The Lived Experience of Incivility Between Nursing Faculties: A Heideggerian Hermeneutic Study

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Problem/Phenomenon of Interest

- Incivility in nursing education among colleagues is increasing and impacts on the entire organization.

- Nursing faculty shortage is a significant problem.

- Research is lacking regarding nursing faculty-to-faculty incivility.

- What is the meaning of incivility between nursing faculty has not previously been explored.
Aim of Study

- The aim of the study was to reveal the meaning embedded in the everyday lived experience of incivility between nursing faculty members.
- The significance for nursing includes the need for nursing faculty to acknowledge that the phenomenon exists, understand the meaning of the experience and to begin a dialogue in the community to address the problem of incivility between nursing faculty.
Background

- Workplace incivility across the country from physical aggression to harassment is reported in the literature to be increasing.
- Incivility is distinguished from other forms of deviant behavior and is considered to be a serious problem with rising incidence.
- This study focused on the milder form of psychological mistreatment rather than overt physical aggression.
Operational Definition:

- Workplace incivility as defined by Andersson and Pearson (1999) was used:
  Lower intensity offensive behavior, with overt or covert intent to harm the recipient and with disregard of established workplace standards for mutually respectful behavior.

- Uncivil behaviors are disrespectful and devalue the person targeted.

- The intentionality of harm may be less apparent in lower intensity incivility and is often unacknowledged by the perpetrator or the target.
Literature Review

Freire’s (1970) Social Critical Theory dealing with the concept of oppression was used to orient the investigator when reviewing the literature.
Historical Perspective

◆ Nurses experiencing oppression came to the forefront with Susan Roberts (1983) sentinel article based on Freire’s (1970) work.

◆ Over the years the name for the behaviors associated with oppression may have changed from horizontal to lateral violence, from bullying to “mean girl games” (Heinrich, 2007) but the phenomenon continues.

◆ Incivility among nurses suggests the perpetuation of oppression.
Literature Review:

- Vertical incivility is common in nursing education between faculty and students.
- Supports the relationship of power imbalances and incivility, the toxic nature of incivility and its impact on both the individual and the organization.
- Describes the presence and fluid nature of power in organizations.
- Fails to offer concrete reasons for the perpetuation of incivility.
- Few studies offered recommendations to prevent and/or stop incivility.
- Studies were primarily descriptive.
Gap in Literature

Literature reviewed failed to identify any studies of what is the meaning of the lived experience of incivility between nursing faculties.
Research question for this study:

What is the meaning of the lived experience of incivility between nursing faculties?
Methodology

- The study used a Heideggerian hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenological approach to uncover the shared or common meaning of nursing faculty-to-faculty experiences of incivility that were embedded in participant consciousness.

- Phenomenology uncovers meanings, hermeneutics interprets the meaning (Pringle, Drummond, McLaffert, & Hendry, 2010).

- Understanding is unveiled when the researcher grasps the essence of actions and interactions rather than to describe them as they were experienced and interpreted by the participant (Dinkel, 2005).
Philosophical Underpinnings

When using a Heideggerian approach, exploring the meaning of the lived experience of an individual helps us gain access to cultural meanings.

Meaning is found in the transaction between an individual and a situation so that the individual both constitutes and is constituted by the situation.
Human Subject Protection

Prior to participant selection and commencing interviews the study was approved by the Sage Colleges Institutional Review Board (IRB)
Participant Selection

- Purposive (selective) sampling was used to select participants with stories that reflect the aim of the study which is having had an experience of incivility with another nursing faculty.
- Snowball (chain) sampling was used for convenience.
- First few participants approached investigator and self-identified as having had an uncivil encounter with another nursing faculty member and then referred other prospective participants to the investigator.
Inclusion Criteria:

- Having been a nursing faculty member in an associate, baccalaureate or masters degree nursing education program within the past five years.
- Having had at least one experience of incivility, as defined in this study, with another nursing faculty during that time frame.
Participants

- A total of ten (N=10) participants were recruited.

- Participants resided and worked in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions of United States (U.S.).
Method of Data Collection

- One in-depth semi-structured, open-ended interview was conducted either face-to-face, via Skype or telephone and was audiotaped.

- Primary interview question:
  Please describe in detail one uncivil encounter you experienced with another nursing faculty member within the past five years.
Confidentiality

- The investigator coded the interview narratives with pseudo-names to protect individual anonymity as well as any other identifiable data.
- Audiotapes and transcripts were kept in a locked cabinet and identifiable data will be destroyed upon completion of study.
Data Analysis

- Data analysis was done through an interpretive approach following a modified version of the process described by Diekelmann, Allen and Tanner (1989) and in Diekelmann and Diekelmann (2009).
- Process included a team approach of re-reading the narratives and taking notes to encourage visual emergence of “essences” within the individual transcripts and among all interviewees to reveal themes and constitutive patterns.
- Analysis followed a hermeneutic process with interpretation and reflection of the texts to reveal the embedded meaning of the lived experience.
Trustworthiness and Rigor were enhanced by:

- purposive participant selection included only individuals who had experiences with faculty-to-faculty incivility as defined in this study.
- open-ended interviews to allow for the richest data possible by allowing participants to reveal new understandings of the experience as it emerged.
- using a team approach for data analysis.
Pattern and Major Themes

Incivility is a co-created event in a power filled environment

Major Themes:

a) the unexpected nature—“where’s this coming from”

b) the wounding effects of incivility

c) difficulty reading the environment—workplace rules are unspoken or unclear

d) the depersonalized nature of communication in the workplace
“Incivility is a co-created event in a power filled environment”

Participants in this study:

- consciously chose to approach colleague with work related issue or concern.
- used a “helping” approach to issue or concern.
- lacked awareness that their approach to “help” was evocative and the catalyst to co-create incivility.
- conveyed the dysfunctional nature of the environment related to presence of unequal power gradients.
- lacked conscious awareness that they were concurrently experiencing power and powerlessness.
Theme: The Unexpected Nature—“where’s this coming from?”

- The unexpected nature of the interaction left faculty frozen, speechless and unable to confront the uncivil peer.
Theme: The Wounding Effects of Incivility

- Humiliation felt during uncivil encounters created shame and a sense of vulnerability.
Theme: Difficulty Reading the Environment
Rules are Unspoken or Unclear

- Participants maintained that no one had shown them or described policy yet each was responsible for maintaining it.
- Paul talked about a lot of policy that he considered being “phantom” or invisible to him.
Theme: The Depersonalized Nature of Uncivil Communication in the Workplace

- Examples of depersonalized verbal communication included: yelling and use of intimidating language to demean the faculty member, parent-child interactions, and inflammatory email being sent out to the entire faculty.

- The depersonalized nature of communication experienced by nursing faculty also had the potential for the participant to respond in a like manner.
Summary

- Findings document the uncovering of the embedded meaning of the lived experience of incivility for each nursing faculty participant and the culture of nursing education at the time of the study.

- Incivility is a co-created event in a power-filled environment.

- Incivility is unexpected, has wounding effects, and there is depersonalized uncivil communication in the workplace. Participants had difficulty reading the environment with unclear or unspoken rules for workplace conduct.

- Incivility may have serious implications for nursing education: One motive that five participants in this study identified as a reason to leave academia was the incivility they experienced with colleagues.
Implications of Study’s Findings

- Dissemination of findings will contribute to nursing knowledge.
- A dialogue in the nursing education community can begin to address incivility between nursing faculty.
- Nursing education curriculum should include teaching and learning about power, oppression of nurses and incivility.
- NLN and AACN as accrediting bodies, should hold nursing programs accountable for evidence of meeting competencies related to civility.
- Nursing Education may be ripe to form communities of practice to co-create civility (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Buckley & Du Toit, 2010)
- Continued research in the area of incivility between nursing faculty is needed to build upon what was learned in this study.
Further Research

- Study to understand the perception of the lived experience of the one labeled as the perpetrator.
- Further qualitative research regarding the “nurse educator as helper” should be conducted relating to the concepts of oppression and collegiality.
Further Research

- How do faculties who team-teach experience incivility among team members?
- What strategies do nursing faculty use to maintain resilient to incivility?
- What workplace conditions support or inhibit incivility?
Lastly...

- It is important to investigate civility in nursing education by collecting faculty stories in workplaces where faculty report low levels of incivility; where faculty are thriving rather than merely surviving.
- In order to co-create civility it is important to know how nursing faculty have created a civil workplace environment.
References


References

References

