

# Classroom Incivility Behaviours among Medical Students: A Comparative Study in Pakistan

Manal Rauf

**Abstract**—Trained medical practitioners are produced from medical colleges serving in public and private sectors. Prime responsibility of teaching faculty is to inculcate required work ethic among the students by serving as role models for them. It is an observed fact that classroom incivility behaviours are providing a friction in achieving these targets. Present study aimed at identification of classroom incivility behaviours observed by teachers and students of public and private medical colleges as per Glasser's Choice Theory, making a comparison and investigating the strategies being adopted by teachers of both sectors to control undesired classroom behaviours. Findings revealed that a significant difference occurs between teacher and student incivility behaviours. Public sector teacher focussed on survival as a strong factor behind in civil behaviours whereas private sector teachers considered power as the precedent for incivility. Teachers of both sectors are required to use verbal as well as non-verbal immediacy to reach a healthy leaning environment.

**Keywords**—Classroom incivility behaviour, Glasser choice theory, Mehrabian immediacy theory, medical student.

## I. INTRODUCTION

A structured and planned educational environment is the key for successful learning opportunities and shaping behaviours of students towards academic success. A teacher plays an important role in developing students' personalities and a two-way positive interpersonal relationship between a teacher and his/her students is vital in this regard. Students become motivated if teachers support their ideas and praise them in front of others. A conducive learning environment includes a non-threatening behaviour of teachers towards their students and openness towards learning [1].

In Pakistan, medical colleges in public and private sector serve as nurseries to produce trained medical practitioners having all the required professional work ethics. Teaching faculty of these colleges are role models for the medical students. But it is an observed fact that classroom incivility behaviours are becoming a common problem for the teaching faculty of public as well as private sector medical colleges. Students from diverse socio-economic background get admitted to these colleges. They bring with them diverse distinctive behaviours which are publicly manifested in the classrooms. Nowadays, it has become a common practice to observe disruptive behaviours in the classrooms. Teachers get irritated in this situation and the disruptive students themselves are less engaged in the learning situation. Such

students with uncivil behaviours increase exhaustion and tension in the teaching-learning environment. Classroom incivility negatively influences the whole classroom environment. It diverts students' attention from learning, decreases students' motivation level and increases stress among teachers and students. The resultant of all this is disappointment and lack of confidence among teachers.

Reference [2] stated the classroom incivility behaviours as those actions which divert students' and teachers' attention from the process of teaching and learning. They defined that all such actions which dispirit teachers from attaining students learning outcomes and diverts students' attention from achieving the desired objectives are included in the classroom incivility. Some common examples of classroom incivilities are coming late to the classroom and leaving early without reason, mobile phone usage, whispering, sleeping, eating during the lecture, seeking special favours, disrespectful gestures and giving absurd remarks.

Experts of the field have classified classroom incivility behaviours into four major categories which are as:

- Low: engaging in some other reading activity, sleeping, eating or being inattentive to the lecture.
- Medium: Use of mobile phone or dominating in group discussion in order to gain attention.
- High: Use of offensive language or non-acceptable verbal cues.
- Extreme: Threat to personal safety of others

In addition to the above categorization, most serious classroom incivility these days is to use without permission information and telecommunication technology such as cell phone or a teacher's email address to send improper mails to the concerned students and teachers [3], [4].

### A. Teacher Related Incivility Behaviours in the Class Room

Literature review of the related topic reveals that classroom incivility is not related to student behaviours but teachers are also equally responsible. Researches in the field conclude that classroom incivility behaviours cannot be reduced unless and until faculty contribution to it is also explored. A simple example is when students get annoyed with teachers biased and authoritative attitude, they start misbehaving or manifesting different elements related to in civil behaviours. Similarly, if students come late to the class room, instead of asking for a reason teachers start giving sarcastic remarks then students get annoyed and misbehave [10]. Researchers have pointed out that several behaviours which are the resultant of classroom incivility on students' part are as under:

- Assigning difficult tasks to students and then being unhelpful and unfriendly to them.

- Delivering content matter without lesson planning and prior preparation.
- Taking surprise tests frequently and then failing the students.
- Creating confusion among students by altering time table or delaying the class schedule.
- Allowing some students to demean and bully other class fellows.
- Showing favouritism in the class room [11].

Some major causes of contributing factors towards classroom incivility behaviours on teachers' part may be lack of experience in the teaching field, less training in teaching learning process, wrong perception about students' previous knowledge, anti-social behaviour or highly social behaviour with the students. Teachers' anti-social behaviours frustrate the students and their highly social behaviours make the students cross that thin border line of respect and trust as teachers [12].

#### B. Causes of Students' Incivility Behaviours

A significant increase in students' classroom incivility behaviours is being observed by the researchers these days. Literature review has revealed many root causes of this situation. Some of them are:

- Emotional issues of students as they have become detached from their parents due to their busy life style.
- Excessive abuse of technology.
- Health issues of students including unhealthy eating habits and abnormal sleeping patterns.
- Attention seeking habits due to some emotional reasons.
- Uncomfortable physical environment of the classroom including lack of heating arrangement in winters and lack of ventilation in summers.
- Comparison with other class fellows on the basis of difference in parental socio-economic status.
- Over-crowded class rooms [13].

#### 1. Effects of Class Room Incivility Behaviours on Teaching Learning Environment

All the above mentioned behaviours create a frustrated and rigid class room environment. Teachers are frustrated and students are unhappy in such an environment in which classroom incivility prevails. Teachers become depressed, disappointed and demotivated if they are unable to cope with such behaviours. Students might lose the level of respect and trust towards teachers and teachers may become upset when incapable of handling classroom incivility behaviours. The resultant of all this is a distorted and disturbed learning environment in which less or no learning occurs [14]

#### 2. Reporting Class Room Incivility Behaviours

Incivility behaviours in the class room are alarmingly threatening for the whole of teaching learning environment but it has been observed by the researchers that class room incivility is not very frequently reported to the higher and concerned authorities unless and until it becomes a total menace. Teachers feel that if they report such behaviours, management will think about their incapability to handle such

problems or may add it negatively to their service record. Whereas students also try to avoid pointing out such problems as they feel threatened of dire consequences on part of the respective teachers.

#### II.CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Conceptual framework was constructed on Glasser Choice Theory and Mehrabian's Immediacy Theory. Glasser states that all human needs are encoded in the biological system, all purposeful behaviours aim at satisfaction of needs and humans have full control over their behaviours. Humans alter their behaviours if given guidance and opportunities. This theory clarifies that student incivility behaviour is a conscious option and not a conditioned stimulus – response. Choice theory further states that there is a correlation between basic human needs and the respective behaviours. For example, belongingness is a basic human need and to fulfil it, students use whispering, using mobile phone in class or chew gum to satisfy the need of belongingness and fun. All humans have a need to show power through survival. A student showing abusive behaviour, bullying, cheating, being disrespectful tries to fulfil the need for power and survival. Freedom is another basic need to make self-choices. A student coming late to the class or sleeping during lectures, being unprepared during tests and taunting others are behaviours of choice and reflect freedom among disruptive students [5]. Second theory taken into consideration was Mehrabian Immediacy Theory which states that instruction is the process which brings teachers and students closer to each other. It includes verbal and non-verbal immediacy which is frequently practiced in class rooms. Non-verbal immediacy includes eye contact, relaxed body language, friendly gestures and smiling whereas verbal immediacy is manifested as use of humour, lively classroom, calling students by their first names, encouraging them and getting their positive input in classroom discussions [6].

Classroom immediacy is positively correlated with students' cognitive learning, student motivation, interpersonal attachment, student motivation and participation [7], [8]. Immediacy behaviours are negatively correlated with verbal aggression, resistance by students and aggressive body language [9].

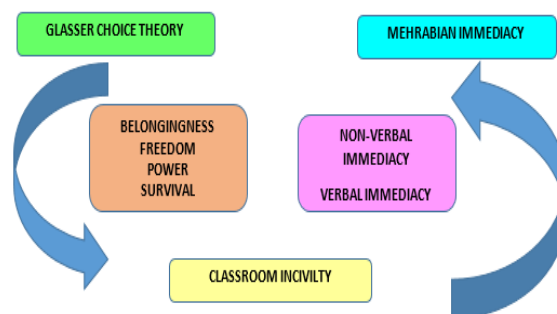


Fig. 1 Conceptual framework of study

*A. Objectives of the Study*

- i. To identify classroom incivility behaviours observed by teachers of public and private medical colleges as per Glasser's Choice Theory
- ii. To find out classroom incivility behaviours observed by students of public and private medical colleges as per Glasser's Choice Theory
- iii. To compare classroom incivility behaviours of students of public and private medical colleges.
- iv. To compare classroom incivility behaviours of teachers of public and private medical colleges.
- v. To investigate and compare strategies used by teachers of public and private medical colleges to control classroom incivilities as per Mehrabian's Immediacy Theory

*B. Hypotheses of the Study*

- i. There is no significant difference between the classroom incivility behaviours being observed by the teachers of public and private medical colleges.
- ii. There is no significant difference between the classroom incivility behaviours being observed by the students of public and private medical colleges.
- iii. There is no significant difference between the strategies being used by the teachers of public and private medical colleges to control classroom incivility behaviours.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research design was used for the research study. Population included all the teachers and students of medical colleges situated in Rawalpindi and Islamabad region. Due to time and resource constraint, random sampling technique was used to select sample of the study. Sample size of students constituted of 200 students from first and second year classes of public and private sector medical colleges situated in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Random selection of teachers included 60 teachers teaching at first and second year of the same colleges. Delimitations of this research study included collection of data from first and second year medical students of Rawalpindi and Islamabad only. Similarly, teachers of same colleges teaching at same levels were taken as research respondents only.

## IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Table I displays the difference in classroom incivility behaviours observed by the students of public and private medical colleges. Students of private medical colleges identify teacher incivility behaviours such as starting lecture late ( $M=2.3$ ) whereas public college students identify this behaviour at  $M=1.7$ . In private sector, teachers leaving classroom early is  $M=4.1$  whereas in public sector it is  $M=4.9$ . Unexpected angry remarks on part of teacher are identified by students at  $M=3.2$  and in private sector mean is 2.4. Repeated use of mobile phones, behavioural abuse, delayed feedback, unprepared lectures criticism on students and cancellation of classes without prior information are fluctuating between  $M=4.1$  to 4.6 in private medical colleges

whereas these variables are being manifested at  $M=2.2$  to 3.7 in public medical colleges. Total  $M=56.23$  in private sector responses and 66.34 in public medical college responses was observed.

TABLE I  
TEACHER CLASSROOM INCIVILITY BEHAVIOURS (N= 200)

Teacher Classroom Incivility Behaviours	Private College	Public College
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Starts lecture late	2.3(1.2)	1.7(.90)
Leaves early from lecture	4.1(2.1)	4.9(2.3)
Unexpected angry remarks	3.2(2.0)	2.4(1.3)
Repeated use of mobile phones	4.1(2.1)	2.2(1.0)
Do not discourage behavioural abuse	4.2(2.2)	4.6(2.1)
Discuss personal issues frequently	3.7(1.8)	2.5(1.3)
Do not facilitate when task is unclear	4.3(2.3)	3.7(1.8)
Do not respond to all questions	3.8(2.1)	2.5(1.4)
Comments on students look	3.7(1.9)	2.1(1.0)
Do not give feedback on time	4.1(2.1)	3.8(2.1)
Have authoritative behaviour	3.9(2.0)	1.7(.90)
Appears unprepared for class	4.5(2.3)	2.6(1.6)
Criticize students	4.3(2.7)	1.9(1.0)
Avoids students rudeness	3.2(2.1)	3.7(2.4)
Cancels class without prior information	4.6(2.4)	2.7(1.1)
Total	56.23(24.39)	66.34(34.18)

TABLE II  
STUDENT CLASSROOM INCIVILITY BEHAVIOURS (N= 60)

Student Classroom Incivility Behaviours	Private College	Public College
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Arriving late in lectures	3.2(1.7)	1.9(.90)
Leaving early from lecture room	2.3(1.2)	4.9(2.4)
Eating and chewing gum	1.2(2.0)	3.4(1.3)
Talking/ whispering in the classroom	3.3(2.1)	1.2(1.0)
Being disrespectful to other students	4.1(2.0)	4.7(2.3)
Disrupting group discussions	2.7(1.8)	2.5(1.3)
Using abusive language	2.3(2.3)	3.7(1.8)
Giving derogatory remarks	3.8(2.1)	2.5(1.4)
Taunting other students	3.7(1.9)	2.1(1.0)
Cheating in exams and quizzes	4.1(2.1)	3.8(2.1)
Showing threatening gestures	3.9(2.0)	1.7(.90)
Inappropriate body language	4.5(2.3)	2.6( 1.6)
Using mobile phone	4.3(2.7)	1.9(1.0)
Bullying others	3.2( 2.1)	3.7(2.4)
Asking for special favours	4.4(2.4)	2.7( 1.1)
Total	54.52( 23.18)	69.83(35.17)

Table II shows the difference in classroom incivility behaviours observed by the students of public and private medical colleges. Teachers of private medical colleges identify student incivility behaviours such as coming to lecture late ( $M=3.2$ ) whereas public college students identify this behaviour at  $M=1.9$ . In private sector, students leaving lectures early is  $M= 2.3$  whereas in public sector it is  $M=4.9$ . Eating and chewing gum are identified by teachers at  $M=1.2$  in private sector and in public sector mean is 3.4. Disrupting group discussions, using abusive language, giving derogatory remarks, taunting other students, cheating in exams and

quizzes, inappropriate body language, using mobile phone, bullying others and asking for special favours range between  $M=3.2$  to  $4.5$  in private medical colleges whereas these variables are being manifested at  $M=1.7$  to  $3.7$  in public medical colleges. Total  $M=54.52$  in private sector responses and  $69.83$  in public medical college responses was observed.

Table III indicates the results of Independent samples t-test table showing classroom incivility behaviours related to belongingness, freedom, power and survival among students of public and private sector medical colleges. The values of t-

test reveal that incivility behaviours of teachers in public sector medical colleges differ from the behaviours of teachers of private sector medical colleges. The level of significance was less than  $p<.05$  and the value of Cohen's  $d$  was also ranging from  $.63$  to  $.74$  in public sector and from  $.69$  to  $.72$  in private sector responses which indicated the higher reliability of the test. It was concluded that there is a significant difference in the classroom incivility behaviours related to teachers of medical colleges of both the sectors.

TABLE III  
INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST TABLE SHOWING CLASSROOM INCIVILITY BEHAVIOURS RELATED TO BELONGINGNESS, FREEDOM, POWER AND SURVIVAL AMONG TEACHERS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR MEDICAL COLLEGES (N=200)

Scales	t Public	t Private	p Public	p Private	Cohen's d Public	Cohen's d Private	df
Belongingness	13.474	12.762	.001*	.001*	.74	.69	198
Freedom	12.367	11.234	.002*	.000*	.63	.72	
Power	17.132	15.701	.000*	.002*	.67	.71	
Survival	16.551	14.309	.001*	.000*	.71	.69	

\* $p<0.05$

TABLE IV  
INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST TABLE SHOWING CLASSROOM INCIVILITY BEHAVIOURS RELATED TO BELONGINGNESS, FREEDOM, POWER AND SURVIVAL AMONG STUDENTS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR MEDICAL COLLEGES (N=60)

Scales	t Public	t Private	p Public	p Private	Cohen's d Public	Cohen's d Private	df
Belongingness	14.578	12.342	.002*	.000*	.69	.70	58
Freedom	14.701	13.476	.000*	.001*	.71	.71	
Power	15.973	16.231	.001*	.002*	.68	.69	
Survival	17.378	15.341	.000*	.000*	.73	.62	

\* $p<0.05$

Table IV shows the results of Independent samples t-test for classroom incivility behaviours related to belongingness, freedom, power and survival among teachers of public and private sector medical colleges. The values of the table reveal that incivility behaviours of teachers in public sector medical colleges differ from their counterparts. The level of significance was less than  $p<.05$  and the value of Cohen's  $d$  was also ranging from  $.68$  to  $.73$  in public sector and from  $.62$  to  $.71$  in private sector responses which indicated a moderately high reliability of the independent samples t-test. It was concluded that there is a significant difference in the classroom incivility behaviours related to teachers serving in medical colleges of both the sectors.

less than  $.05$  level. The Cohen's  $d=.86$  suggests that the t-test conducted is highly significant. The null hypothesis that "there is no significant difference between the strategies being used by the teachers of public and private medical colleges to control classroom incivility behaviours among students" is not accepted. Hence it can be concluded that a major difference is present in the strategies being adopted by the teachers of both sectors.

## V.DISCUSION AND CONCLUSION

Findings of the study based on results indicate that public sector medical college teachers usually start lectures late and leave the classes early which frustrates the students. Public sector teachers are more in a habit of cancelling classes without prior information as compared to their counterparts. Instead of checking and properly reprimanding students of their rude behaviours, teachers of both the sectors try to avoid such a situation which makes rude students act more violently next time. Frequent use of mobile phones, discussion of personal issues and comments on students' appearance is a common practice among teachers of public medical colleges. Moreover, results of data analysis show that in comparison classroom incivility behaviours were highly occurring in public medical colleges. Cheating in exams, use of abusive language, bullying, asking for special favours and leaving the lecture halls early was a common practice among students in public sector.

TABLE V  
INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST FOR COMPARISON OF VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL IMMEDIACY BEING ADOPTED BY TEACHERS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE MEDICAL COLLEGES (N=60)

Sector	n	Mean	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Public	30	25.87	14.89	58	.001*	.86
Private	30	27.15				

\* $p<0.05$

Table V for the independent sample t-test conducted on the responses obtained from teachers of public and private sector medical colleges clearly indicate that there is a major difference in the responses (Public  $M=25.87$ , Private  $M=27.15$ ). t value= $14.89$  (58) is significant at  $p=.001$  whereas it is

If we assess for factors of classroom incivility behaviours based on Glasser Choice Model, then students of public sector had shown such behaviours more intensely for belongingness, freedom, power and survival. Most strong in civil behaviours were related to the factor of survival in public sector and related to belongingness in private sector among students. Similarly, teachers of public medical colleges responded to in civil behaviours of students for the purpose of survival but in private sector, teachers' response to such behaviours was for the purpose of exerting power over students. Teachers of both sectors concentrated less on freedom and belongingness to control classroom incivility behaviours. Teachers of both sectors found incivility as a challenging situation so reported less to the concerned authorities, having a perception that this reporting could add to their incapability as a professional of this field.

Non-verbal immediacy to control in civil behaviours was practised more by private sector teachers and verbal immediacy was focussed by public teachers. Teachers of private medical colleges most often used eye contact, friendly gestures and relaxed body language as controlling strategies and public sector teachers use encouragement, calling students by their first names and using humour for this purpose.

Freedom and belongingness are found to be weak factors in both sectors to control the situation. Teachers of both sectors need to provide freedom to students by making them responsible about their own learning and they need to act as facilitators for them. Academic freedom should be the central theme of a democratic class room so that all students feel loved and responsible to handle their own learning [15]. Similarly, sense of belongingness helps in making students feel happy, comfortable, confident and at ease with themselves and the learning environment. This situation helps in reducing disruptions in the teaching learning environment due to incivilities [16].

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Belongingness and freedom are basic human needs. Humans tend to satisfy these lower level needs in order to move further to higher level needs accordingly to Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory. So teachers may focus on such controlling strategies which help in satisfaction of these needs of students in both the sectors.

A combination of verbal as well as non-verbal immediacy may be applied as it serves as strong tool for controlling classroom incivility behaviours.

Administration may arrange training sessions related to coping up with classroom disruptive behaviours in order to equip teachers for handling such situations.

Teachers may set up clear parameters with students mutually related to classroom rules and behaviours and hand them over to students. If students deviate from them, then proper action may be taken to avoid such behaviours in future.

Management may show a cooperative and supportive attitude towards teachers if they feel incapable to handle in civil behaviours and set up a committee to give decisions in this regard.

Counselling sessions may be held frequently for disruptive students.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Davis, H. A. (2002). The quality and impact of relationships between elementary school students and teachers. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 26(4), 431-453.
- [2] Bjorklund, W. L., & Rehling, D. L. (2009). Student perceptions of classroom incivility. *College Teaching*, 58(1), 15-18.
- [3] Marini, Z. A. (2008) The Learning Republic: Fostering Civility in the University Classroom Interview with Dr. Zopito Marini Reflection Newsletter of the Teaching Support Centre, University of Western Ontario.
- [4] Clark, C. M. (2008). Student voices on faculty incivility in nursing education: A conceptual model. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 29(5), 284-289.
- [5] Glasser, W. (2010). *Choice theory: A new psychology of personal freedom*. Harper Collins.
- [6] Roca, K (2007). Student motivation and attitudes: The role of the affective domain in geoscience learning. Retrieved <http://serc.carleton.edu/NAGTWorkshops/affective/immediacy.html>
- [7] Chesebro, J.L. and McCroskey, J.C. (2001). The relationship of teacher clarity and immediacy with student state receiver apprehension, affect, and cognitive learning. *Communication Education*, 50, 59-68.
- [8] Carrell, L.J. and Menzel, K.E. (2001). Variations in learning, motivation, and perceived immediacy between live and distance education. *Communication Education*, 50, 230-241.
- [9] Messman, S.J. and Jones-Corley, J. (2001). Effects of communication environment, immediacy, communication apprehension on cognitive and affective learning. *Communication Monographs*, 68, 184-200.
- [10] Nutt, C. M. (2013). Stop the Madness! College Faculty and Student Perceptions of Classroom Incivility.
- [11] Kuhlenschmidt, S. L. (1999). Promoting internal civility: Understanding our beliefs about teaching and students. *New directions for teaching and learning*, 1999(77), 13-22.
- [12] Alberts, H. C., Hazen, H. D., & Theobald, R. B. (2010). Classroom incivilities: The challenge of interactions between college students and instructors in the US. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 34(3), 439-462.
- [13] Seidman, A. (2005). The learning killer: Disruptive student behavior in the classroom. *Reading improvement*, 42(1), 40.
- [14] McKinne, M., & Martin, B. N. (2010). Higher education faculty and student perceptions of classroom incivility. *Journal of College and Character*, 11(2).
- [15] Linsin, M. (2011). Why freedom is a power classroom management strategy. Retrieved from <http://www.smartclassroommanagement.com/2011/09/17/why-freedom-is-a-powerful-classroom-management-strategy>
- [16] Stewart, J.D (2014). Every student needs to feel like they belong. Retrieved from <http://www.teachpreschool.org/2014/07/every-child-needs-to-feel-like-they-belong>