

Organizational Incivility: Patterns and Profiles among Teaching Staff

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Abstract

Organizational incivility is a type of behavior that can be frequently encountered in the workplace environment. Even if it can have a low intensity and is vaguely perceptible, studies in recent years find that these manifestations can be contagious and over time can become part of the organizational culture. It usually manifests itself through behaviors such as: taking credit for someone else's work, unpleasant emails, compliments with ambiguous meaning, which cumulatively affect the well-being of employees at work. Distinct characteristics of the target (victim), the instigator and the witness were noted, taking into account criteria such as: position in the organizational hierarchy, certain personality traits and behavioral reactions. The teaching staff have not been spared of manifestations of workplace incivility as it can be seen through the interviews that it is a frequent occurrence.

Keywords: incivility, perceptions, patterns, profiles, teaching staff

JEL Classification: D2

1. Introduction

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The organizational environment is an arena that catalyzes both functional and dysfunctional processes. The interest of researchers in the field of organizational psychology can be seen through the abundance of studies that focus on phenomena such as burnout, mobbing, occupational stress and counterproductive behaviors. For some of us, the following scenario at work might be familiar: a colleague who makes an ambiguous remark or compliment in relation to a characteristic at first glance seems to be a joke, but at the same time puts us in an unpleasant light, but we overlook it, it's not like we're going to report this to Human Resources department. Then another day, the same colleague interrupts us while we're giving a presentation to the entire department. A week later, the colleague mentions that the hairstyle does not fit us very well. Each separate situation is not serious, but when they accumulate, emotional tension begins to rise. This subtle phenomenon is called organizational incivility.

The purpose of the study is to establish patterns and profiles of organizational incivility among teachers in pre-university institutions. Based on this aim, we set the following objectives:

- 1.analysis of theoretical aspects with reference to organizational incivility;
- 2.to investigate perceptions of the manifestation of organizational incivility among teachers;
- 3.establishing profiles and patterns of organizational incivility among teachers.

2. Literature Review

In 1999, Andersson and Pearson first brought this phenomenon to the attention of researchers, defining incivility as deviant behavior of low intensity, with an ambiguous intent to cause harm to the target, in violation of the norms of mutual respect in the workplace (Milam et al., 2009).

Over the course of more than twenty years there have been numerous studies that touched the topic, including those conducted by Cortina and colleagues that have shown that 71% of court

employees, 75% of university employees, 79% of legal employees, have encountered some form of incivility in the workplace (Cortina, 2008; Cortina & Magley, 2009). Also in studies conducted by Einarsen and Raknes in 1997 - 75% of employees experienced general harassment, after Rospenda, in 2002 - 64% of employees experienced general harassment at work and after Neuman, in 2004 - 67% - were treated in a rude and disrespectful manner (Lim et al., 2008).

In 2009, Reio and Ghosh published a cross-sectional, correlational study of workplace adjustment, employee emotional state, incivility and physical health, and job satisfaction in a multiethnic population. They were able to present evidence that demographic status, job fit, and affective state predict interpersonal and organizational incivility, which in turn predict employee physical health and job satisfaction.

The explanation, why such subtle behavior brings so much trauma, reveals in the fact that incivility very easily falls into the category of everyday nuisance. Some authors state that these everyday annoyances do not have the intensity of major life events, but the chronic aspect of the stressors, over time, begin to tire the person, both psychologically and physiologically.

A reference point of profiles is Cortina and Magley's (2009) article in which they established characteristics of the target and the instigator. According to this research, the characteristics of the target depend very much on the person's position in the organization's hierarchy, as it is on this position that depends how they perceive their lack of control over the environment. It was documented by Malamut and Offermann in 2001 that employees lower in the organizational hierarchy rated their experiences of workplace harassment more negatively than employees higher in the organizational hierarchy. The characteristics of the instigator, likewise, are closely related to his or her social position in the organization, especially when talking about perception.

3. Methodology

In our study we have two groups of subjects, with participants of teachers from 2 general education institutions. The teachers teach different subjects.

The first group of subjects completed the Workplace Incivility Scale (WIS) and Workplace relational civility "mirror" questionnaire, here 60 subjects participated, 54 were female and 6 male. The age of the participants is divided into two predominant categories, i.e. age 30-39 years - 36% and 40-49 years - 27%. For the interview part, 10 teachers participated, previously participated in the questionnaires and were randomly selected for the interview. The interview participants were 9 females and 1 male, with ages ranging from 23 to 52.

For the Workplace Incivility Scale (WIS) consisting of 12 items, 17 subjects scored 12, showing a very low level of workplace incivility. Only one subject scored 26 points, a medium level of incivility, the remaining 42 participants have a much lower than medium level of perceived incivility at work. We have framed the results in the figure below:

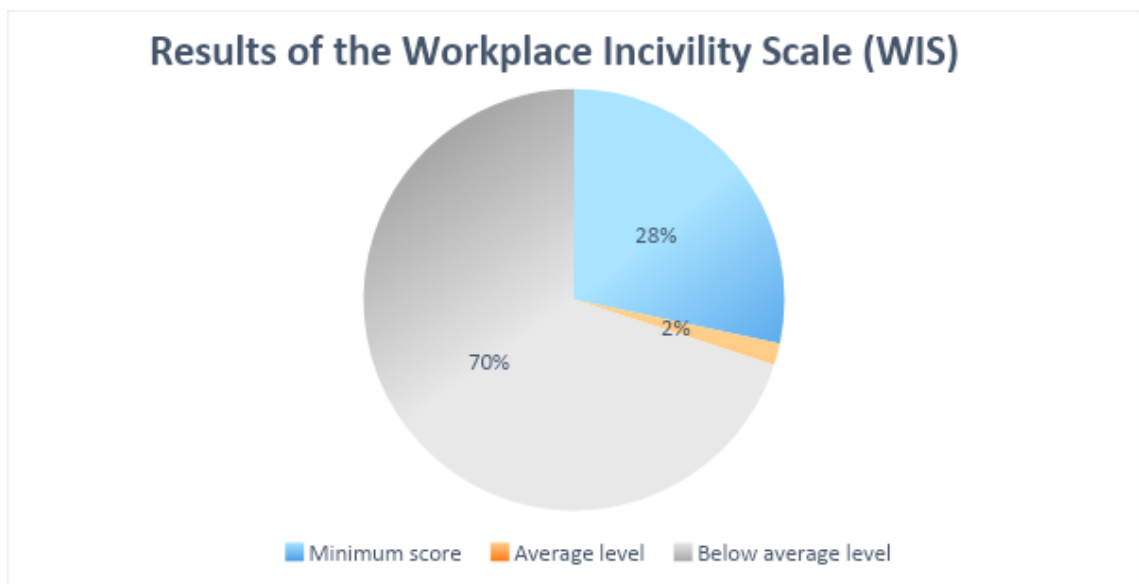


Figure 1. Results of the Workplace Incivility Scale (WIS)

The Workplace Relational Civility "mirror" questionnaire is made up of two parts, in which the level of perception and self-perception of organizational incivility is studied, how the subject

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considers that he behaves with his colleagues and how he perceives that his colleagues behave in relation to himself. In the figure below we have placed the results obtained:

4. Results and Discussions



Figure 2. Results of the Workplace relational civility „mirror” Scale

From the figure, we can see that the results exceed an average level of civility in the workplace, which leads us to conclude that the group of participants perceive that their behavior towards others is more civil than the behavior of others towards them, 73% of participants believe that they behave more civilly towards others than their colleagues behave towards them and 27% of participants believe that their colleagues behave better towards them than they behave towards their colleagues.

For the qualitative part, we conducted 10 interviews with participants who completed questionnaires. Compared to the results obtained in the quantitative part, the interviews give us a completely different picture. The interview participants range in age from 23 to 53 years, with work experience in the unit ranging from 0-6 years and total work experience ranging from 2 years to 35 years. In other words, the participants showed a diversity not only in work and content taught, but also in experience.

In the first part of the interview, we compiled a checklist of behaviors often categorized as uncivil and the participant responds whether they perceived these types of behaviors in the institution in their work group and had the opportunity to add any remarks and/or comments. In this stage, the results took a different form from those presented in the quantitative stage. Here we already see a presence of organizational incivility, quite relevant. We have two types of behaviors that 100% of participants mentioned the presence of, namely: talking about staff behind their backs (gossiping) and employees seem irritated or "tired" from work. Also, 90% of the interviewees, noted the presence of colleagues making unpleasant facial expressions, such as rolling their eyes and the appearance of side conversations during meetings or some people seem to be glued to their phones. And 80% of respondents also noted the presence of using silent treatment.

On the case study side, the participants had quite interesting reactions, mentioning that both situations are cases that are not out of the ordinary and can easily be seen in school. The participants were better able to construct patterns of unacceptable behaviour, which were the vast majority. One effect that would have changed the way teachers decided which behaviours were unacceptable was the tone, but also the way a message is conveyed, in the example in case study 2 about criticism offered from a peer, which is interesting as 70% of participants observed behaviours using a smug tone/language with peers. Equally relevant is the fact that only some behaviors were placed in the grey area: selective invitations, comments made about predecessors'

work, rolling her eyes...something she didn't like and couldn't control her emotion, criticism...maybe she wishes him well, non-socialising with colleagues outside of work.

One confirmation for us that participants associated with the events described in the case studies is that we had participants who mentioned they were in the position of the characters described. Which leads us to the idea that incivility is not foreign to teachers.

For our study, we will use the term **pattern** with the meaning of behavioral patterns manifested by a person and profiles as defining personality traits of both the aggressor, the target and the bystander. From the interview it was much easier to delineate which behaviors are unacceptable and manifest the heart of incivility, these are:

1. gossip;
2. unsolicited advice;
3. questioning someone's professionalism in public;
4. rolling your eyes;
5. marginalising someone;
6. neglecting colleagues;
7. interfering with colleagues.

5. Conclusions

As far as acceptable and grey area behaviors are concerned, here we have more individual opinions, so somehow we even relate them to the individual set of values the person has and of course to their own perceptions. Interestingly the picture of what is not ok was clearer compared to what is ok.

Regarding the **profiles**, here very clearly there was a black and white thinking, when the participants were asked to provide some personality traits of the case study characters, then the words used were, on the instigators: impertinent, impudent, unprofessional, unfaithful,
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hypocritical, a man who has no place in pedagogy. These descriptions were used without questioning the motivation of the characters. As for the targets, they were victimised but also called weak in character for not fighting back, in the case of the character who complied this was called lacking in verticality. That is, here again the messages proved to be much harsher than expected, both on the target and on the witnesses, because the witness should have taken a stand. The study of organizational incivility turned out to be a process in which we explored this unknown phenomenon for our cultural space in relation to other terms already well studied in organizational psychology. Quantitative methods did not show us a relevant presence of organizational incivility, while qualitative methods showed us a much deeper reality. Respectively we will take this into account in the selection of future research methodologies. The phenomenon of incivility is so subtle but can give acute and long-lasting effects, one metaphorical form we can use is that in an avalanche, every flake is responsible, something so small and superficial at first glance, in amalgam is as dangerous, if not more so than mobbing. As a final point we have been able to formulate some patterns and profiles of incivility and to explore the perception of the teacher as an employee of incivility and certain attitudes towards the actors involved in organizational incivility.

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