



Lecturer-initiated Incivility, Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Exhaustion among undergraduate students

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Abstract

This study investigated Lecturer-initiated Incivility, Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Exhaustion among undergraduate students of Benue State University Makurdi. The Cross-sectional survey design was employed where Three Hundred and Seventeen (317) respondents comprising of 129 (40.7%) male and 188 (59.3%) female undergraduate students were used for the study. Their ages ranged from 19-57years with a mean age of 31.31years (SD=6.01). Simple random sampling was used to draw the sample for the study. Three instruments were used for data collection; The Perceived Faculty Incivility Scale, Indigenous Emotional Intelligence Scale and the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Survey. Three hypotheses were tested using Multiple Linear Regression and Multiple Regression. Findings indicated that Lecturer-initiated Incivility and all its dimensions predicted Emotional Exhaustion among undergraduate students. Also, Emotional Intelligence significantly predicted Emotional Exhaustion among undergraduate students. Finally, Lecturer-initiated incivility and Emotional Intelligence jointly predicted Emotional Exhaustion among undergraduate students. It was recommended that university managements should sanction lecturers who purposefully violate the rights of students. The university management should also employ the services of Clinical Psychologists who will provide emotional intelligence training to students during their orientation period.

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Introduction

Emotional exhaustion is a common symptom of stress-related complications in our society today. Among undergraduate students, exhaustion occurs as a result of being exposed to chronic academic stressors for a long period of time, without the possibility of recovery. It results to problems such as emotional exhaustion and irritability, physical symptoms such as stomachache and headache, and cognitive difficulties such as problems with memory and concentration (Asberg, Grape, Krakau, Nygren, Rohde, Wahlberg & Wahrborg, 2010). These stressors which may include uncivil behaviors from lecturers and the persistent inability to manage one's emotion effectively constitute a loss to the students.

The development of emotional exhaustion is in line with the Conservation of Resource theory which this study is anchored on. According to the theory (Hobfoll, 1989), students place greater weight on the effects of losses than those of gains and therefore, strive to protect themselves from resource loss. Because loss is deemed more significant than gain, students also are more sensitive to stresses at school that threaten their resources. In the university context, academic and lecturer-demands which can be considered as antecedents of emotional exhaustion (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001) are perceived as losses, since meeting them requires resource investments in order to be protected from further resource depletion (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000).

The theory implies that students who lack emotional resources to cope with the demands of lecturers (uncivil demands) are more vulnerable to the cycles of resource depletion, whereas those rich in resources are less likely to encounter stress (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000) in the form of emotional exhaustion. However, the exact determinants of emotional exhaustion are yet to be established although factors such as lecturer-initiated incivility and emotional intelligence have been implicated in emotional exhaustion among undergraduate students of Benue State University Makurdi.

Lecturer-Initiated Incivility and Emotional Exhaustion

Liu, Zhou and Che (2018) used a time-lagged design to examine burnout as a potential mediator in the relationship between workplace incivility and organizational citizenship behavior, and affective commitment as a moderator on the relationship between workplace incivility and burnout among 168 full-time employees in North America. They found that workplace incivility had a significant indirect effect on organizational citizenship behaviour through burnout. In addition, the positive effect of workplace incivility on burnout was stronger for individuals with higher affective commitment, suggesting that workplace incivility could be more detrimental to individuals who are more committed to their organizations.

Shi, Guo, Zhang, Xie, Wang, Sun, Dong, Sun and Fan (2018) investigated the impact of workplace incivility against new nurses on job burn-out. They used a cross-sectional survey design on a sample of 201 nurses in China. Findings indicated that workplace incivility was positively correlated with anxiety and job burn-out of new nurses. The positive relation between anxiety and job burnout was also significant. Moreover, anxiety partially mediated and resilience moderated the association between workplace incivility and job burn-out. They concluded that experience of workplace incivility by new nurses would likely generate anxiety in the victims.

Shadwick and Kuchinka (2018) examined the relationship between Workplace Incivility and Burnout in a sample of 122 Professional Firefighters in Midwestern United States of America. Using ex post-facto design, they found that, while professional firefighters experience burnout, it is not caused by Workplace Incivility but rather something else. Consistent with the burnout phenomenon, a significant relationship was discovered between the three dimensions of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal

accomplishment) and workplace incivility. Although despite high levels of Burnout in the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions, the personal accomplishment dimension had low levels, indicating burned out employees still felt a personal sense of accomplishment.

Clercq, Haq and Azeem (2018) examined the relationship between family incivility and organizational citizenship behavior; the mediating role of emotional exhaustion and moderating roles of way-power and will-power; two critical dimensions of hope among employees and their peers in Pakistani organizations. The descriptive study revealed the presence of moderated mediation, such that the indirect effect of family incivility on organizational citizenship behavior through emotional exhaustion was weaker for employees high in way-power and willpower. They also made some recommendations for research and practice.

Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Exhaustion

Dahmash, Alhadlaq, Alhujayri, Alkholaiwi and Alosaimi (2019) investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and the individual components of burnout among plastic surgery residents in Saudi Arabia. They employed cross sectional survey design where the sample for the study was drawn by census. Findings indicated that emotional intelligence was shown to have a significant negative relationship with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and a significant positive correlation with personal accomplishment. Significant risk factors for burnout included dissatisfaction with plastic surgery as a career choice, dissatisfaction with income, and dissatisfaction with the role in the operating room. They conclusively found a positive correlation between higher levels of emotional intelligence and sense of personal achievement, whereas a negative correlation was observed between higher level of emotional intelligence, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization among the residents in this study.

Lee (2017) investigated the relationships between the dimensions of emotional intelligence and job satisfaction, on the one hand, and the dimensions of emotional intelligence and burnout, on the other. In the sample of 167 public service workers in the United States, using employed structural equation modeling, the findings revealed that emotion regulation is significantly and negatively related to burnout and that emotional self-awareness is significantly and positively related to job satisfaction. Some recommendations were made in accordance with the study findings.

Hanafi (2016) examined the mediating role of emotional intelligence on the relationship between emotional exhaustion and quality of hospital care among nurse. The subjects were nurses and patients in Charitas Palembang. The result of the study showed that emotional intelligence negatively affects emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, emotional intelligence had positive effect on the quality of nursing care. Lastly, they found that emotional intelligence significantly mediated the relationship between emotional exhaustion and quality of nursing care.

Nastasa and Farcas (2015) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and burnout among medical professionals. The cross-sectional study was conducted among 120 doctors and nurses. Results indicated that there is a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and the burnout syndrome dimensions (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment). They concluded that personal accomplishment among healthcare professionals is influenced by their level of emotional intelligence. They recommended the importance of training focused on developing emotional intelligence among specialists in the healthcare system. The following hypotheses were postulated for the study:

H₁ Lecturer-initiated Incivility will significantly influence Emotional Exhaustion among undergraduate students of Benue State University Makurdi.

H₂ Emotional Intelligence will significantly influence Emotional Exhaustion among undergraduate students of Benue State University Makurdi.

H₃ Lecturer-initiated Incivility and Emotional Intelligence will jointly influence Emotional Exhaustion among undergraduate students of Benue State University Makurdi.

Design

This study used Cross-sectional survey design to investigate the influence of lecturer-initiated incivility and emotional intelligence on emotional exhaustion among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi.

Participants

The participants for this study were 317 undergraduate students. They were composed of 129 (40.7%) males and 188 (59.3%) females. Their ages ranged from 19-57 years with a mean age of 31.31 (SD=6.01). Other demographic variables such as their religion, ethnic background, marital status, mode of entry and levels of study were also assessed.

Instruments

The instruments employed for data collection in this study included the demographic variables, Perceived Faculty Incivility Scale, Emotional Intelligence Scale, and the Maslach Burnout Inventory Student Survey.

- i. The demographic variables assessed in this study included sex, age, religion, ethnic group, marital status, mode of entry and level of study.
- ii. Lecturer-Initiated Incivility was measured using the Perceived Faculty Incivility Scale developed by Alt and Itzkovich (2015). This scale measures two forms of incivility; Active Incivility (13 items) and Passive Incivility (8 items) on a 5-point scale of 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). The author obtained a reliability coefficient of .90 and .73 for the two subscales respectively. Meanwhile, the present study obtained .89 for the overall scale and .78 and .85 for the Active and Passive Incivility subscales respectively. Sample of items include; “your lecturers ignore students’ requests during lectures”, “your lecturers discriminate students during classes or lectures”.
- iii. Emotional Intelligence was measured using the Indigenous Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by Afolabi (2017). The scale has 40 items and is measured on 5-point Likert format of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A coefficient alpha of .77 was derived using Spearman-Brown Formula. Sample of items include; “I am good at reading peoples’ feelings”, “I find it difficult relating with other people”.
- iv. Emotional Exhaustion was measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Student Survey (MBI-SS) developed by Schaufeli, Martinez, Marques-Pinto, Salanova and Bakker (2002). A coefficient alpha of .86 was derived using Spearman-Brown Formula. Sample of items include; “I feel emotionally drained by my academics”, “Studying or attending a class is really a strain for me”.

Procedure

This study was carried out among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi. The researchers sampled the students from the eight (8) faculties in the university. Students across the various levels of study (100-600level) were then sampled as respondents for the study. The researchers first sought their consents and upon obtaining it, administered the copies of the questionnaire to the respondents in their various lecture rooms. After the administration of the 330 copies of the questionnaire, only 317 representing a return rate of 96.1% was found useful for data analysis.

Data Analysis

Data for this study were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, frequencies and simple percentages. On the other hand, Multiple Linear Regression and Standard Multiple Regression were used to analyze the data.

Results

Table 1: Summary of Multiple linear regression showing the influence of lecturer-initiated incivility on emotional exhaustion among undergraduate students.

Variables	R	R ²	F	df	β	t	Sig.
Constant	.652	.425	389.36	(2,314)		8.122	.000
Active Incivility					.449	14.621	.014
Passive Incivility					.368	13.227	.012

The results as displayed in Table 1 shows that there was a significant influence of lecturer-initiated incivility on emotional exhaustion among undergraduate students $R=.652$, $R^2=.425$, $F(2,314)=389.36$, $p<.001$. On individual basis, both Active Incivility ($\beta=.449$, $t=14.621$, $p<.05$) and Passive Incivility ($\beta=.368$, $t=13.227$, $p<.05$) significantly influenced Emotional Exhaustion. This implies that lecturer-initiated incivility explained 42.5% of the variation in emotional exhaustion among undergraduate students. Therefore, hypothesis one was supported.

Table 2: Summary of Multiple linear regression showing the influence of emotional intelligence on emotional exhaustion among undergraduate students.

Variables	R	R ²	F	df	β	t	Sig.
Constant	.509	.259	115.437	(7,309)		7.222	.000
Interpersonal skills					.028	1.222	.088
Empathic Response					.051	1.110	.082
Stress tolerance					.047	1.218	.121
Optimism					.532	7.191	.011
Assertiveness					.625	7.222	.010
Problem solving					.823	7.708	.001
Flexibility					.458	7.242	.001

The results as displayed in Table 2 shows that there was a significant influence of emotional intelligence on emotional exhaustion $R=.509$, $R^2=.259$, $F(7,309)=115.44$, $p<.001$. This implies that emotional intelligence explained 25.9% of the variation in emotional exhaustion among undergraduate students. On independent basis, all the dimensions; Interpersonal Skills ($\beta=.028$, $t=1.222$, $p>.05$), Empathic Response ($\beta=.051$, $t=1.110$, $p>.05$), Stress Tolerance ($\beta=.047$, $t=1.218$, $p>.05$), Optimism ($\beta=.532$, $t=7.191$, $p<.05$) Assertiveness ($\beta=.625$, $t=7.222$,

$p < .05$), Problem Solving ($\beta = .823$, $t = 7.708$, $p < .05$) and Flexibility ($\beta = .458$, $t = 7.242$, $p < .05$) significantly predicted emotional exhaustion. Therefore, hypothesis two was also supported.

Table 3: Summary of Standard multiple regression showing the joint influence of lecturer-initiated incivility and emotional intelligence on emotional exhaustion among undergraduate students.

Variables	R	R ²	F	df	β	t	Sig.
Constant	.844	.712	118.80	(2,314)		6.444	.000
Lecturer-initiated Incivility					.535	11.162	.002
Emotional Intelligence					.691	12.217	.001

The results as displayed in Table 3 above shows that there was a significant joint influence of lecturer-initiated incivility and emotional intelligence on emotional exhaustion $R = .844$, $R^2 = .712$, $F(2,314) = 118.80$, $p < .001$. This implies that lecturer-initiated incivility and emotional intelligence jointly explained 71.2% of the variance in emotional exhaustion. Therefore, hypothesis three was also supported.

Discussion

In this study, lecturer-initiated incivility was found to have significantly influenced emotional exhaustion among undergraduate students of Benue State University Makurdi. This could be that, uncivil acts or threats are mentally distressing and could cause emotional exhaustion among students. This finding thus tallies with Clercq, Haq and Azeem (2018) who revealed a significant effect of family incivility on emotional exhaustion. Also, Liu, Zhiqing, Zhou and Che (2018), Shi, Guo, Zhang, Xie, Wang, Sun, Dong, Sun and Fan (2018) and Shadwick and Kuchinka (2018) revealed that workplace incivility was positively correlated with anxiety and burn-out.

The study further found that there was a significant influence of emotional intelligence on emotional exhaustion among undergraduate students of Benue State University Makurdi. This could be that, students who are emotionally intelligent are also emotionally resourceful, thus they can manage themselves better when at the verge of burnout. This finding agrees with Hanafi (2016), Dahmash, Alhadlaq, Alhujayri, Alkholaiwi and Alosaimi (2019); and Lee (2017) who found that emotional intelligence negatively affects one's emotional exhaustion; meaning that the more emotionally intelligent one is, the less likely will he/she be emotionally exhausted. On their part, Nastasa and Farcas (2015) revealed that emotional intelligence is not a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion.

Above all, this study found a significant joint influence of lecturer-initiated incivility and emotional intelligence on emotional exhaustion among undergraduate students of Benue State University Makurdi. This finding is in concordance with Lee (2010) who revealed that workplace incivility mediated the relationship between emotional intelligence and emotional exhaustion.

Implications of the Study

The direct implication of the findings obtained in this study is that, there is need for the university management to set-up a staff disciplinary committee to monitor the uncivil acts perpetuated against undergraduate students since lecturer-initiated incivility significantly predicted emotional exhaustion. In addition, the study reiterates the need for emotional intelligence training programmes to be carried out by the counseling and students welfare units of the university, to instill emotional management skills in undergraduate students.

Limitations of the Study

This study has been well designed but despite this, there are some few observed shortcomings: The dearth of literature on this topic has impeded the exhaustive discussion of the third hypothesis raised in this study. Also, like any other cross-sectional survey study, the use of self-rated scales gave room for the faking of responses which may have jeopardized the intended result of this study.

Conclusion and Recommendations of the Study

Based on the findings of this study, it was therefore concluded that lecturer-initiated incivility is a significant determinant of emotional exhaustion among undergraduate students. Also, emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion among undergraduate students. Lastly, both lecturer-initiated incivility and emotional intelligence are significant joint predictors of emotional exhaustion among undergraduate students.

It was therefore recommended university management should sanction lecturers who purposefully violate the rights of students. They should also employ the services of Clinical Psychologists who will provide emotional intelligence training to students.

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