

Incivility in Nursing Education: A Descriptive Study of Definitions and Prevalence

Cynthia M. Clark, PhD, RN; and Pamela J. Springer, PhD, RN

ABSTRACT

Evidence suggests that incivility on American college campuses, ranging from insulting remarks and verbal abuse to violence, is a serious and growing concern. Faculty and students are often unsure how to address these behaviors. Therefore, 32 (88.9%) nursing faculty and 324 (69.4%) nursing students at one university completed a survey to gather their perceptions of student and faculty behaviors that may be considered uncivil. Student behaviors most frequently reported as uncivil by faculty included making disapproving groans, making sarcastic remarks or gestures, not paying attention in class, dominating class discussions, using cell phones during class, and cheating on examinations. The majority of faculty reported that uncivil student behaviors occurred rarely or sometimes. Examples of faculty behaviors considered uncivil by students included canceling class without warning, being unprepared for class, not allowing open discussion, being disinterested or cold, belittling or taunting students, delivering fast-paced lectures, and not being available outside of class. Students perceived incivility as a moderate problem in the nursing academic environment. It is imperative that nurse educators help students and faculty cope effectively with these behaviors; the authors discuss strategies to do so.

On October 28, 2002, a terrifying event shocked the nation. Three nursing professors at the University of Arizona were shot and killed by a nursing stu-

dent, who killed himself in the aftermath. This example of violence, although extreme, has raised awareness about all levels of incivility among students and faculty in higher education, particularly in nursing schools.

Evidence suggests that incivility on American college campuses is a serious and growing concern. Incivility is defined as speech or action that is discourteous, rude, or impolite (*Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary*, 2004). Incivility in the academic environment may range from insulting remarks and verbal abuse to explosive, violent behavior (Tiberius & Flak, 1999).

For years, nursing faculty in higher education have reported disruptive student behaviors, such as cheating on examinations and assignments, absenteeism, and inattention in class. Recently, however, nursing faculty have reported increasingly more problematic student behaviors: verbal abuse, yelling at faculty members, and engaging in physical contact (Lashley & De Menezes, 2001). Clearly, the level of student incivility in nursing education has increased. For these reasons, the authors conducted a study to investigate the problem of incivility in university-based nursing education from both student and faculty perspectives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Accounts of student incivility against faculty appear more frequently in the media, and an increasing body of professional literature focuses on this problem. Schneider (1998) made a compelling case for addressing this issue in higher education, stating that uncivil student encounters are leaving some faculty stunned and shaken.

Although addressing uncivil student behaviors is imperative, it is important that attention is also given to contributions that faculty members may be making to incivility in the academic environment. Amada (1994) purported that faculty behaviors, such as showing up late for class, arriving unprepared, turning a blind eye to rude student behavior, or using profanity, encourage students to do the same.

Luparell (2003) conducted extensive interviews with 21 nursing professors representing nine different nursing programs in six states. Incidents of student incivility described

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Dr. Clark is Associate Professor, and Dr. Springer is Professor and Chair, Boise State University, Department of Nursing, Boise, Idaho.

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Address correspondence to Cynthia M. Clark, PhD, RN, Associate Professor, Boise State University, Department of Nursing, 1910 University Drive, Boise, ID 83725; e-mail: cclark@boisestate.edu.

by faculty in the study were aggressive and severe. Most faculty reported that they had been verbally abused by students and that the negative effects of these encounters on faculty were significant and sustained. As a consequence of uncivil encounters with students, faculty reported losing sleep and experiencing interrupted sleep patterns. Many harbored self-doubt about their teaching abilities and assumed much of the blame for what had occurred. Many faculty relived the experience, and some complained about the time commitment needed to process the encounter and reconcile the academic grievance process. Two faculty members incurred personal financial costs associated with travel expenses and attorney fees. Some faculty changed their pedagogy and modified their grading criteria to avoid conflict with students. Three faculty members cited student incivility as one of the reasons for their departure and retirement from teaching.

In many cases, according to Luparell (2003), faculty did not report the uncivil student behavior to college administrators. Many faculty were concerned about keeping their jobs because of the high potential for negative student input on faculty evaluations. In particular, faculty expressed concern about progress toward promotion and tenure because these processes are closely tied to student evaluations of faculty. Faculty were also concerned about a sense of threat to themselves and their loved ones, personal belongings, and employment. In instances when faculty apprised administrators of the uncivil encounters, many reported a disturbing lack of support. When faculty members were administratively supported, many perceived the grievance procedure as heavily weighted in favor of students and described feeling as if they were on trial (Luparell, 2003).

Hanson's (2001) study explored the phenomenon of classroom incivility from the perspectives of both students and faculty. The study used a four-pronged approach to measure perceptions, including a combination of classroom observation, faculty interviews, and student and faculty surveys. The study findings showed that during the course of one's career, the majority of faculty will experience student incivility. In addition, a number of faculty members knowingly or unknowingly commit incivilities themselves.

Although researchers report that uncivil student behavior in higher education is increasing, much of the evidence to support this assertion is anecdotal (Ewing, Geller, Jones, & Sauer, 2004). Few researchers have studied the effect of incivility on college students and faculty, and higher education as a whole has remained relatively silent on the topic (Hanson, 2001). Boice (1996) suggested that the problem is not being addressed in higher education because it is considered taboo or embarrassing and that students are often blamed for the incivility whereas faculty behaviors are overlooked. When the issue is studied, it is often from the faculty members' point of view and not the students'.

METHOD

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this 2004 study was to investigate the problem of incivility in nursing education in a univer-

sity environment from both student and faculty perspectives.

The research questions were:

- What behaviors do nursing students and faculty perceive as uncivil in the academic environment?
- Do nursing students and faculty perceive the same behaviors as uncivil?
- Is there a relationship between age and perceptions of incivility?
- To what extent do students and faculty perceive incivility as a problem in nursing education?

Sample

All faculty and students in the nursing department of a public university in the northwestern United States received information about the study and were asked to participate. The metropolitan university had more than 18,000 students. The nursing department has more than 450 matriculating students each year and offers a baccalaureate nursing program, with options to complete an associate degree or a practical nursing certificate while in the baccalaureate program. The available population included 36 nursing faculty and 467 nursing students. Approval to conduct the study was obtained from the university institutional review board.

Instruments

All participants completed the Incivility in Nursing Education (INE) survey. The INE survey includes demographic data and quantitative items designed to measure nursing faculty members' and students' perceptions of incivility in nursing education. The intent of two qualitative items is to gather information about how nursing students and faculty may contribute to incivility in the academic environment and how each group might effectively address this problem.

The authors developed the INE survey using two different instruments designed to measure faculty members' and students' incivility in higher education. Several items were derived from the Defining Classroom Incivility survey developed by the Indiana University Center for Survey Research (2000). This survey was previously used in a study to determine the kinds and levels of student incivility at Indiana University (Indiana University Center for Survey Research, 2000). Permission to use the survey items was obtained. No psychometric properties were available. The authors also received permission to use items from the Student Classroom Incivility Measure (known as the SCIM-Part C), in which students are asked to rate uncivil faculty behaviors in the classroom (Hanson, 2001). Hanson designed the SCIM-Part C based on a study by Plax, Kearney, and Tucker (1986). Alpha reliability for Hanson's SCIM-Part C is 0.84.

Faculty with experience in student and faculty incivility reviewed the author-developed questionnaire for content validity. Faculty and students not involved in the final study piloted the survey for readability; revisions were made to the survey after pilot testing.

TABLE 1
Degree to Which Faculty and Students Perceived Certain Student Behaviors as Uncivil (N = 363)

Behavior	Always n (%)	Usually n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Never n (%)
Cheating on examinations or quizzes	299 (82.4)	12 (3.3)	15 (4.1)	35 (9.6)
Using cell phones or pagers during class	198 (54.5)	89 (24.5)	54 (14.9)	20 (5.5)
Holding conversations that distract faculty or other students	163 (44.9)	116 (32)	70 (19.3)	13 (3.6)
Making sarcastic remarks or gestures	153 (42.1)	103 (28.4)	77 (21.2)	25 (6.9)
Sleeping in class	149 (41)	68 (18.7)	97 (26.7)	45 (12.4)
Using a computer during class for purposes not related to the class	128 (35.3)	92 (25.3)	93 (25.6)	44 (12.1)
Demanding make-up examinations, extensions, or other favors	108 (29.8)	112 (30.9)	113 (31.1)	29 (8)
Making disapproving groans	106 (29.2)	107 (29.5)	113 (31.1)	23 (6.3)
Dominating class discussions	99 (27.3)	115 (31.7)	121 (33.3)	25 (6.9)
Refusing to answer direct questions	86 (23.7)	95 (26.2)	117 (32.2)	61 (16.8)
Not paying attention in class	82 (22.6)	109 (30)	128 (35.3)	41 (11.3)
Arriving late for class	50 (13.8)	113 (31.1)	165 (45.5)	32 (8.8)
Acting bored or apathetic	40 (11)	101 (27.8)	184 (50.1)	36 (9.9)
Leaving class early	37 (10.2)	87 (24)	184 (50.1)	53 (14.6)
Cutting class	29 (8)	71 (19.6)	155 (42.7)	103 (28.4)
Being unprepared for class	29 (8)	133 (36.7)	160 (44.1)	39 (10.7)

Note. Numbers may not always equal 363 due to missing responses. Percentages may not always equal 100% due to rounding and missing responses.

Procedure

The authors sent e-mails to faculty in the department of nursing asking them to participate in the study and for permission to distribute surveys to their nursing students. All faculty responded favorably and agreed to assist in survey distribution to students. Clearly written instructions were provided with the surveys. During a 2-week interval in October 2004, faculty self-administered their surveys and provided time during class for students to complete the survey. Faculty and student participation was voluntary. All responses were collected anonymously; the authors were not present for any of the survey administrations.

FINDINGS

Sample

A total of 32 (88.9%) of 36 nursing faculty completed the INE survey. Twenty-five (78.1%) faculty respondents were older than age 46; the remaining faculty were ages 26 to 45. Thirty-one faculty members (96.9%) were women; only 1 (3.1%) was a man. Fourteen (43.8%) faculty members had been teaching at the college or university level for fewer than 5 years, 6 (18.8%) for 5 to 10 years, 4 (12.5%) for 11 to 15 years, 3 (9.4%) for 16 to 20 years, 2 (6.3%) for 21 to 25 years, and 3 (9.4%) for more than 25 years.

A total of 324 (69.4%) of 467 nursing students completed the INE survey. Regarding age, 135 (41.7%) students were

ages 26 to 35, and 113 (34.9%) were ages 18 to 25; only 21 (6.5%) students were older than age 46. Regarding gender, 271 (83.6%) of student respondents were women. The majority of student respondents were completing course requirements for an associate degree in nursing, with more than half of those planning to pursue a baccalaureate degree. The remaining students were in the final year of a traditional baccalaureate nursing program.

Seven (1.9%) responses were not marked as faculty or student. These were used in descriptions of the aggregate responses but not in comparing student and faculty responses.

Student and Faculty Uncivil Behaviors

To determine what behaviors nursing students and faculty perceived as uncivil in the academic environment, the survey first listed 16 student incivilities. Respondents used a Likert scale to indicate the degree to which they perceived certain student behaviors as uncivil, as well as the frequency with which they had experienced the same behaviors within the past 12 months (**Tables 1 and 2**). The Likert scale responses used to determine the degree to which students and faculty members perceived a behavior as uncivil were *always*, *usually*, *sometimes*, and *never* (**Table 1**), and the Likert scale responses used to measure the frequency of the uncivil behavior experienced in the past 12 months were *often*, *sometimes*, *rarely*, and *never* (**Table 2**).

TABLE 2
Faculty and Student Perceptions of the Frequency of Uncivil Student Behaviors (N = 363)

Behavior	Often n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Rarely n (%)	Never n (%)
Arriving late for class	113 (31.1)	149 (41)	81 (22.3)	11 (3)
Holding conversations that distract faculty or other students	92 (25.3)	164 (45.2)	76 (20.9)	24 (6.6)
Leaving class early	68 (18.7)	151 (41.6)	111 (30.6)	26 (7.2)
Cutting class	64 (17.6)	129 (35.5)	115 (31.7)	44 (12.1)
Not paying attention in class	57 (15.7)	144 (39.7)	121 (33.3)	33 (9.1)
Being unprepared for class	54 (14.9)	167 (46)	122 (33.6)	14 (3.9)
Dominating class discussions	53 (14.6)	130 (35.8)	117 (32.2)	53 (14.6)
Using cell phones or pagers during class	48 (13.2)	107 (29.5)	129 (35.5)	71 (19.6)
Acting bored or apathetic	44 (12.1)	179 (49.3)	104 (28.7)	27 (7.4)
Making sarcastic remarks or gestures	37 (10.2)	109 (30)	129 (35.5)	77 (21.2)
Making disapproving groans	22 (6.1)	118 (32.5)	136 (37.5)	66 (18.2)
Sleeping in class	20 (5.5)	71 (19.6)	131 (36.1)	130 (35.8)
Demanding make-up examinations, extensions, or other favors	20 (5.5)	61 (16.8)	158 (43.5)	118 (32.5)
Using a computer during class for purposes not related to the class	12 (3.3)	43 (11.8)	131 (36.1)	167 (46)
Cheating on examinations or quizzes	5 (1.4)	22 (6.1)	104 (28.7)	225 (62)
Refusing to answer direct questions	3 (0.8)	37 (10.2)	170 (46.8)	144 (39.7)

Note. Numbers may not always equal 363 due to missing responses. Percentages may not always equal 100% due to rounding and missing responses.

The student behaviors most often reported as uncivil by both students and faculty included cheating on examinations or quizzes; using cell phones or pagers during class; holding distracting conversations; making sarcastic remarks or gestures; sleeping in class; using computers for purposes not related to the class; demanding make-up examinations, extensions, or other favors; making disapproving groans; dominating class discussion; and refusing to answer direct questions (**Table 1**). The majority of both faculty and student respondents reported that student uncivil behaviors occurred *rarely* or *sometimes* (**Table 2**).

Next, the INE survey listed 17 faculty behaviors. Respondents used a Likert scale to indicate the degree to which they perceived certain faculty behaviors as uncivil. The Likert scale responses used to determine the degree to which students perceived the faculty behaviors as uncivil were *always*, *usually*, *sometimes*, and *never* (**Table 3**). The faculty behaviors most often reported as uncivil were belittling or taunting students; being distant or cold toward students; being inflexible, being rigid, or punishing the class for one student's behavior; being unavailable outside of class; refusing or being reluctant to answer questions; being unprepared for class; making statements about being disinterested in the subject matter; ignoring disruptive student behaviors; not speaking clearly or being understandable; and canceling class without warning (**Table 3**).

The INE survey also included a list of 11 student behaviors that may be considered *beyond uncivil*. The authors developed this list of behaviors using the more serious uncivil behaviors included in the Defining Classroom Incivility survey designed by the Indiana University Center for Survey Research (2000) and the list of uncivil behaviors described in the SCIM-Part C (Hanson, 2001). These behaviors were considered to be seriously threatening, harassing, and potentially violent. Respondents were asked whether the student behaviors considered beyond uncivil had happened to them personally or to someone they knew, or whether they were uncertain about the behavior's occurrence (**Table 4**). The top two behaviors reported by respondents as having happened to them or someone they knew were challenges to faculty knowledge or credibility (60.1%) and general taunts or disrespect to faculty (49.6%).

Finally, the INE survey contained a list of 11 faculty behaviors that may be considered beyond uncivil. Respondents were asked to indicate whether the beyond uncivil faculty behaviors had happened to them personally or to someone they knew, or whether they were uncertain about the behavior's occurrence (**Table 5**). Faculty members' challenges to other faculty's knowledge or credibility was most frequently reported as having happened to the respondents or someone they knew (43.5%).

TABLE 3
Degree to Which Faculty and Students Perceived Certain Faculty Behaviors as Uncivil (N = 363)

Behavior	Always n (%)	Usually n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Never n (%)
Belittling or taunting students through sarcasm, humiliation, intimidation, or profanity	295 (81.3)	18 (5)	12 (3.3)	29 (8)
Being distant or cold toward students	222 (61.2)	77 (21.2)	33 (9.1)	21 (5.8)
Being inflexible, being rigid, or punishing the class for one student's misbehavior	216 (59.5)	78 (21.5)	35 (9.6)	25 (6.9)
Being unavailable outside of class	169 (46.6)	115 (31.7)	50 (13.8)	20 (5.5)
Refusing or being reluctant to answer questions	162 (44.6)	123 (33.9)	42 (11.6)	25 (6.9)
Being unprepared for class	159 (43.8)	112 (30.9)	52 (14.3)	29 (8)
Making statements about being disinterested in the subject matter	120 (33.1)	112 (30.9)	84 (23.1)	35 (9.6)
Ignoring disruptive student behaviors	119 (32.8)	118 (32.5)	86 (23.7)	30 (8.3)
Not speaking clearly or not being understandable	104 (28.7)	137 (37.7)	92 (25.3)	21 (5.8)
Canceling class without warning	96 (26.4)	97 (26.7)	107 (29.5)	50 (13.8)
Delivering fast-paced, uninvolved lectures	84 (23.1)	131 (36.1)	109 (30)	30 (8.3)
Not allowing open discussion	73 (20.1)	125 (34.4)	121 (33.3)	33 (9.1)
Arriving late for class	66 (18.2)	111 (30.6)	144 (39.7)	32 (8.8)
Deviating from the course syllabus or changing assignments or test dates	45 (12.4)	73 (20.1)	178 (49)	54 (14.9)
Refusing to allow make-up examinations, extensions, or grade changes	40 (11)	75 (20.7)	190 (52.3)	45 (12.4)
Leaving class early	25 (6.9)	72 (19.8)	163 (44.9)	92 (25.3)
Straying from class topic	21 (5.8)	61 (16.8)	205 (56.5)	65 (17.9)

Note. Numbers may not always equal 363 due to missing responses. Percentages may not always equal 100% due to rounding and missing responses.

Comparing Student and Faculty Perceptions

The authors compared whether nursing students and faculty perceive the same behaviors as uncivil using a row-mean-score test, a variation of a Cochran-Maentel-Haenszel test from epidemiology. The findings indicated that some student and faculty behaviors were viewed differently between faculty and students. In all cases, faculty were less likely than were students to consider student behaviors uncivil. When asked about uncivil faculty behavior, faculty were more likely to respond *never* or *sometimes*, whereas students were more likely to respond *usually* or *always*. Behaviors about which faculty members' and students' perceptions differed included:

- Students acting apathetic or bored ($p < 0.01$).
- Students making disapproving groans ($p < 0.01$).
- Students sleeping in class ($p < 0.01$).
- Students arriving late to class ($p < 0.05$).
- Students leaving class early ($p < 0.05$).
- Faculty canceling class without warning ($p < 0.05$).
- Faculty delivering fast-paced, non-involving lectures ($p < 0.05$).

The authors also explored whether a relationship exists between age and perceptions of incivility. Age-related

responses to student and faculty behaviors were examined using a Pearson's chi square and a linear-by-linear association. No statistically significant differences were noted on the basis of age for both faculty and students. Younger and older respondents viewed the examples of uncivil behavior similarly. There was no inclination that respondents viewed more behaviors as uncivil than did different age-based cohorts.

The INE survey was also used to determine the extent to which students and faculty perceive uncivil behavior as a problem in nursing education. Response choices included *no problem at all*, *moderate problem*, *serious problem*, and *I don't know/can't answer*. The majority (61.5%) of both faculty and students perceived uncivil behavior as a moderate problem in the nursing academic environment (**Table 6**).

Finally, the INE survey measured the extent to which respondents thought faculty or students were more likely to engage in uncivil behavior in the nursing academic environment. Most respondents (39.9%), both faculty and students, believed students were *a little more likely* than were faculty to engage in uncivil behavior. Faculty (40.6%), more so than students (21.9%), believed students were *much more likely* to engage in uncivil behavior (**Table 7**).

TABLE 4
Student Behaviors Considered Beyond Uncivil: Faculty and Student Perceptions of Whether They Had Happened to Them or Someone They Know (N = 363)

Behavior	Yes n (%)	No n (%)	Unsure n (%)
Challenges to faculty knowledge or credibility	218 (60.1)	115 (31.7)	22 (6.1)
General taunts or disrespect to faculty	180 (49.6)	158 (43.5)	19 (5.2)
General taunts or disrespect to other students	139 (38.3)	186 (51.2)	32 (8.8)
Inappropriate e-mails to other students	79 (21.8)	255 (70.2)	21 (5.8)
Vulgarity directed at faculty	69 (19)	267 (73.6)	21 (5.8)
Vulgarity directed at other students	67 (18.5)	271 (74.7)	19 (5.2)
Harassing comments directed at other students	45 (12.4)	295 (81.3)	17 (4.7)
Inappropriate e-mails to faculty	45 (12.4)	278 (76.6)	32 (8.8)
Harassing comments directed at faculty	40 (11)	304 (83.8)	12 (3.3)
Threats of physical harm against other students	14 (3.9)	323 (89)	20 (5.5)
Threats of physical harm against faculty	14 (3.9)	320 (88.2)	17 (4.7)

Note. Numbers may not always equal 363 due to missing responses. Percentages may not always equal 100% due to rounding and missing responses.

TABLE 5
Faculty Behaviors Considered Beyond Uncivil: Faculty and Student Perceptions of Whether They Had Happened to Them or Someone They Know (N = 363)

Behavior	Yes n (%)	No n (%)	Unsure n (%)
Challenges to other faculty's knowledge or credibility	158 (43.5)	169 (46.6)	22 (6.1)
General taunts or disrespect to students	92 (25.3)	234 (64.5)	22 (6.1)
General taunts or disrespect to other faculty	47 (13)	285 (78.5)	16 (4.4)
Inappropriate e-mails to students	31 (8.5)	299 (82.4)	19 (5.2)
Harassing comments directed at students	29 (8)	312 (86)	7 (1.9)
Vulgarity directed at students	25 (6.9)	315 (86.8)	9 (2.5)
Inappropriate e-mails to other faculty	15 (4.1)	304 (83.8)	29 (8)
Vulgarity directed at other faculty	14 (3.9)	325 (89.5)	10 (2.8)
Harassing comments directed at other faculty or staff	12 (3.3)	327 (90.1)	9 (2.5)
Threats of physical harm against other faculty	2 (0.6)	330 (90.9)	12 (3.3)
Threats of physical harm against students	2 (0.6)	337 (92.8)	10 (2.8)

Note. Numbers may not always equal 363 due to missing responses. Percentages may not always equal 100% due to rounding and missing responses.

DISCUSSION

There were few surprises regarding which student and faculty behaviors were considered uncivil. As the authors suspected, students' making disapproving groans or sarcastic remarks and cheating were identified as uncivil. Cutting

class was the most frequently cited student behavior *not* considered uncivil by respondents, perhaps because the behavior is not deemed disruptive to others. Regarding faculty behaviors, belittling or taunting students and being distant or cold toward students were considered uncivil. Leaving class early was the most frequently cited faculty behavior

not considered to be uncivil. The authors believe that students generally consider getting out of class early as a positive faculty behavior and even a reward; the exception may be the few students who traveled a great distance or arranged for dependent care so they could attend class. These findings correspond to those of other studies in which researchers found that students' being late to class and being inattentive were identified as uncivil (Lashley & De Meneses, 2001).

The findings about behaviors considered beyond uncivil by both faculty and students are disturbing. More than half of the respondents had observed, or knew of, challenges to faculty knowledge or credibility and taunts or disrespect to faculty. Harassing comments and vulgarity were less frequently observed. Faculty members' challenging other faculty's knowledge was the most frequently observed faculty behavior considered beyond uncivil. The second most frequently experienced or observed faculty behavior considered beyond uncivil was taunts and disrespect to students.

According to some researchers, students entering higher education today are underprepared for college, have been socially isolated in many ways, and have deeper and more evident psychological and emotional problems than were students of previous generations (Komives & Woodard, 2003). Although these explanations provide some context for the increase in student incivility, other authors (Boice, 1996; Braxton & Bayer, 2004) suggest that faculty members may intentionally or unintentionally contribute to student incivility and misconduct.

Faculty are role models for students. Setting a positive example for students is a faculty imperative. Richmond and McCroskey (1992) emphasized the relationship between faculty behaviors and student responses. Faculty members who demonstrated positive behaviors in the classroom and showed interest in their students encouraged similar behaviors from their students. Conversely, faculty who showed aloofness toward and disinterest in their students and who

TABLE 6
Faculty and Student Perceptions of Incivility as a Problem in the Nursing Academic Environment

Response	Students (n = 324)	Faculty (n = 32)	Combined (n = 356)
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Moderate problem	195 (60.2)	24 (75)	219 (61.5)
No problem at all	63 (19.4)	0 (0)	63 (17.7)
I don't know/can't answer	35 (10.8)	2 (6.3)	37 (10.4)
Serious problem	28 (8.7)	6 (18.8)	34 (9.6)

Note. Numbers do not always equal totals due to missing responses. Percentages may not always equal 100% due to rounding and missing responses.

TABLE 7
Faculty and Student Perceptions of Who is More Likely to Engage in Uncivil Behavior

Response	Students (n = 324)	Faculty (n = 32)	Combined (n = 356)
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Students are a little more likely	130 (40.1)	12 (37.5)	142 (39.9)
Faculty and students are equally likely	71 (21.9)	5 (15.6)	76 (21.3)
Students are much more likely	71 (21.9)	13 (40.6)	84 (23.6)
I don't know	34 (10.5)	1 (3.1)	35 (9.8)
Faculty are a little more likely	8 (2.5)	0 (0)	8 (2.2)
Faculty are much more likely	7 (2.2)	0 (0)	7 (2)

Note. Numbers do not always equal totals due to missing responses. Percentages may not always equal 100% due to rounding and missing responses.

debated them often invoked hostile student reactions.

Students are constantly observing faculty. Kuhlen-schmidt and Layne (1999) reported that if a faculty member behaves in an uncivil manner, students assume they can behave similarly. A study conducted by Hanson (2001) explored the phenomenon of classroom incivility from the perspectives of both students and faculty. The study measured perceptions using classroom observation, faculty interviews, and student and faculty surveys. The findings indicated that during the course of their careers, the majority of faculty members will experience student incivility. In addition, many faculty members will knowingly or unknowingly commit incivilities themselves.

The authors believe that these behaviors are more prevalent because higher education is a microcosm of the larger society, which is experiencing more acts of incivility (Farkas & Johnson, 2002). American society is seeing increased episodes of anger and rage in daily life (Thomas, 2003). This is concerning because a cultural shift toward

greater tolerance of incivility is occurring. It is particularly worrisome when one considers that students in the process of becoming health care professionals may accept many of these uncivil behaviors as normal.

LIMITATIONS

This study examined both faculty members' and students' perceptions of uncivil behavior in nursing education. Limitations include that the sample was from one university and that the INE survey does not have its own established reliability and validity. Despite these limitations, there are few empirical studies that address incivility in nursing education. The findings of this study enhance the knowledge of behaviors considered to be uncivil by both nursing faculty and students and provide information vital to nursing faculty and administrators.

IMPLICATIONS

In this study, more than 70% of respondents believed incivility in the academic environment is a moderate or serious problem. Now is the time to begin addressing these behaviors on college and university campuses. College and university administrators may consider initiating open dialogue with faculty and students to assess the significance of the problem on their campuses. This can be a difficult discussion to have; however, by using a survey such as the INE, data can be collected anonymously and then used to launch conversations on the issues.

The authors suggest developing policies that clearly define uncivil behaviors for both students and faculty. These policies should clearly set the expectations, as well as the consequences, for these behaviors. Assessment of faculty and student perceptions related to uncivil behavior and development of these policies will stimulate even more faculty and student conversations and will demonstrate areas for faculty and student development.

Administrators need to offer educational opportunities for faculty and for students. Today's world is fast paced and fraught with challenges; faculty and students juggle many priorities, all vying for their attention. In addition, nursing faculty are essentially initiating students into a profession where graduates will be faced with ethical dilemmas, complex health crises, and intense staffing shortages. Such challenges create opportunities for angry outbursts and inappropriate behavior. It is the responsibility of university administrators to help nursing faculty and students learn to cope with conflict in healthy and constructive ways.

CONCLUSION

Incivility among nursing faculty and students is a grave and growing concern. Uncivil encounters have a negative effect on the academic setting and disrupt the teaching-learning environment. Faculty, students, and

administrators must engage in sustained and deliberate dialogue about the problems associated with incivility and develop strategies to improve the academic milieu. Doing so will help produce a healthier teaching-learning environment and improve relationships between students and faculty. Further research in this area may increase awareness and understanding of incivility, its effects, and ways to prevent and intervene with uncivil behaviors.

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