

## **The Impact of Employee Personality and Customer Orientation on Customer Incivility in the Service Industry**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigates how employee personality traits and customer orientation influence customer incivility in the service industry, emphasizing the mediating role of customer orientation. Drawing on the Big Five Personality framework, it explores how conscientiousness, agreeableness, and core self-evaluation (CSE) shape employee interactions with customers. The findings show that conscientiousness and agreeableness significantly enhance customer orientation, while CSE is positively linked to selling orientation but has no notable effect on customer orientation. Customer orientation emerges as a key mediating variable that links personality traits to the ability to manage customer incivility. Using a quantitative method, data were collected from 218 frontline employees across various service sectors. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the proposed relationships. The model revealed that personality traits and customer orientation explain only 3.2% of the variance in customer incivility, highlighting the multifactorial nature of this issue and indicating the need to consider broader variables such as workplace climate, emotional labor demands, and organizational support. This research contributes to the literature by demonstrating the indirect influence of personality traits on customer incivility and affirming the importance of customer orientation in service roles. It recommends prioritizing recruiting individuals high in agreeableness and conscientiousness and implementing training programs that foster emotional intelligence and conflict management skills. Additionally, it calls for future research to examine moderating and mediating variables, such as job autonomy, peer support, and cultural context, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of managing customer incivility in diverse service environments.

**Keywords:** Employee Personality, Customer Orientation, Customer Incivility, Hospitality Industry, Service Management.

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### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The service industry relies heavily on the dynamic interaction between employees and customers, making it crucial to understand factors that influence service quality and employee well-being. Service encounters are often characterized by high emotional labor, requiring employees to regulate their emotions while providing quality service (Koopmann et al., 2015). However, one significant challenge service employees face is customer incivility, which includes rude, disrespectful, or aggressive behavior from customers. Customer incivility can manifest in various ways, including verbal abuse and condescending behavior. Remarks and unreasonable demands create a stressful work environment (Boukis, 2023). Such interactions affect employees' mental health by increasing stress and emotional exhaustion (Han et al., 2016) and impact job satisfaction, performance, and overall service quality (Sliter et al., 2010). Studies indicate that prolonged exposure to incivility can lead to burnout, decreased organizational commitment, and even employee turnover (Ghosh & Shum, 2019). Addressing customer incivility requires a deeper understanding of how employee personality traits and customer orientation shape employees' ability to manage and respond to such situations effectively.

Existing research has examined the role of employee personality in workplace interactions. The study by Highlights states that agreeableness and core self-evaluation (CSE) play a significant role in enhancing customer orientation and reducing the likelihood of experiencing customer incivility. Employees who score high in agreeableness and CSE tend to engage in more customer-oriented behaviors,

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which serve as a buffer against incivility. Similarly, emotional resilience and personality traits significantly influence how employees cope with customer mistreatment, with higher resilience mitigating adverse outcomes. The research emphasized that frontline employees with strong interpersonal skills and emotional regulation capabilities experience lower levels of incivility, underscoring the importance of individual traits in managing workplace stressors. Conversely, individuals with high neuroticism or low agreeableness are more susceptible to customer mistreatment due to their reduced ability to maintain a positive service interaction to their reduced ability to maintain a positive service interaction.

Although these findings contribute to our understanding, significant gaps remain in explaining how additional personality traits, such as conscientiousness and selling orientation, impact customer incivility. Current research has primarily focused on theoretical frameworks, failing to provide practical interventions for businesses to improve customer orientation and reduce incivility through better hiring processes and training programs. Moreover, existing studies have emphasized individual personality traits while neglecting external workplace factors such as organizational support and service culture, which may also influence employee resilience in the face of customer incivility.

This study aims to expand upon extant research by incorporating conscientiousness and selling orientation into existing models and analysing their role in mitigating customer incivility. Furthermore, this investigation will provide actionable strategies for evidence-based recruitment and targeted training programmes, equipping employees with the skills to effectively manage challenging customer interactions. By addressing these factors, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how employee personality and customer orientation influence service experiences, ultimately leading to enhanced employee well-being and improved service quality. Based on the identified gaps, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do employee personality traits affect customer orientation and selling orientation?
2. Does customer orientation mediate the relationship between personality traits and customer incivility?

## B. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Employee Personality in the Service Industry

The way that employees respond to the difficulties that come with providing customer service is greatly influenced by their personalities. Strong emotional stability and self-efficacy, employees frequently maintain composure in tense client interactions by using solution-focused techniques to diffuse tensions effectively. Conversely, those with high neuroticism could find it difficult to control their emotions, which could lead to heightened conflict and poor service quality. Proactive and gregarious front-line staff have proven to be exceptionally adept at managing client dissatisfaction in the hospitality sector. These characteristics enable them to turn possible grievances into satisfying customer experiences, promoting client happiness and loyalty (Kiffin-Petersen & Soutar, 2020). Resilience in complex client interactions is based on core self-evaluation (CSE), which includes self-efficacy, locus of control, emotional stability, and self-esteem. Professionalism, problem-solving skills, and emotional stability are common traits of staff members with high CSE, which enables them to handle rude or hostile clients with grace and confidence (Kiffin-Petersen & Soutar, 2020).

In addition to improving service effectiveness, qualities like friendliness and proactivity also significantly impact job satisfaction (Bani-Melhem, 2020; Chien et al., 2021). Because workers with high CSE see challenges as chances for personal development rather than insurmountable barriers, they are also associated with reduced stress levels. According to Alola et al. (2019), neuroticism, on the other hand, tends to increase stress and emotional exhaustion, especially in situations involving high-pressure customer service. Conversely, being receptive to new experiences encourages flexibility and innovative problem-solving, both critical for upholding high service standards and satisfying a range of client demands (Chien et al., 2021). These observations emphasize how crucial personality qualities are to creating a resilient and productive staff, especially in positions involving direct customer interaction.

### Customer Orientation in Service Industries

One of the main factors influencing customer loyalty and satisfaction is customer orientation. Strong customer-oriented workers put much effort into comprehending and meeting the demands of their clients,

which improves service quality and builds enduring relationships (Bani-Melhem, 2020; Choi et al., 2023). These workers effectively deal with rude customers without resorting to surface acting by utilizing their professionalism and sensitivity, which lessens emotional exhaustion (H.-T. Chen et al., 2021).

Rather than taking nasty customer behavior personally, customer-oriented people typically view it as a problem that can be solved. They uphold high service standards even under pressure by using techniques like active listening, understanding client annoyances, and rephrasing unpleasant experiences as chances for service enhancement. In addition to improving client happiness, this proactive strategy lessens the emotional strain on staff members.

Employees participating in training programs that include role-playing games and emotional intelligence courses are better prepared to deal with rude customers. These techniques develop critical abilities that allow staff members to handle challenging situations positively while maintaining their professionalism. Customer-oriented employees' resilience and flexibility are further strengthened by organizational support, which includes creating a happy work environment and offering resources for their well-being. This improves their capacity to provide outstanding customer service (Han et al., 2016).

### **Impact of Customer Incivility on Service Employees**

Rude customers severely impact employee confidence, mental health, and overall service quality. According to studies conducted in the retail industry, workers who are regularly the targets of insulting comments and contemptuous actions report feeling more stressed and emotionally spent. One worker, for instance, described how persistent rudeness damaged their motivation and self-esteem, resulting in tense relationships with other clients and a decline in their performance at work (Kim & Qu, 2019). Frequent exposure to this type of conduct can cause emotional tiredness, increased stress, and a decline in self-esteem, all of which have a significant negative impact on job performance (Alola et al., 2019; Kim & Qu, 2019). In order to preserve a professional façade, many workers turn to surface acting, which, over time, makes emotional exhaustion worse and lowers motivation and engagement (H.-T. Chen et al., 2021). These results highlight how urgently organizational initiatives are needed to lessen the adverse effects of rude customers. Employees can be empowered to effectively manage stress and uphold professionalism by implementing strategies like emotion regulation training, providing access to support networks, and cultivating a healthy working culture. These programs improve overall service quality in addition to safeguarding the well-being of employees (Bani-Melhem, 2020).

### **Strategies for Dealing with Customer Incivility**

Effective communication and self-control are crucial tactics for handling rude customers. Self-regulation means deliberately controlling one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors to fulfill the demands of a professional role. Self-regulation encourages authentic emotional alignment with professional norms, unlike surface acting, which only covers up genuine emotions without addressing underlying sentiments. This method promotes genuine, constructive encounters and lessens emotional strain. Similarly, deep acting reduces the emotional toll on employees and improves service quality by coordinating internal emotions with role expectations (Chen et al., 2021).

Effective communication techniques, like assertiveness and de-escalation, enable staff members to handle difficult circumstances coolly and professionally. By using these abilities, staff members can constructively handle client complaints and stop disputes from getting worse (Kiffin-Petersen & Soutar, 2020). Employee resilience and confidence are increased by training programs emphasizing self-regulation and communication skills, improving interactions, and ensuring consistent service standards. Businesses that fund these initiatives create a positive work atmosphere, raise staff morale, and guarantee ongoing service quality (Choi et al., 2023).

### **Implications of Personality and Customer Orientation**

Personality factors and client orientation significantly shape employee resilience and service quality. When confronted with rude customers, employees with high core self-evaluation (CSE) show remarkable professionalism and flexibility, which significantly reduces emotional tiredness (Kiffin-Petersen & Soutar, 2020). According to Bani-Melhem (2020). For instance, customer-focused staff members with high empathy and emotional stability are better equipped to handle difficult customer situations, leading to better service results.

This relationship is further supported by statistical data, which indicates that companies that prioritize customer orientation and CSE have a 25% improvement in staff stress resilience and service performance as compared to those that do not (Chien et al., 2021). High CSE and strong customer orientation reduce the harmful effects of rudeness by promoting professionalism, emotional stability, and resilience (Bani-Melhem, 2020; Kiffin-Petersen & Soutar, 2020). Workers with cooperative and sympathetic dispositions are exceptionally skilled at upholding service standards and protecting their mental health amid trying situations. Organizations should place a high priority on customer orientation training and personality development in order to improve resilience and create a healthy work culture. Programs that integrate coping mechanisms and emotion control are essential for maintaining high customer satisfaction and employee well-being (Bani-Melhem, 2020; Chien et al., 2021).

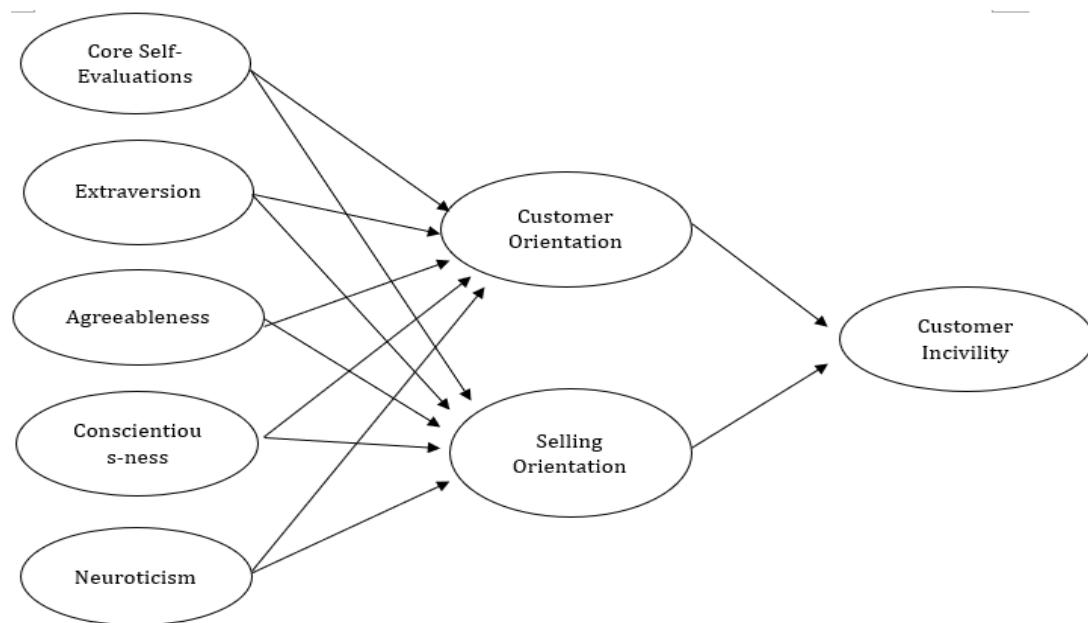
### Hypotheses Development

Based on the literature, the following hypotheses were tested:

H1. Employees' customer orientation will mediate the relationships between (a) core self-evaluation, (b) extraversion, (c) agreeableness, (d) conscientiousness, (e) neuroticism, and customer incivility.

H2. Service employees' selling orientation will mediate the relationships between (a) core self-evaluation, (b) extraversion, (c) agreeableness, (d) conscientiousness, (e) neuroticism, and customer incivility.

By exploring these hypotheses, this study will contribute to understanding the complex dynamics between personality traits and customer orientation in service settings and provide valuable insights for improving employee well-being and service quality (See Figure 1 for Research Framework).



**Figure 1. Research Framework**

## C. RESEARCH METHOD

### Procedure and Respondents

This study employed a quantitative survey method to evaluate the mediating role of customer orientation and examine the effect of employee personality traits on customer incivility. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS was used for data analysis.

Two hundred eighteen frontline service employees with direct and regular contact with customers participated in the study. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling, targeting individuals who met specific inclusion criteria: active employment in customer-facing service roles (e.g., in retail, hospitality, F&B, or customer service). This non-probability sampling method was chosen to ensure that participants had relevant, direct experiences with customers and could provide insights aligned with the study's focus.

The survey was distributed exclusively through online channels, using a combination of organic and targeted outreach strategies. Distribution platforms included popular social media and messaging apps, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Quora, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter), as well as service industry-related forums, online communities, and professional groups. The survey link was also sent to individuals via DMs (Direct Messages) and shared within group chats in sectors such as retail and hospitality. This multi-platform approach maximized geographic reach and demographic diversity, ensuring the respondent pool reflected a broad cross-section of service employees.

**Table 1. Respondent Demographics**

Category	Details	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Women	164	75.23%
	Men	54	24.77%
<b>Age Group</b>	18–20 years	99	45.41%
	21–23 years	74	33.94%
	24–26 years	49	22.48%
	27–30 years	20	9.17%
	Above 30 years	5	2.29%
<b>Education Level</b>	High School Graduates	123	56.42%
	Bachelor's Degree Holders	87	39.91%
	Diploma Holders	6	2.75%
	Postgraduate Degree Holders	2	0.92%
<b>Work Experience</b>	Less than 1 year	83	38.07%
	1–3 years	91	41.74%
	4–6 years	37	16.98%
	7–10 years	2	0.92%
	More than 10 years	5	2.29%
<b>Industry</b>	Retail (stores/sales)	93	42.65%
	Restaurant/Café	50	22.94%
	Hotel/Accommodation	24	11.01%
	Healthcare	16	7.34%
	Creative/Digital	11	5.05%
	Banking/Finance	9	4.13%
	Education	3	1.38%
	Government	3	1.38%

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<b>Work Location</b>			
West Java	96	43.59%	
DKI Jakarta	44	20.18%	
East Java	30	13.76%	
Central Java	21	9.63%	
Yogyakarta	13	5.96%	
Other Regions (Sumatra, Kalimantan, etc.)	16	7.34%	

The table 1 provides a comprehensive breakdown of respondents' demographic characteristics, covering gender distribution, age groups, education levels, work experience, industries of employment, and geographic work locations. Women represent the majority of respondents, with a significant portion aged 18–23 years. Most respondents hold high school or bachelor's degrees and have up to three years of work experience, predominantly in the retail and restaurant sectors. Geographically, West Java accounts for the most respondents, followed by DKI Jakarta and East Java, with smaller representations from other regions and overseas locations.

### Measures

The study employed research instruments adapted from established frameworks to ensure validity and reliability. Employee personality was measured using the Core Self-Evaluation (CSE) scale (Judge et al., 2003), alongside the Five-Factor Model (FFM), which assessed traits such as agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and neuroticism. The Selling Orientation-Customer Orientation (SOCO) scale was utilized to evaluate customer orientation, while customer incivility was measured with the Workplace Incivility Scale (Cortina et al., 2001). These instruments were selected for their proven reliability and comprehensive coverage of the variables in question. The survey was conducted anonymously to reduce the risk of social desirability bias, ensuring honest and independent responses. Respondents were asked to reflect on their personal work experiences, allowing for robust data collection. The insights gained highlighted the complex interactions between employee personality, customer orientation, and incivility experiences, offering valuable contributions to the field.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis utilized PLS-SEM (Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling), an advanced statistical method for examining complex social science research relationships. The analysis was conducted using SmartPLS software to ensure precision. Key psychometric properties of the measurement model, such as reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, were rigorously evaluated, confirming the consistency and uniqueness of the constructs measured. The structural model was then assessed to test the hypothesized relationships between employee personality traits, customer orientation, and customer incivility. The study employed a bootstrapping technique to strengthen the robustness of the findings, allowing for the examination of the significance of mediation paths within the research model. This approach provided insights into both direct and indirect effects within the dataset. With a sample size of 218 respondents, the study satisfied the requirements for conducting PLS-SEM analysis, ensuring statistical reliability and reproducibility. The methodological rigor employed in this analysis establishes a strong foundation for replicating the findings in future research endeavors.

## D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study investigates the factors influencing customer orientation, sales orientation, and customer responsiveness among employees engaging with customers. Through a comprehensive analysis of measurement and structural models, the research ensures validity, reliability, and a clear understanding of the independent variables' contribution to the dependent variables. The key findings of this study are as follows:

### Outer Loadings and Measurement Model Evaluation

Outer loadings measure the contribution of indicators to latent constructs. According to Kiffin-Petersen & Soutar (2020) Indicators with values  $<0.6$  or close to 0.7 can still be retained if their contribution supports the overall reliability and validity of the construct (Hair et al., 2019). In this study, the indicators on Agreeableness ( $AGR2 = 0.663$ ). This value is still close to the threshold of 0.7, so it can be retained for further analysis. And Customer Orientation ( $CO1 = 0.725$ ,  $CO2 = 0.740$ ). The value is close to 0.7 and is acceptable.

### Convergent Validity (AVE) and Reliability (CR)

Convergent validity was tested using the  $AVE \geq 0.5$  criterion, while reliability was tested using Composite Reliability ( $CR \geq 0.7$ ):

**Table 2. Convergent Validity (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR)**

Construct	AVE	CR	Conclusion
Agreeableness	0.536	0.775	Valid and reliable
Costumer Orientation	0.472	0.816	Low AVE, good CR
Customer Incivility	0.574	0.923	Valid and reliable

The results show that Customer Orientation has an AVE value below 0.5 (0.472) (Table 2). According to Fornell & Larcker (1981), this value can be tolerated if the construct reliability (CR) is adequate. Hair et al. (2019) also, a low AVE is acceptable as long as the internal consistency reliability value, such as CR, is above the 0.7 threshold and the indicator loading significantly contributes to the construct. Therefore, high construct reliability indicates that the indicators of Customer Orientation are still consistent in measuring the same concept, even though the AVE is slightly low.

### R-Square ( $R^2$ ) and Contribution of Independent Variables

R-squared ( $R^2$ ) indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that the independent variables in the model can explain. In this study, the  $R^2$  value for customer incivility is 0.032, meaning that the included independent variables personality traits and customer orientation explain only 3.2% of the variance in customer incivility (See Table 3). While this value is statistically valid, it highlights a limited predictive power and suggests the presence of other more influential variables not captured within the current model.

This low  $R^2$  value is standard in behavioral and social sciences, especially when studying complex interpersonal dynamics influenced by numerous external factors. It underscores the multifactorial nature of customer incivility, which may be shaped by organizational culture, situational pressures, emotional labor demands, managerial support, and even specific customer profiles. For instance, previous studies have shown that workplace climate and peer support systems play significant roles in buffering the adverse effects of customer behavior (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Han et al., 2016).

Therefore, the findings point to the need for future research to incorporate additional mediating or moderating variables, such as emotional intelligence, job autonomy, peer collaboration, or cultural context, to better capture the complexity of employee-customer interactions. Expanding the model to include these contextual variables may provide a more comprehensive and accurate picture of the mechanisms driving customer incivility and help guide more targeted interventions in the service industry. Customer Orientation has the highest  $R^2$  (0.444), indicating the significant influence of the independent variable.

**Table 3. R-Square ( $R^2$ ) Values and Explained Variance of Dependent Variables**

Variable Dependent	$R^2$	Interpretation
Customer Orientation	0.444	44.4% variance explained
Customer Incivility	0.032	3.2% variance explained
Selling Orientation	0.161	16.1% variance explained

### Path Coefficients and Significance of Relationship

The results of the path coefficients test and bootstrapping are used to test the hypothesis in Table 4:

**Table 4. Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing Results**

Relationship	Path Coefficient	t-statistics	p-value	Significance
Agreeableness → Customer Orientation	0.364	4.718	0.000	Significant
Conscientiousness → Customer Orientation	0.260	3.637	0.000	Significant
CSE → Selling Orientation	0.158	1.989	0.047	Significant
Agreeableness → Selling Orientation	0.077	0.830	0.406	Not Significant
CSE → Customer Orientation	0.124	1.583	0.114	Not Significant

**Notes:** CSE =core self-evaluations

Employees with high agreeableness exhibit a strong positive relationship with customer orientation ( $\beta = 0.364$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), indicating that their interpersonal traits significantly enhance their ability to prioritize customer needs. Similarly, conscientiousness also shows a positive and significant effect on customer orientation ( $\beta = 0.260$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), highlighting the tendency of conscientious employees to be more focused on customer satisfaction. Furthermore, core self-evaluation (CSE) positively influences selling orientation ( $\beta = 0.158$ ,  $p = 0.047$ ), suggesting that employees with a strong sense of self-worth are better at promoting and selling services. However, other relationships, such as agreeableness with selling orientation and CSE with customer orientation, were found to be statistically insignificant.

The findings of this study strongly align with the Big Five Personality theory, particularly in demonstrating the significant impact of agreeableness and conscientiousness on customer orientation. Agreeableness fosters empathy, cooperation, and effective communication, while conscientiousness supports traits like reliability, meticulousness, and task-oriented behavior. Together, these traits create a foundation for superior customer service, as also observed by Chien et al. (2021). Employees who embody these traits are more likely to anticipate customer needs, reduce interaction friction, and adapt to challenging scenarios with poise.

However, the limited influence of CSE on customer orientation highlights an important nuance. CSE, which encompasses self-esteem, self-efficacy, and emotional stability, appears to have a more significant role in individual performance and task efficiency than sustained interpersonal engagement. This aligns with findings by Kiffin-Petersen & Soutar (2020), who argued that CSE is better suited for roles demanding resilience in job challenges rather than prolonged customer interactions. This divergence suggests that while confident employees may excel in transactional tasks, fostering long-term customer relationships requires additional behavioral and cognitive factors.

Customer orientation's role as a mediator in addressing customer incivility is a critical insight. Employees with strong customer orientation reframed negative interactions as opportunities for growth, demonstrating resilience and emotional regulation. This mirrors Bani-Melhem (2020) assertion that a robust customer-oriented approach helps mitigate the emotional toll of incivility. Employees adopt constructive coping strategies, including active listening and perspective-taking, to de-escalate conflicts and maintain service quality. This ability to reframe situations into constructive interactions highlights the potential of customer orientation to act as a psychological buffer for employees facing high levels of stress or adversity.

These findings are consistent with those of Chen et al. (2021), who showed that frontline employees with higher customer orientation experience less emotional exhaustion from incivility. Choi et al. (2023) also noted that strong customer orientation can buffer the adverse effects of incivility and promote prosocial behavior in service settings. Moreover, Boukis et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of organizational rewards in mitigating identity threats caused by uncivil customer interactions. Together, these studies reinforce the view that individual and

organizational factors interact to shape employees' resilience in the face of challenging customer behavior.

Nonetheless, the study's finding that personality traits and customer orientation explain only 3.2% of customer incivility suggests that broader systemic and environmental factors play a significant role. This low  $R^2$  value is typical in behavioral and social sciences, especially in studies dealing with interpersonal dynamics. It reflects the multifaceted nature of customer incivility, which is influenced by various external and organizational variables. These may include organizational culture, emotional labor demands, leadership style, customer expectations, and peer support systems. For example, high emotional labor demands combined with limited autonomy can exacerbate stress and increase vulnerability to incivility. Conversely, a supportive organizational climate and strong team cohesion have been shown to buffer the negative impacts of complex customer interactions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Han et al., 2016). Recognizing this complexity, future research should consider expanding the model by incorporating additional mediating or moderating variables such as emotional intelligence, job autonomy, peer collaboration, and cultural context to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the antecedents and consequences of customer incivility. Organizational support is one such factor. A supportive work environment characterized by managerial backing, peer collaboration, and accessible resources buffers employees from the adverse effects of incivility (Han et al., 2016). This organizational scaffolding fosters a culture where employees feel equipped and valued, reducing susceptibility to burnout and disengagement. For example, managerial support has been linked to enhanced employee resilience in industries like healthcare, where customer interactions can be emotionally charged (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Organizations can mitigate the emotional toll of complex customer interactions by providing employees with clear communication channels and conflict resolution protocols.

Customer characteristics also influence the dynamics of incivility. For instance, cultural contexts play a substantial role in shaping customer-employee interactions. Cultural dimensions theory underscores that societies with high power distance may exhibit deference in hierarchical settings, potentially minimizing friction with frontline employees. Conversely, cultures emphasizing individualism may lead to more assertive customer behavior, increasing the likelihood of incivility. Additionally, customer expectations shaped by service industry norms often dictate the tone of interactions. For instance, customers accustomed to highly personalized services may react negatively if these expectations are unmet, further compounding the potential for incivility. Understanding these cultural and contextual variations is critical for tailoring service strategies to a diverse clientele.

Training and development represent another essential avenue for addressing these challenges. While personality traits are largely intrinsic, targeted training programs can enhance employees' skills in managing incivility. Emotional intelligence training, as discussed by Brotheridge & Grandey (2002) equips employees with tools to recognize and regulate their emotions, fostering constructive responses to conflict. Role-playing scenarios simulate real-world challenges, enabling employees to practice de-escalation techniques and active listening. Additionally, workshops on resilience building, as Alola et al. (2019) noted, provide employees with strategies to recover from negative encounters and maintain their mental well-being. Training modules focused on managing diverse customer behaviors in the hospitality industry have shown significant improvements in service outcomes (Omazic et al., 2015). Such programs enhance individual competencies and promote a collective culture of professionalism and adaptability within the organization.

A significant limitation of the study lies in its reliance on self-reported survey data, which may introduce biases such as social desirability and subjective interpretations. Incorporating observational methods and customer feedback would enhance the robustness of future research. Longitudinal studies could also offer more profound insights into how personality traits and customer orientation evolve in response to workplace dynamics. For example, tracking employees' responses to incivility before and after interventions like training programs would provide valuable evidence of their effectiveness. Furthermore, qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviews with employees, could uncover nuanced experiences and strategies used to manage incivility, adding depth to the findings.

This study's theoretical implications reinforce the importance of integrating personality assessments into recruitment strategies. Organizations can build a workforce inherently inclined toward superior customer orientation by prioritizing candidates with high agreeableness and conscientiousness. Practical implications extend to the design of professional development programs that emphasize emotional intelligence, active listening, and conflict resolution. Such initiatives enhance employee capabilities and contribute to a more resilient and adaptive organizational culture. For instance, adopting assessment tools like the Big Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999). During hiring processes, ensure alignment between candidate traits and organizational needs.

Finally, the findings invite further exploration into moderating and mediating variables influencing the relationship between personality traits, customer orientation, and incivility. Variables such as emotional labor, job autonomy, and peer support could provide a more comprehensive understanding of these dynamics. Emotional labor, in particular, plays a pivotal role in service settings. According to Costain & Berkeley (1983), the theory on emotional labor highlights the strain employees face in regulating emotions to meet organizational expectations. This strain can amplify the impact of incivility if not managed effectively. Additionally, job autonomy, which allows employees greater control over their work processes, has been linked to reduced stress levels and enhanced problem-solving capabilities (Karasek et al., 1979). Creating environments that balance structured roles with autonomy can empower employees to navigate complex customer interactions more effectively.

Exploring sector-specific factors, such as the unique stressors in hospitality versus retail, would tailor interventions to the distinct challenges faced by employees in different service settings. For example, while hospitality employees often navigate language barriers and cultural differences, retail workers may contend with high transaction volumes and diverse customer profiles. Addressing these sector-specific nuances through customized training and support systems would likely yield more effective outcomes. This approach could also incorporate technology integration, such as AI-powered customer service tools, to reduce direct employee exposure to incivility while maintaining high service standards.

In conclusion, this study advances the discourse on employee personality, customer orientation, and customer incivility by offering theoretical insights and actionable recommendations. While the interplay of these variables is complex, adopting a multidimensional approach that integrates recruitment, training, and organizational support holds promise for enhancing service quality and employee well-being. Future research should aim to build on these foundations, incorporating broader perspectives to fully capture the nuances of customer incivility in diverse service contexts. Expanding the scope to include cross-cultural comparisons and examining the role of technology in moderating customer interactions could further enrich the understanding of this critical area. Additionally, considering longitudinal and sector-specific studies will provide a more holistic perspective on managing and mitigating customer incivility.

## E. CONCLUSION

This research explores how employee personality traits and customer orientation influence customer incivility in the service industry, emphasizing the mediating role of customer orientation. The findings demonstrate that agreeableness and conscientiousness significantly enhance customer orientation, whereas core self-evaluation (CSE) primarily affects selling orientation and has no significant effect on customer orientation. These results underscore the pivotal role of specific personality traits in shaping customer-oriented behaviors, which can help buffer the adverse effects of customer incivility.

From a practical perspective, the study recommends that organizations prioritize recruiting individuals with high levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of implementing targeted training programs focused on customer orientation, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution. These initiatives can strengthen employees' capacity to constructively manage complicated customer interactions, thereby improving service delivery and employee resilience.

Academically, the study contributes to the growing literature on employee personality and workplace behavior by offering empirical evidence on the indirect mechanisms through which personality traits influence customer incivility. It highlights customer orientation as a key mediating factor and

encourages further examination of the psychological and contextual elements that influence employee-customer dynamics.

Importantly, the study's low explanatory power ( $R^2 = 3.2\%$ ) for customer incivility draws attention to the multifactorial nature of workplace behavior and the need to incorporate broader contextual variables in future research. These may include organizational culture, managerial support, job autonomy, and emotional labor demands. Moreover, future studies should explore additional mediating variables such as emotional regulation, burnout, or employee engagement. Adopting longitudinal and multi-source designs will also validate causal pathways and mitigate self-report bias.

Future research can address these areas and develop a more comprehensive framework for understanding and managing customer incivility across diverse service contexts. Such insights will be valuable for shaping strategic HR policies, designing effective training programs, and fostering healthier, more sustainable service environments.

This study has several limitations that are important to acknowledge. Firstly, the research relies on self-reported survey data, which may introduce biases such as social desirability and subjective interpretation. While anonymity and randomization were applied to reduce these effects, self-reporting inherently limits objectivity and may not fully reflect actual behaviors. Secondly, the study focuses on a limited set of independent variables—employee personality traits and customer orientation—which collectively explain only 3.2% of the variance in customer incivility. Although this is typical in behavioral studies, it suggests the presence of other influential variables not included in this model, such as organizational culture, leadership support, job autonomy, emotional labor demands, and customer characteristics. Thirdly, using a cross-sectional design means that the data only captures a snapshot in time, limiting the ability to infer causality or understand how variables may interact or change over time. Lastly, the sample is concentrated in retail and hospitality industries, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other service sectors with different operational contexts or customer expectations.

Future research should address these limitations by adopting longitudinal and multi-source research designs to capture causal relationships better and reduce bias. Expanding the model to include additional mediating and moderating variables—such as emotional regulation strategies, burnout levels, job autonomy, organizational climate, and peer collaboration—could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the antecedents and consequences of customer incivility. Qualitative approaches, including in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, would offer richer insights into the lived experiences of frontline employees and the coping mechanisms they employ in response to uncivil customer behavior. Furthermore, cross-cultural comparisons are recommended to explore how cultural values, service norms, and customer expectations differ across regions and influence incivility dynamics.

Sector-specific studies focusing on industries with high emotional labor demands, such as healthcare, education, or public service, could generate tailored interventions suited to the unique stressors of each environment. Finally, future research could explore integrating technological tools, such as AI-driven customer service platforms, to reduce employees' direct exposure to customer incivility while maintaining service quality and responsiveness. By addressing these areas, future studies can build on the present findings and provide actionable guidance for academic and practical service management advancements.

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## Appendix

All scale items retained in the study (r = reverse scored).

### Extraversion items

- I feel comfortable talking to customers.
- I enjoy interacting with many customers at one time.
- I enjoy interacting with many customers at one time.

### Agreeableness items

- I can understand customer needs well.
- I strive to always be kind and caring towards customers.
- I am always ready to cooperate with both customers and coworkers.

### Conscientiousness items

- I work in an organized and systematic manner to complete my tasks.
- I always strive to complete tasks efficiently.
- I am careful to avoid making mistakes when serving customers.

### Neuroticism items

- I often feel stressed when dealing with difficult customers.
- I feel easily irritated by customer criticism.
- I tend to feel anxious when dealing with dissatisfied customers.

### Core Self-Evaluations Scale items

- I determine what happens in my life.
- I complete tasks successfully.
- I am able to solve most of my problems.

### Customer Orientation items

- I try to identify what customers need.
- I always consider what is best for the customer.
- I follow up on customer requests in a timely manner.
- I follow up on customer issues in a timely manner.
- Regardless of the situation, I always show politeness and respect to customers.

### Selling Orientation items

- I try to sell as much as I can.
- I exaggerate the quality of my product or service to make it sound as good as possible.
- I choose products or services based on how easily I can convince customers to buy them.

### Customer Incivility items

- Customers vent their anger at me.
- Customers make insulting comments toward me.
- Customers treat employees as if they are inferior or unintelligent.
- Customers treat employees as if they are inferior or unintelligent.
- Customers do not trust the information I provide and ask to speak to someone in a higher position.
- Customers make comments questioning my competence.
- Customers greet me in an unprofessional manner, either in public or privately.
- Customers try to discuss my personal matters without my consent.
- Customers ignore me or do not speak to me.
- Customers yell, snap, or curse at me.