Supervisor Incivility and Employees' Customer-Directed Extra-Role Performance Among Airport Check-In Staff: The Mediating Role of Job Insecurity

Do Uyen Tam[1*]

[1]Vietnam Aviation Academy, Vietnam

*Corresponding Author/Email: tamdo@vaa.edu.vn

ABSTRACT

Despite the growing body of research on workplace incivility, the specific relationship between supervisor incivility (SI) and employees' customer-directed extra-role performance—as well as the underlying mechanisms—remains relatively underexplored. Drawing on the Transactional Model of Stress and Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, this study posits that job insecurity serves as a key cognitive mediator linking supervisor incivility to employees' customer-directed extra-role performance. Empirical data were collected from airport check-in staff to test the proposed model. The findings reveal that SI has a significant negative impact on employees' customer-directed extra-role performance. These results advance the workplace incivility literature by identifying a cognitive mechanism through which incivility undermines service behavior, and they offer practical implications for organizations aiming to enhance employee well-being and service quality.

1. Introduction

In the hospitality and tourism sector, supervisors play a critical role in motivating employees to consistently deliver sustainable service performance (Shin et al., 2021). While supervisory support is widely recognized as a key driver of value creation in service organizations, mistreatment by supervisors can have serious consequences for service workers (Anjum et al., 2021). Among various forms of supervisory mistreatment, incivility has emerged as the most prevalent and insidious type of workplace mistreatment (Cortina, 2008), and has received increasing scholarly attention (e.g., Jawahar & Schreurs, 2018; Zhou et al., 2019). SI is defined as low-intensity deviant behavior enacted by supervisors, such as sarcasm, rude remarks, hostile stares, gossip, or social exclusion (Reio, 2011). Unlike overt aggression, SI is marked by its ambiguous intent to harm, which makes it a particularly subtle yet harmful stressor in frontline service environments (Tam & Trang, 2023). SI has been shown to affect a variety of employee outcomes, including job performance (Jawahar & Schreurs, 2018). Job performance is typically divided into in-role performance and extra-role performance (Rai et al., 2018). For frontline employees, customer-directed extra-role performance refers to task-related behaviors that fulfill formal job responsibilities, such as handling inquiries or delivering services. Meanwhile, customer-directed extra-role performance involves discretionary behaviors that go beyond formal role expectations, such as helping customers beyond what is required or providing personalized attention (Rai et al., 2018). These extra-role behaviors are especially vital in service settings, as they significantly enhance organizational performance and customer satisfaction (Daskin, 2015). Although prior research has explored the impact of SI on in-role performance (e.g., Shin et al., 2021), investigations into its influence on customer-directed extra-role performance remain limited. An exception is Tam & Trang (2024), who examined the indirect effect of SI on customer-directed extra-role performance via the mediating role of psychological distress. While their findings were insightful, they also called for further research to explore alternative mediating mechanisms. Understanding such mechanisms is critical for managers seeking to develop interventions that mitigate the negative effects of supervisory mistreatment on employee behavior (Shin et al., 2021). Drawing on the transactional model of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), this study addresses the existing gap by proposing employees' cognitive appraisal of their job—specifically, job insecurity—as a key mediating mechanism linking SI to employees' customer-directed extra-role performance. This framework offers a novel perspective on how frontline employees internalize mistreatment and how such cognitive appraisals translate into customer-related behaviors.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Supervisor Incivility and Customer-Directed Extra-Role Performance

The connection between SI and customer-directed extra-role performance can be explained through Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989). According to this theory, people are driven to obtain and protect valuable resources—like time, energy, and emotional well-being. When those resources are threatened, lost, or not replenished, individuals tend to pull back their efforts to preserve what they still have, which can negatively impact their work performance. When employees face incivility from their supervisors—such

as being treated rudely or disrespected—it further depletes their resources by undermining their confidence and foster negative affectivty (Jawahar & Schreurs, 2018). As a result, they may feel they no longer have enough left to handle the demands of their role, particularly when it comes to extra-role behaviors that aren't formally required but benefit the organization(Rai et al., 2018). Given this, we propose the following hypothesis :

H1: Supervisor incivility negatively impacts customer-directed extra-role performance

2.2. The Mediating Role of Job Insecurity

Uncivil behavior from supervisors—such as dismissive comments, sarcasm, or intentional exclusion—can be particularly damaging due to the inherent power imbalance in the supervisor-subordinate relationship (Rodriguez & Zhou, 2023). SI not only undermines employees' psychological well-being but also has broader organizational consequences, negatively impacting various work-related behaviors, including customer-directed extra-role performance (Vasconcelos, 2020). While earlier studies have primarily focused on emotional responses—such as anger or emotional exhaustion—to explain the effects of SI, the present study proposes a cognitive perspective. Drawing on the Transactional Model of Stress (TMS) (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), this research suggests that job insecurity acts as a crucial cognitive mechanism linking SI to declines in employees' customer-directed extra-role performance.

Job insecurity refers to employees' perception of uncertainty or fear concerning the continuity of their employment (Li et al., 2020). According to the Transactional Model of Stress, employees exposed to stressors like incivility undergo two stages of cognitive appraisal. In the primary appraisal, they assess whether the situation is threatening or harmful; in the secondary appraisal, they evaluate their ability to cope with or manage the stressor. SI often initiates the primary appraisal process, as employees interpret these behaviors as signals of exclusion or rejection, particularly concerning given the supervisor's influence over performance evaluations, promotions, and job continuity (Shin & Hur, 2020). This perception may lead employees to feel undervalued in the organization, or worse, to believe that their job security is under threat (Shin et al., 2021). Such cognitive evaluations are closely tied to perceptions of interactional justice, which refers to the extent to which individuals feel they are treated with dignity, fairness, and respect by their supervisors (Barker & Cortina, 2007). When employees perceive a lack of interactional justice, they are more likely to question their standing within the organization, which in turn fosters a heightened sense of job insecurity (Shin et al., 2021).

The high level of job insecurity can in turn, lead to a lower level of customer directed extra-role performace. Acording to Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989), when individuals perceive a threat to their valuable resources—such as emotional stability, social standing, or employment—they tend to conserve what resources remain. In this context, job insecurity constitutes a perceived resource threat, prompting employees to withdraw from discretionary efforts in order to preserve their resource reservoir (Shin et al.,

2019; Shin & Hur, 2020). As a result, employees become less likely to engage in extra-role service behaviors that require additional emotional and cognitive investment. Previous research has shown that SI indirectly lowers employees' voluntary behaviour (e.g., citizenship performance) (e.g. Jawahar & Schreurs, 2018). Based on this reasoning, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H2: Job insecurity mediates the negative relationship between supervisor incivility and employees' customer directed extra-role performance

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Results
3.1. Descriptive Statistics

A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed to check-in staff at the domestic terminal of Tan Son Nhat International Airport. Of these, 230 were returned, and 228 valid responses were retained for analysis.Among the respondents, 34.3% were male and 65.7% were female. The majority of participants were aged between 25 and 35 years (59.6%), followed by those under 25 (20.4%), between 35 and 45 (14.0%), and a small portion over 45 years old. Regarding marital status, 65.3% of the respondents were single, while 34.7% were married. In terms of work experience, 68.3% had been employed in the aviation industry for more than three years.

3.2. Measures

Measurement Model

The measurement model was evaluated to ensure the reliability and validity of the constructs used in the study. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), as shown in Table 1. The results indicate that all CR values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, demonstrating satisfactory internal consistency across constructs (Bagozzi & Yi, 1998). Similarly, Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs ranged from 0.805 to 0.904, further supporting the reliability of the measurement scales (Hulin et al., 2001). Convergent validity was assessed through factor loadings and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). All item loadings were above the minimum threshold of 0.50 (Hair et al., 1998), with most items loading strongly on their respective constructs. Additionally, the AVE values for all constructs were above the recommended cutoff of 0.50, confirming that the constructs exhibit adequate convergent validity.

Table 1: Measurement Model Assessment: Factor Loadings (λ), Reliability, and Validity Indicators

Construct	Item Code	Loading (λ)	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Supervisor	SI1	0.882	0.904	0.929	0.723

Incivility (SI)	SI2	0.829			
	SI3	0.879			
	SI4	0.829			
	SI5	0.829			
Job Insecurity (INS)	INS1	0.847	0.805	0.872	0.638
	INS2	0.551			
	INS3	0.873			
	INS4	0.877			
Extra-Role Performance (EXP)	EXP1	0.907	0.868	0.918	0.790
	EXP2	0.857			
	EXP3	0.901			

Discriminant validity of the constructs was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. According to this criterion, the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct should be greater than its correlations with any other construct in the model (Grégoire & Fisher, 2006). The results indicated that the square roots of the AVE for all constructs exceed their correlations with other constructs, confirming discriminant validity. These results confirm that each construct exhibits adequate discriminant validity.

Structural Model Assessment

Hypothesis H1 proposed that SI has a direct negative impact on customer-directed extra-role performance. The results support this hypothesis, showing a significant negative relationship between supervisor incivility and extra-role performance ($\beta = -0.232$, $p = 0.002$), with the 95% confidence interval [-0.375, -0.078] excluding zero. This suggests that employees who experience higher levels of incivility from supervisors are less likely to engage in voluntary service behaviors that benefit customers.

Furthermore, Hypothesis H2 suggested that job insecurity mediates the relationship between SI and extra-role performance. The indirect effect was statistically significant ($\beta = -0.072$, $p = 0.019$), and the corresponding confidence interval [-0.141, -0.020] did not include zero, indicating a significant mediating role of job insecurity. These results confirm that SI indirectly reduces extra-role service behaviors by increasing employees' perceptions of job insecurity.

Table 2: Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	β	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
H1. SI → Extra-role performance	-0.232	0.002**	[-0.375, -0.078]
H2. SI → Job insecurity → Extra-role performance	-0.072	0.019*	[-0.141, -0.020]
*p<5%; **p<1%;***p<0.1%			

4. Conclusion, Managerial Implications, and Limitations of the Study
4.1. Discussion

Grounded in the Transactional Model of Stress and Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, this study examined the effects of SI on employees' customer-directed extra-role performance. The results reveal that SI significantly increases employees' perceptions of job insecurity, which, in turn, leads to a decline in extra-role performance. In addition to this indirect effect, SI also exerts a direct negative impact on employees' willingness to engage in discretionary service behaviors that benefit customers. These findings are consistent with prior studies, such as those by Tam & Trang (2024), which emphasize that SI functions as a major workplace stressor which both directly and indirectly affecting their performance beyond formal role requirements.

Furthermore, the results provide empirical support for the Transactional Model of Stress, which posits that employees cognitively appraise and react to stressors in the workplace, and for COR theory, which emphasizes that resource loss triggers conservation behaviors. Supervisor incivility, by threatening employees' sense of respect, inclusion, and job stability, initiates both cognitive (e.g., job insecurity) and behavioral withdrawal (e.g., reduced extra-role efforts), confirming the theoretical framework proposed.

4.2. Managerial Implications

The findings of this study offer several important implications for organizational leaders, particularly in service-oriented industries like aviation. First and foremost, the direct and indirect negative effects of SI on customer-directed extra-role performance highlight the critical need for organizations to foster a respectful and supportive leadership culture. Given that SI not only reduces employees' discretionary service behaviors but also contributes to heightened job insecurity, it is essential for organizations to implement policies and training that promote civility, emotional intelligence, and respectful communication among supervisors (Kim & Shapiro, 2008).

Moreover, employee performance management systems should account for the relational climate between supervisors and subordinates. Regular feedback mechanisms, 360-degree evaluations, and anonymous reporting channels can help identify and mitigate uncivil supervisory behavior early (Atwater & Brett, 2006). Additionally, interventions aimed at reducing job insecurity, such as transparent communication about job expectations and career development opportunities, may buffer the negative effects of incivility and help preserve employees' emotional and motivational resources. For customer-facing roles, especially those requiring high emotional labor (e.g., check-in staff), it is crucial to ensure that employees feel psychologically safe and valued, as this directly influences their willingness to engage in customer-focused extra-role behavior—an essential contributor to service quality and customer satisfaction.

4.3. Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this study provides valuable insights, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw causal inferences between supervisor incivility, job insecurity, and extra-role performance. Future research could employ longitudinal to examine the temporal dynamics of these relationships more accurately. Second, the study relied on self-reported data, which may introduce common method bias, despite efforts to minimize it through careful scale design and statistical validation. Future studies could incorporate multi-source data (e.g., supervisor or peer ratings) to strengthen the robustness of findings. Third, the research was conducted in a specific context—check-in staff at the domestic terminal. While this sample provides a relevant case for studying frontline service roles, the generalizability of findings may be limited. Further research should test the model across different industries and cultural settings to explore the

boundary conditions of these relationships.

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