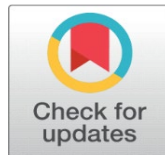


THE HIDDEN COST OF INCIVILITY: HOW KNOWLEDGE HIDING AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES UNDERMINE COLLABORATIVE LEARNING IN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

An academic environment is one where collaboration and mutual respect are critical for both student and teachers' success. Incivility on one hand ranging from subtle disrespect to over hostility has increasingly infiltrated classrooms and academic institutions, leading to negative consequences for learning, knowledge exchange and mental health. Among teachers, incivility includes unfair grading, dismissive attitudes or publicly belittling students. In teacher student interactions, teachers may experience incivility in the form of disrespectful students, while students may face unhelpful teachers. The cumulative impact of such behaviours creates a toxic academic climate. This incivil behaviour not only diminishes trust but also triggers defensive responses like knowledge hiding behaviour. In educational settings, knowledge hiding can be harmful. It stifles peer learning and collaboration, limit sharing of resources and innovative teaching techniques. This paper investigates the effects of knowledge hiding and incivility in educational settings, focusing on mental health issues as key contributors to the erosion of collaborative learning. Mental health issues among teachers and students can significantly amplify the negative consequences of incivility, as individuals struggling with stress, anxiety, or depression may be less likely to engage in collaborative activities or contribute their knowledge. Further the findings said that incivility acts as fuel for knowledge, hiding behaviour which significantly impacts the mental health and well-being of both students and teachers. The paper highlights the need for institutions to address these issues through transformative strategies that promote respect, trust and well-being.



Keywords: Incivility, Knowledge Hiding, Mental Health, Collaborative Learning

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic institutions are essential to the growth and development of a nation, and the foundation of any educational institution's successful operation is trust and cooperation. Since trust is crucial between educators and learners, "Incivil behavior" on the part of one of them can damage the collaborative atmosphere and trust that characterizes a learning environment. The problem of incivility is often characterized by rudeness, disrespectful behaviour, aggression has spread throughout educational institutions. In many cultures and companies, workplace rudeness is a common occurrence (Schilpzand et al., 2014). Workplace rudeness is the most dangerous form of aberrant conduct for both individuals and businesses (Andersson and Pearson, 1999). Even though rudeness is easily noticeable its hidden cost can be much more subtle. Incivility in educational institutions can manifest in many ways. Disruptive behaviour by students can include talking during lectures, disrupting other students, or improperly using electronic equipment. Incivility can create a hostile learning environment that negatively impacts their academic performance, motivation, and overall well-being. Students are less likely to participate in class discussions, ask for help from teachers, or work toward their academic objectives when they feel intimidated or disrespectful. Lower student satisfaction and higher dropout

rates may result from this. On the other hand, a lack of consideration for the interests of students, unjust grading procedures, or patronizing or caustic remarks are some examples of how faculty members might be inconsiderate. Additionally, staff members may act in an impolite manner by snubbing questions from kids or mistreating their coworkers. Disrespectful behaviour toward educators can cause stress, fatigue, and a decline in job satisfaction. This may therefore have an impact on their efficacy as teachers and their capacity to offer pupils high-quality help. Furthermore, rudeness can foster a toxic workplace that deters gifted people from pursuing professions in teaching. Disrespectful behaviour toward teachers lead to a poisonous workplace which is marked by animosity, negativity, and a lack of support. This may result in stress, worry, or depression, all of this affects teachers' mental health and wellbeing.

Isolation and alienation are two other things that rudeness can exacerbate in addition to stress and fatigue. Teachers may feel unappreciated and undervalued when they receive rude treatment. Feelings of social isolation and a sense of alienation from their peers and teachers may result from this. Furthermore, incivility can have a negative impact on teachers' self-esteem and job happiness. Teachers' confidence and sense of worth might be undermined by persistently encountering rude behavior. This may result in a decline in their motivation and job satisfaction, which will be bad for their ability to teach. A situation involving two or more people is considered interactive and constitutes incivility (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Carter, 1998). An uncivil encounter involves and has an impact on the initiator(s), target(s), observer(s), and social milieu. The academic and practitioner management literature has recently focused on aggressive behavior and violence (Baron & Neuman, 1996; Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1996; VandenBos & Bulatao, 1996; Weisinger, 1995). Although social scientists in the disciplines of criminology, psychology, and sociology disagree on the definitions and differences between the two, researchers studying aggression and violence in organizations appear to agree that aggression is an attempt at harmful or destructive behavior that deviates from social norms, and that violence is a high-intensity, physical form of aggression (Tedeschi & Felson, 1994).

2. SPIRALLING INCIVILITY

Incivility acts as a spiral in an organization as negative affect and a desire to return the seen unjust conduct are subsequently triggered by perceptions of interactional injustice (Berkowitz, 1993; Bies & Tripp, 1995; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). Reacting with more unfairness is the most popular way to release adverse impact and restore fairness in this situation (Donnerstein & Hatfield, 1982; Kim & Smith, 1993). This can then cause the other party to perceive and react similarly, potentially creating a vicious cycle of injustice. When an employee or group of employees acts rudely toward another group of employees, it can start an incivility spiral in the organization. The other person in the group notices the rudeness and can see it as an unfair interaction. Negative affect may arise from this thought, which may incite the second group to want to reciprocate. This impulse to reciprocate can only be an expression of the bad emotions that have been evoked, rather than an attempt to physically or psychologically damage the first group employee. After that, the second group responds to the first group with an impolite act.

3. ABUSIVE SUPERVISION

The significance of toxic leadership in the management studies has been established by the numerous research. Abusive supervising procedures are the subject of one section of this research (Poon, 2011). If People's relationships with their bosses are more significant than other personal relationships, they make at work (Ahmad & Omar; 2013). According to Tepper (2000) supervision is "the degree to which a worker believes their supervisor consistently engages in hostile verbal and nonverbal behavior without making physical contact". An authoritarian leader maintains absolute control over followers, requires total obedience, and uses harsh discipline to achieve the goals. Abrupt outbursts and erratic behaviour are the common traits of a toxic leader. According to sources, the current leader's toxic behaviour affects the workplace and cause a terrible mental stress among the employees, and no one wants to talk to him when he is angry. The passion and tone of his voice reflect this feeling. In the dimension of negative emotional mood, toxic leaders exhibit conflict and instability in their behavior, and their vassals match their behavior in this dimension as well. Impolite actions show a lack of regard for other people's needs and go against how people expect to be treated. Anxious workplace, challenging working conditions, and authoritarian work environments can all contribute to the feeling of emptiness. Since they are the only ones with power, the supervisor has the ability to create an atmosphere that promotes rudeness at workplace. Individuals, communities, organizations, and even entire states can be destroyed by toxic leadership, which is an expensive phenomenon, (Indradevi, 2016). Goyer claims that toxic leaders exhibit a variety of

self-centered actions, attitudes, and goals that have a detrimental effect on task performance, subordinates, and the company as a whole (Burns, 2017). Nearly all of the research examined was based on Anderson and Pearson's (1999) definition of workplace incivility, which is why it is the term most frequently used in those studies. They describe incivility at work as low-intensity deviant behavior that violates the mutual respect rules of the workplace and has a vague purpose to cause harm. He went on to argue that rudeness and incivility are characteristics of uncivilized behavior that betrays a lack of consideration for others. This exact term has been used frequently by numerous academics (Bartlett et al., 2008). Regardless of how differently each organization operates, each one has its own rules for, what constitutes suitable interpersonal interaction among the employees. Acts of provocation undermine this behaviour and endanger the organization's and its workers' well-being (Tarraf, 2012). According to Keng (2017), hostility is a behavior that aims to inflict intangible harm on the environment. However, workplace hostility is only defined as blatant acts of animosity that are consistently aimed against an individual or group of individuals (Tastan & Davoudi, 2012). Workplace Incivility leads to knowledge hiding.

4. KNOWLEDGE HIDING

Knowledge hiding can seriously harm professional relationships, foster mistrust among coworkers, result in knowledge gaps, and impair individual and organizational performance. Knowledge Hiding can be defined as "an intentional attempt by an individual to withhold or conceal task information, ideas, and know-how that has been requested by another person", (Connelly et al., 2012). In the academic context, where scientists are expected to share knowledge with students and colleagues alike in order to advance the field and benefit society, a human predisposition to view knowledge with caution (Davenport and Prusak, 1998) is especially troublesome. There are several reasons why knowledge transmitters hoard their knowledge. One of them has to do with the possible decline in market value that is "hardly earned" following years of study and training. Employees get a strong sense of personal ownership over their gained knowledge as a result. The second reason is the rationale behind the expensive process of knowledge sharing, which adds a burden or additional duty to the transmitters' regular work. The third reason is a dread of harboring "knowledge parasites" who haven't worked as hard to advance themselves. Fourth, they steer clear of having their information evaluated by others. Finally, subordinates purposefully hide knowledge because they believe that superiors dislike intelligent subordinates more than they do and that they are unwilling to acknowledge that they can learn from their subordinates. On the other hand, in order to keep their position of authority, superiors may purposefully withhold information from subordinates (Husted and Michailova, 2002). When an employee asks a coworker for information, they react similarly to when information is being withheld. This circumstance is described by Cerne et al. (2014) as "shooting yourself in the foot," which implies that self-centred behavior eventually catches up with the knowledge keeper. It means that mutual mistrust can ruin relationships between people. Additionally, Peng (2013) proposed that knowledge hiding within an organization could impair collaboration, the generation of new ideas, or the application of policies, all of which could negatively impact organizational performance. According to Connelly (2012), knowledge concealment can be broadly classified into three categories: evasive, playing dumb, and rationalized. Evasive Knowledge Hiding happens when a knowledge provider tries to deceive a seeker by giving false information, whereas dumb Knowledge Hiding occurs when the knowledge provider conceals information by claiming that they do not have what the seeker is asking for. When the knowledge provider provides explanations for information withholding, this is known as Rationalized Knowledge hiding. But more recently, researchers have suggested some other aspects of knowledge-hiding also, for example, bullying hiding (Yuan et al., 2020) is a situation where a knowledge provider employs a disagreeable method to discourage the information seeker from questioning them in order to maintain their "knowledge power."

5. INCIVILITY, KNOWLEDGE HIDING AND MENTAL HEALTH

"Low-intensity interpersonal mistreatment enacted with ambiguous intent to harm the target" is the definition of workplace incivility (Andersson and Pearson, 1999). Workers who witness rude conduct in the workplace are more likely to have unpleasant emotional responses that could have detrimental effects. When people are treated rudely at work, they may purposefully conceal information by feigning ignorance or lack of access to pertinent data (Irum et al., 2020). According to Connelly et al. (2012), people may simply decide to provide inaccurate information in response to requests for information. According to earlier research, knowledge concealment behavior is linked to workplace harassment (Zhao et al., 2016). Additionally, people may stop exhibiting citizenship behaviors—helping others—in reaction to rude and unpleasant treatment (Zellars et al., 2002). Furthermore, rudeness can elicit unpleasant feelings in

victims, which may lead them to seek retribution by denying them access to particular information that the other person has asked, claiming that they are unaware of or lack the necessary knowledge. Simply put, victims of rudeness in such situations may find it legitimate to play dumb. According to earlier research, mistrust typically leads to skepticism, disbelief, or even deceit, which makes collaboration challenging (Cahill et al., 2003). Knowledge concealment can be driven by a number of things, such as a desire to hold onto power or a fear of being taken advantage of, but it can seriously impede professional growth and collaboration, leaving teachers feeling inadequate and frustrated.

Teachers' mental health may suffer greatly from the combined impacts of rudeness and knowledge concealment. Teachers may suffer from increased stress, worry, and depression when they encounter disrespectful conduct in addition to a lack of support from their peers. Burnout, a condition of emotional, physical, and mental tiredness, can result from these negative feelings and have detrimental effects on both teachers and their students.

Furthermore, rudeness and knowledge concealment can fuel a poisonous workplace atmosphere that stifles candid dialogue, teamwork, and creativity. Teachers may lose interest in their profession and be less willing to attempt new things or take chances if they feel unsafe or unsupported. Students' learning and general academic performance may suffer as a result. Students' academic achievement, social growth, and general well-being can all suffer greatly when teachers are dealing with poor mental health. Engaging students, giving clear instructions, and fostering a supportive learning environment may be more difficult for teachers who are dealing with mental health concerns. As a result, students may become less motivated, receive worse marks, and perform less academically. Student learning may also be further hampered by teachers who are overburdened or under stress since they are more prone to engage in negative behaviors like screaming, impatience, or harsh punishment. In the classroom, this might cause worry, fear, and feelings of uncertainty. Students may struggle to build healthy social skills and strong relationships with their peers when teachers are unable to offer them emotional support and direction. Students look up to their teachers as role models, and their behavior can significantly impact a student's mental well-being. A toxic and unfavorable environment can arise in the classroom when teachers are dealing with stress, anxiety, or despair. Students may experience higher levels of stress, anxiety, and sadness as a result, and their general wellbeing may deteriorate. Student achievement depends on a solid and constructive teacher-student interaction. It can be challenging to establish and preserve good relationships with students when educators are dealing with mental health concerns. Students may feel alienated, disengaged, and even resentful as a result of this.

6. TEACHERS' MENTAL HEALTH AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Collaborative learning has long been seen as an essential element of successful education, with the ability to engage students, challenge their thinking, and develop their social skills. Collaborative learning is only successful, though, if a teacher is able to establish a classroom environment of trust, respect, and psychological safety. Teachers' mental health thus becomes a determining component in cultivating not just their own wellbeing as professionals, but that of the classroom's collaborative potential. Studies demonstrate that teachers who are highly stressed, burned out, or suffering from depressive symptoms can find it hard to support collaborative tasks and maintain constructive student relationships (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Mental illness can lower teachers' emotional control and tolerance, resulting in less constructive feedback, heightened irritability, or avoidance of active classroom participation. These employees' behaviors have the potential to deter students from freely contributing to group work or sharing thoughts, hence undermining the collaborative spirit. Incivility and knowledge hiding, as this study has underscored, exacerbate such issues. When teachers experience ongoing disrespect from colleagues, administrators, or students, their professional self-worth and competence are eroded. This can lead to feelings of alienation and burnout, which immediately translate into lower motivation to plan and facilitate collaborative efforts. Additionally, peer knowledge hiding further segregates teachers from one another, stripping them of the resources and tips required to come up with creative group learning experiences. In the absence of collegial knowledge-sharing access, teachers can opt to use outdated practices, thus compromising the quality of collaboration within the classroom. Conversely, educators with stable mental health are more likely to be models of collaborative behavior, illustrating empathy, conflict resolution, and tolerance for diversity. Their positive emotional states can create a positive context in which the students feel safe to express themselves, to negotiate differences, and to collaborate in solving problems. This is congruent with the postulates of social learning theory, based on which it is believed that students tend to internalize and copy interpersonal behavior modeled by important adults in their world (Bandura, 1986).

7. STUDENTS MENTAL HEALTH AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Collaborative learning has long been accepted as an instructional method that promotes knowledge construction, critical thinking, and teamwork. Its success, however, largely relies on the emotional and psychological preparedness of students to collaborate on tasks. Mental health of students thus becomes a determining factor of interaction quality, cooperation, and learning outcomes in collaborative tasks. Students with psychological distress, for example, anxiety, depression, or alienation, tend to have obstacles to fully participate in collaborative learning (WHO, 2020). Emotional issues might result in withdrawal, low self-esteem, and the inability to contribute comments to group discussions. These students might be more inclined to just observe as passive onlookers instead of active participants, thereby stifling not just their own education but also the group's collective performance. Thus, poor mental health reduces both individual and group synergy. Academic incivility can further exacerbate the problem. If students are shown disrespect by faculty or fellow students, they may internalize feelings of inadequacy or fear and become less likely to participate freely in group activities. For example, a derisive comment from a colleague or a snarky criticism from an educator can amplify stress and destroy the psychological safety necessary for productive collaboration. Furthermore, peers' withholding of knowledge — be it with evasiveness or avoidance — creates distrust, which can splinter group cohesion and destroy the spirit of cooperation among learning communities. Healthy student mental well-being, on the other hand, creates trust, empathy, and open communication — all qualities that are absolutely essential for collaborative learning. Students who have positive emotional states will be more likely to listen attentively, value diverse views, and add meaningfully to group problem-solving. They are also better equipped to deal with conflicts more constructively, using disagreements as opportunities for deeper learning instead of divisions. This is seen through the standards of cooperative learning theory (Johnson & Johnson, 1999), which views interdependence, accountability, and promotive interaction as main components of group success. Notably, the mental well-being of students is not an isolated entity but rather deeply connected with that of their teachers. As this research demonstrates, when the teachers themselves are suffering from stress or burnout, their ability to develop supportive collaborative learning spaces is compromised, which subsequently can increase student anxiety and disengagement. Similarly, students grappling with mental health issues might put further emotional burdens on teachers, which could be a source of stress for them and in turn further erode the collaborative dynamic. To enhance collaborative learning, institutions of learning have to thus place emphasis on students' mental health as both an academic and social necessity. This involves giving students access to counseling services, infusing mental health education into the curriculum, and building respectful classroom environments where respect and sensitivity are actively promoted. By creating psychological safety, institutions can enable students not just to participate more enthusiastically in group work but also equip them with lifelong competencies in working together, coping, and conflict resolution.

8. THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH

Teachers' and students' mental health are closely intertwined, creating a mutually beneficial relationship that has a big influence on the classroom. Student mental health can impact the teacher's emotional state and efficacy, just as a teacher's mental health can impact the classroom environment and student outcomes. Teachers act as role model for their students. A toxic and unfavorable environment can arise in the classroom when educators are dealing with mental health concerns. Students may experience higher levels of stress, worry, and sadness as a result, which may further impair their capacity for group projects. Teachers disposition, interactions with students, and general attitude can significantly affect the psychological atmosphere. Students may feel more stressed, anxious, or depressed as a result of the negative and poisonous environment that teachers' stress, anxiety, or depression can cause. In turn, the emotional health of the teacher may be impacted by the mental health of the students. Giving pupils the assistance and direction they need while they are dealing with mental health concerns can be difficult for teachers. Feelings of dissatisfaction, inadequacy, and exhaustion may result from this. Teachers may also find it extremely draining to cope with emotionally distressed students, which may exacerbate their own mental health issues. The idea of vicarious trauma emphasizes even more how teacher and student mental health are intertwined. "Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)" and other mental health disorders can strike teachers who watch or go through horrific experiences with their kids. Their capacity to manage their own mental health and properly educate may be severely impacted by this.

9. DISCUSSION

The current paper brings out the interconnected phenomena of incivility, knowledge hiding, and mental health issues in institutions of higher learning. Aligning with Andersson and Pearson's (1999) definition, incivility presents as a low intensity but highly destructive deviant behavior that erodes mutual respect in working relationships. Our integration of existing literature indicates that such actions seldom occur in isolation; instead, they tend to spiral into cycles of disrespect and reciprocation (Berkowitz, 1993; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). This observation is consistent with organizational research in which repeated cycles of incivility are linked with low levels of trust as well as decreased levels of cooperation. In schools and universities, the spiral effect is especially destructive, for it not only undermines collegiality among educators but also seeps into teacher–student relationships, thus undermining the learning environment. The argument further highlights the part played by toxic leadership and abusive supervision in sustaining incivility. Agreeing with Tepper (2000), the paper shows how authoritarian or emotionally volatile supervisors normalize rudeness, establishing climates in which incivility becomes a legitimate way of interacting. Such supervisory style has a domino effect on the faculty and students, amplifying stress, reducing morale, and producing climates in which individuals are more likely to withdraw or strike back. This validates previous findings that toxic leadership reduces psychological safety and promotes counterproductive work behaviors (Poon, 2011; Burns, 2017). One of the biggest contributions of this paper is in connecting incivility to knowledge hiding behavior. Based on Connelly et al.'s (2012) argument, knowledge hiding—evasive, rationalized, or "playing dumb"—is a conscious behavior that undermines collaboration. In learning environments, where sharing of knowledge is central to teaching and research, such hiding reduces individual performance and further inhibits institutional development. Our results confirm previous assertions that incivility can serve as an antecedent of knowledge hiding (Irum et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2016). Staff or teachers who are treated disrespectfully can withhold information either as a defensive measure or as a covert retaliatory mechanism, thus exacerbating mistrust in institutions. This is consistent with the principle of reciprocity set out in social exchange theory, whereby negative treatment tends to attract corresponding negative reactions. Notably, the study highlights the psychological implications of the dynamics. The combination of incivility and knowledge hiding creates a poisonous environment that contributes to stress, anxiety, and burnout among teachers. Teachers who are subjected to ongoing disrespect or exclusion can experience alienation and decreased job satisfaction, as supported in previous research on workplace aggression (Tastan & Davoudi, 2012). Similarly, students' academic performance and well-being are affected when they are exposed to such environments, confirming the interdependence of teacher and student mental health. This two-way effect underscores how stress in teachers can overflow to impact students, and students' distress can also weigh down teachers, promoting cycles of reciprocal stress. The vicarious trauma concept elucidates this even further, implying that teachers are likely to internalize the emotional pain of their students, compounding their own vulnerabilities.

10. CONCLUSION

Incivility and knowledge-hiding practices have serious detrimental effects on the educational process. These actions can impede collaborative learning, foster a hostile and unsupportive learning environment, and exacerbate mental health problems in both teachers and students. This research highlights the insidious and negative influence of incivility in educational organizations, illustrating how what at first blush appears to be low-intensity disrespect can give way to spirals of criticism that destroy trust, collegiality, and cooperation. The analysis further indicates that incivility impacts not only interpersonal relationships between staff, students, and faculty but also creates an environment where hiding knowledge is a ubiquitous coping or retaliatory tactic. Such actions, as insidious as they are, subvert the very basis of education, in which openness, cooperation, and trust are foundational to good teaching, learning, and innovation. Likewise serious are the effects on mental health. Teachers exposed to chronic rudeness, disparate treatment, or withholding of knowledge can become stressed, alienated, and burned out in turn, and thereby lose their professional effectiveness and job satisfaction. These issues inevitably extend to students, whose learning, motivation, and emotional well-being are influenced by the affective and relational atmosphere of the classroom. The two-way connection between teacher and student mental health makes apparent the interdependence of their experiences and brings into focus the system-level implications of incivility in schools. Finally, this research stresses that incivility, knowledge hiding, and poor mental health are not stand-alone problems but interconnected processes that feed into each other, producing poisonous institutional environments. Resolving these requires more than personal coping tactics; it requires structural interventions, leadership responsibility, and a cultural shift toward respect, openness, and psychological safety. By

creating settings that value respect, free exchange of knowledge, and psychological well-being, educational institutions can protect both professional development of teachers and the overall development of students.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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