

Nurse educators' experiences and perspectives of incivility among nursing students in a South African College of Nursing

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INTRODUCTION

- There are growing concerns about classroom incivility in higher education (Boice 1996:453), though incivility traditionally was not thought to exist in universities and colleges (Lashley & De Meneses, 2001:81).
- However other authors, like Mark (2000:1), believe that post-secondary school rudeness has been present to some degree since the establishment of universities in the 12th-century Europe.
- In the field of nursing and nursing education, incivility is becoming more visible in nursing schools and nursing classrooms.
- Authors (Clark & Springer, 2010: 319, & Luparell, 2004:59) have raised concerns that very little empirical data exist on incivility in Nursing Schools.

INTRODUCTION

- There is evidence of reported increase in problematic classroom behaviours such as academic misconduct/dishonesty, absenteeism, aggression, bullying, coarse language, demands for making-up exams, hostility, inappropriate racial remarks, inattentiveness, lack of respect, late coming, physical and verbal abuse, rudeness, tardiness, the use of cell phones, threats and yelling as becoming the norm in some nursing schools (Bjorklund & Rehling, 2010:16 and Elder, Seaton & Swinney, 2010:105 and Lashley & De Meneses, 2001:81 & 83).
- These behaviours are referred to as uncivil: an umbrella term used in the educational literature (Kolanko, Clark, Heinrich, Olive, Serembus & Sifford, 2005:38).

INTRODUCTION

- It is however important to note that student nurses also complain of nurse educators as being uncivil towards them (Clark, 2008:5).
- Irrespective of who initiates incivility if not addressed, it has the potential to degrade the learning environment and this can result in students learning less (Feldmann, 2001:138).
- Civility is essential to the profession of nursing because nursing is based on the values of respect and human dignity and it is assumed that nursing education is a place where compassionate and civilised relationships exist (Clark & Carnosso, 2008:11).
- The assumption is that people who select nursing as a career option would hold personal values that are in relation to a profession of this kind.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

- “Student incivility in the classroom have been identified to be problematic by Higher Education” (Lashley & De Meneses, 2001:81), and nurse educators themselves have not been spared from experiencing incivility among their students.
- In South Africa, very little is known about nurse educator’s experiences of incivility among students and their perceptions have not been reported.
- There was a need to explore the extent of the problem from the nurse educator’s perspective, because many nurse educators have been shown to experience feelings of low morale and confusion due to manager’s ignorance with regards to troubling classroom experiences (Schneider, 1998 cited in Kolanko et al., 2005:38).

PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

Purpose:

- The purpose of the study was to describe how nurse educators perceive incivility, and their own experiences of uncivil classroom behaviours of nursing students in a South African school of nursing.

Objectives:

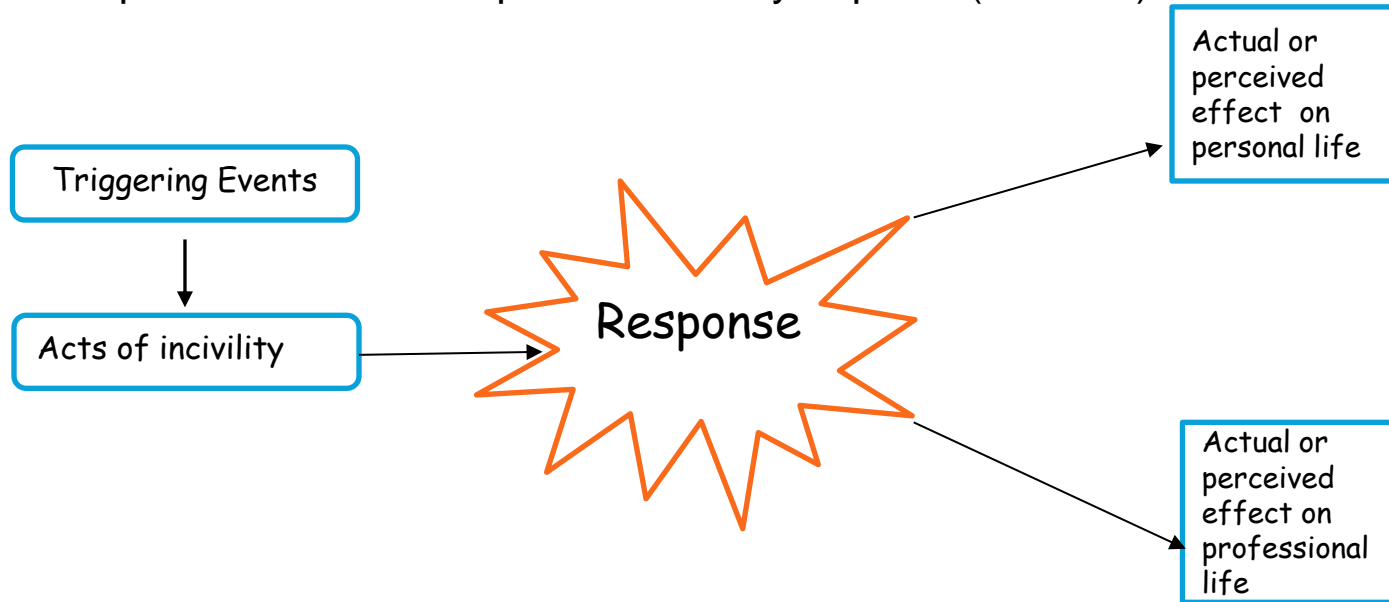
- Describe what the nurse educators in a School of Nursing consider as acts of incivility among the nursing students in a classroom.
- Gain insight into the phenomenon of incivility as experienced by nurse educators in a Nursing School.
- Describe the perceived effects of incivility in the teaching-learning environment of the School of Nursing.

RELATED WORK ON INCIVILITY IN NURSING EDUCATION

- Luparell (2004:59) used the critical incident technique (CIT) to explore the experiences of faculty with uncivil nursing students and applied the battlefield metaphor to describe the incidents of incivility, triggers and the consequences of incivility.
- Other authors who had written on incivility among nursing students include Lashley and De Meneses (2001:81), Goodyear, Reynolds and Gragg (2010:2-3).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Adapted from the concepts identified by Luparell (2004:62)



RESEARCH METHODS

Design

- A qualitative, descriptive design with phenomenology was adopted for this study.

Population & Setting

- The research setting was a nursing school in South Africa that offers undergraduate and postgraduate nurse training.
- The study population consisted of nurse educators employed at the main campus of this nursing school on a full-time basis, teaching undergraduate nursing students.
- This particular nursing school was selected because of the big size and its representativeness in terms of the South African racial groups, and being one of the settings that had been fingered in the past for assumed acts of incivility among the students.

SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCESS

- Purposive selection of nurse educators who were believed to have rich and in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon were applied through a recruitment process as a means of assisting the researcher to understand the problem and the research questions better (Creswell, 2009:178).
- The researcher informed the participants in writing of the purpose of the study after which they indicated their interest to participate in the study or not. Initially 8 participants were selected and were gradually increased to a total of 11 until data saturation occurred in order to gain a clearer understanding of the phenomenon (Streubert & Carpenter, 2003:24).

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

- Individual face-to-face, audio recorded interviews were conducted with the participants in a single meeting at a time and place agreed with the individual.
- Interviews had been conducted with the participants through an interview guide with five open-ended questions that were developed from the example in Creswell (2007:136).
- Informed consent was obtained prior to each interview after the researcher first checked each participant's understanding of the information described on the information sheet.
- Participants received written information about the purpose of the study and how the participants would be protected during this research study.

FINDINGS

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ACTS OF INCIVILITY

- From the analysis of the acts of incivility three sub-categories emerged: disruptions, fraud and aggression.
- These became evident from the patterns of behaviour described by the participants in their daily encounters with students in the classroom.
- Late coming to class, cell phone use, noise, sleeping in class, fraud in classroom attendance and assessments, physical aggression, intimidation and verbal aggression through disputes, confrontations, inappropriate language and verbal threats were the most common types of behaviour that participants perceived as uncivil.
- These student behaviours were described as being disrespectful, distracting, interfering and ignorant either to the educator, fellow students or the teaching and learning environment.

SUB-CATEGORY: DISRUPTIONS

- The most common disruptions reported by participants were late coming to class, cell phone use, noise and sleeping in class.

Late coming as a form of disruption

- In the experience of the participants they encountered mostly that students came late for commencement of class as well as from breaks often without apologising. Participants' comments included the following:

“Uhm I think it, it actually starts at the beginning of, of the session where students come late to class and uhm when you discipline them or you ask them, because some of them just walk into the class. So if you do say anything to them then uhm it changes the atmosphere in the class, because then their colleagues also sometimes chip in and say that they are uhm disrupting the class. Some people come a few minutes late and some people come much later uhm to class” (Part 1).

SUB-CATEGORY: DISRUPTIONS

Cell phone use as a form of disruption

- In this theme patterns of ignoring cell phone policy that resulted in distractions were reported by the participants. Their remarks included the following:

“Cell phones going off in the classroom when the rules have been set, cell phones should be switched off” (Part 8).

Noise as a form of disruption

- Participants experienced noise to the academic environment in the following way:

“There is also that tendency that while you busy the students are talking. You have to ask the student to be quiet and then in that case it is obviously also disturbing for the other students. Then obviously have to stop my lecture and ask them to be quiet. But basically for me it boils down to respect. Not having respect for me and not having respect for the other students” (Part 9).

SUB-CATEGORY: DISRUPTIONS

Sleep as a form of disruption

- Sleeping in class has been identified as a theme relating to disruptions. The participants experienced students sleeping in class as rude, disrespectful and inattentive.

“They sit and sleep in the class uhm that, that I found very uhm also distressing for me it’s being rude it is being disrespectful” (Part 1).

“It is either the student is tired; don’t pay attention, the student disrupting the class by making a noise, sleeping in between lectures” (Part 10).

SUB-CATEGORY: FRAUD

- Fraud as a form of incivility has been identified through the following theme:

Fraud relating to attendance and assessments

- Fraud relating to classroom attendance is a significant problem to this nursing school and it is not limited to classroom attendance only.
- The fraud as being described by participants is also committed in tests, assignments and examinations. Participants remarks included the following:

“One is the issue of fraudulent signatures where students sign for others who are not in class. For example during roll call in the morning you will send out the attendance registers to the students for those who are present to sign that they’re actually present now there’s too many students in the lecture theatre where I teach. I don’t know all of them and neither do I know their signatures for that matter so the one who’s present will sign for himself but also for the one who is absent creating this fraud. The student who is absent is now falsely indicated as present” (Part 7).

SUB-CATEGORY: AGGRESSION

Physical aggression

- The analysis of this sub-category demonstrated that incidents of aggression do occur in the nursing school classroom as well as outside the classroom.
- These incidents whether in an office, passage or classroom as described by participants impacted directly on the teacher-student relationship and had the potential to compromise teaching and learning.

“The issue of uhm late coming here the student will stand outside and literally bang the door demanding to come inside. They late they know that, but now the door is locked it’s now like fighting with this door demanding the lecturer to open the door” (Part 7).

“I can only speak for my colleague, she the next day or the previous day same thing happened and actually one of our students in 1st year picked up a desk and threw the desk at her, but luckily one of the other students came in between and she wasn’t hit with the desk and there was no way that this lecturer could escape, could you see now” (Part 3).

SUB-CATEGORY: AGGRESSION

Verbal aggression

- Incidents of verbal aggression could be identified in disputes over assessments, through threats, confrontations and the use of inappropriate language. The participants' comments included the following:

“Then some other form of aggression which is few but they are quite, they make you quite tense is when a student comes and they dispute a mark uhm and I don't mind the disputing of a mark that's not uncivil, but then they get aggressive about it and uhm and that happened once or twice. It's raising of the voice, pointing of the finger, its uhm almost [silence] turning it around and blaming you for something. It's like yes but uh, uhm, you know uh I am just trying to think of an example now; I only had one or two students” (Part 5).

“You know and it is disruptive for the other students, sometimes they swear at the other students you know that type” (Part 10).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Further studies are required to develop effective strategies in dealing with incivility in the nursing education field.
- A formal training program with adequate support from the nursing school management could assist nurse educators to manage classroom behaviour more effectively and could be beneficial to the educator, the student and the nursing school in general.
- The perceptions of students towards incivility experienced from nurse educators and the impact it has on their ability to learn is also another area for exploration, because from this study it is clear that students may also complain of nurse educators acting uncivil towards them.

LIMITATIONS & CONCLUSION

Limitations

- The findings in this study only relate to nurse educators' experiences and perceptions of the impact from one institution.
- Therefore, the findings should not be interpreted as what happens in all, or generalised to, similar institutions without adequate evidence.

Conclusion

- The study has assisted in bringing to the fore, the experiences of nurse educators with incivility in a nursing school.
- It is concluded that nurse educators do experience acts of incivility in the classroom, but further studies are required on this problem particularly on developing effective measures to reduce or eliminate the problem from our nursing schools.

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THANK YOU

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