Are We Working in a Hostile Environment?: An Exploration of Incivility and Injustice at the Workplace

Sharifah K. Musairah[1], Sabiroh Md Sabri[2], Nurul Faraain Mohamad Rafi[3], Noraliyati Zakaria[4]

[1, 2, 3, 4] Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perlis Branch, Arau Campus, 02600 Arau, Perlis, Malaysia, 02600 Arau, Perlis, Malaysia

skmusairah@uitm.edu.my[1], sabir707@uitm.edu.my[2], nurulfaraain76@gmail.com[3], noraliyati@uitm.edu.my[4]

*Corresponding Author. Tel: (+6013) 369 8155, e-mail: sabir707@uitm.edu.my

Abstract

The presence of unpleasant and annoying colleagues; those who enjoy making other people's lives miserable by discriminating and abusing their power, or non-productive colleagues who are experts at pushing their work onto others are frequent challenges in a workplace. Prior research has considered these situations as hostile environment which also documented numerous adverse mental health consequences on the employees. This study aimed at exploring the nature of hostile work environments and the implications on employees through the perceptions of individuals and the causes of both incivility and injustice in the workplace setting in Malaysian context. In this study, a qualitative approach was adopted by undertaking semi-structured interviews within the Malaysian higher education institutions (HEI). The interviews were carried out with individuals who had either believed they had experienced incivility and/or injustice in the workplace or who had witnessed their colleagues being the target of incivility and injustice. The results of this study indicated a number of aspects that could be used in understanding incivility and injustice in the workplace. Accordingly, it could ultimately be used to help employers in dealing with this situation and, in turn, reduce the adverse impact of this issue on the employees' well-being.

I. Introduction

Many strategies of successful organizations nowadays are dependent on developing and retaining human capital and not necessarily on financial capital. As such, the success of an organization is not merely influenced by overall human or other capital, including technology but more on retaining and developing knowledge, skills, behaviors, and the well-being of employees (Sabri, Mutalib & Hasan, 2019). Many studies have agreed that the well-being of employees is directly influenced by their performance or output, which can invariably lead to less productivity and efficiency if not treated, in turn, affecting the overall performance and profit of the organization. Notably, workplace incivility and injustice have been shown to impact the well-being of employees in the workplace adversely and is increasing. As such, it has become a significant issue and attracting much interest and attention in recent years.

Many countries globally have recognized workplace incivility and injustice as a serious issue within the organizational context, since employees who experienced all types of workplace injustice were more likely to experience a mental breakdown, leave their job, or in failing to have a good working relationship with other colleagues. Some research has shown that workplace incivility and injustice is a 'stressor,' which adversely affects the capabilities of employees to achieve expected job standards (Maslach and Leiter, 2008; Muqadas, Rehman, Aslam, and Ur-Rahman, 2017; Vermunt and Steensma, 2003). However, on the other hand, workplace issues such as incivility and injustice, have not been well-recognized by many researchers, especially in the Malaysian context, given many cases go unreported (Faraain, Musairah & Sabri, 2019). Also, while uncivil behavior may be

understood to some extent, the effects can be overwhelming (Cipriano, 2017). For example, there have been complaints from older, more experienced faculty members who are oppressed and being disconnected from their department(s) and faculty. Moreover, there have been reports cited of high absenteeism and tardiness among faculty members and decreased work quality of faculty members. Additionally, there have been complaints about the increasing level of segregation and seclusion, along with increasing cases of illness and health problems, and rising number of workplace incivility and injustice cases in faculties (Cipriano, 2017). The literature has also documented rising mental health consequences due to working in a hostile environment. Notwithstanding, workplace incivility and injustice have a significant adverse effect on the health of individuals and job performance, in addition to time wasted and even cases of litigation, thereby damaging the organization's image and reputation. Therefore, the impact of workplace incivility and injustice need to be taken seriously and examined given the injustice, and influence on the culture of an organization, sometimes leading to violent, harmful behavior. A contributing factor could be due to scant empirical research carried out to investigate the characteristics and effects of incivility and injustice in the workplace, particularly in the context of academia. Similarly, little is known about the demographic characteristics of the perpetrators (Cortina et al., 2001). Accordingly, there is a driving need to address the issue of hostile working environments and to raise both the awareness and understanding of the issues and consequences to both employers and employees in Malaysia.

Prior research investigating hostile working environments has narrowed its subjective boundaries by drawing heavily from psychological and social-psychological perspectives. Thus, this study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge in this field by examining workplace incivility and injustice through understanding these extreme behavioral actions from a psychological and social-psychological perspective. Accordingly, the objectives of this study are: 1) to investigate workplace incivility and injustice, 2) to explore individuals and the nature of hostile work environments, and 3) to explore the causes of workplace incivility and injustice and its implications on employees and the organization.

II. Literature Review

In order to understand the workplace incivility and injustice, a number of past literature was reviewed and presented below.

Definition of Workplace Incivility and Injustice

Workplace incivility can be described as bullying (Glendinning, 2015), emotional abuse (Elliott, Davenport, & Distler, 1999), discourteous and disrespectful treatment, or unreasonable treatment where management procedures are demeaning (Hodgins, MacCurtain, & Mannix-McNamara, 2014). Indeed, it is costly (Pearson & Porath, 2011), widespread (Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2002), and maybe an antecedent toward workplace violence and aggression (Lutgen-Sandvik, Namie, & Namie, 2009). Workplace injustice can be defined as the mistreatment of employees, such as discrimination, harassment, abuse, and bullying (Okechukwu, Souza, Davis, & de Castro, 2014). Therefore, together, workplace incivility and injustice can be described as repeated and unwarranted behavior or actions toward a victim whether verbally or non-verbally, in undermining an individual or groups of people that can cause offense and distress, having a negative impact on their dignity, in turn, jeopardizing their work performance. If untreated, workplace incivility and injustice can lead to psychological distress (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001), burnout, anxiety, chronic depression (Geldart et al., 2018), affect employees' health and overall well-being (Hershcovis, 2011) and cause potential damage to the organization's image and reputation (Rockett, Fan, Dwyer, & Foy, 2017). This is because individuals who experience incivility and/or injustice in their workplace tend to spend more time informing their co-workers about their experience (Pearson & Porath, 2011). In the worst case, some individuals may also consider resigning from their employment given incivility and injustice issues occurring at their workplace.

The Impact of Workplace Incivility and Injustice on Employees and Organizations

Workplace incivility and injustice have been recognized as significant organizational issues in the context of the psychosocial work environment and leadership practices by many researchers (Einarsen, 1999; Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011). Recently, the literature has revealed that the institutional context is an important factor in workplace incivility and injustice (Hodgins et al., 2014). Specifically, workplace incivility and injustice are more likely to occur in large organizations, the public sector, in male-dominated organizations (Vartia, 2008; Zapf, Escartín, Einarsen, Hoel, & Vartia, 2010), and in health, public administration and

educational sectors (Zapf et al., 2010). Notably, both are particularly rampant in higher education institutions (HEI), given there is a rank or hierarchical structure having numerous regulations and restrictions (Salin, 2003; Vartia, 2001). Similarly, qualitative research of victims' experiences has commonly revealed that employees feel highly compromised if they report the incident, believing that they will not be listened to (which has always been the case), management will not reprimand or punish the perpetrators, and are expected by management to "shut up and put up" (Hodgins et al., 2014).

Accordingly, this raises the prospect of "higher-order" organizational factors, sometimes referred to as 'culture' which may create the kind of working conditions that promote incivility and injustice. Likewise, organizational factors may also be a determinant for incivility and injustice, for example, in an organization where the leader disregards conflict (Klein & Martin, 2011; Van Rooyen & McCormack, 2013). The literature on incivility and injustice also suggests that organizational factors such as an organizational culture that facilitates incivility and injustice often occur without punishment, and disrespect is common (Pearson & Porath, 2011). In addition, some researchers have suggested that employees subjected to incivility and injustice at their workplace would tend to experience adverse psychological effects such as anxiety, depression, and even suicide (Cortina et al., 2001; Elliott et al., 1999; Pearson & Porath, 2011). Research also reveals that uncontrolled incivility is occurring in many organizations nowadays (Porath, 2018). According to Pearson, Andersson, and Porath (2002), 98% of employees experienced incivility, and 99% witnessed it. It was also reported that in 2011, the situation seemed to be worsening when employees mentioned that they were poorly treated each week (Pearson & Porath, 2011). The fact that incivility and injustice in the workplace result in a significant adverse effect on employees and organizations, therefore, requires serious attention.

Interestingly, incivility and injustice seem to be more widespread in ASEAN countries compared to European countries, Canada, and the United States (US) (Akella, 2016). However, Malaysia ranks high in power distance and low in uncertainty avoidance, thereby reporting high levels of injustice and incivility in the workplace (Kwan, Tuckey, & Dollard, 2014). Nevertheless, workplace incivility and injustice are often reflective of unequal power given senior or top management indiscriminately accept the phenomena since it suits their agenda (Akella, 2016), not wishing the victims to prosper. In other words, the perpetrators of incivility and injustice in the workplace are protected by those having the power to eradicate it, and the phenomena becoming an open secret among the other employees. However, while many people may perceive incivility in their department and the corruptness of those holding positions of power that fail to take appropriate action concerning the complaints, they also recognize it as an injustice. This is because, as mentioned earlier, the perpetrators are protected by the top management and supposedly rewarded for their inappropriate behavior (Hutchinson & Jackson, 2015). Hence, they (perpetrators) achieve what they want most of the time; for example, they get to choose their own work schedule or tasks. Nonetheless, workplace incivility and injustice have been recognized as a harmful feature of modern organizations having long-term damaging effects for the victims, witnesses, and organizations alike (Hutchinson, Vickers, Jackson, & Wilkes, 2006). Since workplace incivility and injustice involve repeated actions, in which one or more employees engage in, with the intention to harm the victims and create a hostile working environment (Hutchinson, Vickers, Jackson, & Wilkes, 2006; Hutchinson et al., 2005), it takes the form of unfair criticism, slander, judging work wrongly, defamation, and obstructing or blocking a person's promotion (Randle, Stevenson, & Grayling, 2013). Moreover, it also includes displaying certain behavior like ignoring the victim, not returning messages, phone calls, and emails, etc. (Akella, 2016). As such, workplace incivility and injustice may lead not only to emotional injury but also to the overall well-being of the individual and poor morale (Hutchinson et al., 2005). However, despite these long-term harmful effects, there are no regulations that protect the victim's right to work in a safe and collegial office environment with no regulations that also protect one's human dignity in the workplace (Akella, 2016). It is not uncommon to see that in this situation, the perpetrators misuse their authority and responsibility in allocating work to the victim(s), displaying a secret password or sign to their friends in changing the victim's schedule, influencing the manager while performing a work assessment toward the victims, and creating chaos, directing it toward the victims so that other colleagues would be upset at the victims. Moreover, when the victims complain about having anxiety, depression, and stress due to the injustice and incivility that they experience, the top management simply views this as the victim's personality characteristics, and not able to cope with stress due to their own weaknesses (Baillien, Neyens, De Witte, & De Cuyper, 2009). Also, if the victims attempt to report that they had been subject to incivility and injustice, they would be seen as neurotic and hypersensitive by top management (McIntyre, 2005).

Furthermore, workplace incivility and injustice may contribute to health problems from the adverse effect experienced by the victims. For example, Krieger (1990) found that victims who remained quiet about the incidents would later experience a negative effect on their overall health. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), adverse health effects occur when individuals perceive situational demands as being stressful in that they cannot cope with the situation at hand. Likewise, having experienced incivility and injustice at the workplace can also trigger a psychological and/or physiological stress response (Okechukwu et al., 2014). This response is supported by strong empirical evidence that psychological stress can affect biological resistance through the activation of neuro-endocrinological and immunological responses (Cohen, Janicki-Deverts, & Miller, 2007). Consequently in several studies, these responses have been found to trigger hormonal imbalance, especially in the stress hormone (cortisol) found in the victims from workplace incivility and injustice (Andersen et al., 2008; Hansen, Hogh, & Persson, 2011; Hogh, Hansen, Mikkelsen, & Persson, 2012; Kudielka & Kern, 2004; Townsend, Major, Gangi, & Mendes, 2011). These types of hormonal imbalance that trigger the stress hormone often lead to a variety of chronic health issues (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012; Cohen et al., 2007). Additionally, empirical research has suggested that workplace incivility and injustice often lead to a substantial rise in the victim's blood pressure (Wager, Fieldman, & Hussey, 2003). On the other hand, non-targeted witnesses of workplace incivility and injustice can also be at risk regarding health issues (Okechukwu et al., 2014). This is because witnesses of incivility and injustice in the workplace also experience anxiety (Hansen et al., 2006; Hogh et al., 2012), and employees who observe repeated actions of incivility and injustice have been reported to feel more acute emotional pain compared to those who did not witness it (Saastamoinen, Laaksonen, Leino-Arjas, & Lahelma, 2009). Other research has revealed that witnessing the mistreatment of employees is related to poor psychological well-being, even after controlling for one's own experiences (Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2004, 2007). Moreover, researchers have suggested that the effect on the health of witnesses is partially the result of fear of them becoming the victim of incivility and injustice at the workplace as well. Additionally, experiencing workplace incivility and injustice could lead to negative behaviors, likely to function as maladaptive coping mechanisms (Okechukwu et al., 2014).

The review of stress and health literature further suggests that stress affects mental and physical health through behavioral changes (Droomers, Schrijvers, Stronks, Van De Mheen, & Mackenbach, 1999; Epel et al., 2000; Ng & Jeffery, 2003; Steptoe, Lipsey, & Wardle, 1998). Likewise, with continual exposure to workplace incivility and injustice, victims may potentially become socially isolated and/or detested (Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007; Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996). Hence, this could lead to counterproductive work behaviors such as reduced productivity and/or withdraw from applying for promotions, and finally reducing their credibility and value in performing their work (Caver & Livers, 2002; Spratlen, 1995). Furthermore, career progression has been shown to be hindered by workplace incivility and injustice that leads to overall employee well-being (Obrey & Vydelingum, 2004). Further, health issues related to workplace incivility and injustice can potentially extend toward the employees' families through their interactions (Okechukwu et al., 2014). Therefore, if the victims are stressed, their family members could likewise be affected (Westman, 2001). Similarly, family members could be affected when the victims are stressed if their promotions are being blocked without any explanation (Okechukwu et al., 2014).

III. Materials and Method

The research undertaken in this study was exploratory in nature, adopting a qualitative approach and a pragmatic utility approach for the design of the research, which is an inductive research method. The pragmatic process involved the synthesis of descriptions from interdisciplinary literature. The qualitative approach was chosen, given its suitability, as this research needed to capture meaningful information that could not be conveyed in quantitative data. The chosen participants for this research consisted of employees from both the government and the private sectors, including hospitals and HEIs. The researchers invited victims and witnesses as respondents employing a purposive sampling method, that involved identifying and selecting people who had experience or had witnessed the phenomenon of incivility and injustice at the workplace (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). In addition, the researchers identified employees who were willing to participate and also able to suggest other employees able to participate in the research as either victims or witnesses.

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with the victims and witnesses who had suffered incivility and injustices at their respective organizations in which a total of 22 interviews were conducted. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes to one hour, where the conversation was transcribed by the researchers, excluding all names of the participants from the transcripts. The style and form of the questions were adapted to collect the needed feedback and opinions from the participants. Any responses made by the researchers were

based on the narrative given by each participant, which was primarily to clarify or to probe further with the participant to gain further details or information.

The interviews were transcribed, analyzed, and coded once the data were collected. Each answer was assessed and coded to determine the meaning(s) of what the participants had mentioned and to make it easier for the researchers to frame for later reference. Next, the researchers grouped the participants' comments into categories and sub-categories in which each category was given an individual label, such as "power and social status," that described how the participants felt when experienced incivility and injustice at the workplace. Any quotes that were transcribed were taken verbatim from the interview transcripts.

IV. Results and Findings

The findings on workplace incivility and injustice obtained from the interview sessions from the qualitative research phase are presented and discussed in this section. Of the 22 respondents interviewed, 13 participants felt that they had been victims of incivility and injustice at the workplace, while nine participants were witnesses having observed their colleagues being the target of incivility and injustice in their organizations. All participants reported that the main perpetrators of such actions were their co-workers and managers. The findings presented in the following sections are based on different categories to allow the reader to gain an understanding of the issues associated with workplace incivility and injustice.

Incivility and Injustice Act and Classification of Perpetrators

From the experiences of the victims, 13 respondents reported that they had been the target of incivility and injustice at the workplace. Four respondents reported that the perpetrators were the top management, while others reported that their co-workers were the foremost perpetrators that influenced their manager(s) to behave in a similar fashion. The types of incivility and injustice that the participants experienced included ignoring phone calls, not responding to messages, disrespectful treatment, being humiliated publicly, withholding necessary information, being the subject of defamation or slander, and being denied the right to protest injustice directed toward them. The most frequent behavior mentioned was "ignoring phone calls," which was a common issue with all respondents. This finding was illustrated by Interviewee 11, who reported:

"She never answers my calls; I did not call her to ask her to go to a movie or something, I call her because of a work-related issue – how can someone accept a task but do not want to be held accountable for the task that she agreed to do?"

The next most significant uncivil behavior was "being denied the right to protest". There was a strong connection between this theme and that of "ignoring phone calls". The interviewees commented that the perpetrator would often change other people's schedules in order to suit her own schedule. This activity of changing other peoples' schedules to suit the perpetrators' own time was reportedly known to the committee members of the organization, but they remained quiet about it because the perpetrator was their friend. Hence, when the victim made a call to the committee member to ask about the (changed) schedule, they would ignore the phone calls. Therefore, in a way, it denies the victim's right to protest against the injustice that had been carried out. This finding is illustrated by Interviewee 22, who said:

"I noticed that my schedule had been changed when I have already gone to class for the second week. Somehow, in the third week, the schedule had been changed without prior notice. When I went to the class, I was shocked to see that she (the perpetrator) was in my class. Then, I tried calling the committee members, but no one answered my call; I think it's very rude of them and unprofessional for them to behave like that."

Interviewee 22 also mentioned that she lost 2 hours of her precious time given the incident. Both Interviewees 11 and 22 described their frustrations when they tried to reason with their superior, only to be ignored, as if they "didn't have the right to protest" the injustice that had been afforded toward them.

Notably, incivility and injustice at the workplace are behaviors that are deviant or abnormal (Kring, Johnson, Davison, & Neale, 2013). The participants (victims and witnesses alike) reported that they felt anxious and threatened by the uncivil behavior directed toward them. Although the witnesses felt uncomfortable by the actions of the perpetrators, they did not dare report it to the top management because they felt threatened that they could be the next victim. As reported by Interviewee 17:

"We are getting fed up with her behavior, every week we have to listen to the same old story, and we have to pretend to really pay attention to her (otherwise she would scold us in front of everybody) one of my friends got a very low assessment because she fell asleep during the gossiping session – I mean we have heard this story over and over again that we can already memorize it…."

Individuals with a personality disorder such as narcissistic usually have little control over their behavior or understanding their actions, which could profoundly affect other people's lives. Moreover, they tend to justify their behavior and actions by placing the blame on others. As described by Interviewee 8:

"I am amazed and at the same time confused at how she can go on and on telling us the same story although we already know the truth. She twisted the whole story as if she were the victim when she was the one who started it all. It seems as if she is living a lie; perhaps her whole life is a lie; she fabricates things easily…."

Why Workplace Incivility and Injustice Occurs?

There are many reasons why incivility and injustice occur in the workplace environment.

Power and Social Status

Those with power are more inclined to be uncivil and get away with it and are usually less powerful, to those uninfluential people who tend to be the targets. While they may not have to scream or throw things at their victims, most of the time, it is in the form of emotional abuse where the victims suffer. The perpetrators enact this by abusing their power given they have the authority to do so, in making the victims' life miserable. As described by Interviewee 10:

"I didn't get salary increment for 3 years; each time I asked, what is wrong with me (so that I can take corrective action) she would just say – you need to improve…. But she never tells me what areas to improve."

Social Systems and Social Interactions

One aspect that could directly influence employee behaviors at work is via social systems and social interactions. The social-psychological foundation of social systems consists of the role behaviors of individuals, the norms imposing and prohibiting these behaviors, and the values in which these norms are surrounded (Estes & Wang, 2008). Most of the participants in this study reported that when it came to workloads and their schedule, some of their colleagues would behave uncivilly. As commented by Interviewee 6:

"The people I work with here can make our life at work a nightmare, you know…. They gossip, they slander, they interfere with the schedule, they abuse their power by making other people's schedules like hell just to make sure their own schedule and their friends' schedule are nice. Even the boss put the blame on the victims. What's more, the victims are being ostracized just because they complain about the injustice in our department."

Moral Maturity

Organizations may have also hired the wrong people who ignore morality; thus, those who lack moral maturity and judgment may engage in uncivil behavior given their propensity to act in this manner, which lacks the respect for rules and being considerate to others. As described by Interviewee 9:

> *"She doesn't respect other people but wants to be respected; she does what she wants because no one is stopping her, and when someone is brave enough to report her behavior, she would throw a tantrum and act as if she is the victim...."*

Effects of Workplace Incivility and Injustice Toward Employees

Workplace incivility and injustice are recognized to have a negative impact on employees concerning their health in addition to the organizational culture.

Health Effects

The interviewees were asked if they thought incivility, and injustice experienced at the workplace affected their health. Many of the responses included psychological aspects (i.e., stress, anxiety, depression, lack of concentration and loss of self-esteem), physiological aspects (i.e., tension headaches, fatigue, neck or shoulder aches, stomach problems, and nausea), and behavioral aspects (i.e., sleep problems, moodiness, impoverished sociability, lack of motivation, aggression, and anger) as major issues. These three issues were reported to affect the victims' overall well-being.

Furthermore, when the victims reported that they felt stressed due to incivility and injustice at the workplace, they also indicated that later, they developed sleep problems and fatigue. Therefore, being stressful consistently could lead to health problems, as seen in the following comment made by Interviewee 13:

> *"When I am stressed, I would have trouble sleeping; then, I would be very tired for the whole day, although I did not engage in any heavy activity. Usually, I cannot concentrate on doing my job, and I am always anxious, I guess maybe that's the reason why I find myself becoming angry easily...."*

Nevertheless, all victims felt that being the target of incivility and injustice at the workplace had affected their health in some way or form. All 13 victims mentioned that they felt stressed when they became the target of incivility and injustice. This was because they mentioned on several occasions that they felt "stressful" during the interview. Ten of the victims mentioned that they were always anxious about being the target of incivility and injustice again, as it seemed that no one would put a stop to this vicious cycle. Nine victims mentioned that they thought they suffered from depression due to several symptoms developed over time. When asked about the symptoms, some mentioned not being able to concentrate on their daily tasks and feeling fatigued or lethargic most of the time. It seems that feeling stressful most often could lead to physical illness that could affect the individuals' overall well-being.

Furthermore, many of the victims felt that their self-esteem had been gradually eroded over time, and most reported that they felt isolated and sometimes quite moody impacting their ability to concentrate on their work. Four of the victims reported having developed a physical illness, which resulted in the need to undergo surgery. However, they could not say for sure that the illness was due to the emotional injury that they felt as the target of workplace incivility and injustice.

All the participants (victims and witnesses) reported that being the target (victim) and seeing incivility and injustice occurring had affected their personal well-being to some extent. One witness reported that he felt guilty that he could not do anything to help the victim or stop the actions from happening. Another witness said that it affected her so much that she was continuously feeling anxious about becoming the next target of this

vicious cycle. One victim said that she resented herself (felt guilty) for taking it out on her children because she could not cope with her own emotions. For example, as Interviewee 4 said:

> *"Most of the time, I am always in a bad mood when I got home because of the frustration that I felt at work. Although I tried very hard not to show it to my family, sometimes I took it out on my children, which later on would only make me hate myself even more. I am always angry at a very little mistake that my children made because I want someone to pay for the pain that I felt in my heart, and I hate myself even more for feeling that way."*

Organizational Culture

Gaining an understanding of workplace incivility and injustice requires paying attention to the culture of the organization since it plays an important role in either enabling or inhibiting uncivil conduct and injustice (Cortina, 2008). According to Estes and Wang (2008), organizational culture can either reject or embrace incivility and injustice at the workplace. It becomes a concern when managers ignore the issue, given the lack of attention on this issue, indicating that it is acceptable to behave in an uncivil manner toward colleagues. As mentioned by Interviewee 15:

> *"Whenever I tell the boss of the incidence, he always ignores me; as if it doesn't matter (what happened to me is not important) what he doesn't realize is that by behaving that way, he seems to be okay with that kind of behavior – but it's only okay with certain people, you know…."*

V.   Discussion and Conclusions

Until now, most of the attention given by researchers has been directed toward workplace bullying rather than workplace incivility and injustice. As such, this study makes a valuable contribution toward understanding the implications of hostile working environments in the context of incivility and injustice. The phenomenon associated with a hostile environment such as incivility and injustice has been discussed in this study based on the findings collected from a series of face-to-face interviews of victims and witnesses of such behavior.

Even though the study may be considered limited, given the size of the population, the research itself has been quite extensive. As such, it is hoped the contribution afforded by this study will help in extending this line of research, specifically with respect to workplace incivility and injustice, by offering the views and opinions of employees who are both victims and witnesses to this sort of behavior and its effect on the health and well-being of employees. The data collected, representing the incidences and anecdotal reports, could also be used as the basis for further study into workplace incivility and injustice (Thomas, 2005). In this study, Twenty-two interviews were carried out with participants who believed that they had been the victims and witnesses of incivility and injustice at the workplace which were accordingly ranked in terms of frequency of reporting as ignoring phone calls, being denied the right to protest injustice, not responding to messages, disrespectful treatment, withholding necessary information, being the subject of slander or defamation, and being humiliated publicly.

The phenomena of workplace incivility and injustice and the potential outcomes of these incidences were further elaborated upon with the major findings signified as headaches, fatigue, and neck or shoulder aches as the most reported physical complaints followed by psychological consequences such as stress, anxiety, depression, lack of concentration, and loss of self-esteem as the most reported. This was followed by experiencing sleep problems, moodiness, impoverished sociability, lack of motivation, aggression, and anger as the most behavioral outcomes of incivility and injustice at the workplace.

The main area of bias in this research is probably selection bias, as the semi-structured interviews were not randomly selected, because participants for the interviews volunteered themselves. However, purposive sampling is often used in qualitative research due to the richness of the data required for the study; and is designed to expand knowledge by using purposive sampling (Thomas, 2005). Generalizability is compromised as very

specific data was collected from a particular group of individuals, so the result of this study cannot be generalized to the general population. Although the data was obtained from self-reports on the part of the victims, the researchers also interviewed witnesses to confirm the incidence.

Given the limitation of this study, as mentioned earlier regarding the population size, the findings of this research support many of the findings in other studies that are similar. For example, research regarding workplace stress (Cohen et al., 2007; Cohen, Kessler, & Gordon, 1995) found that the main factors that lead to stress in the workplace are behaviors related to the those mentioned by the participants of this study and the effects on health (Okechukwu et al., 2014). As such, the current study strongly encourages more organizational solutions to be introduced to protect employees and design a safer and stress-free work environment. No employees deserve to be stripped naked of their human rights, dignity, and denied justice (Akella, 2016).

However, investigating incivility and injustice in the workplace setting exhibits substantial difficulties because the scope of the phenomenon incorporates many different types and forms of behavior and responses. Workplace incivility and injustice is, therefore, a devastating problem for individuals compared to other work-related stress due to the emotional injury that it costs the victims regarding their life, family, and career (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2004). This study has presented various issues relating to ethics and employee rights, the humiliating aspects of incivility and injustice in the workplace, and how it has stripped employees of their self-esteem, dignity, and respect. Further, revelations concerning human cruelty, emotional abuse, and mental injury should be openly exposed in shedding light on this phenomenon (Akella, 2016). As such, employers should be careful in managing incivility and injustice in the workplace since both actions are morally and professionally detrimental to employees and the organization's image and reputation. Therefore, future research should be undertaken to demonstrate the relationship between workplace incivility and injustice with respect to health outcomes. Lastly, factors like organizational behavior, organizational culture, attitude, and congeniality should also be investigated to eliminate incivility and injustice in the workplace.

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