



# Delving into preschool teachers' revenge – a mediated-moderated model that explores the deeper nuances of hot and cold revenge among preschool teachers

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## Abstract

While revenge has captured the attention of researchers, certain nuances have been disregarded. Some studies have recognized the existence of two distinct forms of revenge — “hot” or “cold” — but the specific conditions underlying these variants have been overlooked. The present two studies delve into the boundary conditions that differentiate hot and cold revenge. By analyzing data collected from 172 and 107 preschool teachers in studies one and two, respectively, this research confirms the presence of both emotional (hot) and calculated (cold) revenge responses. Furthermore, it uncovers the mechanisms driving these two revenge types and identifies a trade-off between vertical solidarity motivated by pragmatic ambitions and revenge, representing divergent resource acquisition strategies. The findings' relevance for decreasing vindictive behaviours and future research avenues are discussed.

**Keywords** Incivility · Vertical solidarity · Revenge · Irritation · Preschool teachers

## Introduction

Incivility, a mild form of interpersonal violence, is known for its adverse implications. Experiencing incivility triggers negative emotions (Itzkovich, 2016; Itzkovich & Dolev 2021), such as anger, guilt (Liu et al., 2020), and irritation (Turnipseed & Landay, 2018). Irritation is a subjective combination of emotional and cognitive strains, which can elicit strong, unfavorable emotions that reduce a person's capacity to deal with a given reality and promote higher stress levels (Mohr et al., 2006). These have also been acknowledged as drivers of revenge.

Revenge, along with avoidance and forgiveness, is one of three well-documented possible reactions to former experiences of victimization (Gerlsma & Lugtmeyer, 2018). Out of the three, revenge, founded on a tit-for-tat mechanism (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), aims to mitigate adverse emotional states (Fida et al., 2015) or restore personal

resources of status and self-esteem (Kokkinos et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2018). Indeed, retaliatory behavior may help balance power dynamics and restore a sense of control (Watson et al., 2021).

While these studies shed light on utilizing revenge for resource restoration, the implications of vindictive responses to students, staff, or teachers are unquestioned (Contreras & Novaco, 2023). Moreover, revenge is noted as a behavior that depletes the intrapersonal resources of the vindictive party (Itzkovich & Dolev, 2021). Unlike other work settings, the impact of revenge in schools—especially with preschool teachers who are responsible for the education and, ultimately, the lives of other individuals—is highly significant.

To minimize vengeful acts and their costly effects in schools, it is mandatory to understand the triggers and nuances of revenge. While often viewed as an emotionally driven response (Contreras & Novaco, 2023), in the absence of irritation, vengeance could be calculated and thus considered a two-dimensional construct (Lee & Ashton, 2012), consisting of hot and cold revenge. Jones and Carroll (2007) brought forward a similar dichotomy, noting that “revenge is best served cold,” emphasizing the differences between

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employees who use rational planning to be even and those whose vindictive behaviors are emotionally driven.

To date, the difference between instrumental and affective revenge has received little attention, and the boundary conditions eliciting hot and cold revenge are unexplored. Kokkinos et al. (2021) pointed to a possible framework that may be utilized to acquire a comprehensive view of revenge and its boundaries. The authors noted that out of the three possible responses to transgression, namely, avoidance, forgiveness, or revenge, a chosen response hugely depends on the interplay between intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual factors. The comprehensive view they presented was also stressed by the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll et al., 1990, 2018), which highlighted a motivational framework for understanding human behavior. The COR theory posits that human behavior is motivated by the desire to maintain, restore, or gain resources; like Kokkinos et al. (2021), it posits that behavior depends on an interaction between personal and social resources and context. However, these comprehensive views were not used for better understanding the nuances of revenge, which could promote more effective intervention processes.

To address this gap, the present research endeavors to attain two all-encompassing goals:

1. To investigate how incivility affects the personal and social resources to cause irritation and revenge.
2. To understand the triggers and boundaries of the two types of revenge: emotional (hot) and calculated (cold).

On the intrapersonal level, social-emotional competencies, particularly emotional awareness and regulation, play a crucial role in workplace dynamics. These competencies have been identified as key resources that can mitigate incivility (Dolev & Itzkovich, 2020) and are negatively correlated with revenge behaviors (Itzkovich & Dolev, 2021). This suggests that individuals with well-developed emotional skills are better equipped to navigate potentially uncivil situations and less likely to engage in retaliatory actions. Complementing these intrapersonal factors are interpersonal resources, notably vertical solidarity. This social asset has been recognized for its potential to facilitate status upgrades within organizational hierarchies (Potipiroon & Ford, 2019). However, the benefits of vertical solidarity can be significantly undermined by incidents of incivility. The interplay between intrapersonal and interpersonal resources creates a dynamic framework that profoundly influences workplace interactions and outcomes. Supported by the COR theory, the interaction between personal and social resources illuminates the intricate relationships among individual emotional capabilities, social assets, and the broader organizational climate in shaping workplace experiences.

This perspective allows us to delve into the nuances of cold and hot revenge, facilitating their identification and mitigation. By understanding how these resources interact, organizations can better recognize the precursors to revengeful behaviors and implement strategies to prevent their occurrence, thereby fostering a more positive and productive work environment.

## Literature review and hypothesis development

### Incivility as a trigger of irritation and revenge

As a representation of mild violent interpersonal experience, incivility shapes the social context in which individual resources are consumed. Research has revealed that incivility leads to negative emotional states; targets of incivility report adverse feelings such as anger, fear, sadness (Porath & Pearson, 2012), stress, and irritation (Miner et al., 2019; Schilpzand et al., 2016).

Irritation is the experience of uncertainty triggered by a discrepancy between a given situation and the ability to achieve an important personal goal (Mohr et al., 2006; Porath & Pearson, 2012). It includes two complementary mechanisms. The first is rumination, a cognitive pattern of uncontrolled thoughts triggered by a discrepancy that leads to an ineffective use of cognitive resources and intensified negative emotions. The second is irritability, which is primarily an amplified type of mental strain (Martin & Tesser, 1996). Pertaining to the COR theory, incivility experiences are expected to reflect a context in which stress increases and socioemotional resources are depleted (Itzkovich & Dolev, 2021). Thus, in the context of the current study, incivility was expected to be positively correlated with irritation.

*(H1) Incivility is positively correlated with irritation.*

As a retaliation-driven behavior, revenge is motivated by a two-fold aim: (1) reducing a harmful and ineffective emotional state that reflects a loss of emotional resources (Fida et al., 2015) and (2) restoring other personal resources that were damaged by the offender, such as status and self-esteem (Wang et al., 2018). This restorative motivation is based on both positive and negative exchange relations (Mao et al., 2019) and is grounded in the first principle of the COR theory: individuals are motivated by the loss of resources, causing them to invest some of their remaining resources in acts of restoration (Hobfoll et al., 1990). Thus, it is safe to assume that incivility can motivate revenge.

*(H2) Incivility is positively correlated with revenge.*

Vindictive behaviors are affect-driven to an extent (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Dolev et al., 2021; Taylor & Klumper, 2012; Wang et al., 2018; Zeidner & Roberts, 2012). This type of emotionally triggered revenge is motivated by stress and stress intensifiers, such as rumination and irritability (Mohr et al., 2006). Within the COR theory, irritation likely plays a significant role in revenge behaviors. Irritation, which exemplifies a depletion of resources, has been shown to indicate a reduction in both emotional and cognitive resources (Feng, 2024). Consequently, according to the COR theory, individuals experiencing irritation may be more inclined to seek revenge as a means of resource restoration, attempting to recoup their depleted psychological assets. Thus, it can be postulated that:

*(H3a) Irritation is positively correlated with revenge.*

Incivility elicits irritation, reflecting an initial depletion of psychological resources. Research has shown that this resource depletion does not merely occur as a single event but persists and escalates, becoming an ongoing source of frustration. This continuous depletion intensifies the frustration-aggression linkage (Chan et al., 2022). From a COR perspective, this suggests that the loss of resources due to the uncivilized experience is compounded by the arousal of irritation. Consequently, the need for resource restoration through revenge increases proportionally. Based on this theoretical framework, it can be postulated that:

*(H3b) Irritation mediates the relationship between incivility and revenge.*

In a general framework, the COR theory can explain more than the above-described tit-for-tat relationships. Relying on Hobfoll et al.'s (1990) notions regarding the interaction between social and personal resources that are required to deal with stressful contexts, the current study tested the impact of personal and social resources on irritation and revenge. In addition, the interaction between vertical solidarity, which is a social resource, and incivility and their mutual impact on revenge; the interaction between emotional regulation (ER) and irritation and their mutual impact on revenge, and the mutual impact of emotional awareness (EA) and emotional regulation on revenge were tested.

### Personal attributes

Emotional intelligence (EI) involves identifying and expressing emotions, understanding emotional states in oneself and others, and managing positive and negative emotions to effectively cope with daily demands (Bar-On, 2006). These daily demands involve experiences of incivility (Ciarrochi

et al., 2002; Zeidner & Roberts, 2012). In addition to other stress-coping capabilities associated with EI proficiencies, emotional awareness (EA) and emotional regulation (ER), the two components of EI, have been recognized as effective means of dealing with stress (Ciarrochi et al., 2002). Accordingly, both EA and ER were measured in this study as personal resources. Given that some vindictive acts are affect-driven (Zeidner & Roberts, 2012) and triggered by negative emotionality, both EA and ER are hypothesized to buffer against incivility, irritation, and revenge.

From the COR perspective, EA and ER are considered valuable psychological resources. These resources are often depleted when individuals experience negative emotionality (Itzkovich & Dolev, 2021). However, individuals with high EI resources are better equipped to navigate stressful interactions, often perceiving them as challenges rather than threats (Szczygiel & Bazińska, 2021). The COR framework suggests that individuals with higher EI are likely to experience less resource depletion during uncivil encounters. Consequently, they may feel less compelled to seek resource restoration through revenge behaviors.

*(H4a) EA is negatively correlated with irritation.*

*(H4b) EA is negatively correlated with revenge.*

*(H4c) ER is negatively correlated with irritation.*

*(H4d) ER is negatively correlated with revenge.*

Barrett et al. (2001) observed that high emotional differentiation (i.e., EA) facilitates the selection and application of ER strategies, particularly under conditions of intense negative emotional arousal. This interdependency suggests a strong interrelation between EA and ER. Within the COR framework, EA and ER can be conceptualized as “resource caravans”—clusters of resources that develop from shared environmental and developmental conditions. These resource caravans tend to be highly correlated (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Thus, it is hypothesized that EA and ER are not only interrelated but also function as complementary components within an individual's broader emotional resource repertoire.

*(H4e) EA is positively correlated with ER.*

### Social attributes

The current model also accounted for social resources as a factor that can explore the nuances of vengeance. In this respect, solidarity stems from a sense of reciprocal dependency and duty to others. It refers to a scenario in which the well-being of an individual or a group is favorably dependent on others (De Beer & Koster, 2009). Unlike other prosocial

behaviors—which are indifferent to the identity of beneficiaries—solidarity accounts for the direction and hierarchical level of participants in the act of support (Psychogios et al., 2020). In this sense, while horizontal solidarity can be directed at, or sourced from, peers on the same hierarchical level, vertical solidarity is directed at supervisors and expressed through the cooperative behaviours of coworkers toward their supervisors (Sanders & Schyns, 2006).

Preschool teachers are exposed to various sources of irritation (e.g., instigators of incivility) and challenges to their status including, but not limited to, parents, colleagues, and assistants (Itzkovich & Dolev, 2021). In terms of the COR theory, vertical solidarity is a potential source for the restoration of resources that are likely to be damaged by irritation triggered by incivility (Hobfoll et al., 1990). This theoretical notion was supported by Potipiroon and Ford (2019), who noted that investing resources to help a supervisor can be a potential source of status upgrades. This instrumental facet of solidarity tends to be overlooked. In the present study, it is assumed that this calculated mechanism can be activated to buffer against irritation-driven resource consumption and thus decrease irritation.

*(H5) Vertical solidarity is negatively correlated with irritation.*

The perception of resource scarcity (Hobfoll et al., 2018) also implies that investing resources to help a supervisor as a potential source of status upgrade (Potipiroon & Ford, 2019) leaves fewer resources available to invest in vindictive behaviors; thus, once a decision has been made to help the supervisor, it is hypothesized that the probability of revenge decreases.

*(H6) Vertical solidarity is negatively correlated with revenge.*

### **Moderation considerations in the framework of COR that account for the boundaries of revenge**

One of the most compelling principles of the COR theory is that resource acquisition and loss are influenced by the interplay between social and personal resources within their contextual environment (Hobfoll et al., 2018). This principle suggests that accounting for the interactions between resources and resource-depleting contexts may provide a more nuanced understanding of complex relational dynamics. Despite its potential to unveil new research avenues, this illuminating facet of COR has been largely overlooked in previous studies.

Drawing on these ideas, the current study proposes three interaction effects. The first examines the interplay between personal resources (specifically, ER) and the context of irritation in their combined impact on revenge behaviors. ER has been identified as crucial for buffering stress (Ciarrochi et al., 2002), which is a known trigger for revenge. Within the COR framework, it is postulated that under uncivilized conditions, irritation acts as a stress intensifier. This intensification is likely to trigger revenge more strongly in individuals who possess fewer intrapersonal resources, particularly those with lower ER capabilities. The concept of hot revenge, rooted in negative emotionality, further supports this hypothesis. The absence of effective ER is expected to amplify vengeful tendencies, as individuals lack the necessary resources to manage their emotional responses constructively. In terms of the COR theory, this deficiency represents a significant resource deficit, leaving individuals more vulnerable to stress and negative emotions. Conversely, the presence of strong ER capabilities is anticipated to mitigate revenge behaviors, even in irritating contexts. Individuals with well-developed ER skills can better preserve their emotional resources, maintaining a more robust resource pool. This resource preservation serves two crucial functions: first, it provides a buffer against the depleting effects of irritation and incivility; second, it reduces the perceived need for resource restoration through vengeful actions. Consequently, these individuals are less inclined to seek retribution as a means of replenishing their psychological resources, as their existing resource pool remains relatively intact despite environmental stressors.

Based on this theoretical reasoning, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*(H7) The relationship between irritation and revenge is moderated by ER, such that the positive relationship between irritation and revenge will be weaker for individuals with higher ER capabilities.*

Previous studies have established the mutual dependence of EA and ER (Barrett et al., 2001; Boden & Thompson, 2015). Barrett et al. (2001) observed that high emotional differentiation (i.e., EA) facilitates the selection and application of ER strategies, particularly under conditions of intense negative emotional arousal. This interplay subsequently mitigates revenge behaviors.

From a COR perspective, EA and ER function as a “resource caravan”—a cluster of interconnected psychological resources that tend to develop and operate in tandem (Hobfoll et al., 2018). This conceptualization explains both the mediating and moderating roles of these emotional competencies in the context of revenge.

EA serves as a foundational resource that enables the effective deployment of ER strategies. As individuals with higher EA possess a richer emotional vocabulary and understanding, they can more readily access and utilize their ER resources. This enhanced ability to regulate emotions, in turn, reduces the likelihood of engaging in revenge behaviors. Thus, ER mediates the relationship between EA and revenge by serving as the mechanism through which EA's benefits are translated into behavioral outcomes.

*(H8a) ER mediates the relationship between EA and revenge.*

The effectiveness of ER in mitigating revenge is contingent upon the level of EA an individual possesses. High EA provides the nuanced emotional information necessary for selecting and implementing appropriate ER strategies (Boden & Thompson, 2015). In COR terms, EA acts as a resource amplifier, enhancing the potency of ER resources. Individuals with high EA can more effectively leverage their ER capabilities to prevent revenge, as they have a more comprehensive understanding of their emotional state and the emotional dynamics of the situation.

*(H8b) EA moderates the relationship between ER and revenge, such that the negative relationship between ER and revenge is stronger for individuals with higher EA.*

This dual role of EA and ER within the COR framework underscores the complex interplay of emotional resources in shaping behavioral responses to perceived slights or injustices. By considering both mediation and moderation, we gain a more nuanced understanding of how these emotional competencies work together to influence the likelihood of revenge behaviors.

The last interaction concerns the relations between resource-consuming contexts, namely incivility and vertical solidarity, and their opposing impacts on revenge. As shown, incivility can elicit revenge as a retaliatory act; yet, an alternate positive mechanism can set the boundary conditions for these adverse interrelationships. Since resources are limited (Hobfoll et al., 2018), individuals are forced to choose where to invest them. Helping the manager as a strategy for resource restoration leaves fewer resources available for vengeance and is a course of action likely to be chosen when the manager is not the perpetrator. As an alternative strategy, individuals can choose retaliation to restore resources. From a COR perspective, the cognitive process that expresses a trade-off between two opposed strategies implies that revenge, if chosen, could be a rational alternate strategy to actions of instrumental solidarity.

*(H9) Vertical solidarity moderates the relationship between incivility and revenge.*

If confirmed, this final prediction could provide valuable insights into identifying teachers who are experiencing a resource-depleting context. From a COR perspective, unusual helping behavior among preschool teachers might signify an attempt to compensate for resource loss or to acquire new resources in the face of depletion. This behavioral indicator could serve as an early warning system, allowing for timely interventions before the resource depletion reaches critical levels.

Overall, the model being tested in Study 1 and replicated in Study 2 not only contributes to our theoretical understanding of resource dynamics in educational settings but also offers practical implications for maintaining and enhancing teachers' well-being. It provides a COR-based framework for identifying resource-depleting contexts and suggests pathways for targeted interventions, potentially revolutionizing how we approach teacher support and retention in preschool settings.

## Methods

### Study 1

#### Participants

Study 1 focused on preschool teachers, a population of particular interest in the context of workplace incivility. The sample consisted of 172 female preschool teachers working in early education centers across Israel. Participants ranged in age from 25 to 64 years, with an average age of 44.65 years. The entirely female composition of the sample reflects the broader demographic reality of early childhood education in Israel, where the profession is predominantly female.

Moreover, preschool teachers represent a unique population regarding workplace incivility, making them an important group to study. They are exposed to various sources of victimization, including interactions with parents, colleagues, and supervisors, while bearing the significant responsibility of educating the next generation. This multifaceted exposure to potential incivility, combined with their crucial role in child development, makes understanding the antecedents of their vindictive aspirations highly valuable (Itzkovich & Dolev, 2021). By focusing on this group, the study aims to shed light on how workplace incivility manifests and impacts professionals in early childhood education, potentially informing interventions and policies to support these essential educators.

## Measurements

### Preliminary tests

In the partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) assessment process, the reliability and validity of the latent variables in the measurement (outer) model are evaluated before approaching the inner model. This step aims to assess the quality of relationships between the latent variables and their indicators (Hair et al., 2022). Following these guidelines, the first item of vertical solidarity was removed for failing to meet the threshold of item loading, but also because of construct validity assessment. Following the indicator removal, the results of these tests showed that convergent validity, internal consistency, indicator reliability, and discriminant validity were achieved.

### Perceived incivility

To assess workplace incivility, the study employed a 12-item questionnaire, which participants rated on a five-point Likert scale (Cortina et al., 2013). Answers ranged from 1 = never to 5 = many times. The questionnaire solicited responses on the frequency of encountering uncivil conduct in the past year, such as being subjected to hostile stares from colleagues, supervisors, or parents of students. In Study 1, the incivility scale was measured as a formative index based on guidelines and confirmatory tetrad analysis test results (Hair et al., 2022). The assessment protocol guidelines were followed to evaluate collinearity. Results showed that the incivility measure is not affected by collinearity. PLS assessment protocol does not require Cronbach's Alpha reliability assessment for formative scales. Yet, the incivility scale reliability score was 0.930.

### Irritation

To measure workplace irritation, the Mohr et al. (2006) scale consisting of eight questions was used. Respondents were asked to rate their answers on a seven-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability score of the measure in the current study was 0.895.

### Revenge

In conducting the study, Aquino et al.'s (2001) scale was used to measure revenge behaviors on a five-point Likert scale. This scale was specifically created to assess behaviors associated with revenge and its related factors. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability score of the measure in the current study was 0.923.

### Vertical solidarity

Items measuring vertical solidarity (i.e., solidarity toward managers) were based on Lindenberg (1998) and referred to consistent cooperative behavior across five types of situations in which a social dilemma arises (Koster & Sanders, 2006): common good, sharing, need, breach temptation, and mishap situations (Lindenberg, 1998). The Cronbach's Alpha reliability score of the measure in the current study was 0.744. The first item of the scale was removed following the measurement model assessment.

### Emotional awareness and emotional regulation

The study used a portion of the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (Wong & Law, 2002) consisting of eight items with four sub-items for each construct to evaluate EA and ER. Cronbach's alpha reliability scores for the two sub-factors were 0.926 and 0.944, respectively.

### Procedure

After IRB approval (ETHICS/34/2016), a web link was distributed to 2,100 preschool teachers from a small preschool teacher union roster. Before completing the survey, participants' anonymity was guaranteed, and their written consent was obtained. Among the 230 returned questionnaires, 210 contained relevant data, resulting in a response rate of 10%.

A subsample of these 210 preschool teachers (Itzkovich & Dolev, 2021) was taken, considering that the current study required stable work relationships that allow the development of relationships. Therefore, preschool teachers who held temporary positions were excluded. The remaining 172 were analyzed using PLS-SEM with SmartPLS4 software (Hair et al., 2022).

## Results

The model shown in Fig. 1 was constructed to test the research hypotheses.

The predictive power of the model was tested through  $R^2$  values.

To assess the impact of omitting a certain exogenous factor from a model on other related endogenous factors, the effect size was measured by testing the change in the  $R^2$  value. A value of 0.02 indicates a small effect size, 0.15 indicates a medium effect size, and 0.35 indicates a large effect size, according to Hair et al. (2022). The results showed small effect sizes for most exogenous constructs. Conversely, ER, EA, and solidarity demonstrated effects below the threshold. EA showed a large effect size as an exogenous construct for ER (0.788).

Fig. 1 The research model

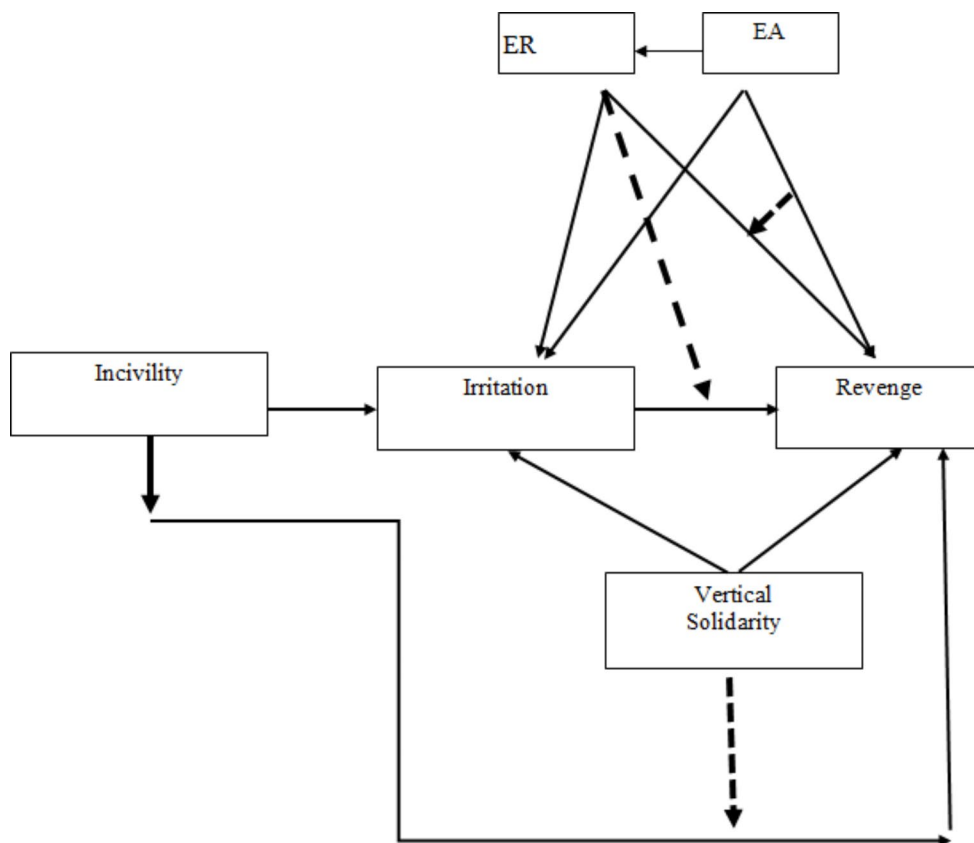


Table 1 Significance analysis of direct effects

	Direct Effect	<i>t</i> value	<i>p</i> -value
Incivility → Irritation	0.419	5.367	0.000
Incivility → Revenge	0.219	2.226	0.026
Irritation → Revenge	0.196	2.019	0.044
ER → Irritation	-0.329	3.702	0.000
EA → Irritation	0.184	2.009	0.045
EA → ER	0.664	12.923	0.000
Solidarity → Irritation	0.189	2.165	0.030
EA*ER → Revenge	0.256	3.673	0.000
ER*Irritation → Revenge	-0.168	2.345	0.019
Solidarity*Incivility → Revenge	-0.142	2.126	0.034

To determine the predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) of the path model, the PLSpredict procedure was utilized.  $Q^2$  values greater than zero indicate that the model has predictive relevance for a specific endogenous construct. In this instance, the  $Q^2$  values indicated that all endogenous constructs have predictive relevance (0.065 for irritation, 0.436 for ER, and 0.245 for revenge).

Analyses of the direct effects are reported in Table 1 and Fig. 2.

The results showed that most predictions were supported except for the direct relationship between social and personal resources and revenge. Additionally, contrary to the hypothesis, the link between EA and irritation was positive. Furthermore, the mediation hypothesis (H3b) was not supported. The results also indicated that the three interactions

predicted in H7–H9 were confirmed. Simple slope analysis was used to understand these interactions.

Figure 3 shows the nature of the first interaction between ER and irritation.

When irritation is high, those with a limited ability to regulate their emotions are more prone to vindictive behaviour than those who can regulate their emotions. Without irritation as a trigger, the inability to regulate emotions is not an expeditor of revenge.

The interaction shown in Fig. 4 indicates the relationship between EA and ER.

Vindictive behavior is most likely to occur when social-emotional skills are absent (i.e., there is no ability to regulate emotions and no awareness of emotions).

The last interaction is shown in Fig. 5.

Figure 5 indicates that under high levels of incivility, those who express vertical solidarity are less likely to take revenge. In contrast, those who do not express solidarity toward their supervisors are most likely to take vindictive measures. Additionally, Fig. 4 shows that revenge is unlikely to occur without incivility present.

### Study 2

Study 2 aimed to enhance the reliability of the findings of Study 1 by replicating it (Nosek et al., 2022). While the

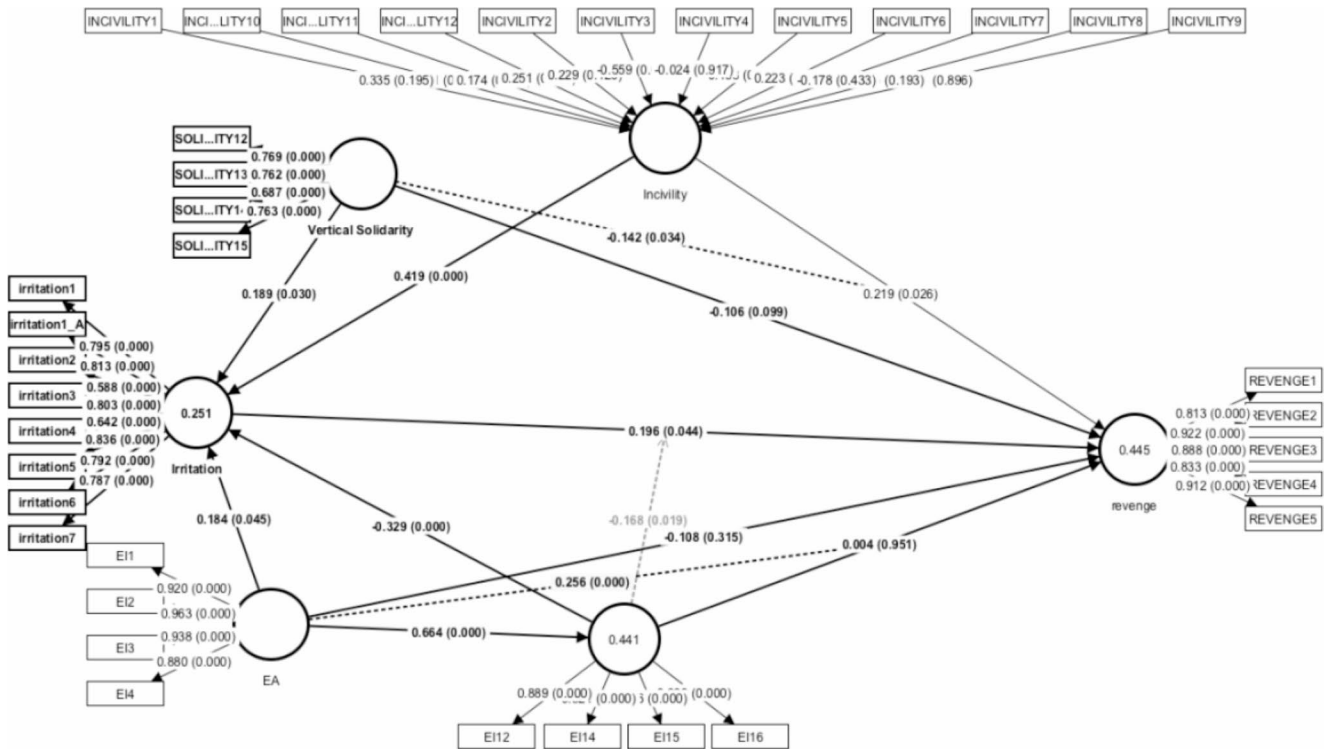
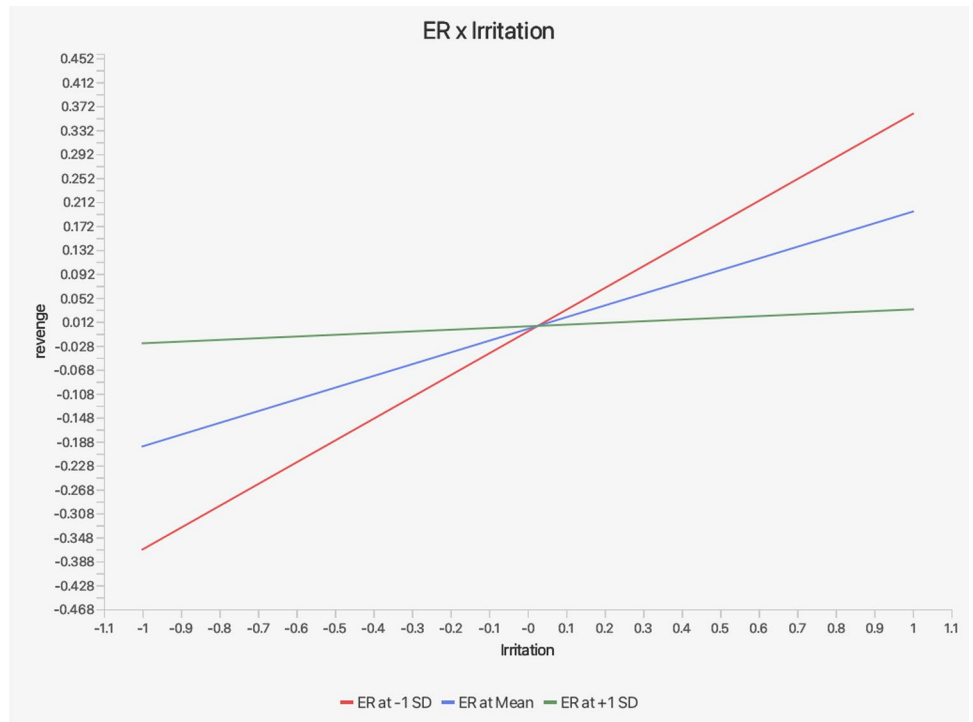


Fig. 2 Path coefficients and *p* values study 1

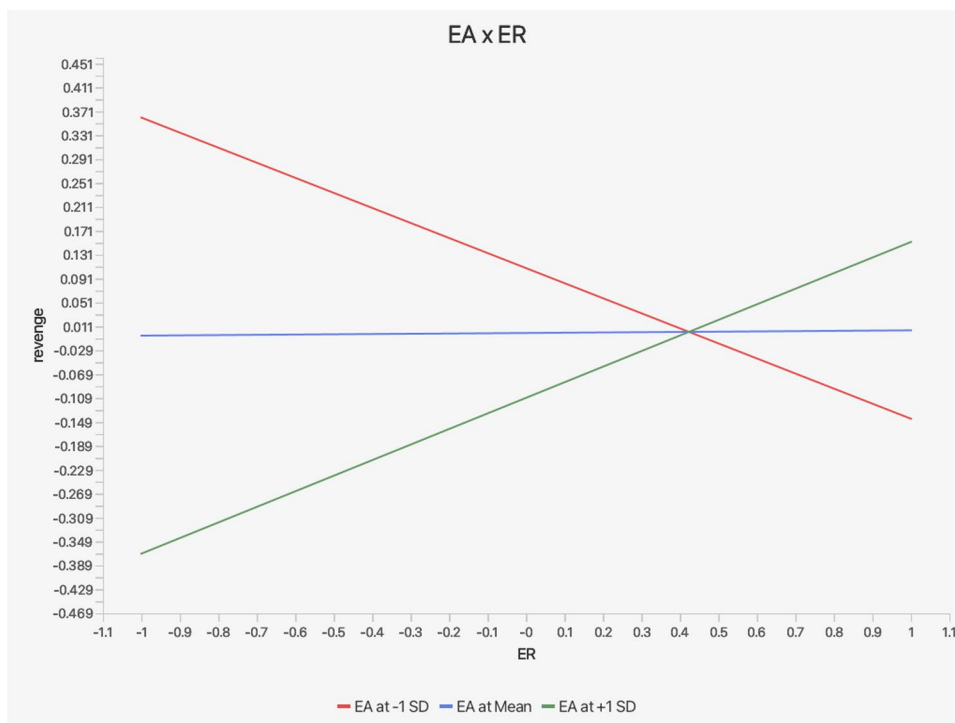
Fig. 3 Simple slope analysis ER\*Irritation



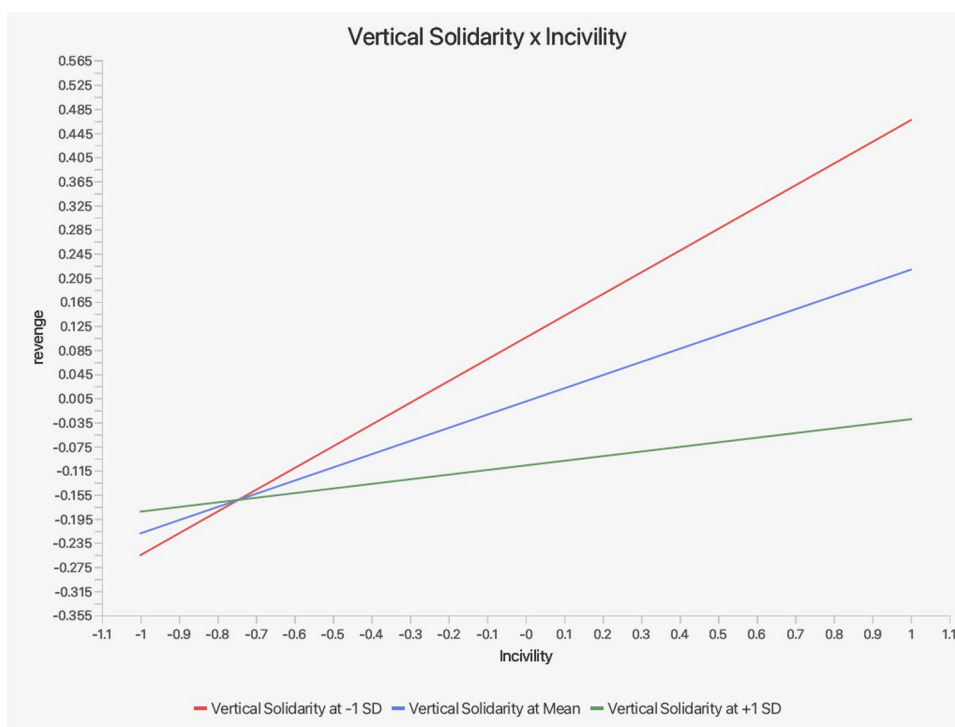
model tested in Study 2 was identical to that of Study 1, a reflective scale (Itzkovich & Aleksic, 2021) with a similar number of items was used to measure incivility in the replication study (i.e., Study 2). Modifying the measure in a replication study helps to increase the measure’s robustness

(Bettis et al., 2016). This approach allowed us to capture shifts in labor relations and preschool educators’ experiences and perceptions both before and after the onset of COVID-19, which is considered a driver of profound changes in the working world.

**Fig. 4** Simple slope analysis EA\*ER



**Fig. 5** Simple slope analysis Vertical Solidarity \*Incivility



**Participants**

Study 2 consisted of 107 female preschool teachers. The ages of these educators ranged from 22 to 61 years old, with an average of 39.54 years old. Altogether, participants in both studies shared similar characteristics.

**Measurements**

The reflective incivility measure employed a 12-item scale, measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = nearly never to 5 = most of the time. The leading question was: “During the past year, have you been in a situation

where the interpersonal relationships with your superiors or coworkers were...” Examples of possible responses are “disrespectful” and “offensive.” All other measures were identical to those used in Study 1. The full scale was introduced by Itzkovich and Aleksic (2021). The full scale can be found in Appendix A. One item was removed from the original scale because it did not refer to an emotional response to incivility as other items did.

## Procedure

After IRB approval in 2021, a questionnaire was distributed to 252 preschool teachers from the same preschool teacher union reported in Study 1. Only permanent preschool teachers who joined the union after 2017 and thus could not participate in Study 1 were approached. Anonymity was guaranteed, and participants’ consent was obtained. Among the 129 returned questionnaires, 107 contained usable data. Study 2 involved a more focused sample, comprising 252 preschool teachers who had joined the union after 2017. This specific selection criterion served two important purposes. First, it ensured that the participants in Study 2 were distinct from those in Study 1, eliminating any potential overlap between the samples. Second, this approach facilitated the examination of perspectives from newer union members, potentially capturing evolving trends or attitudes within both the organization and the broader job market. These changes reflect not only the impact of COVID-19 but also broader shifts in the educational landscape, labor relations, and societal expectations of early childhood educators.

## Results

The model constructed to test the research hypotheses is shown in Fig. 1.

Table 2 and Fig. 6 present the significance analyses of the direct effects.

The findings were mostly in line with the results found in Study 1. However, there were a few differences. In the replication study, the direct relationship between irritation and revenge was not supported, whereas the connections between EA and revenge were supported. Moreover, the

link between solidarity and irritation and the interaction between EA and ER could not be supported.

The interaction between ER and Irritation and vertical solidarity and incivility showed similar patterns, as shown in Figs. 3 and 5. Yet, the interaction between EA and ER was not significant in Study 2.

## Discussion

Drawing on Hobfoll et al.’s (1990) model, which highlights the relationship between context and social and personal resources, the two studies addressed two main goals: (1) to study the impact of incivility and personal and social resources on increased irritation and revenge, and (2) to understand the triggers and boundaries of the two types of revenge—emotional and calculated.

Concerning the first goal, the results of Studies 1 and 2 supported the first two hypotheses concerning the impacts of incivility on irritation and revenge. Incivility triggers irritation and vindictive behaviors and irritation expiates revenge to an extent not replicated in Study 2. The newly implemented reflective scale, which focuses on emotional responses to incivility, may have captured some portion of the variance in irritation. This overlap could have potentially obscured the relationship between irritation, which is also emotionally focused, and revenge behavior. In a similar vein, Rost et al. (2016) explained that shared method variance between negative and positive affect measures facilitated the detection of a correlation between negative affect and pain-related outcomes, while masking any potential correlation with positive affect. Future research should further investigate these interrelationships and their potential effects on outcome variables.

Furthermore, the two studies failed to support the mediation hypothesis. This contrasts with previous findings suggesting that revenge is triggered by affective arousal and expedited by stress, which is intensified by rumination and irritability (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Dolev et al., 2021; Mohr et al., 2006; Wang et al., 2018; Zeidner & Roberts, 2012)—reactions typically expected following incivility. These earlier studies focused on negative emotionality as a mediator. However, according to the COR theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018), it is theorized that the relationship between resources is moderated rather than mediated. Garofalo and Velotti (2017) supported this notion, stating that while negative emotional arousal can facilitate aggression, this effect can be mitigated through ER. Viewed through the COR theory lens, it is plausible that the complex interplay between personal and social resources could not be fully captured through mediation analysis alone, but might be better understood through moderation analysis.

**Table 2** Significance analysis of direct effects

	Direct Effect	<i>t</i> value	<i>p</i> -value
EA → ER	0.645	7.441	0.000
EA → Irritation	0.438	2.572	0.010
EA → Revenge	-0.375	2.310	0.021
ER → Irritation	-0.622	4.865	0.000
Incivility → Irritation	0.279	3.135	0.002
Incivility → Revenge	0.177	2.040	0.041
ER*Irritation → Revenge	-0.246	2.347	0.019
Solidarity*Incivility → Revenge	-0.223	1.978	0.048

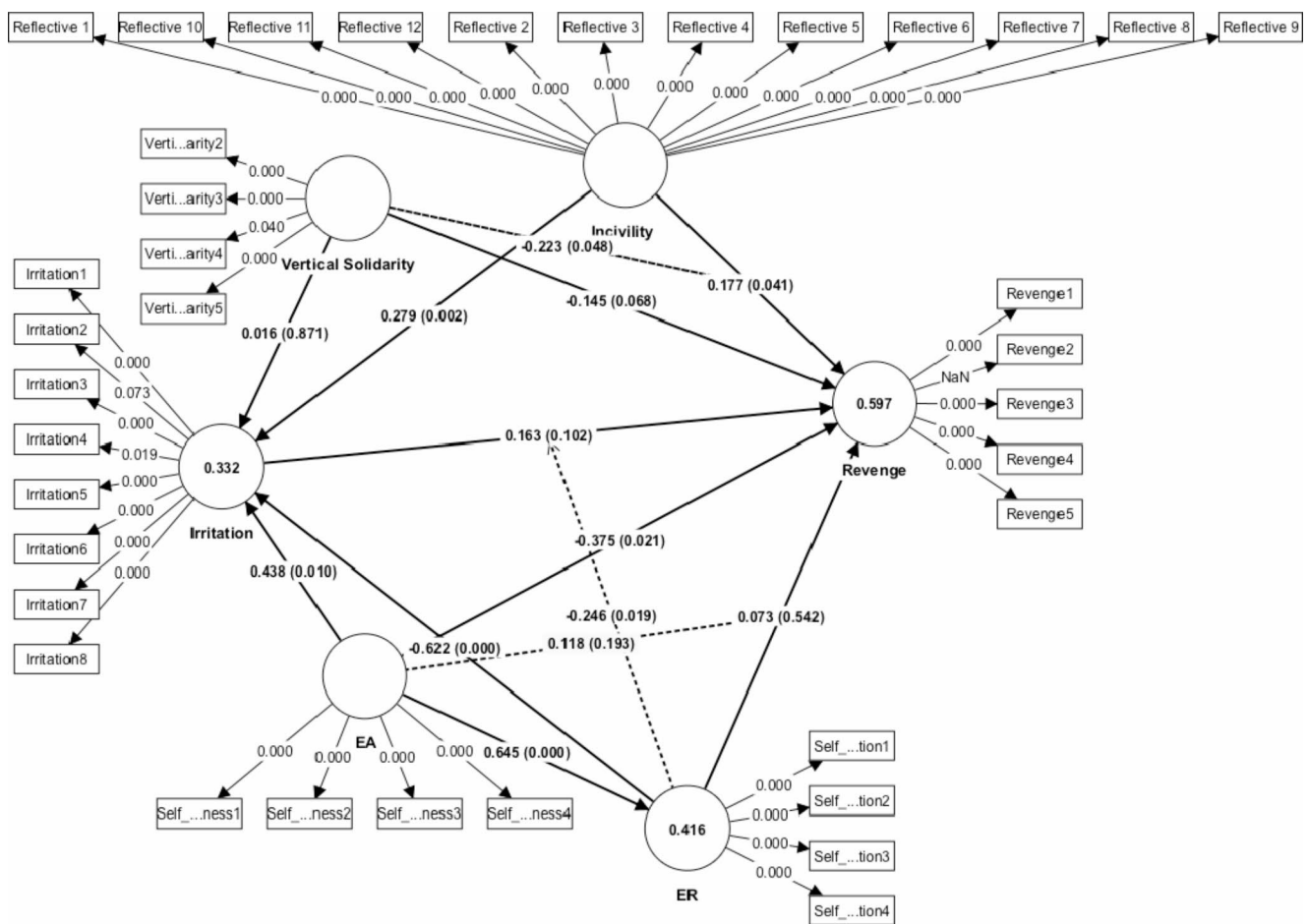


Fig. 6 Path coefficients and *p* values study 2

Hypotheses 4 to 6 were concerned about how vertical solidarity and social-emotional competencies (i.e., EA and ER) mitigate irritation and revenge. In line with the predictions in both studies, ER explained the reduction in irritation.

In contrast to H4a, EA explained increased irritation across the two studies. H4a was based on Ciarrochi et al.’s (2003) work; they noted that an inability to understand emotions is a source of anxiety. Following this notion, it was assumed that understanding one’s emotional state can reduce negative emotions. However, the unexpected findings can be explained by other scholars who have contributed to this lack of clarity by showing that EA, especially the awareness of negative emotions, can elicit negative attitudes in dyad relations (Killian, 2012). These inconsistent findings and the inability to establish clear and consistent relationships between the personal and social resources and revenge were explained through the interaction effects, which answered the second research question. In this respect, H7 addressed the interaction between ER and irritation regarding their mutual impact on revenge. This interaction effect was significant in both studies, supporting the notion that ER can buffer the adverse effects of stress (Barrett et al., 2001). In

particular, the interaction effect found in the current studies indicates that deficient emotional control triggered revenge under conditions of high irritation. To a larger extent, these findings provide evidence for the existence of affective revenge, a type of revenge that is triggered by emotional arousal (Dolev et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2018; Zeidner & Roberts, 2012). An interesting finding emerged from the opposite pole of the interaction: in the absence of irritation, those with high ER were more likely to seek revenge than those with low ER. This finding, although not predicted, suggests that some vindictive behaviors are cold and are not driven by stress-induced irritation, but are instead based on cold calculation (Jones & Carroll, 2007; Lee & Ashton, 2012) of high ER individuals.

The second interaction (H8) considered the interdependence of EA and ER (Barrett et al., 2001; Boden & Thompson, 2015). Results showed that in the absence of ER and EA, emotions were not controlled and revenge was triggered and reached its highest levels—another indication of the existence of hot revenge.

In Study 1, the results indicated that revenge was triggered to a certain extent when both ER and EA were high.

According to Boden and Thompson (2015), effective ER depends on nuanced information supplied by EA. Thus, when both ER and EA are in place, the regulation strategy can be chosen. The observation showing that vindictive behavior was present under high ER and EA provides additional evidence of the existence of cold, calculated, and rational revenge. However, the interaction effect was not replicated in the second study. Recently, Montgomery and Antshel (2024), who investigated self-control resource depletion, suggested that the low replicability of such effects might be attributed to the reliance on mildly depleting tasks. Although their discussion focused on experimental designs, it is possible that a similar principle applies to the current research: the scales used to measure ER and/or EA may lack sufficient sensitivity. Consequently, the interaction effect observed in the first study requires further validation in future research, potentially using more sensitive measures.

The last hypothesis (H9) addressed the interaction between resource-consuming contexts (i.e., incivility) and vertical solidarity regarding their mutual impact on revenge. Although incivility depletes resources, it is expected that they will be restored through revenge (Itzkovich, 2016) in a tit-for-tat response. Recently, Potipiroon and Ford (2019) noted an alternative route for resource restoration based on prosocial behavior. This route, also known as instrumental Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), is based on helping others for gain (Zhang et al., 2011) and has also been documented by Hobfoll et al. (2018, p.110):

“The social exchange relationship between supervisors and subordinates describes how supervisors exchange important resources (e.g., social support, control, self-efficacy) with subordinates who assist them in completing their work. According to the leader-member exchange (LMX) model, leaders develop different forms of exchange relationships with their subordinates, such that employees who maintain good exchange relationships receive more resources.”

Following this line of thought, findings of both studies demonstrate the possibility of a trade-off between the two strategies for resource gain. Under the assumption that resources are scarce (Hobfoll et al., 2018), especially under the stressful and resource-demanding conditions of intense incivility, individuals are likely to consider diverse options for investing their resources to restore those that have been lost. The choice is likely based on the source of the uncivil act. If the manager perpetrates incivility, the revenge strategy would be more logical; in such cases, helping the manager restore lost resources might not be fruitful. If the culprit is someone other than the manager, which is a reasonable option for preschool teachers, it is logical and less precarious to

engage in instrumental aid, as reflected by vertical solidarity. Shen et al. (2019) proposed a similar mechanism in which subordinates carry out a risk–benefit analysis before seeking input from their superiors. Similarly, it is suggested that in the context of the current study, preschool teachers’ decisions to revenge also depend on their relationships with managers. These two competing strategies also support the existence of cold revenge.

### Theoretical contribution

Overall, the current study revealed some boundary conditions of revenge and evidence of both hot and cold forms of revenge, each with its distinct triggers. Additionally, the findings demonstrated the interdependencies between EA and ER. While each of these two components of EI is considered flat, the current study’s finding supports the existence of deeper layers of the two. This finding is based on Hobfoll et al.’s (2018) work, presenting the crossover effect of resources. In an illuminating retrospective study on the COR theory, the authors suggested that through a crossover effect, resources affect each other and should be considered in groups (i.e., caravans). To the best of my knowledge, this aspect presents an understudied aspect of the relations between EA and ER. Understanding these nuances can help increase the effectiveness of intervention processes.

### Practical implications

Recent studies have stressed the importance of competencies, such as resilience, to deal with challenging circumstances (Näswall et al., 2019). Similarly, but more specifically, the present study’s findings imply that preschool teachers and their supervisors must develop intrapersonal competencies to mitigate the incivility and revenge that might occur (Dolev & Itzkovich, 2020).

From a managerial perspective, the findings provide practical insights for supervisors at all levels of schooling systems. The results suggest that managers should be sensitive to teachers’ expressions of solidarity, as these expressions can conceal subordinates’ distress. More broadly, supervisors should be responsible for any harm their subordinates experience from external sources. For example, preschool teachers can be treated rudely by parents. In such cases, managerial sensitivity will help uncover it before its cost becomes unbearable. The relationships observed among preschool teachers may not necessarily generalize to all work situations. In particular, the interaction concerning horizontal solidarity might be attributed to the multiple sources of victimization that preschool teachers face. For instance, parents, as a source of victimization, are not part of the same organizational system as the supervisor. This

unique dynamic makes seeking help from the manager a viable option for preschool teachers when dealing with parental incivility.

While these relationships may not apply universally to all work situations, they could potentially extend to other workplace contexts where victimization originates from sources external to the organizational hierarchy, such as customers or suppliers. In these scenarios, the dynamics of seeking managerial support might be parallel to those observed in the preschool teaching context.

Specifically, the protective role of horizontal solidarity in moderating vindictive behaviors may not be limited to preschool teachers. It could be equally relevant in other professions where employees face incivility from parties outside their direct organizational structure. For instance, retail workers dealing with difficult customers or account managers handling demanding clients might experience similar dynamics. These nuanced findings underscore the importance of considering both occupation-specific factors and broader structural similarities when studying workplace incivility and its consequences.

## Limitations

This research makes a significant contribution to the field, but it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The primary constraint is the cross-sectional design, which prevents establishing causal relationships. The referenced study (citation omitted for anonymity, 2021) suggests that revenge depletes social-emotional competencies, rather than the reverse. Another limitation is the simultaneous measurement of all variables. A longitudinal study could validate these findings and better align with the dynamic nature of the COR theory. From a methodological standpoint, it is worth noting the potential lack of sensitivity in the ER scale and/or the EA measure. In a related vein, the newly implemented reflective incivility scale merits consideration when examining additional emotional variables. This scale, which focuses on emotional responses to incivility, may have captured some of the variance in irritation. This overlap could have potentially obscured the relationship between irritation, which also has an emotional component and revenge. Rost et al. (2016) observed that shared method variance between negative and positive affect measures facilitated the detection of a correlation between negative affect and pain-related outcomes, while masking any potential correlation with positive affect. Future research should further explore these interrelationships and their potential effects on outcome variables.

Lastly, both studies failed to support mediation effects. When viewed through the lens of COR theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018), it is plausible that the complex interplay between

personal and social resources could not be fully captured through mediation analysis alone. This relationship might be better understood through moderation analysis. Subsequent studies should address these limitations to enhance our understanding of the relationships among these variables, particularly focusing on incivility, irritation, and revenge.

Despite these drawbacks, the results of this study contribute to the understanding of the interaction between resources and resource-depleting contexts, as well as the underlying mechanism of these impacts regarding two distinct types of revenge, thereby demonstrating the applicability of more complicated and less-discussed notions of COR. This study also contributed to additional validation of the Incivility Reflective Scale, which demonstrates a refreshing theory-based approach to measure incivility. The novel perspective presented in the current study can allow others to pursue similar routes and investigate interdependencies between other personal and social resources to reveal additional hidden complexities in diverse fields.

## Appendix A

The complete RWIS

During the <u>past year</u> have you been in a situation where the interpersonal relationships with your superiors or coworkers were:	Nearly never	Rarely ever	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
Offensive	1	2	3	4	5
Insulting	1	2	3	4	5
Rude	1	2	3	4	5
Humiliating	1	2	3	4	5
Unpleasant	1	2	3	4	5
Frustrating	1	2	3	4	5
Annoying	1	2	3	4	5
Hurtful	1	2	3	4	5
Saddening	1	2	3	4	5
Stressful	1	2	3	4	5
Shame-inducing	1	2	3	4	5
Disrespectful	1	2	3	4	5

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**Data availability** Raw data were generated at Kinneret College on the Sea of Galilee. Derived data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author [Y.I.] on request.

## Declarations

**Competing interests** The author reports that there are no competing interests to declare.

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