# UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF CYBERBULLYING:

# A RESEARCH ON GENDER DIFFERENCE IN THAILAND

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**ABSTRACT**

The objectives of this study are to investigate the perceptions of cyberbullying of university students, to explore their perceptions of factors associated with cyberbullying and to investigate the gender difference on factors associated with cyberbullying. This study was conducted with university students who were 17-25 years of age. Results indicate that is no difference between the proportions of male and female university students reporting both cyberbullying the others or being a victim of cyberbullying. However, females tend to perceive "non‑confrontational" as a motivation to cyberbullying more than males. Females tend to perceive anxiety emotion to cyberbullying more than males. However, males tend to perceive emotion of powerlessness to cyberbullying more than females. Lastly, females tend to perceive avoidance reaction to cyberbullying more than males.

**Keywords**: Gender difference, Cyber bullying, Motivation, Emotion, Reaction

## 1. Introduction

Thailand's internet penetration rate is ranked among the top in ASEAN. In the last six years, the penetration rate is 11.5%. Based on a survey by the Electronic Transactions Development Agency (ETDA), school students and university students are the group that has the highest internet penetration rate of 76% and spend 12.43 hours per day. Thailand is suffering from not only internet addiction, but also cyberbullying, in which people are both bullies and victims. There are various forms of cyberbullying that involve different motivations, impacts and reactions. However, few studies have focused on young adults' perception of cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying is defined as "…involves the use of information and communication technologies such as email, cellphone and text messages, instant messaging, defamatory personal websites, and defamatory online personal polling websites to support deliberate, repeated and hostile behavior by an individual or group that is

intended to harm others (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009). Cyberbullying is a growing phenomenon in our society with the technological advancement. Harassment and hostility continue to be evident on digital media in society.

Cyberbullying hurts victims physically and emotionally. The feeling of embarrassment causes the victim to isolate himself from friends and family, losing self-esteem and experiencing depression. Many victims blame themselves for being different and lose sleep and appetite. In severe cases, victimized persons may hurt themselves or commit suicide. Hence, communities and concerned authority need to pay attention, taking on a very important role in grooming adolescences to be digitally literate and capable of managing cyberbullying.

University students were chosen for this study because adolescence is an age period when physical aggression increases in frequency and intensity; it has been labeled a brutalizing period. This period also witnesses a series of abrupt changes in the social lives of youngsters.

## 2. Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to collect useful data on the university students, their usage of social media and their perception on cyber bullying in order to add up more insight information for any related organizations to plan an effective policy to prevent and/or remedy cyber bullying. Specifically, the objectives of this study are the following:

1. To compare male and female university students' experiences in relation to cyberbullying;
2. To explore their perceptions associated with cyber bullying; and
3. To investigate the gender difference on perceptions associated with cyberbullying.

## 3. Related Literature Review

### 3.1 Cyberbullying and Its Impacts

Cyberbullying can occur in blogs, websites, emails, chats, instant messaging, and text/ digital image messaging via mobile devices. It can relate to gender, racial, religious, and cultural biases. Digital technology inadvertently becomes bullies' weapon, sending mean messages to targets easier, faster, more intensely and more publicly involved. Bullies can use fake identity on social media to attack victims repeatedly.

The literature suggests that victims of cyberbullying generally manifest psychological problems such as depression, loneliness, low self-esteem, school phobias and social anxiety (Akcil, 2018). Under great emotional stress, victims of cyberbullying are unable to concentrate on their studies, and thus their academic progress is adversely affected (Akcil, 2018). Moreover, research findings have shown that cyber bullying causes emotional and physiological damage to defenseless victims as well as psycho-social difficulties including behavior problems (Akbulut and Eristi, 2011). Since the victims are often hurt psychologically, the depressive effect of cyberbullying prevents students from excelling in their studies ( Faryadi, 2011). The overall presence of cyberbullying victimization among university students was found to be significantly related to the experience of anxiety, depression, substance abuse, low self- esteem, interpersonal problems, family tensions and academic underperformance (Mason, 2018).

### 3.2  Cyberbullying and Its Motivations

Researchers have investigated motivations for cyberbullying. Two common and inter-related motivations include anonymity and the disinhibiting effect (Faryadi, 2011). Mason (2018) described how anonymity breeds disinhibition due to the distance provided by electronic communication. Additional motivations include homophobia, racial intolerance, and revenge (Mason 2018). In this study the motivation for cyberbullying was defined as the reasons for cyberbullying provoked by the characteristics of the cyber victim or by something specific to the situation. They are "no consequences", "non-confrontational", and "target was different" (Molluzzo and Lawler, 2012).

- "No consequences" is the cyberbully's feeling that he or she can get away with cyberbullying without fear of ramifications, physical retaliation from the victim, a permanent consequence (e.g., jail time), or witnessing an emotional reaction from the victim.

- "Non-confrontational" is identified when a cyber bully does not want to have a face-to-face encounter with the victim or expresses fear of facing the person; people often feel that cyberspace is impersonal, and they can therefore say whatever they want.

- "Target was different" is referred to a cyberbully's motivation based on the victim appearing different, having a negative reputation, or standing out in a way that the cyberbully perceives as negative.

### 3.3 Cyberbullying and Its Reactions

The reacting behaviors that the victims display against the aggression or the aggressor because of their emotional state are a very important issue. The type of reaction can turn the existing situation into a more complicated one, or even a non-proportional reaction can convert the victim into a bully (Eristi & Akbulut 2017). Several classification headlines regarding the reactions exhibited by the victims, which include seeking vengeance from the bully (Eristi & Akbulut 2017), establishing dialogue with the bully, forgiving (Safaria et al. 2016), ignoring the attack, and avoiding (Cao & Lin 2015). Eristi (2019) used four factors: revenge, precaution, dialogue, and avoidance in his research. Additionally, there are numerous variables being influential over the reactions that victims can adopt against cyberbullying, which include the type and severity of bullying behavior (Beran et al. 2012), personality traits of the victim (Elledge, 2013), previous experience with such an aggression (Beran et al. 2012), gender (Hinduja & Patchin 2011), and age (Sourander et al. 2010). In this research the reactions used are precaution, ignoring, avoidance, and revenge.

### 3.4 Cyberbullying in Thailand

Thailand's National Report 2020 published by Child Online Safety Index (COSI) indicates that Thai children aged 8-19 years old encounter cyber risks at a much higher rate than their counterparts in other countries (47% to 37%). Thai boys are at greater risk than girls (53% to 41%). And almost half of Thai children aged 8-12 years old have been bullied or witnessed bullying online while the global average is 29%. Besides cyberbullying, COSI also reports the other cyber risks against children including disordered use of technology, risky contents, risky contacts, cyber threats, and reputational risk. The other study shows that around 43% of Thais aged between 12 and 24 years have been victims of online bullying. (Unintentional & Intentional Cyberbullying, 2021)

There were many gender differences, with girls recommending telling and reporting more, for both traditional and cyber victimization. Girls also recommended ignoring it more, or blocking messages; while boys recommended fighting back, but also making new friends. There were few differences by religion. Victims were more likely to recommend passive strategies such as avoiding the cyberbully, or risky ones such as fighting back (Ruthaychonnee and Smith, 2018).

In addition, one study produced direct evidence regarding cyberbullying in Thailand. A report on cyberbullying by Boonoon (2019), in an online newspaper 'The Nation', discussed findings from a survey conducted in August 2019 by the Wisdom Society for Public Opinion Research of Thailand, a private organization concerned about the welfare of Thai children. This report cited cyberbullying as a situation when a child or teenager is repeatedly tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed, or otherwise targeted by another child or teenager using text messaging, e-mail, instant messaging or any other type of digital technology. The survey involved 2,500 students around the country, aged 12 to 24 years; 970 were vocational students and 1,530 were general students. It was found that 43% of students had been threatened over the Internet. Most of them, studying at high school, declined to disclose details, but said they had been annoyed by the cyberbullying and particularly by attempts to lure them into offline meetings. Few parents or teachers were told of bullying episodes.

Songsiri and Musikaphan (2011) reported findings from 1,200 pupils aged mostly 14-16 years, from 21 schools in Bangkok. The date of the survey is not reported. For this sample, ICT penetration was very high; 96% owned a mobile phone, and 95% used the internet. Seven types of cyberbullying were reported: electronic messages with angry and vulgar language; repeatedly sending nasty, mean and insulting messages; talking someone into revealing secrets or embarrassing information, then sharing it online; sending or posting gossip or rumors about a person to damage his or her reputation or friendships; pretending to be someone else and sending or posting material to get that person in trouble or danger or to damage that person's reputation or friendships; repeated intense harassment and denigration including threats; and intentionally and cruelly excluding someone from an online group. Of these, the first two were the most frequent. However, their frequency measures are difficult to interpret, as they included both the experiencing these yourself, or the hearing about them occurring to their friends; in addition, no definition of cyberbullying is given. Duration of internet use and aspects of family relationships (exposure to violence; family income) were found to relate to the cyberbullying measures, but no details of these findings are presented.

### 3.5 Gender and Cyberbullying

The nature of information and communication technology makes it possible for cyberbullying to occur more secretly, spread more rapidly, and be easily preserved. Cyberbullying indeed occurs; yet it is unclear whether gender plays a role in cyberbullying. The term gender, in addition to recognizing the influence of biological factors, includes cultural and experiential factors to explain aggressive behavior. Thus, gender not only implies the categorization of people into male or female groups, but also refers to the gender typing process in which they acquire those motives, values and behaviors viewed as appropriate for males and females within a given culture (Yehuda, 2019).

Gender studies on cyberbullying have attempted to determine which gender is more involved in cyberbullying victimization and perpetration.  However, research has shown mixed results and we cannot affirm that cyber bullying is a gender-specific behavior. Wong et.al (2018) found that both cyberbullying victimization and perceived online disinhibiting enhance the intention to perpetrate cyberbullying.  But the factors influencing cyberbullying differ in strength for male and female students. However, there was no significant difference between the proportions of male and female young adults who reported being cyberbullied.

## 4. Research Methods

This study used a cross-sectional study design, carried out in 2021. We assessed demographic information, ICT use, students' perceptions of the motivations for cyberbullying, the cyber-victim's emotions, and reactions.  The sample for this study was obtained through the online survey in Thailand.   An online survey questionnaire was sent to university students aged 17-25 years, with a final 18.4% response rate (n = 388). Students received an invitation to participate in the survey. One of the limitations of using an online survey is the potential low response rate (Dillman, 2007). However, due to the sheer number of the population, it was the most cost-efficient choice.  The final sample size is more than enough large for a study of this magnitude with 95% confidence level.  The sample consisted of 184 females (47.42%) and 204 males (52.58%), aged 17 to 25 years. The mean age was 20.73 years (SD = 2.14).

## 5. Results

We first examined the extent to which students experience cyberbullying in order to gain a basic understanding of the issue. Overall, close to 62 percent of the students were cyberbully victims. Over 48 percent of the students had cyberbullied the others. In addition, 65 percent of the students reported that they knew someone being cyberbullied.  When male and female students' experiences were considered separately, it was found that over 26 percent of males and close to 24 percent of females were cyberbullying. However, 42 percent of males and 39 percent of females reported that they were cyberbullied.  Table 1 provides details of male and female students reported experiences.

Table 1: Percentages of student experiences of cyberbullying

|                         | Male | Female |
|-------------------------|------|--------|
| Cyberbully              | 26.3 | 23.9   |
| Cyberbully victim       | 42.2 | 39.3   |
| Aware of cyberbullying  | 57.2 | 55.6   |

n = 388

**5.1 Do male and female adolescents have different cyberbullying experiences?**

According to a chi-square test of independence, there was no significant difference between the proportions of male and female young adults who reported cyberbullying ($\chi_2$ = 13.01, p<.05). However, as can be seen in Table 1, more males (26.3%) reported cyberbullying on a social media site than females (23.9%).

Additionally, there was no significant difference between the proportions of male and female young adults who reported being cyberbullied ($\chi_2$ = 12.83, p<.05). However, as can be seen in Table 1, more males (42.2%) reported being bullied on a social media site than females (41.3%).

**5.2 Students' perceptions of the motivation for cyberbullying**

Frequencies were run to gain percentages for the data. "non-confrontational" （49%）had the largest percentage of perceived motivation while "target was different" had the lowest percentage (24%). These results can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Motivation for Cyberbullying

| Motivation for Cyberbullying | Percent |
|---|---|
| non-confrontational | 49 |
| no consequences | 32 |
| target was different | 24 |

*Gender Differences of Motivation for Cyberbullying*

Responses regarding a specific motivation to cyberbullying ranged from 1（very untrue of me）to 5（very true of me）. Results of the independent samples t-test show that mean scores of "non-confrontational" differ between females (mean = 2.85, SD = .89) and males (mean = 2.41, SD = .57) at the .05 level of significance [t (386) = 2.18, df = 386, p = .05, 95% CI for mean difference: -.18 to .27]. On average, females tend to perceive "non-confrontational" as motivation to cyberbullying more than males.

Table 3: Independent samples t-test comparing gender on "non-confrontational" motivation to cyberbullying

| | Gender | | | | | | t | df |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | | | Female | | | | |
| | Mean | SD | n | Mean | SD | n | | |
| non-confrontational | 2.41 | .57 | 204 | 2.85 | .89 | 184 | 2.18* | 386 |

*p < .05

**5.3 Students' perceptions of the cyber-victim's emotions**

Many victims of cyberbullying will get angry about what is happening to them. In fact, research indicates that anger is the most common response to cyberbullying followed by being anxious. When

cyberbullying occurs, the nasty posts, messages, or texts can be shared with multitudes of people. The sheer volume of people that know about the bullying can lead to intense feelings of humiliation. Cyberbullying sometimes causes students to be excluded at university. Consequently, they often feel alone and isolated. Victims of cyberbullying often find it difficult to feel safe. They may feel vulnerable and powerless.

Frequencies were run to gain percentages for the data. Anxiety (30%) had the largest percentage of perceived emotions of cyber-victims while isolation had the lowest percentage (15%). These results can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4: Cyber-victim's emotions

| cyber-victim's emotions | Percent |
|---|---|
| Anger | 27 |
| Anxiety | 30 |
| Humiliation | 21 |
| Isolation | 15 |
| Powerlessness | 17 |

The students have different perceptions of cyber-victim's emotions. The results of this study indicated that 30% of students perceived anxiety, 27% of students perceived anger, and so on. Isolation had the lowest percentage of 15%.

*Gender Differences on Perception of Cyber-victim's Emotions*

Responses regarding a specific emotion to cyberbullying ranged from 1 (very untrue of me) to 5 (very true of me). Results of the independent samples t-test show that mean scores of anxiety and powerlessness differ between males and females as shown in Table 5 and Table 6.

From Table 5, females (mean = 3.02, SD = .72) and males (mean = 2.81, SD = .71) differ at the .05 level of significance [t (386) = 2.05, df = 386, p = .05, 95% CI for mean difference: -.28 to .32]. On average, females tend to perceive anxiety emotion to cyberbullying more than males.

From Table 6, females (mean = 2.82, SD = .74) and males (mean = 3.15, SD = .93) differ at the .05 level of significance [t (386) = 1.99, df = 386, p = .05, 95% CI for mean difference: -.39 to .38]. On average, males tend to perceive emotion of powerlessness to cyberbullying more than females.

Table 5: Independent samples t-test comparing gender on anxiety to cyberbullying

| | Gender | | | | | | t | df |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | | | Female | | | | |
| | Mean | SD | n | Mean | SD | n | | |
| Anxiety | 2.81 | .71 | 204 | 3.02 | 0.72 | 184 | 2.05* | 386 |

*p < .05

Table 6: Independent samples t-test comparing gender on powerlessness to cyberbullying

| | Gender | | | | | | t | df |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | | | Female | | | | |
| | Mean | SD | n | Mean | SD | n | | |
| Powerlessness | 3.15 | .93 | 204 | 2.82 | .74 | 184 | 1.99* | 386 |

*p < .05

### 5.4 Students' perceptions of the cyber-victim's reactions

Responses regarding a specific reaction to cyberbullying ranged from 1 (very untrue of me) to 5 (very true of me). Results of the independent samples t-test show that mean scores of avoidance differ between males and females as shown in Table 7.

From Table 7, females (mean = 3.04, SD = 0.66) and males (mean = 2.71, SD = .62) at the .05 level of significance [t (386) = 2.24, df = 386, p = .05, 95% CI for mean difference: -.24 to .36]. On average, females tend to perceive avoidance reaction to cyberbullying more than males.

Table 7: Independent samples t-test comparing gender on avoidance to cyberbullying

| | Gender | | | | | | t | df |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | | | Female | | | | |
| | Mean | SD | n | Mean | SD | n | | |
| Avoidance | 2.71 | .62 | 204 | 3.04 | 0.66 | 184 | 2.24* | 386 |

*p < .05

## 6. Discussion of the Findings

There is no difference between the proportions of male and female university students' reporting both cyberbullying the others or being a victim of cyberbullying. More males reported being cyberbullying and being a victim of cyberbullying compared to females, which is similar to the results found by Kasahara et. al (2019). However, Li (2006) reported differently that males were more likely to be cyberbullies than their female counterparts.

From the finding, this study concludes that "non-confrontational" is the perceived motivation with the highest percentage. In addition, the motivations for cyberbullying statistically varies across genders. Female perceived "non-confrontational" as cyberbullying motivation more than males. This finding is consistent with the other research's findings that the most important characteristic of electronic bullying that appeals to cyberbullies is the anonymity and the low probability of detection and punishment (Kasahara et.al, 2019).

This study found that mean scores of anxiety and powerlessness differ between males and females. Females tend to perceive anxiety emotion to cyberbullying more than males; while males tend to perceive emotion of powerlessness to cyberbullying more than females. These findings are consistent with other research findings that cyberbullying causes emotional and physiological damage to defenseless victims (Akbulut and Eristi, 2011). Beebe (2010) found that the overall presence of cyberbullying victimization among undergraduate college students was found to be significantly related to the experience of anxiety, depression, substance abuse, low self-esteem, interpersonal problems, family tensions and academic underperformance (Beebe, 2010).

Aiming to determine perceived reactions by cyber victims, this study concludes that the avoidance reaction against cyberbullying varies at a statistically significant level across genders. It is perceived that female victims employ avoidance reaction against cyberbullying more often than males. The findings of other studies also conclude that males and females demonstrate different reactions to cyberbullying, and gender is a critical antecedent of behavioral reactions (Wong et al. 2018).

## 7. Recommendations

This paper demonstrates the perception of university students on cyber bullying in Thailand. The results of this study can be used to make recommendations to institutions to prevent cyberbullying and its consequences for adolescents. To reduce cyberbullying, it is important to avoid attribution of blame and focus more on prevention. The study and the possibility to understand the phenomenon should guarantee its inclusion in the education of young people. There should be the promotion of collaboration between family, university, and territory to counter the spread of cyberbullying and to provide socio-educational tools for parents, teachers and students; implementing communication and confidence among youths and adults and developing new space to train parents and teachers in recognizing cyberbullying.

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# THE EFFECTS OF CUSTOMER INCIVILITY ON HIGH-CONTACT SERVICE EMPLOYEES AND ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIORS: A FRAMEWORK AND ANALYSIS OF PROPOSITIONS

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**ABSTRACT**

The research objective of this paper is to study a broad context of emotional exhaustion and its importance to hospitality management. This knowledge would provide a better understanding of the factors that contribute to customer incivility, emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction, employees' perceived performance, and turnover intentions among high-contact service employees. Seven hypotheses are proposed to test the relationships between customer incivility and its determinants which are emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction, employees' perceived performance, and turnover intentions. This paper fills a gap in knowledge on the role of emotional exhaustion among high-contact service employees that has an impact on job satisfaction, employee's perceived performance, and turnover intentions. With the proposed conceptual framework, the author aims to clarify the effects of customer incivility on high-contact service employees and organizational behaviors which leads to the protection of employee morale and the pro-action of the management team to deal with the situations. The limitation is that the study should be extended beyond the conceptual stage and conduct the empirical research across the high-contact service employees in different countries, different industrial setting, and to explore the role of cultural differences on emotional exhaustion. The managerial implications would extend to improving the recruitment and evaluating the effectiveness of development programs such as a developing and retaining talent that drive the organization for success.

**Keywords:**  customer incivility, emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction, employees' perceived performance, turnover intentions

## Introduction

The hospitality industry is marked as one of the fastest outgrowing industries globally. This sector has experienced exponential growth, disruptive expansion, and intense competitive pressure over the years. The key success focuses ultimately on customer satisfaction, and employees' job performance and turnover intentions. Thus, customers' point of contact has become the first moment of truth that customers have experience with; the high-contact service employees. At the customer touch points, customers judge and form their attitude during service interactions (Ustrov, Valverde, & Ryan, 2016).  By interacting with customers, the high-contact service

employees become the face of the brand who put the customer's high expectations on their shoulders. These expectations are to deliver high service quality, resolve customer complaints effectively, and make customers happy (Karatepe, Yorganci, & Haktanir, 2009), particularly when high-contact service employees encounter difficult customers (H. J. Kim, 2008).

As evidenced in service-oriented organizations literature suggests that the high-contact service employees are exposed to the stressful environment that associated with customer's complaints, demands, and incivility behavior (Sliter, Jex, Wolford, & McInnerney, 2010). The high-contact service employees are enacted to hold the philosophy of 'Customer is always right' and required to operate in unpleasant situations they don't have the right to avoid (Sliter et al., 2010). To please bad-mannered customers by serving them in a friendly and polite manner is not only the misfortune of the high-contact service employees, but also it leads to the exorbitant cost of the firms. Mistreated by customers, high-contact service employees can become exhausted emotionally and may eventually leave the firm (Karatepe et al., 2009). The real cost of employee turnover lies in the loss of productivity during the transition, decreased customer satisfaction, and financial loss including legal compensations, recruiting, hiring, and training (Tuominen, Hirvonen, Reijonen, & Laukkanen, 2016).

Customer incivility is defined as deviant customer behavior that violates workplace norms (Kern & Grandey, 2009), it is an employee's perception that he/she is being treated in an uncivil manner (van Jaarsveld, Walker, & Skarlicki, 2010), with a vague intention to harm an employee, and in violation of social norms of reciprocated respect and is considered one of the most dreadful forms of misconduct on service employees (Sliter et al., 2010). In fact, research confirms that over 98 percent of employees under the study reported experiencing uncivil behavior in their workplace (Schilpzand, De Pater, & Erez, 2016) whereas nearly 99 percent of 9,000 employees reported as the witness of incivility happening at work (Porath & Pearson, 2010).

A wealth of research on workplace incivility literature denotes that the devastating outcomes of negative deviate customer behavior upon the high-contact service employees; customer incivility, are associated with emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and job performance (Arnold & Walsh, 2015; Cheng & O-Yang, 2018; Karatepe & Aleshinloye, 2009; Karatepe et al., 2009; Lam & Chen, 2012; Wilson & Holmvall, 2013). The research showed that workplace incivility significantly increases emotional exhaustion (Cho, Bonn, Han, & Lee, 2016; W.-M. Hur, Moon, & Jun, 2016)  which in turn, has a negative effect on job satisfaction (Cheng & O-Yang, 2018; W.-M. Hur et al., 2016; Lee & Ok, 2012), has a positive effect on turnover intention (W.-M. Hur et al., 2016; Karatepe & Aleshinloye, 2009; Yavas, Babakus, & Karatepe, 2008), and has a negative effect on job performance (Cho et al., 2016; W.-M. Hur et al., 2016). Boukis, A., Koritos, C., Daunt, K. L., & Papastathopoulos, A. (2020) emphasizes that supervisor's leadership style and recognize that an empowering leadership style can better relieve the exhausting impacts of both customer incivility forms on high-contact service employees' stress, contemplation, vengeance, and withdrawal intentions.

Recognizing the previous research has dedicated considerable effort in examining customer incivility using different kinds of high contact service industries including banks (Sliter et al., 2010; Sliter, Sliter, & Jex, 2012), department stores (W.-M. Hur et al., 2016), restaurants (Han, Bonn, & Cho, 2016), and call centers (van Jaarsveld et al., 2010) to name just a few, there have been limited studies that investigated the influences of customer incivility in the hospitality industry (Cho et al., 2016; H. Kim & Qu, 2018). In addition, when applied to the field of hospitality management, several critical questions regarding more specific roles of customer incivility remain unanswered.

First, the existing literature that although focused on customer incivility and investigated its relationship on emotional exhaustion, it is failed to extend the research on the effect of both customer incivility and emotional exhaustion on turnover intentions and job performance, but on employee incivility (H. Kim & Qu, 2018; van Jaarsveld et al., 2010), and some did on the customer orientation or customer service quality (Sliter et al., 2010). Second, though emotional exhaustion, turnover intention, and job satisfaction have gained attention from researcher, customer incivility had failed to put into a comprehensive view as one of the most significant antecedences in the existing hospitality literature; hotel industry literature in particular (Chen & Kao, 2012; Cheng & O-Yang, 2018; Chu, Baker, & Murrmann, 2012; W.-M. Hur, Moon, & Han, 2015; Karatepe, 2013; Karatepe & Aleshinloye, 2009; Karatepe et al., 2009; Lam & Chen, 2012; Lee & Ok, 2012). Third, even though the majority of workplace incivility research drawing their study by using the most frequently used instrument so called Workplace Incivility Scales (WIS) developed by Cortina, Magley, Hunter, and Day (2001) to investigate the effect on emotional exhaustion, the studies did not include customer-experienced incivility. If it did, it did not examine the differential effects of customer incivility directly on the high-contact service employees that was the main purpose of this research (Schilpzand et al., 2016).

Because of the nature of hotel business, hotel guests are with high expectation to be served. These customers are easy to get fussy when things are not going as they expected (Torres, van Niekerk, & Orlowski, 2017). The high-contact service employees are those with direct responsibility to solve problems and to please customers for their satisfaction. These make the high-contact service employees vulnerable especially when tasks require them to remain friendly and smiling in situations that evoke a stressors and strain triggering a reduction in individual emotional resources caused by excessive psychological demands (Karatepe & Aleshinloye, 2009). In addition, Schilpzand et al., (2016) commended that the uncivility experiences have been studies far and wide but intacted with problematic resulting from various factors involved. The authors recommended for the greater good that researcher indicates the source of incivility such as supervisor, coworker, or customer), the type of incivility (i.e., experienced, witnessed, or instigated), the method of inquiry (i.e., questionnaires, experimental study, or qualitative inquiry) and the time frame (i.e., retrospective, cross-sectional, and longitudinal) for a better interpretation and implication by practitioners. Furthermore, even though most of the empirical studies on experience customer incivility have focused on its consequences, there is rare research categorized the consequences into affective, attitudinal, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes.

To fill this void, this paper offers the holistic view of the relationships between customer incivility and emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction, employees' perceived performance, and turnover intentions. This study purposely extends the existing hospitality theory by developing and testing a comprehensive conceptual research model that, for the first time, encompasses all aforementioned constructs, takes the above recommendation into consideration, and applies to the context of the hotel industry. To be precise, this study seeks to investigate the relationships between how uncivil conduct made by hotel guests and its consequences. The hotel guests are indicated as the source of incivility. The high-contact service employees are categorized as experienced – type of incivility. This study includes emotional exhaustion as an affective outcome, job satisfaction as attitudinal outcome, employees' perceived job performance as cognitive outcome, and turnover intentions as behavioral outcome (Schilpzand et al., 2016). This cross-sectional study will be administered by questionnaires and the findings will yield a variety of useful management implications such as strategic directions for hotel managers in human resource management and organizational behaviors.

**Literature Review and Hypothesis Development**

Despite the insights from previous research, one of the most important questions about the effects of customer incivility remain unanswered in the field of hotel management, namely how customer incivility influences employees' emotional exhaustion, and specifically the precise mechanism through which customer incivility may increase emotional exhaustion, and its consequences for the targets of uncivil experiences. To void this gap in literature, this study explores a role for customer incivility and emotional exhaustion towards jobs satisfaction, job performance, and turnover intentions by drawing upon Conservation of Resources theory (COR) developed by Hobfoll (1989) and Affective Event Theory (AET) developed by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996).

Building upon COR theory, it provides a useful framework for the relationship between the two constructs. The COR theory suggests that resources are identified as environments including objects, personal characteristics, conditions, and energies that are valued by the individual who attempts to acquire, maintain, and preserve it (Stevan E. Hobfoll, 2001). The high-contact service employees are bonded to the mottos of 'The Customer is King' when they encounter mistreated conducted by a bad-mannered customer. Based on the COR theory, the relationship between customer incivility and emotional exhaustion is explained by those the high-contact service employees' tolerant is depleted through the process of protecting organization's reputation, which in turns, causing emotional exhaustion.

Alike the COR theory, the AET contends that workplace events or experiences are agent of affective responses among the high-contact service employees. The experiences of customer incivility influence the high-contact service employees' subjective emotional reactions that expressed through deviate behaviors, which in turn determine their job-related attitudes and behaviors (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Furthermore, according to the literature review of workplace incivility by Schilpzand et al. (2016), the authors suggest that the consequences of customer incivility is found to be related to various affective (i.e., emotional exhaustion), attitudinal outcome (i.e., job satisfaction), cognitive outcome (i.e., perceived job performance), and behavioral outcome (i.e., turnover intentions, job performance). Against this backdrop, the proposed research model suggested in this study is broadly consistent with the COR and AET theory (see Figure 1).
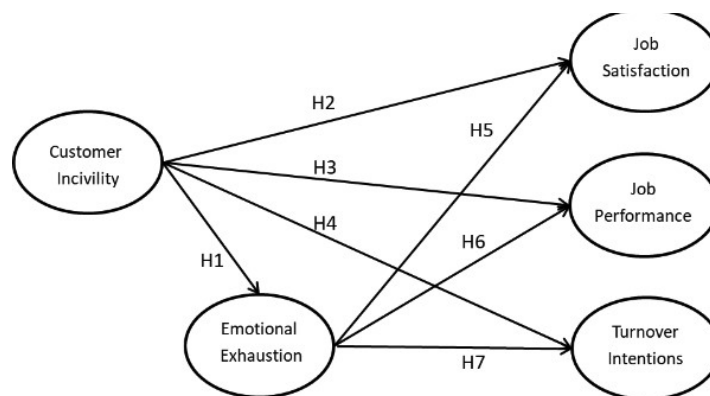


**Figure 1** The Proposed Research Model

Customer incivility is defined as a perception of employee on customers that treating him/her in an uncivil manner (van Jaarsveld et al., 2010). Uncivil behaviors are seen as rude, discourteous, and showing no regard for others (Sliter et al., 2010). Although a one-time event of incivility in the workplace might not conjure

the high-contact service employees, the continued occurrence of incivility can gradually create unpleasant outcomes. As the fact that high-contact service employees are not capable of maintaining or preserving resources operated in the workplace due to its downward spiraling and pervasive nature while dealing with incivility customer, they are losing the resources provided by service-oriented organization and then are prone to strain such as emotional exhaustion (W. M. Hur, Kim, & Park, 2015).

Emotional exhaustion is defined as a feeling of "being over-extended and depleted of one's emotional resources" in response to "chronic interpersonal stressors on the job" (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 399). It is arising from persistent high demands on time and energy that causes continual physical and psychological depletion. High-contact service employees work on a face-to-face and voice-to-voice basis when interact with customers to ensure delivering over expected service quality and gain customer satisfaction (Karatepe et al., 2009). When confronting with uncivil customers, high-contact service employees are threatened of losing their accumulated resources and become stressed about losing their conservation of resources while maintaining high afford to appear pleasant, creating a warm - welcoming environment, and controlling emotions in a process of service delivering to uncivil customers (Chu et al., 2012).

Extensive evidence in the study of workplace incivility is largely concerned with the occurrence of uncivil behaviour among co-workers or employee-to-employee interaction and its consequences on work-related outcomes such as job satisfaction (Lim, Cortina, & Magley, 2008), job performance (Yavas et al., 2008), turnover intentions (Sharma & Singh, 2016), and absenteeism (Sliter et al., 2012). While the workplace incivility has gained attention from the majority researcher, the evidence of customer incivility or customer-to-employee interactions and its consequences have gradually emerged (Han et al., 2016; W.-M. Hur et al., 2015; H. Kim & Qu, 2018).

Empirical studies show that customer incivility is positively related to emotional exhaustion in sales department setting (W.-M. Hare et al., 2015), in a retail setting (Kern & Grandey, 2009), and in bank setting (Sliter et al., 2010). Workplace incivility significantly increases emotional exhaustion and leads to low levels of job service performance in a restaurant setting (Cho et al., 2016) and in a hotel setting (Yavas et al., 2008). The experience of incivility is negatively related to job satisfaction and is positively related to turnover intentions (Karatepe et al., 2009; Lim et al., 2008). Accordingly, this study proposes the following hypotheses.

**Hypothesis 1. Customer incivility has a significant and positive influence on emotional exhaustion.**
**Hypothesis 2. Customer incivility has a significant and negative influence on job satisfaction.**
**Hypothesis 3. Customer incivility has a significant and negative influence on job performance.**
**Hypothesis 4. Customer incivility has a significant and positive influence on turnover intentions.**

Provided by the COR theory as a useful guideline for relationships, the further hypotheses examine the impacts of emotional exhaustion on job satisfaction, job performance, and turnover intentions. When employees interact with uncivil customer, they feel that they are losing scarce resources and tend to have emotional exhaustion, which in turn create employees' negative job-related outcomes (Karatepe et al., 2009). Alike the COR theory, the AET posits that the experiences of events at work (i.e., customer incivility, co-worker incivility, workplace incivility) create employees' responses or subjective emotional reactions (i.e., emotional exhaustion), that influence their job-related attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction), cognitive (i.e., employees' perceived job performance, and behaviours (i.e., turnover intentions) (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Empirical evidence on emotional exhaustion literature suggests that it is an antecedent of various negative outcomes in the workplace

including customer orientation (W.-M. Hur et al., 2015), employee incivility (van Jaarsveld et al., 2010), service recovery performance (Karatepe et al., 2009), job performance (Cho et al., 2016; Karatepe & Aleshinloye, 2009), job satisfaction (Cheng & O-Yang, 2018; W. M. Hur et al., 2015; Karatepe et al., 2009; Lee & Ok, 2012) , and turnover intention (Karatepe & Aleshinloye, 2009; Karatepe et al., 2009).

Job satisfaction refers to an employee's overall affective evaluation of the jobs and the organization to the degree to which an employee feels that his or her job-related needs are being met; it is a positive emotional state resulting from the consideration of one's job experience (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012; Locke, 1976). Employees with emotional exhaustion often experience feelings of frustration, anxiety, depression, or indifference toward their work (Yavas et al., 2008). These negative feelings which result from emotional exhaustion have a negative influence on the magnitude of employees' job satisfaction. Recent research has reported the link between emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction (W. M. Hur et al., 2015; Karatepe et al., 2009; Lee & Ok, 2012; Yavas et al., 2008). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed.

**Hypothesis 5. Emotional exhaustion has a significant and negative influence on job satisfaction.**

In this study, job performance is defined as a mountable productivity, behavior, and outcomes that employees, in relative to his or her peers, contribute to the effectiveness of organization and to overall organizational performance (Babin & Boles, 1998; Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000). Turnover intentions as suggested by Carmeli and Weisberg (2006) refers to the withdrawal process, denoting the thoughts of quitting, the intention to search for a new job, and the intention to leave the organization. As discussed in the AET, emotional exhaustion is not the only a determinant of incivility from a customer, it is also a significant antecedent of job outcomes like job performance and turnover intentions.

Nevertheless, the impact of emotional exhaustion on job performance is varied. For instance, Cropanzano, Rupp, and Byrne (2003) reported subordinates and supervisors working for the large hospital in the western United Stated experiencing the emotional exhaustion demonstrated lower job performance. Janssen and Huang (2010) have shown a similar finding that there was a significant and negative relationship between emotional exhaustion and four indicators of job performance in the fashion chain stores in Mainland China and Hong Kong. In the food service business in the United Stated, the results showed that emotional exhaustion has a significant and negative relationship with service performance (Cho et al., 2016). Some researchers such as Karatepe and Aleshionloye (2009) reported that emotional exhaustion did a lower job performance but was not a significant relationship on the full-time high contact employees of five-star hotels in the sub-Saharan Africa context. Thus, the hypotheses are derived.

**Hypothesis 6. Emotional exhaustion has a significant and negative influence on job performance.**

Drawing upon the COR theory, once employees find they lose their scare resources when interact with uncivil customers, they cannot perform effectively in a workplace and demonstrate turnover intentions as a result of resource loss and depletion of emotion (Karatepe & Aleshinloye, 2009). Empirical studies denoted the relationship between emotional exhaustion and turnover intention. For example, in the study conducted with retail bank employees in South Korea, Hur et al. (2015) found that emotional exhaustion has negative impact on job performance and positively related to turnover intentions. Likewise, junior personnel with psychological strain experiencing emotional exhaustion exerted a diminishing level of a job commitment and amplified the level of turnover intentions (Bridger, Day, & Morton, 2013). Similarly, in the hotel industry in Turkey, high-contact

service employees demonstrated a significant and positive effect of emotional exhaustion on turnover intentions (Yavas et al., 2008). In the light of the aforementioned research findings, the following hypothesis is presented.

**Hypothesis 7. Emotional exhaustion has significant and positive influence on turnover intentions.**

## Analysis and Probable Outcomes

The theoretical underpinning of this paper is that there is an empirical link between customer incivility, emotional exhaustion, job performance, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions, that is yet to be ascertained in the extant literature. Customer incivility will be determined by items designed to tap an employee's perspective as uncivil manner they are treated by customers. Van Jaarsveld et al. (2010) conceptualized customer incivility based on the employee's perception on uncivil manner with ambiguous intent to harm an employee. This paper adopts this principle of customer incivility as a form of psychometric properties of the measures.

Emotional exhaustion will be measured via items designed to tap the feeling of employees who are under pressure and stress from disrespectful customers. Emotional exhaustion is a state of feeling empty and drained of all emotions; it is a feeling incapable to express anything due to physically and mentally energy levels are low. Maslach et al. (2001) conceptualized emotional exhaustion as a feeling of being overloaded and inefficiencies that depleted energy caused by excessive emotional demands made on people interacting with customers or clients. This paper adopts this principle of emotional exhaustion as a form of psychometric properties of the measures.

Job satisfaction will be measured via items designed to tap a degree to which employees enjoy their job. Locke (1976) conceptualized job satisfaction as an employees' overall affective evaluation towards their jobs and the organization which employs them. This paper adopts this principle of job satisfaction as a form of psychometric properties of the measures.

Employees' perceived job performance will be measured via items designed to tap the perception of oneself to the degree to which they provide the services at their top performed to the customers. Zhu, Yang, and Bai (2016) and Cho et al. (2016) conceptualized job performance as discrete activities performed by an individual that contributes to the core of an organization during a standard unit of time. This paper adopts this principle of employees' perceived job performance as a form of psychometric properties of the measures.

Turnover intentions will be measured via items designed to tap the desire or probability that an employee will change his or her job within a certain time. Carmeli and Weisberg (2006) conceptualized turnover intentions as to the withdrawal process including the thoughts of quitting job, the intention to search for another job, and then intention to quit. This paper adopts this principle turnover intentions as a form of psychometric properties of the measures.

The paper's primary purpose is to identify the relationship between customer incivility, emotional exhaustion, employees' perceived job performance, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions. This paper also examines the influence of customer incivility and emotional exhaustion on its consequences, including employees' perceived job performance, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions. The conceptualization posits a link between customer incivility and its consequences through emotional exhaustion highlighting the central role of emotional exhaustion in determining customer incivility when measured by employees' perceived job performance, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions. This is because high-contact service employees are key

resources who make the organization either superior or inferior. Thus, their state of mind certainly has an impact on the organization's performance.

## Conclusions and Managerial Implications

This paper has sought to extend previous theoretical and empirical research on emotional exhaustion and customer incivility in the workplace involving face-to-face interactions between high-contact service employees and customers. Specifically, this paper is the very first conceptual framework that suggests investigating the consequences for the targets of uncivil experiences that occur to the high-contact service employees in four types of outcomes: affective, attitudinal, cognitive, and behavioural. Where emotional exhaustion is an affective outcome of customer incivility, it is a cause that has effects on the magnitude of job satisfaction, employees' perceived job performance, and turnover intentions.

The main managerial implications of such an examination would be, firstly, that it will provide a unique and holistic view to understanding the impact of customer incivility on the emotional experience of high-contact service employees. Secondly, it will contribute to a better understanding of how the high-contact service employees are restrained from scare resources during the service processes to whom treated them with uncivil manner. Next, it will provide a guideline for managers to foresee the magnitude of the impact that uncivil manners have on the high-contact service employees in terms of their job satisfaction, job performance, and turnover intentions. Last, with the magnitude of the impact disclosed, manager will have a direction of human resource strategies to improve the situations. These include to increase job satisfaction, job performance, and retain talents by lower turnover intentions.

Designing proper strategies and programs are not easy if the real causes do not discover. The results of the study will be a tool for this designing process. The importance of such training programs will enhance the ability of the high-contact service employees to handle the situations. The highlight will be on how the high service contact employees shift their attitude when providing services. The strategies that support the high-contact service employees to learn more about their customers, to have empathy to customers' needs, and to deliver an excellent service outcome will be a turning point that benefits both organization and the high service contact employees themselves. Since the high-contact service employees play a significant role on determined the level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction by customers, their emotional disequilibrium should not be underestimated, therefore highlighting the importance of emotional exhaustion in the service encounter.

The managerial implications of such a study would encompass to advance the recruitment process for high-contact service employees, to evaluate the effectiveness of programs such as effective communication, service attitude, building relationship, and problem-solving skills. The implication would be extended to revisiting the management of the staff's performance and satisfaction through the understanding and management factors contributing to emotional exhaustion. These, in turn, should benefits service-oriented managers to weighing up their competitive advantages on customer satisfaction and organizational performance.

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