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# Nursing students and faculty perception of academic incivility: A descriptive qualitative study

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## Abstract:

**BACKGROUND:** Incivility is one of the significant challenges that affect nursing education. Uncivil behaviors have a significant upward trend compared to the past in nursing education. This study was conducted to explore academic incivility from the perspective of nursing students and faculty.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS:** This study was conducted in 2021 using a descriptive qualitative method. Fifteen baccalaureate nursing students and six faculty were selected using purposeful sampling method. Data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, and a qualitative content analysis was applied for data analysis.

**RESULTS:** Data analysis revealed four categories, namely, ineffective teaching–learning, inapposite/unreasonable requests, behaviors disrupting mutually respectful environment, and academic dishonesty, and 14 subcategories.

**CONCLUSION:** To reduce incivility, closer attention needs to be paid to the admission of faculty as well as training them to use effective communication techniques and interactive teaching methods. In addition, nursing students must be provided with the training about uncivil behaviors. Furthermore, clear and precise rules and regulations concerning incivility incidence should be developed and implemented in the universities.

## Keywords:

Faculty, incivility, nursing, student

## Introduction

Incivility is one of the significant challenges that affect nursing education.<sup>[1]</sup> Uncivil behaviors not only disrupt the learning environment, but also cast doubt on the ethical values of the nursing profession.<sup>[2]</sup> The incidence of these behaviors in the academic climate causes a waste of time and damage to reciprocal relationships and tarnishes interpersonal trust and confidence.<sup>[3]</sup> Uncivil behaviors have a significant upward trend compared to the past in nursing education.<sup>[2]</sup>

Incivility is an offensive or destructive behavior that results in individuals' psychological or physiological distress.

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In case these behaviors are unaddressed, threatening conditions, illness, or temporary or permanent damages can occur in individuals.<sup>[4]</sup> Incivility may occur in student–student, student–faculty, or faculty–faculty relations. In fact, in many cases, incivility is a reciprocal process in which both the student and the faculty participate.<sup>[5]</sup> The results of studies on nursing students show that 88% of them have experienced faculty uncivil behaviors.<sup>[6,7]</sup> In addition to faculty, uncivil behaviors have become prevalent among nursing students in recent years, as in Canada,<sup>[8]</sup> the United States, and China, these behaviors are ubiquitous; however, in Oman, the incidence of such behaviors is moderate.<sup>[9]</sup> In

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Iran, the prevalence of uncivil behaviors among nursing and midwifery students is moderate.<sup>[10]</sup>

Incivility encompasses behaviors such as disrespect for others, inability or reluctance to listen to others' opinions or to seek mutuality, as well as disregard for social discourses.<sup>[11]</sup> Unacceptable complaints and objections, sarcastic remarks or behaviors, and cheating on exams are among students' incivility reported by faculty.<sup>[9]</sup> The results of a study in Iran show that the most common uncivil behaviors among nursing students are classroom disruption, humiliation of other students, irregular attendance in classes, noncompliance with Islamic standards, and unpreparedness for the classroom.<sup>[12]</sup> Despite the fact that most studies on incivility in nursing education have focused on nursing students, it should not be overlooked that such uncivil behaviors are also widespread among nursing faculty members.<sup>[1,13]</sup> In the study by Altmiller, unprofessional behavior, poor communication techniques, power gradient, inequality, authority failure, and difficult peer behaviors have been reported to be among the most crucial uncivil faculty behaviors.<sup>[14]</sup>

Poor communication and cooperation between the faculty and student, inefficiency in students' safe clinical practice, reduced retention of students in the job, as well as feelings of frustration in the profession are other adverse effects of incivility in nursing education.<sup>[13]</sup> Incivility in nursing education undermines the safety culture, reduces morale, and increases turnover, distraction, and the number of errors by creating a violent and disrespectful environment.<sup>[1,9]</sup>

Uncivil behaviors in nursing may be observed in classrooms, clinical settings, or online learning forums. However, classroom is a place where faculty often interact with students face to face and, as role models, influence the incidence of professional behaviors in students.<sup>[8]</sup> Considering the cultural dimension of the issue and the need for a tailored context-specific approach to addressing incivility,<sup>[15]</sup> identifying uncivil behaviors in any context is critical. Accordingly, the researchers' question was, What are the uncivil behaviors of faculty and students in this context? As the first step to reduce and control uncivil behaviors is to identify and analyze them,<sup>[2,16]</sup> this study was conducted. This study aimed to explore nursing students' and faculty's perceptions of academic incivility.

## Materials and Methods

### Study design and setting

In the present study, the descriptive qualitative method was applied. In this type of study, the researcher provides a comprehensive summary of phenomenon or

related events in a common language, but does not go into the deep phase of interpretation.<sup>[17]</sup> These studies are less interpretive than other qualitative methods such as phenomenological or grounded theory research.<sup>[18]</sup>

The nursing curriculum in Iran is offered by schools of nursing. Admission into the bachelor's degree in nursing is through participating in the centralized entrance exam throughout the country. The course duration is 4 years, divided into eight semesters, including theoretical courses (70 credits) and clinical courses (65 credits). Also, the employment of faculty is based on professional competencies and teaching skills' assessment by the expert panel. In recent years, due to increased nursing student enrollment, aging, and retirement of faculty, the proportion of faculty to student has diminished.<sup>[19]</sup> These issues can pave the ground for more uncivil behaviors in this academic setting.

The participants were selected from among nursing students and faculty of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Iran. The inclusion criteria for faculty included at least 1 year of teaching experience, encountering students' uncivil behavior, and willingness to participate in the study. The inclusion criteria for students included being at least second-semester freshman, having experiences of uncivil behaviors, and willingness to participate in the study. Participants were selected using a purposeful sampling method. Sample recruitment was performed with maximum variation in terms of age, gender, semester, and the number of years of teaching experience. Participants who did not fully share their experiences were excluded.

### Data collection tool and technique

After coordinating with the educational manager of the faculty of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, contact numbers of the students (who were at least second-semester freshmen) and faculty (with at least 1 year of teaching experience) were received. We contacted them if they wanted to participate in study and had experience of uncivil behaviors. The interview time and place were arranged at participants' convenience. Data were collected from January to June 2021 using in-depth semi-structured interviews. All interviews were conducted by the corresponding author (SF). She has a PhD in nursing and has published several qualitative articles. On average, the interviews lasted for 30–45 min. All interviews began with a general question to establish a close relationship with the participants. An example of an interview question is provided in Table 1. Participant selection and sampling continued until data saturation was reached.

Graneheim and Lundman qualitative content analysis methods were used to analyze the data.<sup>[20]</sup> Recorded

interviews were transcribed verbatim. Transcribed interviews were read by the researchers several times, and the meaning units (sentences or paragraphs extracted from participants' statements) were identified. Each compressed meaning was then assigned a code representing the participants' words in a more abstract way. Finally, similar codes were grouped under subcategories, and categories were formed using the inductive process.

**Rigor**

Trustworthiness was ensured using the confirmability, credibility, dependability, and transferability criteria.<sup>[21]</sup> Confirmability was enhanced by bracketing and keeping a clear audit trail of all research activities. To ensure credibility, member check and peer check methods were used. To this end, participants were provided with the extracted codes and results to confirm the consistency between the codes and their experiences. In addition, the resulting codes and categories were presented to colleagues. Dependability was achieved through the participation of more than one researcher in data analysis. By selecting participants from different demographic characteristics, an attempt was made to enhance the transferability of the study results.

**Ethical consideration**

Written consent was obtained from all participants to comply with the goals and necessary information related to the research, and it was emphasized to them that they could withdraw from the study at any time they wished without any consequences. The researchers did their best to keep the information of the participants anonymous and confidential. Numeric codes were used in place of personal names to secure confidentiality of the interviews.

**Results**

Participants included 15 nursing students and six faculty members [Table 2]. Data analysis revealed four categories, namely, ineffective teaching-learning, inapposite/unreasonable requests, behaviors disrupting the mutually respectful environment, and academic dishonesty, and 14 subcategories [Table 3].

**Ineffective teaching-learning**

Participants' experiences showed that different behaviors of faculty and students disrupted the teaching-learning process. This category includes three categories: poor classroom management, disruptive classroom behaviors, and tedious traditional teaching.

*Poor classroom management*

Classroom management is one of the educator's competencies that influence teaching-learning process.

**Table 1: Samples of interview questions**

Questions
Have you ever encountered faculty members' or students' disrespectful behavior?
Can you share your experience with an example of these behaviors?
In your opinion, what behavior is considered uncivil? Can you give an example? Please explain more.
What behavior of faculty members or students annoys you? Please explain more.

**Table 2: Participants' characteristics**

Participants	Gender	Undergraduate year	Age range (years)	Work experience range (years)
Student	Male: 8 Female: 7	Three freshmen Six sophomores Two juniors Four seniors	20-23	
Faculty	Male: 1 Female: 5		28-54	4-29

**Table 3: The categories and subcategories**

Categories	Subcategories
Ineffective teaching-learning	Poor classroom management Disruptive classroom behaviors Tedious traditional teaching
Inapposite/unreasonable requests	Requests for changing the exam date Requests for assignment cancellation Requests for a higher grade
Behaviors disrupting the mutually respectful environment	Lack of confidentiality Discrimination between students Students and faculty slandering and defaming each other Threats and intimidation
Academic dishonesty	Cheating on exam Plagiarism Lying

*Some instructors give complete freedom of action to the students in the class, so the student takes a selfie in the class, puts his foot on a chair, or talks to his friend. (A second-semester sophomore)*

*Some of my classmates come into the classroom with a half hour delay. When they enter, I get distracted and cannot concentrate. (A third-semester student)*

Given to participant's expressions, poor classroom management of faculty caused to the disruptive for the disruptive behaviors of students including arrive late or leave the classroom without permission. Some students had even disturbed the classroom order and distracted the instructor and other students by doing something irrelevant.

### *Disruptive classroom behaviors*

The intentional and unintentional behaviors of students, such as asking unnecessary questions, whisper, and laugh, had led to other students' distraction and reduced learning. This can interrupt teaching.

*When my students whisper and laugh while I teach, I feel that what I'm saying is funny. Well, it's annoying. Sometimes, I feel that the student ignores me in class. This behavior is very bad and hard to bear. (A faculty with 7 years of experience)*

*Some students ask irrelevant questions while the instructor is teaching and waste the class time and do not let the instructor to teach. (A second-semester sophomore)*

Participants' experiences revealed that the faculty were offended by behaviors such as laughing and whispering and they could not focus on teaching.

### *Tedious traditional teaching*

The use of interactive teaching methods by faculty increases students' participation in teaching-learning process and helps keep them active in the classroom, thereby reducing uncivil behaviors.

*Some instructors' teaching method is boring. They only use PowerPoint for presentation. We just have to be quiet and listen. Well, we get bored and start talking with other classmates. (A fourth-semester student)*

*Some of my colleagues use the same teaching method throughout their working years and do not pay attention to learner-centered approach such as cooperative learning. Well, this makes the student not pay attention to the instructor and entertain himself with his cell phone. (A faculty with 10 years of experience)*

The participants' experiences indicated that traditional teaching methods such as lecture caused exhaustion and unattractiveness of the class. As a result, the student was engaged in other activities, disrupting classroom order and causing uncivil behavior.

### *Inapposite/unreasonable requests*

The participants' experiences demonstrated that the faculty confronts numerous requests from the students in many cases, which displease them and even other students. This category includes three subcategories: requests for changing the exam date, requests for assignment cancellation, and requests for a higher grade.

#### *Requests for changing the exam date*

The students must learn to adhere to exam timetable not only as a rule, but also as a mark of respect for the rights of other students and faculty.

*Two days left to the exam, some students who hadn't worked on the test asked the instructor to change the exam date. It's*

*not fair. It's disrespecting other students and instructor. We were ready for the test; there was no need to change the date because we had already agreed on it. (A second-semester sophomore)*

*In the course plan that I give to students at the beginning of the semester, the exam date is specified and all students are informed of it, but despite the fact that the exam is approaching, some students ask to change the date of the exam. Well, this is really upsetting. (A faculty with 8 years of experience)*

According to the participants' experiences, the request to change the exam date has paved the ground the educator's and other students' dissatisfaction.

#### *Requests for assignment cancellation*

Lack of attention to the appointed deadline of assignments is one of the uncivil behaviors of students. This can disrupt the course plan agreed upon by the faculty and the students.

*Many times, students who don't do their assignment ask for its cancellation after the deadline. Well, it's not right. We agree on the course plan with the students. I can't cancel the assignment, and they annoy me with this improper request. (A faculty with 10 years of experience)*

*I did my homework according to the course plan and timetable set by the instructor. Towards the end of the semester, some students who had not done their homework went to the instructor and asked him to omit the homework. Well, this is not fair. This is ignoring the rules and the right of me and others. (A fifth-semester student)*

The participants' experiences showed that the students' insistence on ignoring the assignments caused the educator to experience stress.

#### *Requests for a higher grade*

Nonacceptance of grades by students is a harassing and uncivil behavior that threatens educational justice.

*After announcing the grades, if student gets a low grade or doesn't pass, come to me and cry. Well, this puts me under pressure and in a dilemma. I can't add a grade because the rights of an active and smarter student are violated. I feel bad when I'm faced with these kinds of requests. (A faculty with 8 years of experience)*

*Some students do not actively participate in the activity learning, but after the test scores are announced, they request a change of grade. Well, this request is not fair. The student should try to succeed during the semester. (A faculty with 12 years of experience)*

The participants' experiences demonstrated the students insisted that the faculty adds to their grades or give

them passing marks, and it was one of the inappropriate requests that caused displeasure among faculty.

### Behaviors disrupting the mutually respectful environment

Nurse educators should respect students as learners and trust their motivation and commitment to the profession they seek to enter. Students are likewise required to respect educators, nursing education, and the community and ensure that educators treat them as fairly as possible. This category includes four subcategories: lack of confidentiality, discrimination between students, students and faculty slandering and defaming each other, and threats and intimidation.

#### Lack of confidentiality

The effective and beneficial relationship between educator and student is built on a base of mutual trust and respect. Although both parties are responsible for maintaining this relationship, the educator must initiate it by demonstrating trust and respect for students.

*When I see the instructor goes to their colleagues and discloses the student's mistake and defame student, actually, the student's character is destroyed, so, the trust is lost, and it makes the student not trust that instructor anymore. (A second-semester sophomore)*

*In one of my classes I fell asleep. I know this was not right, but I was very tired... Two days later, one of the instructors saw me in the hallway and said, "I cannot believe that you were sleeping in your class the whole time..." I was very upset that the instructor had gone and told my sleeping story to his colleague. (A second-semester sophomore)*

Participants' experiences showed that the incidence of behaviors such as disclosure, particularly by educator, had destroyed the atmosphere of trust. Because civil behavior is learned, educator must have attentiveness, respectful communication, and professional behavior in encounters with students.

#### Discrimination between students

Developing social relationships with some students could be perceived as favoritism by other students. Educators often find it is challenging to set appropriate role boundaries for educator–student relationships.

*Sometimes some instructors have a close and intimate relationship with a student, and even if this student doesn't do assignment correctly, the instructor gives student a perfect grade. Well, it's not fair. (A fourth-semester student)*

*Some educators may use examples to clarify health issues/lifestyle habits that are an insult to certain ethnicities, and this may upset students belonging to that ethnicity. (A second-semester sophomore)*

Participants' experiences showed that in some cases, justice is ignored. They cited experiences of ethnic bias and discrimination and feared that the educator's authority and power would discourage educators from restraining those biases.

#### Students and faculty slandering and defaming each other

Applying the ethical standard of beneficence to teaching, students have a right to expect that their educators are competent, responsible, and knowledgeable. Lack of this competency can pave the ground for uncivil behaviors in students.

*I've seen some of my classmates go to instructors and criticize another instructor and say that instructor is bad-tempered or doesn't teach well. It's really bad. If there's a problem, they should tell the instructor, not his colleague. (A second-semester sophomore)*

Participants' experiences indicated that, faculty defame students in the presence of colleagues. Seemingly, in some cases, students slander a faculty in front of their colleagues. Such uncivil behaviors cause discomfort and stress to the student and faculty.

#### Threats and intimidation

The most effective approach to managing incivility focuses on prevention. The faculty must establish clear policies about the administration of each course, such as attendance in class and expectations for student performance and behavior, including the uncivil behavior and its outcomes.

*After finishing work, when I was going home, I noticed some scratch on my car. I wondered who could do it? After a few days, one of the students came to me and said name of student that done it. I was very upset because I had warned that student because of being disorganized. Student had taken revenge on me, ruined my car, and threatened me. (A faculty with 20 years of teaching experience)*

*One of my students, who was absent for some sessions, came to my office with a commanding attitude and said that "You should ignore my absences; otherwise I will express my dissatisfaction when completing the 'instructor satisfaction survey'." (A faculty with 7 years of teaching experience)*

The participants' experiences showed that the incidence of student violent behaviors had destroyed the atmosphere of mutual respect.

#### Academic dishonesty

Acts of dishonesty can have severe consequences and detrimental effects on students, college communication, and the curriculum. Participants' experiences showed that different behaviors, particularly of students, violate academic honesty. This category includes

three subcategories: cheating on exam, plagiarism, and lying.

### *Cheating on exam*

Mutual trust and respect form the basis for effective teacher–learner relationships, and academic dishonesty can damage an educator’s trust in students. Additionally, honest students resent teachers who fail to deal effectively with cheating.

*Cheating on an exam violate smart students’ rights. A student who hasn’t studied at all gets a high grade by cheating. (A second-semester sophomore)*

*After the exam, one of the students came to my office and said that some of their classmates looked at each other’s papers as soon as the teacher was not facing them; and in fact they cheated. (A faculty with 9 years of teaching experience)*

Behaviors such as cheating are an example of students’ academic dishonesty that violates other individuals’ rights and disregards educational rules.

### *Plagiarism in assignments*

Plagiarism is an academic dishonesty that can result in educator’s distrust on students.

*I was correcting the homework. I noticed that the homework of students A and B was exactly the same. Student A was smarter. The student A said that had given homework to student B to use as a model. But student B had presented the same assignment. (A faculty with 4 years of teaching experience)*

*While reading a manuscript by one of my students, I noticed a familiar phrase. When I thought more, I realized that this was part of my own article, which unfortunately, the student did not mention the reference to my article at all and expressed it as his own personal opinion. (A faculty with 20 years of teaching experience)*

The participants’ experiences showed that instances such as plagiarism in assignments damage the relationship between the faculty and the student.

### *Lying*

Ethical standards such as respect and veracity are important considerations for all parties involved in teaching and learning process.

*The student stares into the instructor’s eyes and lies easily. For example, student says the instructor did not explain that. But I was sure I did, and this is very upsetting. (A faculty with 24 years of teaching experience)*

*The class representative requested a change in the class date. I told him to coordinate with the department manager. An hour*

*later, he came to me and said that the department manager had agreed. A few days later, the department manager called me and asked why the class was canceled. It was then that I realized that the representative had not spoken to the department manager at all and had lied to me. (A faculty with 5 years of teaching experience)*

Participants’ experiences showed that students’ deceitfulness had resulted in negative feelings in the faculty. This can disrupt trust.

## Discussion

This study aimed to explore nursing students’ and faculty’s perceptions of academic incivility in Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Iran. Ineffective teaching–learning resulted from various factors such as traditional and boring teaching methods and poor classroom management. Adequate knowledge and the ability to accurately transfer it to students is one of the professional duties of a faculty, the lack of which is considered uncivil behavior.<sup>[22]</sup> When students have no participation in the education process, and there is no encouragement for students to raise questions or express opinions, the class changes into a focal point for uncivil behavior.<sup>[23]</sup> In the present study, behaviors such as lack of punctuality and arriving late for classes, early leaving or canceling classes without prior notice, and using the cell phone in the classroom, which were the most prevalent uncivil behaviors of faculty in other studies,<sup>[1,22,24]</sup> were not observed. The infrequency of such uncivil behaviors in this study could be attributed to faculty’s high perception of the necessity to implement education rules and regulations, as well as continuous monitoring of the education system in holding regular classes and the faculty’s behavior.

In addition to faculty’s teaching shortcomings, the incidence of disrespectful behaviors in students is also one of the factors that can affect the effective teaching–learning process. In the present study, similar to previous studies,<sup>[9,25,26]</sup> arriving late for classes, unpreparedness, fatigue or indifference during class, holding side conversation, and inappropriate use of technology devices such as cell phone were among the factors leading to distractions, reduced concentration, and consequently, poor teaching and learning in the class. Employing effective teaching methods by the faculty through using appropriate presentation skills, interactive teaching methods, and a friendly strategy, in addition to enhancing students’ learning, leads to the establishment of closer relationships between faculty and students and improvement of social skills in them. It is also influential in preventing the incidence of incivility.<sup>[11,27,28]</sup> Heads of the department can play an efficient role in teaching these skills to faculty by organizing appropriate workshops on

effective classroom management and communication skills with students.<sup>[22]</sup>

Students' inappropriate requests, such as postponing the exam date, cancellation of an assignment, and adding to their grades, were among the uncivil behaviors experienced by faculty in this study. Students with a consumerist attitude toward higher education, who enter university solely to obtain a degree and find a more high-paying job, often urge faculty to meet their requests and hold them responsible for their bad grades.<sup>[23]</sup> In fact, such inappropriate requests may not be considered uncivil behavior from the students' perspective, while from the faculty's viewpoint, these behaviors are utterly uncivil. This difference of opinions can impact these behaviors' incidence and exacerbate their harmful consequences in the nursing education system. In the study by Natarajan *et al.*,<sup>[9]</sup> more than 75% of nursing educators considered the demand for make-up exams, class extensions, and grade changes as destructive behaviors, whereas only about 60% of nursing students considered these behaviors as uncivil. This difference of opinion can be confirmed from another perspective, as students believe that the rejection of their requests by faculty is a symbol of their uncivil behavior; however, most nursing faculty do not hold the same opinion. Similarly, in the study by Muliira *et al.*,<sup>[1]</sup> 50% of instructors and 63.7% of students considered such requests as destructive behavior. This difference of opinion further highlights the significance of enlightening nursing students that irrational requests and unacceptable complaints against instructors are uncivil behaviors and can adversely affect the faculty-student relationship.

Clark and Springer believe that a cultural shift to a higher tolerance for incivility is occurring today. Nevertheless, it is a matter of concern that students, in the process of professionalization, accept many of these uncivil behaviors as normal behaviors. The majority of students entering college today, in fact, are successful students in high school; however, they have not practiced civility and respect as manners appropriate for a university environment.<sup>[25]</sup> Consequently, many of these students enter university unprepared for the academic culture and environment.<sup>[23]</sup> This issue dramatizes the importance of the university's academic environment and the prominent role of faculty in teaching incivility to students, after their admission to the university and before entering the clinical environment.<sup>[3]</sup>

In the present study, lack of confidentiality regarding student issues, discrimination, student humiliation, students and faculty defaming one another, as well as threats and intimidation were instances of uncivil behaviors that disrupted the atmosphere of mutual

respect between the student and faculty. In EL Hachi's study,<sup>[24]</sup> the feelings of insult, humiliation, and worthlessness, as well as the feelings of fear and reduced self-confidence due to the humiliating and destructive speeches of instructors, were among the most resentful feelings experienced by nursing students. In Rafiee Vardanjani *et al.*'s study,<sup>[29]</sup> disrespecting students, and in Mohammadipour *et al.*'s<sup>[5]</sup> study, disrespect, physical threat, property damage, and physical violence were among the most significant uncivil behaviors of faculty from the students' perspective. The faculty's method for classroom management is critically influential in the incidence of such uncivil behaviors. In classes where faculty utilize authoritarian and dictatorial class management methods, their uncivil behavior exceeds students' similar behaviors. In such classes, students experience worthlessness, and due to the faculty's rigidity and inadequate understanding, they are afraid to talk and even raise questions related to the lesson.<sup>[26]</sup> However, faculty's use of guided democracy is an efficient strategy for controlling incivility in nursing education, influencing students' professional practice development.<sup>[30]</sup> In this regard, the World Health Organization (WHO) has acknowledged attributes, including awareness of self and others, caring, confidence, patience, integrity, and flexibility to facilitate learning, as well as being considerate of power relations as nursing educators' core competencies.<sup>[31]</sup>

The faculty are always role models, and students attempt to imitate their behavior. This highlights the prominence of faculty's behavior in the classroom and how they interact with learners and other colleagues. Clark and Springer likewise believe that being a positive role model for students is a necessity for faculty, as students continuously observe their instructor. If they commit uncivil behavior, students assume that they can behave in a similar way.<sup>[25]</sup> Given the significance of faculty's role in reducing uncivil behaviors, it is crucial to select efficient individuals as nurse instructors who, in addition to knowledge, possess the necessary communication skills for effective education. Perhaps one of the problems of academic environments is that they place too much attention on aspects such as research, rather than education, when admitting faculty. The faculty who is primarily research focused, by and large, lack the resources and/or interest to invest time and energy in teaching and classroom management techniques.<sup>[22,23]</sup>

According to the study findings, students' uncivil behaviors such as cheating on exam, plagiarism while preparing assignments, and lying had caused mistrust and dishonesty in the academic environment. Academic dishonesty is, by definition, a conscious attempt to falsify, fabricate, or tamper with data, information, or any content relevant to a course, exercise, or academic

practice.<sup>[32]</sup> Individual factors such as irresponsibility, laziness, poor self-image, lack of moral growth, and environmental factors such as parental pressure and students' lack of attitude toward cheating as a dishonest behavior affect their decision to commit uncivil behaviors.<sup>[33]</sup> Kolanko *et al.*<sup>[34]</sup> believe that all faculty are responsible for providing the curriculum, so that the moral and ethical aspects are integrated, students get prepared for clinical practice based on an established professional code, and avoid dishonest behavior. Measures such as setting accurate and clear rules, standards, and values to define dishonest behavior and its consequences, providing a trust-based environment, providing severe penalties for dishonest behavior, and using technology to detect cases such as cheating and plagiarism can be highly efficient in preventing such behaviors in an academic environment.<sup>[32]</sup> Context-based educational intervention and teaching of medical ethics principles based on Quran will have an immense effect on the health-care professionals, including students, following ethical issues.<sup>[35,36]</sup>

### Limitations and recommendation

In this study, participants were selected from Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Iran, with a purposive sampling method, which can limit generalizability of the results. However, researchers tried to use maximum variation by considering the characteristics of participants, such as age, gender, different semesters, and educators' work experience, and a proportional number of participants for qualitative studies was used.<sup>[37]</sup> Future studies are recommended to apply the results of the present study to design strategies that can help reduce the incidence of uncivil behaviors in nursing schools.

### Conclusion

Both students and faculty were influential in the incidence of uncivil behaviors in the classroom. Uncivil behaviors affected the teaching–learning process and the atmosphere of mutual respect and trust in the academic environment. In order to reduce incivility, closer attention needs to be paid to the admission of faculty as well as training of nurse educator to use effective communication techniques and interactive teaching methods. In addition, nursing students must be provided with the training in relation to uncivil behaviors, and clear and precise rules and regulations concerning incivility incidence should be developed and implemented in the university. Utilizing the suggested strategies can help reduce the incidence of uncivil behaviors in nursing schools.

### Acknowledgment and ethical–moral code

This study was approved by the ethics committee of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences (IR.MUI.

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### Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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