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Exploring Customer Incivility in the Service Sector: A Systematic Review and Roadmap for Future Research

Maqsood H. Bhutto¹  | Denitsa Dineva²  | Joel Mero¹ | Heikki Karjaluo¹

¹University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland | ²Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK

Correspondence: Maqsood H. Bhutto (maqsood.h.bhutto@jyu.fi)

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ABSTRACT

Customer incivility (CI) increasingly shapes service work, from frontline hospitality staff to digital agents in retail and banking. This study applies the PRISMA protocol to review 112 empirical articles published between 2009 and 2025. Using the Theory, Context, Characteristics and Methods (TCCM) framework, we synthesise key findings and highlight the dominant themes in CI research. Our analysis identifies under-explored areas, including digital CI dynamics and cultural influences and proposes a framework to guide future inquiry. We set out a research agenda across five themes: theory development, cultural comparisons, digitalisation, intersectionality and intervention design. Conceptually, the review advances the theorisation of CI by clarifying boundaries and neglecting dynamics. Methodologically, it demonstrates the value of TCCM for structuring evidence and systematic analysis. Practically, it translates insights into strategies such as de-escalation training, platform-level moderation and organisational policies that reduce reliance on individual resilience.

1 | Introduction

The service sector dominates contemporary economies and relies heavily on frontline customer–employee interactions to deliver value and maintain organisational legitimacy (European Commission 2024; Statista 2025). These encounters are consequential not only for immediate service outcomes but also for longer-term customer perceptions, employee well-being and brand evaluations (Barari et al. 2021; Fernandes et al. 2018). Yet, despite their centrality, service interactions are increasingly characterised by behavioural norm violations that disrupt relational exchange and undermine service functioning.

A prominent but insufficiently synthesised form of such behaviour is customer incivility (CI). CI refers to low-intensity deviant behaviour enacted by customers that violates norms of mutual respect and carries the ambiguous intent to harm service employees (Sliter et al. 2010). Typical manifestations include

dismissive conduct, verbal disrespect and subtle intimidation. Although less overt than aggression or abuse, such behaviours produce cumulative and situational effects that are theoretically and practically consequential. CI is therefore conceptually distinct from related constructs (for an overview see Table 1), yet remains empirically entangled with them in existing research.

The relevance of CI has further intensified as service delivery has expanded into digital and hybrid environments. Online platforms introduce anonymity, public visibility and algorithmic amplification, which can magnify uncivil conduct and extend its reach beyond the immediate service dyad (Bacile et al. 2025; Boukis et al. 2020; Ciuchita et al. 2022; Fujii 2025). Despite this shift, CI research remains uneven. Conceptualisations vary across studies, empirical attention is disproportionately anchored in offline contexts and methodological approaches are fragmented. As a result, theoretical boundaries remain blurred, and cumulative knowledge development is constrained.

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TABLE 1 | Distinct incivility forms and contexts.

Construct	Description	Context	Distinctive features
Customer incivility	Low-intensity deviant behaviour by customers that violates norms of respect, with ambiguous intent to harm (Sliter et al. 2010)	Customer-employee service interactions (offline and online)	External origin, high frequency, anonymity and limited employee recourse
Workplace incivility	Low-intensity deviant behaviour violating norms of respect in the workplace (Andersson and Pearson 1999)	Employee-employee interactions in the workplace	Internal, dyadic or hierarchical interactions
Bullying	Repeated, deliberate hostile acts intended to harm or intimidate (Cortina et al. 2013; Schilpzand et al. 2016)	Employee-employee interactions in the workplace	Sustained targeting, escalation, power imbalance
Rudeness/disrespect	Breach of etiquette or politeness (Giumetti et al. 2013; Im et al. 2024; Porath and Pearson 2013)	Broad person-to-person interpersonal settings	Can overlap with CI but not specific to service roles

Moreover, existing reviews have advanced understanding of dysfunctional customer behaviour, yet they typically isolate specific behaviours, prioritise employee-level outcomes or focus on traditional service settings such as hospitality, healthcare and banking (Arasli et al. 2018; Cortina et al. 2017; Kim and Qu 2019b). Engagement with digitally mediated service interactions remains limited, despite growing evidence that platform dynamics, customer visibility and organisational responses shape how incivility emerges and escalates (Lages et al. 2023). Consequently, there is no integrative account that clarifies what CI is, how it has been studied and how it operates across contemporary service ecosystems.

To address these three gaps, our review is guided by four research questions that structure the synthesis and foreground its contribution. First, how has CI been conceptualised and operationalised in prior research, and how does it differ from adjacent constructs? Second, what theoretical perspectives, service contexts, behavioural characteristics and methodological approaches dominate the existing CI literature? Third, what substantive and methodological gaps limit cumulative knowledge development and signal priority areas for future research? Fourth, what guidance does the literature provide for organisations seeking to mitigate CI across both traditional and digital service environments?

Importantly, the need for such a synthesis is highlighted by CI's documented consequences. At the employee level, CI undermines performance, creativity and problem-solving while contributing to burnout, absenteeism and turnover intentions (Bani-Melhem et al. 2020, 2022; Hur et al. 2016; Pu et al. 2022). At the organisational level, stress-related costs linked in part to incivility represent a substantial financial burden (The American Institute of Stress 2023; Hassard et al. 2018). Beyond the focal interaction, CI shapes bystander perceptions, discourages constructive customer engagement and heightens reputational risk, particularly in visible digital environments (Wolter et al. 2023). Despite these effects, organisational responses remain largely reactive and employee-centred, with limited attention to systemic and contextual drivers (Kellner et al. 2019).

Accordingly, this review adopts the Theory, Context, Constructs, Methods (TCCM) framework (Basu et al. 2022; Billore and Anisimova 2021; Chakma et al. 2021; De Keyser and Kunz 2022; Hassan et al. 2022; Khlystova et al. 2022; Paul 2025; Paul et al. 2024; Paul and Rosado-Serrano 2019; Roy Bhattacharjee et al. 2022) to organise and evaluate the CI literature across theories, contexts, characteristics and methods. This approach enables conceptual clarification, exposes patterns of concentration and omission and supports a structured assessment of how CI unfolds across offline and digital service ecosystems. Through this synthesis, the review clarifies the conceptual boundaries of CI, evaluates how methodological choices have shaped the field, extends contextual coverage and derives implications for organisational policy and service design. The remainder of the paper outlines the conceptual foundations of CI, details the review methodology, synthesises findings using the TCCM framework and discusses implications for theory and practice.

2 | Conceptual Underpinnings and Recent Debates on CI

Academic attention to CI has grown across the disciplines (Lages et al. 2023). To understand its significance, we begin by situating it within the broader incivility literature, then focus on the unique dynamics of the service sector as the context in which these behaviours unfold, and finally review previous attempts to synthesise knowledge in this domain.

2.1 | Workplace Incivility and CI

Incivility is a broad category of interpersonal behaviour characterised by norm violations that disrupt social interaction without constituting overt aggression. Foundational work conceptualises incivility as ambiguous in intent, episodic rather than sustained and often deniable by the actor (Andersson and Pearson 1999). These features distinguish incivility from aggression and abuse, which are defined by explicit hostility or harm intent.

Within organisational research, incivility has been theorised as a process rather than a single act. Uncivil encounters can trigger spirals of reciprocation, emotional depletion and norm erosion over time (Andersson and Pearson 1999; Schilpzand et al. 2016).

Most empirical work has examined incivility within bounded organisational relationships, typically among co-workers or between supervisors and subordinates. In these settings, actors are embedded within shared norms, repeated interactions and formal governance structures.

Customer incivility, in contrast, is not simply incivility enacted by a different actor: it represents a structurally distinct form of incivility shaped by the service relationship. CI refers to low-intensity norm-violating behaviour directed by customers towards frontline employees within service encounters, where role expectations explicitly constrain employee responses (Sliter et al. 2010).

In particular, three features differentiate CI from general workplace incivility. First, CI is externally generated. The actor is not organisationally embedded and therefore is insulated from internal sanctions, performance evaluations or long-term relational consequences. Second, CI unfolds under asymmetric role expectations. Employees are normatively required to remain polite, emotionally regulated and service-oriented, even when faced with disrespect (Grandey et al. 2004). Third, CI is situationally recurrent rather than relationally sustained. Employees are exposed to repeated uncivil acts across different customers, rather than ongoing hostility from the same individual.

These features produce different behavioural logic. While workplace incivility often escalates through reciprocal exchanges, CI typically involves one-sided norm violations with limited opportunities for correction or confrontation. This distinguishes CI from bullying, which involves deliberate, repeated targeting and stable power asymmetries and from rudeness or disrespect, which lack role specificity and organisational constraints (Cortina et al. 2013; Schilpzand et al. 2016). Table 1 summarises these distinctions, highlighting that CI is defined not only by behavioural intensity but also by its external origin, role-based constraints and structural asymmetry.

2.2 | CI in Digital and Hybrid Service Environments

While early CI research focused predominantly on face-to-face service encounters, contemporary service interactions increasingly occur in digital and hybrid settings. In these environments, CI unfolds through interactions that are public, asynchronous and persistent rather than private and temporally bounded. These characteristics do not merely intensify incivility but alter its form, visibility and organisational implications.

Platform affordances play a central role in this transformation. Interactivity, defined as the degree to which platforms enable rapid and reciprocal exchanges, determines the speed and reciprocity with which uncivil exchanges escalate. Visibility,

referring to the extent to which interactions are observable to third parties, exposes CI to bystanders, enabling audience effects, social validation and reputational spillovers beyond the focal employee–customer dyad. Anonymity, understood as the separation of online behaviour from identifiable personal identity, weakens identity-based accountability, reducing self-regulation and increasing the likelihood of norm violations. Persistence, meaning the temporal durability of content once posted, allows uncivil content to remain accessible over time, extending its psychological and reputational impact beyond the original interaction (Ciuchita et al. 2022).

Empirical studies show that these affordances reshape how CI is perceived and evaluated. Online CI influences perceptions of service climate among both employees and observers (Bacile 2020), reduces customer engagement with brands through vicarious exposure (Wolter et al. 2023) and alters fairness and quality judgments in technology-mediated encounters (Al-Badawi et al. 2025). These effects emerge not simply because CI is more visible online, but because platform structures transform its social meaning and diffusion.

This transformation can be further theoretically explained through Social Presence Theory and the Online Disinhibition Effect. Lower levels of social presence in text-based or asynchronous channels reduce human immediacy cues, facilitating deindividuation (Short et al. 1976; Gunawardena 1995). The Online Disinhibition Effect further explains how dissociative anonymity, invisibility, asynchronicity and minimisation of authority lower behavioural restraints and encourage uncivil expressions (Suler 2004; Lapidot-Lefler and Barak 2015). Together, these frameworks suggest that identical customer frustrations may be regulated in face-to-face encounters but expressed as incivility in digital contexts.

Importantly, these mechanisms imply qualitative differences rather than simple amplification. Digital CI introduces bystander dynamics, algorithmic visibility and temporal persistence that reshape organisational risk, employee exposure and service recovery challenges. CI in digital and hybrid settings should therefore be treated as a structurally distinct phenomenon rather than an online extension of offline behaviour.

2.3 | The Service Sector

Since the service sector is inherently interpersonal and customer-facing, CI is particularly apparent in this sector (Pressey and Harris 2024). Economies where services contribute more than 60% of GDP (Statista 2025) require frontline workers to remain composed and empathetic while enduring aggression, sarcasm and ridicule. Repeated exposure to such behaviour contributes to emotional exhaustion, burnout and turnover (Chang and Lyons 2012; Hur et al. 2015, 2016; Sliter and Jones 2016; Sliter et al. 2012). CI has therefore become increasingly salient as a structural feature of service work rather than an episodic disruption.

To clarify why the service sector constitutes a fertile context for CI, this review organised prior research around three inter-related subthemes: sectoral diversity, hybrid touchpoints and

contagion across actors. Subthemes explain where CI occurs, how it travels across service environments and how its effects extend beyond the immediate employee–customer dyad.

2.3.1 | Sectoral Diversity

Service industries span finance, hospitality, healthcare, education and transportation, all of which depend on direct human interaction to produce value (Bitner and Brown 2008). While CI forms and triggers vary across sectors, frontline vulnerability is a shared condition. Sector-specific norms shape both the prevalence and expression of incivility. For example, expectations of difference in hospitality or authority in healthcare influence how customer frustration is enacted and managed. Yet across sectors, the enduring ‘customer is always right’ ethos reinforces power asymmetries, limiting employee recourse and normalising exposure to incivility.

Such diversity highlights the need for context-sensitive theory. Much of the existing CI literature remains concentrated in hospitality and Western service settings, leaving other sectors and cultural contexts underexplored (e.g., Chaudhuri et al. 2023; Henkel et al. 2017). Examining sectors such as informal transportation or public services in emerging markets may reveal moderators related to cultural norms, institutional authority and service expectations that are absent from more established contexts (Shao and Skarlicki 2014; Loh et al. 2022). Sectoral diversity, therefore, informs the contextual mapping and boundary conditions identified in the latest synthesis.

2.3.2 | Hybrid Touchpoints

Sectoral variation alone does not capture how CI unfolds in contemporary service systems. Increasingly, service encounters span physical and digital environments, creating hybrid touchpoints that connect offline interactions with online platforms. Social media, live chat and review forums introduce asynchronicity, heightened visibility and exposure to public scrutiny, which lower behavioural constraints and facilitate uncivil conduct through disinhibition mechanisms (Guo et al. 2020; Dineva et al. 2023).

Hybridisation reshapes CI by allowing offline incidents to migrate online and acquire persistence and scale. An in-person complaint may escalate into a widely shared digital critique, amplifying conflict and constraining organisational response options. At the same time, frontline employees are often required to address hostile demands in real time, without the organisational buffers available in face-to-face settings (McColl-Kennedy et al. 2011; Wu et al. 2017). These cross-channel spillovers are frequently overlooked in siloed studies, yet they are central to understanding CI in integrated service ecosystems. Accordingly, hybrid touchpoints constitute a distinct contextual dimension that feeds directly into the research agenda.

2.3.3 | Contagion Across Actors

Hybrid and digital environments also expand the scope of CI beyond the dyadic employee–customer exchanges. Increased

visibility blurs the boundaries between customer-to-employee and customer-to-customer interactions, making CI more performative and socially contagious (Bacile 2020). A single uncivil act can reverberate among bystanders, shaping perceptions of service climate, influencing bystander empathy and affecting organisational reputation (Bacile et al. 2018; Dineva and Breitsohl 2022).

This contagion extends CI impact to non-victims through emotional spillovers and reduced willingness to engage constructively. Although such multi-actor dynamics intensify organisational risks, including reputational damage and reduced employee creativity, they remain weakly integrated into existing CI characteristics mappings. Recognising contagion across actors is therefore essential for moving beyond dyadic models and for developing a more holistic account of CI in contemporary service ecosystems.

To synthesise these dynamics, we propose a simple organising lens that positions customer incivility along two intersecting axes: interactional locus (dyadic customer–employee exchanges versus performative, public or bystander-facing interactions) and channel form (offline vs. digital). This yields four analytically distinct forms of CI that differ in visibility, escalation potential and organisational risk. Dyadic–offline CI is typically transient and locally contained, whereas dyadic–digital CI introduces persistence and asymmetric exposure. Performative CI, particularly in digital settings, is qualitatively different: it is oriented toward audiences, shaped by platform affordances and prone to contagion through visibility and reputational signalling. This heuristic clarifies that digital CI should not be understood as a more intense version of offline incivility. Instead, it should be understood as a structurally distinct phenomenon with distinct mechanisms and consequences.

2.4 | Previous Incivility Reviews

While the empirical literature on CI is expanding, systematic attempts to synthesise this body of work remain limited (Andersson and Pearson 1999; Porath and Erez 2007; Sliter et al. 2010). Previous reviews (see Table 2) generally fall into two categories. The first examines broader constructs such as workplace mistreatment or rudeness, where CI is mentioned but not the central focus (e.g., Schilpzand et al. 2016). The second includes sector-specific or thematic reviews, often confined to hospitality or retail, exploring CI's impact on outcomes such as job satisfaction or service recovery performance (e.g., Wang et al. 2022; Zahoor and Siddiqi 2021).

For example, Schilpzand et al. (2016) distinguished between experienced, witnessed and instigated incivility, but focused predominantly on employee-to-employee interactions, rendering CI peripheral to their theoretical synthesis. Sommovigo et al. (2019) reviewed CI and verbal aggression in offline service encounters and linked these behaviours to employee wellbeing, yet did not engage with the distinctive features of customer-driven incivility or its organisational implications. Wang et al.'s (2022) meta-analysis confirmed the negative effects of CI on burnout, revenge intentions and co-worker incivility, but remained confined to offline contexts and individual-level

TABLE 2 | An overview of previous incivility reviews.

Author(s), Year	Method	CI as central concept	Online + Offline	Holistic service focus	Key findings	Limitations relevant to CI
Schilpzand et al. (2016)	Qualitative literature review	✗	✗	✗	Identifies types of incivility, but CI not central; focuses on employee-to-employee incivility	CI treated as peripheral; little attention to customer-driven behaviours; no online context
Sommovigo et al. (2019)	Systematic literature review	✗	✗	✓	Examines CI and verbal aggression, linking to well-being	Focuses on workplace/offline settings; no organisational or managerial implications
Lee and Kim (2022)	Structural review	✓	✗	✗	Reviews antecedents and frameworks; links CI to motivation and commitment	Narrow scope; little synthesis of methods; no digital dimension
Wang et al. (2022)	Meta-analysis (45 studies)	✓	✗	✗	Confirms CI increases burnout, revenge and co-worker incivility	Offline focus; excludes online CI; emphasis on employee outcomes only
Lages et al. (2023)	Bibliometric + systematic	✓ (part of broader 'dark side')	~ (brief mention)	✓ (limited)	Identifies CI within dysfunctional customer behaviour	Treats CI as secondary; tentative mention of online; limited managerial insight
Chaudhuri et al. (2023)	Systematic + bibliometric	✓	✗	✓	Links CI to negative employee outcomes	Still largely offline; limited conceptual clarity; no integration of hybrid contexts
This review	Systematic literature review	✓	✓	✓	Synthesises CI across contexts and service domains	Advances conceptual clarity, integrates online/offline and foregrounds managerial implications

outcomes. Similarly, Lee and Kim (2022) reviewed antecedents and theoretical frameworks associated with CI but offered limited methodological synthesis and did not address the growing prevalence of digitally mediated service encounters.

More recent reviews have brought CI into sharper focus but leave significant gaps. Lages et al. (2023) identified CI as part of the broader 'dark side' of customer behaviour through bibliometric analysis, yet treated it as one theme among many and engaged only tentatively in online contexts. Chaudhuri et al. (2023) provided a systematic review linking CI to negative employee outcomes, but similarly focused on offline encounters and did not integrate hybrid or digital service environments.

Taken together, prior reviews have advanced understanding of customer incivility but remain constrained in three inter-related respects. They predominantly conceptualise CI as a dyadic employee–customer phenomenon, with limited attention to customer-to-customer effects, bystander dynamics and contagion across actors; they privilege offline service contexts, offering little systematic insight into how digital and hybrid environments reshape CI through platform affordances, visibility and persistence; and they provide limited methodological critique, rarely examining how dominant designs, measures and contextual choices have shaped cumulative knowledge and constrained theory development.

The present review addresses these limitations through an integrated synthesis along three aligned dimensions. First, it positions CI as the focal construct and refines its conceptual boundaries, while explicitly accounting for multi-actor dynamics, including spillovers, bystander effects and cross-channel exposure. Second, it systematically integrates offline, digital and hybrid service environments, enabling comparative analysis of how incivility emerges, escalates and diffuses across service contexts. Third, applying the TCCM framework, the review is organised on existing work, thereby identifying underexamined service settings, digitally mediated methodological approaches and cross-cultural research gaps. Collectively, these contributions move the literature beyond descriptive aggregation and provide a clearer foundation for theory development, methodological advancement and managerial guidance within contemporary service ecosystems.

3 | Research Approach

A systematic review is a well-established research method for synthesising existing knowledge and guiding future developments in each field, whether related to a domain, theory, or methodology (Palmatier et al. 2018). Various review approaches have been proposed to achieve this objective, including bibliometric, framework-based, thematic, meta-analytical, hybrid-narrative and meta-systematic methods (Paul and Bhukya 2021; Paul and Criado 2020). This study examines CI in the service sector by addressing three key questions: 'What do we know?', 'How do we know?' and 'Where should we go next?' To achieve this, we adopt an integrated framework-based review method to consolidate existing literature, identify research gaps and suggest future research directions. Specifically, we employ the TCCM framework (Chen et al. 2021; Çelik et al. 2023; Hassan

et al. 2022; Paul and Rosado-Serrano 2019) where "T" represents theory, 'C' stands for contexts, 'C' is characteristics and 'M' denotes methods.

The TCCM framework is particularly well-suited to studying CI in the service sector, as it provides a comprehensive lens to examine the phenomenon's theoretical, contextual and methodological dimensions. It supports the critical evaluation of existing theories and uncovers conceptual gaps in understanding CI. By addressing context and characteristics, it enables analysis of how CI manifests across different service sectors, cultures and situations, both in digital and offline environments and considers key factors such as severity and frequency. Furthermore, the methods component provides insight into the research design and analytical approaches used in the CI studies, specifically, a high percentage of the reviewed studies rely on cross-sectional surveys and vignette-based experiments, which may not capture CI's dynamic nature. Moreover, the paper highlights limitations and opportunities for methodological advancement, such as incorporating digital trace data and social media analytics to address neglected hybrid service models. Compared to other review approaches like bibliometric, hybrid-narrative, or thematic reviews (Dabić et al. 2020; Paul et al. 2017). The TCCM framework provides a more holistic and structured lens, making it particularly effective for analysing complex, multi-dimensional and multi-actor topics like CI.

This review further follows the widely recognised PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol for reporting systematic reviews (Liberati et al. 2009). Originally designed for healthcare research, PRISMA has been shown to be equally effective in other disciplines, including marketing studies (Lim et al. 2021; Ter Huurne et al. 2017). The protocol outlines four key stages to ensure a transparent and rigorous review process: identification, screening, eligibility and inclusion. The specific steps taken at each stage, along with their justifications, will be discussed in the following sections (see Figure 1).

3.1 | Identification

At the identification stage, we used Google Scholar as the primary search engine for articles published between 2009 and 2025. Its open-access nature and broad coverage make it particularly suitable for capturing interdisciplinary and emerging research on CI across psychology, organisational behaviour and service studies, which are not consistently indexed in curated databases. To enhance breadth and minimise omissions, we complemented this search with targeted retrievals from Wiley, ScienceDirect, Emerald and JSTOR. Although the Web of Science is often recommended in systematic reviews, we did not include it because its coverage is narrower in management and service research than other sources, and it would not have substantially expanded the pool of relevant studies (Gusenbauer 2019). To ensure quality and comparability, Scopus indexing was later applied at the eligibility stage as a quality filter for final inclusion, but it was not used for initial retrieval.

To balance rigour with inclusivity, we adopted an iterative Boolean keyword strategy (Sağkaya Güngör and Ozansoy

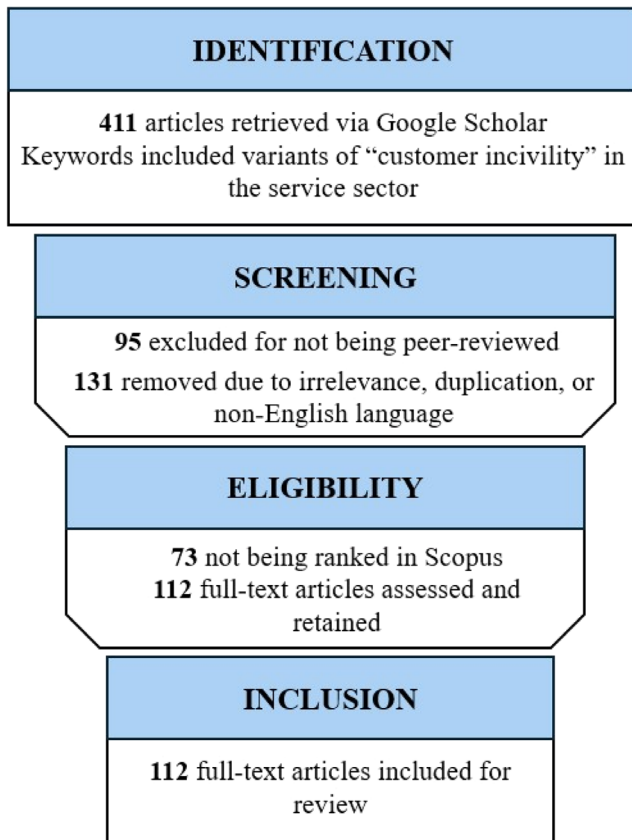


FIGURE 1 | PRISMA procedure of this research.

Çadırcı 2022). For less technical readers, Boolean operators (e.g., 'AND' to combine concepts, 'OR' to include synonyms, and quotation marks for exact phrases) allowed precise yet flexible searching. This meant that our search combined terms such as ('customer incivility' OR 'uncivil customer behaviour' OR 'customer aggression' OR 'consumer incivility' OR 'toxic comments' OR 'hostile customer behaviour') AND ('service sector' OR 'service work' OR 'frontline employees' OR 'digital service'). These were refined during screening by incorporating recurring terms identified across retrieved abstracts, thereby accounting for fragmented terminology in this domain. This process yielded 411 initial results.

3.2 | Screening

At the screening stage, we applied inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure quality and relevance. Each criterion was designed to enhance the dataset's methodological rigor, thematic focus on service-sector CI, and suitability for TCCM synthesis, which requires detailed empirical evidence on theories, contexts, characteristics and methods. First, we included only peer-reviewed journal articles, excluding conference proceedings, book chapters, theses and practitioner-oriented outlets (e.g., white papers). This restriction strengthens dataset quality by ensuring systematic peer review, comparability across studies and academic rigor (Durach et al. 2017; Paul et al. 2021; Lim et al. 2021). Second, we restrict the scope to empirical studies, given our use of the TCCM framework, which requires methodological detail for theory, context and methods synthesis. Although the exclusion

of conceptual papers may omit valuable theoretical insights, it ensures methodological consistency, and we acknowledge this as a limitation. Finally, we excluded duplicates (16), non-English publications (35) and articles outside our scope (80), resulting in 185 studies.

This inclusion of screening criteria increased methodological rigor by ensuring high-quality peer-reviewed empirical data; thematic consistency was enhanced by highlighting the impact of CI on service workers, and digital engagement by consumers and bystanders. Consequently, redundant or irrelevant research was excluded, resulting in an improved TCCM-based synthesis.

3.3 | Eligibility

At the eligibility stage, we conducted a full-text assessment of the remaining articles, focusing on evaluating the quality and credibility of the publication sources. To maintain methodological rigor and align with established academic standards, we included only journal articles ranked on the Scopus journal ranking list, following the approach outlined by Lim et al. (2021). Scopus, Elsevier's abstract and citation database, is widely recognised in business and management research as a reliable quality filter, given its peer review standards, editorial oversight and journal impact criteria (Damarell et al. 2019). While this provides a strong basis for quality assurance, it may not capture all relevant non-indexed contributions, which we acknowledge as a limitation. As a result, 73 articles not published in Scopus-ranked journals were excluded, leaving a final set of 112 articles that met all our quality thresholds for inclusion in the next stage of the review.

3.4 | Inclusion, Coding and Operationalisation of TCCM

Our final sample included 112 studies on CI (available in Appendix A) comprising quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods research from a theoretical perspective within the marketing and interdisciplinary domains. These studies were published in 51 journals between 2009 and January 2025. Among the 112 articles reviewed, the majority (78%) came from business, management and accounting disciplines. A total of 23 articles (20%) were related to psychology and organisational behaviour, while two articles (2%) addressed topics pertinent to information and communication studies.

To synthesise and integrate the findings, we employed a qualitative approach (Cassell et al. 2009) in conjunction with Lim et al. (2021) interrogative framework. An analysis was conducted in two stages: first, technical and descriptive data (publication year, journal, authors, study type, Scopus citation counts as of January 2025) were extracted into an Excel spreadsheet for descriptive and bibliometric profiling (Baker and Kim 2020; Chaudhuri et al. 2023). Second, we conducted manual content analysis by using a structured extraction form that captured the definition of customer incivility from each study, the primary theoretical lens (theory), the context (industry, culture, offline/digital/hybrid), characteristics (antecedents, mediators, moderators, outcomes), and methods (design, sample, data collection,

analysis) (Balaji et al. 2020; Lages et al. 2023). In this process, differences and inconsistencies in conceptualisations were identified, divergent perspectives were reconciled, a consolidated perspective was proposed and the literature was mapped onto the TCCM model.

Since we have backgrounds in marketing and organisational behaviour, we recognise that CI's emotionally charged nature may place employees and organisational outcomes at the forefront. As a result of the structured PRISMA and TCCM frameworks, independent dual coding across two rounds (Cohen's $\alpha=0.91$) and the resolution of discrepancies by discussion and consensus, we mitigated potential bias. A systematic categorisation of citations by disciplinary subfield was supported by the citation data, with rationales for inclusion provided in the Appendix A. While the sample is dominated by Western studies ($\approx 60\%$), we account for this limitation in the synthesis and emphasise it as an area of future research that requires attention. Excluding conceptual papers and publications in languages other than English may have limited theoretical breadth and introduced publication bias. Although TCCM-based frameworks and iterative coding were employed to enhance reliability (Paul et al. 2021; Lim et al. 2021), the categorisation of CI constructs inevitably involved interpretative judgments shaped by disciplinary perspectives. In future reviews, conceptual and non-English work, grey literature and triangulation approaches, such as bibliometric analyses combined with expert input, could enhance comprehensiveness. The next section presents the results of our central research questions.

4 | What Do We Know?

4.1 | Bibliographic Information

Our review is both timely and relevant, particularly considering the growing number of CI publications, as illustrated in Figure 2. Between 2009 and 2018, 41 papers (36%) contributed to the CI literature. Scholarly interest in the topic, however, notably accelerated after 2019, with 74 papers (64%) published between 2019 and early 2025. The most active years are 2020 and 2023, each producing 16 articles (14%). This upward trajectory continued into 2024 with 13 articles (12%), and notably, four more were published in January 2025 alone: the consistent growth highlights the increasing academic and practical relevance of CI,

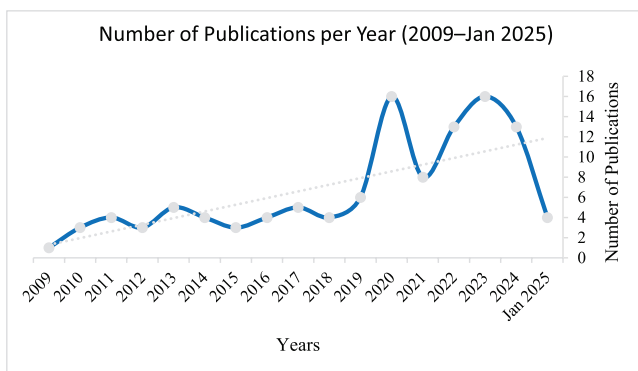


FIGURE 2 | Number of CI publications per year from 2009 to 2025.

reinforcing its emergence as a core issue across interdisciplinary research.

In addition, CI research has predominantly appeared in business, management, psychology and organisational behaviour across 51 refereed journals. The most frequent publication outlets were the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* (13 articles, 12%), *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* (9 articles, 8%), *Journal of Services Marketing* (7 articles, 6%), *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* (6 articles, 5%) and *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* (4 articles, 4%). The remaining 73 articles were dispersed into 46 other journals. It is unsurprising that CI has been disproportionately studied in workplace and hospitality settings, given the high concentration of frontline customer service employees in these environments. Their frequent exposure to uncivil customer behaviour has naturally drawn scholars' attention. In Table 3, we categorise these journals according to their main disciplinary field (78% of articles belong to a business, management and marketing disciplines, 21% to psychology and organisational behaviour and only 2% to information and communication studies). This distribution reflects a strong hospitality focus and a pronounced WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, Democratic) bias, with $\sim 60\%$ of studies conducted in Western contexts.

Citation analysis reveals a concentrated set of studies that have disproportionately shaped CI research trajectory (see Table 4). Anderson et al.'s (2014) 'Nasty Effect' study is especially influential, marking a pivotal shift towards recognising digital manifestations of incivility (1024 citations, 22%). Seminal contributions by Cortina et al. (2013) and Porath and Pearson (2013) extended the constructs scope by positioning incivility as a form of modern discrimination and quantifying its organisational costs, thereby anchoring CI within broader debates on workplace mistreatment and discrimination (1024 citations, 20%). Studies such as Sliter et al. (2012), Wang et al. (2011) and Van Jaarsveld et al. (2010) further consolidated this foundation by emphasising the emotional and behavioural consequences for frontline employees, with emotional exhaustion emerging as a critical mechanism.

Taken together, these six highly cited publications appear to not only define the conceptual boundaries of CI but also establish its dual relevance: as a form of everyday deviance connected to wider mistreatment research, and as a phenomenon reconfigured by the rise of digital service environments.

4.2 | CI Conceptualisation

At the outset, one of our goals was to disentangle, clarify and update CI conceptualisation. In the introduction, we outline how CI overlaps with related constructs such as uncivil treatment, bullying, abuse, rudeness and disrespect. However, it remains distinct in its origins and dynamics. Building on this foundation, our systematic review allows us to position these forms of incivility more precisely, particularly in relation to their intent, intensity, recurrence and broader organisational and social consequences.

Our findings reinforce CI's distinctiveness as a phenomenon originating from individuals external to the organisation, namely

TABLE 3 | Distribution of CI articles by journal, disciplinary subfield and frequency of publication.

Journal title	Subfield	CiteScore	Quartile	Frequency	%
Business, management and marketing					78%
International Journal of Hospitality Management	Hospitality and Services	21.2	Q1	13	12%
Journal of Services Marketing	Marketing	7.8	Q1	7	6%
International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	Hospitality and Services	16.9	Q1	6	5%
Journal of Interactive Marketing	Marketing	20.2	Q1	4	4%
Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management	Hospitality and Services	13.3	Q1	4	4%
Journal of Service Theory and Practice	Operations and Service	7.0	Q1	4	4%
International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences	Operations and Service	6.0	Q2	3	3%
Journal of Business Research	Marketing	20.3	Q1	3	3%
Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management	Hospitality and Services	20.9	Q1	3	3%
Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	Marketing	20.4	Q1	3	3%
Other 19 journals (each $n = 1-2$)	Mixed	—	—	33	29%
Psychology and organisational behaviour					21%
Journal of Occupational Health Psychology	Work Psychology	8.2	Q1	9	8%
Work and Stress	Work Psychology	11.7	Q1	3	3%
Current Psychology	General Psychology	4.6	Q1	3	3%
Journal of Applied Psychology	Work Psychology	17.6	Q1	2	2%
Journal of Business and Psychology	Work Psychology	9.0	Q1	2	2%
Personnel Psychology	Work Psychology	10.2	Q1	2	2%
Other 2 journals (each $n = 1$)	Psychology	—	—	2	2%
Information and communication studies					2%
Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication	Digital Communication	9.6	Q1	2	2%

customers. Unlike workplace-based forms of incivility, CI is marked by its subtlety, ambiguity of intent and opportunistic use in service interactions. It often manifests itself through dismissive gestures, verbal insults or non-linguistic cues in both physical (Bacile et al. 2018) and digital (Bacile 2020) service environments, for example, public reprimands, accusations of incompetence or intimidation that undermine employees' dignity and psychological safety (Baker and Kim 2020). The perceptual dimension is equally significant: employees' interpretations of behaviour as disrespectful or hostile are critical to whether incidents are classified as CI (Alola et al. 2019; Wilson and Holmval 2013).

Our synthesis also highlights CI as a specific form of emotional abuse, harassment or low-level aggression that often remains unpunished but carries severe consequences for

frontline workers. These include emotional exhaustion, psychological strain and diminished performance (Cho et al. 2016; Zhu et al. 2021), compounded by the structural expectation that employees remain deferential under the 'customer is always right' ethos (Lovelock 2001).

At the same time, the impact of CI extends beyond the employee–customer dyad. In physical service environments, uncivil exchanges can spill over to affect bystanders, shaping other customers' satisfaction and fairness perceptions. In digital environments, these effects are magnified: incivility is publicly visible and persistent, influencing brand reputation, perceived service climate and willingness to engage (Bacile 2020; Wolter et al. 2023). This process highlights CI's ecosystemic nature and its dual role as both an organisational challenge and a

TABLE 4 | Top cited papers on CI.

Rank	Author(s)	Total citations (%)	Average citations per year
1	Anderson et al. (2014)	1150 (22%)	105
2	Cortina et al. (2013)	1024 (20%)	85
3	Porath and Pearson (2013)	883 (17%)	74
4	Sliter et al. (2012)	748 (14%)	58
5	Wang et al. (2011)	747 (14%)	53
6	Van Jaarsveld et al. (2010)	698 (13%)	47

broader social phenomenon with reputational and behavioural implications.

Synthesising these insights, we refine and extend the definition of CI as rude, disrespectful and emotionally charged customer behaviour directed at service employees in online or offline settings, typically with ambiguous and opportunistic intent and far-reaching consequences that foster toxic service climates, undermine customer experiences and impair employee morale, health and organisational outcomes. To support this definition, Table 5 advances the comparative overview first introduced in the Introduction. It provides a more detailed account of how CI differs from other forms of incivility. Unlike workplace bullying or supervisor mistreatment, CI is uniquely characterised by its external origin, high frequency and the anonymity of many perpetrators, leaving employees with limited recourse.

5 | How Do We Know?

In this section, we organise our core findings into four domains as per TCCM: theoretical perspectives, contextual settings, characteristics and methodological approaches.

5.1 | Theories (T)

Theory application in the CI literature remains fragmented and uneven. While most studies (95%, as summarised in Table 6) grounded their investigations in formal theoretical frameworks, a notable minority (5%) relied on conceptual reasoning or ad hoc models without explicit theoretical anchoring. Among those that adopted the theory, the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (S. E. Hobfoll 2001) emerged as the most dominant, cited in 39 studies (35%). COR posits that individuals are motivated to obtain, retain and protect valued resources such as social support, self-efficacy, status or physical tools (e.g., reservations systems in hospitality settings) and that the threat or actual loss of these

resources, as often precipitated by CI, can lead to strain, burn-out and withdrawal (e.g., Han et al. 2016; Hur et al. 2020; Sliter et al. 2012), while in other cases it may result in service sabotage (Boukis et al. 2020; Gaan and Shin 2024; Hu 2025; Pu et al. 2022) or even career regret (Shin et al. 2025). Complementing COR, Affective Events Theory (Weiss and Cropanzano 1996), used in 11% of papers, helped explain how CI acts as a discrete negative workplace event that triggers unpleasant emotions, thereby influencing job satisfaction and performance (e.g., Agnihotri and Bhattacharya 2022; Giumetti et al. 2013; Srivastava et al. 2024; Walker et al. 2014).

Meanwhile, Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker and Demerouti 2017) appeared in 9% of studies, offering a framework to distinguish between the exhausting effects of job demands (e.g., repeated exposure to rude customers) and the buffering role of job resources (e.g., supervisor support or autonomy) in mitigating employee burnout and disengagement (e.g., Shin et al. 2022; Van Jaarsveld et al. 2010; Thomas et al. 2022). Cognitive Appraisal Theory (Folkman et al. 1986) was featured in 6% of studies and provided a process-oriented understanding of how individuals interpret CI: appraisals of incivility as goal-threatening and uncontrollable result in heightened psychological strain (Arnold and Walsh 2015; Porath et al. 2010; Rafaeli et al. 2012). Emotion Regulation Theories, including the Emotional Labour Model (Kruml and Geddes 2000) and Emotional Intelligence Theory (Schutte et al. 1998), appear less frequently but are used to explore coping mechanisms. These theories typically frame CI as an emotional stimulus requiring surface or deep acting to maintain organisational display rules (e.g., Goussinsky 2011; Henkel et al. 2017).

Beyond these psychological frameworks, several sociological and behavioural theories were sparsely employed. Social Exchange Theory and Deontic Justice Theory were referenced in roughly 4% and 2% of studies, respectively, to explore the reciprocal nature of respect violations and the fairness perceptions triggered by uncivil treatment (Wang et al. 2011; Aboodi and Allameh 2019). Bandura's (1986) Social Learning Theory provides insights into how witnessing or hearing about others' exposure to CI influences employee expectations and behaviours (Gao et al. 2024), while the Spiral of Incivility Theory (Andersson and Pearson 1999) outlines a cascading process whereby low-intensity uncivil acts escalate into more severe workplace conflict if unchecked (Loh et al. 2022).

Despite drawing on a range of theoretical perspectives, engagement remains largely anchored in face-to-face service contexts. Only a handful of studies explicitly adapt their theoretical lens to the digital realm, such as applications of Benign Violation Theory (Béal et al. 2023), Compatibility Management Theory (Bacile 2020) and Fairness Theory (Bacile et al. 2018). This represents a significant oversight given the proliferation of customer–brand interactions in online and hybrid environments. The dominance of COR theory reflects its utility for explaining resource depletion in traditional encounters, yet its emphasis on immediate emotional strain is less suited to digital settings, where persistent and publicly visible records intensify incivility consequences (Medler-Liraz 2020).

TABLE 5 | Characteristics of CI vs. other forms of incivility.

Dimension	CI	Other types of incivility (e.g., bullying, rudeness, mistreatment, abuse)
<i>Definition</i>	Low-intensity deviant behaviour by customers that violates norms of respect, with ambiguous intent to harm (Sliter et al. 2010).	Bullying: repeated, deliberate hostile acts to intimidate. Rudeness: one-off breaches of etiquette/politeness. Workplace mistreatment: ongoing disrespect by colleagues/supervisors. Emotional abuse: sustained psychological harm through verbal/non-verbal acts.
<i>Primary actors</i>	Customers (external to the organisation).	Internal organisational members: peers, supervisors or subordinates.
<i>Intent</i>	Often ambiguous, sometimes opportunistic; may aim to secure better service or express dissatisfaction.	Bullying/abuse: intentional and sustained. Rudeness: ambiguous, may be careless. Mistreatment: intentional but tied to workplace dynamics.
<i>Frequency and recurrence</i>	Frequent due to high customer turnover and lack of accountability; often one-off but recurring across employees.	Bullying/mistreatment: recurring with the same perpetrator. Rudeness: typically, isolated. Abuse: repeated and escalating.
<i>Context</i>	Service interactions in offline and online environments (Bacile et al. 2018; Bacile 2020).	Internal workplace settings (teams, hierarchies); not tied to customer-facing service contexts.
<i>Power dynamics</i>	Customers hold situational power due to 'the customer is always right' ethos and organisational prioritisation of customer needs.	Bullying/mistreatment: formal or informal hierarchies (e.g., supervisor over subordinate, peer dominance). Rudeness: lateral, situational.
<i>Employee vulnerability</i>	High: employees are often unable to retaliate or defend themselves due to service rules (Lovelock 2001).	Varies by hierarchy and policy; HR or reporting structures sometimes provide recourse.
<i>Psychological impact</i>	Leads to emotional exhaustion, stress, lower job satisfaction and reduced service quality (Zhu et al. 2021).	Similar effects, but bullying/abuse often more severe due to repeated targeting and escalation.
<i>Anonymity of perpetrator</i>	Often high, especially in online interactions or one-time customer visits (Arnold and Walsh 2015).	Typically low: perpetrator is a known and recurring presence in the workplace.
<i>Broader social effects</i>	Spill over to affect other customers and observers, especially in digital settings; shape perceptions of fairness, satisfaction and brand reputation (Bacile 2020; Wolter et al. 2023).	Effects largely contained within the workplace; less likely to directly influence customer perceptions or service climate.

In such contexts, reputational damage and bystander amplification become central, yet these outcomes fall outside COR's explanatory reach. Underused frameworks such as affordance theory (Gibson 1979; Norman 2013) could address how digital platforms' features: anonymity, persistence, interactivity, enable cyber incivility and alter its trajectory. Likewise, the limited use of theories specifically tailored to digital service dynamics (e.g., Benign Violation, Fairness) points to a broader lack of integration and innovation in theorising CI. To address these gaps, more critical theoretical perspectives are needed

that capture the unique mechanisms of online and hybrid service ecosystems. As an example, combining COR with Social Learning Theory can result in CI-specific models that explain how resource loss during an incident of incivility influences behaviour learned in subsequent interactions, leading to self-reinforcing spirals. Alternatively, by integrating JD-R with Affordance Theory, models can be expanded to predict how digital platform resources (e.g., moderation tools) buffer demands in hybrid contexts, allowing employees to respond more adaptively.

TABLE 6 | Summary of theoretical frameworks used in reviewed studies, categorised by conceptual theme.

Theory category	Key theories (examples)	No of articles	%	Key empirical studies
Resource and stress theories	Conservation of resources, job demands-resources, stress appraisal theory, transactional stress, SSO model	54	48%	Al-Hawari et al. (2020); Alola et al. (2019); Anderson et al. (2014); Auh et al. (2024); Baker and Kim (2021); Boukis et al. (2020); Cheng, Dong, et al. (2020); Cheng, Guo, et al. (2020); Doğantekin et al. (2023); Fujii (2025); Giumetti et al. (2013); Gaucher and Chebat (2019); Han et al. (2016); Hu (2025); Hu et al. (2018); Hwang, Hur, et al. (2022); Hur et al. (2016); Hur et al. (2021); Kern and Grandey (2009); Kim and Qu (2019a); Kim et al. (2023); Lee and Gong (2024); Medler-Liraz (2020); Porath and Pearson (2013); Pu et al. (2022); Shao and Skarlicki (2014); Shin et al. (2022); Shin et al. (2025); Shin et al. (2022); Sliter et al. (2010, 2012); Sommovigo et al. (2024); Thomas et al. (2022); Yue et al. (2021); Zhan et al. (2023); Zahoor and Siddiqi (2021); Zhu et al. (2021)
Emotion and appraisal theories	Affective events theory, cognitive appraisal, appraisal tendency, emotion regulation, frustration-aggression	25	22%	Agnihotri and Bhattacharya (2022); Al-Hawari et al. (2020); Alola et al. (2019); Arnold and Walsh (2015); Baker and Kim (2020); Boukis et al. (2020); Chan et al. (2022); Cheng et al. (2023); Frey-Cordes et al. (2020); Gaucher and Chebat (2019); Goussinsky (2011); Han et al. (2016); Henkel et al. (2017); Hu et al. (2018); Hur et al. (2015); Im et al. (2024); Kern and Grandey (2009); Kim and Qu (2019b); Li et al. (2021); Li et al. (2023); McColl-Kennedy et al. (2011); Porath et al. (2010); Rafaeli et al. (2012); Shao and Skarlicki (2014); Shin et al. (2023); Sliter et al. (2015); Sliter and Jones (2016); Srivastava et al. (2024); Walker et al. (2014); Yue et al. (2021); Zahoor and Siddiqi (2021)
Justice and fairness theories	Deontic justice, fairness theory, unfair treatment, equity theory	7	6%	Aboodi and Allameh (2019); Bacile et al. (2018); Bani-Melhem et al. (2020); Cheng, Dong, et al. (2020); Cheng, Guo, et al. (2020); Hwang, Wang, and Guchait (2022); Wang et al. (2011)
Social and exchange theories	Social exchange, social learning, social cognitive, social info processing, compatibility management	9	8%	Agnihotri et al. (2023); Bacile (2020); Bedi and Schat (2017); Gao et al. (2024); Pu et al. (2024); Wang et al. (2025)
Identity, motivation and engagement	Self-determination, core self-evaluations, work/employee engagement, identity control, sociometer theory	7	6%	Kiffin-Petersen and Soutar (2020); Boukis et al. (2023); Lin and Lai (2020); Zhan et al. (2021); Zhu et al. (2019)
Cognitive and dual process theories	Dual-process models, heuristics theory, cognitive-motivational-relational theory	3	3%	Anderson et al. (2014); Chang and Lyons (2012); Ma et al. (2025)
Others (single mentions)	Spiral of incivility, relief theory of humour, service theory, benign violation theory, negative state relief	7	6%	Béal et al. (2023); Elsayed and Hollingshead (2022); Loh et al. (2022)
Without stated theory	—	5	4%	Dineva et al. (2017), Dineva and Daunt (2023), Dineva et al. (2023)
Total		112	100%	

5.2 | Contexts (C)

As noted earlier, most research reviewed here remains anchored in traditional, face-to-face service environments. Over 55% of empirical contexts focus on the hospitality, retail and banking sectors, as shown in Table 7. This creates a skewed understanding of CI, neglecting high-touch, high-stakes sectors like education, transport and healthcare. In contrast, industries such as healthcare (4%), education (3%), transport (1%) and online services (3%) are underrepresented. This is despite their reliance on interpersonal interactions and the high emotional demands placed on employees.

Of particular note, only 11% of the 112 studies examined CI in online or digital settings such as social media (e.g., Dineva & Daunt, 2023; Elsayed and Hollingshead 2022). This imbalance is especially concerning given the increasing digitisation of service experiences (e.g., Breit et al. 2021; Medler-Liraz 2020). Hybrid encounters, where customers interact across both physical and digital platforms, remain almost entirely unexplored, leaving a critical blind spot in our understanding of how CI unfolds in modern service environments.

Furthermore, the geographical focus of CI research is predominantly Western, with 31% (35 articles) conducted in the United States, alongside cross-cultural work involving the United Kingdom, Canada and China (see Table 8). Beyond these, studies were concentrated in China (18%), South Korea (12%), the UAE (5%) and Canada (4%). Very few investigations have examined CI in non-Western contexts, which

restricts the cultural breadth of the evidence base. The dominance of WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, Democratic) settings is particularly problematic because CI is not universally experienced or expressed; its form and frequency are shaped by cultural values such as power distance, collectivism and communication norms. Digital-first service environments, including app-based and AI-mediated services, are also largely absent.

This narrow focus not only limits generalisability but also masks how cultural logics alter the meaning and impact of incivility. For example, in high power distance contexts in Southeast Asia, such as India, hierarchical asymmetries may normalise or even encourage overt expressions of CI. In collectivist environments such as China, CI's disruptive effects can extend beyond the immediate dyad to undermine team harmony. Without attention to such differences, the field risks reifying Western assumptions and overlooking the culturally situated dynamics of incivility. Expanding our research into non-WEIRD contexts, including Africa and Southeast Asia and into digitally mediated service ecosystems would provide the contextual nuance required to strengthen our focus on cultural breadth.

5.3 | Characteristics (C)

Analysis of the reviewed literature reveals four overarching themes: antecedents, consequences, mediators and moderators, which we grouped under CI dynamics. As Table 9 indicates, the

TABLE 7 | Distribution of studies by service sector and sub-sector.

Service sector	Sub-sector	Frequency	Percentage
Travel and leisure	Hospitality	48	42.86
	Tourism	2	1.79
	Transport	1	0.89
Commerce and retail	Retail	7	6.25
	Call Centre	5	4.46
Financial services	Banking	6	5.36
	Insurance	2	1.79
Health and wellness	Healthcare	4	3.57
Education and training	Education	3	2.68
Digital and community	Online communities	3	2.68
Crisis management	COVID-19 service failures	2	1.79
Social impact	Activism	1	0.89
Marketing and branding	Brand innocuous posts	1	0.89
Public sector	Civil servants	1	0.89
Utilities and energy	Energy	1	0.89
Technology and innovation	Nanotechnology	1	0.89
Cross-sector	Multiple service sectors	24	21.43
Total		112	100.00

TABLE 8 | Geographical distribution of articles.

Region	Country	Number of articles	Percentage (%)	Notes
North America	United States	32	28.57	Dominant research hub
	Canada	5	4.46	
	United States and Canada	1	0.89	Cross-cultural research
	Canada and China	1	0.89	Cross-cultural research
Asia	China	20	17.86	Growing interest
	South Korea	13	11.61	Growing interest
	India	4	3.57	Growing interest
	Vietnam	2	1.79	
	Turkey	2	1.79	
	Taiwan	3	2.68	Growing interest
	Nigeria	2	1.79	
	Japan	1	0.89	
	Bangladesh	1	0.89	
	Iran	1	0.89	
	Israel	3	2.68	
	Vietnam and China	1	0.89	Cross-cultural research
	Australia, Singapore and the Philippines	1	0.89	Multi-country research
	United States and China	1	0.89	Cross-cultural research
Europe	United Kingdom	3	2.68	
	Cyprus	1	0.89	
	Italy	1	0.89	
	Netherlands	1	0.89	
	United Kingdom and United States	1	0.89	Cross-cultural research
	Germany	1	0.89	
Australia	Australia	3	2.68	Growing interest
Middle East	UAE	6	5.36	Growing interest
South America	Brazil	1	0.89	
Total		112	100	

field is heavily skewed towards consequences (over 70% of studies), with much less attention paid to antecedents (under 20%) and moderators (around 15%), while mediators are scarcely examined. This imbalance reflects a literature more focused on documenting outcomes than identifying causes or underlying mechanisms.

Within consequences, psychological outcomes are the most prominent, with emotional exhaustion the most studied. Behavioural outcomes such as job performance, turnover intention and retaliatory incivility, as well as spillover into work–family conflict and peer relations, are also well represented. Yet this dominant focus risks reinforcing a deficit view of employees as passive recipients of harm, leaving resilience and coping strategies comparatively underexplored.

By contrast, antecedents and moderators appear sporadically. Studies that address antecedents tend to focus on customer traits (e.g., negative affectivity), employee characteristics (e.g., surface acting, personality), or organisational factors such as abusive supervision. Moderators most often include supervisor support and leadership style, suggesting potential but underdeveloped levers for intervention. Mediators such as emotional dissonance or surface acting remain rare and are conceptually entangled with outcomes like exhaustion, further muddying the interpretation.

Treating CI as a monolithic construct compounds these gaps. Passive-aggressive forms (e.g., sarcasm) may provoke rumination, while overt forms (e.g., insults) often prompt immediate withdrawal, yet both are routinely collapsed together. This lack

TABLE 9 | Summary of key 'C' (characteristics) themes.

Focus area	Sub-dimension	% of studies	Key insights	Key studies
Consequences	Behavioural outcomes			Arasli et al. (2018); Baker and Kim (2021); Choi et al. (2014, 2023); Hu et al. (2018); Hur et al. (2020); Shin et al. (2023); Shin et al. (2022)
	Job performance	28%	Decline in service quality	
	Turnover intention	12%	Desire to quit due to sustained stress	Alola et al. (2019); Cortina et al. (2013); Han et al. (2016); Im et al. (2024); Li and Zhou (2013); Srivastava et al. (2024)
Psychological outcomes	Customer-oriented behaviour	6%	Drop in proactive/helpful behaviours	Agnihotri et al. (2023); Bani-Melhem (2020); Ngo et al. (2024); Yue et al. (2017); Zhu et al. (2021)
	Employee incivility towards customers	13%	Observable retaliatory behaviour	Aboodi and Allameh (2019); Kim and Qu (2019a); Torres et al. (2017)
	Emotional exhaustion	35%	Most widely studied psychological consequence	Gaucher and Chebat (2019); Pu et al. (2022); Shin et al. (2022)
	Burnout	13%	Long-term depletion of emotional/physical resources	Bani-Melhem et al. (2020); Han et al. (2016); Sliter et al. (2011); Wen et al. (2024)
	Revenge motivation	8%	Intentions to retaliate against customers or organisation	Bedi and Schat (2017); Cheng, Dong, et al. (2020); Cheng, Guo, et al. (2020); Nguyen-Viet and Nguyen (2024)
	Employee well-being	4%	Lowered satisfaction and general health	Arnold and Walsh (2015); Baker and Kim (2020); Kuriakose and Sreejesh (2023)
Spillover effects	Work–family conflict	50%	Stress carries over into personal life	Chi et al. (2018); Kuok et al. (2022); Zhu et al. (2021)
	Incivility towards co-workers	50%	Internal stress redirected at colleagues	Kim and Qu (2019a); Sliter et al. (2011)
Antecedents	Customer-related	10%	Customers' predisposition to negative emotion	Cheng, Dong, et al. (2020); Cheng, Guo, et al. (2020); Wang et al. (2011)
	Online incivility and aggression	4%	The role of bystanders and brands in CI	Anderson et al. (2014); Bacile et al. (2018); Béal et al. (2023); Elsayed and Hollingshead (2022)
Employee-related	Surface acting	13%	Emotion labour increasing vulnerability to CI	Gaucher and Chebat (2019); Hur et al. (2016); Zhan et al. (2021)
	Personality traits (e.g., agreeableness)	13%	Trait-level differences shape susceptibility and coping with CI	Kiffin-Petersen and Soutar (2020); Sliter et al. (2015)
	Employee incivility	13%	Prior incivility may escalate or trigger reciprocal CI episodes	Kim and Qu (2019a); Sliter and Jones (2016); Van Jaarsveld et al. (2010)
	Emotional effort, anger	9%	Heightened emotional strain can predispose employees to react to CI	Sliter et al. (2011); McColl-Kennedy et al. (2011)

(Continues)

TABLE 9 | (Continued)

Focus area	Sub-dimension	% of studies	Key insights	Key studies
Organisational-related	Abusive supervision	40%	Managerial hostility intensifies effects of CI	Al-Hawari et al. (2020); Shin et al. (2022); Wang et al. (2025)
	Managerial support	20%	Protective buffer	Baker and Kim (2020); Zhu et al. (2019)
	Extra-role service, organisational deviance	20%		Gaucher and Chebat (2019); Zhu et al. (2019)
Mediators	Emotional dissonance	28%	Mismatch between felt and expressed emotions	Goussinsky (2011)
Moderators	Surface acting		Common emotional labour strategy	Hur et al. (2016)
	Customer orientation	5%	High orientation worsens emotional toll	Wang et al. (2025)
	Emotional intelligence, resilience		Enhance coping ability	Kim and Qu (2019a); Bani-Melhem et al. (2020)
	Hostile attribution bias		Increases perceived intent of harm	Cheng, Dong, et al. (2020); Cheng, Guo, et al. (2020)
Supervisor-level moderators	Racial identity (minorities)		Cultural identity moderates responses	Kern and Grandey (2009)
	Perceived supervisor/co-worker support	61%	Strongest moderator in literature	Kim et al. (2023); Zhu et al. (2019)
	Leadership styles (empowering/passive)	22%	Passive leadership often exacerbates effects	Boukis et al. (2020); Rabiul et al. (2024)
	Supervisor gossip, incivility, justice	4%	Relevant dynamics in the intensification and consequences of CI	Ugwu et al. (2023); Bani-Melhem et al. (2020)
Organisational-level moderators	Perceived organisational/social support	25%	Resources enhance employee resilience	Kuriakose and Sreejesh (2023); Nguyen-Viet and Nguyen (2024)
	Training and participation	13%	Reduce negative performance/emotional outcomes	Hu et al. (2018)
	Entity incivility	13%	CI seen as 'normative' in the organisation	Walker et al. (2014)
	Country (cultural context)	13%	Cultural norms affect employee responses	Shao and Skarlicki (2014); Balaji et al. (2020)
	Organisational culture	1%	Values (e.g., clan, market) shape tolerance and responses	Balaji et al. (2020); Ma et al. (2025)

Note: Percentages and themes may overlap across categories, as many studies examine more than one aspect of CI. The figures presented are not mutually exclusive and do not sum to 100%.

of differentiation, combined with blurred boundaries between mediators and outcomes, limits both theoretical precision and practical interventions. Underexplored characteristics include intersectionality (e.g., how gender, race and immigrant status relate to CI vulnerability), power relations (e.g., elite customer entitlement legitimising abuse) and bystander roles (e.g., peer or customer witnesses influencing escalation). Through targeted interventions such as anti-bias training and bystander protocols, these would advance theory by revealing multi-level mechanisms. Addressing these issues will be essential for advancing RQ2's focus on CI characteristics.

5.4 | Methods (M)

The reviewed literature on CI is methodologically narrow, with 77% of the 112 studies relying on cross-sectional surveys, typically administered to frontline employees (see Table 10). While these surveys provide breadth, they overlook CI's dynamic and context-dependent nature. Experimental methods, mostly vignette-based, account for 15% but raise concerns about ecological validity and real-world applicability. Mixed methods are rare (6%), and qualitative approaches, such as netnography, are barely represented (2%). Notably, advanced methods like digital trace data, social media analytics, or ethnographic digital observation remain virtually absent, despite their suitability for capturing the public, persistent and fast-evolving character of CI in online environments.

This heavy reliance on conventional approaches introduces self-report bias and struggles to capture escalation processes, bystander reactions or platform-driven amplification in real time (Dineva et al. 2023). The limited use of immersive methods such as netnography or digital ethnography means the performative nature of digital CI is poorly understood, while the lack of longitudinal designs restricts insights into how incivility accumulates and shapes chronic outcomes such as stress and withdrawal. To address these gaps, it is necessary to engage in an increased methodological pluralism. Digital trace analysis and social media analytics can be used to examine contagion and amplification in public online encounters, while diary methods can record real-time emotional trajectories and escalate, while digital ethnography can provide insights into bystander and performative dynamics within hybrid environments.

TABLE 10 | Methodological paradigms and approaches in CI studies.

Paradigm	Techniques	Description	No. of articles	%
Quantitative	Survey (cross-sectional, longitudinal)	Questionnaires administered at one or more points in time	86	77%
	Experimental (lab, field, vignette, scenario-based)	Controlled studies examining causal effects	17	15%
Qualitative	Interview, content analysis, netnography, ethnographic observation	In-depth exploration of CI experiences and contexts	2	2%
Mixed methods	Integrated use of quantitative and qualitative techniques	Studies combining surveys, interviews, experiments, or content analysis	7	6%
Total			112	100%

Taken together, the TCCM synthesis reveals a dominant configuration in the CI literature, characterised by the repeated combination of resource-based theories (most notably COR), offline hospitality and retail contexts, employee-level outcome variables and cross-sectional survey designs. While this configuration has been effective in establishing the detrimental effects of CI on employee well-being, it has simultaneously constrained theoretical and empirical progress by privileging individual strain over interactional dynamics, temporal escalation and multi-actor effects. As a result, contagion processes, bystander roles and platform-mediated amplification remain weakly theorised and methodologically underexamined. This pattern helps explain why digitally mediated and hybrid forms of CI are often treated as contextual variations rather than as phenomena requiring distinct theoretical and methodological treatment.

6 | Where Should We Be Heading?

Scholarly attention to CI has grown, yet the field still leans heavily on legacy theories from organisational behaviour that emphasise individual strain (e.g., emotional labour, conservation of resources) while under-examining the socio-technical, cultural and identity-based dynamics of modern service ecosystems (Sliter et al. 2012; Van Jaarsveld et al. 2010). Today's service encounters are hybrid and multichannel, asynchronous, publicly visible and platform-mediated: conditions that reconfigure the expression, perception, contagion and consequences of CI (Ciuchita et al. 2022; Golf-Papez and Veer 2022). To address TCCM gaps and strengthen theoretical and practical relevance, we present five prioritised themes, each accompanied by specific, testable research questions and design exemplars. Figure 3 visually organises near-, mid- and long-term priorities: definitional clarity and measurement at the broad top; diversified contexts and methodologies in the middle; and theoretical expansion and social implications at the narrow base.

6.1 | Advancing CI-Specific Theory

A persistent limitation in CI research is its reliance on theories not designed for the unique dynamics of service-based incivility. While emotional labour and resource depletion frameworks

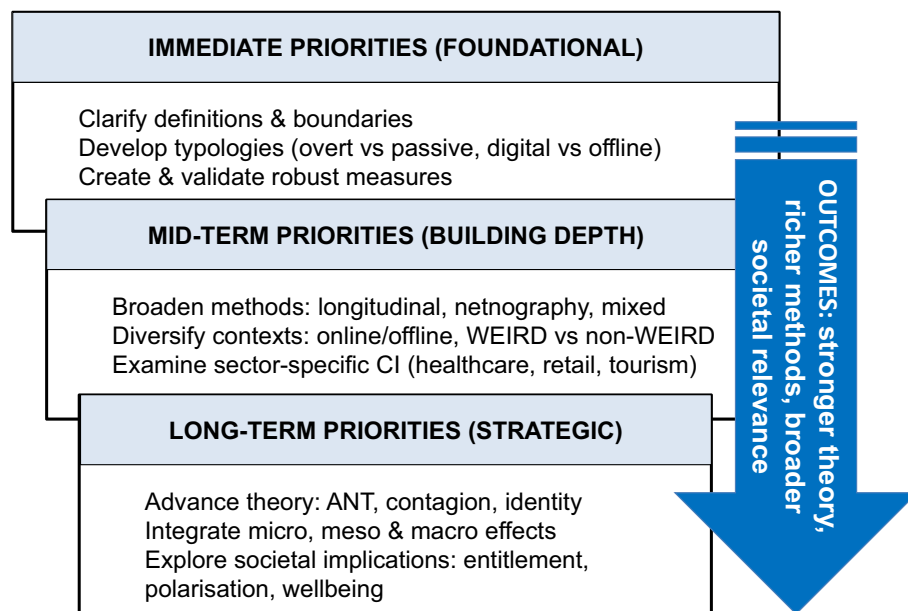


FIGURE 3 | Funnel framework of future research directions in customer incivility.

offer explanatory power, they primarily frame CI as employee strain and overlook contextual and structural drivers. Building on critiques of COR's dominance (35% of studies), the field needs bespoke theoretical tools that capture ambiguous intent, performative norms and power asymmetries (Sliter et al. 2012; Van Jaarsveld et al. 2010).

Emerging work in adjacent domains provides useful starting points. For example, Harris and Dumas (2009) apply neutralisation theory to explain how customers justify online aggression through denial of responsibility or appeals to loyalty, insights that can inform CI theory in digital environments where norms are fluid and accountability diffuse. As service interactions increasingly involve AI agents, platforms and algorithms, CI frameworks must incorporate socio-material and networked dimensions. Cyber-incivility research could be expanded by drawing on Actor–Network Theory (Golf-Papez and Veer 2022), which views agency as distributed across human and nonhuman actors.

This perspective enables scholars to examine how platform affordances, content visibility and algorithmic curation shape incivility (Ciuchita et al. 2022). We therefore advocate for CI-specific theoretical frameworks that move beyond adapting legacy models. Another promising avenue is integrating Social Contagion Theory with resource-based views to explain how incivility spreads across service ecosystems and depletes emotional and cognitive resources. Such approaches would allow more robust theorisation of anonymity, asynchronous interaction and networked visibility: hallmarks of CI in digital environments.

6.2 | Shifting the Unit of Analysis: From Specific Actors to Interactions

CI is often studied as a one-way phenomenon (customer → employee), yet incivility is inherently interactional and

co-constructed. This is especially true in public-facing, multi-vocal environments such as social media, where bystanders, bots and brand interventions shape escalation and resolution (Dineva et al. 2023; Zhan et al. 2023). Future research should adopt interactional and network-based approaches to trace how CI emerges, amplifies and de-escalates over time. Longitudinal digital ethnography, discourse analysis and digital tracing methodologies are well-suited to capturing these recursive dynamics and addressing the scarcity of qualitative, process-oriented studies in CI research.

6.3 | Contextualising CI: Cultural and Regulatory Variation

A key limitation in CI research is the overrepresentation of WEIRD contexts, with 82% of studies focusing on Western settings (Henrich et al. 2010). Yet, perceptions of incivility, tolerance for confrontational behaviour and expectations of employee responses are shaped by local cultural norms and institutional logics (Lian et al. 2023; Zhan et al. 2021). Building on the critique of WEIRD bias, future research could explicitly engage in cross-cultural comparisons to improve external validity.

Empirical studies could compare CI on platforms like WeChat (collectivist) versus X (individualistic) to explore these dynamics. Methodologically, future work could draw on comparative institutional theory or Hofstede's frameworks to systematically examine CI in diverse service environments (Porath and Pearson 2013; Ma et al. 2025). In digital environments, these dimensions intersect with platform affordances: for example, anonymity on social media may embolden indirect incivility in collectivist societies to preserve their faces (Ciuchita et al. 2022). Mixed-methods case studies across cultures and sectors, combining surveys with digital ethnography, can further deepen our understanding of context-sensitive CI dynamics, aligning with modern service ecosystems' globalised nature. In digital

environments, these dimensions intersect with platform affordances: for example, anonymity on social media may embolden indirect incivility in collectivist societies to preserve face (Ciuchita et al. 2022).

6.4 | Addressing Intersectionality and Identity-Based Incivility

Although some studies have begun to examine the role of gender and ethnicity in shaping CI experiences (e.g., Cortina et al. 2013; Arasli et al. 2018), most research continues to treat demographic characteristics as control variables rather than central constructs. Building on our critique of conceptual ambiguity in CI typologies, this masks the ways in which incivility is often highly gendered, racialised, or age-based, particularly in service encounters involving visual or auditory cues (Tippins et al. 2021).

Intersectionality-informed approaches are needed to understand how marginalised identities may affect both the likelihood of being targeted and the resources available to respond. Qualitative methodologies such as diary studies, narrative interviews and critical incident techniques could be instrumental in uncovering these dynamics, especially when combined with visual or voice-based service contexts (e.g., video chat, phone support, livestreaming). Importantly, this line of inquiry takes on added urgency in a climate where major organisations are scaling back EDI (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion) initiatives, making academic research a crucial space for addressing identity-based harms.

6.5 | Enhancing Practical Relevance Through Intervention Research

Although CI's detrimental effects on employee well-being and service outcomes are well documented, there is a striking lack of intervention-focused research. With service firms under pressure to safeguard employee wellbeing while maintaining customer experience, the need for evidence-based interventions is acute. Emerging studies point to promising strategies such as AI-based deflection tools (Demetgul et al. 2024), humorous brand responses (Wolter et al. 2023), or public denouncement of uncivil behaviour (Zhan et al. 2023), but systematic testing remains rare. Building on the critique of methodological reliance on surveys (77%) and theoretical gaps (e.g., S-O-R framework), future work should prioritise field experimental designs to address the specific conditions under which different CI interventions work, including the use of AI agents (such as humour chatbots or empathetic chatbots) to mitigate uncivil behaviour in online CI (Ciuchita et al. 2022; Shin et al. 2023; Xu and Liu 2022).

In doing so, randomised field experiments, natural experiments taking advantage of platform policy changes and A/B testing in collaboration with service providers offer high-impact opportunities to generate actionable insights. Moreover, given that the broader digital ecosystem is increasingly polluted with misinformation and hostility, intervention research must also consider how CI intersects with the broader information disorder

and toxicity online. Managing CI is not just an organisational imperative: it is increasingly a question of social infrastructure. Table 11 summarises key avenues for future research and the methodological approaches suited to addressing them.

7 | Discussion

7.1 | Theoretical Implications

This review contributes to the theoretical advancement of CI research in several meaningful ways that address key limitations in prior literature. First, we offer a more comprehensive and updated conceptualisation of CI by consolidating its emotional, behavioural and contextual dimensions. Previous definitions often treated CI as a unidimensional construct rooted in interpersonal rudeness or emotional labour (Arnold and Walsh 2015). By contrast, our synthesis positions CI as a multidimensional construct shaped by power asymmetries, platform affordances and socio-cultural norms, particularly in digital service environments, which aligns with calls for studying the online space (Bacile 2020). This allows for a more context-sensitive and relational understanding of CI, which reflects the realities of modern service work across both offline and online settings.

Second, our review systematically maps the fragmented theoretical terrain underpinning CI research. It reveals a critical gap in integrative and contextually adaptive frameworks. While theories such as COR, Affective Events Theory and JD-R have been extensively employed (Agnihotri and Bhattacharya 2022; Bakker and Demerouti 2017; Sliter et al. 2012), they are often applied in isolation and primarily to face-to-face service contexts. Our review reveals that digital contexts, where incivility is increasingly prevalent, are theoretically underserved (Dineva and Breitsohl 2022). However, the review's exclusion of conceptual papers may omit valuable theoretical insights that could enrich this synthesis. For digital CI, this may overemphasise established frameworks such as COR that limit the development of new theoretical models. We thus extend the field by calling for a rethinking of CI through digitally native and interdisciplinary theories. This includes potential frameworks grounded in cyberpsychology, digital communication studies and sociotechnical systems theory. To validate conceptual diversity, future reviews may benefit from triangulating bibliometric techniques with qualitative expert consultation or stakeholder-driven methods.

Third, our review contributes theoretically by exposing undertheorised intersections such as bystander responses, cultural variability and gendered incivility as rich yet neglected areas for conceptual development. For example, while existing CI frameworks tend to individualise the experience of incivility (Arasli et al. 2018; Baker and Kim 2021; Cheng, Dong, et al. 2020), our findings suggest the need for models that incorporate social contagion, normative reinforcement and emotional climates, potentially drawing from Social Learning Theory, Identity Threat Theory or Intersectionality frameworks. Finally, by employing the TCCM framework and incorporating both offline and online service contexts, a previously neglected domain (Chaudhuri

TABLE 11 | Summary of future research questions and related methods.

Theme	Example research questions	Suggested methods
CI-specific theory	RQ1: How do anonymity and algorithmic amplification moderate CI's impact on employee strain over time? RQ2: Can Actor–Network Theory explain distributed agency in hybrid service interactions? RQ3: What mechanisms drive CI contagion across multichannel ecosystems?	Multi-level longitudinal models; digital trace analytics; network diffusion/agent-based simulations
Interactions as unit	RQ4: What event sequences predict escalation from isolated CI to viral outrage? RQ5: Do bystander interventions reduce episode severity and alter audience perceptions? RQ6: How do CI trajectories evolve across repeated customer–brand interactions?	Event-history analysis; randomised field experiments; longitudinal digital ethnography
Cultural variation	RQ7: How does power distance moderate the effect of anonymous online CI on employee withdrawal? RQ8: Do collectivist norms amplify team-level spillovers of CI? RQ9: How do platform identity policies interact with cultural norms to shape CI expression?	Multi-country multi-level models; moderated mediation; matched platform comparisons; natural experiments
Intersectionality	RQ10: Are racialised or gendered employees more likely to experience specific CI forms in video versus audio encounters? RQ11: How do intersectional identities influence coping resources and outcomes? RQ12: Does accent or tone trigger CI, and can design interventions mitigate this?	Audit experiments; diary and critical incident methods; intersectional moderated mediation
Interventions	RQ13: Under what conditions do humorous versus empathetic chatbot responses reduce escalation risk? RQ14: How do AI-based deflection tools affect employee well-being and customer satisfaction? RQ15: When do public denouncements of CI backfire on brand reputation? RQ16: Do civility-supportive leadership climates buffer CI's impact at team level?	A/B tests; multi-armed bandit field trials; difference-in-differences; multi

et al. 2023), our review provides a more systematised foundation for future theory-building efforts and calls for constructing new models that reflect the structural, digital and emotional complexities of CI in 21st-century service work.

7.2 | Managerial Implications

The review highlights that customer incivility is not only a research concern but also a pressing managerial challenge. Left unaddressed, it undermines employee wellbeing, weakens service quality and increases organisational costs. Managers therefore need practical guidance on how to recognise, contain and prevent CI in their everyday operations. The following implications translate key insights from the literature into actionable areas of practice, while acknowledging the contextual and cultural factors that shape how CI unfolds.

Treat customer incivility as a business risk, not ‘part of the job’: Evidence shows that even low-intensity incivility produces cumulative harm through stress, burnout, absenteeism and turnover (Sliter et al. 2012; Dineva et al. 2023). This effect is strongest in high-frequency service roles and digitally mediated

environments where exposure is continuous rather than episodic. Managers should therefore treat CI as an operational risk comparable to service failures or safety incidents. In offline services, this legitimises frontline discretion to interrupt or exit abusive encounters. In online and hybrid services, it justifies investment in moderation protocols and escalation thresholds. The trade-off is that formalising CI as ‘risk’ may reduce tolerance for ambiguity; however, the alternative is the normalisation of harm through under-reporting.

Train staff for the specific types of incivility they face: Generic customer service training is insufficient for managing incivility because it assumes goodwill and clear intent. Scenario-based training is most effective when it is matched to the dominant CI form employees face. In offline settings, role-play focused on verbal aggression, boundary setting and safe disengagement is critical (Grandey et al. 2004). In online contexts, training should centre on recognising norm violations, managing public visibility and documenting abuse for escalation. Hybrid services require both skill sets, as employees often transition between private and publicly visible encounters. Organisational support mechanisms, such as structured debriefs and counselling access, are most effective when triggered by repeated exposure

rather than single extreme incidents. The trade-off is resource intensity, but evidence suggests preventative investment reduces long-term attrition costs.

Use technology to contain incivility, but not to replace human judgement: Digital monitoring tools can prevent incivility, but only under clearly defined conditions. Text analytics and moderation dashboards are most effective in online and hybrid services with high interaction volumes, where early pattern detection can prevent escalation (Cheng et al. 2023). AI-driven triage can contain incivility by redirecting abusive customers to slower, less public channels. However, full automation risks misclassification and depersonalisation, particularly in emotionally charged service failures. A hybrid model, where automated systems flag risks and humans retain escalating authority, balances efficiency with legitimacy. The trade-off lies between speed and interpretive accuracy.

Set clear behavioural boundaries for customers and enforce them consistently: Organisational culture shapes whether incivility is tolerated, contested or quietly absorbed. Clear behavioural standards reduce harm only when the enforcement mechanisms are visible and consistent (Porath and Pearson 2013). In offline environments, this includes signage and managerial backing when staff disengage from abuse. Online services require transparent moderation rules and visible consequences for violations. Hybrid settings are particularly vulnerable to norm slippage, as customers behave differently across channels. Here, consistency in tone, enforcement and escalation criteria is critical. The risk is reputational backlash from customers; however, evidence suggests long-term gains in employee retention and service climate.

Adapt CI policies to local cultures and service contexts: CI is interpreted through cultural norms, with behaviours considered rude or aggressive varying across contexts (Kim et al. 2023). However, a key contextual constraint stems from the literature's heavy concentration on Western (82% WEIRD) settings. This may lead to biases toward understanding CI in individualistic cultures, while neglecting collectivist contexts (e.g., East Asia), where team-level effects and indirect expressions of disrespect could dominate (Hofstede 2001). Because incivility norms vary widely across cultures, the generalisability of findings to global service ecosystems remains limited. For multinational or tourism-based services, rigid global policies are less effective than locally calibrated guidelines co-developed with frontline staff. Offline services benefit from local discretion, while online platforms require culturally sensitive moderation thresholds to avoid over- or under-enforcement. The trade-off is reduced standardisation, but this is outweighed by higher perceived fairness and compliance. Accordingly, future studies should prioritise diverse, practice-based insights from non-English literature, alongside cross-cultural comparative designs in regions such as Asia-Pacific or the Middle East, to develop globally applicable strategies and context-sensitive interventions.

Prevent incivility by fixing known service friction points: Most managerial responses focus on post-incident handling, yet many CI episodes are triggered by predictable friction points. Offline services can reduce CI by managing queues, setting expectations and developing complaint pathways. Online platforms can

embed preventative nudges, such as prompts discouraging abusive language or warnings before posting potentially offensive content. These interventions are most effective when upstream of employee exposure. The trade-off is potential customer irritation, but empirical evidence suggests small frictions reduce escalation without materially harming satisfaction.

7.3 | Societal Implications

Finally, CI is not only an organisational stressor but is also a symptom of wider social changes. Increasing entitlement culture, post-pandemic frustrations and digital polarisation create fertile ground for uncivil behaviour, both offline and online. These macro-level roots have largely been obscured by Western and offline biases in the literature. CI is increasingly framed as a workplace problem rather than a social phenomenon, which makes it difficult to address its deeper causes. It is therefore critical for future research to consider CI as both an organisational challenge and a reflection of societal tensions, integrating perspectives from sociology, cultural psychology and digital media studies. Such approaches could uncover the root causes and inform holistic interventions beyond organisational boundaries.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available in the Supporting Information of this article.

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Appendix A

List of articles reviewed.

No.	Article reference	Disciplinary subfield	Inclusion rationale	Incivility context
1	Aboodi, H., & Allameh, S. M. (2019). A theoretical model of antecedents of customer-directed incivility. <i>International Journal of Business Excellence</i> , 17(4), 516–543. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJBEX.2019.099127	Hospitality and services	Develops a theoretical model of CI antecedents in service settings.	Offline
2	Agnihotri, A., & Bhattacharya, S. (2022). Customer incivil behavior and employee retaliation. <i>International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences</i> , 14(3), 442–464. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJQSS-09-2021-0137	Marketing	Explores CI leading to employee retaliation in service settings.	Offline
3	Agnihotri, A., Bhattacharya, S., & Gupta, S. (2023). Do morally disengaged employees withdraw from customer-oriented citizenship behavior in response to customers' uncivil behavior? <i>Journal of Business Research</i> , 165, 114027. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.114027	Marketing	Examines CI's impact on employee citizenship behaviours.	Offline
4	Al-Hawari, M. A., Bani-Melhem, S., & Quratulain, S. (2020). Do frontline employees cope effectively with abusive supervision and customer incivility? Testing the effect of employee resilience. <i>Journal of Business and Psychology</i> , 35(2), 223–240. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-019-09621-2	Work psychology	Studies employee resilience mitigating CI's impact.	Offline
5	Alola, U. V., Olugbade, O. A., Avci, T., & Öztüren, A. (2019). Customer incivility and employees' outcomes in the hotel: Testing the mediating role of emotional exhaustion. <i>Tourism Management Perspectives</i> , 29, 9–17. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2018.10.004	Hospitality and services	Examines CI's role in emotional exhaustion in hotels.	Offline
6	Anderson, A. A., Brossard, D., Scheufele, D. A., Xenos, M. A., & Ladwig, P. (2014). The “nasty effect:” Online incivility and risk perceptions of emerging technologies. <i>Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication</i> , 19(3), 373–387. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12009	Information and communication studies	Examines online CI's impact on risk perceptions.	Online
7	Arasli, H., Hejrati Namin, B., & Abubakar, A. M. (2018). Workplace incivility as a moderator of the relationships between polychronicity and job outcomes. <i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i> , 30(3), 1245–1272. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-12-2016-0655	Hospitality and services	Explores CI as a moderator in hospitality job outcomes.	Offline
8	Arnold, K. A., & Walsh, M. M. (2015). Customer incivility and employee well-being: Testing the moderating effects of meaning, perspective taking and transformational leadership. <i>Work & Stress</i> , 29(4), 362–378. https://doi.org/10.1080/02678373.2015.1075234	Work psychology	Examines CI's effect on employee well-being, moderated by leadership.	Offline
9	Auh, S., Menguc, B., Thompson, F. M., & Uslu, A. (2024). Conflict-solving as a mediator between customer incivility and service performance. <i>The Service Industries Journal</i> , 44(5-6), 342–377. https://doi.org/10.1080/02642069.2022.2094916	Marketing	Analyses conflict-solving mediating CI's effect on service performance.	Offline
10	Bacile, T. J. (2020). Digital customer service and customer-to-customer interactions: investigating the effect of online incivility on customer perceived service climate. <i>Journal of Service Management</i> , 31(3), 441–464. https://doi.org/10.1108/JOSM-11-2018-0363	Marketing	Studies online CI's impact on perceived service climate.	Online
11	Bacile, T. J., Krallman, A., Wolter, J. S., & Beachum, N. D. (2020). The value disruption of uncivil other-customers during online service recovery. <i>Journal of Services Marketing</i> , 34(4), 483–498. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-05-2019-0209	Marketing	Explores CI from other customers in online service recovery.	Online
12	Bacile, T. J., Wolter, J. S., Allen, A. M., & Xu, P. (2018). The effects of online incivility and consumer-to-consumer interactional justice on complainants, observers, and service providers during social media service recovery. <i>Journal of Interactive Marketing</i> , 44(1), 60–81. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2018.04.002	Marketing	Examines CI's effects on social media service recovery.	Online

13	Baker, M. A., & Kim, K. (2020). Dealing with customer incivility: The effects of managerial support on employee psychological well-being and quality-of-life. <i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i> , 87, 102503. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102503	Hospitality and services	Analyses managerial support mitigating CI's effects in hospitality.	Offline
14	Baker, M. A., & Kim, K. (2021). Becoming cynical and depersonalized: how incivility, co-worker support and service rules affect employee job performance. <i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i> , 33(12), 4483–4504. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-01-2021-0105	Hospitality and services	Investigates CI's role in employee cynicism and performance.	Offline
15	Baker, M. A., & Kim, K. (2024). The impacts of organizational support and customer incivility on employee vulnerability and job performance: The moderating role of employee mental health. <i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i> , 118, 103686. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2023.103686	Hospitality and services	Explores CI's impact on employee vulnerability in hospitality.	Offline
16	Balaji, M. S., Jiang, Y., Singh, G., & Jha, S. (2020). Letting go or getting back: How organization culture shapes frontline employee response to customer incivility. <i>Journal of Business Research</i> , 111, 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.02.007	Marketing	Studies organisational culture's influence on CI responses.	Offline
17	Bani-Melhem, S. (2020). What mitigate and exacerbate the influences of customer incivility on frontline employee extra-role behaviour? <i>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management</i> , 44, 38–49. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2020.05.005	Hospitality and services	Identifies factors mitigating CI's impact on extra-role behaviours.	Offline
18	Bani-Melhem, S., Abukhait, R. M., Shamsudin, F. M., & West, M. (2022). Customer incivility and customer problem-solving behaviour in frontline employees: testing a moderated mediation model. <i>Total Quality Management & Business Excellence</i> , 33(3-4), 278–296. https://doi.org/10.1080/14783363.2020.1842187	Operations and service	Tests a model of CI's impact on problem-solving behaviour.	Offline
19	Bani-Melhem, S., Quratulain, S., & Al-Hawari, M. A. (2020). Customer incivility and frontline employees' revenge intentions: interaction effects of employee empowerment and turnover intentions. <i>Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management</i> , 29(4), 450–470. https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2019.1646180	Hospitality and services	Examines CI triggering revenge intentions in hospitality.	Offline
20	Batista, J. M., Barros, L. S., Peixoto, F. V., & Botelho, D. (2022). Sarcastic or assertive: How should brands reply to consumers' uncivil comments on social media in the context of brand activism? <i>Journal of Interactive Marketing</i> , 57(1), 141–158. https://doi.org/10.1177/10949968221075817	Marketing	Analyses brand responses to CI on social media.	Online
21	Béal, M., Grégoire, Y., & Carrillat, F. A. (2023). Let's laugh about it! Using humor to address complainers' online incivility. <i>Journal of Interactive Marketing</i> , 58(1), 34–51. https://doi.org/10.1177/10949968221129268	Marketing	Explores humour as a strategy for online CI.	Online
22	Bedi, A., & Schat, A. C. (2017). Employee revenge against uncivil customers. <i>Journal of Services Marketing</i> , 31(6), 636–649. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-01-2016-0003	Marketing	Examines employee revenge behaviours due to CI.	Offline
23	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. <i>Tourism Management</i> , 77, 103997. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2019.103997	Hospitality and services	Studies CI's effects on hospitality employees, moderated by leadership.	Offline
24	Boukis, A., Koritos, C., Papastathopoulos, A., & Buhalis, D. (2023). Customer incivility as an identity threat for frontline employees: The mitigating role of organizational rewards. <i>Annals of Tourism Research</i> , 100, 103555. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2023.103555	Hospitality and services	Explores CI as an identity threat in hospitality.	Offline
25	Chan, S. H. G., Lin, Z. C., Wong, I. A., & So, A. C. Y. (2022). When employees fight back: Investigating how customer incivility and procedural injustice can impel employee retaliation. <i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i> , 107, 103308. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2022.103308	Hospitality and services	Analyses CI and injustice leading to employee retaliation.	Offline

26	Chang, C. H. D., & Lyons, B. J. (2012). Not all aggressions are created equal: A multifoci approach to workplace aggression. <i>Journal of Occupational Health Psychology</i> , 17(1), 79. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0026073	Work psychology	Analyses workplace aggression, including CI.	Offline
27	Cheng, B., Dong, Y., Zhou, X., Guo, G., & Peng, Y. (2020). Does customer incivility undermine employees' service performance? <i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i> , 89, 102544. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102544	Operations and service	Examines CI's negative impact on service performance.	Offline
28	Cheng, B., Guo, G., Kong, Y., & Chen, R. (2023). How do observing employees react to customer incivility toward colleagues? <i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i> , 113, 103504. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2023.103504	Hospitality and services	Studies ripple effects of CI on observing hospitality employees.	Offline
29	Cheng, B., Guo, G., Tian, J., & Shaalan, A. (2020). Customer incivility and service sabotage in the hotel industry. <i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i> , 32(5), 1737–1754. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-06-2019-0545	Hospitality and services	Links CI to service sabotage in hotels.	Offline
30	Chi, N. W., Yang, J., & Lin, C. Y. (2018). Service workers' chain reactions to daily customer mistreatment: Behavioral linkages, mechanisms, and boundary conditions. <i>Journal of Occupational Health Psychology</i> , 23(1), 58. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/ocp0000050	Work psychology	Explores daily behavioural reactions to CI.	Offline
31	Cho, M., Bonn, M. A., Han, S. J., & Lee, K. H. (2016). Workplace incivility and its effect upon restaurant frontline service employee emotions and service performance. <i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i> , 28(12), 2888–2912. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-04-2015-0205	Hospitality and services	Examines CI's effect on restaurant employee emotions and performance.	Offline
32	Choi, C. H., Kim, T. T., Lee, G., & Lee, S. K. (2014). Testing the stressor–strain–outcome model of customer-related social stressors in predicting emotional exhaustion, customer orientation and service recovery performance. <i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i> , 36, 272–285. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2012.09.009	Hospitality and services	Tests a model linking CI to emotional exhaustion in hospitality.	Offline
33	Choi, W. H., Oh, S. H., Kim, K., & Hur, W. M. (2023). Losing the meaning of being a socially responsible service worker: Moderating effects of customer and coworker incivility. <i>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management</i> , 56, 420–430. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2023.07.004	Hospitality and services	Explores CI undermining social responsibility in hospitality.	Offline
34	Cortina, L. M., Kabat-Farr, D., Leskinen, E. A., Huerta, M., & Magley, V. J. (2013). Selective incivility as modern discrimination in organizations: Evidence and impact. <i>Journal of Management</i> , 39(6), 1579–1605. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206311418835	Mixed	Examines CI as a form of modern discrimination.	Offline
35	Dineva, D. P., Breitsohl, J. C., & Garrod, B. (2017). Corporate conflict management on social media brand fan pages. <i>Journal of Marketing Management</i> , 33(9–10), 679–698. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2017.1329225	Marketing	Studies CI management on social media brand pages.	Online
36	Dineva, D., & Daunt, K. L. (2023). Reframing online brand community management: consumer conflicts, their consequences and moderation. <i>European Journal of Marketing</i> , 57(10), 2653–2682. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-03-2022-0227	Marketing	Analyses consumer conflicts and CI in online brand communities.	Online
37	Dineva, D., Breitsohl, J., Roschk, H., & Hosseinpour, M. (2023). Consumer-to-consumer conflicts and brand moderation strategies during COVID-19 service failures: a framework for international marketers. <i>International Marketing Review</i> , 40(5), 1112–1133. https://doi.org/10.1108/IMR-12-2021-0368	Marketing	Develops a framework for managing CI during service failures.	Online
38	Doğantekin, A., Boğan, E., & Dedeoğlu, B. B. (2023). The effect of customer incivility on employees' work effort and intention to quit: Mediating role of job satisfaction. <i>Tourism Management Perspectives</i> , 45, 101071. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2022.101071	Hospitality and services	Analyses CI's impact on work effort and turnover in hospitality.	Offline

39	Elsayed, Y., & Hollingshead, A. B. (2022). Humor reduces online incivility. <i>Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication</i> , 27(3), zmac005. https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmac005	Information and communication studies	Studies humour mitigating online CI.	Online
40	Frey-Cordes, R., Eilert, M., & Büttgen, M. (2020). Eye for an eye? Frontline service employee reactions to customer incivility. <i>Journal of Services Marketing</i> , 34(7), 939–953. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-07-2019-0270	Marketing	Examines employee reactions to CI in service marketing.	Offline
41	Fujii, M. (2025). Bridging the missing link between customer incivility and service outcomes. <i>The Service Industries Journal</i> , 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/02642069.2025.2454944	Marketing	Links CI to service outcomes in marketing.	Offline
42	Gaan, N., & Shin, Y. (2024). The buffering role of collective mindfulness in customer incivility and service sabotage: a multilevel study of Indian banks. <i>International Journal of Bank Marketing</i> , 42(3), 596–619. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJBM-07-2023-0371	Mixed	Studies collective mindfulness buffering CI in banking.	Offline
43	Gao, W., Weng, Q., Popelnukha, A., & Sungu, L. J. (2024). Their bad experiences make me think twice: Customer-to-colleague incivility, self-reflection, and improved service delivery. <i>Applied Psychology</i> , 73(4), 2047–2076. https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12538	Work psychology	Examines CI's impact on colleague interactions and service delivery.	Offline
44	Gaucher, B., & Chebat, J. C. (2019). How uncivil customers corrode the relationship between frontline employees and retailers. <i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i> , 46, 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2018.09.012	Marketing	Studies CI's impact on employee-retailer relationships.	Offline
45	Giumetti, G. W., Hatfield, A. L., Scisco, J. L., Schroeder, A. N., Muth, E. R., & Kowalski, R. M. (2013). What a rude e-mail! Examining the differential effects of incivility versus support on mood, energy, engagement, and performance in an online context. <i>Journal of Occupational Health Psychology</i> , 18(3), 297. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0032851	Work psychology	Studies online CI's impact on employee mood and performance.	Online
46	Goussinsky, R. (2011). Customer aggression, emotional dissonance and employees' well-being. <i>International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences</i> , 3(3), 248–266. https://doi.org/10.1108/17566691111182825	Operations and service	Studies CI leading to emotional dissonance in service operations.	Offline
47	Han, S. J., Bonn, M. A., & Cho, M. (2016). The relationship between customer incivility, restaurant frontline service employee burnout and turnover intention. <i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i> , 52, 97–106. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2015.10.002	Hospitality and services	Links CI to burnout and turnover in restaurants.	Offline
48	Henkel, A. P., Boegershausen, J., Rafaeli, A., & Lemmink, J. (2017). The social dimension of service interactions: Observer reactions to customer incivility. <i>Journal of Service Research</i> , 20(2), 120–134. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670516685179	Marketing	Examines observer reactions to CI in service settings.	Offline
49	Hu, W. H. (2025). The Dark Effect of Empowerment on the Relationships Among Customer Incivility, Negative Affect, and Employee Sabotage. <i>Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism</i> , 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/1528008X.2025.2463121	Mixed	Explores empowerment exacerbating CI's effects in hospitality.	Offline
50	Hu, X., Zhan, Y., Garden, R., Wang, M., & Shi, J. (2018). Employees' reactions to customer mistreatment: The moderating role of human resource management practices. <i>Work & Stress</i> , 32(1), 49–67. https://doi.org/10.1080/02678373.2017.1330836	Work psychology	Examines HRM practices moderating CI's impact.	Offline
51	Hur, W. M., Moon, T. W., & Han, S. J. (2015). The effect of customer incivility on service employees' customer orientation through double-mediation of surface acting and emotional exhaustion. <i>Journal of Service Theory and Practice</i> , 25(4), 394–413. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSTP-02-2014-0034	Marketing	Explores CI's effect on customer orientation via emotional exhaustion.	Offline
52	Hur, W. M., Moon, T. W., & Kim, M. (2021). Impact of managerial control on the relationship between customer incivility and frontline employees' up-selling behavior. <i>Service Business</i> , 15, 639–665. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11628-021-00457-6	Marketing	Examines managerial control moderating CI's impact on up-selling.	Offline

53	Hur, W. M., Moon, T., & Jun, J. K. (2016). The effect of workplace incivility on service employee creativity: the mediating role of emotional exhaustion and intrinsic motivation. <i>Journal of Services Marketing</i> , 30(3), 302–315. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-10-2014-0342	Marketing	Studies CI's impact on employee creativity in service marketing.	Offline
54	Hur, W. M., Shin, Y., & Shin, G. (2022). Daily relationships between customer incivility, organizational control, self-efficacy, and service performance. <i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i> , 69, 103092. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2022.103092	Marketing	Analyses daily CI effects on service performance in retail.	Offline
55	Hwang, H., Hur, W. M., Shin, Y., & Kim, Y. (2022). Customer incivility and employee outcomes in the new service marketplace. <i>Journal of Services Marketing</i> , 36(4), 612–625. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-04-2021-0117	Marketing	Explores CI's impact on employee outcomes in service marketing.	Offline
56	Hwang, Y., Wang, X., & Guchait, P. (2022). When observers of customer incivility revisit the restaurant: roles of relationship closeness and norms. <i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i> , 34(11), 4227–4244. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-12-2021-1490	Hospitality and services	Examines CI's effect on customer revisit intentions in restaurants.	Offline
57	Im, A. Y., Cho, S., & Kim, D. Y. (2024). The cost of rude customers: customer incivility and employee performance. <i>Current Issues in Tourism</i> , 27(13), 2031–2047. https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2023.2294482	Mixed	Analyses CI's impact on employee performance in tourism.	Offline
58	Kern, J. H., & Grandey, A. A. (2009). Customer incivility as a social stressor: the role of race and racial identity for service employees. <i>Journal of Occupational Health Psychology</i> , 14(1), 46. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0012684	Work psychology	Explores CI as a social stressor, focusing on racial factors.	Offline
59	Kiffin-Petersen, S. A., & Soutar, G. N. (2020). Service employees' personality, customer orientation and customer incivility. <i>International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences</i> , 12(3), 281–296. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJQSS-12-2018-0104	Operations and service	Explores employee personality influencing CI responses.	Offline
60	Kim, B., Yu, H., Huang, Y., & Lee, S. (2023). Impact of customer incivility on restaurant employee stress spread and turnover: COVID-19 vaccination mandate. <i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i> , 113, 103522. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2023.103522	Hospitality and services	Studies CI's role in employee stress and turnover in restaurants.	Offline
61	Kim, H., & Qu, H. (2019a). Employees' burnout and emotional intelligence as mediator and moderator in the negative spiral of incivility. <i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i> , 31(3), 1412–1431. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-12-2017-0794	Hospitality and services	Explores emotional intelligence moderating CI's impact on burnout.	Offline
62	Kim, H., & Qu, H. (2019b). The effects of experienced customer incivility on employees' behavior toward customers and coworkers. <i>Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research</i> , 43(1), 58–77. https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348018764583	Hospitality and services	Examines CI's influence on employee behaviours in hospitality.	Offline
63	Kuok, K. O. M., Chan, S. H. J., Kou, H. K. W., Kong, S. H., & Mac, L. V. I. (2022). Sustainable human resources management in learning organizations: consequences of customer incivility and surface acting. <i>The Learning Organization</i> , 29(5), 548–566. https://doi.org/10.1108/TLO-01-2022-0015	Hospitality and services	Analyses CI's impact on sustainable HRM in hospitality.	Offline
64	Kuriakose, V., & Sreejesh, S. (2023). Co-worker and customer incivility on employee well-being: Roles of helplessness, social support at work and psychological detachment-a study among frontline hotel employees. <i>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management</i> , 56, 443–453. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2023.07.009	Hospitality and services	Studies customer and coworker incivility's effect on hotel employees.	Offline
65	Labrecque, L. I., Markos, E., Yuksel, M., & Khan, T. A. (2022). Value creation (vs value destruction) as an unintended consequence of negative comments on [innocuous] brand social media posts. <i>Journal of Interactive Marketing</i> , 57(1), 115–140. https://doi.org/10.1177/10949968221075820	Marketing	Studies CI's effect on brand value in social media.	Online

66	Lee, K., & Gong, T. (2024). How customer incivility affects organization citizenship behavior: roles of depersonalization, resilience, and caring climate. <i>Journal of Services Marketing</i> , 38(3), 252–271. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-03-2023-0099	Marketing	Examines CI's impact on organisational citizenship behaviour.	Offline
67	Li, J. M., Zhang, X. F., Zhang, L. X., & Zhang, R. X. (2023). Customer incivility and emotional labor: The mediating role of dualistic work passion and the moderating role of conscientiousness. <i>Current Psychology</i> , 42(36), 32324–32337. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-04107-6	General psychology	Examines CI's effect on emotional labour, mediated by work passion.	Offline
68	Li, S., Zhan, J., Cheng, B., & Scott, N. (2021). Frontline employee anger in response to customer incivility: Antecedents and consequences. <i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i> , 96, 102985. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2021.102985	Psychology	Studies antecedents and consequences of employee anger due to CI.	Offline
69	Li, X., & Zhou, E. (2013). Influence of customer verbal aggression on employee turnover intention. <i>Management Decision</i> , 51(4), 890–912. https://doi.org/10.1108/00251741311326635	Mixed	Studies CI's effect on turnover intentions in management.	Offline
70	Lin, C. C., & Lai, F. Y. (2020). The mechanism and boundary conditions of the relationship between customer incivility and service quality. <i>Journal of Management & Organization</i> , 26(2), 201–218. https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2018.82	Operations and service	Analyses mechanisms linking CI to service quality.	Offline
71	Loh, J., Khan, M. I., & Johns, R. (2022). The straw that breaks the camel's back: Service provider vulnerability to customer incivility. <i>Journal of Service Theory and Practice</i> , 32(4), 545–564. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSTP-11-2021-0238	Operations and service	Studies service provider vulnerability to CI.	Offline
72	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. <i>Management Research Review</i> , 48(1), 37–56. https://doi.org/10.1108/MRR-01-2024-0058	Mixed	Examines CI's emotional impact, considering organisational culture.	Offline
73	McColl-Kennedy, J. R., Sparks, B. A., & Nguyen, D. T. (2011). Customer's angry voice: Targeting employees or the organization? <i>Journal of Business Research</i> , 64(7), 707–713. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2010.08.004	Marketing	Analyses targets of CI (employees vs. organisation).	Offline
74	Medler-Liraz, H. (2020). Customer incivility, rapport and tipping: the moderating role of agreeableness. <i>Journal of Services Marketing</i> , 34(7), 955–966. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-06-2019-0220	Marketing	Studies CI's effect on tipping, moderated by employee traits.	Offline
75	Ngo, H. Q., Nguyen-Viet, B., & Nguyen, P. L. (2024). Examination of the antecedents and the outcomes of customer incivility: a case study in the Vietnamese hospitality industry. <i>International Journal of Business and Emerging Markets</i> , 16(1), 50–70. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJBEM.2024.135098	Mixed	Studies CI's antecedents and outcomes in Vietnamese hospitality.	Offline
76	Nguyen-Viet, B., & Nguyen, P. M. (2024). The role of social support on frontline employees' revenge motivation in customer incivility: a case study of the banking industry in an emerging market. <i>Current Psychology</i> , 43(34), 27377–27392. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-024-06381-y	General psychology	Studies social support's influence on CI-related revenge motivation.	Offline
77	Porath, C., & Pearson, C. (2013). The price of incivility. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> , 91(1-2), 114–121. https://asu.elsevierpure.com/en/publications/the-price-of-incivility	Mixed	Provides a broad overview of CI's costs in organisations.	Offline
78	Porath, C., MacInnis, D., & Folkes, V. (2010). Witnessing incivility among employees: Effects on consumer anger and negative inferences about companies. <i>Journal of Consumer Research</i> , 37(2), 292–303. https://doi.org/10.1086/651565	Mixed	Explores CI among employees affecting consumer perceptions.	Offline
79	Pu, B., Ji, S., & Sang, W. (2022). Effects of customer incivility on turnover intention in China's hotel employees: A chain mediating model. <i>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management</i> , 50, 327–336. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2022.02.004	Hospitality and services	Explores CI's impact on turnover intentions in Chinese hotels.	Offline

80	Pu, B., Sang, W., Ji, S., Hu, J., & Phau, I. (2024). The effect of customer incivility on employees' turnover intention in hospitality industry: A chain mediating effect of emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction. <i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i> , 118, 103665. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2023.103665	Hospitality and services	Examines CI's effect on turnover via emotional exhaustion.	Offline
81	Rabiul, M. K., Rashed, K., & Rashid, H. O. (2024). Transformational leadership style and psychological safety to meaningful work: moderating role customer incivility. <i>Journal of Management Development</i> , 43(1), 49-67. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-09-2023-0292	Mixed	Examines CI moderating leadership's impact on meaningful work.	Offline
82	Rafaeli, A., Erez, A., Ravid, S., Derfler-Rozin, R., Treister, D. E., & Scheyer, R. (2012). When customers exhibit verbal aggression, employees pay cognitive costs. <i>Journal of Applied Psychology</i> , 97(5), 931. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0028559	Work psychology	Studies cognitive costs of CI for employees.	Offline
83	Shao, R., & Skarlicki, D. P. (2014). Service employees' reactions to mistreatment by customers: A comparison between North America and East Asia. <i>Personnel Psychology</i> , 67(1), 23-59. https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12021	Work psychology	Compares employee reactions to CI across cultures.	Offline
84	Shin, G., Hur, W. M., & Shin, Y. (2024). Does person-job fit buffer employees from rumination about customer incivility? <i>Current Psychology</i> , 43(8), 7411-7423. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-023-04930-5	General psychology	Explores person-job fit mitigating CI's psychological impact.	Offline
85	Shin, G., Hur, W. M., & Shin, Y. (2025). Service employees' workplace incivility and career regret: Mediation of organizational dehumanization and moderation of psychological safety. <i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i> , 84, 104192. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2024.104192	Marketing	Examines CI's impact on career regret in retail.	Offline
86	Shin, Y., & Hur, W. M. (2022). Having control or lacking control? Roles of job crafting and service scripts in coping with customer incivility. <i>Journal of Occupational Health Psychology</i> , 27(1), 104. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/ocp0000288	Work psychology	Studies job crafting helping employees cope with CI.	Offline
87	Shin, Y., Hur, W. M., & Hwang, H. (2022). Impacts of customer incivility and abusive supervision on employee performance: A comparative study of the pre-and post-COVID-19 periods. <i>Service Business</i> , 16(2), 309-330. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11628-021-00456-7	Work psychology	Compares CI's impact on performance across time periods.	Offline
88	Sliter, M. T., Pui, S. Y., Sliter, K. A., & Jex, S. M. (2011). The differential effects of interpersonal conflict from customers and coworkers: trait anger as a moderator. <i>Journal of Occupational Health Psychology</i> , 16(4), 424. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0023874	Work psychology	Examines trait anger moderating CI's effects.	Offline
89	Sliter, M., & Jones, M. (2016). A qualitative and quantitative examination of the antecedents of customer incivility. <i>Journal of Occupational Health Psychology</i> , 21(2), 208. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0039897	Work psychology	Studies antecedents of CI in work psychology.	Offline
90	Sliter, M., Jex, S., Wolford, K., & McInnerney, J. (2010). How rude! Emotional labor as a mediator between customer incivility and employee outcomes. <i>Journal of Occupational Health Psychology</i> , 15(4), 468. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0020723	Work psychology	Examines emotional labour mediating CI's impact.	Offline
91	Sliter, M., Sliter, K., & Jex, S. (2012). The employee as a punching bag: The effect of multiple sources of incivility on employee withdrawal behavior and sales performance. <i>Journal of Organizational Behavior</i> , 33(1), 121-139. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.767	Work psychology	Studies multiple sources of incivility affecting employee behaviours.	Offline
92	Sliter, M., Withrow, S., & Jex, S. M. (2015). It happened, or you thought it happened? Examining the perception of workplace incivility based on personality characteristics. <i>International Journal of Stress Management</i> , 22(1), 24.	Work psychology	Explores personality influencing CI perceptions.	Offline

93	Sommovigo, V., Filosa, L., Hobfoll, S., Tavorucci, S., Rosa, V., & Alessandri, G. (2024). What does the customer incivility tell me about my worth? A diary study on the short-term effects of customer incivility on self-esteem and job satisfaction. <i>Work & Stress</i> , 1-27. https://doi.org/10.1080/02678373.2024.2364609	Work psychology	Studies CI's short-term effects on self-esteem and job satisfaction.	Offline
94	Srivastava, S., Madan, P., Alzeiby, E. A., & Bodhi, R. (2024). When patrons become perpetrators: Examining the negative effects of customer incivility for Hospitality employees. <i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i> , 122, 103867. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2024.103867	Hospitality and services	Highlights CI's negative impacts on hospitality employees.	Offline
95	Thomas, C. L., Johnson, L. U., Cornelius, A. M., Cobb, H. R., Murphy, L. D., & Vega, D. (2022). Incivility begets incivility: Understanding the relationship between experienced and enacted incivility with customers over time. <i>Journal of Business and Psychology</i> , 37(6), 1255–1274. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-022-09795-2	Work psychology	Examines reciprocal relationship between CI and employee incivility.	Offline
96	Torres, E. N., van Niekerk, M., & Orlowski, M. (2017). Customer and employee incivility and its causal effects in the hospitality industry. <i>Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management</i> , 26(1), 48–66. https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2016.1178620	Hospitality and services	Explores causal effects of CI in hospitality.	Offline
97	Ugwu, F. O., Onyishi, I. E., Ugwu, L. E., Mazei, J., Ugwu, J., Uwouku, J. M., & Ngbea, K. M. (2023). Supervisor and customer incivility as moderators of the relationship between job insecurity and work engagement: Evidence from a new context. <i>Economic and Industrial Democracy</i> , 44(2), 504–525. https://doi.org/10.1177/0143831X221078887	Mixed	Studies CI moderating job insecurity's impact on engagement.	Offline
98	Van Jaarsveld, D. D., Walker, D. D., & Skarlicki, D. P. (2010). The role of job demands and emotional exhaustion in the relationship between customer and employee incivility. <i>Journal of Management</i> , 36(6), 1486–1504. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206310368998	Mixed	Examines interplay between CI and employee incivility.	Offline
99	Walker, D. D., Van Jaarsveld, D. D., & Skarlicki, D. P. (2014). Exploring the effects of individual customer incivility encounters on employee incivility: The moderating roles of entity (in) civility and negative affectivity. <i>Journal of Applied Psychology</i> , 99(1), 151.	Work psychology	Studies CI encounters triggering employee incivility.	Offline
100	Wang, M., Liao, H., Zhan, Y., & Shi, J. (2011). Daily customer mistreatment and employee sabotage against customers: Examining emotion and resource perspectives. <i>Academy of Management Journal</i> , 54(2), 312–334. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2011.60263093	Mixed	Studies CI's link to employee sabotage.	Offline
101	Wang, X., Shi, X., Hwang, Y., Yan, J., & Gip, H. (2025). A social informational processing lens on multi-foci mistreatment: Roles of customer orientation and power distance. <i>Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research</i> , 49(1), 57–71. https://doi.org/10.1177/10963480231168610	Hospitality and services	Applies social information processing to CI in hospitality.	Offline
102	Wen, Y., Liang, L. J., Choi, H. C., & Yu, M. (2024). Stop being mean! Customer incivility influencing employee incivility via employee burnout: a hospitality context. <i>Journal of China Tourism Research</i> , 20(3), 545-564. https://doi.org/10.1080/19388160.2023.2232531	Hospitality and services	Examines CI triggering employee incivility in hospitality.	Offline
103	Wilson, N. L., & Holmval, C. M. (2013). The development and validation of the Incivility from Customers Scale. <i>Journal of Occupational Health Psychology</i> , 18(3), 310.	Psychology	Develops a scale to measure CI.	Offline
104	Xie, F., Zhang, X., Ye, J., Zhou, L., Zhang, W., & Tian, F. (2023). Understanding the role of customer incivility and supervisor monitoring in the relationship between customer orientation and frontline employees' emotional exhaustion. <i>Journal of Service Theory and Practice</i> , 33(6), 796–819. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSTP-12-2022-0273	Operations and service	Examines CI and supervisor monitoring affecting emotional exhaustion.	Offline

105	Yue, Y., Nguyen, H., Groth, M., Johnson, A., & Frenkel, S. (2021). When heroes and villains are victims: How different withdrawal strategies moderate the depleting effects of customer incivility on frontline employees. <i>Journal of Service Research</i> , 24(3), 435–454. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670520967994	Work psychology	Examines withdrawal strategies mitigating CI's effects.	Offline
106	Yue, Y., Wang, K. L., & Groth, M. (2017). Feeling bad and doing good: The effect of customer mistreatment on service employee's daily display of helping behaviors. <i>Personnel Psychology</i> , 70(4), 769–808. https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12208	Work psychology	Studies CI influencing daily helping behaviours.	Offline
107	Zahoor, A., & Siddiqi, M. A. (2023). Customer incivility and service recovery performance: Job crafting as a buffer. <i>Vision</i> , 27(2), 178–188. https://doi.org/10.1177/0972262921991963	Marketing	Explores job crafting buffering CI in service recovery.	Offline
108	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. <i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i> , 109, 103418. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2022.103418	Mixed	Explores how CI spreads in service contexts.	Offline
109	Zhan, X., Luo, W., Ding, H., Zhu, Y., & Guo, Y. (2021). Are employees' emotional labor strategies triggering or reducing customer incivility: a sociometer theory perspective. <i>Journal of Service Theory and Practice</i> , 31(3), 296–317. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSTP-01-2020-0009	Operations and service	Explores emotional labour influencing CI in service operations.	Offline
110	Zhu, H., Lyu, Y., & Ye, Y. (2021). The impact of customer incivility on employees' family undermining: A conservation of resources perspective. <i>Asia Pacific Journal of Management</i> , 38(3), 1061–1083. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10490-019-09688-8	Mixed	Examines CI's spillover effects on employees' family life.	Offline
111	Zhu, J. N., Lam, L. W., & Lai, J. Y. (2019). Returning good for evil: A study of customer incivility and extra-role customer service. <i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i> , 81, 65–72. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2019.03.004	Hospitality and services	Studies employees responding to CI with extra-role service.	Offline
112	Hur, W. M., Moon, T., & Lee, J. H. (2021). The effect of self-efficacy on job performance through creativity: the moderating roles of customer incivility and service scripts. <i>Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics</i> , 33(3), 888–905. https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-03-2019-0138	Marketing	Examines CI moderating self-efficacy's effect on job performance.	Offline