



## **INFLUENCE OF LECTURERS' INCIVILITY ON THE ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE BY OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT STUDENTS IN FEDERAL POLYTECHNICS IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*The study ascertained the influence of lecturers' incivility on the knowledge acquisition of office technology and management students. The descriptive survey research design was used. The study was conducted in federal polytechnics in South East of Nigeria using a population of 950 OTM students. A sample size of 240 respondents was used. The researcher designed and used a set of duly validated questionnaire titled Influence of Lecturers' Incivility on the Acquisition of Knowledge by OTM Students Questionnaire (ILIAKOTMSQ). Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the three research questions and independent z-test was used to test the two null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings indicated that use of intimidating language by lecturers influence students' learning negatively; expression of hostility by lecturers affect students' consistent attendance to classes; lecturer's mocking affects the concentration of OTM students in skills acquisition. Findings based on test of hypotheses indicated that there was no significance difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of use of intimidating languages by lecturers on their learning and that HND and ND students mean responses did not differ significantly on the ways lecturers' mocking affects the concentration of OTM students in skills acquisition. It was therefore concluded that if the objective of business education which OTM is an aspect of must be achieved, lecturers' uncivil attitude should not be overlooked or treated with a wave of hand since it affects students' emotional and physical wellbeing and therefore does not make for the enthusiasm and vitality required in teaching and learning processes. The recommendation among others is that heads of department of office technology and management programmes should organize seminars and symposia to sensitize*



***lecturers on the need for civil behaviours and the inherent danger in passing down uncivil attitude to our students who will become leaders of tomorrow.***

***Key Words:*** Incivility, mocking, bullying, behaviour, learning environment.

## **Introduction**

The ability to foster an atmosphere of civility in tertiary institutions is often elusive. Civil behaviour requires that the people communicate with respect, restraint and responsibility and uncivil communication occur when people fail to do so. According to Berger (2009) incivility is referred to as any speech or action that is disrespectful. Clark (2014) expands on this definition by noting that incivility indicates disregard and insolence for others, causing an atmosphere of disrespect, conflict and stress. In the context, Clark proceeds to note that incivility may be demonstrated by lecturers or students and it violates the norms of mutual respect. It breeds emotion such as fear, hostility and resentment between the parties involved. In a study conducted by the centre for survey research at Indiana University (2008), incivility was described as contrary to the wellbeing of the class, and it includes behaviour that distracts the students or lecturers from learning or teaching, discourages students from participating and derails the lecturers' goal for the period.

Incivility is a general term for social behaviour lacking in civility or good manner. Clark and Springer (2010) described "civility" as being polite, respectful and decent. On the contrary "uncivil" behaviour is often an identified speech or action that is disrespectful or rude and may range from insulting remarks and verbal abuse to explosive violent behaviour. In academics, this can be construed as any behaviour which disrupts the learning of students considering that learning is the process that is targeted at changing the behaviour of the recipient. The causes of this type of behaviour have been attributed to cultural and societal norms. In cultural context, many believe that reactions to noise and insult are culturally determined. Some culture promotes tolerance while some promotes violent reactions. Hence, when brought to the learning environment made up of people from diverse cultures, there is bound to be diverse reactions.

According to Mauk and Hobus (2017) incivility is a term used to describe rude, disruptive, intimidating and undesirable behaviour that are directed towards another person. Other terms found in the literature includes lateral



violence, horizontal violence, relational aggression and bullying. In the views of Forni (2018) incivility often occurs when people are stressed, unhappy and rushed, when these coincide, anything can happen. Incivility erodes self-esteem; damages relationship; increases stress; contaminates the work environment and may escalate into violence. These behaviours exist along a continuum ranging from disruptive behaviour on one end and threatening behaviour on the other.

Incivility in higher educational context is commonly grouped into categories, although the categorical label varies. For example, experts have grouped uncivil behaviour as more serious and less serious behaviour (Connelly, 2019). Less serious behaviours are simply annoyance to most students, although it is important to note that labelling the severity of such behaviour is a subjective task. In other words a behaviour that a student considers rude and disruptive may not bother or even enter the awareness of another student. On the other hand, more serious behaviour may involve expression of hostility, demeaning, and belittling toward the student. Such threat has been on the rise in tertiary institution settings since the 1990s (Clark, 2013).

The most serious form of incivility however occurs when lecturers threaten the students with failure. Clark (2014) noted that while acts of violence on the tertiary institutions are rare, they do occur and such incidents have been given substantial media attention in the recent years. Specifically, students are bothered by lecturers who engage in the following behaviours:

1. Acting in aloof, distant manner toward students or conveying to the students that they are a burden.
2. Threatens to fail students.
3. Constant mocking of students.
4. Bully students

Bullying as an uncivil behaviour is a thoroughly studied phenomenon and one that occurs in OTM programme as regularly as any other discipline in academic institutions. This kind of bullying are looking down on students or making absurd remarks about them which may leave the student psychologically damaged. The result of bullying is widespread and often long term including damage on physiological systems, anxiety and lowered self-esteem. According to Gordon (2019) mocking of students through name calling can have serious



consequences on mental health and it is one of the most damaging form of bullying.

Clark and Springer (2010) are of the view that the frequency and intensity of lecturers' incivility covers verbal abuse such as name calling, teasing students in a way that stings, telling offensive jokes about them, mocking and belittling them in front of others. They also identified intimidation of students as an act of incivility as they may cause actual psychological and physiological symptoms including depression, gastro-intestinal distress, mood-disorder and physical ailment.

Office technology and management program just like any other program in the tertiary institutions is vulnerable to the effect of lecturers' incivility ranging from wickedness to rudeness. According to Nworie and Haughton (2008) recent advances in technology have greatly helped and harmed the practice of lecturing. In particular, the learning state of technologies has brought novelty, originality and flexibility to higher educational settings. At the same time, the progression and development of technology has potentially led to several unanticipated consequences, including new forms of lecturers' incivility. Lecturers may more likely engage in incivility because electronic devices and ICT promote inattention and distraction.

Uncivil behaviour by lecturers could be more distressing and harmful to students whose programme curriculum requires practical demonstration of skills which office technology and management falls into. OTM program is skill driven and needs the concentrated use of the hand, brain, and the eye at the same time. Learning in OTM is critical, because it is a skill driven programme that requires the attention of students to understand the gradual process, scientific knowledge and its concepts. It is technologically driven and is expected to put the students in limelight and make them employable in almost every facet of the world of work. It is therefore designed to equip students in various aspects of different fields of endeavour. Learning in OTM involves problem solving and according to Elom (2016) problem solving learning is a higher order learning process that requires the use of cognitive abilities such as thinking, reasoning and observation.



Having stated that incivility of lecturers could destabilize students' emotional stand, it becomes necessary to find out the influence lecturers' incivility has on students' learning in OTM.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Incivility has been the focus of increased attention in higher educational circles, and is commonly labelled as a growing problem. Many blame the deterioration of civility in higher institution on the society (Connelly, 2019). Nonetheless, experts still struggle to answer the following question. Has incivility always been a problem on campus or has it become worse in the recent years?

According to Oheagbulem (2013), there seem to be a lackadaisical attitude among lecturers' in OTM programme which affects the learning of students. This attitude threatens students' learning to such an extent that they are discouraged from attending classes because such lecturers tend to act uncivil as they try to cover-up their lapses. Moreover uncommitted lecturers use intimidating and threatening languages on students which could breed anxiety and depression. An OTM student might find it difficult to fare well under such emotional condition, since the programme has much to do with skills acquisition that involves the combined use of the hand, the eyes and the brain.

Moreover, recent advances in technology have introduced some complexities in the programme and its students should be made to study in an environment that is conducive if learning must be achieved. One of such positive environmental atmosphere is a cordial student/teacher relationship. Incivility is aghast to cordial relationship and so cannot foster an atmosphere that is conducive for proper learning. Civility in the class depends upon the ability of lecturers to create learning environment that embraces diverse identities and effectively manage conversation rather than bullying or ridiculing students. Misconduct, impoliteness, mocking, use of demeaning words which are few words used to describe uncivil behaviour in the classroom can target and affect students. Although, what constitute uncivil behaviour can be quite subjective and different, its undesirable effects are generally agreed upon. Classroom incivility unsettles the teaching and learning environment in a manner that threatens the cohesion and collaboration among lecturers and students.



Nelson and Jackson (2004) insisted that many of the widespread uncivil behaviour seen in colleges today were virtually non-existent through the mid-1980s. In their view it was only in the last two decades has incivility been recognized and labelled a global concern in higher education. It therefore becomes necessary to find out how it influences the learning of students; especially students whose discipline lends itself to dexterity in the use of work equipment that are complex.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. In what ways does use of intimidating language by lecturers influence students' learning?
2. In what ways does expression of hostility by lecturers affect students' consistent attendance to classes?
3. What are the ways lecturers' mocking affect OTM students' concentration in skills acquisition?



### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** Male and female students do not differ significantly in their mean responses on the influence of use of intimidating languages by lecturers on their learning.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean responses of ND and HND students on the ways lecturers' mocking affects the concentration of OTM students in skills acquisition.

### **Method**

The descriptive survey design was used for the conduct of the study. The population of the study consisted of all students of Office Technology and Management drawn from the three Federal Polytechnics in South East Nigeria. These Polytechnics include: Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic, Unwana; Federal Polytechnic, Nekede, Owerri and Federal Polytechnic, Oko. There are 950 students of OTM in the three Federal Polytechnics in South East Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. A sample size of 240 was used for the study in line with the approved table for determining sample size from a given population developed by Krejcie and Morgan (cited in Igwe, 2018). Stratified sampling technique was used to select this sample size. The instrument used was the Influence of Lecturers' Incivility on the Acquisition of Knowledge by OTM Students Questionnaire (ILIAKOTMSQ). The questionnaire consisted of 20 items based on the purpose of the study and the research questions. The instrument was validated by one Senior Lecturer in the Department of Business Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki and one Chief Lecturer from the Department of Office Technology and Management Department, Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic, Unwana. A pilot study was conducted at Port Harcourt Polytechnic, Rumuola, Port Harcourt to establish the reliability of the instrument. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instrument and this yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.96. Each of the items was assigned four response options of Strongly Agreed (SA-4 points), Agreed (A-3 points), Disagreed (D-2 points), Strongly Disagreed (SD-1 point). The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation. Positive decision rule for the study was established at a mean of 2.50 and above while any mean less than that was regarded as



negative. The null hypotheses were tested using Z-test at 0.05 level of significance. Hypothesis of no significance difference was accepted when the calculated z- value was less than critical z-value and rejected when calculated z- value exceeded the critical z- value.

## Results

### Research Question 1

In what ways does use of intimidating language by lecturers influence students' learning?

**Table 1:** *Mean Ratings of Students on the Ways Use of Intimidating Language by Lecturers Influence Students' Learning.*

| S/<br>N           | Variables  | $\bar{x}$   | SD          | Remarks         |
|-------------------|--|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| 1                 | Makes students loose trend of thought                        | 3.37        | 0.70        | Accepted        |
| 2                 | Makes students feel helpless                                 | 3.02        | 0.92        | Accepted        |
| 3                 | Does not promote co-operation                                | 3.00        | 0.79        | Accepted        |
| 4                 | Diminishes learning moral                                    | 3.50        | 0.73        | Accepted        |
| 5                 | Makes students pay less attention to instructional procedure | 3.06        | 0.90        | Accepted        |
| <b>Grand Mean</b> |  | <b>3.19</b> | <b>0.81</b> | <b>Accepted</b> |

Table 1 is the response of OTM students in Federal Polytechnics in South East Nigeria on the ways use of intimidating language by lecturers influence students' learning. The result of the analysis revealed that use of intimidating language makes students lose their trend of thought, feel helpless, diminishes learning moral and makes them pay less attention to instructional procedure. It however, promotes cooperation of students. This is confirmed by the fact that use of intimidating language by lecturers was rated high with grand mean score of 3.19. The close range of the standard deviation showed that the respondents were not very far from each other in their responses.

### Research Question 2

In what ways does expression of hostility by lecturers affect students' consistent attendance to classes?



**Table 2:** Mean Ratings of Students on the Ways Expression of Hostility by Lecturers Affect Students' Consistent Attendance to Classes.

| S/N               | Variables                                       | $\bar{x}$   | SD          | Remarks         |
|-------------------|---|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| 11                | It breed anxiety in students                    | 3.12        | 0.93        | Accepted        |
| 12                | It breeds frustration                           | 2.68        | 1.05        | Accepted        |
| 13                | It builds resentment towards the teacher        | 3.25        | 0.90        | Accepted        |
| 14                | It creates fear in students                     | 3.29        | 0.80        | Accepted        |
| 15                | It affects students enthusiasm towards learning | 3.11        | 1.01        | Accepted        |
| <b>Grand Mean</b> |   | <b>3.09</b> | <b>0.94</b> | <b>Accepted</b> |

The data presented in Table 2 reveals that the mean score of respondents ranges from 2.68-3.29 with grand mean of 3.09. The respondents affirmed that expression of hostility by lecturers affect students' consistent attendance to classes which hampers their knowledge acquisition. According to the respondents, it makes them feel anxious, frustrated, fearful, less enthusiastic towards learning and builds in them resentment towards the teacher.

### Research Question 3

What are the ways lecturers' mocking affects OTM students' concentration in skills acquisition?

**Table 3:** Mean Ratings of Students on the Ways Lecturers' Mocking Affects the OTM Students Concentration in Skills Acquisition.

| S/N               | Variables  | $\bar{x}$   | SD          | Remarks         |
|-------------------|--|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| 16                | It affects concentration   | 3.00        | 0.79        | Accepted        |
| 17                | Destabilizes emotional stand   | 3.05        | 0.88        | Accepted        |
| 18                | Derail the attention of the students   | 2.66        | 1.13        | Accepted        |
| 19                | Students are frustrated because they cannot coordinate hands and brain for skill acquisition | 3.50        | 0.71        | Accepted        |
| 20                | It encourages violation of norms and mutual respect  | 3.13        | 1.08        | Accepted        |
| <b>Grand Mean</b> |  | <b>3.07</b> | <b>0.92</b> | <b>Accepted</b> |



The result presented in Table 3 indicated that lecturers' mocking of students affect their concentration in skills acquisition. This revelation is based on a weighted mean of 3.07 in a four point scale which indicated that lecturers' mocking destabilize students' emotional stand, derail their attention among others.

### **Hypothesis 1**

Male and female students do not differ significantly in their mean responses on the influence of use of intimidating languages by lecturers on their learning.

**Table 4:** *Summary of z-test Analysis of Male and Female Students Mean Responses on the Influence of the Use of Intimidating Languages by Lecturers on Students' Learning.*

| <b>Gender</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> | <b>Df</b> | <b>z-cal</b> | <b>z-crit</b> | <b>Decision</b> | <b>Significance</b> |
|---------------|----------|-------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Male          | 97       | 3.03        | 0.87      | 00        | 0.90         | 1.64          | Accepted        | Not Significant     |
| Female        | 143      | 3.01        | 0.76      |           |              |               |                 |                     |

From the Table 4 it is observed that the calculated z-value (0.90) is less than critical z-value of 1.64 at 0.05 level of significance; hence  $H_{01}$  is accepted which means that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and females students on the influence of lecturers' use of intimidating language on the acquisition of knowledge of OTM students. This is based on the data which revealed that male students were 97 and female students 143. Therefore, male and female students agreed that use of intimidating language by lecturers have influence on their learning.

### **Hypothesis 2**

There is no significant difference in the mean responses of ND and HND students on the ways lecturers' mocking affects the concentration of OTM students in skills acquisition.

**Table 5:** *Summary of z-test Analysis on the Mean Responses of ND and HND Students on the Ways Lecturers' Mocking Affects the Concentration of OTM Students in Skills Acquisition.*



| Levels       | N   | Mean | SD   | Df | z-cal | z-crit | Decision | S               |
|--------------|-----|------|------|----|-------|--------|----------|-----------------|
| HND Students | 112 | 2.98 | 0.95 | 00 | 1.17  | 1.64   | Accepted | Not Significant |
| ND Students  | 128 | 3.11 | 0.88 |    |       |        |          |                 |

The data in Table 5 reveals that there are 112 HND students and 128 ND students. It is observed that the calculated z-value (1.17) is less than critical z-value of 1.64 at 0.05 level of significance; hence  $H_{o1}$  is accepted which means that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of HND and ND students on the ways lecturers' mocking affect OTM students' acquisition of skills.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The major findings from this study based on answers to research questions are that: Use of intimidating language by lecturers influence students' learning negatively; expression of hostility by lecturers affect students' consistent attendance to classes; lecturer's mocking affects the concentration of OTM students in skills acquisition. Findings based on test of hypotheses indicated that there was no significance difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of use of intimidating languages by lecturers on their learning and that HND and ND students mean responses do not differ significantly on the ways lecturers' mocking affects the concentration of OTM students in skills acquisition.

Authors reviewed reported that uncivil behaviours from lecturers hamper students' learning. According to Gordon (2019) mocking of students is one of the most damaging forms of bullying that have serious consequences on their mental health. Lecturers making mockery of students hamper the students' concentration and breed anxiety and depression. The results also corroborate the findings of Clark (2017) that incivility depending on its intensity, causes actual psychological and physiological symptoms including depression, gastrointestinal distress, mood-disorder and physical ailment which can affect learning. Also Ohaegbulem (2013) echoed this in his views that uncivil attitude of lecturers threatens students' learning to such an extent that they are discouraged from attending classes. Lecturers need to create friendly atmosphere in the teaching and learning of OTM courses to enable the students



concentrate and imbibe the competencies inherent in the programme. Moreover, Okon (2019) asserts that today's classroom requires a devoted teacher, well-organized environment and a fully integrated teaching structure. This is in consideration of the fact that learning is a process and not a product and in the opinion of Elom (2016) this process has continuity and is carried over through various steps. Students must therefore be made to relax for their drive or motive to receive satisfaction. The course content of OTM programme is structured in such a way that students need maximum concentration to be able to engage their hands, brain and eyes for skill acquisition if they must demonstrate such in the e-world of work. Therefore the idea of lecturers making mockery of students hampers their concentration and discourages them from demonstrating the patterns shown to them which affect their dexterity.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that uncivil behaviours of lecturers hamper relationship between students and lecturers and therefore influence knowledge acquisition of OTM students negatively. It can also be concluded that if the objective of Business education which OTM is an aspect of must be achieved, lecturers' uncivil attitude should not be overlooked or treated with a wave of hand since it affects students' emotional and physical well-being and therefore does not make for the enthusiasm and vitality required in teaching and learning processes. Moreover, civility in the classroom broadens the mind of students thereby making them well disposed to knowledge acquisition.

### **Recommendations**

As a result of the conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

1. Heads of Department of Office Technology and Management Programmes should organize seminars and symposia to sensitize lecturers on the need for civil behaviours and the inherent danger in passing down uncivil attitude to our students who will become leaders of tomorrow.
2. Departmental boards should set up disciplinary committees where students could report uncivil acts of lecturers without fear of further intimidation.



- School management should use the medium of new students' orientation to emphasize the need for students to report uncivil behaviours of lectures as this will allay their fears and help the lecturers embrace the attitude of civility.

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