Incivility at workplace: how it affects happiness

Experience, Happiness

Incivility at the workplace is a topic that has created a lot of interest to the general public and especially to the media. Incivility refers to discourteous or rude behavior or actions that are done disregarding other people and violating the conventionally accepted societal norms. As a matter of fact, Pearson (2000) asserts that,

We have established that incivility involves acting rudely or discourteously, without regard for others, in violation of norms forrespectin social interactions. . Workplace norms are the norms of the community of which one is a part while at work, consisting of basic moral standards and others that have arisen out of the tradition of that community including those prescribed by formal and informal organizational policies, rules and procedures. (p. 128)

As a key issue, incivility is displayed in a number of ways at work places which include: harassment, rudeness or even oral abuse and it exists virtually in every organization. Incivility particularly affects the relationship between customers, employees and employers and can thus be said to affect both the internal and external work environments.

Research findings reveal that there has been increased incivility experience over time. In deed, incivility is depicted to have negative effects on internal and external firms which calls for a dire need for instillingprofessionalismat work places. Pearson notes that, " Due to the apparent worsening dilemma of incivility at workplaces, more cost will be incurred by organizations presently but the undesirable effects will be adversely felt in future". (Pearson, Christine, et al 2002, p. 124).

This paper investigates at length the effects of incivilityon happinessat the workplaces. That is, the paper has the prime objective of determining if incivility at workplace is on the rise and the effect this rise has on the overall gratification of the workers in those firms.

The prevailing high rate of unemployment and economic regression has made it very hard to hire and retain staff. This fact becomes more adverse since the potential employees often lack the necessary professional skills needed in order to secure employment successfully. This was argued by Cusark who observes that, " Whether it is an MIT graduate heading for a programming job in Silicon Valley or a Northeastern graduate entering the banking industry, Students are finding they need more thanacademicskills to successfully navigate the business world. (Cursark, 2000, p. 356).

Rudeness at workplace normally affects productivity and the number of employees found in the firm. This results whereby the incivility victims suffer fromanxiety, stress, anger and exhaustion which make them unable to work properly. They therefore develop resentment toward their job, become angry and eventually some of them quit. Jane reports that, " employees would rather quit their job and move on to another job than report an incidence". (Legacy, 1999, p. 3).

It is thus evident that discourteous and insensitive behavior at workplace leads decreased productivity, loss of man-hours and even abandonment of the job. As a result, as organizations diversify, employees' background must be well established because workers from varying backgrounds react differently to a certain behavior so that the overall productivity is not negatively affected by employees' quitting from the jobs.

Daily actions of incivilities among counterparts at workplace often results to aggression. Incivility as an issue is part and parcel of every business that has lasted for a very long time and features in both large and small scale firms. Not only does incivility prevail in service and manufacturing industries but it also characterizes the commercial firms and sales organizations. Incivility is experienced while dealing junior staff, counterparts and the management and can be instigated by a number of factors which include: overcrowding, the introduction of a new member of staff and being overworked.

Overworked employees undergo stress that affects their mood and in turn their relationship with their colleagues. Such form of pressure often leads them to act in incivility resulting to unhappiness in their workenvironment. Jane reports that, " incivility is experienced while dealing with subordinates, superiors and peers almost everywhere. (Legacy, 1999, p. 4).

To most people, incivility is perceived negatively regardless of the form it takes; be it being discourteous, haughty look, or even a rude comment. Due to that, incivility influences the mood of workers by causing annoyance and sadness at workplaces. Therefore incivility can be looked at more essentially in the modern world because of its negative effects on productivity. Shareholding and division of labor are also other factors that play a key role in perpetrating incivility among various work groups.

Jane notes that, " Incivility often starts as a minor issue; use of polite language ceases and people stop appreciating the courteous code of professionalism. As a result, happinessdisappears in those workplaces and hence employee productivity significantly diminishes". (Legacy, 1999, p. 4).

More often than not, use of obscenities and acts ofviolencecharacterize the organizations in question. Thus, it is clear that incivility is not good because it jeopardizes the normal operations of a firm.

Those subjected to incivility often suffer from anxiety, insomnia, tiredness, humiliation, anger and stress that in the long run results indepression. Following that, most employees normally opt to quit or change jobs instead of remaining in that dissatisfying and obviously unhappy job. As a matter of fact, very few employees if any will report such incidences of incivility for fear of being victimized by their counterparts.

Other factors that play a key role in instigating incivility include wastage of man hours, ailments and complaints regarding better terms of employment. Such include: paid sick offs, proper remuneration and better working conditions. Pearson (2000) reveals that,

Workers who are not well treated or those that have experienced incivility will not   be as productive or even worse, will be counter productive. Physical illnesses may   also result, causing sick days to be used. The causes of incivility include lay offs, part time versus full time employees and stress from the management   emphasizing on increased productivity. (P . 133).

A generalobservationdepicts that incivility creates an atmosphere of resentment and disrespect. Thus, it is a source of conflict and often causes stress at workplaces. Incivility makes people unhappy resulting to discouragement and eventually they quit the job. Work place incivility also annoys people rendering them non productive or triggers them to act in an

uncivilized manner further escalating the degree of incivility. Apart from that, people lose good faith thus resulting in their inability to resolve the prevailing conflict or even a similar one in future.

Incivility at workplace depicts lack of regard for colleagues. Although quite common in organizations, less people understand its harmful effects. In most cases, the management lacks the skills and expertise to handle incivility which often leads to erosion of values and depletion of resources for organizations. The level of Incivility is rapidly increasing in the contemporary society. According to Pearson, " there is a suggestion by public statistics that incivility is on the rise. A recent survey of more than 2000 respondents depicted that three out of five people believe that it is getting worse".(

Pearson, Christine, et al 2000 p. 7). In fact incivility is a regular habit at work whereby people experience it first hand, perpetrate it or even witness it happen. In spite of that, efforts to end incivility are quite futile and employees dread being ridiculed should they raise such an issue. They therefore overlook actions of incivility, accept them or even perpetuate them because of that fear.

Although it is a form of work deviance, incivility is not considered illegal and thus, most organizations do not recognize it. Some managers go to the extent of believing that the impacts of incivility are not consequential to the overall productivity of their firms. The long run repercussions of incivility at workplace are that organizational values are corroded and the victims to the same respond in negative ways which in turn adversely affect those firms. Following that, incivility can be realized to have both sentimental and behavioral aspects to those subjected to it, be they first hand victims or even

listeners as it results to erosion of values and depletion of resources. (Vajda, 2006, p. 1).

Incivility shows similarity to sexual harassment whereby in both case, there is loss of time and reduced productivity. Despite that, age, sex, tenure and positional differences between the victim and the instigator of incivility have nothing to do with the perpetration of the same. In fact, men are equal targets as women are to incivility. Moreover, status and time of service do not influence instigation of incivility. In this respect, Anderson portrays how a senior level instigator illustrated the nature of incivility and its impact on the target together with other targets that can be directly affected. (Pearson, Anderson, et al 2000 p. 11).

Naturally, every person behaves disrespectfully once in a while in the work place. Quite often, the subordinate staff are treated as though they are lesser workers and as such speak ill of their bosses behind their backs. However trivial such uncivil behavior might appear, it often leads to detraction from organizational outcomes and erosion of relationships. Efforts to make amends, apologies and rationalizations often can not compensate the negative results accruing from such incivilities. For instance, lost man-hours can not be recovered, grudges harbored are hard to remove and this often implicates a bad image to the victim'scareeras he can not work best in the presence of the instigator.

Pearson (12) states that, " in cases where there are habitual instigators, their behavior normally escalates from incivility to aggression within sight or sound of several of his peers". (Pearson, Anderson, et al). Due to this, some close their doors or eventually report that uncivil behavior to the

organizational leader. Although the leader might caution the culprit (instigator) about being more careful in future, generally, no action is taken by the organization to address the repercussions on the victims.

There is even no record made to such behavior or even any standard set to punish a similar one in future. . Normally, three results are effected when incivility takes place. These are: the parties can continue being uncivil to each other through reciprocal exchanges, they can magnify the gravity of the offense or they can fall out on each other. If the first choice is taken up, disrespect often takes the form of creating a scene, and is usually more aggressive than the others and may lead to physical fights whereby injuries are sustained, equipment is destroyed and the victims' reputation is soiled.

Even though the magnitude of such incidences is not significant, most targets often tell of the same to parties that were not even subjects to such uncivil occurrence especially those in similar positions (peers or subordinates). As a result, those who hear such uncivil reports lack the expertise to deal with the incivility and may seek ways to retaliate on behalf of the target. Additionally, they make impolite remarks when the instigator passes, back bite him and can even decide to deplete organizational resources as a hit back.

Pearson shows that, " when treated disrespectfully at work, 70 percent of targets vent to families and friends outside the workplace. Having been rudely treated by the boss or co workers some employees may lash out at their spouses, humiliate their subordinates, and argue with their customers". (Pearson, Anderson, et al 2000). Following that, the particular organization is

brought into disrepute and people may shun working for the firm leading to the eventual closure of the same.

Research findings reveal that cases of suicides, depression, heart attacks, domestic strife, anddiabetesamong other life-threatening ailments are directly related to the increased incivility. As a consequence, incivility is seen as self-destructive and socially unacceptable behavior. Peter states that, " incivility is not only harmful, but it also hurts many relationships and interactions. (Vajda, 2006, p. 2). Ricky also reports that incivility affects the organizational and sub cultural norms whereby the effects of the differences inculturehave interfered withglobalization.

New employees are often allowed some periods of adjustment during which their rude behavior is overlooked. Such tolerance is revealed initially so as not to scare away the new employee but after the period elapses, incivility takes lead and the employee develops hatred for the job. The stay at such a workplace becomes boring, unpleasant and not very productive and the employee often searches for an alternative job. (Griffin, 2004. p. 420). On the other hand, being exemplary good to employees makes them reluctant and may even fail to observe work ethics. Therefore, employers use incivility to sort out differences and laxity at the workplace in turn contributing to improved profitability to some extent.

As a result, incivility is seen to offer both positive and negative effects. However, to most people viewing incivility through the complexities of interpersonal relationships, incivility is seen as an intriguing workplace deviance that also reflects on the supervisory job of the managers and their workers. (Griffin, 2004, p. 421). Incivility always erodes personal

relationships and causes alienation among counterparts. This especially takes place in overcrowded workplaces where the staff is expected to work closely with each other for the overall benefit of the firm.

Targets of incivility attempt to ignore instigators of the same by avoiding them or even dodging which in turn contributes to the neglect of work. As a matter of fact, male targets respond to incivility by reciprocating or using physical violence where they end up being fired from their work. On the other hand, female workers avoid the instigators, perform the work poorly or quit from the jobs.

Incivility is almost an inherent issue whose time of disappearance is uncertain unless concerted efforts are made to eliminate and control it from all aspects of people's daily lives particularly at the work areas. Eliminating incivility can only be achieved by making civility part of everyone's daily routine. Thus, incivility at work place can be curtailed by implementing a policy like the setting of zero tolerance expectations regarding employee interself relationships' incivility that will require them to treat each other respectfully. (Vajda, 2006, p. 2).

Organizations can improve the output by ensuring that their staff use proper etiquette, are punctual and courteous to their workmates. This can be successfully accomplished by mobilizing employees on proper mode of dressing, use of proper written and oral language, being mindful of their counterparts and being articulate.

Besides, employers need to create a workplace violence policy that will train employees on how to deal with threats of violence or duress against them at

workplace. Such a policy should incorporate formal mechanisms through which instances of violence and aggression can be reported. In addition to that, a response team should be created to handle incidences of incivility and should employees prove too rebellious, then employers should consider termination of the specific employee's service.

Employers should also strive to create effective work places where safety and enjoyable roles are carried out. As a result, employers will benefit from increased productivity and the clients impressed by such courteous employees will reciprocate. Thus, civility will gradually take the place of incivility resulting to a happier and more enjoyable working environment.

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