal interpretation plays a role in shaping one's sense of being targeted. Thus, being targeted is not a simple binary but depends on how individuals interpret and evaluate deviant behaviour. Identifying the psychological factors that shape these interpretations is therefore crucial, as they may explain why some employees feel acutely targeted while others do not. Among the factors that may be particularly relevant are self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal deviance instigation, which may shape how individuals perceive deviant behaviour and, ultimately, their susceptibility to feeling targeted. Henceforth, the term 'perceived targeting' will be used to denote an individual's subjective experience of whether they feel targeted by deviant behaviour.

Psychological Predictors of Perceived Targeting

Self-Esteem

One psychological characteristic that may help explain how individuals interpret deviant behaviour is *self-esteem*, commonly defined as an individual's overall evaluation of their own worth or value (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Self-esteem comprises both stable and variable components. The stable component, referred to as *trait self-esteem*, reflects an individual's general and enduring tendency to evaluate themselves positively or negatively. In contrast, *state self-esteem* captures temporary fluctuations in self-worth that occur in response to situational factors, relative to one's typical baseline level (Adiyaman & Meier, 2022). The present study focuses on trait self-esteem, assessing individuals' long-term self-evaluations.

Self-esteem is as a key determinant of employee well-being and interpersonal functioning, shaping how individuals interpret and navigate their daily workplace experiences (Krauss & Orth, 2022; Kuster et al., 2013). According to sociometer theory, self-esteem acts as an internal gauge that monitors our perceived social standing, signalling how accepted or valued we feel by others (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Hence, self-esteem fluctuates in response to how individuals perceive their relational value within a group. In the workplace, employees continuously monitor their relational value; whether they feel included, appreciated, or rejected by their co-workers. Accordingly, when employees view themselves as valued members of their social environment, their self-esteem tends to rise. Conversely, feelings of social exclusion or threats to belongingness lead to lower self-esteem. This regulatory function of self-esteem is particularly relevant to interpersonal deviance, as individuals' typical assessments of their relational value may shape how they interpret and respond to deviant behaviour in the workplace.

Building on this reasoning, previous research demonstrates that lower self-esteem is associated with various forms of experienced incivility in the workplace, such as workplace

ostracism (Bedi, 2021), incivility (Adiyaman & Meier, 2022), and cyberbullying (Kim & Choi, 2021). One possible explanation is that employees with lower self-esteem tend to perceive themselves as having lower relational value, making them more sensitive to potential rejection signals from co-workers. In line with this, prior research shows that individuals with low self-esteem tend to experience greater emotional distress in response to negative social feedback (Brown, 2010) and show an enhanced attentional bias toward cues relating to social rejection compared to those with high self-esteem (Guan et al., 2017; Li et al., 2012). Thus, employees with lower self-esteem may be more sensitive to potentially negative or socially threatening cues in their work environment, predisposing them to interpret deviant behaviour from co-workers as malicious or personally targeted. Consequently, individuals with lower self-esteem may be more susceptible to feeling targeted by deviant behaviour, and may therefore report experiencing a higher frequency of such behaviour by co-workers compared to those with high self-esteem.

H₁: Self-esteem is negatively associated with perceived targeting.

Emotional Intelligence

Among the psychological factors that may shape perceptions of deviant behaviour, *emotional intelligence* (EI) has received considerable attention. EI is defined as the capacity to recognize and understand both one's own emotions and those of others, distinguish between different emotional states, and apply this awareness to inform one's thoughts and behaviours (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). The present study focuses on trait EI¹. EI encompasses cognitive abilities related to the recognition, interpretation, and management of emotions, and reflects variation in individuals' capacity to effectively navigate and resolve emotion-related challenges (Côté, 2014; Mayer & Salovey, 1997). These abilities include: (1) recognizing and interpreting emotions in oneself and others, (2) using emotions to inform thinking and

¹ For an overview of the discussion on trait vs. ability EI, see Côté (2014).

problem-solving, (3) generating emotional states that fit situational demands, and (4) understanding the cause and effect relationships between events and emotional responses (Fine et al., 2003; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Yip & Côté, 2013). Within EI, emotion regulation is considered particularly relevant for understanding perceived targeting (MacCann et al., 2011; Rueda et al., 2022; Schokman et al., 2014; Shaheen et al., 2023). *Emotion regulation* refers to the ability to deliberately modify the intensity or duration of one's own or others' emotions (Gross, 2013). It involves three key processes: (1) setting regulation goals by evaluating whether one's current emotional state is adaptive (Mayer & Salovey, 1997), (2) selecting regulation strategies suited to situational demands (Barrett & Gross, 2001), and (3) implementing these strategies (Sheppes et al., 2014).

Previous research demonstrates that EI is central to navigating interpersonal dynamics (Karim et al., 2015; Lopes et al., 2003; O'Boyle et al., 2011; Schutte et al., 2001; Schutte & Loi, 2014). Given this role in social functioning, EI may also shape how individuals manage deviant behaviour. Support for this notion comes from adolescent bullying research, which shows that individuals with higher EI are less likely to become victims of bullying as their ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions enables them to handle intimidating situations more effectively (León-Del-Barco et al., 2020; Schokman et al., 2014; Sorrenti et al., 2024). EI is also linked to more adaptive coping with stress: individuals high in EI are more likely to employ constructive emotion regulation strategies (e.g., cognitive reappraisal) which buffer the negative emotional impact of adverse events (MacCann et al., 2011; Rueda et al., 2022; Schokman et al., 2014). Supporting this, Shaheen and colleagues (2023) found that adaptive regulation strategies reduce enduring psychological distress following cyberbullying. Conversely, individuals with lower EI may struggle to regulate their emotional responses effectively, leaving them more vulnerable to enduring psychological distress (Rueda et al., 2022). Consistent with this reasoning, Valera-Pozo and colleagues (2021) found

that bullying victims exhibited poorer emotion regulation and lower psychological adjustment in response to negative events.

Accordingly, similar mechanisms may apply to minor forms of interpersonal deviance among co-workers. Since EI enables individuals to effectively manage intimidation and cope with stress, it is likely to also help them respond more adaptively to deviant behaviour from co-workers. Individuals high in EI are better able to identify and make sense of their emotional reactions triggered by such events (e.g., anger, frustration, or hurt) and to regulate these emotions through appropriate strategies during and after the incident. As a result, they navigate the deviant interaction in such a way that minimizes enduring psychological distress and maintains a more adaptive emotional state. This regulatory process may lower their likelihood of interpreting the instigator's deviant act as malicious, thereby protecting against feelings of being targeted. Supporting this, Kirk and colleagues (2009) found that employees with lower EI were more likely to intentionally report higher rates of malicious behaviour from co-workers, underscoring the role of EI in perceived targeting (Karim et al., 2015).

Taken together, this implies that EI may act as a protective factor against the experience of being targeted by deviant behaviour. By enabling individuals to recover more quickly from negative emotions after deviant encounters, EI fosters psychological detachment from the incident and reduces the tendency to attribute harmful intent to others' behaviour. Conversely, individuals with lower EI may struggle to regulate their emotions, leading to prolonged psychological distress and a heightened sense of being targeted. As such, this heightened reactivity may explain why employees low in EI report experiencing deviant behaviour from co-workers more frequently than those high in EI.

H_{2a}: Emotional intelligence is negatively associated with perceived targeting.

Given the significant role of emotion regulation in the relationship between EI and perceived targeting, it will be examined separately to assess its unique contribution. From this

point forward, ‘overall emotional intelligence’ will be referred to as EI, while ‘emotion regulation’ will continue to be referred to in full.

H_{2b}: Emotion regulation is negatively associated with perceived targeting.

Interpersonal Deviance Instigation

To understand why some individuals are more susceptible to feeling targeted by deviant behaviour, it is also necessary to consider the instigation of such behaviour. Insights from the adolescent bullying literature provide a useful foundation. Previous research shows that victimization is often positively associated with subsequent perpetration, creating a cyclical pattern in which aggression perpetuates over time (Camacho et al., 2021; Li et al., 2025; Walters, 2020). While bullying situations are typically framed in terms of two distinct roles (i.e., victim and perpetrator), these roles are often neither fixed nor mutually exclusive. Individuals who have been victimized may later engage in bullying themselves, highlighting the fluid boundaries between victim and perpetrator (Camacho et al., 2021; Li et al., 2025). Explaining this role shift requires attention to the psychological mechanisms that drive victims to engage in perpetration. Experiencing bullying can constitute a socially threatening event that undermines social standing and disrupts a sense of belonging within peer groups (Park & Metcalfe, 2020). In response, victims may attempt to restore status, cope with stress, or express anger through bullying perpetration as a maladaptive psychological self-regulatory strategy (Chester, 2017), contributing to the escalation and persistence of bullying behaviour over time (Li et al., 2025).

As such, a similar cyclical pattern has been documented in workplace settings. Longitudinal research shows that employees who engage in workplace bullying may later become targets themselves, while those who are targeted may in turn begin to engage in bullying (Vranjes et al., 2022, 2023). Andersson and Pearson’s (1999) model of incivility spirals provides a useful framework for understanding this dynamic. The model

conceptualizes interpersonal mistreatment as a reciprocal process, in which an initial act of incivility provokes retaliatory behaviour, setting off a self-reinforcing cycle of increasingly negative exchanges between two or more parties. The process is typically initiated by a perceived act of incivility, which the target interprets as unjust, leading to negative affect and a retaliatory response in the form of similarly uncivil behaviour. Moreover, retaliation may extend beyond the original dyad: a secondary spiral emerges when the initial target displaces aggression onto uninvolved third parties by modelling the original instigator's behaviour and normalizing such conduct (Marcus-Newhall et al., 2000). In turn, Vranjes and colleagues (2023) argue that individuals who engage in bullying may face social sanctions from their peers as well, which can result in further mistreatment beyond their initial experience.

Accordingly, this pattern may also apply to subtle forms of interpersonal deviance. When an employee experiences deviant behaviour from a co-worker, they may perceive it as unjust and respond with retaliatory behaviour of their own (Park & Martinez, 2022). Over time, this may lead the initial target to adopt such uncivil behaviour more generally, potentially extending their actions beyond the original instigator to uninvolved third parties within their workplace. These third parties may then respond with social sanctions, compounding the individual's initial experience. In this way, the initial target comes to occupy the dual role of both target and instigator, thereby sustaining and spreading a self-reinforcing cycle of interpersonal deviance within their work environment.

H₃: Interpersonal deviance instigation is positively associated with perceived targeting.

The Mediating Role of Personal Sense of Power

To better understand how these psychological characteristics shape experiences of interpersonal deviance, this study examines the *personal sense of power* (PSP) as a potential mediator. PSP refers to an individual's perceived ability to influence others (Anderson et al., 2012). Unlike structural or positional power, PSP is conceptualized as a psychological state: a

subjective evaluation of one's capacity to shape others' thoughts, feelings, or behaviours (Galinsky et al., 2003). PSP is inherently a social-relational construct; an individual's sense of power is always context-dependent and may vary across different relationships (Anderson et al., 2012). For instance, a person may feel highly influential in interactions with a parent, yet perceive limited influence when interacting with a supervisor at work. In workplace settings, this variability carries important implications: employees with a higher PSP are more likely to voice their opinions (Lin et al., 2019), experience fewer internalized negative emotions, and demonstrate reduced susceptibility to coercive or harsh power tactics employed by others (Laslo-Roth & Schmidt-Barad, 2021).

Building on these findings, a high PSP may serve as a protective factor against feeling targeted by deviant behaviour from co-workers. Individuals with greater PSP tend to view themselves as having more control in social encounters (Fast et al., 2009), which can diminish the perceived threat posed by deviant acts. By contrast, those with lower PSP may be more likely to interpret the implicit threat embedded in deviant behaviour as potent, making such behaviour appear more salient and socially threatening. This, in turn, increases the likelihood of compliance in response (Laslo-Roth & Schmidt-Barad, 2021) and may foster the feeling of being targeted. Thus, PSP may buffer individuals from feeling targeted by deviant behaviour by shaping the way such encounters are cognitively and emotionally appraised.

Personal Sense of Power and Self-Esteem

Integrating findings on self-esteem, PSP, and interpersonal deviance, PSP can be proposed as a mediating mechanism linking self-esteem to perceived targeting. When employees feel valued within their work environment, their self-esteem tends to be higher, which in turn may foster a stronger PSP. To exert influence, individuals must view themselves as both capable and deserving of such power; beliefs that are underpinned by high self-esteem (Wojciszke & Struzynska-Kujalowicz, 2007). Because high self-esteem reflects a stable sense

of relational value, it may foster the confidence needed to perceive and enact interpersonal influence, thereby strengthening PSP. Consistent with this reasoning, previous research has shown a positive association between self-esteem and PSP (Wang, 2015; Wojciszke & Struzynska-Kujalowicz, 2007).

Accordingly, higher self-esteem may buffer employees against feeling targeted through a higher PSP. Individuals with greater self-esteem may feel more psychologically equipped to interpret and respond to deviant behaviour without experiencing it as personally threatening. Conversely, those with lower self-esteem may lack confidence in their capacity to influence others, translating into reduced PSP. As a result, deviant behaviour from co-workers may appear more socially threatening, increasing the likelihood of feeling targeted.

H₄: Personal sense of power mediates the relationship between self-esteem and perceived targeting, such that self-esteem is negatively associated with perceived targeting through higher levels of personal sense of power.

Personal Sense of Power and Emotional Intelligence

PSP may also mediate the relationship between EI and perceived targeting. Previous research shows that individuals with higher EI report a greater PSP at work (Schutte & Loi, 2014). This link can be explained by EI's core components (i.e., the ability to perceive, understand, use, and regulate emotions), which enable individuals to navigate social challenges with composure and control. These skills may foster a sense of agency in interpersonal interactions, thereby strengthening PSP. When facing deviant behaviour from a co-worker, individuals high in EI are better able to regulate negative emotions through adaptive strategies, thereby mitigating psychological impact and preserving a sense of agency. This emotional mastery reinforces their perception of influence in social interactions, reducing the likelihood of interpreting deviant behaviour as personally threatening. Instead of viewing themselves as powerless targets, they are more likely to perceive such incidents as

manageable disruptions. In contrast, individuals with lower EI may lack effective regulation skills, leading to prolonged distress, reduced control, and a weaker PSP. As a result, they may be more prone to interpret deviant acts through a malicious lens.

In sum, EI may protect against perceived targeting by enhancing PSP. Through greater emotional regulation and perceived agency, individuals high in EI are less likely to interpret deviant behaviour as personally threatening, thereby buffering against feeling targeted by it.

H_{5a}: Personal sense of power mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and perceived targeting, such that emotional intelligence is negatively associated with perceived targeting through higher levels of personal sense of power.

H_{5b}: Personal sense of power mediates the relationship between emotion regulation and perceived targeting, such that emotion regulation is negatively associated with perceived targeting through higher levels of personal sense of power.

Personal Sense of Power and Interpersonal Deviance Instigation

PSP may also serve as a mediating mechanism between interpersonal deviance instigation and perceived targeting. Although research in this area is limited, emerging evidence offers valuable insights. Vranjes and colleagues (2023) found that employees who engage in workplace bullying may subsequently become targets themselves, often due to escalating conflicts with previously uninvolved co-workers. This aligns with Andersson and Pearson's (1999) concept of secondary spirals, where initial targets retaliate by redirecting aggression toward others. By modelling and internalizing the deviant behaviour of the original instigator, the initial target may start displacing their aggression onto third parties, assuming the role of instigator themselves. Such retaliatory behaviour can damage workplace relationships, leading to conflict and social exclusion (Vranjes et al., 2023). As co-workers withdraw support or avoid collaboration, the instigator's access to social resources declines. As such, this erosion of workplace relationships undermines PSP, as individuals perceive a

loss of influence when they can no longer secure cooperation from others. Diminished PSP may, in turn, increase the likelihood of interpreting deviant behaviour as threatening, heightening perceptions of being targeted by such behaviour.

In sum, engaging in deviant behaviour may erode workplace relationships and thereby reduce PSP, leaving employees more vulnerable to feeling targeted. While most evident in workplace bullying, similar processes may occur in subtler forms of interpersonal deviance, where even mild relational strain can undermine PSP and elevate perceived targeting.

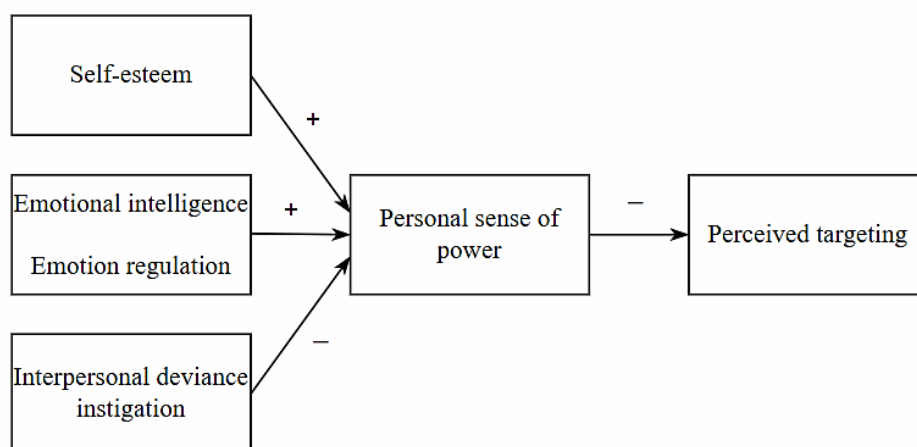
H₆: Personal sense of power mediates the relationship between interpersonal deviance instigation and perceived targeting, such that interpersonal deviance instigation is positively associated with perceived targeting through lower levels of personal sense of power.

The Current Study

The present study aims to achieve two primary objectives: first, to examine the relationship between perceived targeting and self-esteem, EI, and interpersonal deviance instigation as psychological antecedents; and second, to investigate whether PSP mediates these relationships. Based on these objectives, the following model was developed (figure 1). To measure this, a cross-sectional study will be conducted among working adults.

Figure 1

Hypothesized Mediation Model



Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants

Participants were working adults in The Netherlands and the UK. A total of 260 individuals participated in this study. 11 participants were excluded from the dataset due to insufficient response completion, defined as less than 10 percent survey completion. An a priori power analysis revealed a desired sample size of 153 participants.

The complete questionnaire was administered through Qualtrics and subsequently distributed through two separate channels. It was first distributed through the researcher's personal network via social media platforms such as LinkedIn. It was published on 12-3-2025 and available for 83 days. There was no compensation for participating in the study through this channel. A total of 78 participants were collected through this channel. The survey was later distributed through Prolific Academic as well. It was published on 03-06-2025 and available for 1 day. A total of 182 participants were collected through this channel. The estimated time duration to complete the questionnaire was approximately 10 minutes. Participation was voluntary and could be terminated at any moment. After the data collection was completed, the two datasets were merged into one combined dataset. SPSS (version 29.0.1.0) was used to perform the data analysis.

On average, participants were 36.2 years of age ($SD = 11.7$). Of all participants, 51.4 percent were female and 48.6 percent were male. Most participants (84.8 percent) reported having frequent interaction with co-workers, with 63.9 reporting having contact multiple times a day. The majority of participants (88 percent) worked 30 – 39 hours per week, with most having a permanent contract (77.9 percent). Approximately half of the participants (47.4 percent) currently occupied a leadership position. In terms of work location, 34.9 percent worked on-site, 14.1 percent worked fully remote, and 49.4 percent worked in a hybrid model.

Participants' tenure was varied, with 13.3 percent working for less than 1 year at their current employer, 24.9 percent for 1 to 3 years, 19.7 percent for 3 to 5 years, 24.5 percent for 5 to 10 years and 17.3 percent for more than 10 years. Participants represented a wide range of job industries: 14.9 percent worked in healthcare and welfare, 9.2 percent worked in trade and services, 15.7 percent worked in information and communication technology (ICT), 7.6 percent worked in law, security, and public administration, 1.2 percent worked in environment and agricultural sector, 5.6 percent worked in media and communication, 15.3 percent worked in education, culture, and science, 6.8 percent worked in engineering, manufacturing, and construction, 6 percent worked in tourism, recreation, and hospitality, 2.8 percent worked in transport and logistics, and 14.9 percent specified a sector not listed among the predefined categories.

Procedure

On the basis of a checklist developed by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences at the University of Groningen, this study (PSY-2425-S-0217) was exempt from full ethics and privacy review. The participants were provided with information about the content of the study, procedure and approximate time duration beforehand. The participants were asked to read the written consent form and asked for their consent to participate in the study through an opt-in approach question. If the participant did not give consent, participation ended. When the participant had given consent to participate, they were directed to either the Dutch or English version of the questionnaire, according to the preferred language they indicated at the start of the questionnaire.

In the first part of the study, participants were asked to provide demographic information, e.g., age and gender. Additionally, participants were asked to provide information about their current occupation, e.g., working hours and sector type. No personal information was recorded. The first part of the study consisted of 9 items in total.

The second part of the study consisted of assessing the variables of interest. The participants were asked to answer questions about their personal experience with interpersonal deviance, their level of self-esteem, emotional intelligence, their experience with engaging in interpersonal deviance instigation and their personal sense of power. Questions were divided into blocks according to the respective variables being assessed. The second part of the study consisted of 78 items in total. For the full version of the questionnaire, see the Appendix.

Materials

Interpersonal Deviance Instigation

Participants reported the frequency of engaging in deviant behaviour toward co-workers in their current job using an adapted version of the Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (CWB-C) by Spector and colleagues (2006) and the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) by Einarsen and colleagues (2009), combined. Only the CWB-Person subscale of the CWB-C was included, as it specifically measures interpersonal deviance. Five items² were removed from this subscale, as they reflected severe forms of interpersonal deviance, whereas the present study focuses exclusively on mild forms. From the NAQ-R, only one item was included: “Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm”. As this item assesses exposure to deviant behaviour (rather than being an instigator), it was rewritten to the instigator perspective: “Excessively teased or used sarcasm toward someone at work”. The remaining NAQ-R items were not included due to substantial overlap with the CWB-C. The complete measure consisted of 19 items in total, utilising a 5-point frequency scale ranging from (1) *never* to (5) *every day*. The measure consisted of items such as: “Ignored or excluded someone at work”. In the present study, the reliability was Guttman’s $\lambda^2 = .89$ for the

² Items excluded were: Item 33. Verbally abused someone at work; Item 35. Threatened someone at work with violence; Item 36. Threatened someone at work, but not physically; Item 41. Destroyed property belonging to someone at work; and Item 43. Hit or pushed someone at work.

English measure and $\lambda^2 = .95$ for the Dutch measure. A sum score was computed by summing participants' responses to all items, with higher scores indicating greater levels of instigation.

Perceived Targeting

The present study proceeded from the premise that employees who feel actively targeted by deviant behaviour would perceive and therefore report higher frequencies of such behaviour (Kirk et al., 2009). Hence, participants reported the frequency of experiencing deviant behaviour from co-workers in their current job using the same items from the CWB-C and NAQ-R as were used to measure interpersonal deviance instigation. Since the original CWB-C items assess engagement in deviant behaviour (rather than being a target), they were rewritten to capture participants' experiences from a target perspective. An example item includes: "Been blamed for an error at work that someone else made", adapted from the original scale item: "Blamed someone at work for an error you made". The NAQ-R item was used in its original form. The measure consisted of 19 items in total, utilising a 5-point frequency scale ranging from (1) *never* to (5) *every day*. The measure consisted of items such as: "Been the target of a mean prank intended to embarrass you at work". In the present study, the reliability was $\lambda^2 = .93$ for the English measure and $\lambda^2 = .94$ for the Dutch measure. A sum score was computed by summing participants' responses to all items, with higher scores indicating greater levels of perceived targeting.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem was assessed using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) by Rosenberg (1965). The measure consisted of 10 items in total. Participants responded to items with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) *strongly disagree* to (6) *strongly agree*. An example item includes: "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself". In the present study, the reliability was $\lambda^2 = .93$ for the English scale and $\lambda^2 = .86$ for the Dutch scale. A sum score was computed by summing participants' responses to all items, with higher scores indicating greater levels of

self-esteem. Items phrased in the opposite direction (i.e., measuring low rather than high self-esteem) were reverse coded prior to computing sum scores, ensuring that higher scores consistently reflected greater levels of the measured construct.

Emotional Intelligence and Emotion Regulation

EI was assessed in two separate parts. Participants' overall level of EI was assessed using the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS, 16-item version) by Davies and colleagues (2010). Participants responded to 16 items with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) *strongly disagree* to (6) *strongly agree*. An example item includes: "I easily recognize my emotions as I experience them". In the present study, the reliability was $\lambda^2 = .86$ for the English scale and $\lambda^2 = .71$ for the Dutch scale. A sum score was computed by summing participants' responses to all items, with higher scores indicating greater levels of EI. Items phrased in the opposite direction were reverse coded prior to computing sum scores, ensuring that higher scores consistently reflected greater levels of the measured construct.

The specific EI-branch of emotion regulation was assessed using the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) by Gross and John (2003). Only the 'Reappraisal' items were included in the 6-item scale, as the remaining 'Suppression' items were not relevant for this study. The measure utilized a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) *strongly disagree* to (5) *strongly agree*. The scale consisted of items such as: "When I want to feel more positive emotion (such as joy or amusement), I change what I'm thinking about". In the present study, the reliability was $\lambda^2 = .90$ for the English scale and $\lambda^2 = .77$ for the Dutch scale. A sum score was computed by summing participants' responses to all items, with higher scores indicating greater levels of emotional regulation.

The sum scores from the BEIS-16 and ERQ will be analysed as separate variables to assess the distinct contribution of emotion regulation as a subcomponent of EI.

Personal Sense of Power

PSP was assessed using the Sense of Power Scale by Anderson and colleagues (2012). The measure consisted of 8 items in total. Participants responded to items with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) *strongly disagree* to (6) *strongly agree*. As PSP is relationship-specific, participants were instructed to evaluate their sense of power specifically in relation to their co-workers. The instruction prompt read: “In my relationship with my co-workers...” followed by the scale items. An example item includes: “My wishes do not carry much weight”. In the present study, the reliability was $\lambda^2 = .91$ for the English measure and $\lambda^2 = .76$ for the Dutch measure. A sum score was computed by summing participants’ responses to all items, with higher scores indicating greater levels of PSP. Items phrased in the opposite direction were reverse coded prior to computing sum scores, ensuring that higher scores consistently reflected greater levels of the measured construct.

Translation Procedure

The complete questionnaire was available for participants in either English or Dutch. All scales that were used in this study were originally written and tested in English. For two scales, validated Dutch translations were publicly available. The Dutch translation of the RSE was developed by Franck and colleagues (2008).

To develop the Dutch translations of the remaining scales for which no validated Dutch translation was publicly available, the method of Translation by Committee was utilized (Furukawa et al., 2014). This procedure involves multiple bilingual experts independently translating the items, discussing discrepancies, and reaching consensus on the most accurate and culturally appropriate wording. Accordingly, the following procedure was executed. First, the original scales were translated into Dutch (translation version 1, TV1) by one of the (native) Dutch speaking researchers on the team. Then, a second (native) Dutch speaking researcher on the team inspected and corrected TV1 where necessary, resulting in a

second set of Dutch scale items (translation version 2, TV2). Next, the first and second researcher compared their respective versions and discussed the most appropriate wording. Based on these revisions, a final version was developed (translation version 3, TV3). To improve the quality and comprehensibility of the translations, TV3 was inspected by an independent native Dutch speaking individual. Minor adjustments were made to the Dutch translations when necessary to e.g., make them easier to read for the participants. This corrected version of the TV3 was used in the present study.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Prior to the main analyses, data screening and assumption testing were conducted. Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. Normality of residuals was assessed via histograms, Q-Q plots, and skewness and kurtosis values, which mostly fell within the acceptable range of ± 2 . Scatterplots of standardized residuals against predicted values indicated that the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity were met, with no funnelling patterns or curvature observed. Multicollinearity was evaluated using tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) values; all VIFs were below 5 and tolerance values exceeded .10, indicating no concerns. Outlier detection combined statistical and graphical methods. The variables *perceived targeting* and *interpersonal deviance instigation* showed severe outliers, evidenced by boxplots and extreme skewness and kurtosis values. To reduce their influence without removing cases, these variables were winsorized at the 5th and 95th percentiles. This procedure replaced extreme values with the nearest percentile cutoff to minimize distortion. The winsorized variables were used to conduct the main analyses. Overall, the data met the assumptions required for multiple linear regression and mediation analyses.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Predictors

Variable	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Perceived Targeting	249	26.4	8.6
Winsorized Perceived Targeting ^a	249	25.9	6.8
Self-Esteem	247	47.4	7.5
General Emotional Intelligence (EI)	245	59.4	7.3
Emotion Regulation	245	21.5	4.2
Interpersonal Deviance Instigation	242	22.9	5.8
Winsorized Interpersonal Deviance Instigation ^b	249	22.9	4.9
Personal Sense of Power (PSP)	242	27.8	5.7

^a the variable after the winsorization procedure.

^b the variable after the winsorization procedure.

Multiple Linear Regression Analyses

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine whether self-esteem, EI, emotion regulation, and interpersonal deviance instigation significantly predicted perceived targeting. The overall model was significant, $F(4, 240) = 52.54, p < .001$, accounting for approximately 46% of the variance in perceived targeting, $R^2 = .47$, *Adjusted* $R^2 = .46$. Self-esteem significantly negatively predicted perceived targeting, $B = -0.12, SE = 0.05, \beta = -0.13, t = -2.42, p = .02$, supporting H1. Self-esteem uniquely explained approximately 1.3% ($sr^2 = .01$) of the variance in perceived targeting, controlling for the other predictors. EI was not a significant predictor, $B = 0.03, SE = 0.06, \beta = 0.03, t = 0.56, p = .58$, providing no support for H2a. Similarly, emotion regulation did not significantly predict perceived targeting, $B = 0.03, SE = 0.10, \beta = 0.02, t = 0.30, p = .77$, offering no support for H2b. In contrast, interpersonal deviance instigation significantly positively predicted perceived targeting, $B = 0.94, SE = 0.07, \beta = 0.65, t = 13.45, p < .001$, supporting H3. Its unique contribution ($sr^2 = .40$) indicated that it accounted for approximately 40% of the variance in perceived targeting, beyond the other predictors.

Mediation Analyses

Four independent mediation analyses were conducted using Hayes' PROCESS macro Model 4 (Hayes, 2013) to test whether PSP mediates the relationship between self-esteem, EI, emotional regulation, interpersonal deviance instigation and perceived targeting. The mediation model was tested using 5,000 bootstrap samples with bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (CIs).

Self-Esteem

The total effect of self-esteem on perceived targeting was significant, $B = -0.22$, $SE = 0.06$, $t = -3.84$, $p < .001$. The effect of self-esteem on PSP (path a) was significant ($B = 0.36$, $SE = 0.04$, $t = 8.2$, $p < .001$), indicating that self-esteem significantly predicted PSP. The effect of PSP on perceived targeting (path b), controlling for self-esteem, was non-significant ($B = -0.07$, $SE = 0.09$, $t = -0.76$, $p = .45$), meaning PSP did not significantly predict perceived targeting. The direct effect of self-esteem on perceived targeting (path c'), controlling for PSP, was significant ($B = -0.2$, $SE = 0.07$, $t = -3.04$, $p = .003$), indicating self-esteem still significantly predicted perceived targeting. The indirect effect of self-esteem on perceived targeting through PSP showed $B = -0.02$, 95% CI $[-0.98, 0.05]$. Because the confidence interval includes zero, this indicates that the indirect effect was not significant, providing no support for H4. Hence, PSP did not mediate the relationship between self-esteem and perceived targeting.

Emotional Intelligence

The total effect of EI on perceived targeting was non-significant, $B = -0.1$, $SE = 0.06$, $t = -1.71$, $p = .87$. EI significantly predicted PSP (path a), $B = 0.27$, $SE = 0.05$, $t = 5.72$, $p < .001$. PSP did not significantly predict perceived targeting (path b), $B = -0.15$, $SE = 0.08$, $t = -1.94$, $p = .05$. The direct effect of EI on perceived targeting (path c'), controlling for PSP, was non-significant, $B = -0.06$, $SE = 0.06$, $t = -0.95$, $p = .34$. The indirect effect of EI was not

significant, $B = -0.04$, 95% CI $[-0.12, 0.01]$, indicating that PSP did not significantly mediate the relationship between EI and perceived targeting. Hence, H5a was not supported.

Emotion Regulation

The total effect of emotion regulation on perceived targeting was non-significant, $B = -0.05$, $SE = 0.11$, $t = -0.51$, $p = .61$. Emotion regulation significantly predicted PSP (path a), $B = 0.41$, $SE = 0.08$, $t = 4.88$, $p < .001$. PSP significantly predicted perceived targeting (path b), $B = -0.19$, $SE = 0.08$, $t = -2.37$, $p = .02$. The direct effect of emotion regulation on perceived targeting (path c'), controlling for PSP, was non-significant, $B = 0.02$, $SE = 0.11$, $t = 0.22$, $p = .83$. The indirect effect of emotion regulation was not significant, $B = -0.08$, 95% CI $[-0.18, 0.001]$, indicating that PSP did not significantly mediate the relationship between emotion regulation and perceived targeting. Thus, H5b was not supported.

Interpersonal Deviance Instigation

The total effect of instigation on perceived targeting was significant, $B = 1.05$, $SE = 0.7$, $t = 14.76$, $p < .001$. Instigation did not significantly predict PSP (path a), $B = -0.06$, $SE = 0.08$, $t = -0.73$, $p = .46$. PSP significantly predicted perceived targeting (path b), $B = -0.15$, $SE = 0.06$, $t = -2.64$, $p = .01$. The direct effect of instigation on perceived targeting (path c'), controlling for PSP, was still significant, $B = 1.04$, $SE = 0.07$, $t = 14.8$, $p < .001$. The indirect effect of instigation was not significant, $B = 0.01$, 95% CI $[-0.02, 0.05]$, indicating that PSP did not significantly mediate the relationship between interpersonal deviance instigation and perceived targeting. Hence, H6 was not supported.

Discussion

A cross-sectional study was conducted to examine the relationship between employees' psychological characteristics and their subjective experience of interpersonal deviance. The study had two primary objectives: first, to examine the relationship between perceived targeting and self-esteem, emotional intelligence (EI), and interpersonal deviance

instigation as psychological antecedents; and second, to investigate whether personal sense of power (PSP) mediates these relationships. It is important to note that the mediating variable was not examined in terms of causality; therefore, no definitive conclusions can be drawn regarding the direction of effects.

Self-Esteem, Perceived Targeting, and Personal Sense of Power

The results indicate that self-esteem is negatively associated with perceived targeting. In other words, employees with higher self-esteem are less likely to feel targeted by deviant behaviour from co-workers. This finding aligns with prior research showing that low self-esteem is linked to more frequent experiences of workplace incivility (Adiyaman & Meier, 2022; Bedi, 2021; Kim & Choi, 2021). It also suggests evidence in support of the notion that individuals with low self-esteem may exhibit heightened attentional sensitivity to social rejection cues compared to those with high self-esteem (Guan et al., 2017; Li et al., 2012). Employees with lower self-esteem may perceive themselves as having less relational value in the workplace, making them more vigilant to signals of social threat or exclusion. Consequently, they may be more likely to interpret co-workers' deviant behaviour as malicious and personally directed.

The results further show that self-esteem is positively associated with PSP, which suggests that employees with higher self-esteem tend to experience a stronger sense of power in their relationship with co-workers. This is consistent with prior research showing a positive association between self-esteem and PSP (Wang, 2015; Wojciszke & Struzynska-Kujalowicz, 2007). PSP is tied to beliefs about competence and legitimacy; individuals who view themselves as capable and worthy of influence are more likely to feel powerful. Since high self-esteem reflects strong perceived relational value, it may reinforce confidence in one's ability and right to influence, thereby strengthening one's subjective sense of power.

However, the hypothesized mediation was not supported. While self-esteem was directly related to both lower perceived targeting and higher PSP, PSP did not mediate the relationship between self-esteem and perceived targeting. This suggests that the protective effect of self-esteem does not operate through enhanced perceptions of power, but may instead function through alternative psychological mechanisms.

Emotional Intelligence, Perceived Targeting, and Personal Sense of Power

Contrary to the hypotheses, neither EI nor emotion regulation was significantly related to perceived targeting. This contrasts with prior studies highlighting EI's role in shaping employees' experiences of interpersonal deviance (Karim et al., 2015; Kirk et al., 2009). One explanation may lie in the relatively high mean scores for both EI and emotion regulation in the current sample, suggesting limited variability in these traits. Few participants rated themselves as low on either trait, which may reflect the present study's reliance on self-report measures to assess both traits. Such measures are prone to inflated responses, particularly among those lacking the very skills being assessed. In contrast, performance-based measures capture actual emotional abilities and may provide a more accurate assessment. Future research should therefore consider employing ability-based EI measures to more robustly examine its relationship with perceived targeting.

Furthermore, the results show that EI and emotion regulation are both positively associated with PSP. That is, employees with higher EI and better emotion regulation tend to experience a greater sense of power in their relationships with co-workers, which is consistent with previous findings (Schutte & Loi, 2014). The ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions likely facilitates adaptive responses to interpersonal challenges. By maintaining emotional composure and self-regulation, individuals may reinforce their perceived capacity to exert influence, thereby strengthening PSP.

However, PSP did not mediate the relationship between EI and perceived targeting. Although individuals high in EI reported greater PSP in their relationship with co-workers, this did not translate into reduced perceptions of being targeted. For emotion regulation, the pattern was somewhat different: emotion regulation predicted higher PSP, and PSP predicted lower perceived targeting, but the indirect effect was not significant. This suggests a possible, but statistically inconclusive, pathway from emotion regulation to perceived targeting via PSP, indicating that PSP may play a role, though further evidence is needed.

Interpersonal Deviance Instigation, Perceived Targeting, and Personal Sense of Power

The results indicate that interpersonal deviance instigation is positively associated with perceived targeting. In other words, employees who frequently engage in deviant behaviour toward co-workers also report experiencing more deviant behaviour from them. This aligns with prior research highlighting the fluid boundaries between target and instigator roles (Camacho et al., 2021; Li et al., 2025; Walters, 2020) and suggests that such cyclical patterns also occur in workplace settings (Vranjes et al., 2022, 2023). As such, these findings may reflect incivility spirals, in which negative behaviours escalate through mutual retaliation (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Initial deviant acts may prompt reciprocal responses, creating cycles in which roles alternate. Such spirals may extend beyond the original dyad, as aggression is displaced onto third parties (Marcus-Newhall et al., 2000). These third parties may, in turn, respond with social sanctions, reinforcing one's sense of being targeted (Vranjes et al., 2023). Thus, deviant behaviour can trigger self-reinforcing cycles of retaliation, spreading across workplace relationships and sustaining a climate of interpersonal deviance.

Contrary to the hypotheses, interpersonal deviance instigation was not significantly related to PSP, and PSP did not mediate the link between instigation and perceived targeting. This suggests that the connection between instigation and perceived targeting likely reflects a direct relational dynamic rather than being driven by perceived power. One explanation may

lie in the motives underlying instigation. Perceived incivility from a co-worker can threaten one's social standing, potentially prompting retaliatory behaviour as a maladaptive coping strategy to express anger, alleviate distress, or restore a sense of status and control (Chester, 2017; Park & Metcalfe, 2020). In this sample, participants who frequently experienced deviance from co-workers also reported engaging in instigation, suggesting retaliation may function as an attempt to preserve power in workplace relationships. While striking back may not increase one's sense of power, it may prevent further loss by offsetting the psychological impact of feeling targeted. This dynamic could explain why participants high in both instigation and perceived targeting did not report significantly lower PSP: retaliatory behaviour may have helped stabilize, rather than diminish, their sense of power.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The present study has several limitations. First, it primarily examined how EI shapes the internal regulation of emotions in response to interpersonal deviance. However, EI also encompasses outward emotional processes, such as the expression of emotions and the ability to manage others' emotional states. Future research could investigate whether individuals high in EI are better able to express emotions constructively and confront instigators effectively, thereby navigating deviance with greater resilience and assertiveness. Second, this study did not account for participants' level of education. General cognitive ability may influence how individuals interpret and respond to deviant behaviour, potentially shaping their susceptibility to feeling targeted. Future research should therefore examine the role of cognitive factors in these perceptions. Finally, this study primarily focused on on-site work environments. However, with the rise of hybrid and digital work, it would be valuable to also explore cyber interpersonal deviance. Online interactions may involve distinct forms of deviance or alter perceptions of targeting, given the reduced access to non-verbal cues and the absence of face-to-face interaction. Accordingly, addressing these limitations would provide a more

comprehensive understanding of how individual and contextual factors shape employees' experiences of interpersonal deviance and perceived targeting.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The present study makes a novel contribution by shifting the analytical lens through which interpersonal deviance is examined. Whereas prior research has primarily focused on instigators, this study adopts a target-focused perspective. While this approach has been criticized for potentially implying that targets are responsible for their experiences (Cortina et al., 2018; Köhler et al., 2018), the findings indicate that examining targets' characteristics is particularly informative for understanding mild forms of deviance. Targets' dispositions play a central role in how such deviant acts are perceived, shaping their susceptibility to interpreting behaviours as malicious and personally directed. Given that the subjective experience of being targeted has meaningful negative consequences, examining targets' characteristics is essential. By emphasizing the role of target characteristics, this study provides a novel framework for understanding and addressing subtle forms of interpersonal deviance in the workplace.

In terms of practical implications, the present study highlights the importance of early intervention in interpersonal deviance to prevent the escalation and proliferation of incivility spirals. Proactive measures can help sustain a respectful work environment. Organizations may benefit from targeted programs that equip employees with strategies to manage and respond to perceived incivility. For example, training in emotion regulation can help employees cope with negative experiences without resorting to retaliation. Likewise, enhancing communication skills (e.g., expressing concerns constructively to an instigator, colleague, or supervisor) can foster more adaptive responses and reduce conflict escalation. By empowering employees to regulate emotions and engage in respectful dialogue, organizations are better positioned to interrupt incivility spirals and promote a healthier workplace culture.

Conclusion

This study examined the psychological characteristics that shape employees' subjective experience of mild interpersonal deviance in the workplace. The findings indicate that self-esteem and employees' own engagement in deviant behaviour are key determinants of this experience. Employees with higher self-esteem were less likely to feel targeted by deviant behaviour, whereas those who frequently engage in deviant behaviour themselves also perceive more deviance from co-workers. By focusing on targets' psychological characteristics, this study makes a novel contribution by underscoring the role of individual dispositions in shaping one's susceptibility to feel targeted by deviant behaviour. From a practical standpoint, the findings emphasize the value of early intervention to prevent the escalation of incivility spirals. Organizations may benefit from targeted programs that strengthen employees' emotion regulation and communication skills, enabling them to cope constructively with negative experiences and engage in respectful dialogue. Ultimately, this study shows that employees' psychological characteristics are central to their experience of interpersonal deviance, offering valuable insights for advancing theory and guiding organizational efforts to build more respectful and resilient workplaces.

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Appendix

Questionnaire Items

This appendix presents the complete set of questionnaire items used in the study. For each scale, the original English items and their Dutch translations are provided, along with the response options as presented to participants.

Scale 1: Perceived Targeting

Adapted version of the Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (CWB-C) by Spector and colleagues (2006) and the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) by Einarsen and colleagues (2009) combined.

Question Asked to Participants

English: “How often have you personally experienced the following behaviors directed at you by one or more co-workers at your current job? Select the answer option that best describes your situation.”

Dutch: “Hoe vaak heb je op je huidige werk meegemaakt dat één of meerdere collega's de volgende gedragingen naar jou vertoonde? Kies de antwoordoptie die jouw situatie het beste beschrijft.”

Scale Items

Item	English Statement	Dutch Translation
1	Had a damaging or harmful rumor spread about you at work.	Er werd een schadelijke roddel over je verspreid op het werk.
2	Been insulted or ridiculed by someone about your job performance.	Je werd door iemand beledigd over je werkprestaties.
3	Had someone make fun of your personal life.	Iemand maakte je privéleven belachelijk op het werk.

4	Been ignored or excluded by someone at work.	Je werd opzettelijk genegeerd op het werk.
5	Been refused help by someone at work.	Iemand weigerde je te helpen op het werk.
6	Had someone withhold needed information from you at work.	Iemand hield opzettelijk belangrijke informatie achter op het werk.
7	Had someone purposely interfere with you doing your job.	Iemand hinderde je opzettelijk in het uitvoeren van je werk.
8	Been blamed for an error at work that someone else made.	Je kreeg de schuld van een fout die iemand anders had gemaakt op het werk.
9	Been involved in an argument someone else started with you at work.	Je raakte betrokken bij een ruzie of discussie die iemand anders met je aanging op het werk.
10	Had a personal belonging stolen from you at work.	Er werd een persoonlijk bezit van je gestolen op het werk.
11	Had someone make an obscene gesture (the finger) at you at work.	Iemand maakte een obscene gebaar (de middelvinger) naar je op het werk.
12	Had someone say something obscene to you at work to make you feel bad.	Iemand zei iets obsceens tegen je op het werk om je een slecht gevoel te geven.
13	Had someone hide something from you at work so you couldn't find it.	Iemand verstopte iets van je zodat je het niet kon vinden op het werk.
14	Had someone do something to make you look bad at work.	Iemand deed iets om je op het werk voor schut te zetten.
15	Been the target of a mean prank intended to embarrass you at work.	Je werd het doelwit van een gemeen grapje dat bedoeld was om je te beschamen op het werk.

16	Had someone look at your private mail/property at work without your permission.	Iemand keek zonder toestemming naar je privé-mail/-eigendommen op het werk.
17	Been insulted or made fun of by someone at work.	Je werd beledigd of belachelijk gemaakt op het werk.
18	Had someone purposely avoid returning your phone call at work when they should have.	Iemand belde je opzettelijk niet terug terwijl dit wel had moeten.
19	Been the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm at work.	Je was het doelwit van overmatige plagerijen en sarcasme op het werk.

Response Options

English: 1 = Never, 2 = Once or twice, 3 = Once or twice per month, 4 = Once or twice per week, 5 = Every day.

Dutch: 1 = Nooit, 2 = Eén of twee keer, 3 = Eén of twee keer per maand, 4 = Eén of twee keer per week, 5 = Elke dag.

Scale 2: Self-Esteem

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) by Rosenberg (1965).

Question Asked to Participants

English: “Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement. Select the answer option that best fits you.”

Dutch: “Hieronder staat een lijst met uitspraken die gaan over algemene gevoelens over jezelf. Geef aan in hoeverre je het eens of oneens bent met elke uitspraak. Selecteer de antwoordoptie die het beste bij jou past.”

Scale Items

Item	English Statement	Dutch Translation
1	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	Over het algemeen ben ik tevreden met mezelf.
2	At times I think I am no good at all.	Bij momenten denk ik dat ik helemaal niet deug.
3	I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	Ik heb het gevoel dat ik een aantal goede kwaliteiten heb.
4	I am able to do things as well as most other people.	Ik ben in staat dingen even goed te doen als de meeste andere mensen.
5	I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	Ik heb het gevoel dat ik niet veel heb om trots op te zijn.
6	I certainly feel useless at times.	Het is ongetwijfeld zo dat ik me bij momenten nutteloos voel.
7	I feel that I'm a person of worth.	Ik heb het gevoel dat ik een waardevol iemand ben, minstens evenwaardig aan anderen.
8	I wish I could have more respect for myself.	Ik wou dat ik meer respect voor mezelf kon opbrengen.
9	All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.	Al bij al ben ik geneigd mezelf een mislukkeling te voelen.
10	I take a positive attitude toward myself.	Ik neem een positieve houding aan ten opzichte van mezelf.

Response Options

English: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree.

Dutch: 1 = Helemaal mee oneens, 2 = Oneens, 3 = Neutraal, 4 = Mee eens, 5 = Helemaal mee eens.

Scale 3: Emotion Regulation

The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) by Gross and John (2003).

Question Asked to Participants

English: “Below is a list of statements dealing with your emotional life, in particular, how you control (that is, regulate and manage) your emotions. Although some of the following statements may seem similar to one another, they differ in important ways. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the statements below. Select the answer option that best fits you.”

Dutch: “Hieronder staat een lijst met uitspraken die betrekking hebben op je emotionele leven, in het bijzonder op hoe je je emoties controleert (dat wil zeggen, reguleert en beheert). Hoewel sommige van de volgende uitspraken op elkaar kunnen lijken, verschillen ze op belangrijke manieren van elkaar. Geef aan in hoeverre je het eens of oneens bent met elke uitspraak. Selecteer de antwoordoptie die het beste bij jou past.”

Scale Items

Item	English Statement	Dutch Translation
1	When I want to feel more positive emotion (such as joy or amusement), I change what I'm thinking about.	Wanneer ik meer positieve emoties wil voelen (zoals blijdschap of plezier), dan verander ik datgene waar ik op dat moment aan denk.

2	When I want to feel less negative emotion (such as sadness or anger), I change what I'm thinking about.	Wanneer ik minder negatieve emoties wil voelen (zoals verdriet of boosheid), dan verander ik datgene waar ik op dat moment aan denk.
3	When I'm faced with a stressful situation, I make myself think about it in a way that helps me stay calm.	Wanneer ik in een stressvolle situatie ben, dan laat ik mezelf daarover nadenken op een manier die me helpt om kalm te blijven.
4	When I want to feel more positive emotion, I change the way I'm thinking about the situation.	Wanneer ik meer positieve emoties wil voelen, dan verander ik de manier waarop ik op dat moment over de situatie denk.
5	I control my emotions by changing the way I think about the situation I'm in.	Ik houd mijn emoties onder controle door te veranderen hoe ik denk over de situatie waarin ik verkeer.
6	When I want to feel less negative emotion, I change the way I'm thinking about the situation.	Wanneer ik minder negatieve emoties wil voelen, dan verander ik de manier waarop ik op dat moment over de situatie denk.

Response Options

English: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree.

Dutch: 1 = Helemaal mee oneens, 2 = Oneens, 3 = Neutraal, 4 = Mee eens, 5 = Helemaal mee eens.

Scale 4: Emotional Intelligence

The Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS, 16-item version) by Davies and colleagues (2010).

Question Asked to Participants

English: “Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements below. Select the answer option that best fits you.”

Dutch: “Geef aan in hoeverre je het eens of oneens bent met elke uitspraak hieronder. Selecteer de antwoordoptie die het beste bij jou past.”

Scale Items

Item	English Statement	Dutch Translation
1	I am aware of my emotions as I experience them.	Ik ben mijzelf bewust van mijn emoties op het moment dat ik ze ervaar.
2	I know why my emotions change.	Ik weet waarom mijn emoties veranderen.
3	I easily recognize my emotions as I experience them.	Ik herken mijn emoties gemakkelijk op het moment dat ik ze ervaar.
4	I can tell how people are feeling by listening to the tone of their voice.	Ik weet hoe mensen zich voelen door naar de toon van hun stem te luisteren.
5	By looking at their facial expressions, I recognize the emotions people are experiencing.	Ik kan de emoties die mensen ervaren herkennen door naar hun gezichtsuitdrukking te kijken.
6	I know what other people are feeling just by looking at them.	Ik weet wat andere mensen voelen door alleen maar naar ze te kijken.
7	It is difficult for me to understand why people feel the way they do.	Ik vind het moeilijk om te begrijpen waarom mensen zich voelen zoals ze zich voelen.
8	I seek out activities that make me happy.	Ik zoek activiteiten op waar ik vrolijk van word.
9	I have control over my emotions.	Ik heb controle over mijn emoties.

10	I arrange events others enjoy.	Ik organiseer/regel dingen die andere mensen leuk vinden.
11	I help other people feel better when they are down.	Ik help andere mensen zich beter te voelen als ze zich slecht voelen.
12	When my mood changes, I see new possibilities.	Als mijn humeur verandert, zie ik nieuwe mogelijkheden.
13	When I am in a positive mood, solving problems is easy for me.	Als ik een positief humeur heb, is het gemakkelijk voor me om problemen op te lossen.
14	When I am in a positive mood, I am able to come up with new ideas.	Als ik in een positieve stemming ben, ben ik in staat om nieuwe ideeën te bedenken.
15	When I feel a change in emotions, I tend to come up with new ideas.	Als ik een verandering in emoties ervaar, heb ik de neiging om nieuwe ideeën te bedenken.
16	I use good moods to help myself keep trying in the face of obstacles.	Ik gebruik een goed humeur om mijzelf te helpen om door te zetten als ik met problemen word geconfronteerd.

Response Options

English: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree.

Dutch: 1 = Helemaal mee oneens, 2 = Oneens, 3 = Neutraal, 4 = Mee eens, 5 = Helemaal mee eens.

Scale 5: Interpersonal Deviance Instigation

Adapted version of the Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (CWB-C) by Spector and colleagues (2006) and the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) by Einarsen and colleagues (2009) combined.

Question Asked to Participants

English: “How often have you personally engaged in the following behaviors toward a co-worker at your current job? Select the answer option that best describes your situation. There are no right or wrong answers; please answer as honestly as possible.”

Dutch: “Hoe vaak heb je je op je huidige werk op de volgende manieren tegenover een collega gedragen? Kies de antwoordoptie die jouw situatie het beste beschrijft. Er zijn geen goede of foute antwoorden; beantwoord de vragen alsjeblieft zo eerlijk mogelijk.”

Scale Items

Item	English Statement	Dutch Translation
1	Started or continued a damaging or harmful rumor at work.	Een schadelijke roddel op het werk gestart of voortgezet.
2	Insulted someone about their job performance.	Iemand over zijn of haar werkprestaties beledigd.
3	Made fun of someone's personal life.	Iemands privéleven belachelijk gemaakt.
4	Ignored or excluded someone at work.	Iemand op het werk genegeerd of buitengesloten.
5	Refused to help someone at work.	Geweigerd om iemand op het werk te helpen.
6	Withheld needed information from someone at work.	Benodigde informatie voor iemand op het werk achtergehouden.

7	Purposely interfered with someone doing their job.	Opzettelijk iemand op het werk belemmerd bij het uitvoeren van hun werk.
8	Blamed someone at work for an error you made.	Iemand op het werk de schuld gegeven van een fout die jij hebt gemaakt.
9	Started an argument with someone at work.	Een ruzie of discussie gestart met iemand op het werk.
10	Stole something belonging to someone at work.	Een persoonlijk bezit van iemand op het werk gestolen.
11	Made an obscene gesture (the finger) to someone at work.	Een obscene gebaar (de middelvinger) naar iemand op het werk gemaakt.
12	Said something obscene to someone at work to make them feel bad.	Iets obsceens tegen iemand op het werk gezegd om hem of haar slecht te laten voelen.
13	Hid something so someone at work couldn't find it.	Iets verborgen zodat iemand het niet kon vinden op het werk.
14	Did something to make someone at work look bad.	Iets gedaan om iemand op het werk voor schut te zetten.
15	Played a mean prank to embarrass someone at work.	Een gemeen grapje gemaakt om iemand op het werk in verlegenheid te brengen.
16	Looked at someone's private mail/property without permission at work.	Iemands privé-mail/eigendommen op het werk bekeken zonder toestemming.
17	Insulted or made fun of someone at work.	Iemand op het werk beledigd of belachelijk gemaakt.
18	Avoided returning a phone call to someone you should at work.	Een telefoongesprek met iemand op het werk vermeden.

19	Excessively teased or used sarcasm toward someone at work.	Iemand op het werk overmatig geplaagd of sarcastische opmerkingen gemaakt.
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Response Options

English: 1 = Never, 2 = Once or twice, 3 = Once or twice per month, 4 = Once or twice per week, 5 = Every day.

Dutch: 1 = Nooit, 2 = Eén of twee keer, 3 = Eén of twee keer per maand, 4 = Eén of twee keer per week, 5 = Elke dag.

Scale 6: Personal Sense of Power

The Sense of Power Scale by Anderson and colleagues (2012).

Question Asked to Participants

English: “Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements below. Select the answer option that best describes your situation. In my relationship with my co-workers...”

Dutch: “Geef aan in hoeverre je het eens of oneens bent met elke uitspraak hieronder. Selecteer de antwoordoptie die het beste bij jou past. In mijn relatie met mijn collega’s...”

Scale Items

Item	English Statement	Dutch Translation
1	I can get them to listen to what I say.	Kan ik hen laten luisteren naar wat ik zeg.
2	My wishes do not carry much weight.	Wegen mijn wensen niet zwaar mee.
3	I can get them to do what I want.	Kan ik hen laten doen wat ik wil.
4	Even if I voice them, my views have little sway.	Heeft mijn mening weinig invloed, zelfs als ik die uitspreek.

5	I think I have a great deal of power.	Heb ik het gevoel dat ik veel macht heb.
6	My ideas and opinions are often ignored.	Worden mijn ideeën en mening vaak genegeerd.
7	Even when I try, I am not able to get my way.	Lukt het me niet om mijn zin te krijgen, zelfs als ik het probeer.
8	If I want to, I get to make the decisions.	Mag ik de beslissingen nemen als ik dat wil.

Response Options

English: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree.

Dutch: 1 = Helemaal mee oneens, 2 = Oneens, 3 = Neutraal, 4 = Mee eens, 5 = Helemaal mee eens.