

Uncivil behaviour and individual experiences at Finland

Tiina Brandt

Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Finland

Tiina.Brandt@haaga-helia.fi

22.12.2022



Työsuojelurahasto
Arbetarskyddsfonden
The Finnish Work Environment Fund



Haaga-Helia

Background

- The phenomenon of uncivil behaviour has been studied in different fields, e.g., industry, health care, and higher education. It is harmful to employees as well as organisations (Zhou *et al.*, 2015).
- It is defined as *low-intensity deviant behaviour* with ambiguous intent to harm the target in violation of workplace norms mandating mutual respect. Low-intensity behaviour means that uncivil acts are less intense and do not carry transparent intent
- Studies describe uncivil behaviour as a
 - Psychological harassment and emotional aggression
 - Specific type of workplace deviance
 - Experienced as workplace mistreatment
 - Distinguished from aggression
 - Disrupts the workplace norm of mutual respect

Earlier research about uncivility

- Workplace incivility has been found to be associated with *numerous negative effects*:
 - Including increased absenteeism, higher turnover, poor mental health, decreased productivity, turnover intentions and negative effects on employees' psychological and physical health
- Even with an absence of clear intent to harm, *incivility may be detrimental to targets, witnesses and co-workers*, adversely impacting the organisation if this behaviour is not addressed
- *Reasons for uncivil behaviours* are varied; they include professional jealousy; unclear, amplified, competing, and/or overly demanding work expectations; low salaries and salary compression; the need to adopt new technologies; stressful, volatile work settings; competition for scarce resources; and the pursuit of professional advancement.
- *Narcistic people* have a specific tendency to harm workplace norms and studies. They have a strong propensity for self-enhancement and a sense of entitlement. They use all the resources available to them to attract the admiration of others as a way of confirming their feelings of superiority.

Data

- The data was collected during 2019-2020.
- The questionnaire instruments were sent to respondents who have taken courses at the Open University and University of Applied Sciences, Finland.
- *A total of 214 respondents* completed the questionnaire, indicating a response rate of 30%.
- All participants had a professional background in business and possessed work experience. The minimum age of respondents was 30 years. The topic under the exploration was sensitive, personal, potentially emotional and difficult for the respondents. Therefore, it was expected that data collected in the questionnaires would be more appropriate, with the subjects remaining anonymous and distant, leading to more straightforward and honest answers.

Questionnaire

Questionnaire consisted of two parts:

- *Uncivil persons' behaviour and qualities* with 39 items with Likert-scale 1-5. The respondents were asked to evaluate the one uncivil person from the current working place or from his/her working history.
- *Respondents' own traits* and also responses on the uncivil behaviour with eight items (Likert-scale 1-5).

The uncivil persons behaviour -questionnaire was analysed in SPSS-Program with principal component analyses (Varimax) to identify uncivil behaviour dimensions.

Dimensions were as follows:

1. Willingness to lead, 10 items, Cronbach alpha: 0,917)
2. Focus on own appearance, 5 items, CA:0,868
3. Attention seeking, 4 items, CA:0,829)
4. Manipulating, 4 items, CA: 0,732
5. Strong will, 2 items, CA: 0,724
6. Self-Sufficiency 3 items, CA: 0,557
7. Insolence 2 items, CA: 0,443

Results

Uncivil behavior dimensions	Mean (std)
Willingness to lead	4,10 (0,726) (2.)
Focus on own appearance	2,67 (0,965) (7.)
Attention seeking	3,98 (0,862) (3.)
Manipulating	3,48 (0,800) (5.)
Strong will	4,47 (0,694) (1.)
Self-sufficiency	3,68 (0,878) (4.)
Insolence	2,82 (0,524) (6.)
Total – Uncivil behavior	3,60 (0,486)



The person with uncivil behaviour	Has a lot of narcissistic traits	I have met a lot of people with narcissistic traits	I avoid those kind of people	I feel myself insecure with those kind of people	I have also narcissistic traits	I easily notice social games and use of power
Willingness to lead	0,538**	0,184**	0,348**	0,095	-0,074	0,244**
Focus on own appearance	0,212**	0,198**	0,032	0,105	-0,022	0,017
Attention seeking	0,475**	0,126	0,274**	0,057	-0,064	0,126
Manipulating	0,325**	0,127	0,77	0,339**	-0,058	0,065
Strong will	0,407**	0,145*	0,313**	0,159*	-0,103	0,207**
Self-sufficiency	0,119	-0,015	0,08	0,305**	-0,070	-0,043
Insolence	0,293**	0,138*	0,398**	0,105	-0,093	0,155*
Overall Uncivil Behaviour	0,556**	0,184**	0,294**	0,207**	-0,106	0,133



	The uncivil person has a lot of narcissistic traits	I have met a lot of people with narcissistic traits	I avoid uncivil persons that I describe here	I feel myself unsecure with those kind of people	I am having also narcissistic traits	I easily notice social games and use of power
Has a lot of narcissistic traits	1					
I have met a lot of people with narcissistic traits	0,213**	1				
I avoid uncivil persons that I describe here	0,441**	0,806	1			
I feel myself unsecure with uncivil people	0,127	0,097	0,209**	1		
I am having also narcissistic traits	-0,044	0,119	-0,069	-0,012	1	
I easily notice social games and use of power	0,225**	0,310**	0,087	0,100	-0,014	1

DISCUSSION

- Among Finnish respondents, *Strong will* was the most occurring behaviour of uncivil persons, second highest was *Willingness to lead* and third was *Attention seeking*.
- It seems that *Finnish people tend to get anxiety around people with strong will, people who want to be in positions of being in charge, and the center of the attention.* Individuals who do not give room to others, and do not consider others' opinions are perceived to break the rules of Finnish working life. It is not common to observe uncivil persons as focusing on their looks or behaving in a shameless way. Such uncivil behaviour is not so obvious.



- *Avoidance of uncivil behaviour* was connected with behaviour of Willingness to lead, Attention seeking, Strong will and Insolence.
- *Feeling insecure* were those who experienced uncivil behaviour as Manipulating, Strong willed or Self-sufficient.
- *Those respondents who reported having narcissistic traits* were not correlated with uncivil behaviour dimensions.
 - These respondents did not correlate with trying to avoid uncivil persons or feeling insecure around them.
 - They did not either appraise those as narcissistic or had not met narcissistic behaving people
- *Respondents who feel insecure with uncivil people tend to avoid those.*
 - *People who avoid* uncivil persons tend to think that uncivil people have a lot of narcissistic traits.

Thank you!