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Incivility among Female Students in Higher Education

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Abstract

Incivility among university students is a common academic problem, its Unprofessional behaviors have occurred both among faculty members and students. This study sets to identify behaviors of the students and faculty perceived as uncivil by the students, and to assess the frequency of uncivil behaviors the students may experience in academic environment, and to compare the students perceptions between health sciences and human sciences colleges. A comparative descriptive design was used to explore the phenomenon of incivility among female students. Data was collected from 143 participants using a self-report incivility of higher education survey (IHE-R). Sample was recruited from one governmental university (Females university) located in Riyadh/KSA. The results of this study indicated that, students' most uncivil frequently occurred behaviors were making threatening statements about weapons, refusing or reluctant to answer direct question, making rude remarks toward others, using computers, phone, or other media devices during class for unrelated purposes. While the faculty common uncivil frequent behaviors were refusing to discuss make-up exams, or grade changes, being unavailable outside of class, not returning calls or emails, not maintaining office hours, Punishing the entire class for one student's misbehavior. There was no significant difference in students perceptions of uncivil behavior between health science and human science students. In conclusion incivility considered to be a moderated problem in the academic environment in KSA, both students and faculty members equally contributed in several uncivil behaviors. The study recommended that awareness should be spread to develop a civil academic environment.

Key words: Academic environment, Higher education, Incivility, Uncivil behavior

Introduction

Incivility in education is an emergent problem and one that seriously disrupts the academic environment and often results in conflicted and stressful student/faculty relationships (Clark, 2008). Incivility in nursing education has become increasingly more important to understand as bad-mannered behavior on college and university campuses continues to reflect that of modern society (Clark &

Springe, 2007; Putnam, 1995). students' incivility has been the focus of study in academia. However, incivility cannot fully be attributed to students (Clark, 2008). In a study aimed to measure faculty incivility, seven inviolable unbreakable norms, including inattentive planning, moral turpitude, personal disregard, condescending negativism, poorly communicated course subjective details. grading, uncooperative cynicism were identified.

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When faculty violates these norms, the teaching-learning environment negatively affected and uncivil student behavior is often triggered (Braxton, & Bayer, 1999). Suplee PD. (2008) clarified in her study that Students' incivility may cause negative physical, emotional and psychological effects on faculty members, such as stress ,anxiety, illness, job dissatisfaction, behavioral changes, as well as harmful impacts on work setting. In addition, the students' incivility may negatively impact the functions of college authorities (Luparell, 2007). Civility comes from the Greek word "civilitas" meaning community or city (Clark & 2008). Incivility in Carnosso. classroom, is the actions disturbing environment created learning collaboration with the conflicting actions that are not compatible with them (Feldman, 2001), or deliberate destruction of the teaching & learning process 2001). (Morrisette, One of the consequences of incivility in the class is that bad behavior interferes with a normal learning environment, especially in group learning. Nowadays this kind of behavior is considered to be a serious problem throughout the world (Feldmann, 2001).

Feldmann (2001) revealed that incivility in academic settings is evidenced by actions that hinder the development of a pleasant and cooperative learning defined academic environment, he incivility as "rude, discourteous speech or behavior that disrupts the teachinglearning environment", and Morrissette (2001) added that incivility is an intentional behavior aims to disrupting or interfering with the teaching and learning processes of others. Clark (2006) clarified that incivility may range from misuse of cell phones and rude and sarcastic

comments to threats or actual acts of physical harm. Also Kuhlenschmidt & Layne (1999) mentioned many studentrelated factors as potential causes of classroom incivility: illness (both physical and mental.), fatigue., stress (e.g., feeling overextended.), emotional challenges (e.g., loss of a loved one, break-up of a relationship.), emotional immaturity and poor problem-solving skills, attentionseeking, redirected aggression (i.e., when a student becomes upset with a professor) due to an unrelated event that occurred outside the classroom, vision and hearing problems. and other disabilities. According to Alberts, et al., (2010) in the U.S. many students are not challenged academically before they enter college, and as a result, they possess inaccurate expectations and ideas about the nature of college-level work. In addition, Nordstrom, et al. (2009) claimed that some students believe they should put least effort in their courses rather than wanting to acquire knowledge for its own sake. Students may also feel that the instructor should reward them with high grades simply for class attendance. Faculty now view themselves as mostly responsible for students' learning, while themselves students have become relatively passive. So an increasing number of students simply want to be entertained in class.

On another hand, many college students are often juggling multiple roles. Some students may have full or part-time jobs, in addition to taking a full course load. Kuhlenschmidt & Layne (1999) stated that as time pressures for student increase, civility is often lost. Other researchers reported other causes for incivility among students include exposure to violence, poor secondary school preparation, changing student

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demographics, and inadequate parenting (Braxton & Bayer, 1999).

Clark & Springer (2007) specified that cheating on examinations, using cell phones during class, holding distracting conversations, making abusive remarks, asking for make-up exams and extension for the assignments dates and making disapproving groans are also uncivil student acts. In the Middle East, Al-Kandari (2011) reported moderate level of incivility among university students in a Kuwait. The most common behavior was students' asking to be excused from continuing the lecture and asking the permission faculty for to leave (AlKandari, 2011).

While the Center for Survey Research (2000) has shown that instructors engage in uncivil behavior that is noticed and reported by students. Specifically, students are bothered by faculty who engage in presenting lectures at a fast speed with little to no student involvement or interaction, acting in an unfriendly distant manner toward students. surprising students with unannounced assessments unanticipated exam questions, arriving late to class or canceling class without prior notice, permitting students to belittle or ridicule classmates.

Uncivil student behavior is a problem for faculty, students, and university administration. Uncivil student behavior can cause additional faculty stress, discontent, and eventual burnout (Appleby, 1990; Schneider, 1998). Luparell (2004, 2007) clarified similar results in a study where the faculty reported being verbally abused bv suffering physical students, and psychological symptoms as a result of the uncivil behaviors, and doubt their abilities

as educators . Developing an academic environment of civility on universities presents a challenge. To be "civil" is to be polite respectful, and decent. Education plays an important role in developing a civil society, and higher education plays a special role in helping students, develop a sense of civic and social responsibility and learn ways ,to contribute to the common good (Clark & Springer , 2007).

The body of literature on the topic of incivility is growing. Lashley and De Meneses (2001) showed in their study that uncivil student behaviors ranged from mild to severe, with increasing in the frequency of disruptive student behaviors, compared with 5 years before the study. Luparell (2007) stated that student incivility is a troublesome problem for nursing education that negatively affects faculty well-being, sense of self-worth, and overall commitment to university/college teaching, administration. One study only consider the gender as a variable related to incivility among students in higher education and differentiate between uncivil behaviors between male and female students, the results of the study showed that the mean rating of felt the disturbed behaviors is female over male, and the mean rating of the frequency behaviors is male over female (Yu-Nan Su, 2013). In the same study the results indicated that although male sense more incivility behaviors in the class, male can endure more incivility behaviors than female, and felt less disturbed (Yu-Nan Su, 2013). Despite that, Research focusing on incivility in higher education is limited. So whether academic incivility is intentional or not, it is a growing problem and Incivility among students in the universities in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has generated much

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discussion at national conferences, faculty meetings, and in the press. However, no studies were located on university students' incivility and addressed the types, level, and frequency of uncivil behaviors οf student and faculty members. Uncivil student behavior in classroom and against faculty has gained increased media attention. Such behavior may be increasing, thus jeopardizing the wellbeing of faculty, students, and the whole educational process. Therefore, this study sets to Identify the students' and faculty behaviors perceived as uncivil by the students also to assess the frequency of uncivil behaviors the students may experience or seen in academic environment, and to compare between the students perceptions in health sciences colleges and human sciences colleges.

Research Questions

- 1- What student and faculty behaviors are perceived as uncivil in academic environment by undergraduate students enrolled in BSN programs in one university setting?
- 2- What uncivil (disruptive and threatening) student and faculty behaviors are most frequently occurring in the academic environment as perceived by undergraduate students enrolled in BSN programs in one university setting?
- 3- What are the differences in perceptions of uncivil student/faculty behaviors across the health sciences students and human sciences students in one university setting?

Ho: There is no statistical difference in perceptions of uncivil student and

faculty behavior between health sciences students and human sciences students.

Methods

Sample and Setting

Students are recruited from one university governmental (Female university) located in Riyadh. Students were recruited from all faculties, which for the purpose of this study have been divided into two main categories, Applied Sciences (i.e., Nursing, Pharmacology, Medicine, and college of health and rehabilitation sciences) and Human Sciences (i.e., Art, Education, and Law). All participants are undergraduates who should have spent at least three years at the university including student of 5th, 6th, 7th of 8th Levels; and they have to be a full time students. The sample size for this study was obtained using a computer program (G power) which was developed by Faul and Erdfelder (1992), with medium effect size 0.15, power analysis of 0.8, and α (the risk of Type I error) was 0.05 as a compromised two tailed statistics. A total number of 180 participants were required in this study. Although 180 participants were needed for the study, more participants included to produce better power and reliable findings, and to compensate for the suspected incomplete questionnaires. Therefore, Α convenient sampling procedure of 200 students were recruited in the study.

Ethical considerations

Permission from the tool developer was taken to use translated survey. Then the research instrument was submitted to the IRB research committee in faculty of nursing at the selected university where the researcher work in, for their approval. Anonymity of

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the respondents was ensured; also the data was secured, and saved in the researcher's personal computer. Moreover, the questionnaire was coded by numbers to maintain confidentiality, and no one, except the researchers, had access to that data. In this research, there will be no harm to any of the participants, the participants was given full information of the purpose and aim of this study and that they participated voluntarily and can withdraw at any given time during the research, and how they would be protected along the research. An informed consent was obtained prior to each survey, after participants' understanding of the information described by the research assistants and in the message sent to each participant.

Instrument

Data were collected using a selfreport survey. All participants completed the Arabic version of Incivility in higher Education (IHE-R) survey. The IHE survey includes demographic data and quantitative items designed to measure faculty members' and students' perceptions incivility of hiaher in education. The intent of two qualitative items at the end of survey is to gather information about how students and faculty may contribute to incivility in the academic environment and how each group might effectively address this problem but from only the students perception. Participants were asked, "To what degree do you consider the following behaviors to be uncivil?" They used a 4point Liker t-type scale to evaluate each behavior (1 = not uncivil at all to 4 =extremely uncivil). Participants also were asked to rate how frequently they observed each of the 25 student behaviors in classrooms using a 4-point Liker t-type scale (1 never to 4

frequently). Although the tool IHE-R is essentially a carbon copy of the INE-R (Incivility in Nursing Education) which is reliable and valid according to Clark et. Al. (2015), the only difference being the INE-R is nursing specific, and the IHE-R may be used among other disciplines within higher education. The Arabic version of the Survey was pilot tested to determine the feasibility, reliability and validity of the tool in a study done by Allari R. (2016). The results of the study showed that Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α) was computed to assess the internal consistency of the translated survey, and the total Cronbach's alpha = .897 for the IHE-R which considered as acceptable.

Data collection

Self-reported IHE-R survey distributed among the students as electronic on line survey, the research assistants recruited the students during break hours over two week period, they targeted the places which were crowded by the students, such as cafeteria, class rooms libraries. To get the decided sample size the research assistants were divided in to two groups, first group responsible for human science colleges participants (art, education and law) and the other group for the health science colleges (nursing, medicine and pharmacy). The recruited participants directly received a massage from the research assistants through social media or email include the consent associated with the link to electronic survey.

Results

Data were analyzed using SPSS (version 22). The significance level was set at .05. Number of data analysis procedures were used including means, standard deviations, frequencies for question 1 and 2. these questions explored

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what student and faculty behaviors were perceived as uncivil and most frequently occurring from the student point of view. Comparisons were made between health colleges student and other human sciences student, question 3. To test the null hypotheses of Research Questions 3Analysis of Variance (t-test) was used to explore differences in student perceptions of uncivil student behavior and uncivil faculty behavior among students. Alpha level of significance was set at a < .05.

Sample Description

The survey was distributed via email and social media link by the research assistants of the colleges of Nursing. The total number of surveys returned was 143 out of 200 participants recruited. The survey response rate was 71.5%, participants from health sciences colleges (n=72), human sciences colleges (n=71). Demographic data for the whole sample is portrayed in Table 1 and includes the variables of age, academic discipline, academic year, and level in the program. All respondents were female (100%). The age of participants ranged from 20-25 years. The majority of

respondents were from 3ed year (32.9 %). Of the respondents, 50.3% health sciences and 49.7% human sciences.

In regard to the students' perception of what are considered as uncivil behavior among students, the five highest rank behaviors mentioned by the students showed in table 2. Majority of the students mentioned threats of physical harm against others and property damage as the most uncivil behaviors according to their perception, then use profanity toward others with the same percentage 86%. The total average of the uncivil behavior was significantly high (3.04 out of 4).

In table 3 according to the survey shows the five highest rank occurring uncivil behaviors among student. The most frequent uncivil behavior was property damage with 78.3% and average of 2.82, followed by Using profanity

(swearing, cussing) directed toward others with 73.4 %, then being unresponsive to emails or other communications (68.3 %). The overall average of frequency of incivility among student was moderate (2.00 out of 4.0).

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics. N=143

Variable	Category	%	N
	20	23,1	33
	21	16,8	24
Age	22	21,7	31
	23	23,1	33
	24	6,3	9
	25	9,1	13
	1 st year	15,4	22
Academic year	2 nd year	15,4	22
	3d year	32,9	47

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	4 th year 5 th year	19,6 16.8	28 24
Level in the program	1 2	3,5 2,8	5 4
Level III the program	3	5,6	8
	4 5	16,2 10,6	23 15
	6 7	28,9 7,7	41 11
	8	21,1	30
	10 11	2,1 0,7	3 1
	12	0,7	1
Academic discipline	Health sciences human sciences	50,3 49,7	72 71

Table 2: the Five highest rank students behaviors perceived as uncivil. N=143

	Behavior	Behavior Frequency F		
1.	Threats of physical harm against others (implied or actual)	124	86.7	3.77
2.	Property damage	124	86.7	3.77
3.	Using profanity (swearing, cussing) directed toward others	123	86	3.71
4.	Making discriminating comments (racial, ethnic, gender, etc.) directed toward others	116	81.1	3.66
5.	Making condescending or rude remarks toward others	116	81.1	3.66
	Overall average		3.04	

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Table 3: The Five highest rank frequent occurring uncivil behaviors among students. N=143

	Behavior	Frequency	Percentage %	Average rate
1.	Property damage	112	78.3	2.82
2.	Using profanity (swearing, cussing) directed toward others	105	73.4	2.75
3.	Being unresponsive to emails or other communications	99	68.2	2.45
4.	Making discriminating comments (racial, ethnic, gender, etc.) directed toward others	97	67.8	2.30
5.	Sending inappropriate or rude e-mails to others	96	67.1	2.25
	Overall average	·	2.00	

Table 4 showed the five highest rank faculty uncivil behaviors according to the perception of the students. The first behavior with 86.6% was expressing disinterest, boredom, or apathy about course content or subject matter. Using profanity (swearing, cussing) directed toward others with (83.3%), making threatening statements about weapons (82.4), and then exerting superiority, abusing position, or rank over others with rate of 3.66. the overall average rate of uncivil behavior was 3.43 out of 4

Table 4 : The five highest rank Faculty behaviors that have experienced or seen by the students in the academic environment N=143

	Behavior	Behavior Frequency Percentag %		e Average rate	
1.	Expressing disinterest, boredom, or apathy about course content or subject matter	123	86.6	3.72	
2.	Using profanity (swearing, cussing) directed toward others	118	83.3	3.71	
3.	Making threatening statements about weapons	117	82.4	3.70	
4.	Exerting superiority, abusing position, or rank over others (e.g., arbitrarily threatening to fail students	116	81.7	3.66	
5.	Sending inappropriate or rude e- mails to others	115	81 %	3.66	
	Overall average		3.43		

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Table 5 shows The five highest rank frequent Faculty uncivil behaviors that have experienced or seen in the academic environment by the students. The most frequent uncivil behavior of faculty members is refusing to discuss make-up exams, extensions, or grade changes (2.47), then being unavailable outside of

class with a rate of (2.67). the third rank was for two behaviors punishing the entire class for one student's misbehavior and exerting superiority, abusing position, or rank over others with a rate of (2.58), finally arriving late for class or other scheduled activities with a rate of (2.41). the overall rate was moderate 2.05.

Table 5: The five highest rank frequent Faculty uncivil behaviors that have experienced in the academic environment by the students. N=143

	Behavior	Frequency	Percentage %	Average rate
1.	Refusing to discuss make-up exams, extensions, or grade changes	37	26.1	2.74
2.	Being unavailable outside of class (not returning calls or emails, not maintaining office hours)	28	19.7	2.67
3.	Punishing the entire class for one student's misbehavior	24	16.9	2.58
4.	Exerting superiority, abusing position, or rank over others (e.g., arbitrarily threatening to fail students)	24	16.9	2.58
5.	Arriving late for class or other scheduled activities	21	14.8	2.41
	Overall average		2.05	

Table 6 shows the percentage of to what extent the incivility was perceived as a problem in the students program. about 39.4 % of the total students consider it a moderate problem. The majority of the student in health sciences colleges considered it a moderate problem with 55.4 % while majority of students in human sciences colleges considered it as a serious problem with 66.7%. And table 7 shows that 54.2 % of the participants considered students and faculty are equally likely to engage in uncivil behavior.

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Table 6: To what extent the students think incivility is a problem in their program. N= 143

	Variable	Percentage %	Health Sciences Colleges %	Human Sciences Colleges %
1.	No problem at all	7%	40%	60%
2.	Mild problem	36.6%	53.8%	46.2%
3.	Moderate problem	39.4%	55.4%	44.6%
4.	Serious problem	16%	33.3%	66.7%

Table 7: The engagement of students and faculty in uncivil behaviors based on students perception. N=143

	Variable	Percentage %
1.	Faculty members are much more likely	8.5%
2.	Faculty members are a little more likely	6.3%
3.	About equal	54.2%
4.	Students are a little more likely	27.5%
5.	Students are much more likely	3.5%

Table 8 shows an independent t test result to compare between the perception of both human sciences and health sciences students and the results revealed showed no statistical differences between two groups.

Table 8: Comparison in total student perception of incivility between students from health sciences and students from human sciences colleges. N=143

	Health	sciences	Human	sciences		
Total	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	CI
incivility average score	2.620	0.264	2.630	0.290	- 0.268	0.789

Note: p < .05; SD- standard deviation; CI- confidence interval; t-t-test

Discussion

1- What student and faculty behaviors are perceived as uncivil in academic environment by undergraduate students enrolled in BSN programs in one university setting?

Students shows that the most students behaviors of that considered as highly

uncivil are threats of physical harm against others, property damage, using profanity (swearing, cussing) directed toward others, making discriminating comments (racial, ethnic, gender, etc.) directed toward others, and making condescending or rude remarks toward others. According to Feldmann (2001), all these behaviors is considered actions of

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classroom terrorism and intimidation. The impact of these behaviors can hinder the learning in the academic environment (Clark & Springer, 2007; Morrisette, 2001). While the Faculty most behaviors that considered to be highly uncivil according to students perception are: expressing disinterest, boredom, or apathy about course content or subject matter, profanity (swearing, directed toward others, making threatening statements about weapons. exerting superiority, abusing position, or over others. and sendina inappropriate or rude e-mails to others. These results supported by Clark & Springer (2007) study that showed cancelation of class without informing students, being ill-prepared for the class, restricting discussions, belittling students' efforts and reproaching them, perfunctory teaching, and unavailability outside the classroom have been reported incivility on behalf of educators. In addition Explicit violence or threats of violence are the most serious uncivil behaviors.

Students in the BSN programs reported them within the highest five in both students and faculty behaviors. Morrissette (2001) asserts, "Antisocial behavior can invite hostile student reactions and retaliation" and "incivility often begets incivility" (p.9). These comments clearly indicate faculty must be very careful to avoid intensifying the situation. Moreover, these behaviors require immediate efforts to ensure personal safety and the safety of students and faculty. In situations of threatening or actual acts of violence, the security, and the college administration must be notified and involved.

2. What uncivil (disruptive and threatening) student and faculty

behaviors are most frequently occurring in academic environment as perceived by undergraduate students enrolled in BSN programs in one university setting?

According to the results from the survey the most frequently occurring behavior among students from the students point of view are property damage, using profanity (swearing, cussing) directed toward others, being unresponsive to emails or other communications, making discriminating comments (racial, ethnic, gender, etc.) directed toward others, and sending inappropriate or rude e-mails to others. According to Feldmann (2001) academic incivility is defined as rude, discourteous speech or behavior that disrupts the teaching-learning environment, and Clark (2006) clarified that it may range from misuse of cell phones and rude and sarcastic comments to threats or actual acts of physical harm. And the most frequent uncivil behavior among faculty members according to the findings are, refusing to discuss make-up exams, extensions, or grade changes, being unavailable outside of class (not returning calls or emails, not maintaining office hours, punishing the entire class for student's misbehavior, superiority, abusing position, or rank over others, and arriving late for class or other scheduled activities. Same results showed in Appleby (1990) & Schneider (1998) studies they specifically mentioned that students are bothered by faculty who engage in presenting lectures at a fast pace with little to no student involvement or interaction, acting in an aloof distant toward students. manner surprising students with unannounced assessments or unanticipated exam guestions, arriving late to class or canceling class without

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prior notice, permitting students to belittle or ridicule classmates. Although the rank order of perceived uncivil student and faculty behaviors varied slightly, between this study and the above mentioned studies but in overall, these findings are consistent with prior studies.

3. What are the differences in perceptions of uncivil student/faculty behaviors across the health sciences students and human sciences students in one university setting?

Because of the non-significant result of ttest, the null hypothesis for H0 failed to be rejected and was retained. The nonsignificant results indicated that no differences were detected in students' perceptions of the overall incivility among two groups; the health sciences students and human sciences students. According to the literature, no previous studies have been conducted that have used comparative research to determine differences in students' perceptions of student and faculty incivility across disciplines. Only two studies were found; first study that compared business faculty perceptions of student incivility with faculty of other disciplines (Swinney et al., 2010). The study concluded that there was no significant difference. The second study of Wagner (2014) the results showed no statistically significant difference undergraduate upperclassmen students' perceptions of how often student disruptive behaviors occur among the disciplines of nursing, education, and business at a large public university. Another study was conducted regarding academic cheating between nursing and non-nursing students and found no difference (McCabe, 2009). Burke et al. (2013) conducted a review of the higher

education literature on incivility, which was generally directed toward all of higher education. Burke et al. (2013) recommended that more research is necessary to identify if incivility is more common in some disciplines than others. This study addresses suggestions from other research (Burke et al., 2013; Clark & Davis- Kenaley, 2011; McKinne, 2008) to continue the research on incivility in education higher by comparing disciplines.

In regard to relating the gender to the incivility one study done by Yu-Nan Su (2013), showed that female students score higher than male students on the perceptions of the disturbance. The author clarify that result because the female are more sensitive and tend to be interrupted by environment factors compared to their counterparts. The female students in same study mentioned that the highest uncivil behavior experienced were rude behaviors to classmates, and use defiant words, and these results similar with the result of current study.

Limitations

The study was limited geographically to undergraduate in one governmental university, this limits the ability to generalize the findings to the population under study. Also the current study is a comparative descriptive study using quantitative data. Data were obtained using a self-report survey, which can contain selection bias. Selection bias exists because the groups under study were not randomly selected; therefore, one is unable to assume the groups are equal. This study was designed to assess perceptions of uncivil behaviors among students and no data were collected from the faculty to compare with results of the

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student perceptions, which also represents a limitation to the current study.

Conclusion

The study addressed the overall perception of student and faculty incivility as perceived by students, and also addressed students' perceptions of the frequency of occurrence of both disruptive and threatening student and faculty behaviors. Results indicated that there were no significant differences among the disciplines in overall perception of incivility. The results suggest that continued research is necessary to validate the results of this study and to continue investigating the incidence and prevalence of incivility in various academic disciplines. The results also educators propose that and administrators in higher education should address the issue of incivility from a broader more general perspective until further research indicates if there are unique features to specific disciplines. In conclusion both students and faculty members contribute equally in several uncivil behavior from the students point of view, and according to the survey result most students consider it to be a moderate problem in the academic environment. So it is recommended that awareness should be spread to develop a civil academic environment. Recommendation for future research using qualitative methodology or using observers to observe behaviors in higher education settings and comparing among disciplines would provide rich data. Adjusting the research design to include random sampling rather than convenience sampling and including many universities over wide geographical area would make the study design stronger.

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