

Managing Incivility: Coping Mechanisms and Support Systems among Lecturers in Malaysian Private Universities

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Abstract:

Workplace incivility has become a pervasive issue in many organisational settings, including higher education, with significant consequences for individuals' well-being and institutional performance. This qualitative study explores how lecturers at private universities in Malaysia cope with workplace incivility and the role of social support systems in coping with its negative effects. Using Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping as the theoretical framework, the study employed a case study approach to understand the experiences of ten lecturers from diverse backgrounds and varying years of experience working in private universities. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted via MS Teams, lasting 40-60 minutes, and analysed using thematic analysis. The study identifies four key coping mechanisms: seeking social support, confronting the instigators, avoiding the instigators, and detachment from work. Social support, particularly from colleagues, superiors, and family, was found to be a critical factor in managing incivility, aligning with the theory's emphasis on the role of external resources in stress appraisal and coping. Confronting the instigators and avoiding them emerged as common strategies, though participants also employed emotional detachment techniques to recover from stress. The study highlights the need for university management to foster a respectful work environment, establish clear policies, and provide adequate support systems to address incivility. The findings contribute to the understanding of coping mechanisms in academic settings and emphasize the importance of support systems in overcoming workplace incivility in Malaysian private universities.

Keywords: Workplace Incivility, Academic Incivility, Coping Mechanisms Family Support, Superiors Support, Malaysian private universities

Introduction:

In recent years, workplace incivility has become a concern across various organisational settings. Incivility in the workplace is known as low-intensity deviant behaviour with an ambiguous intent to harm (Ghosh, 2017; Schilpzand et al., 2016). Incivility can manifest subtly yet have far-reaching consequences for individual well-being, organisational performance, productivity, and job

satisfaction (Abas et al., 2018; Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina et al., 2001; Lim & Lee, 2011). The pressing issue of workplace incivility has brought attention to Human Resource Development (HRD) practitioners because this issue of incivility is not limited to specific industries but permeates diverse environments, including service sectors and educational institutions (Porath & Pearson, 2010).

The occurrence of uncivil behaviour in the workplace has risen over the years. For example, in the United States, only 25% of employees surveyed in 1998 reported experiencing incivility at least once a week, however by 2005 this figure had nearly doubled to almost 50% (Porath & Pearson, 2010). These patterns illustrate a broader trend that cuts across hierarchies and affiliations. Incivility may originate from superiors, colleagues, clients, or other stakeholders within the organisation (Pearson & Porath, 2005). An individual who experiences workplace incivility is often aware of the intentional mistreatment they are undergoing; nonetheless, it might be difficult for them to fully understand that they are being specifically targeted (Musairah & Farhana, 2021). Despite increasing attention in Western contexts, the phenomenon remains underexplored in academic settings in Malaysia, where universities are grappling with their unique challenges related to professional conduct and psychological safety (Wafa & Hassan, 2016).

Traditionally, academic environments are known to provide respectful spaces for intellectual exchange but are not exempt from uncivil behaviour. Incivility within universities can disrupt teaching and learning processes, strain collegial relationships, and adversely affect both students' and lecturers' mental health (Caza & Cortina, 2007; Feldmann, 2001a; Hopkins et al., 2017). Incivility in the academic setting occurs through various forms, ranging from faculty-to-faculty to inappropriate student-faculty interactions, and often becomes part of the culture in universities if left unaddressed (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Rawlins, 2017; Wright & Hill, 2015). The erosion of civility is viewed as a growing concern that has been observed at many educational institutions throughout countries, and the lack of civility has also made many lecturers extremely anxious about the uncivil behaviour occurring within the profession (Aydin et al., 2021). Research has identified various stressors faced by academicians, including workload, role ambiguity, career pressures, organisational structure, and relationships at work, all of which

can significantly impact their mental health (Ghazali et al., 2023).

Incivility can cause organisational stress that will harm employee health and morale, and also diminish the quality, creativity, and productivity of lecturers' work if not addressed (Akhtar et al., 2017; Terry et al., 1995). Employees exposed to ongoing incivility must rely on effective organisation to overcome incivility and its negative impacts (Holm et al., 2023). Longitudinal studies have shown that 96% of employees report being victims of workplace incivility, while 99% have witnessed it (Porath & Pearson, 2010).

Despite this alarming prevalence, little is known about the organisation that are most effective, particularly within academic contexts (Hershcovis et al., 2018). Although the literature has expanded, significant gaps remain in understanding how lecturers in higher education, especially in Malaysia, navigate and manage incivility in the workplace. Therefore, this study aims to explore the organisation employed by lecturers within Malaysian private universities in response to workplace incivility. Using Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress and coping as the theoretical foundation, this research has adopted a qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews. The research aimed at covering both the cognitive appraisals and behavioural coping mechanisms that lecturers used, including the role of social support networks in mitigating the negative effects of incivility experienced.

Literature Review:

Academic Incivility:

Incivility is recognized as a factual problem in education though perceived differently based on the culture and social norms of society (Cahyadi & Hendryadi, 2021). Academic incivility in Malaysian private universities, specifically faced by lecturers, refers to subtle yet disrespectful or disruptive behaviors that undermine a positive and productive work environment. Academic incivility is a significant issue faced by lecturers in

Malaysian private universities, impacting job satisfaction and mental health (Abas et al., 2020). Four types of incivility that are caused by students in higher education learning are annoyance, intimidation, classroom terrorism, and threat of violence (Feldmann, 2001b). Disorderly conduct, disruptive use of cell phones, substance abuse, holding a disruptive conversation, reading newspapers during lectures, plagiarism, arriving late and leaving early, being unprepared for lectures, making sarcastic remarks, threat of physical harm, and verbal and physical assault are more examples of incivility that an academic may experience (Alberts et al., 2010; Clark & Cynthia, 2008; Leiter et al., 2015; Segrist et al., 2018). On the other hand, incivility from the university administrators, faculty, and colleagues can be in the form of failing to uphold one's share of the workload, using cell phones or other handheld devices during meetings, putting down fellow faculty members, gossiping about colleagues, interrupting others, and challenging other colleagues' knowledge (Clark et al., 2013).

Theoretical Framework:

The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping:

Lazarus and Folkman's transactional model of stress and coping focuses on an individual's response to instigators through cognitive appraisal (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Stress is perceived as a transactional process involving the individual and their surroundings. It highlights that stress is influenced not only by external circumstances but also by people's interpretation and reaction to those circumstances (Hershcovis et al., 2018). Individuals evaluate the significance of a stressful situation through cognitive appraisal. The two main parts of appraisals are primary and secondary appraisal. The evaluation of whether an encounter is threatening, detrimental, irrelevant, or positive-benign to one's well-being is how primary appraisal takes place (Hershcovis et al., 2018). Positive-benign means that the outcome of an event is appraised as positive to the person's well-being. Stressful evaluations, on the other hand, view situations as either harmful,

threatening, or challenging. This occurs when harm is anticipated or has already occurred (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). If the situation is appraised as stressful, this is followed by a secondary appraisal, once a instigator is appraised as relevant, individuals assess their ability to cope with it and this includes evaluating available resources, organisation, and perceived control over the whole situation. After appraising a situation as possibly threatening one's well-being, the transactional model of stress by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) states that individuals may engage in two forms of coping: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping involves active efforts to eliminate the problem to eliminate the stress (Hershcovis et al., 2018). This involves taking direct action to change or eliminate the instigator, one way to do this is to confront the problem directly to change or remove its cause. Emotion-focused coping differs from problem-focused coping in that it is not aimed at eliminating the stress, but rather is aimed at managing emotions produced by the stress (Hershcovis et al., 2018). Individuals may try to regulate their emotional response when a instigator is seen as uncontrollable. This can include seeking social support, exercising relaxation techniques, or reframing one's thoughts on the current situation. In other words, the objective is to reduce the emotional discomfort linked to the threat or potential threat (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004) and individuals can accomplish this by participating in activities that create distance or assist in reframing the threat (Hershcovis et al., 2018).

Transactional Model of Stress and Coping in an Education Setting:

This is a reflection on how this model can be used among lecturers at selected private universities in Malaysia. The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping provides a framework for understanding how lecturers cope with incivility. Workplace incivility can lead to increased stress, decreased job satisfaction, and negative health outcomes among lecturers (Abas et al., 2020; Shen & Slater, 2021). The model suggests that individuals

appraise stressors and employ organisation to manage them (Berjot & Gillet, 2011). Common organisations include confrontation and avoidance, though their effectiveness varies (Hershcovis et al., 2018). Contextual factors, such as group dynamics and supervisory support, can influence how individuals respond to incivility (Abas et al., 2020).

When lecturers face workplace incivility, they will employ primary and secondary appraisals to appraise the situation. Primary appraisal involves lecturers appraising the importance of workplace incivility by determining whether incivility presents a possible threat or harm to their well-being and goals. This involves appraising the seriousness and consequences of uncivil conduct demonstrated by colleagues, academic administrators, supervisors, or students. Lecturers may perceive incivility as a lack of respect and a threat to their professional integrity, which could impact their job satisfaction and emotional well-being. Whereas secondary appraisal happens is about determining the significance of the incivility experienced, lecturers appraise their ability to cope with the situation and the resources available to them. This appraisal involved assessing whether lecturers have control over the situation and whether they possess the necessary skills and support to manage the instigator effectively. While coping with workplace incivility, lecturers will use two strategies to align with Lazarus and Folkman's model: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping is when lecturers adopt problem-solving strategies to address the source of incivility directly. For instance, lecturers may confront the individuals responsible, for the uncivil act or seek assistance from higher authorities within the academic institution for support. This method seeks to lessen the impact of the instigator by addressing its underlying cause and restoring a sense of control over the situation. An emotion-focused coping strategy is used to regulate lecturers' emotional response to workplace incivility. This may involve seeking social support from family and friends, engaging in relaxation techniques, or

reframing their perceptions of the situation to reduce distress. Lecturers can focus on being more resilient and less affected by uncivil behaviour by reaching out to their social networks for emotional support. Organisation are influenced by the target's appraisal of the situation, its duration, and the organisational positions of those involved (Cortina & Magley, 2009). Understanding these processes can help improve academic environments and support staff well-being (Clark et al., 2015). By applying Lazarus and Folkman's transactional model of stress and coping to this research, the study can explore how lecturers appraise workplace incivility, the factors influencing their appraisal process, and the coping mechanisms they employ to manage the instigator. Additionally, it can provide insights into the effectiveness of different organisation in mitigating the negative impact of incivility on lecturers' well-being and job satisfaction.

Workplace Social Support:

When it comes to coping with incivility in the workplace social support plays an important role among lecturers. Lecturers often rely on social support from various sources to cope with incivility effectively such as colleagues, friends, family, mentors, and other members of their social networks. Workplace social support, often referred to as organisational social support, is the employees' perception of their organisation's position concerning their contribution and well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). The information that an individual receives about how other people care about them, as well as the fact that they are a member of a certain team and share the same commitments as the team, is what is meant by the term "social support". It shows how the organisation cares for people in general, through good times and bad (Bajaba et al., 2022) which also means knowing what employees need, their expectations, and problems faced and giving them both material and moral support as needed (Bohle & Alonso, 2017). Supervisors can provide emotional support, such as empathy, feedback, and guidance, as well as support for workplace

resources and professional advancement (Bhanthumnavin, 2003).

Workplace social support mainly comes from supervisors or colleagues (Bajaba et al., 2022) and has a positive effect on health issues for employees (Arnold & Dupré, 2012). Employees who perceived more social support at work were less likely to experience mental health issues including anxiety and depression. Additionally, it promotes positive feelings associated with work, which in turn improves attitude, performance, commitment to the company (Bajaba et al., 2022) and can promote greater positive work experience (Rousseau & Aubé, 2010). Employees often seek out the help of their colleagues when they feel the need to strengthen their coping mechanisms (MacGeorge et al., 2004). The most prevalent types of support in the workplace include general conversations between co-workers, sharing, and listening (McGuire, 2007). Such support consists mostly of listening and providing an opportunity for employees to express hard feelings, as social support in the workplace can contribute to employees' overall well-being (Sigursteinsdottir & Karlsdottir, 2022).

Social support benefits both employees and organisations because social support is viewed as the way that an employee helps another employee cope with the stress felt in a particular situation (Davies, 1996). In her research on women's perceptions of gender as a barrier to development in the workplace, Buzzanell (1997) addresses the idea of community inside organisations. Employees may discover that their interactions with others create a supportive community in which they may effectively organize and understand their organisation (Buzzanell et al., 1997). When faced with uncivil behaviour in the workplace, employees may rely on either community support or assistance from their colleagues to deal with the situation. Moreover, studies indicate that relationship networks within organisations tend to be supportive. Supportive communication refers to the use of both verbal and nonverbal behaviour to aid employees who are viewed as requiring help (MacGeorge et al.,

2004). There is also the possibility that employees may cope with stressful situations by receiving emotional support from other people in their social network (Burlinson, 2009). In a similar vein, individuals may cope with a stressful situation by withdrawing from those in their social network (Sias & Cahill, 1998). The provision of emotional support by a colleague can serve as a positive personal affirmation that mitigates the negative message that is inherently communicated by the treatment of others in an uncivil manner (Miner et al., 2012). The social support received from supervisors and colleagues has a major impact on job satisfaction (Mérida-López et al., 2019; Ng & Sorensen, 2008; Pinna et al., 2020). There is a strong connection between social support and job happiness, which is related to the willingness of employees to provide assistance and access to their knowledge to their colleagues; their work reports that job satisfaction creates a positive attitude and dedication to the workplace (Kucharska & Bedford, 2019). Social support and job satisfaction have likewise been connected to quality of life (Sigursteinsdottir & Karlsdottir, 2022). If one had support from colleagues, employers, and supervisors, the appraisal of work demands would likely be more favourable than if such support did not exist (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Family Social Support:

The four main types of social support are administrative support, supervisory support, co-worker support, and support from family and friends. Support from colleagues, supervisors, and management constitutes intra-organisational social support networks, and support from family and friends provides extra-organisational support systems (Lambert et al., 2016). Family social support refers to an employee's cognitive appraisal of emotional issues and instrumental support from family and friends when fulfilling the individual's obligations (Bajaba et al., 2022). Support from family can help to alleviate some of the effects of working in a stressful situation (Kurtz, 2008). Family may provide support against the effects of the job on the employee,

particularly outside of work (Lambert et al., 2010). Support from family usually allow the person the opportunity to escape from the pressure of work and to live a balanced life (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). The content of support from family may come in the forms like emotions such as love, trust, empathy, and care, whereas forms of instruments like skills, acquisition, transportation, sharing tasks and responsibilities (López & Cooper, 2011). Spouse and family may be more sympathetic to demand at work, they may be unable to provide tangible aid that would assist in resolving those demands (Halbesleben, 2006). However, lecturers generally live in a wide social network and can receive social support outside their workplace (Halbesleben, 2006)

Methodology:

The main research question guiding this study is: How do lecturers at private universities in Malaysia employ organisation to address workplace incivility in academic settings? The purpose of this study is to examine and describe how lecturers perceive and respond to incivility in their work settings. A qualitative research design is used to gain a deeper understanding of the personal experiences of lecturers at private universities in Malaysia. Data is collected through interviews and observations with a carefully chosen group of participants. Open-ended questions were used to encourage participants to share their thoughts freely and provide detailed responses on their experiences of workplace incivility. As Creswell (2013) suggests, qualitative research is valuable for studying social phenomena in their natural settings, enabling a deeper exploration of human behaviour, experiences, and social context, insights that may not be easily captured through quantitative methods alone.

This research adopts a case study approach, which allows for a comprehensive examination of specific instances or individuals, offering a detailed analysis of the phenomenon in question. Merriam (2009) highlights that case studies enable researchers to investigate unique cases that reveal

phenomena that might otherwise remain hidden. In qualitative research, interpretation plays a central role, and researchers need to be aware of their own biases, personal interests, and values, as well as the methods used to access the research site (Creswell, 2003). Consequently, the researcher becomes the key instrument in collecting and analysing data. As noted by Silverman (2000), qualitative methods are particularly well-suited for exploring social phenomena on a smaller scale to gain a richer, more nuanced understanding. Purposive sampling is utilized in this study to target individuals who have direct experience with the central issue, ensuring that the data gathered is both relevant and insightful (Patton, 2002).

Sampling:

The study was conducted on ten lecturers from selected private universities in Malaysia. Recent research suggests that small sample sizes can be sufficient for qualitative studies, with 10 interviews often providing adequate data saturation. Malterud et al. (2016) propose the concept of "information power" to guide sample size. Information power indicates that the more information the sample holds, relevant for the actual study, the lower the number of participants needed (Malterud et al., 2016), while a sample size of 7-10 cases is sufficient to fully realize the complete dimensionality of themes in qualitative studies (Young & Casey, 2019). Purposive sampling was used to select these ten lecturers. Purposive sampling enhances research rigor by better aligning the sample with study objectives, improving trustworthiness in data collection and analysis (Campbell et al., 2020). Snowball sampling was also utilized because this strategy helped by locating a few participants with relevant criteria, interviewing them, and then asking those participants to introduce more names of other people who meet similar criteria (Merriam, 2009). Snowball sampling is a purposeful method of data collection in qualitative research, especially useful for accessing hard-to-reach populations (Naderifar et al., 2017). Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend sampling until a point of saturation or

redundancy is obtained. The sampling for this study ended when no new information was coming from new participants and when there was evidence of saturation. Saturation is a context-dependent, subjective procedure used in qualitative research to maintain credibility and quality while saving time and resources (Rahimi & Khatooni, 2024).

Participants:

This study recruited ten lecturers from selected private universities in Malaysia. The participants had to be Malaysians and worked for a private university for at least three years. Participants

were interviewed through MS Teams, the interview lasted about 40 to 60 minutes. Ten lecturers from selected private universities in Malaysia participated in this study. In terms of work experience, two lecturers had sixteen years of experience, one worked for about twenty years, two had seventeen years of work experience, one worked for twenty-five years, two of them had twelve years of work experience, one worked for fifteen years and lastly the youngest participant had worked for nine years. For the ethnicity, four participants were Indians, two were Chinese, one Punjabi, and three were Malays.

Table 1: Demographic Summary of Participants

Participant (P)	Gender	Age	Race	Years of work experience
P1	Female	43	Indian	16
P2	Female	49	Indian	20
P3	Male	44	Chinese	17
P4	Female	40	Punjabi	16
P5	Female	43	Indian	17
P6	Female	50	Indian	25
P7	Male	38	Malay	12
P8	Female	38	Malay	12
P9	Female	35	Malay	9
P10	Male	41	Chinese	15

Data Collection:

To understand the coping and social support involving workplace incivility among lecturers at private universities in Malaysia, a qualitative semi-structured interview was employed in this study. Interviews were conducted via MS Teams. Informed consent forms were acquired from all ten participants before the interview. Pseudonyms such as P1 to P10, were assigned to each participant to protect their identity. The letter P stands for "participant." Topical areas were addressed in the interview guide for the interviewer to explore and probe (Sandelowski, 2010). Using a comprehensive interview protocol; participants' interviews were categorized and served as the foundation for subsequent theme analysis. Each interview lasted 40 to 60 minutes and was conducted in English, which is the language used by all participants to communicate among students, colleagues, and faculty members.

Data Analysis:

This study involved conducting detailed semi-structured interviews with each participant. Using the semi-structured interviews, collection of rich and personalized information, personal perspective on the outward behaviours of participants (Patton, 2002), and what is on participants' minds (Merriam, 2001) was able to be obtained. Interviews enable researchers to probe follow-up questions to clarify uncertainties and prevent misunderstandings and misinterpretations. The data gathered were analysed by systematic and analytical data evaluation using thematic analysis (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). Thematic analysis is selected for its emphasis on identifying patterns or themes within the data. The data collected is aligned with the theoretical framework of this study, if it accurately reflects the participants' perspectives. Data were analyzed inductively, where the themes identified were closely related to the data itself (Patton, 2002). This allows the data coding process to expand according to the research questions. Lastly, the data gathered were analyzed based on Ryan and Bernard's (2000) six steps of thematic analysis: familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes,

reviewing themes, defining, and naming themes, and producing the report.

Rigor and Trustworthiness:

The qualitative descriptive design stages adhered to improve the credibility and applicability of the study by ensuring the research objective was achieved (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sandelowski, 2010). In this study, member checks were conducted with the participants to establish the analysis's trustworthiness (Merriam, 2009). The generated themes were further cross-checked with all participants to ensure that their views were correctly captured.

Ethical Consideration:

Participants were informed that all participants were voluntary, that they were free to withdraw at any point, and that the recording and transcripts of the interviews would be treated confidentially by the researcher. The study was approved by the ethical review board at Universiti Putra Malaysia. Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities and the interview only began when participants had agreed and signed the consent form.

Findings:

All ten participants of this study acknowledge the evidence of experiencing incivility in their organisation and career as an academic. Incivility manifested itself in unruly behaviour towards one another. Students reading newspapers or using mobile phones in the classroom, coming late, sleeping while the lecture is going on, eating during lectures, romancing during lectures, sending rude emails, posting ill messages about lecturers' behaviour on social media, bullying, sexual harassment, body shaming, gossiping, unrealistic demands from both faculty members and students, and receiving emails from both students and faculty members at an inappropriate time (past midnight). The findings were derived from the views expressed by all the participants of this study.

Themes:

Four themes were extracted from categories as follows: (1) seeking social support, (2)

confronting the instigators, (3) avoiding the instigators, and (4) detachment from work.

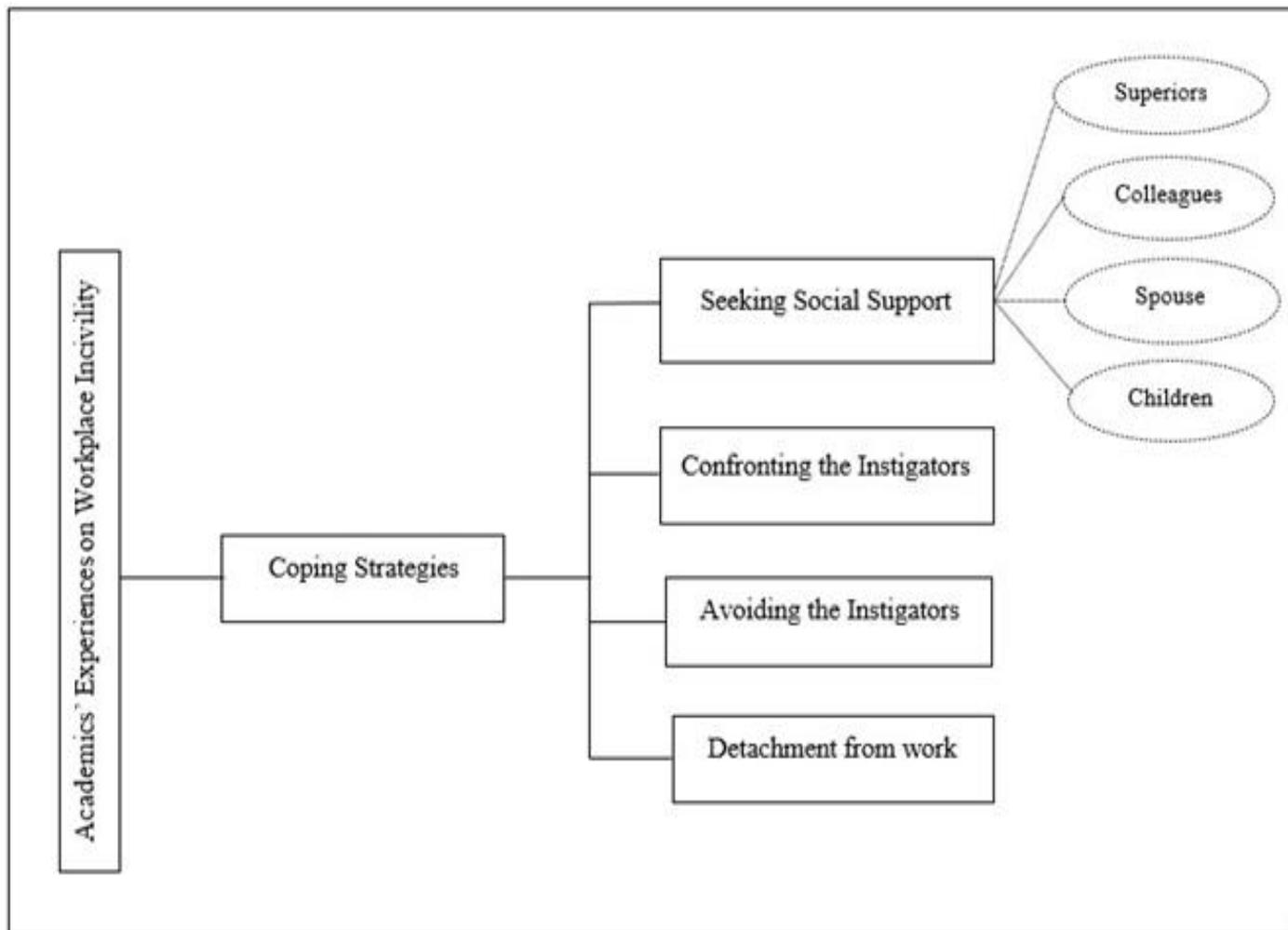


Figure 1: Summary of emerging themes on workplace incivility organisation by lecturers

Theme 1: Seeking Social Support

Based on the data collected through the interviews, one of the most contributing factors shared by participants was seeking social support when they experience workplace incivility. They sought social support from their superiors, colleagues/friends, spouses, and children. In this theme, the value of interpersonal ties and relationships is emphasized as a means of reducing the adverse consequences that incivility has on the well-being and job satisfaction of employees. For the support from superiors, participants depend on their superiors for direction and support when dealing with workplace incivility. This support can be in the form of guiding conflict resolution, supporting the victim

of incivility, or intervening to address inappropriate behaviour in the academic setting.

“Your body shaming people. Until I think one time I, I directly spoken to my, my, my head of school and then now, this person started to call me with title, and I am happy to say that. Because, I’m not, I’m not really, I’m not going to brag with the title. But the thing is, only with you. (P5)

Support from colleagues/friends within the workplace is needed for lecturers experiencing workplace incivility because this can provide a sense of solidarity and understanding, enabling lecturers to share their experiences, seek validation, and receive empathy from others who may have encountered similar challenges.

“It's also important now who is your friend and whether your friend is really understands the situation or not. Same good to your boss. Let's say they are not in the situation to understand you... definitely it won't happen. Maybe the outcome will be different. Luckily my husband and my colleagues who actually in the similar feel or who actually went through the similar situation. They know how to handle it. Then they always advise me just ignore the person, just go and do it. Let's say if you find out it's not right, it is incivility. Go and raise up your voice!” (P1)

“Yeah, I do. I do share with my friends. Uh, not so much with my spouse. But my friends I share, especially my colleagues, my close colleagues because they understand what I am talking about. So that's very important the person who's listening must understand your scenario. Otherwise, no point explaining see”. (P2)

“... Then I tried to talk to my friend to have a different environment.

So, what at some positive way to handle the situation is where whenever we are stress, I will immediately will call my friend to go for tea. I will stress out I will clear out all my stress... I will throw out all my anger while we are having coffee...” (P1)

“The best way is eat... eat some snack... have a coffee or ask people to buy me a coffee. Normally my friends, my colleague really do that, even though they're not so happy. But it seem okay uh when having a snack or how to say uh, coffee right normally can make me happier, definitely during the coffee session with my friends I”.(P3)

“... I stayed away at my best friend's place, so I got a lot of support from her, so these things made me a better person

and I know how to handle things better now. Yeah, at that time, I was still very new to all this. Now if you tell me if there's anyone who's going to come up and bully me, I don't think it's gonna be a success”. (P4)

“But if something to do with my superior, then I probably share it with my colleague. Uh, yeah. Sometimes when I want to speak to my friends about it, we go out for coffee because the work environment may not be very suitable to share such things. Sometimes it could be very personal, so going out and venting it out and having a cup of coffee or just a change of environment gives a lot of calmness. And maybe after that you see the problem as a little bit smaller compared to how it was initially. When you get another opinion from someone else”. (P5)

“...I'm not answering it because I'm frustrated, but I'm answering it because I have been pushed through a lot in the organisation and yet I'm standing tall. And the reason I'm standing tall is because I have good friends when I talk to and they have actually been my pillar of support”. (P6)

Spousal support and family support serve as a buffer against the negative impact of incivility, fostering a sense of security and stability in lecturers' personal lives in overcoming workplace incivility.

“I will show I will cry and show the anger and sharing it with my friends some of my trustable working colleague and also with my husband”. (P1)

“I will share, but I will choose certain people to share okay the first of all, good listener then I choose them, and I definitely I will share with my wife as well, my spouse”. (P3)

“Yeah. Umm, stress, yes. Okay. Meaning that example usually my, my, my, my, my, my, my partner will always say that hey, okay, let, let let's have a coffee. Something like that. okay, So what? What? What? What I can help you out example. Sometime when we talk about the colleagues, okay, the colleagues is not give full cooperation. For example, hey you know this, this persons you know, don't give full cooperation on this, this and this, and that sometimes the, the, the, the partners will give ideas that, oh, why not you try to do this... something like that? Yeah”. (P8)

“I feel that this satisfies satisfaction, but I do talk to my family also. Of course, my sister and she gave me so much advice and support, and with my mom as well. And they always, like, keep calling me from from day to day and asking my my day asking about my day and my work. And then every time if I if I'm clueless. I didn't have anything to I I don't have any ways on how to cope with that, so I will. I will call my mom and my sister and then they will give me some advice and ideas on how to deal with that”. (P9)

“Second, throughout the journey from home, from the office to the home, I will call my husband... I will explain everything, then my husband will say, OK, you already experience... forget it. You don't need to think back...” (P1)

Participant 6 and 8 mentioned that burdening family members was not fair to the family members

... Think, um, because for me, right, I mean that, more towards to compartmentalize. I believe in compartmentalization, meaning that you need to really compartmentalize, or this is this. This is that. But if let's say that particular, I believe if they say that particular things is like getting worse or

obviously it will bring a mental health issues. Yeah. Emotions, everything. But, as of now, I think it won't really, you know, I, I won't really bring back home. I mean that whatever that I have in office, because I'll try to, to compartmentalize, yeah. (P8)

“My children, I think their ears are so painful they don't, they don't want to hear it anymore. So much so now, I talk in the car because I don't want them to know what I'm going through. I don't want them to be demotivated as well. Uuh, because sometimes it's very hurting. You know, what you go through and people are not there for you, so I try not to tell them a lot of things”. (P6)

Lastly, their children are seen as sources of comfort and motivation during tough times at work. Engaging with children allows a break from work-related stress and gave participants a greater sense of purpose outside of their professional responsibilities, which improved their ability to deal with rudeness.

“...and I'll I'll bring the issues to my family prayer so we have a prayer session with my children as well. So, I let my children know. Maybe I'm not so detailed in explaining the what is the situation, but I will let my family, my kids know about okay, maybe the papa or the father's facing some challenges in the workplace, maybe they can pray for the father so when I listen to my kids prayer and and my wife are listening then I... I will try to convince myself or change the details or emotions. Actually, we don't need to bring the much issue or this issue is not deserve all my concern”. (P3) .

Theme 2 Confronting the instigators:

Drawing on the coping process of the transactional model of stress, confrontation is a form of problem-focused coping. Confrontation represents a strategy for coping in which individuals express their concerns and directly

address the pressures imposed by the conflict. Academic confrontations in response to workplace incivility are important for addressing mistreatment, upholding employees' rights, preventing escalation, promoting a positive workplace culture, empowering individuals, facilitating resolution, and establishing clear boundaries for acceptable behaviour. Confrontation is best done in private rather than in public to avoid instigators feeling embarrassed.

"I do it in private because we still have to save face. You know, whatever it is that our colleagues I am facing, it probably others are not facing it. So it's it's always a bad thing to do to confront someone in public and to humiliate someone in public whether they have done that, it's up to them. But I have my principles. I do it in in, in private". (P4)

"OK, most of the time I do it in private, but if the whole class is behaving uncivilized towards me, then it's a common advice. Common way of approaching, but if it's going to be one two individual who is doing that, then probably I will wait till the class ends. I'll speak to them separately". (P5)

"Yeah, I confront in private because I want to humiliate these people, among others. And I believe that bully should not be I, I should not believe people as well. If I'm really people as well, nothing, we are just at the same page. So, better not. That's why I'm, I'm always saying myself I'm better than others. So, when people do this, I'm not, I'm not doing that thing too. So, so we have to, we have to plan like that, that, that la. So that uh we are not uh bully people as well. And then also at the same time, I'm going to respect people". (P7)

"In my experience is just confrontation and being honest with them, telling them

I really don't appreciate what you're doing". (P4)

"Yes, if I've done that, I have banged tables and I have queried them, uh, I asked them why uh, I am like for example, for the promotion process I asked him I see my another colleague who doesn't qualify as me. Uh, just because she's being favourite girl of the top management the dean". (P2)

"That was the stupidest answer I ever heard, and in fact I brought this matter to the higher level of authority. The management as well to bring in, of course, the management did look into the top management to the CEO try to look into the matter and he was asking them to re-evaluate. Obviously, it stops there because they hate me. Because I've confronted them in such a way. So, when the CEO can only involve at that particular level so, they all perhaps maybe they decided 100% they're not gonna give me or what, but I did I did confront every single injustice that's taking place". (P2)

"But the word went around saying that I'm not good enough. I mean, a bit of racism was also there where they said that that this Punjabi lecture is really not good. So when I heard that I was a bit upset and I did, I confront them. Yes, I did. But I confronted after about maybe five months. So I asked them why was the reason that this was this statement was particularly said, apparently because they had someone else that they wanted in to be in my place. But I got the job". (P4)

However, participant 8 is not keen on confronting the instigators as the participant believes that confrontation makes mistreatment worse.

"Uh, okay, for me, I don't like a confrontation. Yes, I don't love confrontations because I know it will

make things worse. I don't know. I mean, I for, for me, confrontations just make things worse. But, different people, they have a different perspective". (P8)

Participant 9 is afraid of losing friendship if confrontation is done and participant 2 felt confrontation is not a solution to overcome workplace incivility

"... And then if I open my mouth then that's it the the how to say the the friendship is gone. You know like that". (P9)

"Yes, I've tried confronting whoever that I feel. It's not fair being treating me fairly, and I feel like, you know, eventually you are mistreating me to some extent, but it became very in vain. It's like everybody manipulates. So, they have their own version to say just to just to you know shut their mouth and so, there are so many occasions I try to demand for the for justice for myself you know because when you compare other people, other staff are doing very well despite not putting any effort so but but it was totally mean because it's it's indirectly, it's like it's not gonna work. There's no point"....(P2)

Theme 3 Avoiding the instigator:

Choosing to avoid or ignore instigators of workplace incivility among lecturers may inadvertently reinforce a culture of tolerance for disrespectful behavior, contributing to a detrimental environment where individuals feel powerless to address mistreatment. This effort of avoidance hinders efforts to establish a supportive and collaborative workplace, causing a lot of discomfort, stress, and low morale among faculty members. Avoiding incivility did not appear to remove targets from the negative emotion associated with incivility, as this type of coping was associated with more emotional exhaustion and less forgiveness.

"Yeah, yeah... I went through that one, but what I did is I tried to ignore the student but I won't discriminate them. I won't ever take revenge on them, so if you if they perform well, I'm giving them correct one... but what I will do is I try to not have any contact with this student after the class and try to avoid to see the student...(P1)

"Yeah, well. I'm the person to avoid him unless if I can do something that they say I can't do. I can prove them that they are wrong. Then I walk in front of them, but most of the time I try to I try to avoid them because I don't want to be continuously bullied because you are already in anxiety you already in fear. I don't want that one to be affected my self-esteem".(P1)

At times I do ignore. Ignore in order to avoid further question and so and I think that has helped me a lot. When you ignore, it actually shows a sense of message to the instigators that we are not interested and we are not affected by it. But yeap, that that has helped me.(P5)

Yeah, definitely, I will ignore that because, no point. I mean, it's a, you know it's a fighting battle. You're, you're gonna be losing at the end of the day. No point of going on a and you know what, what's the best part? They will actually mark you. They will either make your life miserable. There's no point, and then you go to HR, this doesn't make a big difference. The HR is in support of the manage top management, not you.(P6)

If it for me, if possible I try to ignore. I try to distract myself. I try to distance myself from from them. If let's say I need to mingle with them, I just do as the job is related to them. That's all only... there's a very professional way, and then that's it.(P9)

However, participant 5 says ignoring or avoiding is just temporary

“I think it's only temporary because if such person who is going to be there constantly, you're being there within the team and working with colleagues who are there with you. It's only probably sometime because work matters need a lot of collaboration and so on. So, at every time when you're going to be dealing with this, when this is going to occur again, again, so avoiding them is just gonna be a temporary measure. So, I think putting a stand or putting a closure to it is very important before you can actually work again on other matters”.(P5)

Theme 4 Detachment from work:

Detachment from workplace incivility involves consciously disengaging from negative interactions or stressors encountered in the academic environment. Activities such as yoga, spa treatments, and gym, for example, allow lecturers to unwind, clear their thoughts, and focus on personal well-being. Engaging in these activities allows lecturers to temporarily shift their attention away from work-related challenges, providing a much-needed break and fostering a sense of balance and resilience. Finally, implementing detachment strategies into one's routine allows lecturers to maintain their emotional and psychological well-being while navigating the challenges of academic life.

“Then the weekend I try to spend the quality time with my daughter. I will bring them to the park where when you walk when you dealing with the nature, there is a high possibility for you to forget the frustration and even I went to some yoga classes during that situation as well to calm down myself”.(P1)

“Yeah, I will not make any complaints. I just go for a drink, ask my colleague, buy me a coffee, then I get settled.”(P3)

“I'll I'll bring the issues to my family prayer so we have a prayer session with my children as well”.(P3)

“Sometimes when I want to speak to my friends about it, we go out for coffee because the work environment may not be very suitable to share such things. Sometimes it could be very personal, so going out and venting it out and having a cup of coffee or just a change of environment gives a lot of calmness. And maybe after that you see the problem as a little bit smaller compared to how it was initially”.(P5)

“So I feel like it's better for me to be alone. So, I just that's why most of the time I'm, I'd like to be alone, or else I'll be, I will be mingle with a person from a different school and so on”.(P7)

“I calm down myself. Then I ask my will bring my husband to bring me for coffee or tea outside then I will explain the scenario one by one. Then he understand that he told me OK.”(P1)

Discussion:

In the context of workplace incivility experienced by lecturers at selected private universities in Malaysia, the qualitative findings reveal several organisations employed by lecturers to manage and mitigate the adverse effects of such mistreatment. A total of four organisation were discovered: (1) seeking social support, (2) confronting the instigators, (3) avoiding the instigators, and (4) detachment from work (See Figure 1). Social support is mentioned by lecturers as a coping strategy for workplace incivility. This social support is usually received from superiors, colleagues, spouses, and children. The findings of this study are addressed concerning Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model of Stress, stressing how people perceive and deal with workplace incivility.

The first theme discovered, seeking social support is consistent with Lazarus and Folkman's

emphasis on the role of social resources in stress appraisal and coping. Lecturers in this study actively sought help from a variety of sources, including supervisors, colleagues, spouses, and children, to overcome workplace incivility. This is consistent with Lazarus and Folkman's idea of seeking instrumental and emotional assistance as a way of coping with stress. Most lecturers were happy to share their emotions and feelings on their bad experience of workplace incivility with their colleagues and spouses. Employees often seek out the help of their colleagues when they feel the need to cope with mistreatment in their workplace (MacGeorge et al., 2004). Lecturers believed that sharing grievances about workplace incivility with colleagues/friends within the workplace would be preferable to other support systems because colleagues/friends can understand and provide a sense of solidarity and understanding because they are more familiar with the job. The presence of assistance from colleagues, employers, and superiors is likely to contribute to a more positive evaluation of work demands compared to the absence of such support (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

The second theme, confronting the instigators, represents problem-focused coping mechanisms found in the Transactional Model of Stress. Confrontation is aimed at directly addressing the source of stress to assert boundaries, protect personal rights, and reduce further mistreatment. Many participants reported confronting the instigators in private settings, by their desire to avoid public humiliation and maintain professional relationships. However, some participants were hesitant to confront because it would make matters worse, while others were worried about having an unpleasant relationship with the instigators, as they would still have to work together in the same environment. Two more participants opined that confronting the instigators would be pointless because it would not be an effective solution to the problem of workplace incivility. Emotion-focused coping differs from problem-focused coping in that it is not aimed at eliminating the stress, but rather is

aimed at managing emotions produced by the stress (Hershcovis et al., 2018).

Avoiding the instigator, the third theme, presents a form of emotion-focused coping characterized by efforts to minimize exposure to uncivil behaviour. Participants explained that they avoided or disregarded instigators to lessen discomfort and maintain their well-being. In line with Lazarus and Folkman's concept of avoidant coping mechanisms, this approach may provide short-term relief from emotional distress but risks perpetuating a culture that tolerates incivility. Avoidance, while offering immediate comfort, does not address the underlying issue of workplace incivility. Over time, avoidance may contribute to a sustained negative work environment by failing to challenge the behaviours of the instigators. Moreover, avoiding the issue may lead to increased emotional exhaustion, as the stress associated with incivility remains unresolved. Thus, while avoidance can offer temporary relief, it is not a long-term solution to workplace incivility.

The last theme is detachment from work, aligns to Lazarus and Folkman's concept of disengagement coping, where individuals psychologically detach from instigators to lessen emotional distress. Participants described engaging in activities such as yoga, spending time with family, or seeking solitude to unwind and get a new look. These detachment strategies serve to replenish emotional resources and foster resilience in dealing with workplace incivility. These detachment strategies are crucial for maintaining mental health and emotional well-being in the face of persistent workplace stressors. By taking time away from the stressor, lecturers were able to gain perspective, recover emotionally, and return to work with a renewed sense of balance. This aligns with Lazarus and Folkman's idea that disengaging from stressors can help individuals maintain their overall psychological resilience, reducing the emotional toll that prolonged exposure to incivility can cause.

Overall, the findings of this study show the complex relationship between individuals and their environment in appraising and coping with workplace incivility. We can learn more about the adaptive mechanisms used by lecturers to deal with incivility by looking at these coping mechanisms through the perspective of Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress.

Limitation of the study:

There are a few limitations highlighted in this study. First. The reliance on self-reporting introduces the possibility of bias, as participants may or may not report their personal experiences due to personal factors. Furthermore, the scope of the study is limited only to selected private universities in Malaysia, which may not be representative of other academic settings, particularly those in public universities with different institutional norms. Moreover, the study's cross-sectional nature provides an experience of lecturers at a single point in time, whereas a longitudinal approach would offer experiences of lecturers in how they cope over time. The cultural context of Malaysia, particularly its values around hierarchy and respect for authority, also likely influences how lecturers cope, suggesting that the findings may not apply to different cultural settings. The study also does not address how institutional factors, such as university policies and leadership styles, shape the experience and management of incivility, nor does it consider individual differences in resilience and coping styles that could impact how lecturers deal with incivility. These limitations provide opportunities for future research to explore these dimensions in more depth and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of workplace incivility and organisation within the academic setting.

Conclusion:

This study provides valuable insights into how lecturers cope with workplace incivility in selected private universities in Malaysia. The findings highlight the use of both emotion-focused and problem-focused organisation, as described

by Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model of Stress. Lecturers in this study utilized emotion-focused strategies such as seeking social support from colleagues, supervisors, and family members, as well as avoiding instigators to mitigate emotional distress. On the other hand, problem-focused strategies, such as confronting the instigators in private, were also employed by those seeking to address the source of their stress and assert boundaries. These strategies reflect how lecturers balance emotional regulation with the need to address workplace incivility directly. The study also highlights the significance of support systems in coping with workplace incivility. Social support from peers and family members plays a crucial role in managing the negative impact of incivility, while confronting the source of the mistreatment, although challenging, serves as a proactive measure to maintain professional integrity. Additionally, avoidance and detachment strategies offer temporary relief but may not provide long-term solutions to the issues of workplace incivility experienced by lecturers. Given these findings, university management has an essential role to play in fostering a respectful work environment. Clear policies, open channels for reporting grievances, and the promotion of supportive networks within the workplace are crucial in overcoming incivility and promoting healthier academic cultures. Further research is needed to explore how these coping mechanisms evolve over time and across different types of academic institutions. Additionally, examining the influence of institutional factors and individual resilience can provide deeper insights into how lecturers adapt to and cope with incivility in diverse cultural and organisational settings. This study serves as a foundation for future research aimed at understanding and addressing workplace incivility, ultimately contributing to the creation of more supportive and respectful academic environments in Malaysia.

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