The effects of customer incivility and employee incivility on depersonalization: The mediation effect of forgiveness

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Article Info	Abstract
	This study examined the effect of customer incivility and employee incivility on depersonalization as well as the mediation role of forgiveness in the effects of customer incivility and employee incivility on depersonalization. The study was conducted with 352 employees of five-star hotels in Antalya, Turkey. The results show that customer incivility and employee incivility increase hotel employees' depersonalization while forgiveness partially mediates the impact of customer incivility and employee incivility on depersonalization. These findings indicate that hotel managers should encourage employees' tendency to forgive, increase managerial support and training for employees, and learning about different cultures.

1. Introduction

Since service businesses are labor-intensive, they require constant communication and interaction. Generally, the producer and consumer share the same environment where the service is produced and consumed. Service environments are stressful for employees due to pressure to meet customers' expectations and demands while providing optimum service to ensure an excellent experience that is also good value for money. These pressures can increase incivility by both employees and customers, but particularly from the latter in accommodation businesses. Customer incivility, which is mostly conscious but sometimes unconscious, can cause negative outcomes for employees both individually and organizationally. More specifically, it increases employee stress (Boukis et al., 2020; Porath & Pearson, 2013; Sliter et al., 2010), impairs employee performance (Cheng et al., 2020; Porath & Pearson, 2013; Liu, Zhou & Che, 2019), reduces job satisfaction (Kim et al., 2014), raises the risk of burnout syndrome when employees are constantly exposed to customer incivility (Bani-Melhem, 2020; Kim & Qu, 2019; Yang & Lau, 2019), and increases turnover intention (Porath & Pearson, 2013; Rahim & Cosby, 2016; Lim, Cortina & Magley, 2008; Wilson & Holmvall, 2013).

Hospitality employees may also have to deal with rudeness from colleagues. Employee incivility can be physical, verbal, or non-verbal, including lack of polite behavior, exclusion from the group, ignoring, and bullying. Employee incivility also increases employee stress (Lim & Cortina, 2005), reduces job satisfaction (Chen & Wang, 2019; Cortina et al., 2001), leads to desensitization (De Clercq et al., 2020; Rahim & Cosby, 2016), and increases turnover intention (Laschinger et al., 2009; Chen & Wang, 2019). Another effect is depersonalization, which is the advanced stage of burnout whereby people are seen as "objects" (Lee et al., 2018). This impairs job performance (Baker & Kim, 2021; Karatepe & Uludağ, 2008), reduces service quality (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993), promotes negative employee attitudes and behaviors (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993), and ultimately lead to lost customers by eliminating a customer orientation (Lee et al., 2018).

Forgiveness, both individually and organizationally, is an important factor to protect employees facing customer and/or employee incivility from depersonalization and thereby prevent negative attitudes and behaviors. Employees with a high tendency to forgive have higher job satisfaction (Cox, 2011; Guchait et al., 2016; McCullough, 2000) and lower turnover intention (Guchait et al., 2016; McCullough, 2000). This study aimed to reveal the effect of customer and employee incivility, which are frequently encountered in hotel businesses, on employee depersonalization. It also aimed to disclose the mediating role of forgiveness on the effects of customer and employee incivility on depersonalization. Hypotheses were developed with "cognitive appraisal theory", "conservation of resources theory", "social information processing theory", "social identity theory", and previous empirical findings. The next section reviews the relevant literature before the hypotheses are introduced in terms of relevant theories and research findings. The following section expresses the sampling and data collection, including the scales used, and presents the participants' demographic characteristics. The results are then discussed in detail before the conclusion, which suggests some implications for theorists and practitioners.

2. Literature review

2.1. Customer incivility

Koopmann et al. (2015) define customer incivility as "the low-quality interpersonal treatment that employees receive from their customers during service interactions". Customer incivility include sexual harassment or physical aggression (Bhati & Pearce, 2016), verbal and non-verbal attacks (Cortina et al., 2017), physical violence and abuse of power, unintentional behaviors that adversely affect the employee, and unintentional dissemination of behavior by employees (Cheng et al., 2020). Customer incivility tends towards rudeness (talking too loudly, etc.) or disrespect (not thanking, not saying please, etc.) more than physical aggression (Sliter & Jones, 2016). The most common forms of customer incivility are verbal aggression and unreasonable customer demands (Dormann & Zapf, 2004; Koopmann et al., 2015). The latter can encourage customer rudeness, such as grumbling at service that customers think is too slow, blaming an employee for a problem that they did not cause, addressing employees in an unkind manner, and complaining about the prices of products or services (Wilson & Holmvall, 2013).

Consumers want the best service at the best price and do not hesitate to use their power to get what they want. Service workers are particularly at risk of incivility if they lack power compared to those with greater organizational power (Sliter et al., 2010). With ever-increasing service expectations, customers can be dissatisfied with even the smallest problems. Therefore, behave rudely towards employees (Wilson & Holmvall, 2013). Customer incivility harms employee well-being and work outcomes (Arnold & Walsh, 2015) while employees may behave badly towards customers in response to their incivility (Walker, Van Jaarsveld & Skarlicki, 2014). Customer incivility reduces "employee motivation" and "job performance", and increases "negative emotions", "psychological withdrawal", and "counterproductive work behavior" (Hur, Moon & Jun, 2016). It can also induce burnout, especially among employees who consistently encounter this problem (Bani-Melhem, 2020).

Several theories can help in understanding how employees respond to incivility. Cognitive appraisal theory explains how people evaluate in two stages whether a particular encounter will be for their own good (Folkman et al., 1986). People first assess whether the encounter represents a hazard and then, if it does, assess whether they have the resources to deal with this threat (Arnold & Walsh, 2015). Conservation of resources theory explains how stress is caused by the risk of losing valuable resources (work, money, valuable objects, etc.) and how individuals are then motivated to seek different solutions (Hobfoll, 2011). The risk of resource loss can harm employees' well-being and increase burnout (Arnold & Walsh, 2015; Halbesleben, 2006), job dissatisfaction, and turnover intention (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). Customer-facing employees are more prone to emotional exhaustion because of frequent interaction with customers (Karatepe, 2015). Customer incivility increases employee stress levels (Boukis et al., 2020; Porath & Pearson, 2013; Sliter et al., 2010), emotional exhaustion (Alola et al., 2019; Dorman & Zapf, 2004; Sliter et al., 2010; Karatepe et al.,, 2009; Kim & Qu, 2019; Yang & Lau, 2019), and burnout levels of hotel employees (Bani-Melhem, 2020; Kim & Qu, 2019; Yang & Lau, 2019). It impairs performance (Cheng et al., 2020; Porath & Pearson, 2013; Liu et al., 2019), reduces job satisfaction (Kim et al., 2014), and encourages job withdrawal in hotel employees (Boukis et al., 2020; Torres et al., 2017), and turnover intention (Porath & Pearson, 2013; Rahim & Cosby, 2016; Lim et al., 2008; Wilson & Holmvall, 2013).

2.2. Employee incivility

Anderson and Pearson (1999) define employee incivility is "low intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect". Behaviors include shouting, not saying please or thank you, ignoring, excluding, or vilifying co-workers. It can also be seen as bullying (Yagil et

al., 2008), social undermining (Yoo, 2013), workplace aggression (Goussinsky, 2012), and abusive supervision (Madupalli & Poddar, 2014). Bullying refers to situations that constantly expose an employee to negative behavior (harassment, offensive words, teasing, social exclusion, etc.) from other employees. Social undermining interferes with the skill to establish and sustain positive interpersonal relationships, work-related achievement, and positive fame (Hur et al., 2014). Employee incivility has a spillover effect on third parties observing rude behavior among co-workers, which ultimately impairs both routine and creative tasks (Porath & Erez, 2009). Employee incivility increases job stress (Lim & Cortina, 2005), decreases job satisfaction (Chen & Wang, 2019; Cortina et al., 2001), reduces cooperation, impairs performance (Porath & Erez, 2007), increases turnover intention (Laschinger et al., 2009; Chen & Wang, 2019), and increases employee depersonalization (De Clercq et al., 2020; Rahim & Cosby, 2016).

2.3. Forgiveness

Forgiveness includes tolerating mistakes, showing understanding of problems, and not holding grudges (Cox, 2008; Cox, 2011). This requires reducing negativity in relationships, letting go of negative emotions, and avoiding hostile behaviors (Balaji et al., 2020). Forgiveness can reflect both personal traits and organizational climate, which can be used to solve interpersonal conflicts (Fehr & Gelfand, 2012). Bies et al. (2016) define organizational forgiveness as eliminating anger, resentment, and vengefulness against the person who harmed while strengthening positive feelings and thoughts towards that person. A climate of forgiveness includes avoiding blame, anger, and hatred towards the person who made the mistake while generally adopting a tolerant approach to mistakes (Cox, 2008). The perceived forgiveness climate refers to employees' beliefs about the organization's willingness to accept that violations, failures, and mistakes occur in the workplace (Guchait & Back, 2016). It also includes the perception that the organization will not hold a grudge against employees who make mistakes but instead will try to solve problems. The climate of forgiveness is a powerful organizational factor promoting employee forgiveness and positive work outcomes (Bennett & Cox, 2014).

When customers experience service failures, they consider the loss of financial and social benefits when deciding whether to terminate their relationship with the service provider. Thus, they may not abandon that provider, despite their regret, if switching providers would be costlier than the service failure (Haj-Salem & Chebat, 2014). The same reasoning can be applied to employees. That is, employees' organizational commitment, fear of losing their job, and the influence of their social environment can increase forgiveness behavior regarding other employees and customers. Forgiveness can mean condoning, forgetting, or denying the harmful actions (Coyle & Enright, 1997). This changes the employee's motivations away from blame and avoidance towards benevolence and pro-sociality (Fehr & Gelfand, 2012). Following others' mistakes by others, people can experience sadness, resentment, vengefulness, and withdrawal. However, they may become more likely to forgive in order to develop and maintain workplace relationships (McCullough, 2000). Forgiveness may be greater in individuals who are better at empathizing, and in employees who wish to avoid non-compliance (McCullough, 2000). High levels of forgiveness can increase job satisfaction in hotel employees (Cox, 2011; Guchait et al., 2016; McCullough, 2000), employees' learning behaviors (Guchait et al., 2016), well-being (McCullough, 2000), organizational citizenship behaviors (Cox, 2011), and cooperation (Balaji et al., 2020), and reduce turnover intention (Guchait et al., 2016; McCullough, 2000).

2.4. Depersonalization

Maslach and Jackson (1981) conceptualize depersonalization as "one of the three prominent syndromes of burnout alongside emotional exhaustion and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment". Burnout begins with emotional exhaustion and progresses to depersonalization (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Depersonalization refers to callous, negative, or detached attitudes (Söderlund, 2017). It can be triggered in workplaces by psychological pressure from poor interpersonal interactions (Lee et al., 2018). Employees who experience apathy towards customers and co-workers due to depersonalization might become alienated (Karatepe & Uludağ, 2008). In particular, customer incivility can make employees become emotionally distant and desensitized (Baker & Kim, 2021). This depersonalization leads to problems in relations with customers (Leiter & Maslach, 1988), such as feeling incompetent and inadequate in their work (Akgunduz, Bardakoglu & Alkan, 2015).

Hobfoll (1989) states that people seek to acquire, build, and preserve resources. Therefore, they experience psychological stress if these resources are threatened or cannot be replenished despite significant effort. This then makes them feel tired, and exhausted of energy and resources. Employees who work to avoid losing scarce resources, or feel threatened with losing them, tend to view customers impersonally. Hence, they may distance themselves by behaving insensitively or cynically (Karatepe & Aleshinloye, 2009). It is important to manage the

desensitized responses of service workers because depersonalization weakens employees' motivation and performance, which in turn damages service delivery and customers' service quality perceptions (Stock & Hoyer, 2005). In response to high levels of emotional exhaustion, employees self-isolate, decrease their emotional and cognitive involvement, and treat customers as objects (Lee et al., 2018). For hotel employees, depersonalization encourages negative attitudes (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993) and discourages a customer orientation (Lee et al., 2018), which impairs job performance (Baker & Kim, 2021; Karatepe & Uludağ, 2008) and service quality (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993).

3. Hypotheses development

3.1. Customer incivility and depersonalization

According to the job demand-resources framework, employees experience stress, leading to physical and psychological effects, due to job demands and required resources. Job demands include sustained physical or psychological effort in various dimensions, including physical, psychological, social, and organizational (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). Employees who constantly communicate and interact with customers due to their job function are likely to face customer incivility when they cannot meet customer demands, customers are dissatisfied with the service, or there are insufficient business resources. Even when the service is fully provided, customers may be unwittingly rude (e.g., by not saying please, thank you, etc.).

As outlined earlier, cognitive appraisal theory would suggest that employees evaluate whether such customer encounters are good or not (Folkman et al., 1986). Following exposure to rude customer behavior, employees may desensitize themselves by assuming that future customers will behave similarly (Arnold & Walsh, 2015). Conservation of resources theory would suggest that the risk of losing valuable resources causes stress for employees (Hobfoll, 2011). This could encourage withdrawal behaviors due to the perception that employees have some resources that they can lose as a result of constantly being rude to customers (Boukis et al., 2020; Torres et al., 2017). Indeed, customer incivility increases employee stress (Boukis et al., 2020; Porath & Pearson, 2013; Sliter et al., 2010), emotional exhaustion (Alola et al., 2019; Dorman & Zapf, 2004; Sliter et al., 2010; Karatepe et al., 2009; Kim & Qu, 2019; Yang & Lau, 2019), depersonalization (Baker & Kim, 2021), and burnout of hotel employees (Bani-Melhem, 2020; Kim & Qu, 2019; Yang & Lau, 2019). Interpreting previous research findings in terms of the job demand-resources framework, cognitive appraisal theory, and conservation of resources theory suggests the following hypothesis:

H$_1$: Customer incivility increases hotel employees' depersonalization.

3.2. Employee incivility and depersonalization

According to social information processing theory, employee perceptions of their work environment are influenced both by their personal judgments and social factors, such as cues from colleagues. Employees improve organizational climate perceptions while team members make judgments about their own and their colleagues' experiences in the work environment. Employees who are exposed to incivility from colleagues may therefore experience negative outcomes, individually and organizationally (Hur et al., 2014). Employee incivility reduces workplace cooperation and impairs performance (Porath & Erez, 2007). It increases job stress (Lim & Cortina, 2005), decreases job satisfaction (Cortina et al., 2001), increases employee depersonalization (De Clercq et al., 2020; Rahim & Cosby, 2016), and increases turnover intention (Lim et al., 2008). Interpreting previous research findings in terms of social information processing theory suggests the following hypothesis:

H$_2$: Employee incivility increases hotel employees' depersonalization.

3.3. Forgiveness and depersonalization

Social identity theory explains how people belong to different groups based on gender, race, educational and cultural conditions, etc. Group membership can increase forgiveness (Bhattacharya et al., 1995). Social identity derives from a sense of belonging to a group to the extent that a new individual identifies with it. Social identification results in organizational identification when organizational members identify themselves in terms of organizational membership (Bhattacharya, et al., 1995). Forgiveness is based on forgiving mistakes, ignoring negative behaviors, and being able to work at the same level despite problems (Cox, 2008; Cox, 2011). Forgiveness is an important factor in reducing individual and organizational negative outcomes (Bennett & Cox, 2014). High levels of forgiveness in hotel employees can increase job satisfaction (Cox, 2011; Guchait et al., 2016; McCullough, 2000), learning behaviors (Guchait et al., 2016), well-being (McCullough, 2000), organizational citizenship

behaviors (Cox, 2011), and cooperation (Balaji et al., 2020) while reducing turnover intention (Guchait et al., 2016; McCullough, 2000). Interpreting previous research findings in terms of social identity theory suggests the following hypothesis:

H₃: Forgiveness decreases hotel employees' depersonalization

3.4. Mediating effect of forgiveness

Hotel staff, especially frontline employees and those who lack power commonly suffer from customer incivility (Sliter et al., 2010), including unintentional rudeness (Cheng et al., 2020). Customer incivility, whether verbal or non-verbal, may cause employee depersonalization so that they view customers as objects (Lee et al., 2018). It also increases emotional exhaustion (Alola et al., 2019; Dorman & Zapf, 2004; Sliter et al., 2010; Karatepe et al., 2009; Kim & Qu, 2019; Yang & Lau, 2019), and burnout of hotel employees (Bani-Melhem, 2020; Kim & Qu, 2019; Yang & Lau, 2019). The forgiveness climate is an important factor in reducing burnout. Forgiveness, both organizationally and individually, allows employees exposed to customer incivility to ignore it and focus on their work. This in turn reduces depersonalization of hotel employees. These findings suggest the following hypothesis:

H₄ₐ: Forgiveness mediates the relationship between customer incivility and depersonalization

Hotel employees are also subject to rudeness from colleagues. For the victims, employee incivility can cause withdrawal, decrease job satisfaction, impair performance, and promote depersonalization (De Clercq et al., 2020; Rahim & Cosby, 2016). However, the depersonalization effect of employee incivility may be reduced by forgiveness. These findings suggest the following hypothesis:

H₄ᵦ: Forgiveness mediates the relationship between employee incivility and depersonalization

4. Method

4.1. Sample and data collection

The study population was employees at 5-star hotels in Antalya, Turkey. Given that there are over 100,000 employees at such hotels, convenience sampling was used to target at least 384 respondents (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). The questionnaire form was sent electronically to the relevant hotel managers. Data collection was conducted between October 2021 and February 2022. A total of 352 completed questionnaire forms were returned. Table 1 shows the respondents' profile.

Table 1. Respondents' profile

Gender	n	%	Education	n	%
Female	117	33.2	High School	57	16.2
Male	235	66.8	College	92	26.1
Age			University	157	44.6
18-29 years	188	53.4	Master or PhD	46	13.1
30-39 years	137	38.9	Experience in the organization		
40 years and above	27	7.7	0-365 days	72	20.5
Work Status			366 days and above	280	79.5
Seasonal	72	20.5	Departments		
Full-time	280	79.5	F&B	114	32.4
Business Life			Front Office	103	29.3
0-10 years	279	79.3	HK	42	11.9
More than 10 years	73	20.7	Others	93	26.4

4.2. Measures

Customer incivility was measured with six items from Alola et al. (2019) (α = 0.88). Sample items include "Customer took out their anger on me" and "Customers showed that they are irritated or impatient". Employee incivility was measured with seven items from Cortina et al. (2001). Forgiveness was measured with three items from Balaji et al. (2020) (α = 0.88). A sample item is "Following incivility incidents, I forgave the customer who was uncivil to me". Depersonalization was measured with five items from Akgunduz, Bardakoglu and Alkan, 2015 (α = 0.84). Sample items include "I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally" and "I do not really care what happens to some customers". A five-point Likert-type scale was used for all items, ranging from 1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 5 = "Strongly Agree". All items were first translated from English to Turkish before being back-translated into English with the help of academic experts to ensure the quality of the questionnaire (Brislin, 1970).

5. Findings

Explanatory factor analysis was performed before confirmatory factor analysis. The data was first examined to ensure that the required assumptions were met, specifically that the item factor loadings were greater than 0.50, that loadings were at least 0.10 different if an item loaded on two dimensions, and that each dimension had at least three items. The explanatory factor analysis indicated that one item in the depersonalization scale should be excluded due to insufficient factor loading. For the confirmatory factor analysis, the standardized values of the expressions had to be greater than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2006), t-values greater than ±1.96 (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004: 70), average variance extracted (AVE) values greater than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010: 709), and composite reliability (CR) values greater than 0.70 (Hair et al., 2010: 710). All the standardized values, t-values, AVE, and CR values exceeded these thresholds (see Table 2). The normalized Chi-square value was 3.40, RMSEA was 0.080, AGFI was 0.84, GFI was 0.88, and SRMR was 0.060.

Table 2. Overall reliability of the constructs and factor loadings of indicators

Scale Items	Standardized loading	t-value	Factor loading	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha/ CR
Customer incivility				0.61	0.90/0.90
CI1	0.79	17.13	.827		
CI2	0.79	17.34	.828		
CI3	0.79	17.13	.826		
CI4	0.74	15.71	.796		
CI5	0.80	17.41	.831		
CI6	0.78	16.89	.823		
Employee incivility				0.66	0.93/0.93
EI1	0.83	18.64	.849		
EI2	0.80	17.88	.835		
EI3	0.85	19.49	.867		
EI4	0.78	16.99	.818		
EI5	0.82	18.38	.848		
EI6	0.81	18.03	.837		
EI7	0.80	17.78	.834		
Forgiveness				0.74	0.90/0.90
FG1	0.88	20.16	.917		
FG2	0.85	19.15	.906		
FG3	0.85	19.10	.905		
Depersonalization				0.58	0.85/0.85
DP2	0.70	14.26	.819		
DP3	0.81	17.47	.832		
DP4	0.72	14.79	.833		
DP5	0.81	17.52	.828		
Chi-Square: 557.91; df: 164; Normalized Chi-Square: 3.40; RMSEA: 0.080; AGFI: 0.84; GFI: 0.88; CFI: 0.97; SRMR: 0.060					

Correlations between the variables ranged from -0.320 to 0.613 (see Table 3). Customer incivility correlated positively with employee incivility (r=0.263; p<0.01) and depersonalization (r=0.369; p<0.01) and negatively with forgiveness (r= -0.320; p<0.01); employee incivility correlates positively with depersonalization (r=0.613; p<0.01) and negatively with forgiveness (r= -0.315; p<0.01).

Table 3. Correlations

n=352	Correlation			
	1	2	3	4
Customer incivility	1.000			
Employee incivility	.263**	1.000		
Forgiveness	-.320**	-.315**	1.000	
Depersonalization	.369**	.613**	-.529**	1.000

** *p<0.01*

Table 4 presents the discriminant validity results, which indicate how much the model factors are distinct from each other (Hair et al., 2010: 710). The table shows that, as required for discriminant validity, the AVE values are greater than the square of the correlation coefficients between them (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 4. Discriminant validity

Construct		1	2	3	4
1	Customer incivility	(.61)			
2	Employee incivility	.08**	(.66)		
3	Forgiveness	.13**	.12**	(.74)	
4	Depersonalization	.20**	.43**	.41**	(.58)

*"The AVE values are presented in the diagonal while the off-diagonal values are the squared correlation coefficients of each factor with another. **denotes a significance level of 0.01"*

Path analysis was conducted to test the hypotheses using structural equation modeling. This showed significant positive effects between customer incivility and depersonalization (β= 0.44; p≤0.01), and between employee incivility and depersonalization (β= 0.68; p≤0.01), whereas forgiveness had a significant negative effect with depersonalization (β= -0.63; p≤0.01). Thus, H1, H2, and H3 were supported, respectively.

Table 5. Path coefficients of structural model

			Standardized path coefficients	t-value
Customer incivility	⟶	Forgiveness	-.38	-6.28
Employee incivility	⟶	Forgiveness	-.37	-6.29
Customer incivility	⟶	Depersonalization	.44	7.43
Employee incivility	⟶	Depersonalization	.68	10.69
Forgiveness	⟶	Depersonalization	-.63	-9.88

The four necessary conditions for mediation effects suggested by Baron and Kenney (1986) were all met in the present study. Customer incivility affected depersonalization directly (β=0.16) and indirectly through forgiveness (β=-0.28*-0.38=0.11). Since the indirect effect (β=0.11) was weaker than the direct effect (β=0.16), this indicated that forgiveness only partially mediated the effect of customer incivility on depersonalization. Thus, H4a was partially supported. Similarly, employee incivility affected depersonalization directly (β=0.47) and indirectly through forgiveness (β=-0.26*-0.38=0.10). Since the indirect effect (β=0.10) was weaker than the direct effect (β=0.47), this indicated that forgiveness only partially mediated the effect of employee incivility on depersonalization. Thus, H4b was partially supported.

Figure 1. Path results of structural model
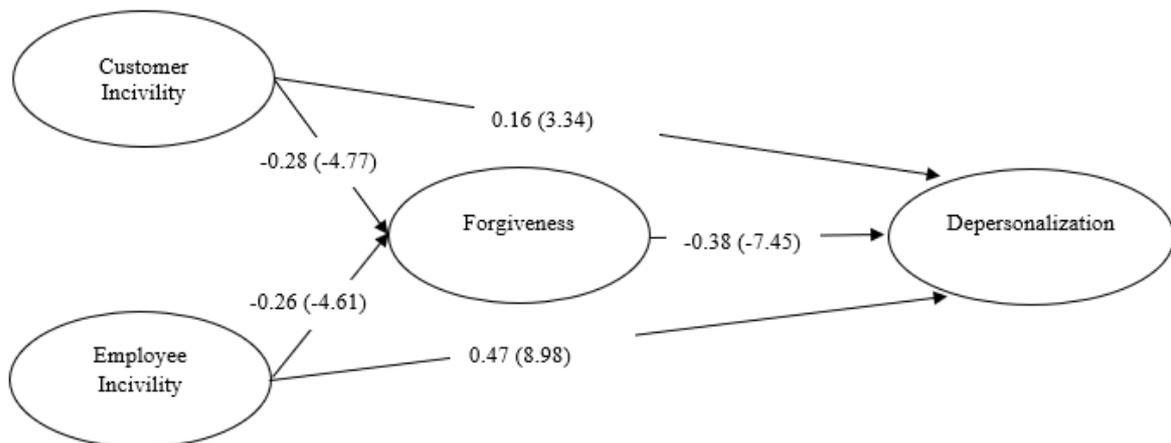
6. Conclusions

This study of hotel employees investigated the mediating role of forgiveness in the effects of customer incivility and employee incivility on employee depersonalization. The first hypotheses, that customer incivility and employee incivility increase depersonalization, were both supported. The third hypothesis, that forgiveness decreases depersonalization, was supported. The fourth hypotheses (a and b) that forgiveness mediates the direct effects of customer incivility and employee incivility on depersonalization were both partially supported.

6.1. Theoretical contributions

Customer incivility, which hotel employees frequently encounter, can cause negative outcomes for both the individual and the organization. The finding that customer incivility increases employee depersonalization

supports previous studies (Bani-Melhem, 2020; Kim & Qu, 2019; Yang & Lau, 2019). Customer incivility, whether physical, verbal, or nonverbal, can increase employee stress levels (Boukis et al., 2020; Porath & Pearson, 2013; Sliter et al., 2010). Such employees are more likely to exhibit negative behaviors towards both customers and colleagues (Walker et al., 2014). This finding can be explained by conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 2011). When hotel employees perceive the risk of losing valued resources, their stress levels increase, leading to negative outcomes, such as damage to their well-being (Arnold & Walsh, 2015; Halbesleben, 2006). Employees who cannot cope with customer incivility perform worse (Cheng et al., 2020; Porath & Pearson, 2013; Liu et al., 2019) and have reduced job satisfaction (Kim et al., 2014), increased emotional burnout (Alola et al., 2019; Dorman & Zapf, 2004; Sliter et al., 2010; Karatepe et al., 2009; Kim & Qu, 2019; Yang & Lau, 2019), and ultimately depersonalization (Baker & Kim, 2021). Depersonalization encourages employees to see customers as objects (Lee et al., 2018), which negatively affects the employee's workplace and social life. Depersonalized employees may thus face more family problems (Sliter et al., 2010).

Hotel employees are also exposed to co-worker incivility. The present study showed that employee incivility increases employee depersonalization, which supports previous findings (De Clercq et al., 2020; Rahim & Cosby, 2016). Colleagues' unkind behaviors, social exclusion and ignoring, physical attacks, and verbal or nonverbal negative reactions may cause depersonalization of the victims, leading to negative individual and organizational outcomes (Hur et al., 2014). Employee incivility increases the stress levels of hotel employees (Lim & Cortina, 2005), impairs performance (Porath & Erez, 2007), and reduces job satisfaction (Cortina et al., 2001). Constant employee incivility also increases depersonalization (De Clercq et al., 2020; Rahim & Cosby, 2016). These findings can be explained by social information processing theory. Employees who are constantly exposed to employee incivility expect this situation to continue. This weakens their organizational commitment and encourages depersonalization. Employee incivility also affects third parties who witness rudeness between co-workers, which damages both routine and creative tasks (Porath & Erez, 2009). Thus, managers have a responsibility to take action (Han et al., 2020).

Because depersonalization of impairs hotel employee performance (Baker & Kim, 2021; Karatepe & Uludağ, 2008), service quality declines (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). The greater the depersonalization, the more negative attitudes are likely to increase (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993), leading to a loss of customers, reduced profitability, and lack of competitive advantage. Given these effects, the tendency of employees to forgive is an important ameliorating factor because, by preventing depersonalization, it can prevent negative workplace behaviors. This can be explained by the social identity theory (Bhattacharya, et al., 1995). Employees who feel organizational commitment will be more likely to forgive uncivil colleagues and customers, thereby reducing negative attitudes and behaviors, and depersonalization (Cox, 2008; Cox, 2011). The present study showed that forgiveness partially mediates the direct effects of customer and employee incivility on depersonalization. Thus, hotels can reduce the negative effects of incivility if their employees have a high tendency to forgive despite constantly encountering it (Bennett & Cox, 2014). Given that forgiveness is only a partial mediator, there may be other mediating factors, such as the organizational forgiveness climate (Cox, 2011), cooperation (Balaji et al., 2020), and manager and employee support (Han et al., 2020).

6.2. Practical implications

Employees are one of the most important factors enabling hotel businesses to provide a high-quality service, prevent loss of customers, and maintain profitability. Due to the high level of communication and interaction in tourism, which is a labor-intensive sector, employees are likely to be disrespected by customers and colleagues. As depersonalization increases as a result of incivility, negative attitudes and behaviors will increase. To prevent these negative attitudes and behaviors in employees, colleagues and managers have important responsibilities. One main factor that increases customer incivility is cultural differences (Pearson, Andersson & Porath, 2000). Therefore, employees should be aware of different cultural characteristics. As well as the tendency to forgive, employees should hide their emotions and reactions, remain rational and calm, and also calm the customer (Aslan & Kozak, 2012). Achieving this requires support from colleagues (Han et al., 2020; Sliter et al., 2012) and managers (Han et al., 2020). Another important factor is appropriate employee education programs (Van Jaarsweld et al., 2010). In addition to the trainings to be given by the human resources managers on the communication of the employees with their colleagues and customers, it is also important to receive training services by making use of outsourcing. In cases of incivility, managers can give employees a break as a temporary solution to reduce negative behaviors (Van Jaarsweld et al., 2010). In addition to organizing social activities in order to strengthen the communication between employees can also be a facilitator in reducing incivility. Forgiveness of rudeness can reduce insensitivity and it is important to offer appropriate solutions and support for the affected employee (Yagil, 2008).

6.3. Limitations and future research

The most important limitation of this study was the sampling method. Due to limited financial and human resources, it was impossible to reach all individuals in the study population, so convenience sampling was preferred. However, this method may restrict generalizability of the results. Future studies using quota sampling could produce more generalizable results. This study only sampled hotels in Antalya, Turkey, so future studies could produce comparative data from different regions and countries. Finally, future studies could also explore the potential mediating roles of other variables on the relationship between incivility and depersonalization, such as employee stress, organizational forgiveness climate, workplace cooperation, and manager and employee support.

Author contribution statements

The author contributed all to the research's design and implementation, the analysis of the results, and the writing of the manuscript.

Disclosure statement

The author reported no potential conflict of interest.

Ethics committee approval

This research has Ethics Committee Approval from Isparta University of Applied Sciences with 29/11/2021 date and 75/1 number. All responsibility belongs to the researcher. All parties were involved in the research of his own free will.

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