The Influence of Perceived Organizational Politics on Workplace Incivility Among Private and Public Employees in Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of perceived organizational politics on workplace incivility. A total of four hundred (400) participants ($M = 200$: $F = 200$) were randomly selected from private and public organizations in Ogun State, Nigeria. A battery of psychological instruments was used in the collection of data for this study which include: Workplace Incivility Scale and Perception of Organizational Politics Scale. Descriptive statistical methods, Pearson's product moment correlation and Independent Sample *t*-tests were used to analyse data in order to test the five hypotheses formulated. The findings show that perceived organizational politics had a significant influence on workplace incivility. This implies that, the lower the level of perception of organizational politics, the lower the report of incivility and vice versa ($t = 5.26$, $p < 0.05$). Furthermore, a significant positive relationship existed between perceived organizational politics and workplace incivility ($r = .331$, $p < 0.05$). It also revealed that there was a significant difference in the report of incivility among private and public employees. Employees from public organizations reported significantly higher workplace incivility. However, the result indicated that age and gender had no significant influence on workplace incivility. Based on these findings, management should put measures in place to minimize perceived organizational politics in order to reduce uncivil behaviour in workplace

Key words: Perceived organizational politics and workplace incivility; Employees; Organizational politics

INTRODUCTION

Individuals generally like to be treated with respect in any form of relationship (formal or informal) they find themselves, especially in Nigeria where respect is highly valued by the society, thus the ideology of respect cannot be dissociated from the work environment. Individuals are more relaxed and motivated to function better in an environment where they are regarded or accorded with respect due to them. Therefore individuals would want to work in an environment where they are given this due respect and the act of civility is not absent (Tarraf, 2012). This implies that the presence of respect or civility in an organization fosters a healthy work environment.

According to Carter (1998) civility is the sum of the many sacrifices individuals make for the sake of living together. Wilson (1993) described civility as the means of showing self-control, while Donald (2009) defines it as the unspoken, yet strongly expected ways of conducting oneself in social interactions. Andersson and Pearson (1999) also described the basis for civility as the love for a neighbour. Civility has been identified as an instrument used to soften the issue of class (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). That is, the difference between the poor and the rich, the employers and the employees. It has not been identified only to be a functional tool, but also to have moral grounds as well (Ibid.).

Thus civility has morality imbedded in it and can be considered as essential in social interactions. Social scientists have come to the conclusion that as interactions

between humans become more frequent and complex, the necessity for civility becomes higher. Therefore individuals involved in complex interactions (such as in an organization) must adjust their behaviours to the expected civil ways of conducting one's self.

Unfortunately, interpersonal maltreatments such as violence, aggression, bullying, tyranny, harassment, deviance, and injustice are on the increase in the workplace (Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2000; Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001; Tarraf, 2012).

Over the past decade, organizational researchers have been concerned about these behaviours considered as antisocial, probably because of the increasing rate of disgruntled employees and the impacts it leaves on the organization and its employees (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001). Yet few researches have focused on the milder form of psychological mistreatments in which ambiguous intents are present. This behaviour is what Andersson and Pearson (1999) termed as workplace incivility.

Workplace incivility is therefore a low level of exhibited defiant behaviour. It is a "mild form of psychological mistreatment in which intentionality is less apparent" (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001). Andersson and Pearson (1999) define workplace incivility as a low-intensity deviant behaviour with ambiguous intent to harm the target in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Thus, workplace incivility is characteristically rude, discourteous, with less regard for others and can be attributed to instigator's ignorance or target's misinterpretation or hypersensitivity. In time past there have been disagreements among criminologist, psychologists, and sociologist as to what aggression and violence really entail. Researchers who examine aggression and violence in the organization agree that aggression is a destructive behaviour that deviates from social norms while violence is the exaggerated physical form of violence with obvious intent to harm being common to both (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Baron & Neuman, 1996). Hence this verifies the definition of incivility being a low-intensity deviant behaviour and cannot be regarded as aggression or violence.

Though a recent phenomenon, a considerable number of studies have been conducted on workplace incivility and it has been identified or associated with negative outcomes such as greater job stress, cognitive distraction, psychological distress, lower job satisfaction and creativity (Cortina & Magley, 2009; Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2005). However, literature suggests that researchers basically concentrate on the incidence and outcomes of workplace incivility, with less consideration for its sources (Tarraf, 2012). Incivility can come from anyone (e.g. customer,

business partner) affiliated to the organization businesswise, but this study is more concerned with an intra-organizational source and impacts of workplace incivility. Therefore this study aims at investigating the role of perceived organizational politics on workplace incivility.

Perceived organizational politics is seen as an individual's (employee) observation or interpretation of other's self-interested behaviours, like the careful manipulation of organizational policies (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992). Politics is considered a phenomenon that is part of the regular social makeup of any organization (Abbas & Raja, 2014; Vigoda & Cohen, 2002; Yilmaz, 2014). It is argued to be a functional tool, as political environments and competitions bring about productivity (Pfeffer, 1981). Whereas, others consider politics in the organization as dysfunctional (Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey, & Toth, 1997). Nonetheless it has been discovered to be a determining factor of some antisocial behaviour.

Furthermore, the prevalence rate of interpersonal maltreatment or antisocial behaviours in the workplace is on the increase. This has called for the attention of many organizational and social researchers. A lot of studies have been carried out on antisocial behaviours like workplace aggression, bullying, harassments, tyranny and the likes. However researchers have given less attention to the milder forms of these mistreatments; workplace incivility. Even 90% of a survey study thinks incivility to be very serious problem in terms of its unnoticed prevalence (Andersson & Pearson, 1999).

Social analysts have noted that politics is incorporated into the structure of organizations (Abbas & Raja, 2014; Vigoda & Cohen, 2002) and with the level of corruption and politics played in Nigeria, it is inevitable to predict that the problem of organizational politics would be encountered in almost every organization. Although some managements or individuals ignorantly establish organizational politics to foster competition, yet employees do perceive and react to it in different ways, most of which have been proven by research to be negative. The perception of these employees may lead them to react in uncivil manners to their colleagues or supervisors.

The objective of this study is to:

a) Ascertain the influence of perceived organizational politics on workplace incivility.

b) Examine the relationship between perceived organizational politics and workplace incivility.

c) Determine the influence of organizational type on the level of incivility experienced.

d) Ascertain the influence of gender on workplace incivility.

e) Ascertain the influence of age on workplace incivility.

To achieve the set objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated:

a) Workers classified as perceiving high level of organizational politics will report significantly higher workplace incivility compared to their counterparts who perceive low level of organizational politics.

b) There will be a significant relationship between perceived organizational politics and workplace incivility.

c) Private organization workers will report significantly lower workplace incivility than their public organization counterparts.

d) Male workers will report significantly higher incivility compared to their female counterparts.

e) Employees with the age bracket of 21-30 would experience more incivility compared to their counterparts from age 51 and above.

1. METHOD

The target population for this study is workers from public and private organizations in Ogun state, Nigeria. Participants were 400 (200 female, 200 males) randomly selected from banks, schools, network service providers, an eatery and a hospital which representing the private organization while other participants representing the public organization were also randomly selected from some public secondary schools, higher institutions and Ogun state Ministries. Their age ranged from 21 and above with 47.2% being between ages 21 and 30, 34.5% were between ages 31 and 40, 13% were between ages 41 and 50 and the remaining 5.2% were from age 51 and above. 50% of respondents were males while the other 50% were females. Also educational qualifications of respondents indicated that, 22% of the respondents had SSCE, 11.8% had OND or NCE, 47% had HND or BSc and 19.2% had MSc or PhD. In terms of marital status, 58.8% of respondents were married while the other 41.2% were single. In terms of the nature of the organization, 50% were from private organizations and the other 50% were from public organizations.

Data were collected through a battery of psychology tests. Due to the very busy schedule of targeted population, questionnaires were distributed through managers who were briefed on the procedure by the researchers. Other questionnaires were directly administered to the other participants, while more attention was given to the less-literate. A total of 400 questionnaires were administered to male and female employees, from randomly selected public and private organizations. Questionnaires distributed to busy organizations such as the banks were collected within two days. Others were collected immediately after they were administered.

2. MEASURES

Workplace Incivility Scale (WIS) developed by Cortina, Magley, Williams & Langhout (2001) was a seven itemed scales used to assess workplace incivility. Cortina and Magley (2009) later improved the WIS with three additional items which were included in this study. Each item of the scale measures the frequency to which individuals experience uncivil behaviour from colleagues. Participants responded using a 5-point scale ranging from once or twice a year (1) to everyday (5). Cronbach's alpha for the single incivility scale of the WIS in this study is .89. Sample items include: My co-worker/supervisor "Paid little attention to a statement you made or showed little interest in your opinion", "Doubted your judgment in a matter over which you have responsibility" and "Made unwanted attempts to draw you into a discussion of personal matters". Individuals with high scores confirmed that they have been victims of uncivil behaviours and its presence in the organization.

Perception of Organizational Politics Scale (POPS) is a twelve item psychological instrument developed by Kacmar and Ferris (1991). It is a 5-point Likert scale used to assess employee's perception of an organization's political nature. The scale measures general political behaviour, political behaviour to "get ahead", and ambiguity in pay and promotion policies. The POP scale's reliability coefficient alpha values ranged from .87 to .91 and Kacmar & Ferris (1991) factor analysed the POPS items with the items of the Job Descriptive Index (JDI). The politic items loaded on single factor separate from the JDI items. The items measuring the general political behaviour and pay and promotion policies are scored normally, while the items measuring the get ahead political behaviour are scored in reverse. Sample items include: "In my Organization, One Group Always Gets Their Way", "Favouritism Not Merit Gets People Ahead in My Organization" and "Pay and Promotion Decisions Are Consistence With Policies". A high score signifies ones perception of high politics in the organization.

3. RESULTS

Table 1 shows that there is a significant difference in the scores for classified low perceivers (M=18.34, SD= 7.54) and classified high perceivers (M= 22.90, SD=9.32) of politics on incivility; t= -5.26, p <0.05. Thus the hypothesis one which stated that workers classified as having lower perception of organizational politics would report a significant different level of workplace incivility was accepted.

Table 1
Independent *T*-Test of Perceived Organizational Politics on Workplace Incivility

Classified perception of organizational politics	N	Mean	S.D	df	t	P
Low perception	175	18.34	7.54	398	-5.26	<0.05
High perception	225	22.90	9.32			

Table 2
Pearson Correlation Between Workplace Incivility and Perceived Organizational Politics

Variables	N	r	P
Perceived Organizational Politics	200	.331	<0.05
Workplace Incivility	200		

Table 2 shows that there is a significant positive relationship between perceived organizational politics and workplace incivility. This result supports hypothesis two, which stated that there will be significant relationship between perceived organizational politics and workplace incivility (r= .331, p <0.05). Thus the hypothesis is accepted.

Table 3
Independent *T*-Test of Organization's Nature on Incivility

Nature of organization	N	Mean	S.D	df	t	P
Private	200	18.31	8.03	398	-6.11	<0.05
Public	200	23.50	8.93			

Table 3 above shows that there is a significant difference between the report of incivility in private organizations (M= 18.31, SD= 8.03) and public organizations (M= 23.50, SD= 8.93) t= -6.11, p <0.05. Thus the hypothesis 3 which stated that the will be a significant difference in incivility report between private and public organizations' workers was accepted.

Table 4
Independent *T*-Test of Gender Difference on Experience of Incivility

Gender	N	Mean	S.D	df	t	P
Male	200	21.32	8.48	398	.924	>0.05
Female	200	20.50	9.24			

Table 5 shows that there is no significant difference between female's score (M= 20.50, SD= 9.24) and male's score (M= 21.32, SD= 8.48) on their experience of incivility (t= .924, p >0.05, sig= .086). Thus hypothesis four which stated that there would be a significant difference between male and female workers' experiences of incivility and was not accepted.

The Table 5 result shows that there is no difference between workers in age group 21 to 30 (M= 22.00, SD= 8.21) and 51 and above (M= 20.14, SD= 9.92) experience of incivility (t= .827, p >0.05). Thus hypothesis four was rejected.

Table 5
Independent *T*-Test of Specific Age Groups on Incivility

Age	N	Mean	S.D	df	t	P
21-30	189	22.00	8.21	208	.827	>0.05
51-above	21	20.14	9.92			

DISCUSSION

This study based on the influence of perceived organizational politics on workplace incivility among private and public employees complemented other researches in the area of workplace incivility. The major objective of this study was to discover if perceived organizational politics would have influence on workplace incivility.

The hypothesis one which stated that workers classified as perceiving high level of organizational politics will report significantly higher workplace incivility compared to their counterparts who perceive low level of organizational politics was confirmed by this study. Results supported this hypothesis as employees who had high scores for perceived organizational politics also report a high level of incivility. In Ogungbami's (2013) result it was discovered that those who perceived organizational politics were likely going to be instigators of workplace incivility. The present research's finding was focused on the presence of perceived organizational politics and the level to which incivility would be reported. Employees classified as having high levels of perceived organizational politics were discovered to have personally experienced a high level incivility (M= 22.90, SD=9.32). Employees classified as having low levels of perceived organizational politics were discovered to have experienced low levels of incivility (M=18.34, SD= 7.54); t= -5.26, p <0.05. Therefore high report of incivility in the organization shows that the level of incivility present in those organizations is high. Also, high perceptions of organizational politics by employees indicate that the extent to which colleagues or supervisors observe self-serving behaviours is also high. Thus high perception of organizational politics depicts the presence of high levels of incivility in the organization. By implication, this means that when employees perceive self-serving behaviours among their colleagues or supervisors, there

is a very high probability that individuals would in turn exhibit uncivil behaviours.

Hypothesis two which states that there will be a significant relationship between perceived organizational politics and workplace incivility" was supported by analysis. Thus there is a significant relationship between perceived organizational politics (r= .331, p <0.05). With inference from the above hypothesis' result, the result of this hypothesis suggests that there is a significant positive relationship between perceived organizational politics and workplace incivility. Thus when an employee believes that the company's policies are not fairly enforced, or that a set of individuals are the regular beneficiaries of any change implemented in the organization, or that his or her supposed benefits is enjoyed by someone else, such a person is likely to unintentionally behave in a manner that negates to norms of the organization on mutual respect which is characteristically ambiguous and of less intensity. Hence perceived organizational politics is high when incivility is high.

Hypothesis three which states that private organization workers will report significantly lower workplace incivility than their public organization counterparts was also supported. Thus employees from public organizations reported a lower level of incivility (M= 18.31, SD= 8.03) compared to employees of public organizations (M= 23.50, SD= 8.93); t= -6.11, p <0.05. The combination of these factors, private and public organizations, is new to the concept of incivility. It is commonly believed that politics is highly rampant in the public sector in Nigeria. And the result of this hypothesis supports these speculations. Thus it would be justifiable to infer based on results of this study that the level of self-serving behaviours such as (in our context) godfatherism, tribalism, corruption etc. is on the high side in public organizations. Hence finding implies that the popular speculation of politics being the order of the day in public institutions or organizations has a very high probability of being totally true. Therefore based on the result of hypothesis two, the level of incivility that would be experienced by employees in these organizations would be high.

Hypothesis four was rejected because there was no significant difference between the male and female gender. Males had a mean score of (M= 21.32, SD= 8.48) while the females had a mean score of (M= 20.50, SD= 9.24) at a significant level of .086; t= .924, p >0.05. Thus the hypothesis was rejected. The research carried out by Ogungbamila (2013) supports the finding of this study. On the contrary Pearson and Porath's (2005) finding indicated that males were most likely instigators of incivility. Both studies were carried out within the context of different culture, Nigeria (Ogungbamila, 2013) and U.S. and Canada (Pearson & Porath, 2005). Thus culture may be a contributing factor to the variations in the result.

On the other hand Cortina et al. (2001) discovered that age was not a significant factor that predisposes a person to be a target of incivility. Although not significant, Cortina et al.'s (2001) study, discovered that females experienced more incivility than males. On the contrary, the result of the present study shows that males had a higher report of incivility experience than the females. Males had a mean score of 21.32 and females had a mean score of 20.50. Thus males were more likely targets of incivility than females were. The result from the present study implies that a person's gender does not make one a likely target of incivility. Therefore males are likely targets of incivility than females are.

Hypothesis five was also rejected because both classes of ages in this study had no significant influence on the level of incivility experienced; t= .827, p >0.05. The present study's finding confirms the results of previous researches such as (Ogungbamila, 2013; Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001). Ogungbamila (2013) found out that age did not sufficiently predict an instigator of workplace incivility. This implies that being young or old does not predispose an individual to uncivil behaviour.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has revealed that the way an individual perceives his or her organization's politics to be unfair and self-serving can give rise to the level of "mild forms of psychological mistreatment in which intentionality is less apparent" (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001). Also from this study, it can be concluded that the level of politics present in public organizations is high, thereby causing a relatively high level of workplace incivility. Therefore managers of public institutions or organizations should be more conscious of how policies, rule and regulations are implemented in their organizations to prevent potential incivility cases. It is also important for managers of other organizations (private) to regulate their policies in a way that is beneficial to all members of staff in their organizations. Furthermore, a zero tolerance policy for uncivil behaviours in the organization should be enforced. Potential instigators based on their traits, can also be prevented from entering the organization by thoroughly assessing job candidates. Finally, managers could go for trainings on civility and other managerial skills in dealing with people such as conflict resolution, effective listening skill, stress management and other managerial skills that could affect a smooth running of day-to-day activities.

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