



Journal of Business and Social Science Review
Issue: Vol. 2; No.9; September 2021 (pp.1-24)
ISSN 2690-0866(Print) 2690-0874 (Online)
Website: www.jbssrnet.com
E-mail: editor@jbssrnet.com
Doi: 10.48150/jbssr.v2no9.2021.a1

COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION USE AND EMPLOYEES' INCIVILITY IN A HISTORICALLY BLACK UNIVERSITY: AN ACTION RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This study diagnoses and proposes action toward addressing issues related to workplace incivility in a historically Black University in the United States. Therefore, the primary objective of this study was to explore the influence of computer-mediated communication use on (in)civility. The approach to conducting this research involved mixed method and participatory action research using the four phases of action research proposed by Coghlan and Brannick. The first phase of this study examined the context of the problem to determine if the issue was worth studying. Phase 2 entailed the development of a plan for examining the issue. Taking action in phase three, involved data collection to diagnose and assess the problem. Finally, phase four involved analysis of the collected data and preparation and sharing of an action plan with employees and pertinent organizational decision makers for feedback via focus group discussion. From the employee population of 729, the sample included 298 university respondents of which, 45.5% were faculty and 52.1% were staff. Generally, results of the data collection indicate that workplace incivility does exist in the organizational environment. However, it rarely occurs in the form of a direct attack and most commonly occurs in a passive-aggressive nature. In addition, based on further examination of the findings based on focus group feedback, this study also specifically exposed a significant correlation between workplace incivility and the use of email as a form of computer-mediated communication.

Keywords: Computer-Mediated Communication Use; Employees' Incivility; Historically Black University;

Action Research; United States

1.0 Introduction

Workplace incivility has been defined in previous research as low-intensity defiant workplace behaviours that have an arguable intent to cause harm (Lewis and Malecha, 2011). Specifically, workplace incivility, according to Cortina et al (2001), relates to "low-intensity behavior" with obscure intent to cause harm to the intended target. Such behaviors occur in the form of: being rude or discourteous, disregarding the feelings of others, showing lack of effort, and demonstrating lack of respect for authority figures. It has also been expressed that it is costly and pervasive and has negative consequences related to the affective, cognitive and behavioural well-being of those who are targeted, witness to, and instigators of such behaviours (Schilpzand, Pater, and Erez, 2016). These behaviours have commonly been studied with regard to their relevance to nursing and identified to occur in high stress work environments like that of healthcare (Stoddard, 2017). Previous studies suggest that its behavioural context has the potential to be detrimental to the work environment. Its presence promotes declining service quality from affected organizations. And, characteristics associated with such behaviour include the lack of regard for the feelings and opinions of others, threatening gestures and/or actions, and unwillingness to collaborate or cooperate with others (Stoddard, 2017).

Incivility, as a major organizational problem, was also corroborated by many recent studies (Chen et al, 2018; Ejohwomu., Olalekan, &Ka, 2017; Painter&Jorge, 2017; Young., Melissa, &Marizen, 2017).

Despite training efforts, Savannah State University has still experienced issues with workplace incivility and the use of computer-mediated communication. Action is required if the university is going to reduce occurrences of workplace incivility, attain higher levels of collaboration based on the use of computer-mediated communication, and increase success as it relates to student retention and graduation. Although previous research suggests that workplace incivility generally appears in higher education in interactions between faculty, between faculty and students, and between students and their peers (Disbrow and Prentice, 2009; Taylor et al, 2018), further research is necessary to examine how workplace incivility occurs, how it is perceived, and how it should be addressed within a given organization. In addition, previous studies suggests that although there are some consistencies with regard to civility, variations exist with regard to how it is defined based on the organizational environment (Clark and Carnosso, 2008; Disbrow and Prentice, 2009; Yamada, Duffy, and Berry, 2018). In addition, perceptions of civility can be varied (Caza and Cortina, 2007; Clark and Carnosso, 2008; Clark and Springer, 2007; Kim., Insin, &Sunghyup, 2016; Walsh&Cunningham, 2017). As a result, approaches to addressing it can differ based on the circumstances of the environment (Cortina et al, 2001; 2013; Cortina and Magley, 2003; Clark and Ritter, 2018; Pearson &Porath, 2005; Sidle, 2009; Zheng., Tomas., Ryan, &Hinrichs, 2016). Therefore, the goal of this study was to define, explore and propose actions related to workplace incivility within a specified organization.

According to the Department of Education, Historically Black Colleges\Universities (HBCUs) are a source of pride and accomplishment for the community and nation. The Higher Education Act of 1965 defines HBCUs. According to definition, HBCUs are historically black colleges or universities that were established prior to 1964 and were established on the principal mission to educate black Americans. A nationally recognized accrediting agency or association that is reliable with regard to the quality of training offered or making reasonable progress towards accreditation as determined by the United States Secretary of Education must now accredit these institutions. HBCUs are responsible for offering skill and talent development for all students regardless of race (White House. Initiatives on Historically Black Colleges and Universities 2019, March 20).

In an effort to offer a more focused approach to studying incivility in the workplace, this study examined the effects that computer-mediated communication use and work-related tasks, among university employees have on workplace incivility in a historically black university in the United States. The main aim of the study was therefore to evaluate the specified organizational issue using action research methodology to: (1) appropriately identify the organizational problem, (2) apply knowledge of related theory to encourage the organization to reflect upon its impact on the organizational community, and (3) collaborate with organizational stakeholders to develop an action plan that would appropriately address the organizational issue. In alignment with the aforementioned need for organization specific exploration of workplace incivility, this study employed action research methodology to evaluate and reflect upon the presence of workplace incivility at Savannah State University and to explore the role that computer-mediated communication plays in contributing to workplace incivility. This study, therefore offers a practical but theoretically sound perspective that is inclusive of new knowledge gained through insider action research, evaluation and reflection on the identified issue relevant to the examined university. Accordingly, this research assessed the following critical action research objectives: definition of the fundamental concepts relevant to the development of the thesis: workplace incivility, computer-mediated communication, and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs); identification of the organizational problem; establishment of the theoretical and practical framework for the study through a review of relevant literature; definition of the methodology employed to gather insight into and foster better understanding of the examined organizational issue through deductive reasoning; analysis and identification of relevant understandings; proposal of changes to Savannah State University's policies and strategies based on research awareness; discussion of the findings and intended practical impact of the proposed action plan.

The action research used a mixed methods approach. Action research is a multi-step process applicable to both academic and non-academic research. It differs from traditional research in that it allows the researcher to become directly engaged in the research process and provides solutions to identified problems that are applicable to taking corrective action(s) that have the potential to promote sustainable organizational development (Antonellis and Berry, 2017). Using this method, researchers are able to link proposed actions to methodology through reflection (Townsend, 2013).

However, action research requires a significant time commitment relative to its planning to promote best results and collaboration among all stakeholders (Bradbury, 2015).

The study offered both the researcher and organizational stakeholders a deeper understanding of the problem while contributing to previous studies on higher education environments that primarily addressed the same groups (i.e. faculty-to-faculty and faculty-to-student, etc.). In addition, this study offers implications not provided by the extant literature by offering answers to the identified questions, specifically with regard to the examined organization. Consequently, to achieve the above objectives and to investigate further the root causes and propose tangible solutions to the above organizational issues, the study answered the following questions:

1. Does workplace incivility exist at the examined university?
2. In what form does workplace incivility appear at the examined university?
3. Is computer-mediated communication being used at the examined university?
4. What are computer-mediated communication methods being used for at the examined university?
5. Does computer-mediated communication use influence workplace incivility at the examined university?

The research answered the above questions using both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis (Ahn, 2016; Costa & Pedro Neves, 2017) in examining how the use of computer-mediated communication systems influenced workplace incivility.

Organizational context and identification of organizational issue

The organization examined in this study, Savannah State University (SSU), is the oldest public HBCU in the state of Georgia and the oldest institution of higher learning in the city of Savannah. Given that it is a public institution, the state (USG) governs the institution and it must comply with the state's enforced standards. These standards are relative, for example, to: technology, administration, admissions, fees, budgeting, degree offerings, etc. Savannah State University was founded in 1890. Although at its founding it was established for the education of colored youth, the current demographics of the university (as obtained from the university's Office of Institutional Research and Planning), although generally African American, are relatively diverse; including: 84.4% Black/African American, 6.5% Hispanic/Latino, 4.3% White, 3.2% Other, .4% American Indian/Alaska Native, and .2% Asian. With regard to the university's organizational structure, the organizational chart reveals that (at the onset of this research) the university had four colleges and a number of supporting departments. However, it also shows that (at the time of this study) a single administrator was responsible for single-handedly managing twenty of the university's enterprises.

This study examined the relevance and impact of workplace incivility in the subject organization and examined the role that computer-mediated communication use plays in promoting uncivil behaviors. Specifically, this study took into account that Savannah State University (a historically black institution of higher education) has experienced issues of workplace incivility. These issues were pointed out by organizational leadership in the established topic of focus for a weeklong institute, "...Collective Collaboration and Civil Communication Contribute to Consistent College Completion" (taken from the university's 2015 Spring Faculty/Staff Institute Program). Civility was highlighted, in this meeting of faculty, staff, and administrators, as an aspect of the organizational environment that has the potential to promote the university's ability to develop increased rates of retention. Subsequently, the university identified incivility as a major workplace issue in my organisation, and deemed that it is necessary for action to be taken to reduce its occurrence. The university administrator suggested that the presence of incivility inhibits the organization's ability to collaborate collectively and engage in civil communication to promote enhanced levels of student retention and graduation using the implemented systems. Similar to the work of previous researchers, both the reduction of uncivil behavior and increased use of currently employed systems had the potential to promote increased rates of retention and graduation at the university (Wasserman and Kram, 2009; Coghlan and Brannick, 2014; Costa & Pedro Neves, 2017; Jayamohan., Alexander, & Moss, 2017). In addition, in other breakout sessions, diverse members of the organization paired together to brainstorm ways that uncivil behavior occurs in the workplace in relation to different aspects of the organization where new systems have been implemented to promote increased retention and graduation rates. The focal areas for the discussions included: advisement, assessment, customer service, and collaboration between departments.

According to McNiff (2016), researchers should seek to redefine their abilities with regard to undertaking action research. Therefore, in assessing the researchers relevance to the study as an insider researcher (Unluer, 2012; Pang&Ng, 2016; Ejohwomu., Olalekan, &Ka, 2017), the study focused on evaluating the researchers capabilities with regard to offering solutions to the identified organizational issues.

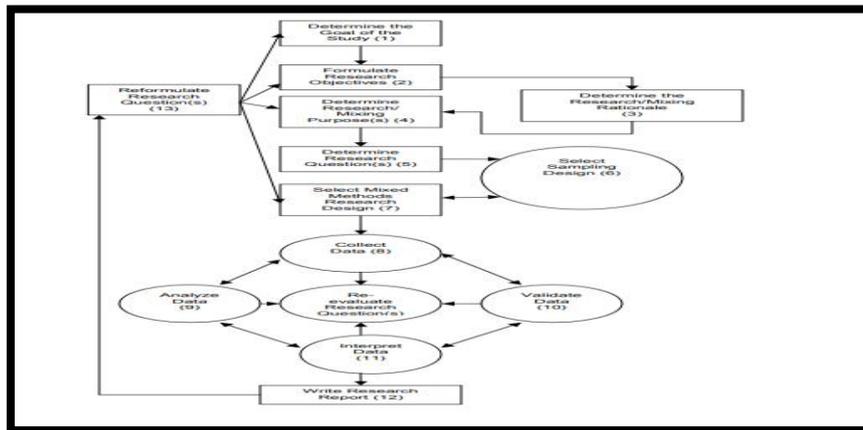
As an alumna and member of the faculty at the university examined in this study, it is the researchers desire to support the growth and development of the organizational environment as a stakeholder in its success. Output of the study is therefore important to local university administrators, employees, alumni, students, and the university's governing body by providing them with the immediate benefit of a better understanding of the variables associated with civility in the university. It has also afforded them with awareness about computer-mediated communication use and how it affects the occurrence of workplace incivility (Pang&Ng, 2016; Kennedy&Francisco, 2017; Young., Melissa, &Marizen, 2017; Stich et al, 2018). This research gave employees an opportunity to support the enhancement of the organizational environment by collaboratively expressing their perspectives on workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication use (Ahn, 2016; Costa &Pedro Neves, 2017). Alumni and students will reap the indirect benefits of any changes that occur within the organizational environment because of action taken relevant to this research. In addition, the university's state governing body can benefit from the findings of this research, given that the results may illuminate the nature of other similar challenges in other universities. And, the proposed action plan has some level of relevance to other universities that are experiencing similar issue with workplace incivility, computer-mediated communication use and declines in student retention and graduation. This study helps the examined university (and can potentially offer implications for the higher education industry) to dispel the myths related to workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication use in the organizational community by establishing a degree of certainty with regard to the issues (Larsen, 2017; Li&Zheng, 2017). The findings of this research may also offer implication for other universities that exist within the same context and are currently experiencing issues with civility and computer-mediated communication use.

2.0 Materials and Methods

2.1 The action research/ Mixed Methods Process

The action research used in this study sought to explore that "reality" as a means to better understand and address the organizational problem (Coghlan, 2019; Kumar, 2019). The employed research methodology allowed an extension of the fundamental understanding of workplace incivility in higher education by undertaking a systematic approach to answering the established research questions. To develop a comprehensive understanding of the organizational issue that would promote informed decisions with regard to proposing possible solutions a mixed methods approach was used (Halcomb, 2019). The research philosophy for this study is comprised of both ontological and epistemological reference. Although, the study evaluated a number of possible approaches, notwithstanding, an interpretive approach was deemed most appropriate given that the research seeks to identify perceptions rather than truths about the issue (Coghlan, 2019; Kumar, 2019). In alignment with previous research on workplace incivility, my initial evaluation of the organizational problem ought to identify relationships between previously evaluated variables to diagnose the issue. However, further investigation in this study used inductive reasoning to offer a deeper understanding of the deductive findings. Although all research methodologies have weaknesses, previous researchers have suggested that a mixed-method approach allows the researcher to use the strengths of one method to overcome the shortcomings of another (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Halcomb, 2019). Therefore, in accordance with Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) who suggest that traditional qualitative and quantitative research naturally complement one another, the study applied a mixed-methods approach to this study. The figure on the next page shows the process employed in this study.

Figure 2-1 Steps in Mixed Methods Research Process



Retrieved from: Linking Research Questions to Mixed Methods Data Analysis Procedures (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2006)

Proceeding through the steps outlined above, I established the goal of the study in **Step 1**. It was determined that the purpose of this study was to evaluate the presence of workplace incivility in a specified organizational environment by identifying how it exists, analyzing the relationship between workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication usage on workplace incivility. The critical research objectives for the study were therefore formulated in accordance with **Step 2**. In **Step 3**, it was determined that a mixed-methods approach would be appropriate based on previous research that employed action research methodology to pursue deeper understanding of relevant organizational issues with the intent to recommend appropriate action towards addressing identified issues.

In collecting relevant data for the study, the research approach was based on the methodology proposed by Creswell (2003) that suggests a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The study therefore confirmed the purpose of the mixed-methods approach in **Step 4**. **Consequently, all the five research questions were established in Step 5**. In **Step 6**, the study evaluated different sampling methods to determine the most appropriate approach. A non-probability sampling technique was deemed most appropriate given the nature of the study (Gentles & Vilches, 2017; Creswell, 2017; Peregrine, 2019). However, considering the purpose of this study, to employ action research methodology to a specified organizational issue, purposeful or purposive sampling method was adopted. According to Creswell (2007) purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select research participants at a specified site that meet specified criteria and have the ability to inform “purposeful” understanding of an identified research problem and/or focus being examined. With regard to this study, the targeted participants included all university employees at the evaluated site categorized under one of the following criteria: faculty, staff or administrators. Among this sample, I conducted three focus group interviews on the university campus. Focus groups were formed using cluster sampling to group focus group participants by category of: faculty, staff, or administrators (Gentles & Vilches, 2017; Creswell and Clark, 2007; Creswell et al 2007).

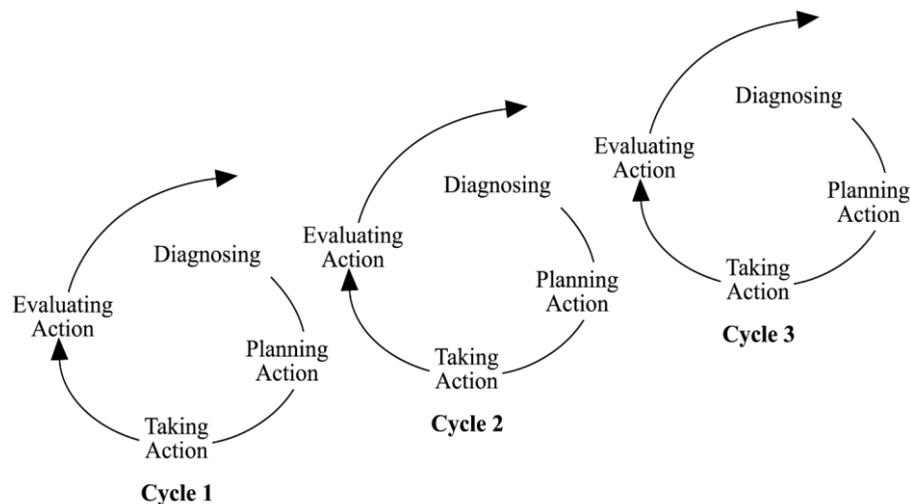
The study confirmed the mixed methods research design for this study in **Step 7**. In this step, the study confirmed that an action research approach was applicable to the research and selected Coghlan and Brannick’s (2014) four-phased approach to action research, which includes constructing, planning, taking action, and evaluating action. Action research methodology involves the evaluation of a specified problem in an existing situation. It seeks to draw conclusions from findings relevant to the problem in an effort to apply action and monitor the effect of the applied action. It produces results that are specifically relevant to the subject evaluated and is therefore not generalizable. Therefore, the study believes that this approach is most appropriate for the research design of this study. The figure below depicts a graphical implementation of these steps in this study:

Figure 2-2 Coghlan and Brannick’s Four Phased Approach to Action Research

Development of Action Plan

Identifying Organizational Issue

Identifying the Organizational Context



Source: Coghlan and Brannick (2001) p. 19

Retrieved from: <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/30/d2/e8/30d2e804fcc34c16a2b730bb620fb563.jpg>

In **Cycle 1**, the study identified the organizational context and approached the context first in the Diagnosing/Constructing phase by researching relevant literature on the organizational context including workplace incivility, computer-mediated communication, higher education, HBCUs, USG, and human behavior theories. In an effort to plan appropriate action in the second phase, I determined how extant literature is relevant to the organizational problem and how to apply previously employed approaches to this study. Subsequently, the study conducted the action taken in the next phase working collaboratively with local organizational resources to gain access to organization specific data. Finally, the study assessed the action taken based on reevaluating collected literature to confirm existing correlations between previously examined organizations in extant literature and the organization examined in this study.

Cycle 2 of the research, identifying the organizational issue, derived from the Diagnosing/Constructing phase and involved working collaboratively with organizational resources to collect data relevant to the internal organizational issue examined in this study. To plan the appropriate action that should be taken relevant to the identified issue, the study determined the approach(s) to research that is generally accepted within the organizational environment. Next, the study proceeded to take action by preceded with Phase 1 of the research. During Phase 1 data collection. The study also examined various research approaches to confirm appropriateness of selected approach, examined collected data to identify the organizational issue, and developed a comprehensive report of results. Finally, the study evaluated the results for correlations with extant literature and implications relevant to the development of an appropriate action plan.

In the final cycle, **Cycle 3**, the study developed the action plan. In the Diagnosing/Constructing phase and examined the results of the quantitative data collected from the survey used to diagnose the organizational issue to develop an appropriate action plan. the study then developed a proposed action plan based on the results from Phase 1 of the research in the Planning action phase. The study thereafter conducted a focus group testing to get feedback from organizational stakeholders to determine the feasibility of the proposed action plan. Finally, in the Evaluating Action phase, the study assessed the feedback received in the feasibility test to re-evaluate the results from Phase 1 of the research and update the proposed action plan.

Data collection, the methods of inquiry, proceeded in **Step 8** in a two-phased approach including the collection of survey data to identify\diagnose the organizational issue and feasibility study to establish further understanding of the findings and establish support for the proposed action plan. In **Steps 9-11**, the collected quantitative data was analyzed, evaluated, validated and interpreted. It was first exported from Qualtrics and imported into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to be analyzed for descriptive statistics and using regression analysis to estimate relationships between the examined variables. The study then documented and compared the results to results from extant literature and translated the findings of this research into a list of recommended actions proposed towards addressing the examined organizational issue. The study also conducted feasibility testing of the proposed action plan to validate the proposed actions. In **Step 12**, the study compiled all findings relevant to the study into a final proposal and PowerPoint presentation to present to organizational leaders for consideration.

2.3 Instrument construction and Data Collection

In an effort to appropriately identify and evaluate the organizational issue, the study employed the previously planned survey to collect data relevant to stakeholders' evaluation of the organizational issue. Upon receipt of ethics approval, data collection commenced. To initiate contact with participants, email invitations were sent to all faculty and staff. The invitation included a link to the electronically formatted survey formatted in Qualtrics. The participant information sheet and consent forms were included within the first pages of the electronic survey. Participants indicated their consent to participate by selecting "YES" after viewing the PIS and Consent Form. Participants who did not wish to proceed with the survey after reading the PIS and Consent Form were able to select "NO" to end the survey. Completion of the survey took approximately 10 minutes. The data collection period occurred for approximately a 1 to 2-month period. All data collection and evaluation methods were adequately aligned with those employed in relevant literature and statistical recommendations from previous researchers (Nunnally 1978; Hair et al, 2010; Connors&Halligan, 2017). Descriptive statistics tools from SPSS were used to evaluate the samples. Subsequently, the following methodologies were applied: reliability analysis, factor analysis, correlation, and regression analysis. Specifically, regression analysis was used to validate the hypothesis. Consequently, the simple linear regression models are summarised in equations (1) below:

MODEL

$$WPI = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 CMC + \varepsilon \text{ ----- (1)}$$

Where:

WPI- Workplace Incivility, CMC – Computer-Mediated Communication use. α_0, α_1 , are the estimated parameters, while ε is the error term.

This equation indicates the extent to which the explanatory or independent variable influences the dependent variable.

In addition, focus groups are used to gather stakeholders' opinions about a proposed idea, issue, product or service (Krueger and Casey, 2014; De-Guinea, 2016; Martin-Lacroux, 2017). In action research, this method is used for the evaluation of proposed action (Smith, 2015; Sanders&Yang, 2016; Painter&Jorge, 2017). The objective of the focus groups was to determine if university stakeholders would implement the proposed action plan.

2.4 Constructing: Instruments/Development of Survey Packet

The study selected the survey instruments employed in this research based on their relevance to evaluating issues related to workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication use. Based on a common theme among the relevant studies in literature, the study used instruments that were employed in Kettinger and Grover's (1997) work on workplace incivility and Clark's (2013) work on computer-mediated communication use. From these studies, several instruments were used including: the workplace incivility scales (Clark, 2013); the computer-mediated communication use scales (Clark, 2013). The workplace incivility scale is a 34-item scale (Cronbach's Alpha of .973) developed by Clark et al (2013) in their study of faculty-to-faculty incivility in nursing. It measures the extent to which respondents have experienced various instances of workplace incivility. It is rated on a 4-point Likert scale. Responses are indicated as never, rarely, sometimes, or always. Kettinger and Grover's (1997) computer-mediated communication use scale, is a 24-item scale ranked on a 7-point Likert scale, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of .970. It was employed in their study of inter-organizational email use to evaluate the extent to which computer-mediated communication technology was used as an alternative to face-to-face communication. Responses are anchored from "Never" to "Always". The scale is divided into four subsets describing the nature of use; task use, social/entertainment use, broadcast use, and other use. This study majorly examined the effect that computer-mediated communication use has on employee civility in a historically black university in the United States. Although the nature of action research differs from that of traditional research, to put the study into perspective, an proposition (hypothesis) was considered based on reviewed previous studies (Davis, Bangozzi, and Warchaw, 1989; Kettinger and Grover, 1997; Clark, 2013; Ahn, 2016; Costa & Pedro Neves, 2017; Painter&Jorge, 2017). Specifically, to answer Questions 5, the study tested the following hypothesis with regard to Phase 1 of this study, which involved the identification of the specifics regarding the organizational issue:

H₁: *Computer-mediated communication usage will influence workplace incivility.*

It is also important to note that the hypotheses were stated in the alternate form (alternative hypothesis) based on the various reviewed literatures (Ahn, 2016; Costa & Pedro Neves, 2017; Painter & Jorge, 2017).

After the development of the survey packet, the study determined the sample size that would be most appropriate for data collection. Based on the university's demographic data (including a sum of total faculty and staff) as derived from university's website, the university's total employee population at the time of this study was 729. To calculate the appropriate sample size for this study, we used Yamane's (1967) simplified formula of proportions. Additionally, given that previous studies neglected to explore a representative sample (Clark, 2013), the sample for this study was diverse and included various organizational member types, including staff and both full-time and part-time employees. In addition, employees of diverse cultures were encouraged to participate (Bergkvist & Taylor, 2016; Jayamohan et al., 2017). Overall, three-hundred fifty employees responded to the survey. However, only 298 of the responses were usable (a response rate of 85%) given that the study excluded 52 responses based on the exclusion criteria that stated that all incomplete submissions would be omitted (Walther et al., 2016; Zinko et al., 2017). This sample size and the response rate are acceptable based on standards for research that is relatively qualitative in nature (Malterud, Siersma and Guassora, 2016; Connors & Halligan, 2017).

This is true given that this research was intended merely to diagnose a specified organizational issue, and not to make generalizations based on the data (Connors & Halligan, 2017).

3.0 Results and Discussion of Findings

Based on evaluation of the demographic data, the sample was made up of 55% Female and nearly 59% African American. About 43.9% have been working for the organization for 5 years or less. Fifty-two percent of respondents were staff, while 44.5% were faculty and only about 4% were administrators. Of the faculty respondents, about 97.6 percent are non-tenured and 34.4% are on a non-tenured track. Eighty-five percent of all respondents are full time employees.

3.1 Validity and Reliability of Instruments

The initial draft of the questionnaire was subjected to face validity, by first giving the questionnaires to the project supervisor for scrutiny (Ahn, 2016; Costa & Pedro Neves, 2017). In addition, content validity was done by giving the questionnaire to six experts in human resource management and communication studies to confirm that the questionnaire items were representative and a good fit for purpose (Bergkvist & Taylor, 2016; Jayamohan et al., 2017). Suggestions from these two sets of validators and experts were used to adjust the initial questionnaire and the adjusted draft was administered to a few selected 20 respondents (using convenience sampling) at the pilot stage. However, in order not to introduce biases, the study exempted these 20 respondents from the main study (Sussman et al, 2002; Ahn, 2016). The 20 responses from the pilot stage were analysed, and various reliability figures established. The Cronbach's alphas for each measure met the minimum threshold and are indicated as follows: Workplace Incivility (.973), Computer-Mediated Communication (.970). In addition to the Cronbach's alpha test, the following reliability indexes were obtained from our analysis of the pilot data: composite reliability (CR), 0.79; average variance extracted (AVE), 0.78; and Dublin-Watson statistics, 2.111. All the calculated indices were well above the recommended thresholds (Pauleen and Yoong, 2001; Walther et al., 2016; Zinko et al., 2017), and again, it implied great internal consistency in the questionnaire questions, measuring the same value (Sussman et al, 2002; Ahn, 2016; Costa & Pedro Neves, 2017).

4.0 Results

This section offers an overview of the findings relative to each of the deployed survey instruments. It also highlights survey responses that were significant as indicated by high response rates on the Linkert scale. The proceeding sections discussed the findings related to each scale and provide answers to the previously proposed research questions below.

1. Does workplace incivility exist at the examined university?
2. In what form does workplace incivility appear at the examined university?
3. Is computer-mediated communication being used at the examined university?
4. What are computer-mediated communication methods being used for at the examined university?
5. Does computer-mediated communication use influence workplace incivility at the examined university?

4.1 Validation of questions and hypothesis

Question 1 and 2: Workplace Incivility Scale: Does Workplace Incivility exist? How does it appear?

The study employed the workplace incivility scale to evaluate the previously proposed question, “Does workplace incivility exist at the university?” Responses indicated in all other categories (rarely, sometimes, and always) suggest that these items are experienced to some extent in the workplace. Ninety-two percent of responses indicate that some type of workplace incivility exists, while only 8% indicate that such instances never occur. With regard to the type of workplace incivility that is most prevalent in the organization, 71% of responses suggest that resistance to change is prevalent. With regard to those behaviors that respondents suggested never exist, 86% indicate that “physical threats are never made against another faculty\staff member” and 69% or more indicated that “racial, ethnic, sexual, gender or religious slurs” are never made, “inappropriate emails are never sent”, and “private emails are never forwarded without permission”. Therefore, the findings from this instrument primarily indicate that workplace incivility does exist in the workplace. In addition, participants generally agree that physical threats, derogatory slurs, and inappropriate use of email are uncommon in the workplace. However, indirect attacks or passive-aggressive acts of incivility are a more common occurrence.

The item with the highest average response as indicated by the mean response out of four (2.29) was the statement “Resisted change or were unwilling to negotiate.” The item that had the lowest response (1.17) said: “Made physical threats against another faculty/staff member”

Question 3 and 4: Computer-Mediated Communication Use Scale: Is it Being Used? What for?

The Computer-Mediated Communication Use Scale was used to collect data relevant to the use of computer-mediated communication system. The survey items included in the scale were related to four categories of use: task, social/entertainment, broadcast, and other. With regard to the responses related generally to the use of computer-mediated communication, 98% of employees agree that computer-mediated communication is being used in the organizational environment. Responses also indicate that it is used most often (as indicated by the response other than “NEVER”) for “distributing/providing information” in the organizational environment (92.8%), to “send a message in place of a phone call” (90.8%) and to “keep a record of interactions/agreements” (88.4%). Computer-mediated communication is least often (as indicated by the response of “NEVER”) used to “discuss confidential matters” (52.5%) and to “carry on a negotiation/bargaining” (43.4%). The highest average response (3.86) as indicated by the mean response out of 5 was “Distribute/provide information.” The lowest average response (1.80) was on the statement that said, “Discuss confidential matters”

Research Questions 5: Does Computer-Mediated Communication Use Influence Workplace Incivility? What factors influence computer-mediated communication use?

Regression and correlation analyses were used to evaluate the relationship between computer-mediated communication and workplace incivility. The linear regression data in this study indicates a significance of .024 with regard to the relationship between the responses on the computer-mediated communication use and workplace incivility scales. This figure suggests that there is a significant relationship between the factors given that the required threshold is lower than .05. Consequently, results from the linear regression equation are depicted below (to accept Hypothesis 1):

Table 4.1 Regression Results: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	2963.310	1	2963.310	5.188	.024
Residual	158223.787	277	571.205		
Total	161187.097	278			

Source: Researcher Framework, 2019

From table 4.1, the p-value for the F-calculated at 5.188 (sig.=0.024) - is less than the critical value of 0.05, and, for this, the alternate hypothesis which stated that computer-mediated communication use will influence workplace incivility was accepted, based on the decision rule (Munzel, 2016; Woisetschläger et al., 2017). Therefore, according to the data, computer-mediated communication use does influence workplace incivility. However, to validate and authenticate (Hwang et al., 2016; Kelly&Hun-Tong, 2017) the various results from the analysis of regression equation, the study analysed the model fit. Similar to previous literature, different types of “goodness of fit” indices were adopted (Hwang et al., 2016; Connors&Halligan,

2017). Consequently, the study obtained the following results: the normed X^2 or X^2/df ratio=2.112; the comparative fit index (CFI)= 0.96; the root mean square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)= 0.057; Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)= 0.96; Incremental Fit Index (IFI)=0.97; and Normed Fit Index (NFI)=0.95 (Hwang et al., 2016; Kelly&Hun-Tong, 2017; Larsen, 2017; Neumann et al., 2017; Connors&Halligan, 2017). All the above results confirmed a good fit, since all fall within the acceptable fit criteria (Koschate-Fischer et al., 2016; Alderman, 2017; Hwang et al., 2016).

The table below offers a summary of the results with regard to each of the proposed research questions.

TABLE 4.2 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Research Questions (Hypothesis)	ANSWER	EVIDENCE
Does workplace incivility exist at the university?	YES	92% of responses indicate that some type of workplace incivility exists Only 8% indicate that such instances never occur.
How does workplace incivility appear at the university?	It occurs in many forms. However, it is most evident in resistance to change. It rarely occurs in the form of physical threats, inappropriate emails, breach or privacy, or inappropriate conversation.	68% of responses suggest that resistance to change is prevalent. 86% indicate that “physical threats are never made against another faculty\staff member” 69% or more indicated that “racial, ethic, sexual, gender or religious slurs” are never made and 74% indicated “inappropriate emails are never sent”, and 79% indicated “private emails are never forwarded without permission”.
Is computer-mediated communication being used at the university?	YES	Over 90% of participant selected responses other than “NEVER” on all of the surveyed items relating to the use of computer-mediated communication.
What are computer-mediated communication methods being used for?	Computer-mediated communication is being used to distribute and provide information, send messages, and keep record of interactions and agreements.	92.8% state that it is used for “distributing\providing information” 90.8% state that it is used to “send a message in place of a phone call” 88.4% state that it is used to “keep a record of interactions/agreements” Only 52.5% state that is used to “discuss confidential matters” Only 43.4% state that it is used to “carry on a negotiation/bargaining”
Does computer-mediated communication use influence workplace incivility? (Hypothesis 5)	YES	The relationship between computer-mediated communication use and workplace incivility has a significance of .024 which meets the recommended threshold of .05 And, highly significant relationships exist between computer-mediated communication use items related

		to email as revealed by further evaluation of the data based on stakeholder feedback.
How do employees perceive computer-mediated communication?	Employees perceive computer-mediated-communication to be essential to most job task. They also believe that it is useful and relatively simple to use.	There was an over 90% response rate in agreement that task are not independent of computer-mediated communication use. Over 90% of respondents stated that computer-mediated communication system are useful for saving time (91.8%), accomplishing tasks more quickly (90.8%), making one's job easier (93.6%), and overall completion of one's job (91.67%). 71.5% say that "My interaction with information technology is easy for me to understand." 69.7% says that "It is easy for me to remember how to perform tasks recommended by information technology." 71.9% say that "Information technology provides helpful guidance in performing tasks." And 67.5% "Overall, I find that information technology is easy to use."

4.2 Development of the proposed action plan

In this section, the overall proposed action plan is discussed with regard to its development and how it can be used to address the issues identified based on the results. The sections below proceed as follows: drafting of initial action plan, summary of feasibility study feedback, and development of proposed action plan.

The study drafted the initial action plan based on previous research related to the subject matter and findings from data collection relevant to the existence of a workplace incivility issue at the university and proposed action plan was sent to all employees via email to obtain feedback for consideration. Based on the feedback received from the feasibility-testing questionnaire, the proposed action plan was revised to include recommendations for organizational stakeholders. The Feasibility Questionnaire provide a brief overview of the findings related to the SWOT Analysis (Phadermrod, Crowder and Willis, 2019) of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, financial implications, and resources identified from the feedback. Overall, responses to the feasibility questionnaire indicate the employees believed that the proposed action plan is feasible and can be implemented with the appropriate changes. Their recommendations include a more detailed description of the plan and reduction in the associated costs to promote administrative buy-in.

Consequently, the proposed action plan was developed based on the review of relevant literature regarding recommendations for addressing workplace incivility related issues and feedback received from data collection. The proposed plan includes four primary objectives to be applied towards addressing the identified organizational issue:

- Decrease occurrences of workplace incivility
- Promote collaborative leadership
- Promote face-to-face collaboration across organizational departments
- Promote higher levels of employee satisfaction

Proposed actions are the related actions that are required to achieve the objective. The tasks describe the associated tasks that are necessary to complete the proposed actions. The target group includes all of the

employees that will be directly impacted by accomplishing the proposed objective. The list of participants includes all individuals or groups that will be required to engage in completing the required tasks. A success criterion is included for each objective to ensure that there is an established mechanism for measuring success of each objective. The timeframe for each objective describes the time allotted to achieve the overall objective. In addition, the resources list includes the items needed to complete the proposed tasks.

4.3 Decrease Occurrences of Workplace Incivility

The overall objective of this study was to determine if an issue with civility exists in the examined organization. Given that workplace incivility was identified in the survey data collection phase as an existing issue in the workplace, decreasing these occurrences was an important objective to include in the proposed plan. I offered five actions to be implemented with regard to resolving this issue. The proposed actions are listed and explained below.

- **Increase awareness of the organization's mission, vision and strategic plan.**

An organization's mission, vision and strategic plan, should generally include evidence of the organization's values. Although my organization's mission statement and vision (as outlined in its Strategic Plan) do not currently make specific mention of civility among employees, it does state that it fosters an environment that nurtures diversity, is supportive in nature and exercises ethical actions. Therefore, it is important that the university reiterate awareness of these ideals to support a more civil workplace.

- **Revise the organization's strategic plan as needed to adjust to organizational needs.**

Given that the current mission and vision are not explicit in expressing a commitment to its internal customers, the organization should consider including a statement that promotes the organization's commitment to maintaining a civil workplace. Given that there is an existing strategic planning committee (or one can be developed as an ad hoc committee), they can work collaboratively to revise the current strategic plan to be inclusive of the organizations commitment to fostering a civil work environment. There will be no costs associated with implementing this task.

- **Increase awareness of diversity and what workplace incivility is and why it should not occur in the workplace.**

Previous studies suggest that organizations that experience issues with workplace incivility should implement awareness training programs (Armstrong, 2017) and increase awareness of varied perspective of workplace incivility (Caza and Cortina, 2007; Clark and Carnosso, 2008; Clark and Springer, 2007). They should also develop an approach to addressing it based on the organizational environment (Cortina et al, 2001; Cortina and Magley, 2003; Clark, 2013; Pearson & Porath, 2005; Sidle, 2009), culture (Alexander-Snow, 2004), and diversity (Von Bergen and Collier, 2013). Therefore, it is important for my organization to increase awareness among employees to promote understanding and intended behavior. To do so, the campus public relations department can facilitate an internal campaign including a newly developed list of core values to support the awareness effort. Human Resources can also support the campaign by introducing the core values to employees in workplace (in)civility trainings that will increase employee awareness of workplace (in)civility. HR should also implement the core values into new hire trainings to indoctrinate new employees to the organizational values. To encourage the intended behaviors, the university's Human Resources department should also develop an employee recognition program with the support of organizational leadership (administrators, department heads, and deans) to recognize employees who consistently exhibit desired (civil) behavior. And, they should consider implementing both university and department employee recognition programs. By implementing recognition programs at the department level, those recognized by their department can be automatically considered for university level recognition.

4.4 Promote Collaborative Leadership

The characteristics of collaborative leadership include engaging in open dialogue, establishing awareness of consequences associated with behaviors, and being open to new ideas (Raelin, 2003). Previous literature suggests that leaders have the ability to promote intended organizational behavior (Clark et al, 2013). However, to support this effort, they should develop an awareness of the potential barriers to managing a civil workplace (Peters and King, 2017). Subsequently, this objective was included in the proposed plan to encourage leaders to obtain the necessary skills to adopt and to support employees' ability to adopt the culture of a civil workplace. The actions associated with this objective include mandatory leadership trainings for

organizational leaders (including all supervisory roles) and leadership recognition programs to acknowledge success. The on-campus Human Resources department can facilitate both the training and recognition programs building on internally developed performance evaluation benchmarks. To facilitate this objective, an internal task force of faculty and staff can be formed to develop and facilitate training workshops and offer recommendations on how to promote collaborative leadership in the organizational environment. Volunteers can be taken from various relevant academic disciplines and other support departments to avoid the cost of hiring an outside consultant. Human resources personnel can implement a recognition program to acknowledge exemplary collaborative leadership. All organizational leaders will be impacted by implementation of this objective, including supervisory staff, administrators, department heads, and deans. Success in accomplishing this objective will be measured by periodic employee opinion surveys that allow employees to evaluate their immediate supervisor(s).

4.5 Promote Face-to-face Collaboration across Organizational Departments

The promotion of face-to-face communication was recognized by employees in the feasibility study as strength of the proposed action plan. It was also recommended in previous literature as an effective way of addressing workplace incivility (Clark, 2013). Additionally, it was mentioned as a means of addressing issues with the quality of face-to-face interactions experience due to the use of computer-mediated communication (Bartlett and Bartlett, 2016). Therefore, this objective seeks to promote more face-to-face interaction in the organizational environment. As many committees are formed to implement projects, the organization would need to encourage the participation of representatives from departments that will be impacted by committee recommendations to serve on them (including those implementing new processes, policies, procedures, etc.). They must also require a minimum number of face-to-face meetings for all committees. The consultants task force developed for previous objectives can be used to make recommendations on how to promote collaboration in the organizational environment and conduct relevant training. Human resources can also implement quarterly or yearly team building events for all employees. To measure this objective's success, organizational leaders should develop a repository and require publication of meeting minutes for university, college, and departmental meetings to evaluate attendance and participation from all organizational units.

4.6 Promote Higher Levels of Employee Satisfaction

Based on comments on items related to "buy-in", findings from the feasibility study indicate that employees perceive that organizational leaders are not interested in investing in the enhancement of the organizational environment. See some statements from responses below:

- "Upper management may not want to participate, as it may appear to others that they were a part of the problem. In addition, many individuals may not want to participate because they will see it as a waste of time. Many programs on communication have been done before with no change in the workplace"
- Identified as a weakness: "Administrative buy-in and implementation"
- Identified as a threat "Lack of buy-in or weak buy-in"
- "The greatest threat to applying the proposed actions is organizational leadership resistance -- one, resistance to accept the results as valid, and two, to implement the needed change."
- "Revealing administrators who are not aware of their issues of incivility and their lack of concern of how their employees truly feel."
- "I believe the resources are available, but I am not sure that administration is convinced that incivility is a problem on this campus."

Therefore, there is a need for employees to see a willingness from organizational leaders to support employee satisfaction. The proposed actions associated with this objective include the development of an employee opinion survey that will be periodically distributed for feedback. This will allow organizational leaders to identify issues and propose appropriate actions. Also, employee opinion survey results will need to be shared with employees along with proposed action plans towards addressing identified issues. Benchmarks will also need to be implemented to evaluate the overall success of applied corrective actions. To reduce associated costs, the survey instrument can be internally developed by the IT department and distributed electronically. Electronic data collection methods can also be used to analyze the data and develop reports of the findings. To measure the success of this objective, employee opinion surveys will need to be distributed for completion at least yearly to examine progress with regard to improving employee perceptions of the organizational environment.

5.1 Reflection and Discussion of Findings

During the first phase of inquiry, Ramsey (2014) offers that scholar-practitioners should gather data to inform their decision on what action needs to be taken with regard to the identified organizational issues. During the first phase of inquiry, Ramsey (2014) offers that scholar-practitioners should gather data to inform their decision on what action needs to be taken with regard to the identified organizational issues.

In this study, this phase of inquiry included the review of previous literature to determine previous findings that are relevant to the issue, evaluating the organizational context to validate the importance of undertaking the study, and collecting data to identify and evaluate the organizational issue. I approach this study with the general perception that organization based evaluation is necessary to assess workplace incivility (Clark and Carnosso, 2008; Disbrow and Prentice, 2009; Clark, 2013). Therefore, I first examined my organizational context specifically.

By enhancing my understanding of the organizational context and previous studies related to workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication use, I was able to better approach the examination of my organizational issue. For instance, in my examination of the context in which my organization exists, I established an understanding that the United States educational system has experienced an overall decline in the quality and quantity of high school diplomas (US News Best Countries for Education Ranking, 2019). This helped me to assess the challenges experienced by my organization from the perspective that external factors may affect levels of internal workplace incivility. For instance, the quantity and quality of high school diplomas issued in Georgia is a fact that could influence the level of incivility in the subject organization. In addition, the fact that Georgia is one of the lowest ranked states in terms of graduation rates (Layton, 2014) could also make it highly likely that higher education rates are impacted by this external circumstance. In addition, understanding the statistics relevant to teacher turnover (Kopkowski, 2013), teachers teaching out of their field in schools in low-income populations (Darling-Hammond and Sykes, 2003; Purcell et al, 2013), the lack of college preparation, and the significant level of need for post-secondary education to be successful in the workforce (Sheehy, 2012) helped me to understand why my organization may also experience a decline in student retention and graduation due to the lack of prior preparation. These ideas collectively helped me to re-frame my thinking about my organization's issue with workplace incivility. With this knowledge, I was able to isolate the problem rather than approaching it from a perspective that workplace incivility would naturally influence student retention and graduation rates.

In my review of extant literature related to this study on workplace incivility, I found that my research is consistent with others that suggests that perceptions of workplace incivility can be diverse (Caza and Cortina, 2007; Clark and Carnosso, 2008; Clark and Springer, 2007; Kim., Insin, &Sunghyup, 2016; Walsh&Cunningham, 2017). This is based on findings that indicate that respondents in all phases of the research raised different concerns related to how workplace incivility exists in the organization. The study also supports previous studies that suggest that workplace incivility can appear in passive-aggressive behaviors (Caza and Cortina, 2007) given that the survey results show evidence that higher levels of non-aggressive workplace incivility behaviors exist than aggressive behaviors. Feedback obtained from organizational stakeholders in the focus group also revealed that participants believed, consistent with that of previous researchers, that there is a need to examine differentiated types of computer-mediated communication use (specifically email) to explain behavior relevant to specified mechanisms (Kettinger and Grover, 1997; Costabile, 2016; Foroudi., Khalid, &Mohammad, 2017). This research, like that of extant studies revealed evidence to support the claim that the use of technology is linked to promoting uncivil behaviors(Clark, 2013; Uribe et al., 2016; Kim&Rhee, 2017). And, it did show a correlation between computer-mediated communication use and increased levels of workplace incivility (Bartlett and Bartlett, 2016).

In the development of the proposed action plan, I considered previously offered theories that suggest that attitudes likely influence behaviors (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1980) and actions result from an understanding of expectations (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, I incorporated tasks that promote a better understanding of workplace incivility. I also understood that supervisory leaders should lead in establishing clearly defined rules for acceptable behavior, teach established standards and gain support from administrative leadership to promote desired behavior(Schein, 1990; Canter and Canter, 1976; Canter, 2010; Bergkvist., Hjalmarson, &Mägi, 2016; Dutta., Attila, &Dhruv, 2017). As a result, I included organizational leadership participants in all tasks and incorporated a recognition program given that theories suggest that behaviors that are supported with positive reinforcement will be continued (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1980; 1985).

I also referred to the recommendation of previous literature that suggested that approaches to the issue of workplace incivility should be based on the identified environmental circumstances (Cortina et al., 2001; 2013; Cortina and Magley, 2003; Pearson & Porath, 2005; Sidle, 2009; Zheng., Tomas., Ryan, & Hinrichs, 2016), include diversity (Von Bergen and Collier, 2013; Jensen et al, 2016; Wang et al., 2016; Mayer et al., 2017), and promote the organization's ability to define, document, and enforce standards for acceptable behaviors (Euben and Lee, 2005). Therefore, I developed a plan that seeks to reduce workplace incivility, is inclusive of diversity training, and promotes the development of core values. My plan design recognizes that organizational leaders should serve as role models (Bandura & Walters, 1977) and their ability to increase employees' self-efficacy has the potential to combat against the negative impacts of workplace incivility (Fida et al., 2016) and foster a work environment that promotes empowerment, support, openness and teamwork, while enforcing policies against workplace incivility (Logan, 2016). Therefore, I incorporated collaboration with university administrators in all phases of the plan.

I also included the implementation of a civility-training program given my awareness that it has the potential to increase awareness of workplace incivility, reduce its occurrence in the workplace, increase employees' confidence levels with regard to responding to uncivil behaviors (Armstrong 2017; Zinko et al., 2016; Kaul & Desai, 2017), promote the development of an organizational culture of civility and enhance the satisfaction and quality of performance of academic faculty (Clark, 2013; Livengood & Rose, 2016; Sugathan., Kumar, & Avinash, 2017).

Furthermore, this study is also similar to Bandura's (1971) social and cognitive theories that interaction in the social environment influences behaviors, given that respondents consistently were in 90% agreement when asked about repetitive job-related tasks for which computer-mediated communication is being used. In addition, in correlation with the technology acceptance model (Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw, 1989), findings indicate that employee perceptions of technology influence their intentions with regard to its use. In addition, in alignment with the implications of previous literature relevant to workplace incivility (Kettinger and Grover, 1997; Clark, 2013), the findings of this study indicate that workplace incivility can be perceived differently in different organizations given that responses in this study are somewhat different from previous studies. Task characteristics can also influence the use of computer-mediated communication given the relationship revealed in the regression and correlation analysis. It also suggests, similarly to that of Kettinger and Grover (1997) that the types of computer-mediated communication use should be differentiated to establish an explanation for associated behavior. Although university administrators believe there is a lack of computer-mediated communication use, 98% of employees responded that such systems are being used. Additionally, this study uniquely offers in contrast to previous literature (Clark, 2013; Bartlett and Bartlett, 2016) that workplace incivility and computer-mediated (technology) use can be independently motivated.

The second phase of inquiry, testing plausibility (Ramsey, 2014) occurs after an action plan is developed and involves the scholar-practitioner evaluating if organizational stakeholders will support the proposed action plan. To discuss the appropriateness of scholar-practitioner engagement relevant to this study, two of Ramsey's (2014) three key "moments of inquiry" frame the discussion of these findings: mapping the terrain and testing plausibility. In this study, we approached this phase of inquiry with the employment of a feasibility questionnaire to evaluate stakeholders' perceptions relevant to the proposed action plan. Additionally, we tested plausibility in three focus group cycles collecting feedback from stakeholders at all levels of the organization (i.e. staff, faculty, and administrators). The feasibility study revealed that employees view the proposed plan as valuable. However, they suggested that we should make changes to reduce the associated cost and offer a more detailed description of the tasks associated with the proposed plan. The feedback received from the focus groups reveals a consensus among organizational stakeholders at all levels that we need to address workplace incivility and should implement the proposed action plan to do so. It also revealed that, although in support of the plan, some staff had concerns about the proposed action plan being inclusive of evaluations at all levels including non-supervisory leaders. According to Coghlan and Brannick (2014) and Stringer (2013), discussion and reflection is an essential culmination of action research in which the researcher collaboratively analyses and synthesizes the research findings and interprets and explains them to conclude what they have learned and what should be pursued in future research. As an aspiring scholar-practitioner, it has always been my desire to explore research in a practical manner. Therefore, this study was approached with a desire to identify a favorable way to balance my knowledge of theoretical and action research to address a practical problem. In doing so, I was able to demonstrate that the application of both theory and knowledge creation are equally relevant to addressing issues related to the evolving business world.

With regard to conducting insider action research, I found Coghlan and Brannick's (2014) proposition about insider action research to be true. Although being an insider to the organization examined made the resources necessary to facilitate the research more accessible, organizational politics and resistance presented a challenge. However, I remained cognizant of previous studies that found avoidance of the issue (Wilkinson and Mellahi, 2005), management's neglect of the problem (Chandler, 1962; March and Simon, 1985), complacency (Hannan and Freedman, 1977), and fear of the potentially negative effects of change (Katz and Khan, 1966) as reasons why organizational leaders often do not adopt proposed change. I thereby avoided neglecting pertinent facts due to overconfidence in my proposed action plan (Bazerman and Moore, 2008) in an effort to encourage support for my proposed plan.

When approached with apprehension about my study, I was equipped with the understanding that leadership issues (Grint, 2005), poor planning and unclear consequences can result in "wicked problems" (Churchman, 1967). Therefore, to promote favorable results, I implemented collaborative efforts (i.e. survey, feasibility study, and focus group) that included individuals from various disciplines engaging in the assessment of the problem. (Weick, 2006). In addition, to overcome resistance to change, I heavily incorporated the use of human resources personnel into the proposed action plan realizing that by enhancing the effectiveness of managing human resources practices (in terms of communication and enforcement of organizational policies and standards), there would be a potential to mitigate resistance to change (Hon, Bloom, and Crant, 2014). This knowledge, along with my awareness that organizational management sometimes views change as a natural condition of the organization (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002) and that action research has the potential to influence how complex adaptive systems will inevitably evolve (Stacey, 2011), helped me to design and propose a plan based on what I determined to be a most effective approach.

Extant literature also indicates that there is a lack of research on university branding (Chapelo, 2010; Gruber et al., 2012; Hemsley-Brown et al., 2016). However, developments on this subject would likely help to promote universities' ability to develop their unique identities in the industry, establish a deeper understanding of the importance of brand identity, meaning, image, and reputation that can help foster more effective communication with organizational stakeholders including faculty, staff, students, alumni, etc. Other research suggests that university branding has increasingly become a relevant topic among practitioners with regard to the level of commitment invested in such activities in higher education (Chapelo, 2010). Because of the rise in competition in the higher education industry, universities can benefit from successfully implementing branding techniques (Hemsley-Brown et al., 2016). Therefore, given that, previous studies on the subject matter are scarce; more research is needed to assess the success of university branding. Also, in a study of the influence that professor characteristics have on student satisfaction, it was found that organizations should invest in developing the skills and techniques necessary for faculty to develop and maintain a rapport with students (Gruber et al., 2012).

In phase 2 of the study, I recognized that, although some participants were eager to see the results from the Phase 1 survey, many were again apprehensive about providing additional information in the feasibility questionnaire, mostly due to their unwillingness to review and consider the proposed action plan. However, the feedback I did receive was very helpful in my examination of an appropriate approach to the organizational issue. Based on the feedback, many (as I anticipated) felt that university administrators' resistance and university funding would be the biggest obstacle to applying the proposed plan. Some subsequently proposed options that would allow for implementing the proposed action without external input to avoid incurring any costs that might hinder implementation of the proposed plan. The focus group feedback also revealed that although the participating organizational leaders were in support of the proposed plan, they also believed that senior leadership would need to collectively support its implementation.

Overall, I have found that employees generally display a willingness to take part in decision making related to organizational change. However, they do not believe that senior leadership is collectively open to their feedback with regard to organizational policy matters. Although members of my organization feel strongly about the issue of workplace incivility and recognize that the problem needs to be addressed, they do not believe that senior leadership will collectively support taking relative action. As a result, I am aware that senior management buy-in will be essential to the success of this or any other action proposed relevant to my organization. As previous studies suggest, until senior leaders buy-in to the proposed change, employees are more likely to adopt behaviors that are displayed and/or tolerated by organizational leaders than to adopt those that are merely documented (Euben and Lee, 2005; Verhenzen, 2010). Therefore, it is highly likely that

further action is needed to promote my ideas to senior administrators that did not take part in the feasibility study to ensure that all administrators adopt and support the implementation effort.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

Based on the various findings, this study concludes as follows: workplace incivility exists in the studied organisation; workplace incivility most commonly appears in the form of low-intensity behaviors but sometimes occurs in aggressive forms; computer-mediated communication is being used at the university; computer-mediated communication is mostly being used to complete job-related tasks; and computer-mediated communication does influence workplace incivility.

Additionally, as a result of further evaluation of the survey data based on focus group feedback, email computer-mediated communication use emerges as a high predictor of workplace incivility. However, workplace incivility rarely occurs in the form of a direct attack and most commonly occurs in a passive-aggressive nature.

6.2 Recommendations

Therefore, based on the findings of this research and the proposed objectives of the action plan, the study recommend that the university should take the following specific actions: (1) revise existing university policies to address the workplace incivility issues found in this study and (2) modify the university's mission, vision and strategic plan to promote the objectives of the proposed plan and the reduction of workplace incivility occurrences.

Addressing the workplace incivility issue will require the university to explicitly define acceptable and unacceptable behavior, promote collaboration on organizational change, and define consequences for contrary behavior (Euben and Lee, 2006). These actions can be undertaken in three phases. The first phase has these steps: First, (1) The university should update the **Ethics Policy** to explicitly state behaviors that will not be tolerated. The current policy vaguely explains what is expected with regard to the university's core values but does not explain what is specifically unacceptable. It also currently states that "*Members of the SSU community are expected to exercise good judgment absent specific guidance from this policy or other applicable laws, rules and regulations.*" Also, include not only a list of behaviors that will not be tolerated but associated disciplinary actions. The current policy simply states that "*Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action including dismissal or termination.*" (2) Update the **Electronic Mail Policy** to explicitly state the disciplinary actions associated with inappropriate use. The current policy does explicitly list examples of inappropriate use including: "*Offensive e-mail (i.e., fraudulent, harassing, or obscene) must not be sent or forwarded, except as requested in making a complaint of offensive email.*" However, the policy makes no mention of associated reprimands.

This phase is important given that (1) the research findings indicated that 92% of employees have experienced workplace incivility occurrences in the workplace, (2) in the review of extant literature on promoting intended behaviors, the Theory of Assertive Discipline suggests that leaders who establish rules that clearly define acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, teach them to subordinates, and (3) these leaders should gain support from other organizational leaders as a way to promote intended behaviors (Canter and Canter, 1976; Canter, 2010; Bergkvist., Hjalmarson, & Mägi, 2016; Dutta., Attila, & Dhruv, 2017). Leadership's effort to change policies will work towards decreasing occurrences of workplace incivility and promote higher levels of employee satisfaction. The university should make the following policy changes:

Secondly, the research findings also warrant a more collaborative effort relevant to implementing organizational change given that 71% of the employees suggested that resistance to change is prevalent in the workplace. Caldwell (2003) offered that organizational leaders can act as change agents to promote appropriate initiation and implementation of proposed change by advocating for change in a collaborative approach. Therefore, to promote collaborative leadership and face-to-face collaboration across organizational departments, the following university policies should be revised: (1) The **Change Management Policy** should be revised to explicitly state who should be a member of the Change Management Committee and when the establishment of a committee is necessary. The current policy states that "*A Change Management committee should be established as needed, to review and approve change requests and ensure that change reviews and communications are performed.*"

The revised policy should state that a representative from all university units be included on the change management committee and a committee should be formed yearly and be responsible for approving all university-wide changes; (2) The **Policy on Policy Formation** should be revised to include the appropriate process for rejection of a proposed policy. Although the steps for approval are included in the policy, the appropriate grounds for rejection of a proposed policy are not included leaving no option for appeal or requirement of explanation for rejection.

Third, although some organizational units have published standards for employee evaluations, the university should consider drafting and implementing a new policy related to employee evaluation to define and promote civility and include standards for usage of required systems based on job function. According to Bandura (1986), actions result from an understanding of expectations. Therefore, clearly outlining expectations and making employees accountable for meeting them has the potential to promote civil behavior and usage of implemented systems given that over 90% of respondents agree that computer-mediated communication is most commonly used for job-related tasks.

By defining civil behavior and requiring usage of specified systems for specified job-related tasks and enforcing accountability based on usage being assessed in employee evaluating, civil behavior and usage of employed computer-mediated systems would likely increase among those who may not be doing so otherwise.

The proposed policy revisions and additions will provide a viable solution to the workplace incivility problem. The revision of the above policies will likely promote the university's ability to begin fostering a more civil environment where employees can be better respected, held accountable for adhering to university policies, more satisfied with their work environment and engage in a collaboration that promotes the success of the organization. Therefore, to promote a lasting impact on the organizational culture, the following action should be implemented to promote the objectives of the proposed plan and reduction in workplace incivility:

First, in an effort to support the objective to decrease occurrences of workplace incivility and increase awareness of the organization's mission, vision and strategic plan, the university should revise the organization's mission and vision to be more inclusive of the university's intentions to embrace diversity and collaboration among both internal and external stakeholders (Needle, 2010, Laubengaier and Hahn, 2019). According to the University System of Georgia "2.6 Presidential Authority and Responsibilities" policy, the university president has the responsibility of governing the university. However, in accordance with the "2.8 Institutional Mission" policy, all changes to the university mission, vision and strategic plan must be approved by the Board. Therefore, the proposed changes to the university mission, vision, and strategic plan would have to be adopted by the internal Strategic Planning Committee (including the university president) and submitted for approval from the Board of Regents. Support for the proposed changes to the mission, vision and strategic plan are highly likely given that changes are typically done as a standard every five years and some of the planning committee members participated in the feasibility study (in which they supported the recommendations). In addition, opportunity exists to propose this research to other committee members via those who have been exposed to this research. With regard to promotion of the revised mission and vision, this recommendation requires internal adoption and development of a marketing campaign by the university's public relations department and approval of the university president. The university typically implements new promotions regularly. Therefore, the possibility of adopting this recommendation is highly likely especially if the proposed changes are adopted by the Strategic Planning Committee.

Then, the organization should revise its strategic plan as needed to adjust to organizational needs. As previously stated, the university must follow the University System of Georgia "2.6 Presidential Authority and Responsibilities" policy to obtain Board of Regents approval. Therefore, the proposed changes to the strategic plan would have to be adopted by the University Strategic Planning Committee and submitted for approval. The likelihood of adopting this change is great given that some of the planning committee members participated in the feasibility study (in which they supported the recommendations) and opportunity exists to propose this research to other committee members given their awareness based on exposure to this research and the associated benefits and adoption

To increase awareness of diversity (Von Bergen and Collier, 2013) and what workplace incivility is and why it should not occur in the workplace (Zinko et al., 2016; Kaul & Desai, 2017), the university can incorporate training in the professional development days that are currently being held at least twice in an academic year. These types of workshops are approved internally and the university leadership accepts feedback from faculty and staff (via survey) with regard to the workshops that will be offered.

Data collection is typically facilitated via the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (IRPA) and workshop facilitators are either obtained from the pool of internal resources, based on available grant funding or based on the Academic Affairs budget allocation for professional development.

With regard to promoting collaborative leadership (Raelin, 2013), leadership styles are adopted internally based on the direction set by the university president. Therefore, success of this recommendation would require acceptance by the university president. However, changes to the internal policy as it relates to expectations of committees can be proposed to promote adoption of this recommended change. According to the “1.7.2 Legislative, Rule Making and Regulatory Authority of the Faculty”, the faculty senate by designation of the Board of Regents and the Faculty Senate By-Laws has the authority with the approval of the president to make rules and regulations for internal governance related to academics. Therefore, as a member of the faculty, I can propose that a change to committee structure to be inclusive of a department representative be voted on and adopted by the Faculty Senate as a university committee standard. This change to structure can be voted on by the Faculty Senate and adopted.

Face-to-face collaboration across organizational departments should be promoted internally (Clark, 2013). Collaboration efforts do not have to be approved. However, changes to the internal “1.7.2 Legislative, Rule Making and Regulatory Authority of the Faculty” policy can be proposed to promote adoption of this recommended change. According to the “1.7.2 Legislative, Rule Making and Regulatory Authority of the Faculty”, the Faculty Senate by designation of the Board of Regents and the Faculty Senate By-Laws has the authority with the approval of the president to make rules and regulations for internal governance related to academics. Therefore, as a member of the faculty, I can propose a change to committee expectations that suggests a standard number of face-to-face meetings to be voted on and adopted by the Faculty Senate as a university committee standard. This can, therefore, be voted on by the Faculty Senate and adopted.

To promote higher levels of employee satisfaction, satisfaction concerns should be raised in faculty senate meetings for consideration (Armstrong, 2017, Zinko et al, 2016; and Kaul & Desai, 2017). According to the “1.7.2 Legislative, Rule Making and Regulatory Authority of the Faculty”, the faculty senate by designation of the Board of Regents and the Faculty Senate By-Laws has the authority with the approval of the president to make rules and regulations for internal governance related to academics. Employee satisfaction surveys are currently being conducted. However, as a member of the university faculty, I can propose that the results of employee satisfaction surveys be shared and consideration be given (and disclosed) on how subsequent changes are implemented. This can be voted on and adopted by the Faculty Senate.

Acknowledgement: This paper is an extract from a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) thesis at the University of Liverpool, London. Prof. Olawumi .D. Awolusi was the supervisor of the study.

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