

The Relationships between Emotional Intelligence and Perceptions of Faculty Incivility in Higher Education. Do Men and Women Differ?

Yariv Itzkovich¹ · Niva Dolev¹

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Abstract Awareness of the concepts of incivility and emotional intelligence (EI) and of their relevance to higher education has grown in recent years. Incivility has been widely linked to deviant behaviours that are known to negatively impact upon students, while EI has been linked, among other things, to pro-social behaviours. However, the links between EI and faculty incivility (FI), and in particular uncivil behaviours perpetrated by faculty towards students in academic settings, remain unmapped. Similarly, the role of gender with respect to such links have yet to be examined. Thus, the current study examined the relationships between EI and perceived FI towards students as a function of gender. The research was conducted among 210 undergraduate students from one major college in Israel. High scores in the SEA EI branch were correlated with reduced FI perceptions among female students but not among male students. However, the links between general EI scores and perceived FI toward students did not indicate any gender effect.

Keywords Emotional Intelligence, Faculty incivility, Incivility, Gender

✉ Yariv Itzkovich
Itzkovichyariv@gmail.com

Niva Dolev
nivadolev@hotmail.com

¹ School of Social Sciences and Humanities, Kinneret Academic College Sea of Galilee, Kinneret, Israel

Theoretical Framework

Incivility

The concept of incivility has been widely investigated throughout the last decade, with studies motivated mostly by its negative impact on employees and organizations. Organizational researchers perceive incivility to be a manifestation of workplace deviance (Taylor and Pattie 2014) and to be more prevalent, but also subtler, than other interpersonal misconducts, such as bullying or aggression, which are considered more intense forms of misconduct (Itzkovich 2014). Defined first by Andersson and Pearson (1999) as a “low-intensity deviant behaviour with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect” (p. 457), incivility is commonly associated with the following three main characteristics.

The first characteristic implies that incivility is subtle (Andersson and Pearson 1999; Itzkovich 2014; Pearson and Porath 2005), that is, that compared with other forms of interpersonal mistreatment, incivility is less intense and might be expressed through a range of subtle behaviours such as ignoring, condescending-over or patronizing others, as well as through other, additional forms of interpersonal mistreatment (Hershcovis 2011; Schilpzand et al. 2016).

The second characteristic concerns the ambiguity of intention inherent to the above definition of incivility (Andersson and Pearson 1999; Cortina et al. 2001; Pearson et al. 2000; Pearson and Porath 2005). In particular, it is implied that neither the perpetrator nor the target or a third party can easily attribute intention to the act. However, none of the existing tools for the measurement of incivility address the element of intention. In addition, it has been noted (Itzkovich 2015) that repeated acts of mistreatment in general and of incivility in particular are often perceived as intended, and thus the inclusion of ambiguity-of-

intent as part of the definition of incivility has recently been challenged (Itzkovich 2015).

The third and last characteristic involves the setting in which incivility occurs. Initially defined as a workplace and organization-related construct and as one focused on disrespectful interactions at the workplace, the concept of incivility has been recently extended to the academic field in order to explore deviant behaviours manifested by a wide variety of sources, mainly students and faculty (Alt and Itzkovich 2015a; Clark 2008; Marchiondo et al. 2010).

Academic Incivility and Faculty Incivility Towards Students

As part of the above-noted construct adaptation to academic settings, incivility has been redefined and the term ‘academic incivility’ has been introduced. Some scholars (e.g. Berger 2000) have defined academic incivility very broadly as a “speech or action that is disrespectful or rude” (p. 446), while others have highlighted its consequences to include “any action that interferes with a harmonious and cooperative learning atmosphere” (Feldmann 2001, p. 137). The most commonly-used definition is the one proposed by Morrissette (2001), which describes academic incivility as an *intentional* behaviour that disrupts or interferes with the learning process of others (Altmiller 2012). It is this reference to *intention* that distinguishes academic incivility from workplace incivility.

Berger (2000) was the first to treat academic incivility as a concept with two separate dimensions of intensity, active and passive. These dimensions were empirically validated 15 years later by author concerning FI in academia (Alt and Itzkovich 2015). Such distinction between active (more intense) and passive (more subtle) incivilities does not align with the earlier, workplace definition of incivility, which has been limited to subtle behaviours only (Andersson and Pearson 1999).

FI has been studied in terms of uncivil behaviors of faculty members of higher education institutions towards other faculty members (Clark et al. 2013) and, to a larger extent, towards students (Marchiondo et al. 2010), the latter being the focus of the current study.

FI has been noted to be accompanied by a harsh “price tag”. In particular, it was found that faculty incivility towards students enhances their levels of stress and anxiety (Marchiondo et al. 2010), negatively impacts students’ adjustment to academic settings (Alt and Itzkovich 2015b) and student-satisfaction (Marchiondo et al. 2010) and promotes physical and emotional withdrawal among students (Clark 2008; Tiberius and Falk 1999). Those, in turn, might impact upon students’ academic performance. Although Marchiondo et al. (2010) failed to find any correlation between incivilities and self-reported GPA, Caza and Cortina (2007) did report such a correlation.

Several factors have been noted to foster faculty incivility towards students. Most researchers attribute the prevalence of

such incivility to environmental factors such as the widespread occurrence of incivility in the larger population due to changing norms and the pervasiveness of alternate and impersonal methods of communication (Clark and Springer 2007; Marchiondo et al. 2010). Additionally, researchers have attributed the prevalence of incivility in academic settings to the temporary nature of relationships within the academic sphere but also to the often autocratic nature of academic environments (Marchiondo et al. 2010).

Links between Personal Factors, Including Gender, and Incivility

Despite extensive research, little is known concerning the personal antecedents or outcomes of incivility (Schilpzand et al. 2016). As compared with some environmental factors explored by the above-noted studies, fewer studies have focused on personal characteristics as antecedents to incivility. Of these, studies concerning links between gender and perceived incivility have revealed inconclusive results. While some researchers have reported that men experience incivilities more frequently than women (Lim and Lee 2011), others have shown that women are more likely to report instances of incivility as compared with men (Alberts et al. 2010; Cortina et al. 2001; Cortina et al. 2013; Schilpzand et al. 2016; Settles and O’Connor 2014). To date, the contribution of gender to perceived incivility, and in particular to the antecedents or impacts of incivility is not fully understood. Data concerning the role of gender in experiences of FI in academic settings has not yet been reported.

Furthermore, while a variety of dispositional, behavioural and situational antecedents to incivility have been explored (Cortina et al. 2013; Itzkovich 2016; Lim and Lee 2011; Meier and Spector 2013; Milam et al. 2009; Schilpzand et al. 2016; Walsh et al. 2012), the contribution of the personal capabilities and/or skills of those targeted by incivility remains unmapped (Schilpzand et al. 2016). Specifically, the links between Emotional Intelligence (EI) skills and incivility have yet to be addressed. Thus, only a few studies have examined the relationships between EI and workplace incivility or the role of EI either as a moderating agent (Bibi et al. 2013) or as a potential remedy (Sheehan 1999; Kirk et al. 2009). Marchiondo et al. (2010) noted that the reluctance to confront others’ uncivil behaviours may contribute to incivility. Such reluctance might be linked to certain EI skills and could thus point to potential links between EI and incivility. Even more explicitly, Carblis (2008) had claimed that EI skills could mitigate incivility (and other types of interpersonal conflicts) while Kirk et al. (2009) suggested that individuals with low EI are more likely to report instances of workplace incivility. Demonstrating the effects of incivility on EI in schools, Stein and Book (2000) found that low impulse control in teachers, as manifested through loss of temper, lack of patience or insulting comments, could negatively impact upon the emotional state, learning abilities and

emotional regulation of students. However, the role of EI as a possible antecedent to perceived incivility has not yet been directly addressed and elements of EI that could serve as potential precursors to perceived FI have not yet been assessed in an academic context. In particular, the effects of EI on faculty's incivility towards students have not yet been examined.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI), a psychological concept that has emerged as a research area in the last few decades, has been promoted as an individual-difference variable that plays a role in various types of human performance and behaviours (Van Rooy and Viswesvaran 2007). Generally speaking, the concept concerns the effective integration of emotion and thought (Mayer et al. 2001), thus combining two research areas which previously had been mostly considered foreign to one another and enabling the integrated study of the emotional and social skills derived from these two areas (Bar-On 2006). Building on the interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences of Gardner's multiple intelligences concept, as well as on earlier works by Darwin (1872); Thorndike (1920) and Wechsler (1940); Salovey and Mayer (1990), the two pioneers of EI research, defined it as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey and Mayer 1990, p. 189). Using a wider view, Bar-On (2006) described EI as "a cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate to them, and cope with daily demands" (p. 3).

Following the publication of Goleman's (1995) book *Emotional Intelligence*, the concept has become a major topic of interest in scientific circles as well as among the lay public. Thus it has been the subject of a wide range of studies in various contexts, including universities. Goleman (1995) credited interest in the concept to the fact that EI offers a new perspective on skills that could promote success and pro-social behaviours and could reduce violence and mal-adaptive behaviours, noting the rise in the latter in the modern era.

Many researchers have proposed models to describe EI (Bar-On 1997; Goleman 1997; Petrides and Furnham 2003) and have offered ways to measure the associated parameters. One of the earlier and leading models of EI is the one by Salovey and Mayer (1990), where EI is described as an ability comprised of four hierarchical components (branches).

First among these is the appraisal and expression of emotion in the self - the ability to be aware and understand self-emotions and to express these emotions naturally. People with enhanced emotional awareness abilities perceive their emotions more quickly and accurately than others, acknowledge their emotions, have a good understanding of their emotions and respond to these emotions appropriately (Salovey and Mayer 1990).

Recognizing that most human emotions are manifested in social context and are stimulated by social interactions, the second branch of the Salovey and Mayer (1990) model refers to the appraisal and recognition of emotion in others. The ability to perceive, recognize and understand others' emotions provides the basis for interpersonal interactions and cooperation, as the information needed for appropriate interpersonal conduct can only be acquired through accurate perceptions of emotions (Mayer and Salovey 1997; Libbrecht et al. 2010).

Emotions are often activated automatically through the limbic system, in what Goleman (1995) has referred to as emotional 'high-jacking', a process that often results in undesired behaviours. Regulation of Emotion, the third branch of the Salovey and Mayer model, concerns the ability of individuals to manage their emotions. Such regulation involves several mechanisms: applying strategies to regulate and alter emotions; monitoring of the effectiveness of these strategies (Salovey and Mayer 1990); examining cognition, i.e. the paradigms and interpretations that underlie emotions and reactions (Carblis 2008); and choosing the desired reactions (Marzuki et al. 2012). The ability to regulate emotions leads to adaptive and reinforcing mood states, enables a more rapid recovery from psychological distress (Libbrecht et al. 2010) and promotes more effective and civil reactions in the course of social interactions (Stein and Book 2000). Brackett et al. (2010), for example, found emotion-regulation to be positively associated with job satisfaction, positive affect at work and low burnout, while Dulewicz and Higgs (2000) argued that the ability to regulate emotions is linked to both academic and life successes.

Stein and Book (2000) noted emotion-regulation as key to effective teaching and to a safe learning climate. Additionally, emotion-regulation was noted to concern the regulation of others' emotions and the ability to help others to manage their emotions and to motivate them (Brackett and Salovey 2006). The self-perceived ability to manage one's own and others' emotions has been found to be positively related to a perceived sense of personal control (Petrides and Furnham 2003).

The last, fourth branch of the Salovey and Mayer (1990) EI model, the use of emotion to facilitate thought, touches on the ability to focus attention and to harness feelings in order to assist in cognitive processes such as reasoning, problem-solving, decision-making and interpersonal communication (Mayer and Salovey 1997; Libbrecht et al. 2010). Its inclusion in the model reflects the understanding that moods and emotions subtly but systematically influence some of the factors and strategies involved in both problem solving and decision making.

Studies have indicated negative links between EI and stress levels (Ciarrochi et al. 2002), suggesting that EI may moderate between stress and aggressive behaviours (Slaski and Cartwright 2002) and may protect against stress and strong negative emotions (Goleman 1995). In a not entirely unrelated vein, EI has been directly linked to better-quality social interactions

(Brackett and Katulak 2006; Cohen and Sandy 2007; Stern et al. 2007), to pro-social behaviours (Brackett et al. 2004; Fernández-Berrocal and Ruiz 2008) and to low rates of involvement in negative and deviant behaviours (Petrides et al. 2004; Brackett et al. 2011). The ability to perceive, use, understand and manage emotions (Brackett and Katulak 2006), and in particular the ability to understand and to empathize with others' emotions (Goleman 1995), were found to contribute to positive social interactions, as participants in such interactions relied on verbal and nonverbal emotional expressions to convey information about thoughts, intentions and behaviours. In particular, a number of studies in a variety of EI frameworks have highlighted the importance of EI abilities and competencies to the fostering of better student-teacher communications and positive relationships, to creating supportive and respectful learning environments, to effective teaching in higher education settings (Haskett 2003; Hwang 2007) and to improved teaching in schools in general (Stein and Book 2000). Zembylas et al. (2014), for example, discussed the importance of care in higher education settings, noting the benefits of caring for and about students and of providing and receiving care, and highlighting the relevance of the concept to mitigating irresponsible behaviours towards students.

Drawing on the above line of research, several studies have examined links between EI and bullying. Of these, a number of studies have chosen to examine links between EI and bullying at the workplace (Branch and Murray 2012). Einarsen et al. (2003), for example, have suggested that bullying is largely an emotional process and that individual factors may contribute to the ability to cope with it. Similarly, Branch and Murray (2012) have noted that individuals with high EI may be less likely to become victims of workplace bullying. Goleman (1995) further noted that individuals who recognize and understand their emotions and the emotions of others are better able to react in positive ways in social situations and thus may be less prone to bullying. Other workplace studies noted links between EI (in particular emotion regulation) and both bullying and becoming the target for bullying (Sheehan et al. 2003; Branch and Murray 2012, respectively). Additional studies have centered on such EI-bullying links among children and adolescents (Kokkinos and Kipritsi 2012; Lomas et al. 2012). In a study conducted among elementary school students and using the Bar-On framework, Vogel (2006) found the interpersonal skills (including empathy) of bullies, but not of victims of bullying, to be significantly and negatively correlated with the bully/victim questionnaires scores, while stress management and general mood skills were found to be negatively correlated with both bullying and victimization.

However, while recent data has shown links between low levels of EI to a range of deviant interactions as noted above, and while EI development has been suggested as a way to deal with deviant behaviours (Goleman 1995; Sheehan 1999), very few studies have centered on the links between EI and incivility,

in particular in an academic context and even more specifically on the links between EI and perceived faculty incivility towards students. This despite the fact that incivility is considered a manifestation of deviant behaviours.

Based on the above-noted studies, the first research hypothesis for the current study postulated that general EI scores would be negatively correlated with perceived FI among student participants (H1).

EI and Gender

The potential role of gender in EI has long been a topic of academic interest. To date, data regarding such differences between men and women is inconclusive, with some studies suggesting gender related differences in total EI levels, others noting gender related differences in some EI competencies, and still others not finding any gender differences in EI at all.

Studies that have found women to be superior to men in their emotional abilities have employed a variety of EI measures (Brackett and Mayer 2003; Ciarrochi et al. 2000; Extremera et al. 2006; Kafetsios 2004). The mechanisms invoked to account for these findings had been similarly varied and included biological mechanisms, in particular gender related differences in brain function, as well as social processes such as gender differences in socialization processes, expectations and early child-parent interactions (Fernández-Berrocal et al. 2012).

Other authors, including ones that have used the Salovey and Mayer four-branch EI framework (Fernández-Berrocal et al. 2012), have argued that no gender differences in the average, general EI levels had been demonstrated (Bar-On 2006; Ciarrochi et al. 2002; Hopkins and Bilimoria 2008). For example, both Mabekoje and Ogunyemi (2003) and Marzuki et al. (2012) did not find gender differences in EI among university students.

Similar to the paucity of studies on the role of EI in incivility towards students, the role of gender in the study of EI as a potential antecedent of faculty incivility has not yet been examined.

Drawing on the above notions and on the reported absence of gender differences in general EI scores among university students, we formulated our second research hypotheses.

H2: Correlations between the general EI scores and perceived FI would not differ between male and female student participants.

Specific EI Skills and Gender

Several studies have looked at gender differences with respect to specific EI skills. Some of these have found women to have higher levels of emotional self-awareness and awareness of others as well as higher empathy (Costa et al. 2001; Zeidner and Roberts 2012). Bar-On (2006), for example, found small but statistically significant gender differences in favor of women in self-awareness and in all of the interpersonal sub-scales of his

model: empathy, social responsibility and interpersonal-relationships. Men, on the other hand, were found to have higher intra-personal capacity (in particular self-regard and independence) and higher adaptability, stress tolerance and optimism (Bar-On 2006).

However, studies that employed the Salovey and Mayer four-branch EI framework have shown conflicting results regarding the specific EI dimensions in which women were noted to perform better. While some of these studies have found women to score higher than men in perception and emotional facilitation, others have found women more likely to have higher understanding and emotional regulation. Still others have found women to be superior to men in a variety of abilities corresponding to all four EI branches (Brackett et al. 2006). Furthermore, Fernández-Berrocal et al. (2012) noted that some gender differences in EI were mediated by age.

Finally, in their examination of behaviours which could be considered uncivil, using the Salovey and Mayer MSCEIT scale, Brackett et al. (2006) have found men, but not women, with lower EI scores more likely to use both passive and active destructive strategies in response to interpersonal conflicts as well as to others' reports of positive events. They suggest that emotions might play a different role in the social interactions of men as compared with women and that emotional skills might be employed differently in the social worlds of each gender.

Based on these conflicting and inconsistent results regarding the differences in specific EI dimensions between women and men (Salovey and Mayer 1990; Bar-On 2006; Brackett et al. 2006), a third research hypothesis had been postulated: Correlations between specific EI skills and perceived FI would be different for male student participants as compared with female student participants (H3).

The Present Study

The current study aimed to address the knowledge gaps which had been presented throughout the theoretical framework,

In order to do so, the relationships between emotional intelligence (EI) and perceived faculty incivility (FI) toward students as a function of gender differences were examined. Three research hypotheses were postulated:

- H1: General EI scores would be negatively correlated with perceptions of FI for all student participants.
- H2: Correlations between general EI scores and perceived FI would not differ between male and female student participants.
- H3: Correlations between specific EI skills and perceived FI would be different for male student participants as compared with female student participants.

Figure 1 illustrates the proposed research framework.

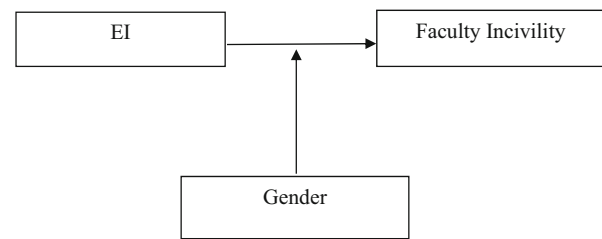


Fig. 1 The theoretical structure of the proposed framework

Methods

Participants

The research sample included 210 undergraduate students (25 % males and 75 % females) from one major college in Israel. 60.8 % of the participants were Jewish while the remaining (39.2 %) were Christian, Muslim and Druze. The mean age of participants was 27.9 (SD = 7.7) years. The year-of-study distribution was: 17 % first year students, 40 % second year students, 31 % third year students and 11 % fourth year students.

Research Tools

Emotional Intelligence Scale

EI was measured by means of the 16 item Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (Wong and Law 2002), a self-report measure based on the Salovey-Mayer EI framework (Salovey and Mayer 1990) which includes four EI dimensions: Self-Emotion Appraisal [SEA]; Others' Emotion Appraisal [OEA]; Use of Emotions [UOE]; and Regulation of Emotions [ROE], each of which comprising four sub-items.

Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with each statement on the associated EI questionnaires, using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). A sample statement is: *'I really understand what I feel'*. The alpha coefficients were .85 for Self-Emotion Appraisal dimension, .79 for the Others' Emotions Appraisal dimension, .85 for the Use of Emotions dimension and .86 for the Regulation of Emotions dimension.

The Perceived Faculty Incivility Scale (PFIS)

The PFIS scale was *designed* by Authors (Alt and Itzkovich 2015b) to measure the frequency of FI occurrences. It includes two independent FI sub-scales: The first comprises 13 items pertaining to *active incivility*, such as: *"The teacher yells at you for not understanding the material"* (Cronbach's alpha equals .90) and the second comprises 8 items pertaining to

passive incivility, such as: “The teacher ignores students’ questions during lectures” (Cronbach’s alpha equals .73). Each item is assigned a Likert-type score ranging from 1 = *almost never* to 5 = *nearly always*.

In the current study only the passive FI sub-scale was employed, as preliminary data had indicated that it was more widely in line with the participants’ experiences as compared with the active FI sub-scale.

Procedure

Prior to signing an informed consent form, participants had been clearly notified that the questionnaires they were about to be administered were anonymous and that no pressure would be applied should they choose to return the questionnaires unfilled or incomplete. Participants were further assured that all specific and identifying information which could link them to specific teachers would be excluded from data analysis.

EI and PFIS questionnaires were administered to the participants in their regular classrooms by research assistants and without the presence of regular academic staff/instructors. The stated purpose of the study (namely, the examination of students’ perceptions of their teachers) was explained prior to the administration of questionnaires.

Upon the study’s completion, debriefing information was delivered to the participants via the academic institution’s website as well as in the course of face-to-face debriefing sessions.

Findings

Research data for all participants, including means, standard deviations of the measured variables and correlations, is presented in Table 1. In order to demonstrate that all variables of the research variables are distinct, Table 1 further includes the Fornell-Larcker Criterion for discriminant validity. The Fornell-Larcker Criterion posits that the square root of average variance extracted (AVE), must be greater than the correlation of the construct with all other constructs in the structural model (Hair et al. 2016). As noted in Table 1, the values for the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, indicate that all constructs (i.e FI, EI and all sub-factors of EI) are sufficiently distinct.

Additionally, the data in Table 1 indicates that all sub-factors of EI are interrelated and that only SEA is negatively and significantly correlated with FI.

The three research hypotheses were tested by means of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), with combined measurement (factor analysis) and structural (path analysis) models. Data was analyzed by the maximum likelihood method. Three fit indices were computed in order to evaluate the

Table 1 Descriptive statistics and correlations

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Faculty incivility	1.97	.69	(.68)				
2. Others’ emotions	3.85	.66	-.14	(.78)			
3. Regulate emotions	3.54	.78	.05	.23**	(.80)		
4. Self-emotions	4.07	.72	-.17*	.41**	.49**	(.83)	
5. Use of emotions	4.07	.76	-.08	.30**	.44**	.41**	(.75)

N = 210. Fornell-Larcker Criterion for discriminant validity is in parentheses

p* ≤ .05 *p* ≤ .01

model fit: $\chi^2(df)$ (*p* > .05), *CFI* (> 0.9) and *RMSEA* (< .08). The measurement models were designed to include the EI general latent factor and four sub-factors: Self-Emotional Appraisal [SEA] with 4 observed variables, Others’ Emotional Appraisal [OEA] with 4 observed variables, Regulation of Emotions [ROE] with 4 observed variables and Use of Emotions [UOE] with 4 observed variables. The Faculty Incivility (FI) general latent factor was determined by measuring the passive incivility latent sub-factor with 8 observed variables. For the purpose of the path models, paths between the general latent EI factor and the passive latent FI sub-factor were specified.

First, in order to examine the first research hypothesis (H1), general EI scores measured by the EI general latent factor (composed out of the four EI sub-factors) and perceptions of FI were measured through model 1 (Fig. 2). The goodness of fit of the data to the model yielded sufficient fit results ($\chi^2 = 371.4$ [*df* = 246], *p* = .000; *CFI* = .94; *RMSEA* = .04).

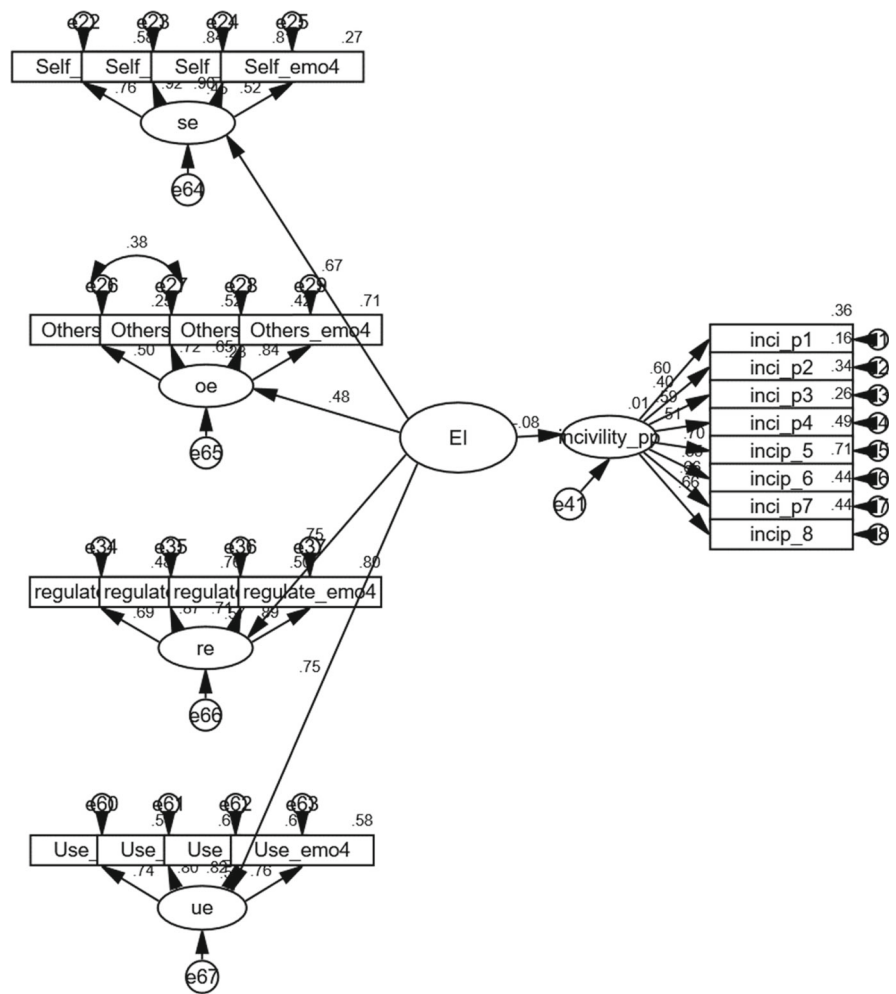
No links between the general EI scores and the perceptions of FI toward students were noted (Fig. 2).

Later on, in order to evaluate the role of gender with respect to the links between general EI scores and perceived FI toward students (H2) two distinct models (models 2 and 3), illustrated in Figs. 3 and 4 respectively, had been assessed. Analysis of the goodness of fit of the data to the models yielded a sufficient fit ($\chi^2 = 697.6$ [*df* = 492], *p* = .000; *CFI* = .91; *RMSEA* = .04).

As evident from Figs. 3 and 4, no differences between male and female student participants with respect to the relationships between general EI scores and perceived FI toward students were noted. When calculated as a single latent variable, general EI scores could not account for any of the variance in the perceived FI for either male or female student participants.

Finally, in order to test hypothesis H3, two additional models which specified paths between each of the four EI sub-factors and the passive incivility latent variable were examined (models 4 and 5). Calculation of the goodness of fit of the data to the models yielded a sufficient fit ($\chi^2 = 675.5$ [*df* = 482], *p* = .000; *CFI* = .91; *RMSEA* = .04).

Fig. 2 The structural model with standardized parameter estimates – total effects of EI general score on students’ FI perceptions (N = 210) Note: *p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001



Note: *p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001

The corresponding EI and perceived FI values for male and female student participants are depicted in Figs. 5 and 6 respectively.

While no links between the four dimensions of EI and perceived FI toward students were noted among male student participants (Fig. 5), a moderate but significant negative link between the SEA sub-factor and FI was found for female student participants (Fig. 6, $\beta = -.37, p < .001$).

As evident from Fig. 6, the SEA sub-factor of EI, by itself, accounted for 13 % of the variance in FI perceptions among female student participants. This finding suggests that higher levels of SEA (the ability to understand own emotions) may lead to fewer reports of uncivil encounters in female students. These relations were not found among male student participants.

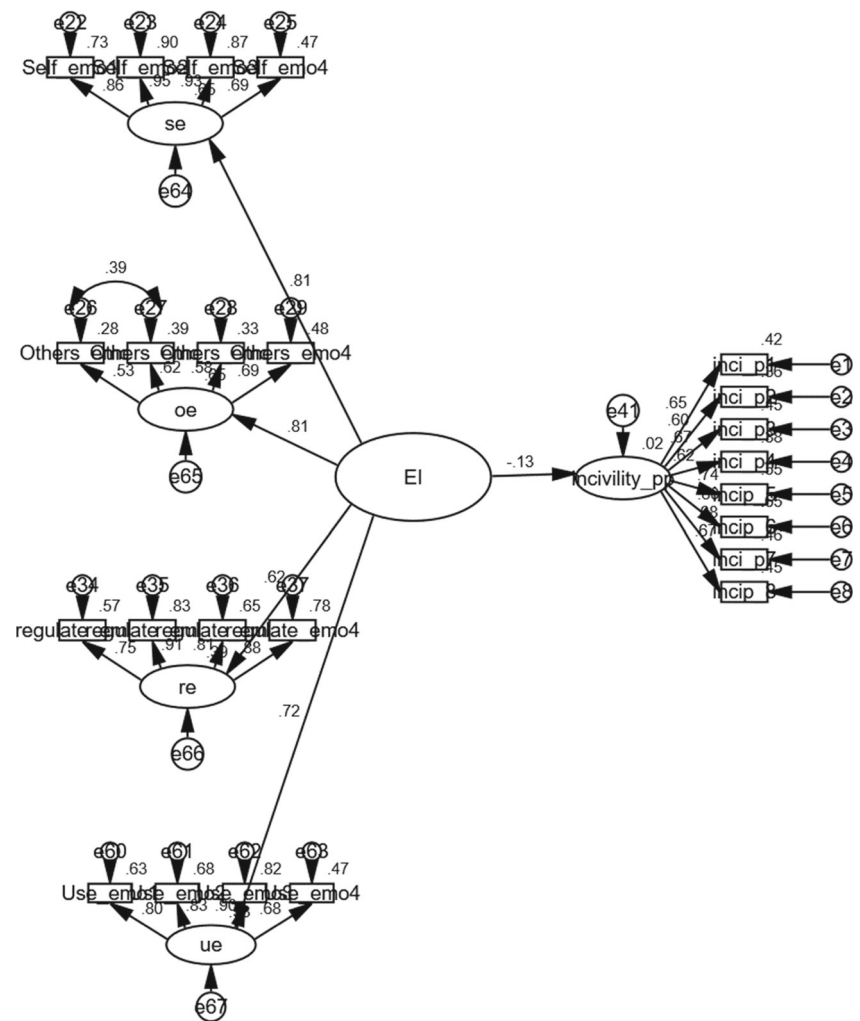
Discussion

Awareness of the concepts of incivility (Andersson and Pearson 1999; Schilpzand et al. 2016; Taylor and Pattie

2014) and emotional intelligence (Mayer and Salovey 1997; Goleman 1995), including awareness of their relevance to higher education, has grown in recent years (Berger 2000; Drew 2006; Karim et al. 2015). In many of these studies, incivility has been linked to deviant behaviours which negatively impact upon individuals in organizations, including students (Marchiondo et al. 2010). Conversely, high EI, defined as a set of personal social and emotional skills, has been linked to pro-social behaviours, academic achievements and work success (Bar-On 2006), including effective teaching in higher education settings (Haskett 2003), as well as to an improved ability to successfully handle stressful and adverse situations (Fariselli et al. 2008). Furthermore, and somewhat similar to high FI, low EI has been linked, among other things, to anti-social behaviours as well as to difficulties in forming positive interpersonal interactions and to poor impulse control (Goleman 1995; Stein and Book 2000).

With respect to academic settings, it has been argued that teaching “activates, colors and expresses teachers’ own feelings and actions, as well as the feelings and actions of others

Fig. 3 The structural model with standardized parameter estimates – total effects of EI general score on FI perceptions of male students ($N = 210$) Note: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$



Note: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

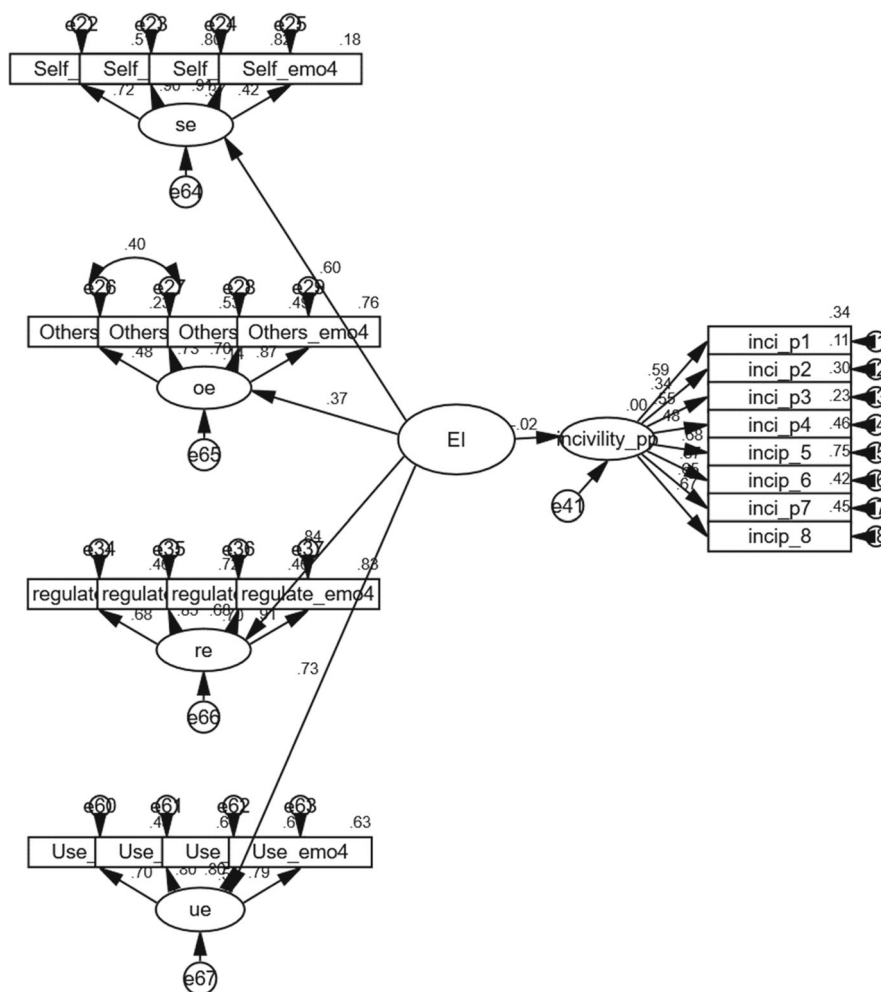
with whom teachers interact” (Hargreaves 1999, p. 4), with particular reference to students. Thus, interactions between emotion, cognition, feelings and thoughts have been recognized as fundamental to teaching and learning and to positive teacher-student relationships (Hargreaves 1998). Uitto and Estola (2009) argued that in order for schools to be a more democratic, caring and egalitarian (i.e. civil), teachers should become more aware of their own ‘personal histories’ (namely aware of their emotions).

It has been demonstrated that teacher-student interpersonal relationships are at the core of effective teaching and learning and that non-regulated behaviours may contribute to the creation of unsafe and unpredictable environments for students, which, in turn, could negatively affect students’ emotions and learning (Stein and Book 2000). At the same time, students’ emotional resources, referred to by Cefai (2008) as ‘educational resilience’, have been noted to affect their ability to form positive relations with their teachers, to endure difficulties and to succeed in their studies (Cohen 2001).

As noted above, a variety of studies have indicated that individuals’ interpretations of situations impact upon their emotional experience and reactions, including to instances of incivility. Despite these findings, the links between incivility and EI have been only scantily studied (Marchiondo et al. 2010). In particular, such links had not been assessed in academic settings and more specifically with respect to perceived FI toward students.

In the current study, links between perceived FI and EI (both general EI and the four branches of EI) among college students were assessed within the framework of gender, an even less explored topic. In line with past research which had noted links between EI and bullying (Sheehan M. et al. 2003; Vogel 2006; Branch and Murray 2012), and more specifically between EI and incivility (Bibi et al. 2013), our first research hypothesis (H1) postulated that students’ general EI scores would be negatively correlated with perceived FI toward students among all student participants. The current results do not support such a correlation. One possible explanation for this lack of EI-FI

Fig. 4 The structural model with standardized parameter estimates – total effects of EI general score on FI perceptions of female students ($N = 210$) Note: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$



Note: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

association is the nature of FI and in particular the nature of faculty-student relationships in large classrooms, which tend to be temporary, hierarchical and relatively impersonal. As EI concerns not only the awareness of self-emotions, which can be instrumental when dealing with FI, but also the ability to express and regulate these emotions in a social context (Mayer and Salovey 1997), links between general EI scores and perceived FI may be less apparent in the large classes often encountered in the academic context.

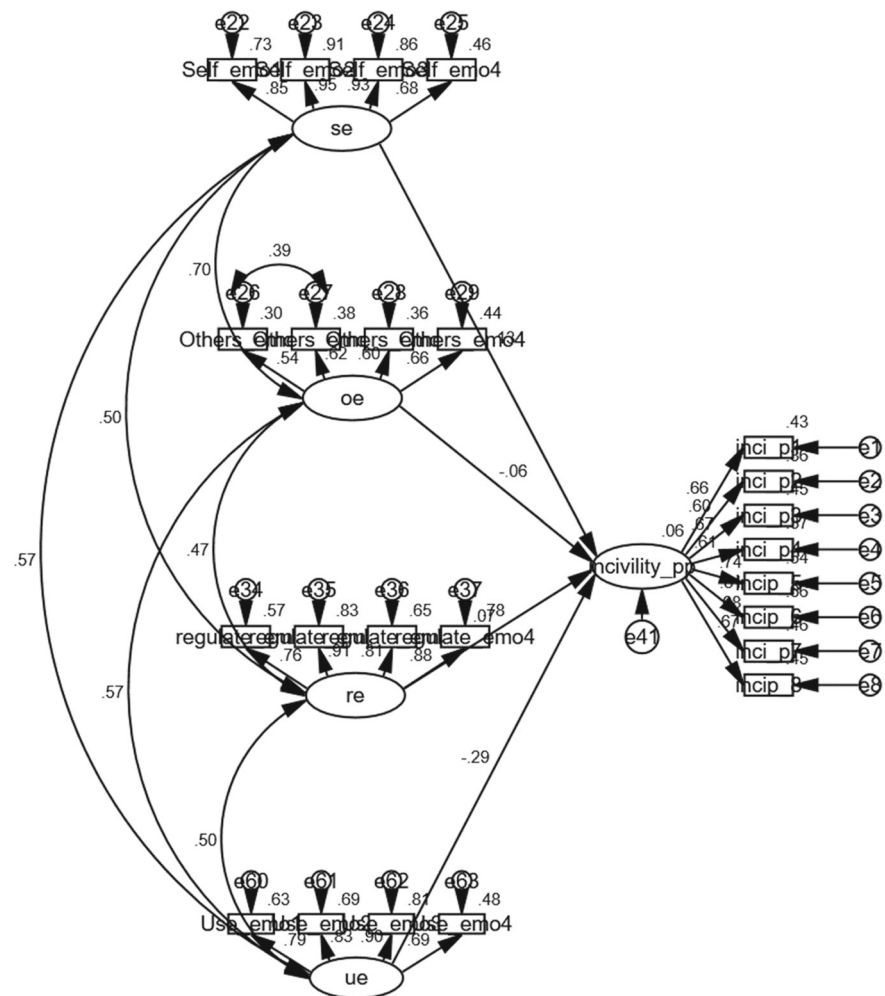
Another explanation may have to do with the specific EI framework and the corresponding measurement tool which were used in the current study. The Salovey-Mayer framework we had employed is a profound and highly valued framework of EI but is limited to the assessment of relationships between emotion and cognition and to the four types of EI abilities (branches) derived from these relationships. However, much of the evidence for links between EI and different life outcomes has been found within wider and more behaviour-related conceptualizations of EI (Bar-On 2006). For example, and similar to the current findings, Vogel (2006) did not find links between bullying,

victimization and the intrapersonal or inter-personal EQ-i scales, two scales that are in fact a manifestation of the Salovey-Mayer framework of EI. She did however observe negative correlations between bullying and victimization on the one hand and the stress-tolerance and general mood Bar-On EQ-i scales on the other hand. These latter two EQ-i scales which demonstrate a link between EI and bullying are part of the wider model of EI as conceptualized by Bar-On (2006) but not of the model used in the current study.

It may be concluded that the relationships between general EI scores and perceived FI may be context-dependent and may be more apparent in small groups and in the context of less formal academic settings. In addition, evidence of such relationships may depend on the empirical tools and underlying theoretical framework used to assess them. As EI-FI relationships had not been previously examined, additional research is needed in order to enable a comprehensive assessment of such links.

While some studies have indicated that women have higher general levels of EI (e.g. Brackett and Mayer 2003; Extremera

Fig. 5 The structural model with standardized parameter estimates—effects of EI sub factors on FI perceptions of male students ($N = 210$) Note: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$



Note: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

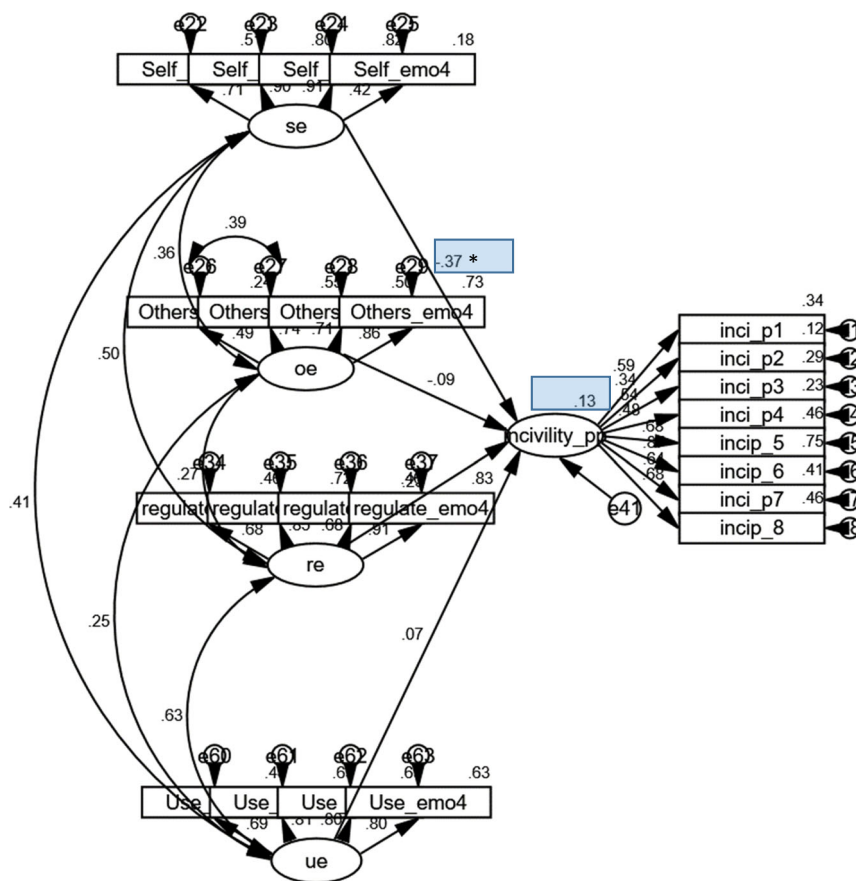
et al. 2006), others have not revealed such gender differences (Bar-On 2006; Cavallo and Brienza 2001; Hopkins and Bilimoria 2008). Similarly, findings regarding links between gender differences and perceptions of incivility have been inconclusive (Bibi et al. 2013; Sheehan 1999; Kirk et al. 2009). In view of these studies, our second hypothesis (H2) predicted no gender differences in the correlations between general EI scores and perceived FI toward students. Indeed, in line with our hypothesis and with many of the above quoted findings, no differences between male and female students with respect to the links between general EI scores and perceived FI were found.

It is important to note that congruent with our results, other studies had failed to support a prediction that gender would moderate EI-bullying relationships (Vogel 2006). This lack of moderating effect of gender may have to do with the construct of EI itself. In particular, it could be that differences in the subscales that comprise the general score of EI work out to average each other, suggesting a compensation mechanism. For example, Bar-On (2006) had found that while women

scored higher than men on self-awareness and on all interpersonal scales, men demonstrated higher intrapersonal capacity, and in particular higher self-regard and independence, higher adaptability and higher stress tolerance and optimism, as compared with women. However, he too did not observe any differences between men and women in general EI scores. Extending these findings, Brackett et al. (2004) noted that EI (using the Salovey and Mayer framework) predicted social deviance, including aggressive acts, for men but not for women, while Eisenberg et al. (1995) found links between emotion regulation and social function in boys but not in girls. Furthermore, Custrini and Feldman (1989) showed that the ability to decode and encode emotions contributed to increased social competence in girls but not in boys.

Based on the above-noted claims for a possible gender role in specific branches of EI, our third research hypothesis (H3) postulated that the correlations between certain, distinct EI facets and perceived FI toward students will differ between male and female students. In line with this hypothesis, the present findings indicate a correlation between high scores

Fig. 6 The structural model with standardized parameter estimates –effects of EI sub factors on FI perceptions of female students (N = 210) Note: **p* < .05 ***p* < .01 ****p* < .001



Note: **p* < .05 ***p* < .01 ****p* < .001

in the SEA EI branch and reduced faculty incivility perceptions among female student participants but not among their male counterparts. These findings corroborate findings by Bar-On (2006) that had shown women to have higher ability to recognize and understand their own emotions and extend these findings to include the impact of such enhanced abilities on perceptions of incivility. As noted earlier, emotional self-awareness allows individuals to recognize, understand and manage self-emotions (Jennings and Greenberg 2009). It could be reasoned that such specifically enhanced EI skills in women may help them to motivate themselves when facing daily challenges (Stein and Book 2000), such as incivility, and to seek alternative explanations or alternative moods and emotions in order to address them. Conversely, the observed lack of such enhanced skills may rule out the availability of such an EI mitigation mechanism for men. More generally, the findings are in line with Brackett et al. (2004) who stated that emotions and emotional functioning may act differently in men and women.

While the present findings shed light on a previously unexamined field, some research limitations should be noted:

First, the cross sectional nature of the present data could preclude definitive statements about causality. Indeed, some

relationships in the model are likely to be reciprocal. For example, while the study implies that EI could impact FI in women, it is quite plausible that FI experiences could lead to lower awareness of self-feelings as a protective mechanism.

Second, as the study was conducted in a single country and was limited to a single regional college the results cannot necessarily be generalized to students from other colleges and/or countries.

Third, the current data was limited to self-report measures. Use of additional, more varied, survey approaches as well as different experimental and qualitative measurement techniques could lend more support to the present findings and perhaps shed more light on the EI/FI/gender relationships.

Fourth, and most important, our findings with respect to the contribution of SEA to the mitigation of perceived FI in female students account for only a limited part of the noted variance in the incivility variable. However, while modest in nature, the findings are among the first to shed some light on a little-explored field, namely the relationships between EI and perceived incivility, and in particular incivility towards students. Formerly, it has been noted that “low R-squared does not necessarily mean that a regression equation is useless. Given sufficient data it may still be possible to reliably

estimate the impact of individual explanatory variables even though the model has a low R-squared” (Wooldridge 2006, p. 43–44, 207). In line with this insight, we hope that the current findings would encourage other researchers to further explore this topic with additional constructs. Such studies, in turn, might gradually increase the understanding of the EI/FI relationships and the significance of the current results.

Conclusions and Implications

The present empirical findings demonstrate important, although modest, links between EI and perceived FI towards students (defined as uncivil encounters in academic settings).

As thus far such links had been only scantily explored, the current findings contribute to the understanding of the relationships between emotional abilities and the perception of incivility. In particular, it has been shown that certain aspects of EI can mitigate perceived faculty incivility toward students. Thus, while uncivil acts are not within the control of their victims, the findings indicate that specific emotional skills can help those targeted by incivility to cope with the emotional experience. The findings further suggest that such a mitigation mechanism may be available only for women. As data comparing women’s and men’s reactions to incivility is rare, the present study contributes to the understanding of the links between EI and FI in the framework of gender. Our findings imply that the enhancement of emotional awareness and EI skills among students could contribute to decreasing perceptions of incivility in academic settings or their emotional costs. Although, EI mitigation process observed in the present study was found to apply to female students only and to account for only part of the variance in the dependent variable (FI), faculty staff might still be encouraged to develop their own EI and increase their emotional self-awareness, as well as the awareness and understanding of emotional mechanisms in their students, in order to better address FI in academia. This in line with Zembylas et al. (2014) who had noted the importance of developing faculty’s ability to understand and attend to students’ emotions on a multi-dimensional level. Similarly, higher-education institutions might consider investing in the development of EI in students in order to help them better cope with interpersonal challenges related to incivility in academia but also in the workplace.

Finally, in light of the study’s relatively small sample size and limited geographical scope, these conclusions should be further bolstered by added research.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest Yariv Itzkovich declares that he has no conflict of interest.

Niva Dolev declares that she has no conflict of interest.

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