AFRICAN JOURNAL OF HOSPITALITY, TOURISM AND LEISURE
2026, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 628-639
https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720.768

AJHTL
OPEN ACCESS

Research article

The effect of customer incivility on hospitality employee engagement and service quality

Fatima P. Diasse [1] and Erica Sao Joao [1]

[1] School of Tourism and Hospitality, College of Business and Economics, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa

ABSTRACT

The restaurant industry is people-centric, aiming to foster engagement between guests and employees to improve service delivery. However, a growing concern is customer incivility, which stems from the hospitality industry's 'The customer is always right' or 'The customer is king' philosophy. Uncivil customer behaviour not only affects employees' health but also their service delivery and interactions with guests, and it impacts job satisfaction. The objective of the study is to analyse how customer behaviour affects restaurant employees' service delivery and explore its effects on employee engagement. This study employed a qualitative methodology, collecting data through interviews with 13 frontline restaurant employees in Melville, Johannesburg. The data was thematically analysed, coded, and patterns identified. The findings revealed that positive customer behaviours certainly impact employee engagement, service delivery, and job satisfaction. However, negative customer behaviours lead to employees reciprocating the same energies to guests, with a reduced quality in service leading to a lack of customer satisfaction. This study highlights the importance of restaurant employers recognising and supporting employees in the face of customer incivility. Recommendations include that employers should prioritise employees' work-life balance, offer educational training, and develop support systems in the workspace.

KEYWORDS

Hospitality industry; employee engagement; frontline employees; customer incivility; qualitative

Introduction

The last decade has seen renewed attention being drawn to women in the workplace, their treatment and gender-based violence and discrimination. Although these are not new problems, they still demand attention. This study aims to highlight the effect of workplace incivility on hospitality employees. Hospitality is a people-centric industry, with interactions between employees, guests and other stakeholders. Globally, businesses rely on customers to purchase their products or make use of their facilities and services. Frontline employees are always interacting directly with customers; however, a growing problem is customer incivility (Prasetyo et al., 2021). Financial returns will fluctuate due to customer demands, and it is important to treat customers as king (Ali et al., 2021a). But it is also why employees need to focus on their own happiness, as they are at the core of the service-industry economy (Aslam et al., 2020). It is generally accepted that the customer's main connection with the hospitality organisation is through its employees (Cain et al., 2018). Thus, employees and customers have a significant role in creating value in a hospitality establishment (Dangaiso & Mukucha, 2024; Frey-Cordes et al., 2020). The concept 'the customer is always right', has always been about holding service providers to the highest standards, ensuring they prioritise serving customers effectively to achieve customer satisfaction. However, this has led customers to feel entitled to treat employees inappropriately and unfairly (Park & Kim, 2020). Fader (2020) argues that 'The customer is not always right, rather the right customer is always right'. Employees in the hospitality industry are negatively affected by customer behaviour, which may even lead to a lack of proper service performance (Cheng et al., 2020a). Additionally, these behaviours can sometimes affect the engagement and interactions of hospitality employees because customers often approach situations in an impolite manner, and some are rude on arrival. This rudeness leads to other issues, like customers making unrealistic demands, affecting

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR'S CONTACT: Erica Sao Joao ericasj@uj.ac.za
HOW TO CITE: Diasse, F.P. & Sao Joao, E. (2026). The effect of customer incivility on hospitality employee engagement and service quality. African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure, 15(2), 628-639 https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720.768

ISSN: 2223-814X (Online) | © 2026 AJHTL

This work is published by African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure and is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

Open Rubric

staff morale, and a declining work ethic (Goh & Lee, 2018). If experienced over the long term, it can have negative effects on employee mental well-being. The purpose of the study is to examine the effects of customer behaviours on the service delivery and employee engagement of restaurant frontline employees. Therefore, the three questions asked are: 1) How does customer behaviour affect service delivery and engagement of restaurant employees? 2) What customer behaviour is currently being experienced by restaurant employees? And 3) How does customer behaviour affect the restaurant employee's performance? Therefore, the objective of the study was to investigate how customer behaviour affects restaurant employees' service delivery and engagement, and to analyse how customer behaviour affects restaurant employees' service delivery and employee engagement. This study focused mainly on frontline employees in the restaurant industry which included waiter/waitresses, bartenders and servers, who are directly impacted by customer incivility. The geographical area, which is Melville, a suburb of Johannesburg, was chosen for convenience and because it is an area that accommodates various age groups because of its restaurants, bars, coffee shops and art shops. The gap remains in how customer behaviours affect hospitality employees' engagement, particularly in the South African context. This research will examine the behaviours customers impose on employees and the effects these behaviours have on employees.

Literature review

The hospitality industry is a people business (Yan et al., 2023) and is a representative of the service industry (Pu et al., 2024). Employee-customer engagement is key to the success of businesses in the hospitality industry. Hospitality establishments require frontline employees to treat guests honestly and consistently provide high-quality service (Cheng et al., 2020a).

Customer incivility

Workplace incivility was introduced as a term to represent the lesser form of mistreatment in establishments in a manner that the intention to harm is ambiguous (Anderson, 2022), but when it comes to clearly apparent customer misbehaviours, customer uncivil behaviours are less harsh and can be quickly overlooked (Zhan et al., 2023). Porath & Pearson (2010) define customer incivility as the exchange of inconsequential, inconsiderate words and deeds that violate conventional norms of workplace conduct**.** Kiffin-Petersen and Soutar (2020) agreed with Andersson and Pearson (1999:457), who stated that incivility is 'low-intensity deviant behaviour with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect'. These uncivil behaviours are being rude, impolite and discourteous, which display a lack of concern for others (Anderson, 2022; Rehman et al., 2022), while Zhan et al. (2023) stated that the most occurring instances of customer incivility include belittling employees or making disparaging comments, mocking and showing rudeness to employees. Customer incivility focuses on situations in which the intent to harm is ambiguous (Pu et al., 2024). Some of these customers' uncivil behaviours may include aggressive questions such as asking employees if they are 'kidding', disregarding employee statements and showing signs of uncertainty about employee ability (Cheng & Liu, 2024). Consequently, verbal assault, harassment, incivility, disagreements, abuse, and bullying affect most employees in the service industry, which then leads to a variety of negative impacts (Bellamkonda & Sheel, 2024). Without a doubt, incivility has always been hugely noticeable in the work environment (Vasconcelos, 2020). This might be due to several factors and social norms, such as 'the customer is always right', which increase the likelihood that service employees will experience incivility (Kiffin-Petersen & Soutar, 2020). These service cultures employed by the hospitality industry, are emphasised to ensure that customer satisfaction and return intention are achieved (Booyens et al., 2022; Mitsakis et al., 2024). Kiffin-Petersen & Soutar (2020) showed that service employees who reported having practised more customer-oriented behaviours also experienced fewer instances of customer incivility. A study on customer incivility and employees' work engagement confirmed that customers' uncivil behaviours reduce the employees' work engagement (Ugwu et al., 2022). While Baker and Kim (2021) reported that over 50% of employees deal with uncivil customers at least once or twice a month, Mitsakies et al. (2024) added that 85.15% of employees in the hospitality and tourism industry reported having at least experienced or witnessed exploitation and harassment. Kim & Woo (2024) noted that people of colour often experience racial discrimination, which creates a hostile work environment for them.

Employees who are likely to suffer customer uncivil behaviours often experience increased levels of work stress and dissatisfaction, and show signs of decreased creativity, mental distractions, and psychological discomfort (Vasconcelos, 2020). Furthermore, Ma et al. (2024) point out that customer incivility can leave frontline employees feeling helpless and powerless due to a lack of valuable resources, which can lead to sadness. Eventually, this will threaten the safety, dignity, and appropriate treatment of employees in the hospitality industry due to customer harassment and abuse (Mitsakis et al., 2020). Pu et al.

(2024) suggested that hospitality employees are most likely to resign after encountering uncivil customer behaviour. Frontline employees may interpret incidents of customer uncivil behaviour as a sign of failure to fulfil their duty to serve the customer (Boukis et al., 2020). However, the customer may conclude that employees' lack of interest in delivering services is the reason behind service failure (Yagil, 2021). Customer incivility may cause increased job demands which may result in psychological anguish and mental fatigue hence employees may be uninterested and show a lack of enthusiasm for their work (Jang et al., 2020).

Customer incivility effects on employees PCSP

Proactive customer service performance (PCSP) is defined as an individual's initiative, long-term orientation, and persistent service behaviour that goes beyond agreed-upon performance requirements (Rank et al., 2007). PCSP requires employees to act on their initiative, rather than only do things regulated by organisational rules. Cheng et al. (2020) discovered that unkind guests influence staff members and in the hospitality service industry, proactive customer service performance (PCSP) and customer-focused strategies like ‘smiling service’ and ‘customer first’ are widely used. It is a fact that hospitality establishments hardly impose proper policies that clarify and address customer misbehaviours while service employees are expected to comply with emotional labour laws while serving customers or engaging with customers (Mitsakies et al. 2024). Cheng et al. (2020) highlight the detrimental effects of PCSP and rude customers. Particularly, as frontline hospitality staff from all departments typically interact with visitors in the hotel business, the negative consequences of rude customers would consequently affect every department inside the organization. Cheng et al. (2020) further argued that rude consumers affect PCSP even when they do not lower frontline employees' in-role performance, and, for this reason, managers and supervisors must shield their staff from the negative consequences of rude customers. Jang et al. (2020) imply that employees' initiative-taking service performance may be compromised because of decreased work engagement.

Customer incivility effects on employee engagement

Employee engagement is defined as a worker's positive sense of their work environment or the organisation they work in, and active employee engagement is one of the key tactics for achieving optimal performance (Riyanto et al., 2021). Kwon and Kim (2020) define employee engagement as a fully involved state in which employees contribute something new to the workplace. Bakker et al., (2014) suggest that engaged employees experience more positive and active emotions than disengaged employees. Engaged employees are always willing to learn new things when they are resolute, efficient, and hardworking. Jang et al. (2020) argued that employees who experience emotional fatigue due to customer incivility manage to retain resources by decreasing their level of work engagement. While Ugwu et al. (2022) imply that customer uncivil behaviours reduce employee work engagement. All employees expect their workplace supervisors, co-workers, and guests to treat them as justly as they would treat everyone else (Ugwu et al., 2022). But engaged employees to display behaviours that go above and beyond their assigned responsibilities and benefit the company (Bakker et al., 2014). Riyanto et al. (2021) stated that job exhaustion is the opposite of employee engagement and that workplace demands and burnout are correlated, implying that employees who face greater job demands also experience higher levels of burnout (Jang et al., 2020). Additionally, engaged employees are more likely to act creatively when faced with challenges by using coping mechanisms. This suggests that an employee’s ability to cope and their levels of engagement both contribute to the promotion of creative behaviour. Kim et al. (2024) noted two types of coping mechanisms: first, problem-focused coping strategies, in which employees manage the problem causing the stress. Secondly, emotion-focused coping strategies, in which employees regulate the emotions caused by stressful situation. In addition to the two coping strategies, avoidance is another strategy employees use to disengage during stressful events. Ugwu et al. (2022) suggested that when customers display uncivil behaviour towards employees, employees can be expected to show a decrease in the extent of their work engagement. Mitsakis et al. (2024) and Pu et al. (2024) suggest that improving customer management and implementing an incentive mechanism can help reduce the negative effects of customers' uncivil behaviours on workers' emotions, behavioural intentions, and attitudes. Employees who are not engaged lack the self-motivation to serve effectively because they are often reluctant to demonstrate initiative in service performance, which requires more effort and resources (Jang et al., 2020).

Customer incivility effects on employee’s service delivery

Hospitality establishments should conduct organisational training for their employees to equip them on ways to take control and strategically react to of customers' impoliteness (Zhan et al., 2023). Employees deal with rude, prideful, and hostile behaviour from clients, despite their best efforts to maintain a high level of service quality (Pu et al., 2024). Unrealistic service expectations and demands are continuously rising, resulting in customers frequently expressing dissatisfaction by becoming aggressive and angry toward employees

(Chaudhuri, Apoorva, Vrontis, Siachou & Trichina, 2023). Service sabotage is a phenomenon in the hospitality industry in which employees slow down service, ignore customers, or even become rude to them (Cheng et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2019). Boukis et al. (2020) stated that there is a variety of uncivil customer behaviours which affect frontline employees differently and not all forms of customer uncivil behaviours will affect employees in the same manner. Customer misbehaviours have become the norm in the hospitality industry, to the point that they are now viewed as part of employees' jobs (Booyens et al., 2022). Frontline employees may be negatively affected by rude customers, which can undermine their work habits and customer service quality (Cheng et al., 2020). Thus, service-oriented hospitality businesses need to pay attention to the problem of rude customers and how it affects front-line employees. About 47% of customers are difficult, hostile, and rude, while 33% always blame employees, and 16% can be very demanding, leading to cynical and depersonalised behaviours (Baker & Kim, 2021).

The effects of customer incivility on job satisfaction

Job satisfaction has a broad definition, which is linked to experiencing the feeling of comfort when performing a job (Riyanto et al., 2021). Job satisfaction is a measure of an individual's attitudes toward their employment, work environment, and relationships with co-workers (Palar, 2016), reflecting the extent to which employees have positive or negative feelings about their job (Loh et al., 2022). To satisfy clients, frontline employees in the hospitality industry need to be initiative-taking, flexible, and always inventive (Yan et al., 2023), but uncivil customer behaviours may increase mental fatigue and reduce job satisfaction (Loh et al., 2022). argue that emotional exhaustion negatively impacts job satisfaction and leads to turnover intentions (Pu et al., 2024: Sao Joao et al., 2025). Customer incivility impacts workers' job satisfaction (Pu et al., 2024) and creates a hostile environment, which is caused by rude customers and affects the service quality of front-line employees (Cheng et al., 2020). Cheng et al. (2020) stated that employees' time, energy, and emotional resources will be depleted in fulfilling job demands. Riyanto et al. (2021) believe that the establishment's performance will increase if it is diligently involved with motivation and job satisfaction. A low level of satisfaction can lead employees to reconsider their compatibility with the organisation and their ambitions for future growth, which may prompt them to consider resigning and leaving the organisation to pursue better opportunities and take their experience with them (Pu et al., 2024; Srivastava et al., 2024).
Hospitality businesses should be concerned about their employees' job satisfaction. When workers are not happy at work, feel underappreciated, or are unable to reach their full potential, they are naturally less able to focus and give their full attention to their work (Palar, 2016). A lack of managerial support in protecting employees indicates a failure to fulfil their duty to take action and assume responsibility for ensuring employee safety by managing cases of customer exploitation and harassment (Mitsakis et al., 2024). Managers in the hospitality industry are not provided with guidance on which actions to take during incidents of customer incivility, nor on rewards or other organisational assets that may assist employees when addressing customer identity threats (Boukis et al., 2023). Colleagues who support each other emotionally will influence how customer incivility affects workers' performance and the service experience (Baker & Kim, 2021).

Theoretical frameworks

A theoretical framework is a set of components and principles that are logically related to one another, grounded in one or more theories, and often designed by a researcher to support a specific study (Varpio et al., 2020). This study will discuss the Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Job Demands-Resources Theory (JD-R). Social exchange theory (SET) is a theory that is instrumental in the research aspect in terms of relationships in the workplace (Ledi et al., 2023) and it is an accepted theory that explains how people respond to abuse (Bellamkonda & Sheel, 2024). Social Exchange Theory explains how employees engage in exchange relationships and how such relationships can affect employees' behaviours and attitudes (Rehman et al., 2022). Several social scientific fields, including management, social psychology, and anthropology, are included in the wide conceptual framework known as social exchange theory (Cropanzano et al., 2017). The SET is one of the most important conceptual models for comprehending behaviour at work (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Ahmad et al. (2023) believe that the practice of social exchange theory is so prevalent and established in our everyday existence. Social exchange is a social-psychological perspective that seeks to explain and understand human relationships and workplace engagement (Ledi et al., 2023). The Jobs Demand and Resources (JD-R) model with its dual process includes an energy-sapping process where demand levels lead to exhaustion versus a positive motivational procedure where resources promote engagement. Bakker & Demerouti (2007) proposed this model because it can be applied across various occupations, thereby improving employee well-being and job performance. Job resources and Job demands are the categories that can be used to represent all job features while these are the primary factors linked with the JD-R theory, which contribute to burnout and have been proven to be job demands (Bakker et al., 2014).

Reducing job demands reduces employee distractions and helps employees focus on their assigned work, while increasing job or personal resources helps employees maintain their engagement (Kwon & Kim, 2020). The JD-R theory highlights the interaction between job demands and resources and their effects on employee engagement and burnout (Boukis et al., 2020). This helps to comprehend, clarify, and forecast burnout among employees, engagement at work (Bakker et al., 2014). Prolonged job demands consume so much energy that they can drain both physical and mental resources, causing employees to become fatigued and experience a decrease in their quality of work life (Jang et al., 2020). It is emphasized that when employees are threatened by high job demands such as workloads, and mental fatigue, job resources become more visible (Tripathi et al., 2021). Moreover, job demands are linked to psychological, organisational, social, and physical work factors, as well as to physiological and psychological consequences (Radic et al., 2020; Tripathi et al., 2021). These aspects can decrease the demands and support of an individual's personal development. Work resources are the primary indicators of work engagement, which enhance well-being and produce positive results for the organisation (Bakker et al., 2014). In conclusion, customer incivility significantly impacts employee engagement. This incivility is a growing concern and affects managers as well as frontline employees (Boukis et al., 2023). Customer incivility results in decreased job satisfaction among service providers (Loh et al., 2022) and a negative work environment. It also affects employees' commitment and often leads to turnover intentions (Rehman et al., 2022). Baker & Kim (2021) believe that the philosophy that employees should tolerate customers' uncivil behaviour is outdated. Often, employees do not report incidents of harassment and exploitation by customers because employees fear losing their jobs (Mitsakis et al., 2024), while others will resign due to this incivility (Pu et al., 2024). In summary, the hospitality industry, which depends heavily on its customers and employees, and is reliant on maintaining good relations between them.

Research methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach (Pajo, 2022) to gain in-depth information from employees in the hospitality industry. A qualitative method or approach provided employees with a greater platform to discuss their experiences of poor customer behaviours, employees were able to fully express their emotions and different perceptions portrayed and offered a thorough contextual understanding of different effects that customer incivility imposes on employees, how employees interpret different scenarios of customer incivility, the way they deal with the after-effects of these uncivil behaviours and how their managers or business owners helped them to resolve these issues. Interviews were used to collect data which allowed the participant to explain their perspective on customer uncivil behaviours. Kumar (2019) referred to interviews as a person-to-person engagement whether in person or not, it is usually between two or more people to achieve a particular goal and interviews are the most frequently used technique for gathering data from individuals, while Elsayed (2013) refers to interviews as the technique of collecting data that involves both structured and unstructured interviews to obtain the required information through relevant questions. The participants shared their experiences and how they have been directly and indirectly impacted. The selection of participants was based on the purposive convenience sampling technique (Pago, 2022), as frontline employees may have experienced uncivil customer behaviour. The collected data was analysed through a thematic analysis, following the six steps by Braun and Clarke (2006). This study has ensured trustworthiness, guided by the principles outlined by Guba (1981) and Krefting (1991), and has adhered to ethical standards while maintaining participants' confidentiality. Trustworthiness is important when evaluating qualitative research, and one of its most important factors is transparency (Adler, 2022). Guba (1981) suggested that major factors concerned with trustworthiness include consistency, applicability, truth value, and neutrality. The pilot study for this research was conducted with one front-line employee to assess the effectiveness of the interview questions and whether they elicited relevant answers.

The sample for this study was based on interviewing restaurant frontline employees in the geographical area of Melville, Johannesburg (South Africa). The interviews were conducted with 13 frontline employees, selected for their frequency of guest interactions in the restaurants. These employees included waiters, bartenders, and baristas within the restaurant industry in Melville. Melville is a suburb surrounded by two universities and close to Johannesburg CBD. There are an assortment of restaurants, nightclubs, and jazz bars, antique shops and art galleries. Although over the last 10 years the suburb has observed a change in its client base, the area has experienced strong day and evening restaurant trade (Ngwetjana & Sao Joao, 2026). A qualitative approach gave employees the platform to fully express their emotions, perceptions and experiences about customer incivility. The researcher firstly requested consent from the restaurant owners or manager and then asked for permission from the employees to interview them and recorded this consent. The researcher explained the study to the employees, the reason for conducting the study, the importance of their responses in the study before starting with the interview. Employees were

made aware of their rights such as knowing that they can still reverse their consent mid-interview or after the interview should they not feel comfortable. Clarke & Braun (2017) refer to thematic analysis as a technique that is used to interpret, examine and identify the trends which are the themes in qualitative data collection. A thematic analysis aims at identifying themes which are patterns observed in the data that are significant and are then used to address a particular phenomenon in the study (Maguire & Delehunt, 2017). A thematic analysis gives accessibility and follows a process that is systematic to develop themes and codes in qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2017). The interviews were transcribed and the data analysis using thematic analysis using the six steps of analysing data, this analysis method was used as a guide to transcribe, code, formulate themes and patterns and analyse the data. The interviews were prepared for analysis using a line-by-line coding method, to ensure that all the crucial details and responses of the employees are analysed. A line-by-line coding in a thematic analysis helped during the analysis of data because it ensures a detailed approach to identifying themes. In conclusion, for this study, interviews were the ideal technique for data collection because interviews allowed the participants to express their experiences and provide deeper insights on the topic of customer uncivil behaviours. This study adhered to the ethical considerations and rules that are in place as such no one was interviewed before ethics were approved and granted. Participants were asked for consent prior the interviews, along with the restaurant managers and owners. Ethical clearance was granted by the School of Tourism and Hospitality's ethics committee at the University of Johannesburg. The researcher did not interview persons with disabilities; participants were between the ages of 18 and 65 years old and participation in the study was voluntary.

Findings

Impolite customer behaviour has different effects on restaurant employees. Participants' responses show how each employee is differently impacted by customer incivility. This section examines insights from participants who were part of the data collection process in the study, analysing the impacts of impolite customer behaviours on employees' engagement, while also considering other factors that may be influenced, such as service delivery and job satisfaction. The key themes that were developed are guest behaviours, service delivery, reciprocation, coping mechanisms, and Support.

Theme 1: Guests' behaviours

The participants highlighted that experiencing positive and negative guest behaviours have different impacts on their daily work lives. This theme shows the different customer behaviours that employees experience in their working environment, and how these have an impact in the engagement, morale, and job satisfaction.

The various guest behaviours employees noted include rudeness and impolite guests (P1, P2, P6), complaints and insults from customers (P7, P4), aggressive customers (P5), impatient customers (P4), and joyless, unfriendly, and hard-to-serve customers (P3). Participant 5 highlighted that aggressive customers tend to have more physical contact employees when intoxicated, which makes them uncomfortable. Participant 4 acknowledged that impatience causes delay in the service, '*I can be making a drink order, then another customer calls me, so the minute I go attend that customer, there is a delay in between, so some customers are not very patient at all'*. Participant 7 highlighted that *'customers who are always polite, we know that at least you can have a great day'*. Participant 6 expressed that positive customer behaviours *'give you the energy and some of us are very passionate about our jobs so they give the motivation'*. Participant 2 agrees that '*a polite customer or a nice person they motivate you to do better, actually it's a motivation for you to work harder with a smile'*. Customer incivility is associated with rude and impolite guests, aligning with the existing literature, which suggests that uncivil customer behaviours are associated with rudeness, impoliteness, discourtesy, and a lack of concern for others (Anderson, 2020). Most participants emphasised various behaviours that affect them differently, which supports the findings of Boukis et al. (2020), who indicated that there is a variety of uncivil customer behaviours that affect employees differently, and that not all forms of customer incivility will affect employees in the same way. Participants disclosed that service is sometimes compromised by customer behaviours, which negatively impact the services they offer to guests. These findings agree with those of Cheng et al. (2020), who argued that employees are negatively affected by rude customers, which in turn affects their work habits and customer service quality.

Theme 2: Racism and tribalism

Some participants highlighted an occurrence of racism and tribalism within their workspace. Participants expressed that racism is also a factor that has an impact on the way they engage with customers. According to the participants, some guests may feel like they are not fit enough to be doing that job because of their race or they should be doing it because of their race. Participant 9 highlighted that *'we do have racisms and tribalism within the restaurant industry'*. Participant 1 mentioned that *'even racism we get that a lot, because*

they are not expecting that kind of a person can do such work and be experienced that much'. Participant 6 indicated that *'when people come to a restaurant, they know they will find someone from Zimbabwe so they will do anything they want'.* Participant 12 mentioned that *'Yes, especially coming from guests*. Participant 13 highlighted that '*This industry has favour but yes racism is an issue here'*. Participant 8 expressed that *'she ruined my whole mood on that day because she was being rude and racist towards me'.* Participant 9 highlighted that '*industry. We have instances where a white person is the manager and they have black employees, they treat them differently and pay the less than the white employees that they have in the restaurant or if someone is from a certain tribe, they tend to treat people from a different tribe differently than those of the same tribe as them'.* Participants highlighted that racism affect the ability to work effectively because some guests may be very racist towards them. Participants expressed that the act of racism negatively impacts them as customers sometimes treat them unfairly because of their race, which may lead to experience distraction or disrupting their focus as work. The literature indicates that people of colour often experience racial discrimination which creates a hostile work environment for them (Kim & Woo, 2024).

Theme 3: Service delivery

This was a recurring theme in participants' responses and is influenced by different customer behaviours. This theme shows the relationship between guests' behaviours and service delivery, and how different customers' behaviours have different impacts on the service employees provide. Participants noted that when customers are friendly, polite, and joyful, it not only enhances the service delivery quality but also increases employee motivation and creates a healthy working environment. A rude, impolite customer may hinder an employee's ability to offer excellent service to other guests too. Participant 6 expressed that *'when you are angry because the customer is a bit rude you cannot give the next customer the best service'*. Participant 3 mentioned that having an unpleasant experience with one guest may impact the next customer's service and mentioned that negative customer behaviours can affect their mood, *'it really puts confidence down, so I cannot really give good service if I am not confident about it'*. Participant 4 also emphasized that *'the moment you shout at me is the moment my mind shuts down and I become very slow so if you shout at somebody, they will not do their job perfectly'*. Participant 5 emphasized that *'if a customer is being rude or disrespectful or has an attitude it's going to affect the treatment and the service delivery that us as waitresses give to you'…* '*if you are impolite, if you are disrespectful, you are not giving me that enthusiasm to give you a good service'*. Participant 2 supports the idea that *'the moment the customer is polite to you the service will be great*' and implies that *'when a customer seat down you greet them, the way they respond to you determines the service you will give'*. Participant 1 indicated that *'mostly customers that are mean and that are difficult especially those who like to complain a lot may affect the service delivery provided by me towards other customers and that customers may fail to experience the service that I am providing to them'*. Customer behaviours have an impact on employee's engagement, service delivery and this in turn impacts employee and customer satisfaction. Participants agreed with the existing literature that employees deal with rude, prideful, and hostile behaviours from guests despite their efforts of maintaining a level of providing high-quality service (Pu et al., 2024). There is a link between themes, like guests' behaviours and service delivery. For instance, customer behaviours such as lack of patience and complaints from customers may cause a delay in the service. This is supported by Zhan et al. (2023), who argue that service quality becomes a scarce resource because frontline food service employees serve multiple tables, making it difficult to ensure that all customer needs are met. A hostile environment caused by rude customers will affect frontline employees service quality (Cheng et al., 2020).

Theme 4: Reciprocation

Simplified, reciprocation means that behaviours are mirrored or referred to as give-and-take, but when the behaviour being mirrored is negative, the reciprocal action is negative. This is also observed among employees and guests, who emerged as a factor influenced by guests' behaviours, affecting employee engagement, employee-guest interactions and job satisfaction. There is a relationship between reciprocity and service delivery: employees offer their services in response to the guest's behaviour. Good and positive behaviours enable employees to foster a positive working environment, engage and interact with customers, and offer excellent service. Participant 8 highlighted that *'I believe that because if a customer comes to you with positive energy, then I also give out positive energy'*. Participant 3 highlighted that *'if someone is mirroring the same energy that you give them, you obviously start enjoying the job that you are doing'.* Participant 11 expressed that *'If I serve a nice customer and we click then it is easier for me to communicate with them but if a customer is moody and difficult to communicate with then I get reluctant to serve* them'. Participant 4 also mentions that *'if someone comes with a very positive attitude you also do your job perfectly with no distractions or anything like that'*. Participant 10 mentioned that *'If I get to serve a customer who is*

giving positive energy then I will also absorb from their energy but if they give me bad energy, I will reciprocate what they are giving'. Participant 5 indicted that *'if you come with a nice energy and you are friendly, we will give it right back because at the end of the day we are also humans so we will reflect off your energy'.* Restaurant employees constantly navigate impolite customer behaviour that affects their daily professional lives.

Theme 5: Support and well-being

Workplace support emerged as a theme which positively impacts frontline employee engagement, which they use to mitigate the consequences of experiencing customer incivility. Employees often feel valued and motivated when they experience support especially from their managers and fellow employees. Participant 11 highlighted that they usually support each other as colleagues *'we always make sure to assist the table that is being served at that time' and '… so basically it is a matter of helping each other and attending to guests'* (Participant 2). Participant 9 expressed that 'w*ith our management, we have a policy where we are allowed to come and speak to them about the customers behaviours so they tend to listen to both sides of the story'*. Participant 7 expressed that *'if they lay a rule, they must not change it… We are often told to do or act in a certain way towards customers, and when you do, the managers will come back and say you are not supposed to do that. Now what am I supposed to do?* This theme emphasises creating a welcoming and positive work environment where employees are valued and allowed to express their experiences without judgment. The literature indicated that when colleagues support each other emotionally, the service commitment rule will lessen the effects of customer incivility on the employees work performance and will impact the service experience (Baker & Kim, 2021). While employees may feel undervalued and not motivated especially if they do not get support from their managers, Mitsakis et al. (2024) implied that a lack of support from managers in protecting employees indicates a failure to adhere to their duty of taking actions and responsibilities to ensure the safety of their employees by managing cases of customers incivility and harassment. A key aspect of this study is the coping mechanisms frontline employees use when dealing with inappropriate guest behaviour. Most participants have adopted coping mechanisms to mitigate the impact of impolite customers and have identified this as a personal reaction to the experience. These coping strategies are evident when employees encounter impolite customers, to the point that they become emotionally detached from such behaviours. The frontline employees responses display no signs of acceptance or avoidance, rather choosing no response so as not to ruin their tasks or hinder service delivery.

Participant 8 expressed that 'what I do is when I come into work, I focus on the reason I am at work, I ensure that I do not take anything personal especially when it comes to customers ill behaviours. Participant 10 highlighted that 'I come here to work and I try to not always take what customers say or do into heart because sometimes you did nothing to a customer'. Participant 13 mentioned that 'For me its ignore and apologies, because whether you are wrong or right once the customer complains you are wrong'. Participant 3 highlighted that their coping mechanism to impolite customer behaviours is 'you take it as it comes and continue with your day'. Participant 4 mentioned that as employee they create humour in experiencing impoliteness from customers 'with us, we might end up joking about it then at the end of the day it's just a joke for us then we carry on with our day'. Participant 5 indicated that 'I have learnt to be patient, I have learnt to be nice, to be respectful'. Participant 6 mentioned that impolite customer behaviours are part of the hospitality industry, 'you are always wrong, you have to say sorry'. Participant 2 expressed that 'it is about not working with your emotions in the hospitality industry'. Most participants noted the use of emotional detachment from incivility by not taking everything into heart as it may affect the service offered to another guests. The concern for management should be that service delivery may become robotic. According to Jang et al. (2020), engaged employees are more likely to act creatively when faced with challenges by using coping mechanisms. This suggests that an employee's ability to cope and their levels of engagement both contribute to the promotion of creative behaviour. While other participants expressed using avoidance as a coping mechanism, this agrees of the literature according to Kim et al. (2024) avoidance is also a strategy that employees use to disengage from stressful events. By applying the theoretical frameworks to this study such as SET and JD-R theories, the study revealed that uncivil customer behaviours directly impact employees emotionally, their ability to serve guests willingly and with motivation, decreases motivation and leads to burnout. Employees identified coping mechanisms to the continuous exposure to employee incivility such as support form colleagues, management and from other guests in cases were the incivility takes place in from of other guests. Employees also identified avoidance and resilience to mitigate the complex effects of customer incivility. In summary, employees in the restaurant industry face challenges related to customer incivility for various reasons. Both negative and positive guests' behaviours have unique ways of impacting employees. Participants highlighted that they often reciprocate the energy they get from customers, whether positive or negative. Participants also highlighted ways in which they have adapted to mitigating the risks associated with customer incivility such as coping mechanisms and offering or getting support either from

their management or fellow employees. The chapter also highlighted on the social impacts of racism which affects employee engagement and service delivery.

Recommendations and implications for restaurant managers

The analysis of both positive and negative impacts of customer incivility on restaurant employee service delivery showed a dynamic connection. The data that was collected primarily from interviews revealed that positive customer behaviours showed that it enhances the quality-of-service employee provide to guests within an establishment. While negative customer behaviours demotivate employee when they must provide service to guests. Existing literature shows a causal relationship or link between customer incivility and low or lessened quality of service delivered to guests. Zhan et al. (2023) argued that service quality becomes a scarce resource because frontline employees serving multiple tables may struggle to ensure that all customers' needs are met. This aligns with Participant 6's justification that there is sometimes a delay in service because serving multiple customers simultaneously can lead to impatient guests. Continuous exposure to customer incivility results in employees being reluctant to deliver quality services to guests and increased stress levels. Fatigue and emotional exhaustion. However, positive customer behaviours help employees build resilience, be energetic about their job, and feel motivated and satisfied. (i) Recommendation 1: Restaurant managers should conduct more training. This recommendation aligns with the literature by Zhan et al. (2023), which suggests that hospitality establishments should conduct organisational training for their employees to equip them with ways to manage customers' impoliteness. This can help employees develop adequate skills to handle customer incivility incidents more effectively, rather than retaliating. Recommendation 2 - improved teamwork. Baker & Kim (2021) suggest that colleagues who support each other emotionally can mitigate the negative effects of customer incivility on workers' performance. Conversely, it will improve the service commitment rule, positively impacting the service experience. Recommendation 3 - improving managerial support. Participant 7 expressed that '*we are never heard'.* This highlights to managers that supporting employees and listening to their grievances can help them develop effective coping mechanisms, which could help reduce stress levels. The majority of participants indicated that they receive support from their colleagues but not from their managers or supervisors, thereby underscoring the need for managerial support. Recommendation 4 - customer training and education. Although this is more difficult to achieve, Mitsakies et al. (2024) explained that hospitality establishments rarely implement clear policies that clarify and address customer misbehaviours, while service employees are expected to comply with emotional labour laws when serving or engaging with customers. Therefore, it is crucial for establishments to set out boundaries on what is and not acceptable for guests to do in terms of behaviours within the establishment to protect their employees. Recommendation 5 - encourage a balance between work and personal life. Establishing this balance is crucial for employees, especially those in the restaurant industry, as the work is physically and emotionally demanding. Some participants argued that personal issues can affect you mentally at work, which may, in turn, affect the services you offer guests. Others agreed, stating that you cannot leave your personal issues outside of work; instead, you need to find a way to balance the two. Some expressed having insufficient personal time, this results in employees getting to work exhausted. Having a balance between the two is necessary so to reduce tiredness and being refreshed for their next shift.

This research is important to the following stakeholders. Frontline employees, these stakeholders are important in providing their good service, which is inseparable from them. Therefore, management should acknowledge employees' experiences and create effective management systems, resulting in a better working environment for all service workers. Customers, these stakeholders are vital to the sustainability of the business but there needs to be an awareness of the effect of customer incivility on service employees. It is important to raise awareness of customer incivility because it has such an impact on employee engagement. Restaurant owners, managers, and supervisors, these stakeholders are necessary, as they support frontline employees through their management skills and approaches to handling incivility in the workplace. Thus, it is important for employers to get a thorough understanding of the impact of customer behaviours on employee engagement, performance and service delivery as well as fostering a positive working environment that supports employees. Limitations are recognised in every study and they need to be acknowledged. The first limitation in this study was equality in gender in terms of the people who were interviewed, the study consists of more females than males and this was because males did not want or rather did not consent to be part of the study. Based on this limitation, future research could focus mainly on male frontline employees to get a different perspective. Secondly, the number of participants does not allow the findings to be considered generalisable; rather, they should be seen as confirmatory of existing studies. Thirdly, a concern when interviewing employees at their workplace, is that the participants will not entirely share their experiences fully, for fear of retaliation. Perhaps to repeat a similar study but interviewing participants off

site, may yield slightly different results. Lastly, the research was conducted in a small area/section of Johannesburg so the results could be slightly or highly different in a large geographic area and perhaps since this study focused mainly on restaurants, future research could look at other sections of the industry such as accommodation. Future research may investigate how managers' management and leadership skills in the restaurant industry can circumvent customer incivility. Participants revealed that managers sometimes do not listen to the side of the employee but will decide based on what the customer said, only because of the popular saying 'the customer is always right'. The concepts of infamous notions such as 'the customer is always right' or 'the customer is king' are believed to contribute to the way customers behave, granting them a 'power' advantage.

Conclusion

It is increasingly important that the hospitality industry understands the effects of different customer behaviours on their employee's mental health, physical health, as well as their daily working life, which helps to create a positive working environment. Strategies need to be developed to mitigate the impact of customer incivility on employee engagement and other outcomes, such as service delivery and job satisfaction. Customer incivility is a negative behaviour that affects employee engagement and the quality of service delivery. Employees often show signs of reduced motivation and enthusiasm after experiencing customer incivility. However, there are customers who exhibit positive behaviours that enhance employee engagement and satisfaction. Customer behaviours have a direct impact on service delivery and employee engagement; these behaviours can affect an employee's emotional and mental states. Studies have shown that employees frequently exposed to customer incivility often experience high levels of stress, fatigue, and reduced job performance, which affects the overall service customers experience. Most participants reported that they often feel valued and engaged when customers are positive and kind towards them, which motivates employees to serve guests beyond customers' expectations and ensure high-quality service. Positive behaviours included friendly, polite and understanding. Negative behaviours included being harsh, rude, having a bad attitude, being impatient, aggressive, and difficult. Employees in the restaurant industry constantly encounter a range of customer behaviours that affect their work environment. Customer incivility will impact employee engagement, service delivery, job satisfaction, employee morale, and motivation. There is evidence of a correlation between customer behaviour and employees' responses. Because of these factors, customers can experience poor service due to these behaviours, while other customers may experience better service. Employees reciprocate the energy they receive from guests. The research process adopting a qualitative approach for collecting data was ideal as it allowed for rich and comprehensive insights from employees about their experiences. Moreover, this study emphasized on the importance of adopting and applying effective management systems and management support system in fostering a healthy working environment for both employers and employees. As a results, this calls for better management skills and leaders within the industry to enhance service delivery, increased employee morale and well-being, increased productivity and performance and a strong brand reputation and customer loyalty.

References

Adler, R. H. (2022). Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Human Lactation, 38*(4), 598–602. https://doi.org/10.1177/08903344221116620

Ahmad, R., Nawaz, M. R., Ishaq, M. I., Khan, M. M., & Ashraf, H. A. (2023). Social exchange theory: Systematic review and future directions. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, 1015921. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1015921

Ali, B. J., Saleh, P. F., Akoi, S., Abdulrahman, A. A., Muhamed, A. S., Noori, H. N., & Anwar, G. (2021). Impact of service quality on customer satisfaction: A case study of online meeting platforms. *International Journal of Engineering, Business and Management, 5*(2), 65–77. https://doi.org/10.22161/ijebm.5.2.6

Anderson, L. J. (2022). *Workplace incivility: Extending research to the day-level* (Doctoral dissertation). Macquarie University.

Andersson, L. M., & Pearson, C. M. (1999). Tit for tat? The spiralling effect of workplace incivility. *Academy of Management Review, 24*(3), 452–471. https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.1999.2202131

Aslam, M. Z., Nor, M. N. M., Omar, S., & Bustaman, H. A. (2020). Predicting proactive service performance: The role of employee engagement and positive emotional labour among frontline hospitality employees. *Cogent Business & Management, 7*(1), 1771117. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2020.1771117

Baker, M. A., & Kim, K. (2021). Becoming cynical and depersonalized: How incivility, co-worker support and service rules affect employee job performance. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 33*(12), 4483–4504. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-01-2021-0105

Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2007). The job demands–resources model: State of the art. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 22*(3), 309–328. https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940710733115

Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Sanz-Vergel, A. I. (2014). Burnout and work engagement: The JD–R approach. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 1*(1), 389–411. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-031413-091235

Bellamkonda, N., & Sheel, R. C. (2024). Reactions and underlying mechanisms of customer mistreatment: An integrative review. *Organizational Psychology Review, 14*(1), 106–130. https://doi.org/10.1177/20413866231177682

Booyens, I., Hadjisolomou, A., Nickson, D., Cunningham, T., & Baum, T. (2022). "It's not a big deal": Customer misbehaviour and social washing in hospitality. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 34*(11), 4123–4141. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-10-2021-1310

Boukis, A., Koritos, C., Daunt, K. L., & Papastathopoulos, A. (2020). Effects of customer incivility on frontline employees and the moderating role of supervisor leadership style. *Tourism Management, 77*, 103997. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2019.103997

Boukis, A., Koritos, C., Papastathopoulos, A., & Buhalis, D. (2023). Customer incivility as an identity threat for frontline employees: The mitigating role of organizational rewards. *Annals of Tourism Research, 100*, 103555. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2023.103555

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Cain, L., Tanford, S., & Shulga, L. (2018). Customers' perceptions of employee engagement: Fortifying the service–profit chain. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration, 19*(1), 52–77. https://doi.org/10.1080/15256480.2017.1305312

Chaudhuri, R., Apoorva, A., Vrontis, D., Siachou, E., & Trichina, E. (2023). How customer incivility affects service-sector employees: A systematic literature review and a bibliometric analysis. *Journal of Business Research, 164*, 114011. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.114011

Cheng, B., Dong, Y., Zhou, X., Guo, G., & Peng, Y. (2020). Does customer incivility undermine employees' service performance? *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 89*, 102544. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102544

Cheng, B., Guo, G., Tian, J., & Shaalan, A. (2020). Customer incivility and service sabotage in the hotel industry. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 32*(5), 1737–1754. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-06-2019-0545

Cheng, P., & Liu, Z. (2024). Predicting frontline employees' emotional labour after suffering customer incivility: A job passion perspective. *Acta Psychologica, 244*, 104178. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2024.104178

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 12*(3), 297–298. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1262613

Cropanzano, R., Anthony, E. L., Daniels, S. R., & Hall, A. V. (2017). Social exchange theory: A critical review with theoretical remedies. *Academy of Management Annals, 11*(1), 479–516. https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2015.0099

Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M. S. (2005). Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review. *Journal of Management, 31*(6), 874–900. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206305279602

Dangaiso, P., & Mukucha, P. (2024). Evaluating the impact of service encounter incivility on employee job stress, turnover intentions and labour attrition: A study on frontline employees in the fast-food service industry. *Cogent Business & Management, 11*(1), 2355671. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2355671

Elsayed, D. E. (2013). *Research methodology*. LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing.

Fader, P. (2020). *Customer centricity: Focus on the right customers for strategic advantage.* Wharton School Press.

Frey-Cordes, R., Eilert, M., & Büttgen, M. (2020). Eye for an eye? Frontline service employee reactions to customer incivility. *Journal of Services Marketing, 34*(7), 939–953. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-07-2019-0270

Goh, E., & Lee, C. (2018). A workforce to be reckoned with: The emerging pivotal Generation Z hospitality workforce. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 73*, 20–28. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2018.01.016

Guba, E. G. (1981). ERIC/ECTJ annual review paper: Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Communication and Technology Journal, 29*(2), 75–91. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30219811

Jang, J., Jo, W., & Kim, J. S. (2020). Can employee workplace mindfulness counteract the indirect effects of customer incivility on proactive service performance through work engagement? A moderated mediation model. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management, 29*(7), 812–829. https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2020.1725954

Kiffin-Petersen, S. A., & Soutar, G. N. (2020). Service employees' personality, customer orientation and customer incivility. *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences, 12*(3), 281–296. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJQSS-12-2018-0104

Kim, K., & Woo, B. (2024). Racial discrimination against Asian American employees: Impact of employee coping strategies on employee competence and work quality of life. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management.* Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-12-2023-1884

Krefting, L. (1991). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 45*(3), 214–222. https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.45.3.214

Kumar, R. (2019). *Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners* (5th ed.). Sage.

Kwon, K., & Kim, T. (2020). An integrative literature review of employee engagement and innovative behavior: Revisiting the JD–R model. *Human Resource Management Review, 30*(2), 100704. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2019.100704

Ledi, K. K., Ameza-Xemalordzo, E. B., & Owusu Ansah, M. (2023). Mediating role of work intentions in the relationship between workplace spirituality and service quality delivery of hotels in Ghana. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 1–26. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/1528008X.2023.2231147

Loh, J., Khan, M. I., & Johns, R. (2022). The straw that breaks the camel's back: Service provider vulnerability to customer incivility. *Journal of Service Theory and Practice, 32*(4), 545–564. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSTP-11-2021-0238

Ma, T. N., Yeh, Y. J. Y., Lee, H. Y., & Vu, H. V. (2025). The impact of customer incivility on employee negative emotions: An organizational culture perspective. *Management Research Review, 48*(1), 37–56. https://doi.org/10.1108/MRR-01-2024-0058

Maguire, M., & Delahunt, B. (2017). Doing a thematic analysis: A practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars. *AISHE-J: The All Ireland Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 9*(3), 3351–33514.

Mitsakis, F., Hadjisolomou, A., & Kouki, A. (2025). Customer abuse and harassment in the hospitality industry: The immersion of an everyday workplace crime. *Current Issues in Tourism, 28*(2), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2024.2342397

Ngwetjana, D. C., & São João, E. (2026). Restaurant revenue management practices in Johannesburg. *Studia Periegetica, 49*(1). https://doi.org/10.58683/sp.2122

Pajo, B. (2022). *Introduction to research methods: A hands-on approach.* Sage.

Palar, A. (2016). The effect of work motivation and job satisfaction on employee performance at Bank SulutGo Tomohon. *Jurnal Berkala Ilmiah Efisiensi, 16*(3).

Park, J., & Kim, H. J. (2020). Customer mistreatment and service performance: A self-consistency perspective. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 86*, 102367. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2019.102367

Porath, C. L., & Pearson, C. M. (2010). The cost of bad behaviour. *Organizational Dynamics, 39*(1), 64–71. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2009.10.006

Prasetyo, R., Purwandari, D. A., & Syah, T. Y. R. (2021). The effect of customers' incivility and work stress on job satisfaction through burnout. *Journal of Economics, Business, & Accountancy Ventura, 23*(3), 390–401. https://doi.org/10.14414/jebav.v23i3.2417

Pu, B., Sang, W., Ji, S., Hu, J., & Phau, I. (2024). The effect of customer incivility on employees' turnover intention in the hospitality industry: A chain mediating effect of emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 118*, 103665. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2023.103665

Radic, A., Arjona-Fuentes, J. M., Ariza-Montes, A., Han, H., & Law, R. (2020). Job demands–job resources (JD–R) model, work engagement, and well-being of cruise ship employees. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 88*, 102518. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102518

Rank, J., Carsten, J. M., Unger, J. M., & Spector, P. E. (2007). Proactive customer service performance: Relationships with individual, task, and leadership variables. *Human Performance, 20*(4), 363–390. https://doi.org/10.1080/08959280701522056

Rehman, Z. U., Ziaullah, M., Mehmood, S., Buzdar, A. D., & Kashif, M. (2022). Exploring the relationship of workplace incivility, organizational commitment, and turnover intention in the perspective of social exchange theory. *Indian Journal of Economics and Business, 21*(3), 189–202.

Riyanto, S., Endri, E., & Herlisha, N. (2021). Effect of work motivation and job satisfaction on employee performance: Mediating role of employee engagement. *Problems and Perspectives in Management, 19*(3), 162–174. https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.19(3).2021.14

Sao Joao, E., Baum, T., & Downing, C. (2025). Quality of work and sustainable hospitality human resources management. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure, 14*(5), 982–988. https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720.684

Srivastava, S., Madan, P., Alzeiby, E. A., & Bodhi, R. (2024). When patrons become perpetrators: Examining the negative effects of customer incivility for hospitality employees. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 122*, 103867. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2024.103867

Tripathi, P. M., Srivastava, S., Singh, L. B., Kapoor, V., & Solanki, U. (2021). A JD–R perspective for enhancing engagement through empowerment: A study on the Indian hotel industry. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, 46*, 12–25. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2020.11.007

Ugwu, F. O., Onyishi, E. I., Anozie, O. O., & Ugwu, L. E. (2022). Customer incivility and employee work engagement in the hospitality industry: Roles of supervisor positive gossip and workplace friendship prevalence. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights, 5*(3), 515–534. https://doi.org/10.1108/JHTI-06-2020-0113

Varpio, L., Paradis, E., Uijtdehaage, S., & Young, M. (2020). The distinctions between theory, theoretical framework, and conceptual framework. *Academic Medicine, 95*(7), 989–994. https://doi.org/10.1097/ACM.0000000000003075

Vasconcelos, A. F. (2020). Analysing the effects of incivility beyond workplaces. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis, 28*(5), 1069–1093. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-08-2019-1865

Yagil, D. (2021). Abuse from organizational outsiders: Customer aggression and incivility. In C. L. Cooper & N. Chmiel (Eds.), *Special topics and particular occupations, professions and sectors* (pp. 109–134). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-5308-5_3

Yan, Z., Mansor, Z. D., & Choo, W. C. (2023). Antecedents of proactive customer service performance in hospitality: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management, 32*(4), 505–529. https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2023.2184896

Zhan, X., Guo, Y., Yang, Y., Li, Z., & Li, X. (2023). Why can customer incivility be contagious in the service context? A resource scarcity perspective. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 109*, 103418. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2022.103418

Zhu, J. N., Lam, L. W., & Lai, J. Y. (2019). Returning good for evil: A study of customer incivility and extra-role customer service. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 81*, 65–72. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2019.03.004