

The Effect of Supervisor Incivility on Employee Silence

"An Applied Study on Academic Staff Members' Assistants in Mansoura University"

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Abstract

The current study provides a conceptual framework to examine the effect of perceived workplace incivility from supervisors on four types of employee silence behavior according to motivations that are deviant, relational, defensive, and ineffectual silence. Pilot testing for the questionnaire was done to verify its validity and reliability. Then, copies of the final version of the questionnaire were distributed online to demonstrators and lecturer assistants in Mansoura University to collect primary data. Out of the distributed copies, 320 questionnaires were valid. Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach was applied to test the research hypotheses. Results showed support for all research hypotheses. Supervisor incivility were found to directly, significantly, and positively impact four types of employee silence at faculties of Mansoura University. Practical implications are presented in addition to future research suggestions.

Keywords: Supervisor Incivility, Employee Silence, Social Exchange Theory, Conservation of Resources Theory.

1. Introduction

Educational institutions are working in complex, diverse, and competitive work environment enforcing them to be learning organizations in which change and success are based on collective power of shared vision and collective intelligence of human resources (Atalay et al., 2019; Erkutlu & Chafra, 2019; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Moreover, one of the challenges facing higher education institutions is educational quality as an increasingly important concern in higher education sector (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2019). Toward enhancing higher educational quality, universities are required to develop organizational strategies that assure learning from previous errors and preventing them from recurrence (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2019). This in turn requires faculty members to contribute with their opinions and concerns about the problems undergoing in their organizations (Akin & Ulusoy, 2016; Erkutlu & Chafra, 2019). This type of communication is critical for understanding causes of the problems and taking corrective actions. On the other hand, the tendency of organizational members to remain silent is a contributor to error (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2019).

An organizational member is involved in employee silence behavior when he decides to withhold work-related matters and concerns, which is a dominant behavior in modern organizations that requires the attention of organizational management (Wang & Hsieh, 2013). Sometimes, employee silence is somehow beneficial to the organization. It might reduce managerial overload by reducing the flow of unnecessary information (Wang & Hsieh, 2013). However, in most cases, employee silence was found to be an organizational obstacle that had a negative impact on the organization and its members. It had reduced innovation (Brinsfield, 2013), decreased effective organizational learning (Milliken et al., 2003), hindered organizational change (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Ryan & Oestreich, 1991; Wang & Hsieh, 2013), and reduced employee satisfaction and commitment (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Vakola & Bouradas, 2005; Wang & Hsieh, 2013). The obstacle of employee silence becomes more dangerous when it escalates to be the dominant choice among employees and turns to be a collective phenomenon (Morrison & Milliken, 2000) and neglecting it leads to serious negative consequences (Morrison, 2011; Wang & Hsieh, 2013). The relatively hierarchical nature of higher education institutions that build on the interaction among various groups in different organizational levels to provide the desired quality of educational services makes higher education sector a suitable

environment for employee silence that is reinforced in hierarchical organizational structures (Akin & Ulusoy, 2016; Erkutlu & Chafra, 2019). Hence, it is very important for administrators of educational institutions to understand the antecedents of employee silence and reasons why faculty members involve in employee silence behavior and decide not to share their concerns and opinions regarding the workplace circumstances (Dyne et al., 2003; Erkutlu & Chafra, 2019).

Experiencing incivility in the workplace makes employees feel small or ineffective (Hershcovis et al., 2017), affecting their work-related attitudes and behaviors adversely (Cortina et al., 2001; Hershcovis et al., 2017). However, uncivil behaviors are conspicuous (Andersson & Pearson, 1999) and are dominant phenomenon in many organizations of different cultures and in various fields (Lim et al., 2018). It has been linked to various negative consequences such as turnover intention (Cortina et al., 2001), counterproductive work behaviors (Penney & Spector, 2005), emotional exhaustion (Huang & Lin, 2019), job dissatisfaction and work withdrawal (Loh et al., 2019), and knowledge hiding behavior (Arshad & Ismail, 2018). Norms for mutual respect among members are similar in all organizations and any behavior that violates these norms should be considered as uncivil and should never be accepted or tolerated (Cortina & Magley, 2009; Pearson et al., 2005; Zhou et al., 2019). Otherwise, it transforms from an individual unaccepted behavior to be the organizational norm (Pearson et al., 2001). Hence, on one hand, it is important for organizational administrators to understand workplace incivility and its consequences to be able to develop strategies and policies that address it and stop its' spiraling effects (Schenck, 2017). On the other hand, its' important for higher educational administrators addressing silence behavior in their organizations to regard workplace incivility as a potential antecedent of employee silence behavior.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

2.1. Supervisor incivility

Incivility is defined as "low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Uncivil behaviors are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others" (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). This definition has been adopted by many various studies such as Alola et al., (2019), Cortina (2008), Holm et al., (2019).

According to this definition, there are four characteristics of workplace incivility. First, it is a violation of norms of mutual respect that exists either written or perceived in any organization (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Second, it is low in intensity so that it causes temperate negative evaluations and perceptions (such as frustration) (Cortina & Magley, 2009) and does not involve sexual or physical forms of assault (Lim et al., 2018). Third, it inheres an ambiguous intent to harm. This means that it is not always obvious for each of the instigator, the target, and witnesses that the behavior is deliberate and involves an intent to harm (Lim et al., 2018) and it may be attributed to oversight or over sensitivity (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Finally, uncivil behaviors are generally described as rude and disrespectful which makes it an antisocial behavior (Chen & Wang, 2019).

The supervisor is a likely source of uncivil behaviors. Supervisors work much closely with their subordinates and have much formal power over them subordinates as they have the ability to control their rewards and punishment (Potipiroon, 2014). Various studies have attempted to define reasons why supervisors may violate norms for mutual respect in the workplace. When the supervisor perceive mistreatment from his manager or the organization, he reciprocates his anger and discontent against parties that can be controlled without further negative consequences such as subordinates which is called the “trickle-down” effect (Potipiroon, 2014). Such an effect increases when targets are individuals that are high in negative affectivity as they reflect that they are vulnerable and cannot defend themselves (Potipiroon, 2014). Supervisor incivility is represented in behaviors such as: neglecting subordinate’s opinions or complains, doubting his judgements in work-related matters, outbursts of anger, mocking or criticizing him in public, taking credit of his good work, or “scapegoating” him (Potipiroon, 2014).

Examples of supervisor incivility include derogation of subordinates, ignorance of their opinions and requests, neglecting and avoiding them, mocking, withholding information from them (Porath & Pearson, 2010), violation of their privacy (Leiter et al., 2012), offending them with comments or remarks (Cortina et al., 2001; Lim et al., 2018), and using unprofessional terms in addressing them (Lim et al., 2018).

2.2. Employee silence

Rai & Agarwal (2018) defined employee silence as "employee intentionally withholding ideas, information, concerns, and opinions about issues related to their jobs and the organization". Both employee silence and organizational silence are of the same tenor. The only one difference is that the term "employee silence" refers to silence at individual level from employee perspective while organizational silence is widespread behavior among employees in the organization at a collective level, which is more likely considered by Human resources management or top-level management in an organization.

Deviant silence is the intentional behavior of withholding information or misusing information to benefit from the organization (Brinsfield, 2013). For a glance it seems similar to opportunistic silence developed by Knoll & van Dick (2013). However, while opportunistic silence inheres the sense of egoism and selfishness, deviant silence inheres the sense of retaliation against individuals or the organization.

Relational silence is a relation-protection-oriented behavior (Jain, 2015) that occurs when people remain silent because they don't want to harm a relationship or general relational concerns (Brinsfield, 2013). It seems partially related to prosocial silence developed by (Dyne et al., 2003), however, they are differentiated from two aspects. First, prosocial silence is a proactive and other-oriented behavior showing altruism and cooperation. On the other hand, relational silence is measured by items such as: "I did not want to create tension with co-worker" and "I didn't want to harm my relationship with another individual" which are not necessarily reflecting altruism and is more alike a self-interest behavior (Brinsfield, 2013). Second, prosocial silence is conceptualized as a knowledge-defending behavior to benefit the organization, which has nothing to do with relational silence (Brinsfield, 2013; Dyne et al., 2003).

Defensive silence is the silence motivated by the fear of potential negative consequences following speaking up (Brinsfield, 2013; Milliken et al., 2003). Employees with defensive silence disagree with some circumstances and situations in the organization, recognize some alternatives to change the status quo, but they deliberately withhold such alternatives and prefer not to speak up due to the fear of potential negative consequences following speaking up (Pinder & Harlos, 2001) such as retaliation and punishment (Brinsfield, 2013; Milliken & Morrison, 2003).

Ineffectual silence is when the employees believe that speaking up will not change the situation or concern of interest (Brinsfield, 2013). The current study agrees with Jain (2015) in that ineffectual silence corresponds to acquiescent silence. When the employee feels that the opinion he reveals is ineffective, it's mainly due to the feeling of being resigned by management or decision makers.

In addition to the review of definitions and classifications of the study variables, two theories are to be represented: social exchange theory and conservation of resources theory.

The first theory to be discussed is social exchange theory. It is a theory developed by Homans (1958) in an attempt to explain the motivations and rules of social interactions among individuals. Described as "individual self-interest theory", it assumes that individuals get involved in social interactions with others to satisfy a social want or gain an advantage either consciously or unconsciously (Blau, 1968; Koeppen, 2019; Ukpai, 2018) and that individuals get involved in and continue social relations that they expect to be mutually beneficial (Ukpai, 2018).

Reciprocity means that the action of an individual is based on the behavior of another individual. In other words, what is received will be returned (Koeppen, 2019) kind for kind with the same quality (Ukpai, 2018). If one party does not receive a return on his previous investment, his following action will be as a sanction or punishment for ingratitude (Koeppen, 2019). On the other hand, when an individual receives a benefit or an advantage from an interaction, he gets morally obligated to trade some benefit in return (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Koeppen, 2019).

The second theory is resources conservation theory. Resources are highly valued for individuals and are simply defined by Hobfoll (2002) as entities that either have a central value themselves (e.g. self-esteem and health) or can be used to obtain other ends that have values (e.g. money, time, and social support).

Resources conservation theory states that individuals try to gain and maintain resources such as objects, personal characteristics, conditions, emotions, time, and energy and prevent any loss of them. (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002; Liu et al., 2020). In other words, the theory argues that people will struggle to save and protect their current resources, prevent any loss in these resources, and acquire new and additional resources (Liu et al., 2020). When individuals lose or perceive a threat on one or more of these

resources, or fail to gain resources (Hobfoll, 2002), they are stressed and begin to behave accordingly (Liu et al., 2020).

2.5. The relationship between supervisor incivility and employee silence

First, incivility in the workplace was positively linked to employees' tendency to hide knowledge when requested (Arshad & Ismail, 2018). On the other hand, supervisor incivility was negatively linked to knowledge sharing among team members (Sharifirad, 2016).

In addition, workplace incivility, supervisor incivility, and coworker incivility were found to have a positive relationship with turnover intention (Alola et al., 2018; Cortina et al., 2001; Hur et al., 2015; Laschinger & Read, 2016). The effect of incivility is not confined to the mere intention to leave, but also extends to involve withdrawal behaviors (Loh et al., 2019) especially, turnover behavior (Huang & Lin, 2019).

Both supervisor and coworker incivility had been found to have a negative effect on employee's work engagement (Jawahar & Schreurs, 2018; Reio, 2011). Also, supervisor incivility had been found to have a positive effect on employees' organizational deviance (Potpiroon & Ford, 2019).

In addition, bullying in the workplace was found to increase defensive, relational, and ineffectual silence (Rai & Agarwal, 2018). As bullying is a form of deviant organizational behaviors to which uncivil behavior belongs, incivility may have a similar effect. Also, employee silence was found to be a result of abusive supervision (Park et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020; Xu et al., 2015; Xu et al., 2020). Similarly, quiescent silence was found to be positively related to abuse, unfair treatment, or ethical conflict (Mannan & Kashif, 2019).

In addition to the previously presented literature, and according to social exchange theory, workplace incivility motivates employees to reduce their contributions to their supervisors, coworkers, or organizations as a negative reciprocity (Sakurai & Jex, 2012). Hence, employees are motivated to withhold their information, ideas, or opinions that may benefit the organization when they are exposed to uncivil behaviors within the organization.

Also, according to conservation of resources, when employees experience workplace stressors that deplete their resources, they alter their behaviors in a way that

prevent more loss of resources. Workplace incivility is a prolonged and daily low intensity stressor that impact well-being even more than occasional highly intensive stressors (Leiter et al., 2010; Pearson et al., 2005; Zhu et al., 2019). It has been linked to the loss of various resources either psychological or physical (Leiter et al., 2010). Incivility was found to have an impact on rumination and worry (Pearson et al., 2000), depression and anxiety (Cortina et al., 2001), mental health and job satisfaction, and physical health problems (Lim et al., 2008). Hence, incivility provokes resources conservation and protection mechanisms (Zhu et al., 2019). On the other hand, employee silence is viewed as an avoidance-coping behavior that may be adopted by employees to avoid interactions (Wang et al., 2020) either with their supervisors or coworkers to avoid loss of resources.

Based upon these previous studies and the support of the previously discussed theories, hypotheses were developed as follows:

- H1: Supervisor incivility has a significant direct positive effect on employee's deviant silence.
- H2: Supervisor incivility has a significant direct positive effect on employee's relational silence.
- H3: Supervisor incivility has a significant direct positive effect on employee's defensive silence.
- H4: Supervisor incivility has a significant direct positive effect on employee's ineffectual silence.

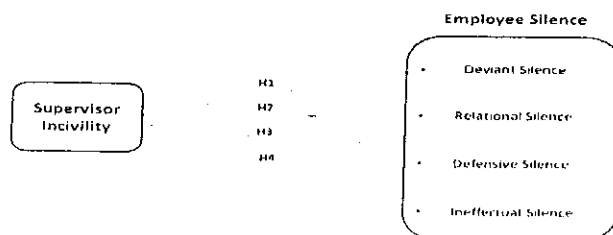


Figure (1): conceptual framework

3. Method

3.1. Measurement

Incivility: is measured using 7 items developed by Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout (2001). The measure will be responded to for supervisor's behavior. The items (e.g. "put you down or was condescending to you", "made demeaning or derogatory remarks about you") will be rated on five-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree).

Employee Silence: is measured using 21 items developed by Brinsfield (2013). Each of deviant, relational, and ineffectual silence is measured by five items (e.g. "To retaliate against the organization" for deviant silence, "To avoid conflict with another individual" for relational silence, and "I didn't feel I would be taken seriously" for ineffectual silence) and defensive silence is measured by six items (e.g. "To protect myself from harm"). The items will be rated on five-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree).

3.3. Data collection and sampling

The population and sampling unit of the current study are represented in demonstrators and lecturer assistants in Mansoura University. The population of the study is composed of 2201 units distributed among 18 faculties of the university. The sample was calculated to be 328 units at a confidence level of 95%. For all faculties to be represented in the sample, the required sample size is divided proportionally according to the number of demonstrators and lecturer assistants in each faculty using a quota sample. After the distribution to faculties, total sample units summed up to be 329 units. Questionnaire was distributed to sample units online by uploading the questionnaire software copy on social network groups created for demonstrators and teaching assistants in different faculties or their private accounts.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive statistics

Out of these distributed surveys, there were 337 responses out of which 320 surveys are valid for statistical analysis. 25.6% of the valid surveys were from male respondents, the remaining were from female respondents. Also, 41.3% of respondents were demonstrators while the remaining were lecturer assistants. Finally, 34.7% from

the respondents had been working in their faculties for 1-3 years, 33.4% had been working for 4-6 years, and the remaining had been working for 7 years or more.

4.2. Measurement assessment model

First, combined loadings and cross loadings were used to assess individual items' reliability. Individual factor loading for the research variables were 0.848, 0.800, 0.825, 0.775, 0.707, 0.710, 0.700 for supervisor incivility items; 0.508, 0.849, 0.630, 0.893, and 0.850 for deviant silence items; 0.875, 0.916, 0.903, 0.883, and 0.832 for relational silence items; 0.806, 0.853, 0.873, 0.866, 0.849, and 0.748 for defensive silence items; and 0.767, 0.889, 0.888, 0.909, and 0.890 for ineffectual silence items all with p-values < 0.001. According to results, statistical analysis was conducted after deleting two items from deviant silence (DevS1, DevS2) construct because their loadings were less than the required minimum value of 0.708.

Second, internal consistency of the study constructs is measured through composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha (A) coefficients. Cronbach's alpha values were 0.883, 0.807, 0.928, 0.911, and 0.919 while composite reliability values were 0.909, 0.869, 0.946, 0.932, and 0.940 for supervisor incivility, deviant silence, relational, defensive, and ineffectual silence respectively. All the values are higher than 0.7 and less than 0.95 which indicates acceptable and satisfactory levels of reliability.

Third, convergent validity was measured through the value of average variance extracted (AVE) whose values were 0.591, 0.579, 0.778, 0.695, and 0.680 for supervisor incivility, deviant silence, relational, defensive, and ineffectual silence respectively. AVE values for the study constructs indicate that all constructs are convergently valid.

Finally, discriminant validity was measured by the square root of AVE. For a variable to be distinct from other variables, its' square root value should exceed the value of its' correlation with the other variables (Hair et al., 2016). This condition had been met for all the study variables.

4.3. Structural model assessment

The following step was to test the research hypotheses through path coefficients and significance level to accept or reject the proposed hypotheses. The following table shows path coefficients and levels of significance for all research hypotheses and whether each hypothesis is accepted or rejected.

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Path Coefficients

H	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Path Coefficients	P-Value	Result	Note
H1	SI	DevS	0.289	<0.001	Supported	SI→Supervisor Incivility DevS→Deviant Silence RelS→Relational Silence DefS→Defensive Silence IneS→Ineffectual Silence
H2	SI	RelS	0.096	0.042	Supported	
H3	SI	DefS	0.202	<0.001	Supported	
H4	SI	IneS	0.165	0.001	Supported	

In addition, for each relation, the value of effect size (f^2) is calculated. Values of f^2 are shown in the following table.

Effect size values

H	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	f^2
H1	SI	DevS	0.147
H2	SI	RelS	0.025
H3	SI	DefS	0.072
H4	SI	IneS	0.055

5. Discussion

In general, all study hypotheses were supported which indicates that workplace incivility that is perceived by demonstrators and lecturer assistants in Mansoura university has a significant direct positive effect on their tendency to be silent regarding work-related matters. This relationship can be explained in the light of two theories: social exchange theory and conservation of resources theory.

Social exchange theory assumes that individuals involve in and continue social interactions they expect to provide them with some benefits or advantages either consciously or unconsciously. Each party of the interaction provides some benefits.

expecting to receive some benefits in return. When the individual finds that the exchange is paying off and that he receives some benefits from an interaction, he becomes morally obligated to provide some benefits in return such as sharing his information, ideas, opinions, or complains about problems prevailing in the workplace. However, when the employee involves in an interaction in which he is victimized by workplace incivility either from the supervisor or coworkers, he recognizes that such relationships are not positive exchanges. Instead of positive return out of moral obligation, he is likely to reciprocate kind for kind and decide to involve in behaviors that he perceives as sanction or punishment such as deciding to withhold work-related matters that may be beneficial for improving the workplace (Arshad & Ismail, 2018; Loh et al., 2019; Mannan & Kashif, 2019; Sharifirad, 2016).

Conservation of resources theory assumes that individuals always try to maximize their resources and protect them from any losses or threats. Hence, individuals try to maintain relationships that help them protect and increase their resources. On the other hand, when an employee is in a given interaction that is stressful and threatening to his emotional stability and cognitive resources (Loh et al., 2019; Mannan & Kashif, 2019) such as workplace incivility, he is likely to decide to get involved in behaviors that help him to preserve and protect the other resources over which he has control or at least help him avoid losing more resources. In other words, negative interactions that take place for long time cause loss of resources and in an attempt to protect the remaining resources, employees may decide to get involved in different types of employee silence behavior (Rai & Agarwal, 2018). These resources include information, ideas, or opinions that are related to the workplace and can be beneficial to the entire organization. These results conform to the results of previous studies that had proven that employee silence is one of a common passive strategy to avoid loss of additional resources (Rai & Agarwal, 2018; Wang et al., 2020; Xu et al., 2015).

First, results showed that supervisor incivility has a significant positive effect on employee's deviant silence ($\beta = 0.289$, $P < 0.001$) with effect size ($f^2=0.147$) supporting H1. This means that when a demonstrator or a lecturer assistant is victimized by incivility from his supervisor, he is likely to engage in silence behavior motivated by the desire to retaliate and harm. This result can be obviously explained through social exchange theory. When a demonstrator or a lecturer assistant is involved in an

interaction with his supervisor either the research supervisor, head of the department, the dean or vice dean for student and education affairs, and he receives benefits from this interaction such as respect and interest in his opinions related to work, he is morally obligated to provide advantages in return to that supervisor directly and in turn to the organization. However, if the demonstrator or lecturer assistant is targeted by uncivil behaviors by his supervisor in any area such as condescendence or ignorance, he recognizes the interaction with the supervisor is a negative trade and reciprocate by withholding what he possesses of information, ideas, opinions, and any form of work-related concerns with the purpose of harm. The purpose of harm may be toward that supervisor directly or may be displaced toward the organization.

Second, results showed that supervisor incivility has a significant positive effect on employee's relational silence ($\beta = 0.096$, $P = 0.042$) with effect size ($f^2=0.025$) supporting H2. This means that when a demonstrator or lecturer assistant experience incivility from his supervisor either the research supervisor, head of the department, the dean or vice dean for student and education affairs, he is likely to involve in silence behavior motivated by the desire to protect relations. This result can be explained through conservation of resources theory. When the demonstrator or lecturer assistant interacts with his supervisor, he is exerting efforts for his resources such as emotional stability and cognitive resources (Loh et al., 2019; Mannan & Kashif, 2019) to be increased and maximized by this interaction. Yet, when his relationship with the supervisor is stressful and inhere violation of mutual respect, such resources are consumed, and he decides to avoid behaviors that cause additional loss of resources and get involved in behaviors helping him conserve the other resources. For example, if the faculty dean addresses a demonstrator in an unprofessional term that threatens his emotional resources either privately or in front of other witnesses, he is more likely to withhold any work-related concern that when shared will either create tension with supervisor or give him the opportunity to continue his unprofessional speech wasting more of his resources.

Third, results showed that supervisor incivility has a significant positive effect on employee's defensive silence ($\beta = 0.202$, $P < 0.001$) with effect size ($f^2=0.072$) supporting H3. This means that when a demonstrator or a lecturer assistant is targeted with incivility from his supervisor either the research supervisor, head of the department, the dean or vice dean for student and education affairs, he is likely to

involve in silence behavior motivated by the fear of negative consequences. This result can be explained through conservation of resources theory. Because the supervisor, for example, the head of the department, is of an upper hand over demonstrators and lecturer assistants in the department and controls their evaluations that has a direct effect on their careers, they often consider to avoid the sharing of any work-related concerns that inhere risk and potential negative consequences. So, when a demonstrator or a lecturer assistant experiences uncivil behavior from the head of his department such as receiving demeaning or derogatory remarks, he gets worried about facing other negative consequences regarding his job by sharing his opinions or complains such as being blamed for problems. As a result, the demonstrator decides to withhold these concerns to avoid the additional loss of resources.

Finally, results showed that supervisor incivility has a significant positive effect on employee's ineffectual silence ($\beta = 0.386$, $P < 0.001$) with effect size ($f^2=0.192$) supporting H_d. This means that when a demonstrator or lecturer assistant is victimized by incivility from his supervisor either the research supervisor, head of the department, the dean or vice dean for student and education affairs, he is likely to involve in silence behavior motivated by the inability to affect. This result can be explained through both social exchange theory and conservation of resources theory. For example, when a lecturer assistant shares work-related matters such as ideas and opinions, he expects some return such as appreciation. When such return is not received by the him, instead, he perceives little interest and lack of attention from his supervisor such as the vice dean for student and education affairs, he decides to withhold what he possesses of information, ideas and opinions to reciprocate either directly toward that vice dean or displacing reciprocation to be directed toward the organization. Also, when what he provides is neglected or not appreciated, he perceives loss of his resources and he is more likely to withhold any additional information, opinions, and ideas to prevent any additional loss of resources.

6. Practical implications

The results of the current study indicate that the incivility demonstrators and lecturer assistants experience in their faculties either from their supervisors or coworkers contribute to their involvement in employee silence behavior. Demonstrators and lecturer assistants may have valuable information, opinions, and ideas that may

help improve their faculties performance either in research, teaching, or administrative activities. Deciding to withhold these potentially valuable work-related concerns is an obstacle that requires handling by faculties management by finding solutions that help minimize resorting to silence behavior and limit its' antecedents one of which is workplace incivility either from supervisors or coworkers. The current study suggests the following:

- a. **Establishing and Announcing the Acceptable Conduct:** The absence of a clear conduct for mutual respect among parties either in the case of employee- supervisor or the case of employee-coworker interaction creates a wide space for individuals' discretion that in turn might allow members to act in an uncivil way. Agreement among all organizational members about what behaviors to be accepted or rejected in mutual interactions will limit the act of uncivil behaviors. Meetings with demonstrators and lecturer assistants on one hand and lecturers, assistant professors, and professors on the other hand for the joint establishment of such conduct will be very beneficial. It will help in establishing standards that address the actual problems and increase their adherence to them. Also, there should be periodic meetings to follow up the degree of commitment.
- b. **Modeling the Desired Behaviors:** Managers and decision makers should themselves be role models for civil behaviors. For example, they should not interrupt the conversation of others while talking, talk loudly in phone calls while lectures are processing, or neglect greeting others either coworkers or subordinates. Instead, their behaviors should show respect for others such as giving thanks for services, saying sorry for mistakes, and listen to conversations till they are ended.
- c. **Accountability and Guidance:** Uncivil behaviors are not easily recognized and recorded by management to be punished. They are behaviors of low intensity for which the intent to harm is not obvious. However, if faculties managers and decision makers who have authority in guiding and directing others notice the coincidence of workplace incivility around or receive complains about being targeted with incivility, they should alert perpetrators in a friendly informal way. When repeated, such altering of perpetrators behavior signals that such behavior is not accepted and tolerated instead of being the common behavior within the organization.

7. Limitations and future research

The current study has some limitations that can provide direction for further research. First, the current study addressed the effect of both supervisor and coworker incivility on employee silence, however, the effect of customer incivility as the third source of workplace incivility was not addressed. Further studies may examine the effect of customer incivility on employee silence behavior.

Second, the current study did not examine the effect of any neutralizing moderators on the relationship between workplace incivility and employee silence behavior. According to literature, there are some moderators that can reduce that effect such as workplace intervention, supervisor's social support, collaborative climate, organizational trust, and workplace friendship.

Due to time constraint, the current study population was confined to demonstrators and lecturer assistants in Mansoura university. Further studies may extend the population to include all universities in Egypt or may compare between public sector and private sector universities.

Finally, data were collected in the middle of COVID 19 crisis. It was difficult to collect data personally through face to face interaction. Instead, data were collected using online surveys. Further studies can increase response by collecting data personally.

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