Customer Incivility from Frequent Customers in the Context of Service Relationships: Critically Exploring Service Employees' Coping Tactics

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Declaration of authorship

I, **Nolla Haidar,** hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed:

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Abstract

Customer incivility constitutes a significant area in human resources management, organisational behaviour and also in the marketing literature. A plethora of studies suggest that customer incivility is widespread among service organisations and renders the atmosphere of the workplace as harmful and detrimental to employees' psychological and physical well-being, due to the abusive environment surrounding them. Although these studies are significant and provide substantial information about incivility, and its devastating impact on frontline employees during service encounters, there is still minimal focus on critically understanding customer incivility specifically during service relationships, within the restaurant industry. In the little research that does exist in the sector, frontliners are predominantly seen by scholars as the victims of the customers. Based on a qualitative study comprising an ethnographic methodology, data is gathered by participant-observation, informal interviews, content analysis, virtual ethnography and also from 12 interviewees (11 male and 1 female service employees) working at a Lebanese "authentic" restaurant, named here Be-Beirut, located in North West London. I argue that customers in this case study are frequent customers; thus, incivility takes a different form as compared to already studied restaurants.

The empirical evidence indicates that many customers act uncivil and their actions are stimulated by either the management through its marketing activities, or by employees due to establishing service relationships with frequent customers. Employees cope with these incivilities in different ways, which could be either individual or collective. The coping tactics of employees are strongly shaped by the organisational power of both the target and the instigator. Those in power were able to impose their construction of incivility on those of less power. Therefore, this thesis broadens our understanding about the tough and stressful work environment that employees suffer from due to their exposure to customer incivility. The data shows that employees are vulnerable and are exposed to incivility due to the toxic management which is positioning them in a weaker power position relative to customers. Managerial and practical implications are discussed.

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Chapter One: Introductory Chapter

1.0 Introduction

Among scholars working on workplace incivility in the service industry there is a prevalent understanding that incivility is drastically increasing, the customer being its main source (Han et al., 2016; Kern and Grandey, 2009; Sliter et al., 2010a) .The impact that customer incivility has on employees and organisations has been a significant topic in the marketing, human resources management and organisation behaviour literature. The evidence from current research shows the negative impact of incivility on employees' burnout and turnover intentions, as well as on organisations' profitability, which makes this topic particularly important (Estes and Wang, 2008; Han et al., 2016; Sliter et al., 2010b) . This research aims to highlight the reasons behind customer incivility, and also it investigates the methods used by employees to cope with the anguish of incivility in the context of service relationships. This is explored by adopting a qualitative methodology and implementing ethnographic methods to collect data. This chapter represents the introduction of my ethnographic research. It starts by explaining my personal motivation to behind conducting this research. It then discusses the background of this topic, defines the research gap, the research aim and objectives, and presents the research questions to be answered throughout this thesis. Consequently, this chapter elaborates on the significance of this research. Finally, the chapter ends with a conclusion, and it presents an overview of the remainder chapters of this thesis.

1.1 Personal motivation

The restaurant industry in London has kept surprising me with its variety and continual growth since I first arrived in the UK to pursue my MSc in 2014. This industry reveals arguably a more dynamic growth pace when compared to its counterparts in the countries I had visited across the world. I always wondered how employees cope with stress because of the excessive demands of customers in such a dynamic market. The dynamics of this industry could be related to three main changes in the economy including urbanisation, globalisation and digitization (Feldman, 2015). Each of these elements suggest that restaurants' role goes beyond providing food and drinks to the customers. Restaurants are capable of shaping the social relations between people, for example by fulfilling customers' needs for connection (Feldman, 2015). Curiosity about this process motivated my interest for an in-depth and systematic exploration of the topic – incentivising the pursuit of a PhD. Being originally from Lebanon, I became interested in conducting my study at a London-based “authentic” Lebanese restaurant.

Like most of the Lebanese abroad, my search for a Lebanese restaurant started back in 2014, when I was desperately looking for an “authentic” Lebanese restaurant in London with as much resemblance to the original cuisine and atmosphere at home as possible. I have noticed through my recurrent visits to the same Lebanese restaurants across London that the majority of customers are frequent customers. I suspected that these customers demand higher expectations of authenticity. In turn, my perception was those employees working at an ethnic “authentic” restaurant could potentially encounter a higher level of incivility, due to the additional and more extensive customers’ demands for experiencing authenticity—when compared to non-authentic restaurants. My suspicion was later supported when I witnessed incidents of incivility specifically practiced by frequent customers across many Lebanese restaurants I have been visiting.

Now that I was in search for an “authentic” Lebanese restaurant to conduct my PhD research, I finally identified such a restaurant and after a few dining experiences, became the frequent customer of Be-Beirut (pseudonym), located in Northwest London. Subsequently, this restaurant became the source of my data collection for this study.

To observe the dynamics of the above chosen restaurant, and the interactions between its customers and employees, I intended to visit it once-a-week over a period of 3 months. I chose ‘Be-Beirut’ as the context of my current research since as a Lebanese customer, this restaurant was the only Lebanese restaurant I found in London, which could be genuinely compared to restaurants found in Lebanon. The restaurant’s management was focused on creating an “authentic” Lebanese identity, which caters mostly to Lebanese expatriates through providing them with an ultimate experience of a Lebanese restaurant setting, traditional food and a service provided by Lebanese employees. This made it quite obvious to me that there might be a clear difference in terms of service employee-customer interactions between this Lebanese ‘authentic’ restaurant and other London-based Lebanese restaurants in general – specifically resulting from the increased level of customer demands and expectations for experiencing a high level of authenticity. Within the following sections, I will expand on the importance of authenticity, and I will also specify the research gap in this area.

1.2 Research background

For decades, researchers in organisational behaviour mainly focused on investigating the impact of negative emotions of service employees —as they experience mistreatment from organisational members (co-workers and supervisors) — on their work and psychological well-being (Feldman, 2015; Leiter et al., 2010; Spence Laschinger et al., 2009). Recently, a growing body of literature on workplace incivility focuses on customers as the main source of incivility. Kern and Grandey (2009) were the first scholars to identify customer incivility as a social stressor — a major source of employees' burnout.

Customer incivility refers to a "low intensity deviant behaviour with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect" (Andersson and Pearson, 1999:457). Employees targeted by customer incivility show greater job-related stress, cognitive distraction, psychological distress, as well as lower job satisfaction, performance, and creativity (Cortina et al., 2001; Han et al., 2016; Rafaeli et al., 2012; Sliter et al., 2012; Van Jaarsveld et al., 2010). Ultimately, this results in higher rates of employees leaving their jobs or being absent from work (Li and Zhou, 2013), which transfers its impact on the overall performance of the organisation (Sliter et al., 2010).

There is a growing managerial concern about the detrimental impact of work-related stress on employees and the organisation (Latack and Havlovic, 1992; Matteson and Ivancevich, 1987).This is estimated to have cost UK employers 10.4 million working days per year, which almost accounts for a total cost of £35 billion (£10.6 billion in sickness absence; £21.2 billion in reduced productivity at work; £3.1 billion in replacing staff who leave their jobs because of their mental health) (Parsonage and Saini, 2017) . Employees working in the service industry, such as in restaurants, show the highest work-related stress amongst other employees working in different industries (*e.g.* oil industry) (Hassard et al., 2014). Customer incivility in the restaurant industry is well known to impose the most negative impact on service employees, due to the long and sheer volume of repeated service interactions with customers (Cho et al., 2016; Gustafsson, 2009).

Additionally, within the restaurant industry, restaurateurs focus on elevating their restaurants' performance to retain happy, satisfied, and loyal customers, which is the main reason behind restaurants' profitability and success (Dick and Basu, 1994; Han et al., 2016; Soriano, 2002) . As the restaurant industry is known for its tendency to keep customers satisfied with the service, service employees in restaurants are put in a weaker power position relative to customers and thus are more prone to be exposed to customer incivility, compared to employees working in other industries, such as call-centers (Cho et al., 2016; Han et al., 2016; Huang and Miao, 2016; Sliter et al., 2010; Sliter et al., 2012).

Evidence from existing research claims that customer incivility imposes negative consequences on service employees due to their engagement with emotional labour, which leads to psychological distress (Adams and Webster, 2013; Cho et al., 2016; Han et al., 2016). A study by Jung and Yoon (2014) surveying 338 family-style restaurant employees shows that emotional labour is an antecedent of emotional dissonance, job stress and turnover intent among restaurant employees. Another study by Han et al. (2016) on 228 frontline service employees working at 28 independent Florida-based restaurants shows that service employees suffer from burnout due to the inherent demanding nature of their job – requiring constant involvement with emotional labour due to customers' incivilities toward them. Cho et al. (2015) claim that customer incivility is potentially negative on the overall performance of a restaurant, adversely influencing its employees, guests, and the organisation. The authors collected data from 239 restaurant employees working at casual dining restaurants. They conclude that employees suffer from elevated levels of emotional exhaustion due to customer incivility. These findings support those reported by Sliter et al., (2010). Other results from a study by Schuster et al., (2016) , collected from 283 service employees working at various restaurants in the Northern and Western parts of India, show that workplace incivility, mainly customer incivility, has a major negative impact on the employees' job satisfaction and turnover intentions.

Clearly, the negative impact of incivility on frontliners is largely related to employees' engagement with emotional labour, specifically engaging with surface acting (Adams and Webster, 2013; Hochschild, 1983). Restaurant frontline employees, also known as emotional labourers, engage in surface acting because they are encouraged to comply with their organisational rules to serve customers "with a smile" even during unpleasant situations (Cho et al., 2016; Grandey et al., 2007a). Suppressing felt emotions proves to have a detrimental impact on employees' psychological, cognitive, and physical health (Sliter et al., 2010; Sliter et al., 2012). Thus, it is expected that there is a considerable rise in the turnover of service employees in the restaurant industry, especially when the stress from the customer is considered one of the significant reasons behind it (Han et al., 2016).

It is undoubtedly significant to acknowledge the negative impact of customer incivility on frontliners in the restaurant industry. However, the majority of research on incivility in the restaurant industry is positivistic and quantitative by nature. By studying incivility from a positivistic perspective, researchers disregard two prominent investigations. First, researchers overlooked the fact that incivility is socially constructed. When we view incivility as a social construct it means that what one employee regards as uncivil, might seem normal for another. Therefore, in the current literature the nature of customer incivility is recognised by many authors using generalisations at a macro level (Bishop et al., 2005). Thus, organisations take incivility as something normal and unproblematic. In other words, they consider incivility as something that normally happens and passes, and they fail to recognise it as a subjective construct (Bishop et al., 2005). In that vein, existing research fails to deeply understand the incivility construct by focusing on individual cases—which this study aims to accomplish. By focusing on individual cases, this study aims at highlighting the core reason behind employees' distress, which might not be directly an issue caused directly by the customer.

In addition to the negative impact of incivility on frontliners, further studies on the restaurant industry tackle the reasons behind incivility. Adams and Webster (2013) found that the weak position of labour, the role of conflict between the customers and workers, and service encounters are major triggers of customer incivility during service interactions. This assertion is possibly linked to the entrenched myth of customer sovereignty in service organisations' systems (Kim et al., 2014c). Customer sovereignty offers a customer the title of a “king” which gives them a superior power over employees (Korczynski and Ott, 2004).

Since organisations abide by the myth of customer sovereignty, employees are expected by the organisation to individually deal with customer incivility. Therefore, employees try to mitigate the negative consequences of customer incivility by attempting to subjectively or individually cope with it (Bishop et al., 2005; Cortina and Magley, 2009). For example, they may try to reduce the gravity of their conditions by smoking and/or drinking alcohol (Pienaar and Willemse, 2008a).

The aforementioned studies on customer incivility in the restaurant industry show that restaurants’ managements individualise incivility, which renders the employees responsible for its occurrence. There are various studies in many contexts such as in hotels and courts (Cortina and Magley, 2009; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Torres et al., 2017) that focus on exploring employees’ coping tactics with customer incivility. To my knowledge there is only one study by (Reynolds and Harris, 2006c) that qualitatively investigates the coping tactics of frontliners in the restaurant context. Although theoretically substantial, the study by Reynolds and Harris (2006) focuses on investigating employees’ coping tactics as they experience customers’ intentional deviance and not the milder forms of misbehaviours such as incivility and therefore, coping tactics are not examined from employees’ subjective stance. In addition to that, the study of Reynolds and Harris (2006) explores employees’ coping tactics during service encounters between employees and customers and hence, it fails to investigate the ways employees cope specifically in the context of service relationships. Therefore, I argue that by exploring employees’ coping tactics from the employees’ perspective I can emphasise on the customer incivility construct, its antecedents, and how do employees cope with it.

Therefore, to my knowledge, there is no existing study which qualitatively and critically investigates customer incivility from a subjective construct and the coping behaviours of service employees when they experience customer incivility in the context of service relationships. As such, the existing literature on the coping tactics promotes little realistic guidance. In fact, these studies provide general notions on service employees’ coping behaviours without critically addressing the problem and offering practical emancipatory methods. Therefore, my study takes an interpretivist approach using qualitative methods to collect data on incivility. The study aims to allow the theory to be grounded in the data and hence; the research agenda emerges from the data rather than being imposed on it (Bishop et al., 2005).

This research explores the coping behaviours of service employees as they experience customer incivility in the context of service relationships. I have mentioned in section 1.1 that I have chosen a Lebanese ‘authentic’ restaurant as my case study. In the sections below I elaborate on the concept of ethnicity, ethnic restaurants, the customers of ethnic restaurants and also on how customer incivility is constructed within the body of these restaurants.

1.2.1 Overview of ethnic restaurants in the UK

The context of this research is a London-based “authentic” Lebanese (ethnic) restaurant whose client base consists largely of customers inside this ethnic group (Lebanese and other Arab customers). I argue that “Be-Beirut” is promoted as an “authentic” Lebanese restaurant, which caters to homesick Lebanese people, as well as those who have had experienced Lebanese food back in Lebanon. Significantly, the customers’ ethnic identity at ‘Be-Beirut’ is homogenised, due to the restaurant’s management focus on promoting authenticity to customers inside the same ethnic group. This narrowed focus on a specific category of customers is fostering customisation of the service provided; thus, encouraging repeat patronage and making customers become frequent comers to the restaurant. As such, I argue that customer incivility takes a particular form in this case study restaurant. The following paragraphs elaborate on the definition of ethnicity and ethnic restaurants to give us a better understanding about the aspects of this kind of restaurant, such as the restaurant environment, settings, food and service.

By definition, ethnic restaurants are recognised as “markers of ethnicity” (Lu and Fine, 1995:536). Many social scientists agree that we are at the beginning of understanding ethnicity, in spite of the many already existing definitions in literature (Hale, 2004). For Connor (1993:40) it is “a conviction that members of the nation are all ancestrally related, and they have not hesitated to appeal to this sense of kinship”. For Erikson (1993:1), ethnicity “emerges and is made relevant through social situations and encounters, and through people’s ways of coping with the demands and challenges of life”, which means that ethnicity is socially constructed due to recurrent interactions between the “ethnic group” and the public (Lu and Fine, 1995). Considerably, ethnicity is made real by the economically grounded transactions through the promotion of “ethnic food” at restaurants (Lu and Fine, 1995).

During the 19th century, early immigrants from the colonial territories such as Hong Kong and India were the pioneers in introducing ethnic-styled restaurants into the UK market. Ethnic restaurants are establishments functioning as a place to serve traditional food belonging to a specific culture or region with distinctive cultural elements from the culture of the host country. Wood and Muñoz (2007) refer to ethnic restaurants as ‘cultural ambassadors’ that communicate foreign food and not just serve as eating establishments.

In the 20th century, the UK restaurant industry experienced a rapid expansion of ethnic restaurants due to the growing populations of the immigrants and expatriates, such as from India and Bangladesh (Leung, 2010). The UK neo-liberal economic movement that promotes contact between cultures has played a primary role in promoting the exchange of cultural norms between the immigrants, expatriates, and the people of the host country (Appadurai, 1996; Kitcharoen, 2007). Consequently, this transnationalism has also encouraged citizens of the UK to travel to Asia, the Far East and the Caribbean, which has transformed their tastes to become adventurous and cosmopolitan (Leung, 2010) . Therefore, affirming the fact that ethnic food has now become an integral part of the social life of the European people generally, and the British people specifically (Camarena-Gomez and Sanjuan, 2008; Leung, 2010; Möhring, 2008).

London is considered one of the significant sites in the UK for its historic ethnic culinary culture, in which restaurants are central in forming the social, culture and economic life. From a social and cultural perspective, ethnic restaurants play a major role in shaping the food consumption of the British people contributing to “the homogenisation of culture on a global scale” (Beriss and Sutton, 2007:3). However, this homogenisation gave rise to social identities which emerged through the practices of kinship, rituals, and consumers’ debates over authenticity (Beriss and Sutton, 2007; Tsai and Lu, 2012).

From an economic perspective, the de-regulated and free-market rhetoric of the UK has attracted considerable foreign investments, especially in the ethnic restaurant business. This significant growth of investment in dine-in ethnic restaurants is clearly an indicator of an ever-expanding market with; consequently, a fiercer competitive environment. For example, the growth of the dine-in ethnic restaurant sector is estimated to increase by 27% to £6.8 billion between 2016 and 2021 (Mintel Group, 2017)[1]. Customers who visit ethnic restaurants appear to be of very diverse demographics, due to the increasing presence of individuals from various cultures, residing in a country different of their own (Josiam and Monteiro, 2004). Thus, individual customers carry their own, potentially different, definitions of authenticity. In other words, customers seeking authenticity at an ethnic restaurant could be either shaped their experiences of traditional food, a service provided, price, and/or even the authentic design of a restaurant (Sukalakamala and Boyce, 2007). This highlights the notion behind the social construction of authenticity, which asserts that one customer's evaluation of a restaurant's authenticity is different from another customer's view of authenticity depending on each person's experience.

Consequently, restaurants' managers might be enforced to provide their service employees with the proper training to demonstrate robust performance. In order to demonstrate a robust performance, researchers claim that managers will have to put a lot of effort in training their frontline employees on ways to deal with consumers of certain demographic segments that allows them to maximize the robustness of the perceived service, and also will help them understand and address customers' complaints in a way that could foster customers' repeated patronage and encourage a positive word of mouth (Jang et al., 2012; Lim et al., 2008).

Given the fact that in general, customer retention is economically more advantageous than constantly reaching out to new customers, a high level of competition makes it economically more compelling for restaurateurs to retain a high rate of frequently-visiting customers (Bove and Johnson, 2000; Dick and Basu, 1994) and therefore, exploring practical methods to retaining customers is of critical importance for ethnic restaurants in the UK. Equally, investigating the

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[1] Mintel group, 2017, Ethnic restaurants and takeaways http://brakes-source.co.uk/assetfiles/Ethnic_Restaurants_and_Takeaways_-_UK_-_January_2017.pdf. Accessed: 17 March 2019.

potential root-cause of the key factors affecting customers' retention (*e.g.* offering a good service as a result of "happy" service employees) and minimising such adverse impacts is crucially becoming more important in such a dynamic market in the UK. The next section identifies customers' dining experiences at ethnic restaurants in the UK.

1.2.2 An overview of customers' dining experiences at UK's ethnic restaurants

In this section I provide a general overview about customers' dining experiences at ethnic restaurants in the UK market. Worthy to note that, the sample I discuss in this section are customers who are outsiders of the culture of a particular ethnic restaurant (*e.g*. English people dining at a Spanish restaurant). Therefore, I will not be using this sample as my data since my focus is on customers from inside the ethnic group (*e.g.* Arab customers dining at a Lebanese restaurant). I have added this section to highlight the prominence of the ethnic restaurant industry in the UK, which is one of the major reasons behind my chosen case study, and also to emphasise on the role of authenticity in defining customers' attitudes and perceptions about an ethnic "authentic" restaurant.

The rise of ethnic restaurants in the UK is partly related to the exposure of the British consumers to various ethnic groups operating mainstream restaurants across the country (Jamal, 1998). Since 2012, the number of customers dining at ethnic restaurants in the UK has rapidly grown. A market update from the market intelligence provider "Key Note", highlights that there was a 3.2% increase in food consumption at ethnic restaurants in the UK (Shaun, 2014). It also reports a 14.8% in growth between 2014 and 2018 (Shaun, 2014).

For example, in 2015, 79% of customers in the UK dined at Chinese, Mexican, Caribbean, South American, African and Middle Eastern ethnic restaurants (Mintel Group, 2017). These ethnic restaurants are not mainstream restaurants, rather they provide customers with an "exotic and unique foods and experience different cultures through the dining experience" (Jang et al., 2012:990).The uniqueness of an ethnic restaurant lies on the level of "authenticity" of the food, the service and the restaurant setting as perceived by customers (Jang et al., 2012). This increase in the interest of consumers in ethnic dining experiences encouraged more restaurants to open.

Consequently, as of 2016, the number of ethnic restaurants has dramatically increased across various cuisines: North American restaurants (American and Tex-Mex) increased by 66%, Thai restaurants increased by 51% and Middle Eastern restaurants increased by 37% (Savills, 2016). It is clear that UK consumers have widely accepted ethnic restaurants as they have the opportunity to experience a different atmosphere than that of local restaurants *e.g.* English pubs. Not to mention, ethnic restaurants catering to clientele outside the ethnic group tend to provide food which is “traditional” but is adjusted to local taste. This type of restaurants differs from the case study restaurant chosen for this research, which aims at providing food for customers inside the ethnic group. This puts a higher pressure on restaurateurs to find the “real” and “traditional” ingredients (Hughes, 1995), which aid in producing food which is similar to that found back home.

Customers who experience a new dining atmosphere at an ethnic restaurant indicate that they become familiar with a new culture different from their own (Leung, 2010). There are several reasons why customers choose to dine at ethnic restaurants. These include “food with a variety of tastes”, “like food of a different ethnicity/culture”, “food different from home” and “the search for healthier food options” (Leung, 2010; Roseman, 2007; Sukalakamala and Boyce, 2007). Therefore, it is evident that customers of ethnic restaurants are not only keen to dine at such restaurants, but they are also willing to obtain inter-cultural learning and hence, to expand their cultural awareness in a place demonstrating national and cultural characteristics (Tsai and Lu, 2012). As such, ethnic restaurants represent a form of an international brand, bridging between food and culture (Tsai and Lu, 2012).

Noticeably, customers’ impressions about their experience of authenticity at ethnic restaurants is highly related to their level of satisfaction of the food they eat and/or the service performance of the service employees (Okumus et al., 2007; Tsai and Lu, 2012). In other words, authenticity is experiential by nature and socially constructed (Jeannerat, 2013a); thus, in order to maintain a positive reputation underlying an authentic image, restaurants are advised to focus on the basics *i.e.* the food, service, décor, atmosphere and convenience (Sukalakamala and Boyce, 2007). Therefore, every ethnic dining experience may either positively or negatively influence customers’ expectations and perceptions (Sukalakamala and Boyce, 2007). The authors’ claim is reported upon their investigation of customers' perceptions, acceptance and expectations in relation to an "authentic" Thai dining experience in the United States of America.

Based on the above, consumers expect ethnic "authentic" restaurants to offer special and unique dining experiences (Leung, 2010). The restaurants' management, as well as the service employees are therefore required to reinforce their efforts to provide the demanding customers with what they expect and also to meet the high expectations of their authentic dining experience. This may indicate that the pressure experienced by service employees at ethnic "authentic" restaurants may put them in a serious position to encounter customer incivility. Therefore, customer incivility might have especially deleterious health, organisational and family-related outcomes on service employees working at ethnic restaurants. Sliter and his colleagues (Sliter et al., 2010) found that customer incivility may lead to health-related problems such as emotional exhaustion — a facet of burnout. Emotional exhaustion, in turn, is found to reduce the work performance of employees (Sliter et al., 2010). It may also result in organisation-related behaviours, such as a spiral of incivility from employees toward customers or from employees toward their co-workers (Greenbaum et al., 2014; Torres et al., 2017). Similarly, customer incivility might also impact work-family relationships; employees may carry their emotional exhaustion with them to their home, which may severely affect their family members alike (Greenbaum et al., 2014).

1.2.3 Theoretical background: Customer incivility in restaurants

Following the discrepancies among social, cultural, and economic identities, restaurateurs and restaurant managers are put under a lot of pressure in order to find alternative options to retain their customers by going beyond simply fulfilling their dietary needs. The shift steers towards investing in training employees on ways to offer customers an excellent service experience (Hur and Ha, 2019). Clearly, the emphasis on the role of the employees became one of the main factors in shaping the customers' perception of quality towards the brand — a particular restaurant in the case of this study.

The employee's duty rests on ensuring that consumers' perceptions of the restaurant and the projected image of the restaurant are in a consistent relationship (Hur and Adler, 2011). This means that it is essential that the employees understand the proper behaviour they need to demonstrate while interacting with customers (Hur and Adler, 2011). Employees' focus to behaving properly in front of the customer is part of what Goffman called "performance" in his book "The presentation of self in everyday life" (Goffman, 1978) . He states that (Goffman, 1990:15)

> "A performance may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants".

Goffman clearly introduces performance as part of his theory "the impression management". The theory of impression management sees service employees as actors on a theatre stage. These actors have two different roles; one in which the employee performs on the front stage, and one where they perform on the backstage. The front-stage performance is the moment when the employees attempt to engender a certain positive impression with the audience they interact with, the customers in this case (Goffman, 1990). While in the backstage, the employees might be acting genuinely with their colleagues without any need to adjust their actions to impress an audience.

Following the "impression management" theory, Hochschild (1983) introduces the theory of "emotional labour" in her book "The managed heart". Hochschild argues that during service interactions, managers expect their employees to show socially accepted emotions. These expectations give rise to "feeling rules", which become expected norms during such interactions (Hochschild, 1983). For example, a nurse should put on a friendly and cheerful face when dealing with patients (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) refer to the term as "display rules" (Ekman, 1973) rather than "feeling rules" since the former refers to emotions that are socially-accepted rather than being genuinely felt. This distinction integrates the emotional labour with the impression management, where emotional labour display rules became part of the dramaturgical perspective of Goffman (1990).

Obviously, the role of service employees is not solely delivering their core duties but also complementing it with socially-accepted impressions *i.e.* to serve with a friendly smile (Grandey et al., 2005). This notion is entrenched in the myth of customer sovereignty. The idea behind sovereignty gives the customer the feeling of being sovereign and powerful during a service interaction. Research argues that organisations which promote sovereignty, instruct their employees to engage in emotional labour (*e.g.* surface acting), which is one of the major causes of their mental and psychological strain and thus; may lead to their turnover intentions (Bedi and Schat, 2017; Grandey et al., 2007b; Han et al., 2016). To surpass such a psychological strain, Grandey et al., (2005) suggest giving employees some job autonomy that is supposed to increase employees' resource of intrinsic motivation. Consequently, the intrinsic motivation might fill the gap of resources already lost by emotion regulation (Grandey et al. 2005).

The aforementioned claims are prominent in depicting the complex job of employees working in the service industry by focusing on emotional labour as the mediator between customer incivility and employees' psychological strain. Additionally, previous research highlights the importance of emotional intelligence and employee empowerment as a tool to replace personal resources lost while employees attempt to regulate their emotions. However, none of the studies state the role of the organisation as a covert reason behind employees' burnout and turnover intentions, rather they focus on presenting the overt reason behind employees' strain which is mainly the customer and also the nature of the service job, which is naturally demanding from employees, especially during service encounters (Choi et al., 2014; Bishop et al., 2005; Grandey et al., 2005).

During service interactions with customers, employees are not only expected to serve the customers "with a smile", but also to absorb their incivility and to devise individual tactics to deal with the job and the corresponding emotional strain alike. Customer incivility can encourage service employees to quit their job due to the associated adverse impact on their physical and mental health (Han et al., 2016). Therefore, customer incivility may cause restaurants a retention problem of their service employees. This is considered highly problematic and costly for the overall economy of any country as more employees quit their jobs, businesses' spending on training new employees increases. Also, the quality standards of service drops as a result of losing the more experienced employees (Hinkin and Bruce Tracey, 2000). Although it is not the aim of my study to aid managers in learning ways to retain their employees, practically understanding service employees' responses to incivility will aid managers to find practical ways to increase their employees' job satisfaction and to lessen their intentions to quit; thus, increasing profits whilst minimizing the training costs.

This research work is conducted at an ethnic "authentic" Lebanese restaurant located in the city of London. I expect that customer incivility at this case study restaurant is different from that of other ethnic and non-ethnic restaurants, and therefore further studies are deemed necessary to investigate such interactions. The reasons behind my assumptions are explained in the section below.

1.3 Research gap

I mentioned above that to my knowledge there is no research which critically and qualitatively investigates employees' coping behaviours when they encounter incivility from frequent customers, in the context of service relationships. I argue that customers at this case study are frequent customers; thus, incivility takes a different form from already studied restaurants.

Existing literature objectively tackles the negative impact of customer incivility on service employees working in the restaurant industry (Han et al., 2016; Cho et al., 2016). Although theoretically substantial, existing research is mostly occupied with understanding from a positivistic perspective the consequences of customer incivility occurring only during service encounters. Therefore, there is still a major gap in the literature on qualitatively understanding the subjective reactions of employees to customer incivility during service relationships with frequent customers.

Gutek *et al.,* (1999b) identify three types of service interactions between the customer, the service employee, and the organisation as: service encounters, service pseudorelationships and service relationships. *Service encounters* occur when the customer interacts with a different service provider every time, but at different organisations. *Service pseudorelationships* is a type of service encounter in which the customer interacts with different service providers, but within the same organisation. *Service relationships* is the case when a customer identifies an employee as their own service provider and sometimes without even knowing their first and/or last name.

Unlike service encounters, during service relationships employees engage in frequent interactions with the same customer (Mattila, 2001). Existing research on service relationships highlight the effectiveness of such kind of relationships on customer patronage, in leveraging customer satisfaction and creating trust between the two parties (Aurier and N'Goala, 2010; Bitner, 1995; Mattila, 2001). However, no study has yet tackled the dark side of service relationships on employees' well-being and overall job performance.

I suggest that customers who dine at this full-service ethnic Lebanese restaurant are frequent customers; thus, most have formed a service relationship with employees due to their recurrent visits to the restaurant. Through service relationships, I argue that customers are gaining more power relative to employees and thus, putting employees in a vulnerable position to experience incivility. Since I am looking at incivility from a subjective construct, I suggest that incivility is socially constructed and thus, it takes a different form from already studied restaurants. To my knowledge, there is no research which investigates customer incivility in the restaurant industry through which employees establish a service relationship with customers. This research suggests that incivility during service relationships takes on a particular form in the context of a full-service ethnic "authentic" restaurant. This may require employees to adopt specific forms of coping strategies.

Such a knowledge gap in the existing literature has a direct adverse impact on the service quality offered at full-service ethnic "authentic" restaurants. Consequently, the management is left blind to employees' suffering, leading to an inability of the management to help them tackle the problem and hence, improve their service performance. Therefore, this study will highlight the role of the employees as well as the management in constructing customer incivility at this case study restaurant.

The sections above clearly identify that customer incivility is an endemic phenomenon, which has a severe negative impact on the restaurant industry due to employees' emotional exhaustion, which in turn, leads to a reduced job satisfaction and overall performance — ultimately encouraging them to quit their jobs. The significance of the above research area lies in its actual impact on both employees and the economy, bundled with my personal motivation to study the restaurant industry. The next section is on the research objectives.

1.4 Research aim and objectives

I mentioned earlier in section 1.2 that in contrast to many studies on customer incivility, this study adopts an interpretivist approach, by using qualitative methods to collect data on the theoretical and conceptual relationships of incivility. Grounded in the data, this approach extracts meaning from the data collected from the fieldwork notes (observations and participant-observation), semi-structured interviews and informal conversations with service employees, as well as through virtual ethnography and content analysis to identify relationships to build a theory.

This research work is therefore centered on service employees working at a full-service ethnic “authentic” restaurant based in Northwest London. This study aims to study the coping strategies of service employees when are faced with uncivil customers, more specifically, the customers who tend to build *service relationships* in a restaurant setting as opposed to common incivility *via* routine service encounters. I tend to argue that this specific ethnic restaurant has many frequent customers and thus, incivility takes a particular form in this context and is therefore, experienced in a certain way, which could be potentially different from other restaurant settings. Through this ethnography research work, I aim to:

-Explore how Lebanese restaurant owners make their restaurant setting and food appealing to customers inside the ethnic group

- Investigate how customer incivility is constructed in this particular restaurant setting
- Examine the type and nature of the common uncivil customer behaviours
- Explore how individual service employees cope with customer incivility by accounting for the role of gender of the existing employees in devising different coping strategies.

1.5 Research questions

According to the aim of this research, the primary research questions to be addressed in this study are as follows:

1. How does the owner design his restaurant and recruit his employees to appeal to customers from inside the ethnic group?

2. How do the managerial practices affect the way that customer incivility is constructed within this case study full-service ethnic “authentic” restaurant?
3. How do the service employees affect the way customer incivility is constructed within this case study full-service ethnic “authentic” restaurant?
4. What is the nature and type of the common customers’ uncivil behaviours at this case study restaurant?
5. How do the service employees cope with specific forms of customers’ uncivil behaviours?
6. How do the coping strategies adopted by female employees differ from male employees?

1.6 Significance of this study

In seeking to answer these questions, this research is able to identify several techniques that frontline employees use to cope with incivility of frequent customers, during service relationships. New insights are generated, which bring forward the significant role that the management and service employees’ construction of incivility play in identifying the ways that employees use to cope with incivility. Particularly, these findings identify the prominent role that the management play not only in identifying how employees cope, but also in being the central reason behind causing incivility to occur. The findings also shed light on the distinct power between customers and employees, which put the latter in a vulnerable power position; thus, leads to experiencing incivility. These findings are explained in more detail in chapters 5 and 6, which represent the main contributions of this research.

This research builds on existing literature on customer incivility and will highlight the core reason behind employees’ suffering during service interactions with customers; and how do employees cope with it. By doing so, restaurant managers will become aware of the adverse impact of customer incivility on their employees, which is caused by their toxic managerial practices, as well by their marketing strategies. Since the success of an organisation is heavily reliant on employees’ excellent service interaction with customers, the outcomes of this research might enable restaurant managers to identify and enhance their efforts to foster job satisfaction and to boost the overall productivity of their employees *via* a practical managerial intervention approach. Understanding employees’ responses to the anguish of customer incivility helps managers to learn new ways in managing their employees and thus to reduce, prevent and/or eliminate the negative impact of customer incivility on their service employees. Therefore, when restaurant managers secure happy employees, employees’ performance increases and hence, this will lead to securing happy customers who might become loyal and frequent customers. Retaining loyal and happy customers will decrease organisations' costs to acquire new customers and hence, to increase their profitability.

Consequently, the results of this study are expected to offer an invaluable opportunity to address hospitality HR management, organisational behaviour and marketing issues in an industry recognised for its poor work conditions, low pay rates and low levels of unionisation (Reynolds and Harris, 2006). One of the major issues is the extreme utility of the notion of customer sovereignty by restaurants' managements, which disregards the deviance of the social exchange between customers and their employees (Babin and Babin, 1996; Reynolds and Harris, 2006a) .

Additionally, this research highlights the significance of endorsing training schemes for employees' empowerment, which train them on how to deal with tough incidents they face at work. Besides, the restaurants' managements could also plan to engage their employees in fringe benefits schemes to make them feel valuable to the organisation and to help diminish their feelings of work-stress.

1.7 Conclusion

This introductory chapter outlines the rationale behind the study through providing a summary of the research background, the research gap and the research objectives of this study, followed by a paragraph on the significance of this study to service organisations, especially restaurants. Chapter two explores the literature on misbehaviours generally, and specifically expands on the literature on customer incivility, emotional labour and the coping behaviours of employees, while encapsulating the existing theories used in previous literature. Chapter three focuses on the methodology by outlining the importance of this qualitative-ethnographic study, and also discussing the grounded-theory approach to the data. Chapter four is the first empirical chapter which explores the case study restaurant settings and highlights the relationships between the members of this case study restaurant. Chapter five investigates the managerial practices, as well as the individual construction of customer incivility in this case study restaurant. Chapter six examines the coping behaviours of service employees when they experience customer incivility. Finally, chapter seven is a concluding chapter on key points and findings. It includes a discussion section and also presents the limitations of the current study and suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

For many years, customer misbehaviours remain the focus of many researchers in the service industry. Although, these misbehaviours have been studied from many perspectives in terms of its antecedents and consequences on employees, the current research mainly focuses on specific forms such as deviance, violence, aggression, bullying and harassment (Bishop et al., 2005; Cortina et al., 2001; Fullerton and Punj, 1993; Lugosi, 2019). Nonetheless, in the two past decades the body of research is more focused on incivility (Andersson and Pearson, 1999), especially among many scholars interested in human resources management, organisational behaviour and also marketing, specifically on the service industry (Cho et al., 2016; Diefendorff et al., 2005; Han et al., 2016; Sliter et al., 2010; Sliter et al., 2012). Despite its popularity, both scholars and practitioners struggle to discern the major perpetrator and the victims of incivility. This implies that, the current body of research lacks the depiction of the major cause behind incivility and the ways to reduce and/or eliminate its negative impact on organisational members-the employees in the case of this study. The ambiguities in perpetrators' intentions coupled with the impact of incivility on targets raise numerous disputes among scholars (Wu et al., 2014) .

This chapter begins by providing an overview of customer misbehaviour research. This includes accentuating a comprehensive critical review of the existing literature on customer deviance in general. I must acknowledge that I will be exploring the literature on customer deviance to emphasise on the reason why I have chosen to investigate a milder form of misbehaviour, which is incivility. Later, I will explore deeper the construct of customer incivility, detailing its presence in the core of the service industry and presenting its common definition. The analysis intends to depict how incivility differs from other forms of customer misbehaviours in its forms, antecedents and consequences on employees. This chapter will cover the existing body of literature in terms of its relevance to the objectives addressed in this study. This allows me to define the gap in literature and helps to rationalize the proposed research questions. In this research, I intend to argue that the case study ethnic "authentic" restaurant has many frequent customers and thus customer incivility takes particular forms in this context and is therefore, experienced in a certain way which could be potentially different from other already-studied restaurant settings. I will expand on this argument after highlighting the gaps in existing research on the customer misbehaviour literature.

This chapter is divided in three parts. Part one provides an overview of the various divisions of customers' misbehaviours during a service interaction, whilst investigating the work done on customer deviance generally and customer incivility specifically. Part two critically explores the work done on the antecedents of customers' misbehaviours. Part three focuses on the coping strategies of service employees. Therefore, I aim to discuss contemporary issues pertaining to customer incivility, emotional labour, and the coping strategies of service employees by critically investigating the prior works.

2.1 Customer misbehaviours

Service employees working in the hospitality industry are entitled by their management to satisfy the needs of customers to increase their loyalty to the firm. Although customers are expected to behave rationally and respectfully with employees, many scholars note that some customers cross the lines of an expected service interaction and thus engage in various forms of misbehaviours. Fullerton and Punj (2004:1239) were able to provide us with an integrative definition of customers misbehaviours by defining them as "behavioural acts by consumers, which violate the generally accepted norms of conduct in consumption situations, and thus disrupt the consumption order. It represents the dark, negative side of the consumer" (also cited in Lugosi, 2019).

The vast majority of literature explores the various kinds of interpersonal mistreatments in the workplace such as violence and aggression (Bishop et al., 2005; Cortina et al., 2001). However, further research differentiates between two perspectives on the nature of customer misbehaviours (Kim et al., 2014a). The first perspective violates the socially constructed standards of a normal service interaction, but its intent to harm the target is ambiguous, such as customer incivility (Andersson and Pearson, 1999; Kim et al., 2014). The second perspective is described as deliberate and intentional to harm the target violating the expected norms of the service interaction, such as jay customer, aberrant, deviant, and violent (Lugosi, 2019; Bishop et al., 2005; Kim et al., 2014; Fullerton and Punj, 1993). In order to differentiate between customer incivility and deviance, I will be exploring both literatures and highlighting the gaps. The next section depicts an overview of the literature on customer deviance, its forms and consequences.

2.1.1 Overview of customer deviance, its forms and consequences

Numerous researchers examine various conceptualizations of customer deviance (Dootson et al., 2016; Harris and Daunt, 2011; Lugosi, 2019). The most popular terms that refer to customer deviance are jay customers, aggressive, violent, dysfunctional, sexual harassment, and deviant behaviour (Bishop et al., 2005; Cortina et al., 2001; Cortina and Berdahl, 2008; Fullerton and Punj, 1993; Kim et al., 2014; Lugosi, 2019). All these forms of deviance slightly differ in their conceptualization by scholars, but they mostly agree that the intentionality of customers performing them is verified (Lugosi, 2019). In their study on customer misbehaviour, Fullerton and Punj (2004) are able to construct a typology of various customers misbehaviours which have an overt intent to harm the target by inflicting injury to organisational members (verbal abuse, physical abuse), to other customers (jumping queue), to the merchandise and service (shoplifting), toward financial assets (credit card fraud), and to physical or electronic premises (vandalism). Similarly, Gursoy et al., (2017) identify seven types of disruptive customer behaviours that negatively affect the service experience of other customers are: (1) “oral abusers” who use profanity with customers and employees, (2) “outlandish requesters”, or what (Belding, 2004) calls them “wishy-washy Wendy’s”, they are customers who waste the time of the employee due to their immersion in the cult of the customer, which is based on the ‘the customer is always right’, (4) “hysterical shouters” are those who orally abuse others, but intend to make a scene out of it, (5) “poor hygiene manners” are those who smell bad, change diapers in front of people in a restaurant, or cough around others, (6) “service rule breakers” are those who talk loudly on the phone, and lastly (7) “ignorant customers” or “time vampires” (Belding, 2004), are those who keep on chatting after they finish food while others are waiting, or they stay in store after closing time. In the same vein, (Daunt and Harris, 2012) collected data from customers in shopping malls, and they highlight that the three forms of customers’ misbehaviours that violate the norms of social conduct are “petty norm infringement” such as engaging in illegitimate complaining, “felonious norm infringement” such as theft or leaving without paying, and “belligerent norm infringement” such as intentional damage of servicescape or the well-being of employees. Likewise, Harris and

Reynolds (2004) also offer a comprehensive typology of eight forms of jaycustomer behaviours that are; (1) compensation letter writers which is similar to illegitimate complaints and petty norm infringement; (2) Undesirable customers (3) property abusers; (4) service workers who behave dysfunctionally since they were in that position previously (5) Vindictive customers who perform malicious behaviours for personal gains (6) Oral abusers who are similar to ego hunters, (7) physical abusers (8) sexual predators who overtly express sexual desires. These misbehaviours differ in their position on a horizontal continuum ranging from covert vandalism to overt public display and a vertical continuum ranging from financial ego gains to non-financial.

Customer deviant behaviours impact customers, employees and the organisation during a service interaction (Daunt and Harris, 2012; Gursoy et al., 2017; Harris and Reynolds, 2003; Harris and Reynolds, 2004). In their study Harris and Reynolds (2003) claim that deviant behaviours pose various consequences on employees such as long-term psychological effects, short-term emotional effects, as well as behavioural and physical consequences. As for customers, a deviant behaviour by one customer might encourage other customers to engage with the same act (domino effect). Moreover, the negative impact of customers' deviance might have an impact on the organisation by causing it direct and/or indirect financial costs (Harris and Reynolds, 2003).

Corresponding to the classifications of the various forms of deliberate customers' misbehaviours and their consequences, these misbehaviours differ with their breadth, intent, possible gains and also the context where the misbehaviour occurs (Harris and Reynolds, 2004). Furthermore, despite their inconsistencies, the customer is being the common perpetrator for such acts (Fullerton and Punj, 2004). In this sense, the data emphasises that customers are being the source of their own frustration during a service setting (Harris and Reynolds, 2004). In other words, customers are being the perpetrators and the victims of their own acts. Not to mention, this frustration is also victimizing employees and the overall performance of the organisation. Although the main focus of researchers in this area is focused on identifying customers' intentional forms of deviance and its impact on the organisation and employees, there is still a gap in literature to identify the milder forms of deviance, such as incivility, and this gives the incivility construct a significant role to be investigated in the body of this research.

2.1.2 Overview of customer incivility and its forms

Regardless of their occupation, gender, ethnicity, or religion, humans must be treated respectfully. When you treat others with respect, you expect to be treated indicatively which determines the harmonious living in a society (Sliter et al., 2010). Knowing that universally this should be the case, service employees are seldom treated differently (Sliter et al., 2010). There is a growing concern about workplace incivility which has attracted the interest of academics in many fields (Pearson et al., 2001). This interest flourished in research, where recent studies on the workplace are more focused on customers as the main source of incivility (Dienfendorff and Croyle, 2008; Kern and Grandey, 2009; Sliter et al., 2010; Sliter et al., 2012). Ample research examine the customer incivility construct in various service sectors such as call-centers, hospitals, schools and restaurants (Grandey et al., 2004b; Han et al., 2016; Reio Jr and Sanders-Reio, 2011).

Although incivility is explored by many researchers, they all agree on one definition of incivility, being a "low-intensity deviant behaviour with an ambiguous intent to harm the target in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect… uncivil behaviours are characteristically: rude and discourteous, displaying lack of regard for others" (Andersson & Pearson, 1999, 457).

Examples on customers' uncivil acts, as inferred by service employees, include "neglecting the presence of the employee, answering the phone with a "yeah," neglecting to say thank you or please, using voice mail to screen calls, leaving a half cup of coffee behind to avoid having to brew the next pot" (Andersson and Pearson, 1999; Rosen et al., 2016; Welbourne et al., 2016). Accordingly, incivility should not be confused with other forms of customers' acts such as deviant misbehaviour (Daunt and Harris, 2011), aggression (Grandey et al., 2004a; LeBlanc and Kelloway, 2002; Leymann, 1996a), bullying (Leymann, 1996) and violence (Bishop et al., 2005; Boyd, 2002). As previously discussed in section 1.1 the common characteristic of all deviant forms is that they are deliberately initiated by customers to harm the target, and the target can easily interpret them as overtly deviant (Schilpzand et al., 2016). However, in the case of incivility the victim (employee) has no solid evidence on knowing the intentionality of the perpetrators (customers) while performing uncivil acts (Andersson and Pearson, 1999).

Henceforth, the ambiguous nature of customer incivility gives it a distinguished characteristic in which an employee might perceive a customer's incivility as an intentional behaviour to harm the target, while the same behaviour might be perceived as unintentional by another individual (Hershcovis, 2011; Wu et al., 2014) . Moreover, the instigator (customer) might have an intention to harm the target (employee), but the target does not realise it as a form of harm (Andersson and Pearson, 1999). This ambiguity in intentions and how employees perceive it may cause the target to interpret incivility differently providing a boundary condition of the thin line which separates incivility from deviance. In my study, I argue that when service employees establish service relationships with frequent customers, customers' intentions are ambiguous. Therefore, I claim that some employees might perceive customers' acts as uncivil and others might perceive the same act as normal depending on each person's experience and perception.

Since the reputation of service organisations is constructed on delivering excellent service to their customers, the management's failure to address and prevent customer incivility, such as verbally abusing employees, might gradually undermine employees' efforts to deliver excellent service (Spence Laschinger et al., 2009). Therefore, the prevalence of customer incivility in the ever-expanding service industry gives a solid reason why investigating this construct is a significant body of research. It acknowledges employers about the risk their employees are put into, whose impact is transferred to the overall performance of the organisation.

2.1.3 Customer incivility, emotional labour and its consequences on employees

Service-oriented organisations, specifically restaurants, regularly train their employees on the mantras 'the customer is always right' and 'the customer is a king', and that employees should always provide a service 'with a smile' (Han et al., 2016; Rafaeli et al., 2012). Therefore, organisations require their employees to endure the frustrations and complaints of customers, which are largely uncivil and thus, they break the norms of mutual respect in an organisation. Andersson and Pearson (1999) are the first scholars to introduce the issue on incivility in the workplace and its relative consequences on employees and the overall organisation. Although employees are experiencing incivility, the management requires them to follow strict organisational rules and policies by regulating their expressive emotions that comply with the organisational display rules of positive emotions, which are annotated with the phrase “service with a smile” (Bolton and Boyd, 2016; Hochschild, 1983; Mo and Shi, 2017; Sliter et al., 2010). This is called emotional labour. Emotional labour during service interactions between employees and customers directs employees’ engagement with highly structured service interactions, such that it appears to the customer that they are in charge of the interaction (Korczynski, 2003).

However, such an interaction tends to be a fragile process; consequently, customers enchantment might turn into disillusionment, which leads customers to start acting abusive with the employees (Korczynski, 2002; Ritzer, 2005). Such a phenomenon on customer entitlement is previously discussed by Fisk and Neville (2011) and Sliter and Jones (2016) where they claim that the unmet expectations of customers drive customer incivility during a service interaction. The section below elaborates on this notion. In accordance with Hochschild’s (1983, 1987) seminal work on emotional labour, Ashforth and Tomiuk (2000) and Grandey (2000) differentiate between two techniques of display rules *i.e.* surface and deep acting. Surface acting denotes to the effort in which an employee puts to alter his/her facial expressions, gestures and his/her tone to comply with the attitude he/she aims to reveal during a service interaction (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). The psychological term for this state, as created by Hochschild (1983), is called "emotive dissonance" which is the sudden change of genuine feeling to a fake one. For example, Hochschild (1983) gives an example of a flight attendant who tries to hide her fear and anxiety while facing severe discomfort on board:

> “Even though I'm a very honest person, I have learned not to allow my face to mirror my alarm or my fright. I feel very protective of my passengers. My voice might quiver a little during the announcements, but somehow I feel we could get them to believe the best” (Hochschild, 1983:107)

This flight attendant applied surface acting by behaving in a way that contradicts what she is, in fact, feeling. This is similar to when a person tries to put on a fake smile while masking their true, genuine inner emotions (Lee et al., 2015) .The flight attendant's engagement in surface acting backs up the “theatre” metaphor created by Goffman (1959), which implies that employees tend to fake their actual emotions to fit in a certain situation at the workplace.

Whereas deep acting is a condition whereby employees express their emotions and feelings the way they feel comfortable in displaying (Ashforth and Humphrey,1993). Hochschild (1983) distinguishes between surface acting and deep acting by stating that the former is the state by which individuals "fool others" and the latter is the state by which individuals "fool themselves". She also claims that normally a person engages in surface acting in their daily life with their family, colleagues and with any other social encounters such as when dealing with customers. It is the effort and pressure that a person puts on their own self to suppress or alter any emotional state that does not align with their personal or professional life (Hochschild, 1983). Employees who frequently engage with emotion management behaviours, such as engaging in surface acting or deep acting, experience elevated levels of emotional strain, such as burnout (Mo and Shi, 2017). Consequently, this emotional strain is contingent to employees' job-related outcomes such as reducing their service performance, their job satisfaction, and it also results in encouraging them to quit their jobs or to change their profession (Meier et al., 2013; Walsh and Bartikowski, 2013; Yang and Chang, 2008). The source of this emotional strain in the service industry is largely related to service employees' exposure to incivility from customers in various service contexts (Han et al., 2016; Sliter et al., 2010; Sliter et al., 2012).

It is evident that emotional labour is strongly entrenched in the core of service interactions. There are two kinds of service interactions *i.e.* service encounter and service relationship. A single interaction between a customer and a service provider is referred to as a service encounter. A service relationship is when the two individuals *i.e.* an employee and a customer, engage in repeated contacts with each other over a period of time and get to know each other as role occupants and sometimes even become friends (Gutek et al., 2002). Furthermore, the ubiquity of emotional labour among employees depends on both the nature of the service interaction, and on the nature of the job of the employees. Thus, the display of emotions required for each job varies among occupations. For example, bill collectors are required to display uncheerful and serious emotions (Bailey and McCollough, 2000). However, salesclerks show happy and joyful emotions when dealing with customers (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1989). In the study of (Jenkins et al., 2010) on call center employees, the authors found that surface acting is less significant at the company they were investigating since employees are not required to have standardised display rules. The data shows that employers always encourage their employees to be themselves while ensuring that they are providing a courteous service (Jenkins et al., 2010). Therefore, the employees at call-centers might be engaging in minimal efforts of emotional labour, probably because they engage in limited and indirect contacts with the customers (Ashforth and Tomiuk, 2000). It is evident that during a service encounters, employees might deliver repetitively identical service to all customers (Gustafsson et al., 2005; Gutek et al., 1999a). Consequently, this could be an indicator that emotional labour is extensively experienced by employees in the contexts whereby employees engage in long-term service relationships with customers, such as in full-service restaurants.

It is evident that previous research on emotional labour primarily focuses on studying the impact of emotional labour during service encounters in various contexts including call centers and restaurants. Hence, emotional labour works as a mediator between customer incivility and employees' distress. The nature of the emotional exchange during service encounters is considered by Hochschild (1983) as part of a service employee's job, which is to serve customers with a smile. As such, the customer is given the power and freedom to display emotions, such as anger toward a service employee, whilst the employee is obliged to suppress their emotions while dealing with uncivil customers (Grandey et al., 2007; Hochschild, 1983). This clearly reflects the triadic power arrangement recognised by (Whyte, 1949) who claims that the restaurant worker has two bosses are his supervisor and the customer. That is, the management clearly individualises incivility and renders the employees responsible for coping with it individually, while at the same time maintaining the status quo.

Particularly, previous literature on incivility refers to frontline service employees, also known as front-of-house employees, as the main victims of incivility from the perpetrators who are the customers (Han et al., 2016, Grandey et al., 2005). Various studies on customer incivility in the service industry predicts that incivility has various negative health-related and organisation-related negative impact on service employees (Beaudoin and Edgar, 2003; Luong and Rogelberg, 2005) . Customer incivility is found to cause distress among teachers at universities (Adams and Webster, 2013) and retail employees (Hur et al., 2015; Kern and Grandey, 2009), nurses (Hayes, Orchard et al., 2006; Hayes, O'Brien-Pallas et al., 2006; Heinen et al., 2013), bankers (Sliter et al., 2010; Sliter et al., 2012; Diefendorff and Croyle, 2008), teachers (Cortina and Magley, 2009; Giumetti et al., 2013; Gregory et al., 2010), manufacturing (Chen et al., 2013) ; Federal courts (Cortina et al., 2001; Cortina et al.,2002); retail services (Diefendorff et al., 2005; Hur et al., 2015; Wilson and Holmvall, 2013); railway and trolley drivers (van Dierendonck and Mevissen, 2002), and call-center employees (Korzynski and Evans, 2003).

Evidently, customer incivility is prevalent in various sectors in the service industry, but its impact is recognised as the most deleterious in the restaurant industry. It could be due to the frequent and long interactions between the customer and the employee compared to the manufacturing sector (Han et al., 2016). For example, the results of various studies on restaurant service employees show that service employees portray customer incivility as a daily hassle, such as being yelled at or being insulted, which leads them to suffer from high levels of stress when exposed to customer incivility. This causes employees high levels of job burnout which may lead to emotional exhaustion (Van Jaarsvelt et al., 2010), psychological and job-strain (Wilson and Holmvall, 2013) and job dissatisfaction (Deery et al., 2011; Dormann and Zapf, 2004; Kim et al., 2009) and it also has an impact on their turnover intentions (Deery et al., 2011; Han et al., 2016; Hunter and Penney, 2014).

Although the aforementioned studies annotate the link between customer incivility and service employees' health-related- and organisation-related problems, further studies found that the impact of customer incivility lies beyond the territories of an organisation (Greenbaum et al., 2014; Hobfoll, 1989). Recent research shows that due to the negative consequences of customer incivility on employees' well-being, it is causing employees work-family conflicts. Building on the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), the study of Greenbaum et al. (2014) show that the emotional exhaustion experienced by service employees due to customer incivility is contagious to their work-family relationship. Greenbaum et al. (2014) argue that incivility from customers depletes employees' cognitive, psychological, and emotional resources. In other words, it causes them emotional exhaustion making it difficult for employees to deal with family demands. Conversely, Bai et al., (2016), drawing on the work–home resources model, claim that emotional family demands deplete service employees' emotional recourses and lead to incivility at the workplace, which supports the theory of instigated incivility developed by Andersson and Pearson (1999).

Significantly, the research on customer incivility relative to restaurant employees is studied by many researchers in the fields of HRM, organisational behaviour and marketing literature. However, most of these studies are basically positivistic, and they also overlook three major elements of a restaurant setting. First, these studies recognise restaurants as a homogenous construct, without giving any consideration to the difference that entails the nature of restaurants' service, which could be a full-service or a fast-food service. Previous research focuses mainly on fast-food restaurants where incivility occurs during service encounters with random customers. In addition to that, previous research fails to precisely identify the type of the restaurant where the study is taking place. The type of restaurant could be a local or ethnic "authentic" restaurant, which could be a reason behind special forms of incivility.

2.1.3.1 Full-service VS fast-food

Owners of full-service restaurants significantly focus on the food quality, restaurant décor, furniture, and on providing excellent service to customers, because customers engage in longer service interactions with employees. Therefore, restaurateurs focus on these characteristics to create an expectation to the customer of what they will experience at the restaurant. Although some customers dine at full-service restaurants to satisfy their dietary needs, others can establish service relationships with employees and thus, become loyal customers (Stone et al., 1996). Any complications in any of the restaurant's characteristics is ought to trigger anger amongst customers, due to unmet expectations and dissatisfaction with the service provided (Jani and Han, 2011; Sulek and Hensley, 2004). Conversely, customers of fast-food restaurants engage in short and quick service encounters with random customers; thus, the décor and food quality are not always a criterion of interest for restaurateurs to maintain, and the service is mostly standerdised (Leidner, 1993; Qin and Prybutok, 2009).

There is only one study which tackles the existence of customer incivility in full-service restaurants, and it is the study by (Kim and Qu, 2019a). They quantitatively collected data from full-service employees to study their experiences of customer incivility during service encounters. Data shows that employees' burnout significantly mediates the relationship between customer incivility and employee incivility. This study which is conducted on full-service relationships fails to explore customer incivility during service relationships. I argue that at this case study restaurant, customers are frequent customers; thus, employees establish service relationships with customers and consequently, customer incivility is constructed and experienced differently by employees compared to already studied restaurants.

2.1.3.2 Ethnic-authentic restaurant VS local restaurant

An ethnic restaurant refers to “a restaurant whose signboard or publicity clearly promises the national or regional cuisine of another land” (Turgeon and Pastinelli, 2002:252). One of the major features of an ethnic restaurant is promoting authenticity. From a constructivist approach, authenticity of an ethnic restaurant is socially constructed, meaning that authenticity is not an objective reality to all patrons (Ebster and Guist, 2005). For example, if the same owner of a Lebanese restaurant located in Beirut opens another branch in London, both are authentic, but each in its own way. Conversely, a local restaurant is a restaurant whose identity is the same as the location where it is located. For example, a local restaurant is a Lebanese restaurant located in Beirut, Lebanon (Later in the chapter I will critically discuss the authenticity construct and how it translates to incivility).

Therefore, it is necessary with respect to restaurant frontline employees to investigate incivility by being specific in identifying the nature of the restaurant (*e.g.* full-service VS fast-food), and the type of the restaurant (local restaurant VS ethnic-authentic restaurant) under study. Research question number one emerges from this literature:

> How does the owner design his restaurant and recruit his employees to appeal to customers inside the ethnic group?

2.2 Antecedents of misbehaviours

Interesting to note that since the deviance and incivility are intrinsic behaviours present during service interactions (Fullerton and Punj, 2004), there should be stimulants for such acts. In order to understand the linkages between customers’ deviance and incivility and the possible driving forces of such acts, it is important to explore the antecedents behind both misbehaviours. The subsequent section underpins the motives which drive customers' deviant behaviours.

2.2.1 Motives for customer deviance

Although Sporadic research focuses on exploring customers' misbehaviours that are considered deliberate and intends to harm and threaten the target (employee), the majority of these studies collected data from customers and thus, accentuating the customers being the main reason behind their misbehaviours. From this data, scholars were able to identify the antecedents and motives that drive customers to misbehave against individuals (other customers and employees) and the organisation (Dootson et al., 2016; Daunt and Harris, 2012; Daunt and Harris, 2011; Harris and Reynolds, 2004; Fullerton and Punj, 1993). The data shows that the types of customers and their personality, customers' neutralization techniques, the absence of deterrence techniques, and the poor management are major motives for customer deviance.

2.2.1.1 Customers' characteristics and personality

Customer deviance is linked to three distinct types of motives that are "financial egotists", "money grabbers", and ego revengers" (Daunt and Harris, 2012). As referred by Daunt and Harris (2012), the "financial egotists" are customers who are driven to act deviant by their ego and money motives. The "money grabbers" are customers who are exclusively motivated by financial gains. Lastly, "ego revengers" are customers who engage in malicious activities to feel positively about themselves and to enhance their personal self-worth, such as by shoplifting or by falsely claiming a stolen object to an insurance company. Moreover, further literature highlights the role of the personality of the customers, such as machiavellianism, aggressiveness, sensation seeking, consumer alienation and self-esteem, and also the gender, age and the level of education of customers for being motives for deviance (Daunt and Harris, 2012, Daunt and Harris, 2011), Moreover, further studies suggest that customers are most likely to misbehave if they witness other customers engaging in norm-violating behaviours, such as skipping queues, this is what is called the domino effect (Grove and Fisk, 1997; Grove et al., 2004; Harris et al., 2010).

2.2.1.2 Neutralization techniques

To restate, the aforementioned data which postulates the motives that drives customers to act deviant are collected from customers themselves. This shows that customers are aware they are misbehaving, and that they are engaging in norm-violating acts, but none of these studies show that customers feel remorse or guilt feeling acting this way. The reason behind such a non-remorse feeling pertains to customers' engagement in number of factors that can influence their deviance threshold. The deviance threshold allows consumers to engage in deviant consumer behaviour that they subjectively perceive as acceptable, or can justifiable, despite it being objectively classified as wrong (Dootson et al., 2017: 1356), such as engaging in neutralization techniques. Neutralization techniques are tools applied by individuals that allow them to disengage from the cognitive dissonance experienced when an individual behaves in a contradictory act to one's beliefs and values (Dootson et al., 2016; Moore and Loewenstein, 2004) . In this body of research on neutralization techniques, customers perceive themselves the victims of harsh service rules which limits their freedom in doing things, but principally employees and the organisation are the victims of customers perpetrations of deviance (Dootson et al., 2016; Dootson et al., 2017).

Dootson et al., (2016) postulate various kinds and examples of customers' neutralization techniques such as justification by comparison (others are doing this, why wouldn't I), denial of punishment (If they find out they will not react to it), norms (if it is accepted by peers then it is an acceptable norm), intent (bad intentions such as taking someone takeaway, good intentions such creating a US iTunes account to view content in Australia), direction of harm (it is fine to engage in acts which hurt the organisation and not the employees, because the organisation can handle it) and moral identity (maintaining self-concept to feel good about oneself).

2.2.1.3 Deterrence techniques

Ostensibly, previous research pertaining the literature on the antecedents of customer deviance, customers are highlighted as the major reason behind deviance, due to the absence of the appropriate deterrence techniques that could prevent such acts from happening in the first place. Deterrence tactics cause customers cognitive dissonance prior to performing a deviant act (Dootson et al., 2017; Dootson et al., 2018). Some managers appeal to customers' fear of punishment for being caught and/or detained, by reducing the outlet vulnerability, such as by installing CCTV and/or recruiting security guards (Dootson et al., 2017; Harris and Reynolds, 2004; Daunt and Harris, 2012). Although sometimes it is effective, most behaviours end up not being caught due to the high expenses and difficulty in detecting deviance and also punishing deviant customers (Dootson et al., 2017; Lindblom and Kajalo, 2011). Moreover, the interpretation of what is wrong, or right is a subjective matter and thus, customers differ with their perceptions of things (Dootson et al., 2016). Given the limitation of deterrence tactics, Dootson et al., (2017) propose to educate customers about the harm they are causing victims (employees and/or the organisation) by narrating incidents of personal stories that might ignite some empathy amongst customers. The data shows that deterrence tactics are ought to weaken the effect of customers' neutralization techniques (Dootson et al., 2018). Thus, deterrence tactics might be successful to nudge customers behaviours away from deviance, but they might not be always successful due to the difference in customers' perceptions towards what is right, empathetic, normal and moral (Dootson et al., 2017; Dootson et al., 2018).

Furthermore, deterrence techniques can be successful in limiting customers deviance (e.g. shoplifting, robbery or vandalism) in various service contexts (e.g. supermarkets and restaurants). However, such techniques might not be very efficient and successful to detect milder forms of deviance (*e.g.* incivility) in a restaurant setting such as clicking fingers to call an employee or throwing rubbish on the floor, because they do not usually cause any direct threat to the employees or the organisation that requires detention or punishment. In a restaurant setting the common form of misbehaviour, which is incivility, is mostly a result of interpersonal interactions between the employee and the customer (Andersson and Pearson 1999). Therefore, the likelihood success of deterrence techniques in a restaurant setting is very low, unless deterrence is based on recruiting a security guard to imbue protection and to moderate misbehaviours (Zimmerman, 2014). Instances of such deterrence strategies might offer some promise but might not be fully successful in shaping frequent customers' behaviours, who internally feel entitled to act impulsive and opportunistic with an organisation which they feel they are loyal to its services and employees.

2.2.1.4 Poor management and division of labour

In addition to the absence of the appropriate deterrence techniques, the prevalence of a poor management, and its weakness in dividing the labor amongst its employees, are also motives behind customers' misbehaviours (Lugosi, 2019). This might be problematic and motivates customers to act deviant, especially if it provokes feelings of dissatisfaction and stress amongst them. For example, when one employee is responsible to serve many tables in a restaurant or if the same table is overbooked for many customers at the same time (Lugosi, 2019). Therefore, deviance might be an end result of rules and regulations set by the management of an organisation, rather than putting the utmost blame on customers for being deviant (Lugosi, 2019). Since employees are the ones on the frontline dealing with the unsatisfied customers, some employees might be either aware that customers are acting deviant for a reason, which might be the management that is incapable of managing its organisation properly, or employees might recognise customers deviance as a low-intensity deviant behaviour, which has an ambiguous intent to harm the target and that's when the literature of incivility stands out. Therefore, more research is needed to understand employees' opinions about their management, and its impact on customers' behaviours. Noticeably, this is what this study is seeking to address.

Additionally, some employees might be supervised by unprofessional supervisors who normalise many unacceptable forms of interactions between customers and employees, such as normalizing sexualised gender roles and accepting patriarchy that normalises sexism, thus; they fail to recognise deviance occurring in the workplace (Lugosi, 2019; Spradley and Mann, 2008). When the organisation normalizes such behaviours, employees tend to accept them by denying the injury or threat that might come up as a result (Lugosi, 2019). Turning a blind eye to racism, sexism, and harassment, encourages customers to engage in more severe deviant behaviours because it is a socially embedded part of their experience (Lugosi, 2019). Therefore, the impotency of supervisors might be a motive for customers to engage in deviance in a way that allows them to express their frustration from the organisation as whole, but the employees are the ones who are bearing all this frustration, since they are working on the front line. Since employees are located by the management as a human shield with customers, it is significant to investigate employees' perspectives on the impact of managerial practices as a driving force for misbehaviours, incivility in the case of this study where the intentionality of customers is ambiguous when the data is collected from employees. This is also a gap in the literature, which this study seeks to address.

Analogous to the literature, the many studies on deviance seem to be very expansive and provide a holistic review of the concept, its forms, consequences and motives. I conceptualise that the constructs of customer deviance are more overt in their intentions to harm the target. Although theoretically sufficient, existing research focusing on deviance in the hospitality industry is mostly concerned in analyzing the concept of deviance from a macro level, whilst overlooking narrower forms of deviance that might be performed with no intentions to harm the target, but they were given loopholes to act this way. Garnered from the array of literature on customer misbehaviours, I seemingly consider focusing specifically on the incivility literature, which has an ambiguous intent to harm the target; additionally, I am collecting data from the recipients of incivility (the employees) and the intentionality of customers is vague and hardly recognisable.

2.2.2 Motives for incivility

As previously mentioned in section 2.1 there are various motives which encourage customers to engage in deviance. However, in the literature on incivility the motives which encourage customers' incivility are distinctive. Many scholars in the marketing domain consider focusing on customer sovereignty as a reason behind customer incivility. Customer sovereignty is ought to create power differentials between customers and employees. Hence, the next section explores the sovereignty construct in more detail.

2.2.2.1 Customer sovereignty and power

Traditionally, many researchers across many disciplines, especially in marketing, assume that the customer is the major element during a service interaction where he/she should be treated by employees as a king (Kashif and Zarkada, 2015). Thus, service employees are held responsible for creating a satisfactory experience for customers and hence, for creating value (Kashif and Zarkada, 2015). This is called customer sovereignty.

Customer sovereignty is illustrated by the mantra "the customer is always right" and "the customer is a king" (Han et al., 2016). People who study customer sovereignty divide it into "pre-modern" and "modern" perspectives. The "pre-modern" sovereignty refers to customers who own the absolute power over employees during a service interaction (Korczynski and Ott, 2004), while "modern" sovereignty refers to the idea that service employees are autonomous, and they are the controllers of the customers (Korczynski and Ott, 2004). Gay and Salaman (1992) project customers' sovereignty in a "pre-modern" perspective. They suggest that the cult[ture] of the consumer (Gay and Salaman, 1992:1) has a significant impact on the organisation where customers became 'a god-like figure' (Gabriel and Lang, 2015:11) and the service employees became a means to achieve profitability by achieving high levels of satisfaction.

However, recent studies refute this claim by suggesting that customers, along with employees and the firm, are all responsible for creating a satisfactory service interaction and this is called value co-creation (Kashif and Zardaka, 2015). If one party does not play the expected role, an imbalance will be created between the firm, its employees and customers, which creates a form of value co-destruction that disrupts the normalcy of interaction between employees and customers and might lead one party to suffer. In the presence of customer sovereignty, employees or revenue generators, are the ones who suffer since the management gives customers a greater power relative to the employees (Kashif and Zardaka, 2015, Sliter et al., 2010; Cortina et al., 2001). Such power imbalance between service employees and customers seems such an odd situation. Generally, when employees give service to customers (*e.g.* lawyers and judges), employees should be the ones in power because they are the providers of service. However, in the restaurant industry this equation is reversed and customers hold greater power than employees. Such an argument lies in the core norms of customer sovereignty, which is mostly entrenched in the nature of service organisations and is regarded as a motive for incivility to arise (Korczynski and Evans, 2013; Bishop et al., 2005). As Webster (1994:263) states:

> "Everyone's job is defined in terms of how it helps to create and deliver value for the customer, and internal processes are designed and managed to ensure responsiveness to customer needs and maximum efficiency in value delivery."

However, Korczynski and Ott (2004) suggest that the enchanted myth of customer sovereignty' perceives "pre-modern" and "modern" meanings to the term. This means that during a service interaction, service employees create a pleasurable fantasy to customers, which makes customers believe that they are sovereign; however, employees are in fact, the ones who own the power over customers. Service employees highlight the value of the 'enchanting myth of customers' sovereignty' when they show a relational superiority to customers by positioning them as autonomous choice-makers (Korczynski and Ott, 2004; Korczynski and Evans, 2013), by the menu of a restaurant or naming of the customers (Korczynski and Ott, 2004).

For example, the 'A La Carte' menu gives the customer a variety of choices to choose whatever catches their eyes (Korczynski and Ott, 2004). Besides, when a service employee starts giving information about the menu to the customers, it also gives customers the feeling of owning the control over the employee (Korczynski and Ott, 2004). Additionally, naming is another way of promoting sovereignty to customers. Korczynski and Evans (2013:771) illustrate this claim by depicting a scene at a restaurant:

> "A waiter approaches the customer who has just entered and asks, 'Would you like to follow me this way, Sir/Madam?'

Here, the customer is positioned as a relational superior power relative to employees (he/she is addressed as 'Sir/Madam') and as an autonomous choice-maker (she/he is given the choice of whether or not to follow the waiter) (Korczynski and Ott, 2004). Furthermore, even as it enchants the customer, it also allows the worker to have some power while they guide the customer through the rationalised constraints of production (*e.g.,* the customer must be seated outdoors because it is not allowed to smoke indoors).

Although the above argument highlights the embedded myth of customer sovereignty at service organisations, this myth can be disillusioned in many ways (Korczynski et al., 2002). In other words, if the customer feels that an employee has power over them, they may become frustrated (Korczynski and Evans, 2013). For example, Whitelegg's (2007) findings resting on Korczynski and Evans (2013), claim that anger which arises between flight attendants and passengers during their interaction on board is related to the paradox between the advertised images (*e.g*. advertising sexy flight attendants who are ready to serve customers) and the emotional labour of flight attendants explaining the safety disciplines on board. In other words, the discrepancies between advertised images which make the customer powerful, and the safety disciplines on board, which make the customer dependent on the flight attendant, might trigger incivility due to customers' perceived feelings of powerlessness relative to flight attendants. Therefore, these findings show that the power of the customer as a sovereign agent has a double edged sword, but in both cases the employee is not protected by his/her organisation from experiencing incivility- which highlights the main argument of my study. The subsequent section explores the authenticity construct.

Evidently, previous researchers study incivility from a positivist perspective, while disregarding the fact that incivility is a subjective construct in the workplace. Additionally, scholars who studied customer incivility in the restaurant industry focus on exploring the motives of incivility from a macro-level, and no research has yet explored customer incivility at restaurants from a micro-level. In this sense, I argue three things. First, I argue that this case study restaurant has many frequent customers; consequently, I expect employees to engage in service relationships with frequent customers. Service relationships occur when a customer has various service contacts with the same employee (Gutek et al., 1999). This might lead to the construction of incivility forms that are different from already studied restaurants. In addition to customer sovereignty and the elements of power which are recognised as reasons behind incivility, I also argue that customer incivility is constructed due to unmet customers' expectations of the level of authenticity of the restaurant, knowing the nature of the restaurant is ethnic "authentic".

2.2.2.2 Authenticity

Numerous scholars focus on critically exploring the authenticity construct, its impact and prevalence in promoting and selling products and goods in a global market. The authenticity construct could be used in ascribing authentic features to either a brand or a place (Andéhn et al., 2020). To impactfully commercialize a brand in an attempt to increase potential consumption, marketers focus on emphasizing the country of origin. The country-of-origin refers to consumers' purchasing intentions of a service or a brand depending on its place of origin (Andéhn et al., 2019). Whereas the growing body of literature explores the ways a commercial entity is marketized by what is so called place branding (Andéhn et al., 2019). Place branding centralizes on commercializing places by marketing them similar to brands which features can be altered to meet the demands of the market (Andéhn et al., 2020; Chatzidakis et al., 2018). Hence, it elaborates on "the way in which people attach meaning and symbolic value to place" (Andéhn et al., 2019: 323).

In the vast majority of literature pertaining to the tourism industry, scholars generally assume that experiencing a place, through the promotion of food and culinary arts in a city, a region, or even at a restaurant, is an aesthetic experience involving the five senses of a human being (Berg and Sevón, 2014). In their article about food branding, Berg and Sevón, (2014) introduce a conceptual framework to show how food is used to communicate the characteristics of a city to tourists and its inhabitants. In specific, Berg and Sevón, (2014) refer to food with all its forms (ethnic, fast food, food market, locally produced) saying there is potentially a significant element in branding an ethnic identity and generating favourable impressions of a place to specific audience (Anholt, 2010; Berg and Sevón, 2014). Such an aesthetic experience results in the experience of "authenticity" (Berg and Sevón, 2014). Food is referred to be authentic "in terms of the criterion of whether they are made or enacted by local people according to custom or tradition… And in this sense authenticity connotes traditional culture and origin, a sense of the genuine, the real or the unique" (Wang, 1999a:350-351) ; also (Sharpley, 1994:130).

Promoting the "authenticity" of the food in ethnic cuisines is used to expose the ethnic identity of a certain region or country (*e.g.* Lebanese cuisine). This emphasises on what Andéhn et al., (2019) claim that identity is enacted in the context of place. In addition to that, amplifying the existence of an ethnic identity is also utilised to raise awareness of the culinary heritage of a specific culinary destination (Sharpley, 1994). Although food branding is an efficient strategy to promote attractive destinations for tourists, it is also a method to boost the quality of life of citizens, such organising food festivals and allocating fast-food stalls that convey authenticity of the food, project the life of the rural areas or reflect the essence of life in the urban region of a city (Berg and Sevón, 2014). Henceforth, the recent literature is more focused on exploring the experience market which is linked to consumers' memorable experiences with goods and services (Jeannerat, 2013b). This is made possible by developing business strategies based on creating a consumer market based on experiential marketing. In that sense, the market value of a product or a service is related to consumer's experience in consumption, such as to experience the authenticity of a product or a service as a market valuation element (Jeannerat, 2013; Pine et al., 1999). Attributing quality values to a product or a service contribute largely to the authentic image of a certain object, such as something/someone is real or fake (Gilmore, 2007; Jeannerat, 2013).

For instance, in an analysis of the authenticity of luxury swiss-made watches industry, Jeannerat (2013) provides a critical approach to depict what makes swiss-made watches authentic and thus sold as luxury and expensive. Jeannerat (2013) claims that in order to become aware of the distinctive features of what is fake or real, competencies are created by justifying the origin of authenticity rather than focusing on the technical capabilities of a product or a service (Jeannerat, 2013). The origin of authenticity centralizes on the prominent role of cultural (museums, exhibitions, architecture) and technological activities (technical developments) which introduce the object (product/service) as distinctive and thus legitimizing its authenticity. Therefore, the authenticity of an object gains competence from connoisseurs who become experts in identifying the distinctive features of a product and in learning what is fake or real through engaging consumers in an interactive learning process about the product offerings, such as through journalists, brand ambassadors, visits to factories or to showrooms (Jeannerat, 2013).

Although Jeannerat (2013) provides a comprehensive review on how the watchmaking industry in Switzerland exploits consumer mobility and gains a competitive advantage in global markets (*e.g.* in London and Paris) by promoting the country of origin of their products (Andéhn et al., 2019), this critical review does not necessarily reflect issues that are relevant to an ethnic restaurant. To brand an ethnic restaurant, the branding should be reliant on what is called food and place branding, which is branding food as "authentic" to qualify for being superior and distinctive to other cuisines; additionally, place branding should rely on branding the restaurant for being authentic in its service and servicescape (indoor/outdoor layout). The complex nature of authenticity is largely exhibited in the literature of marketing in the tourism industry, while focusing on depicting the objective, existential and constructive nature of authenticity from the standpoint of tourists. Objective authenticity "involves a museum-linked usage" of the authenticity of arts and objects (Wang, 1999b). Existential authenticity refers to being true to one's true personal feelings (Jeannerat, 2013; Penrose, 2018). The famous book "Jargon of authenticity" by (Adorno, 2013) criticizes existential authenticity by claiming that the self is a construct impacted by the social and biological forces, and it changes its meanings according to the context. Thus, authenticity is dependent on one's subjective thoughts of authenticity (Adorno, 2013; Wang, 1999). Constructive authenticity is a socio-cultural phenomenon that is forever changing, it means that "things appear authentic not because they are inherently authentic but because they are constructed as such in terms of points of view, beliefs, perspectives or power… this notion is thus relative, negotiable, ideological (Wang, 1999: 351; Penrose, 2018).

Clearly, there is no one single way to define authenticity and all definitions are significant in understanding human experiences associated with authenticity (Penrose, 2018). Hence, if we integrate the meanings derived from objective, existential and constructive authenticity, experiential authenticity will be revealed (Penrose, 2018). In other words, the experiences of existential authenticity can be influenced by the authenticity of objects, and this can have an impact on an individual's perceptions towards an object or a place (Penrose, 2018). Experiential authenticity is "the belief and sensations of having experienced something genuine and real – something authentic" (Penrose, 2018:4). In her study on customers' experiences and perceptions about the authenticity of a museum, Penrose (2018) identifies the significance of experiential authenticity by attributing the total consumer's experience through their interactions with stories expressed by texts, pictures, objects, events, people, and performances. She claims that experiential authenticity allows the individual to engage mentally and emotionally with the authentic experience (Penrose, 2018). In the same vein, the high competition in the restaurant industry and due to the unlimited access to information about customers' preferences, promoting authenticity of a restaurant has put a lot of pressure on restaurateurs to provide customers with what they are really seeking in a dining experience (Home et al., 2020). Therefore, restaurant customers are no longer seeking one aspect of authenticity, which is through the service offerings (includes the food and service), but also seeking the authenticity of the internal organisation (layout) (Le et al., 2020). Therefore, the authenticity of a restaurant is a product of three elements are the consumer (includes the authenticity of self or existential authenticity), the provider who could be the service employee or the restaurateur (reveals the authenticity of the restaurant) and the experience (projecting the authenticity of the objects including food) (Le et al., 2019). The summation of the three elements results in one authentic form is experiential authenticity.

Clearly, there are various studies exploring experiential authenticity of tourists in different contexts such as museums and restaurants (Penrose, 2018; Wang, 1999; Le et al., 2019; Le et al., 2020). Although theoretically substantial, none of the existing studies involve exploring the experiential authentic experience of customers who are not classified as tourists rather they have experienced past authentic experiences, or they are connoisseurs in a particular cuisine, specifically in the context of an ethnic restaurant. Hence, I argue that customers seek experiential authenticity at an ethnic “authentic” restaurant, which can stimulate their imagination (Le et al., 2020, Penrose, 2018).

In the case study restaurant chosen for this research, experiential authenticity plays a significant role in valuing the overall competence of this restaurant compared to other restaurants in the market. I argue that the owner of this restaurant is promoting the authenticity of his place by endorsing the country-of-origin and place branding as marketing strategies to promote the authenticity of his restaurant. I have to emphasise that the possibilities people have about the authenticity of the restaurant are not the same because each person has different experiences and thus, they have different meanings to what is authentic or inauthentic (Steiner and Reisinger, 2006). In other words, authenticity is a socially constructed phenomenon and thus, what appeals as authentic for one customer is different to another customer. Therefore, I argue that when customers’ dynamic expectations of the level of authenticity does not meet their expectations, the question about authenticity becomes pressing and this translates to uncivil behaviours. As such, although authenticity contributes to justifying the competences of this restaurant under investigation, some “connoisseurs” might disqualify its authenticity and thus, incivility arises due to dissatisfaction of what is being offered to them by the restaurant from food and/or service.

Therefore, this research aims at filling this gap by explicitly exploring how customer incivility is constructed by the management and the employees in the context of this case study full-service ethnic “authentic” restaurant. This will allow me to fill the gaps in the literature and to highlight the limitations in the basic and common definition of customer incivility. Research questions number two and three emerge from this literature:

> (2) How the managerial practices affect the way that customer incivility is constructed within this case study full-service ethnic "authentic" restaurant?
>
> (3) How the service employees' service relationships with customers affect the way that customer incivility is constructed within this case study full-service ethnic "authentic" restaurant?

Since I argue that customer incivility at this case study restaurant is different from already existing restaurants and that incivility is a subjective construct, it is predictable that the forms of incivility are also different from already explored ones, and that's when research question four emerges:

> (4) what is the nature and the types of the common customers' uncivil behaviours at this case study restaurant?

After depicting the motives behind incivility, its forms and consequences on employees, it is evident that the management often individualises incivility where it expects employees to cope with incivility individually, such as to engage in tactics that could be either cognitive, emotional or behavioural coping tactics (Arnold and Walsh, 2015; Bishop et al., 2005).

Although the body of research on coping during service encounters is substantial, the literature on employees' coping during service relationships is still under-researched. Existing studies only focus on employees who engage with service encounters with random customers. However, I argue in this research that service relationships with frequent customers emphasise the power imbalance between customers and employees. Evidently, the growing body of literature on customer incivility is taking this construct objectively, whilst disregarding the fact that incivility is a subjective matter and the way it is perceived differs from one person to another. In addition to that, the vast majority of literature, and its impact on service employees is positivistic in nature and therefore, I decided on studying incivility utilising an interpretivist approach, where I refer to customer incivility as subjective and socially constructed. By referring to incivility as a social construct, this implies that employees differ in their ways of coping and thus, the coping tactics of employees take a different form from already studied restaurants. The next section builds on this argument, and it explores the existing literature on the coping strategies of employees in the service industry.

2.3 Introduction to coping strategies with customer incivility

Coping with stress and work stressors is gaining intensive attention from scholars in social science. The growing body of literature on coping strategies is manifested as a result of scholars' concerns about incivility, and its impacts on employees' psychological and physical well-being (e.*g.* stress and burnout). The subsequent section will begin with a discussion about the coping definition. It then continuous to explore various coping strategies. This section concludes with a discussion on coping resources.

2.3.1 Definition of coping

The concept of coping refers to individuals' cognitive and behavioural efforts to reduce and control emotions— arising during stressful situations— in order to mitigate the risk of declining individual resources (Goussinsky, 2012a; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). The literature on service employees' coping behaviour with workplace incivility is studied extensively, but existing research mainly focuses on incivility from customers (Goussinsky, 2012). Though theoretically substantial, scant research focuses on determining the coping strategies employed by service employees when they experience customer incivility.

One of the distressing features of working as a frontline employee in the service industry is the managements' expectation of employees not to react to customers in ways deemed to be discourteous. Conversely, customers are not informally required by the management to be polite toward service employees and this is bound by the myth of customer sovereignty, which is explained previously is this chapter.

Dealing with the 'dark' side of a service job (Goussinsky, 2015:170) grasped considerable attention among scholars in the fields of emotional labour and incivility; yet the coping strategies of frontline employees in the restaurant industry, specifically in the context of service relationships, is still under-researched. According to the transactional theory, coping is composed of ''cognitive and behavioural efforts to master, reduce or tolerate the internal or external demands that are created by the stressful transaction'' (Folkman, 1984:843). The stressful transaction in the case study of my research is customer incivility. There are several existing studies on how employees cope with customer incivility or customer misbehaviour (Reynolds and Harris, 2006b; Siu et al., 2006; Yagil, 2008). Reynold and Harris (2006) reveal that restaurants' frontline employees engage in 15 informal coping tactics pre-incident, during the incident, and post-incident that are used to minimize the impact of customers' deviance (Torres et al., 2017). Some of these tactics are also noted by (Reynolds and Harris, 2006) where findings show that employees isolate themselves from abusive customers, and some others engage in retaliatory tactics, such as tightening safety bells or separating couples at Disneyland (Noon et al., 2013). In addition, Hochschild (1983) in her study on flight attendants and bill collectors, suggests that one of the original tactics deployed by employees is surface acting, which is characterized by the display of 'inauthentic' emotions to comply with the organisation's rules of display of emotions.

These studies are significant in exploring service employees' coping tactics during service encounters, but they have not yet explored employees' coping behaviours from recurrent interactions with a frequent customer, in the context of service relationships. I argue that employees' coping behaviours to incivility from frequent customers is different compared to when they experience incivility from random customers. Consequently, I argue that most frequent customers of Be-Beirut have formed service relationships with employees and thus, they acquire a feeling of belonging to this establishment, which makes them attain additional superior power over employees (Yagil, 2006). Therefore, this research aims to explore the coping strategies that service employees engage with to deal with customer incivility in the context of an ethnic "authentic" restaurant. This distinction will underpin a difference in coping strategies deployed by employees of different gender (female/male employees).

According to the transactional model of stress, employees who encounter any kind of incivility engage with two appraisal stages: primary appraisals and secondary appraisals. Primary appraisals allow employees to evaluate their experience with incivility as negative, positive or benign, whereas if the experience is evaluated as negative then the employees will engage in secondary appraisals by deploying coping strategies to deal with it (Beattie and Griffin, 2014; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) differentiate among two coping strategies implemented by employees in the workplace: problem-focused and emotional-focused coping strategies.

2.3.2 Problem-focused coping

Problem-focused coping is a strategy focused on employees' efforts to cope with the anguish of customer incivility during a service interaction such as problem-solving and seeking assistance (Folkman and Lazarus, 1990; Goussinsky, 2012; Skinner et al., 2003; Yagil, 2008).

2.3.2.1 Problem-solving strategy

This strategy is implemented by employees who work on solving a particular problem through investing their efforts to analyse and plan for a solution (Goussinsky, 2012; Skinner et al., 2003; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Grandey et al., 2004).

For example, in order to **prevent sexual harassment**, employees tend to wear modest clothes (Reynolds and Harris, 2006). Conversely, some employees are engaged in a strategy of **exploiting sexual attractiveness** where an employee engages in an attractive and promiscuous sexual behaviour to diffuse customers' uncivil acts. For example, Reynolds and Harris (2006) found that employees, specifically women, use explicit language with customers or wear sexually revealing clothes as a technique to cope with customers' incivility (Reynolds and Harris, 2006). The study of Reynolds and Harris opposes most of the studies on sexual harassment *e.g.* (Li et al., 2016) that claim harassment is mostly acted by customers toward the employees.

Moreover, some employees solve problems by **bribing customers** or altering servicescape. Bribing involves offering customers free food or drinks, to either calm an abusive customer or to encourage them to exit the organisation. Offering free goods is mostly given without the management's consent and hence, it might expose the employee to serious ethical consideration as they may be potentially accused of theft (Reynolds and Harris, 2006; Li et al., 2016). Additionally, an employee might divert the customer's abusive attention by **altering servicescape** such as to remove or rearrange the organisation's setting to manipulate the service atmosphere or alter their speech to go in line with the tone of the abusive customer.

Furthermore, some employees tend to moderate the relationship between them and uncivil customers by being agreeable individuals who are perceived to be enduring and sympathetic with the customer (Medler-Liraz, 2020). By doing so, agreeable employees could create a harmonious relationship with the customer that could deter their attention from incivility, or what has primarily caused their dissatisfaction (Sliter et al., 2010).

2.3.2.2 Support-seeking strategy

Service providers sought to **seek assistance and advice from their co-workers or supervisors** to help them deal with a problem they face during a service interaction with customers (Yagil, 2008; Skinner et al., 2003). This strategy is similar to the "collaborative emotional labour" concept which will be discussed in the section on perspective emotion management. Therefore, this strategy highlights the collaboration among the employees on an emotional and task level. For example, (Handy, 2006) claims that a service employee might **ask their co-worker to cover for them,** while they try to avoid an angry or abusive customer (*e.g.* arrange with a colleague to be interrupted with a call once a particular customer approaches them). The findings of Handy (2006) are consistent with Reynolds and Harris's (2006) claim that employees who are exposed to incivility from customers tend to collaborate with the situation by **ventilating emotions and sharing their experiences with their colleagues**. Similarly, service workers might also **seek organisational/supervisory support to cope with customer incivility** (Han et al., 2016). Organisational/supervisory support gives employees an impression of being appreciated by their organisation for their hard work and for being an important addition to the firm (Han et al., 2016). This support is ought to increase employee's emotional and psychological resources which enable them to moderate the negative impact they experience from incivility (Han et al., 2016). In addition to that, some employees seek the support from a family member or someone they trust to give them the best advice or emotional support (Cortina and Magley, 2009).

2.3.3 Emotion-focused strategy

Emotion-Focused strategy is a strategy triggered by a stressor during which employees engage in emotional regulatory tactics to reduce emotional distress (Grandey et al., 2004; Hochschild, 1983), such as engaging in escape-avoidance (distancing and/or avoidance), or they engage in emotion management tactics such as emotional labour (Goussinsky, 2012; Grandey et al., 2004; Hochschild, 1984, Reynolds and Harris, 2006, Bolton and Boyd, 2003).

2.3.3.1 Escape-Avoidance strategies

Distancing strategy is the process by which a service employee disengages themselves from the work environment in situations where they feel stressed due to the recurrent encounters with uncivil customers (Dwyer and Ganster, 1991). In a qualitative study conducted in 2011 by Fisk and Neville on the coping strategies adopted by service employees working in the restaurant industry, it reports that seven participants out of the fifty-nine cases, engage with **temporary distancing techniques** such as physically detaching themselves from the customer by taking a break. Some participants report (Fisk and Neville, 2011):

> "I tried to go and wash my face"
>
> "I went and got a drink of water before returning to my duties"

Fisk and Neville (2011) also report that despite employees' engagement with a distancing behaviour to cope with their felt emotions, employees also suffer from negativity and psychological withdrawal such as **absenteeism** (they come late to work or falsely call in sick). Additionally, service employees might distance themselves from customers' incivility by **engaging with instigated incivility** which is a process of venting anger to co-workers rather than reacting to customers' abuse (Reynolds and Harris, 2006). Instigated incivility is the type of incivility, which is transferred between co-workers upon their exposure to incivility form customers (Schilpzand et al., 2016). This type of incivility is related to the spiral of incivility introduced by Andersson and Pearson in 1999, which suggests that an incivility from one person leads to a chain reaction of incivility from that person to another.

Moreover, **avoidance** is a strategy in which employees act in denial while interacting with customers (Goussinsky, 2012). Service employees may employ this technique to avoid any interaction with abusive customers, especially if customers' uncivil behaviour is portrayed as a normal act by the organisation (Bishop et al., 2005; Reynolds and Harris, 2006).

The strategy of **ignoring the difficult customer** is a way when an employee puts effort to overlook the demands of a customer. According to Reynolds and Harris (2006), an employee engages in such behaviour for two reasons. The employee may refuse to compromise their mental and physical recourses on a not-well-paid job. This is consistent with the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989:516) model of stress which claims that people strive to retain and protect their recourses such as objects, personality characteristics, conditions or energies in order not to suffer from stressors such as burnout (Wright and Hobfoll, 2004) or emotional exhaustion (Wright and Cropanzano, 1998). The second reason is the fact that the employee may fear engaging in an action against the abusive customer because this might put their job security at risk. For example, most service employees compromise on sexual harassment enacted by customers, accepting this as a normal part of their job (Bishop et al., 2005; Good and Cooper, 2016; Goussinsky, 2012).

Escape-avoidance strategies refer to employees' abilities to disengage from the problem by deploying different strategies such as engaging with **humor** (Korczynski, 2003; Skinner et al., 2003). Conversely, an escape-avoidance coping could be ineffective as it entails abusing the usage of **alcohol, drugs** or **smoking** (Reynolds and Harris, 2006), associated with higher levels of depression and anxiety (Pienaar and Willemse, 2008). However, some studies on restaurant employees show that drug use before starting a working shift and alcohol consumption post-shift have a positive influence on employees' job satisfaction and work performance (Hight and Park, 2018; Kjeerheim et al., 1997). Although drug use and drinking alcohol are deemed successful in decreasing some employees' stress, they are fairly dysfunctional coping tactics that might lead to addiction or other health issues.

2.3.3.3 Emotion management techniques

Although the theory of stress and coping developed by Lazarus and Folkman differentiates between problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies of service employees, this theory dismisses recognising emotional labour as an emotion-based coping strategy. The dismissal of the emotional labour from this theory might be explained by Lazarus' and Folkman's agreeableness with the original meaning of emotional labour, previously defined as "the display of expected emotions by service agents during service encounters" (Ashforth and Humphrey,1993:88).

The engagement in service-with-smile is the commonly popular emotion of service employees during a service interaction. The service-with-smile way of dealing with customers is an indicator of the prevalence of customer sovereignty. As mentioned earlier, customers' sovereignty in the service industry gives the freedom to customers to act uncivil with service employees to obtain what they desire *e.g.* goods and/or service. Simultaneously, the management expects employees not to instigate an abusive behaviour as they are obliged to engage with emotional labour (service with a smile), which is a requirement consistent with the organisation's rules of recruitment in the service industry. However, Bailey and McCollough (2000) and Reynolds and Harris (2006) overlook the fact that emotional labour can be used as a coping strategy to deal with customer incivility rather than being a coercive requirement by the service organisation.

For instance, a recent study by Singh et al., (2016) on job demands collected data from 209 nurses working at a hospital. The findings of this study reveal that nurses engage in **psychological detachment** and **relaxation activities** as after-work-experiences in order to buffer the negative impact of their job demands. Customer incivility in the nursing industry, I refer to patients here, is also one component of the job demands which might encourage them to leave their jobs due to the mental exhaustion caused by incivility (Guidroz et al., 2010; Spence Laschinger et al., 2009). Joudrey and Wallace (2009) collected data from 887 law firm lawyers to examine the importance of **leisure**, such as taking a vacation and social leisure activities, in reducing depression and buffering the detrimental effects of job demands. Hence, leisure might be one of the coping strategies implemented by service employees to deal with incivility.

In addition to the aforesaid coping strategies, Reynold and Harris (2009) assert that employees engage in **sports or any physical technique to release emotions** as a coping strategy to deal with the stress they experience from customers. Following the positive aforementioned coping strategies deployed by employees to deal with incivility, employees might engage in negative coping strategies impacting their personal life, such as engaging in work-family conflicts (Greenbaum et al., 2014).

Although the literature on employees' coping tactics is significantly researched across many different service contexts, none of these studies qualitatively and critically explore the coping tactics of employees when they face incivility from frequent customers, in the context of service relationships. In other words, the quantified data from these studies fails to explore how employees cope with customers' uncivil behaviour beyond the emotional labour techniques, in a service relationship context.

I explained earlier that my study takes a full-service, ethnic "authentic" restaurant industry as its focal focus. In such contexts, employees engage in long and multiple interactions with frequent customers. Ostensibly, in long-term service interactions and given the nature of the job, I argue that employees might invest more in emotional labour and thus, to engage in coping tactics that might help them deal with stressful encounters with the customer and simultaneously preserving the status quo.

Additionally, these long-term interactions identify employees' emotional attachment to customers (Grandey, 2000; Rafaeli and Sutton, 1989). Under such conditions, customers' expectations of such relationships would be higher, such as requiring the employee not only to "serve with a smile" but also to personalise the service interaction for them (Ford et al., 2001; Grandey et al., 2005). Consequently, service relationships are expected to give higher power to customers relative to their employees and hence, emphasising the power imbalance between employees and customers.

While the power asymmetry between service employees and customers is noted in many studies, existing studies mainly focus on exploring the impact of employees' powerlessness on the service provider (Callahan, 2011), or referring to powerlessness as an antecedent to customer incivility

(Cortina et al., 2009). However, no research of which I am aware of explores the coping behaviours of employees who perceive themselves powerless as they experience customer incivility, specifically from frequent customers in the context of service relationships. I argue that the employees of Be-Beirut feel largely powerless politically and economically. They are powerless politically because most of them are immigrants and they have no right to vote, and they are economically powerless because they are deprived from collective bargaining (*i.e.* bargaining wages), especially that they have little skills to qualify them to work at any job other than being service employees (e.g. engineers or doctors). When employees feel powerless, they will keep on feeling helpless and powerless to their managers, as well as to customers.

In response to this gap, this research aims at extending the literature on service relationships by identifying a context gap in the setting of a full-service "authentic" ethnic restaurant. I argue that employees of this case study restaurant appraise incivility differently from other restaurant employees since they are experiencing incivility from frequent customers, with whom they have established a service relationship. I argue that employees might engage in unique coping tactics, which do not entail a reaction to a sudden incivility from a random customer, rather they are coping tactics of which employees engage with depending on previous uncivil incidents with frequent customers, as well as on the organisational power of both the employee and the customer. Therefore, research question five emerges from this literature:

(5) How do employees cope with incivility?

2.3.4 Gender and coping with customer incivility

The literature on coping strategies in service settings also focuses on the role of gender in the production of coping strategies. Various studies and theory propose that managing strategies in coping with workplace stressors varies by gender *e.g*. (Welbourne et al., 2016) and e.g. selective incivility developed by (Cortina et al., 2013).

Welbourne et al., (2016) study on a female-dominated institution collected survey data from 314 teachers working at an American public university, where 62% were females. The study's aim is to examine whether teachers' choice of problem-focused coping or emotion-focused coping moderate the impact of incivility on their job satisfaction and sense of community.

The study of Welbourne et al., (2016) nests on the transactional theory of stress and coping (Lazarus and Folkman, 1983) and the theory of selective incivility (Cortina, 2008). The theory of selective incivility is developed by Cortina (2008) to draw attention to modern race and gender discriminations in organisations. Cortina's main argument is that incivility in modern days is not general, so she sheds the light on the prejudice against women and people of colour in many disguised contexts of service work (Kabat-Farr and Cortina, 2014).

Results show that both female and male employees engage in problem-focused coping, but women experience stronger negative feelings which lowers their job satisfaction. Additionally, the findings highlight the existence of religious coping among women, which weakens the negative impact of incivility on their job attitude. Therefore, women are perceived more vulnerable in adapting to the negativity of incivility which in turn influences their job satisfaction and job attitude. Similarly, findings show that female teachers engage in support seeking which leads to an experience of strong negative relationship between incivility and job attitude. This result on support seeking opposes many studies which claim that support seeking among women results in greater effectiveness in managing stress (González-Morales et al., 2006; González-Morales et al., 2010).

For instance, support seeking among female teachers is claimed to be positive and successful in reducing stress among female teachers working at 100 Spanish primary and secondary schools (Gonzalez-Morales et al., 2006, 2010). The difference in coping among female teachers at schools and universities might be related to the extent the teacher has control over the stressor. For instance, female teachers working at schools might enjoy more control over their young students since they have authority over them, whereas at universities female teachers enjoy less control over students, and they might observe themselves as stereotypically vulnerable and thus, might understand incivility as an element which is associated with attributional ambiguity (Cortina, 2008). This might be related to societal perceptions that men have more power than women and enjoy a higher respect in social hierarchies (Carli, 1999). Per se, this will discourage women from taking actions, such as confrontation, filling complaint, or also seeking support (Welbourne et al., 2016).

Gonzalez-Morales et al., (2006, 2010) argue that females differ in their coping strategies from males. Females are said to rely more on emotion-focused coping, while males rely on problem-focused coping. Giorgi (2012) argues that this distinction may be related to the level of sensitivity of women where they are more likely to react to incivility than men. Conversely, Tavris (1992) and Wood (1992) suggest that such a dominant attribution of females versus males, goes back to the 18th century where women are expected to offer warmth and care, while males are expected to provide money and success. Besides, Weber (2001) adds that this distinction between males and females is rather contextual, which means that they are never static or fixed, rather that gender roles are socially constructed (Weber, 2001). Ptacek et al., (1992) and Stokes and Wilson (1984) argue that the social construction of gender roles means that men are socialised to deal instrumentally with any kind of stressor (e.g. engaging in problem-focused coping), and women are socialised to express emotions (e.g. engaging in emotion-focused coping). DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2005) and Luthar and Luthar (2008) support the previous argument, and they argue that this attribution is mostly prevalent in patriarchal societies which highlight the power of masculinity over femininity. Noticeably, all researchers agree on one argument that gender roles are socially constructed, but their disagreement lies in the extent to which gender is socially constructed.

In my study, I argue that the customers of this case study restaurant have many frequent customers who are originally coming from a patriarchal society; thus, female employees might carry less power than male customers. I expect that female employees will perceive more intensive forms of customer incivility originated from male customers. Therefore, I suggest that female employees differ from their male co-workers in the ways they manage and cope with customer incivility. Research question six emerges from this section.

(6) How do the coping strategies adopted by female employees differ from male employees?

2.4 Summary

In summary, existing research on service employees coping behaviours points the importance of acknowledging organisations on the ways that employees use to deal with the anguish of customer incivility. However, existing research is fairly positivistic in nature and thus, it did not explore incivility from a subjective stance. In addition to that, previous research did not yet explore in any in depth how customer incivility could be different if it is initiated by frequent customers in the context of service relationships. Investigating these dynamics will allow me to extend the research on customer incivility by unfolding how it is constructed in this case study restaurant, what the common uncivil acts of frequent customers are, and how employees cope with it. By exploring these elements, I will be able to highlight the covert reason behind employees' distress in the workplace, which could not be the customer as it is overtly manifested in the many previous research already done on customer incivility in the service industry.

In order to show the relationship between customer incivility in the service industry, emotional labour, and the coping behaviours of employees, this literature review is divided into three parts. Part one explores the literature on deviance and emphasises the reasons behind focusing on the customer incivility construct, compared to other forms of misbehaviours. Customer incivility is defined as rude and discourteous behavioural acts with an ambiguous intent to harm the target, including verbal and non-verbal acts, which violate the norms of mutual respect. Such uncivil behaviours are proved to have several negative impacts on service employees. To deal with such behaviours, service employees engage in various coping strategies. Part two explores the motives behind misbehaviours. Part three explores the literature on the coping strategies of employees, with special focus on gender in determining coping behaviours.

The aforementioned studies throughout this literature review give substantial evidence to the claim that customer incivility has a serious impact on service employees; thus, it is crucial to further examine this construct in different service industries. Since there is no evident research which focuses on the ways that service employees use to cope with the anguish of customer incivility from frequent customer in the context of full-service ethnic "authentic" restaurants, this gives the context of this research the priority in filling this void in the literature on customer incivility.

Therefore, this research aims to contribute to the literature pertaining to human resources management and organisational behaviour, as well as to the marketing literature, specifically focused on the service industry.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

The previous chapter explores the underpinnings of literature fundamental to the current thesis. Throughout chapter two, I shape the research questions to be answered by this research. The current chapter presents the methods used to collect and analyze data. This chapter is written with extreme care since the strength, validity and the credibility of data collected lie in the context of a refined and strong methodology (Charmaz and Bryant, 2011). A strong methodology is the foundation to create fundamental and robust arguments and claims of a thesis. This research is based upon a qualitative methodological framework, which aims at giving a complete scientific understanding of the human world (Khan et al., 2016; McLeod and Thompson, 2009). Consequently, this study implements an interpretivist approach that "understands the world as socially constructed and subject to the interpretations of different social actors" (Bezzola and Lugosi, 2018:492). Data is collected through participant-observation, semi-structured interviews, informal interviews with service employees, and also by virtual ethnography.

3.1 Research method

This section solely focuses on the research methods that I used to collect and analyse the data, which helped to fulfil the main objective of my research. Going back to the main research objective of this thesis: "*to investigate the coping behaviours of service employees as they experience customer incivility from frequent customers, in the context of service relationships*".

This part is divided into three sections are: the philosophy, research design and methodology. Besides, this chapter explains the significance of reflexivity as a quality control mechanism, the methods I used to collect data, details on how I analysed the data, and it also highlights the ethical considerations.

3.1.1 Research philosophy

The research philosophy informs the way in which the researcher is interpreting knowledge (Schwandt et al., 2007) . Cohen (2000) suggests that the nature of social reality is placed on opposite poles are subjectivism and objectivism. **Objectivism** requires the researcher to overlook the nature of reality from an external ontological positioning (Diesing, 1966). However, **subjectivism** allows the researcher to take a conscious and internal view of reality (Diesing, 1966). In my research I adopt a **subjective view** of reality where the perceptions and actions of social actors are the creators of the social phenomena (Saunders et al., 2012).

The focus on subjectivism implicates the experiences of service employees with customer incivility, where the research's objective is to focus on employees' subjective experiences with customer incivility and to uncover ways to cope with it, in the context of service relationships. Therefore, social reality is internally created by social actors which highly support the **subjective ontological position** of my research.

Following ontology, epistemology is the second philosophical stance adopted for this research. Epistemology is concerned with what is considered acceptable knowledge (Saunders et al., 2012). In other words, it considers "how we know what we know, what justifies us in believing what we do, and what standards of evidence we should use in seeking truths about the world and human experiences" (Audi, 2010:8). For this research, I took an **interpretivist stance**, since it advocates the necessity to understand as a social actor the differences between humans (Saunders et al., 2012). Through interpretivism, reality is foreseen as something that is created and recreated through social interactions, that is so called as "socially constructed and subject to the interpretations of different social actors" (Bezzola and Lugosi, 2018:492). This belief makes interpretivism a suitable selection to be adopted for this research. In the investigation of employees coping behaviours, I recognised that service employees interpret incivility differently, and also their coping behaviours differ from one another, even in cases where they encounter the same kind of stressor.

Therefore, the aim of interpretivism is to develop theory throughout the interpretation and understanding of observations. This approach extensively relies on "thick descriptions", and it often embraces the ambiguous boundary between ethnography and literature (Moore and Mahadevan, 2020).

In his article "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" (1973), Geertz begins with a reconsideration of the concept of culture. Geertz suggests using thick descriptions as an analysis of culture, where each has its own configuration (Geertz, 1994; Geertz, 1976; Shankman et al., 1984).

Thick descriptions refer to the process by which the ethnographer takes excellent care in capturing contextual details while observing and interpreting the meaning behind social constructs in a specific culture (Geertz, 1994). The aim of "thick descriptions" is to build theories and to draw conclusions from small, but very dense data (Geertz, 1994). Geertz claims that "the essential task of theory building there is not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible, not to generalize across cases, but to generalize within them" (Geertz, 1976:26).

3.1.2 Research approach

Before the research proceeds, it is very important to identify the research design adopted for this research. The research design determines the type of data to be obtained (Bailey et al., 2003). For this thesis, I chose **ethnography** as a template and below is an exploration of the term ethnography and how it relates to this thesis.

3.1.2.1 What is ethnography?

Ethnography is an art of science utilised to describe a group or culture (Fetterman, 2019). Ethnography, what is referred to as a tool of "writing culture" (Clifford et al., 1986), "aims to explicate patterns of action that are cultural and/or social rather than cognitive" (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994:485). Culture "is the foundation of a worldview and value system…which gives meaning to people's concept of self and their roles in daily life" (Mariampolski, 2006:6). Ethnography allows the researcher to become aware of what people do but they do not know they have done it (Mendez, 2009), so the ethnographer's task is "to uncover those facts that seem trivial, but that can become powerful insights" (Mendez, 2009:638).

To analyse the pattern of the "complex whole", "participant-observation" was introduced by the American scientist Bronislaw Malinowski in 1914 when he conducted ethnography on Trobriand

Islands located on the Eastern coast of New Guinea. The aim of his trip was to learn the language of islanders by engaging in the day to day activities and participating in social events. However, while he was there, the WW1 started and he stayed there for two years, and this was the trigger for the development of "participant-observation" (Moore and Mahadevan, 2020). (a more detailed section on data collection methods is explained below). Malinowski emphasised the significance of his personal experience in the Trobiand Island, which had its influence on modern ethnography:

> "Before the 1920s many anthropologists relied on explorers, traders, missionaries and government officials for accounts of the people they studied…Malinowski exhorted his colleagues to go into the villages to see the natives at work, to sail with them on their ventures with their tribes and to observe them fishing, trading and working. The data that would be obtained would then be based on first-hand observations rather than second-hand accounts that had been squeezed out of reluctant informants"
>
> (Burgess, 2002:12-13)

Clearly, Malinowski's radical first-hand observations contributed to developing the literature on ethnography and anthropology. However, Wolcott (1982) claims that Malinowski's contribution to ethnography literature is both "classic" and "adequate". Wolcott suggests that depending on documenting behaviour does not give informative sense to an ethnographic research on criminal sub-cultures. Such ethnographic studies need a more detailed explanation on the reasons behind peoples' criminal acts rather than just narrating events.

Therefore, ethnography became not only a method to collect data, but also to analyse data aiming at discovering new information (Wolcott, 1994) .The inherent nature of ethnography being both a tool to collect and analyse data "gives it an unusual position in incorporating comparison and critique as an inherent part of the process" (Moore and Mahendan, Forthcoming).

3.1.2.2 Why I chose ethnography?

Conducting ethnographic research allows me to fully involve myself in the lives of my participants that can be useful for "analyzing human ways of life (cultures) holistically, relativistically, and comparatively" [means] understanding human activities, behaviours, and values within a broad sociocultural context (Zaharlick, 1992:117).

Both Malinowski and Boas believe that a researcher could collect data over a period of time from the same research site; however, Malinowski believes that data is not necessarily to be collected once at a time, which means that the researcher could take a break and then come back to the research site to continue his/her observation (Sanjek, 1991).

Clearly, Malinowski and Boas have radically different theoretical stances in approaching ethnography. Malinowski approaches ethnography from a functionalist perspective where he claims that the culture is functioned to meet the needs of the individuals, and when their needs are met, then the society needs are met. He also claims that the change in culture is an indicator of change in needs of the individuals who belong to this culture (Szymanski, 1972). According to Franz Boas who is the considered the father of cultural anthropology, cultural diversity is the core of developing unique societies (Boas, 1982; Sluka and Robben, 2007). Boas claims that every culture should be judged within its own premises, and this idea of "cultural relativism" is still held by anthropologists today (Boas, 1982; Johnson, 2007). The idea of Boas about cultural relativism is critical and important; however, it does not fully capture the significance of using ethnography as a method to collect and analyse data.

Although Malinowski and Boas differ in their collection of data and also differ in their approach to ethnography, they both have something in common which is that they both were fully involved in the lives of their participants and approached data from a subjective ontological stance (Adler et al., 1987).

Theresa Lillis in her article "Ethnography as a method, methodology, and deep theorizing" (Lillis, 2008) lists three radical values of ethnography in academic writing. Firstly, ethnography as a method rides the reader into a narrative text which allows him/her to consider some of the writer's perspectives about data collected. Secondly, as a methodology, ethnography allows the researcher to collect data from multiple sources, which enables him/her to explore complex meaning behind vague concepts and practices.

Finally, the most radical value is realising ethnography as a "radical theorizing" (Blommaert, 2006). Ethnography as radical theorising signals the need to develop an analytic tool that closes the gap between text and context (culture), in other words between emic and etic perspectives (Blommaert, 2006; Gothóni, 1981). **Etic perspective** refers to the description of behaviours and beliefs by the researcher, whilst **emic perspective** refers to the description of behaviours coming from the 'native's point of view' within the culture (Morris et al., 1999).

We can theorize that ethnography will allow me to take a critical stance in conducting this research. This will not only enable me to uncover the coping strategies of employees when they encounter customer incivility, but also to understand why employees cope the way they do. Additionally, deep theorizing of ethnography is a significant approach to assess the role of employees' gender in shaping their coping behaviours. The next section presents the context under study.

3.2 Research context: Why a Lebanese restaurant?

The popularity of the Lebanese cuisine has emerged in the UK through the global migration of the Lebanese during the Lebanese civil war in 1975 (Batrouney, 2006). TripAdvisor shows that there are around 295 Lebanese cuisine restaurants located around the city of London. This number of restaurants is huge compared to the number of Arabs (Lebanese, people from the Gulf, Syrians, Iraqis, Palestinians, Jordanians) which is 106,020, compared to the whole population in London, which is 8,173,941 (White, 2012).These uneven figures perhaps might be a significant determinant of the popularity of the Lebanese cuisine in the British market, which makes it a very good example to be used for this research.

For a cuisine to be of one of the most popular cuisines in such a very diverse and urbanised city, probably puts restaurant owners and service employees under lots of pressure. The pressure lies in attracting and retaining customers by offering them an excellent customer experience which reflects an "authentic" and "ethnic" image of the Lebanese cuisine, ranging from serving "authentic" and healthy food variety to providing a welcoming and good service. This is problematic because customers' views about "authenticity" differs amongst them. For instance, as a Lebanese I might be evaluating the authenticity of an Indian restaurant, differently from an Indian customer. This is largely related to the notion of “authenticity” being a socially constructed phenomenon, and it differs from one person to another (the construct of authenticity is critically explored in chapter two).

3.2.1 Finding “Be-Beirut”

While identifying the research questions of this thesis, which were also agreed upon with my supervisors, the first step to conducting this research is to find the appropriate restaurant. Since the research focuses on “customer incivility” prevailing at an ethnic “authentic” restaurant, choosing the right restaurant was by no means easy. As mentioned earlier, customer incivility is expected to be mostly prevalent in full-service restaurants, since service employees engage in long customer-employee service interactions. This implies that my task was focused on finding a full-service restaurant, which is located mostly in the city of London as they are the busiest. Additionally, because this research focuses on the context of ethnic restaurants, then it was another challenge for me to look for a full-service restaurant with ethnic, cultural/authentic characteristics. In the section “personal motivation” in chapter one, I mentioned that I have chosen a Lebanese full-service restaurant located in NorthWest London as the only setting to collect data for this research. This restaurant was not easily chosen for this research; however, I have taken my time to do so.

Choosing Be-Beirut as an appropriate context to conduct my study was by no means an easy task. It took me more than three years to be convinced that Be-Beirut is the appropriate restaurant relative to the most popular Lebanese restaurants located around the city of London. Over the course of my active search, Be-Beirut was very distinct in its seating and spatial distribution, its outdoor and indoor layout, its service, its food, and also its face interactions between employees and customers. Additionally, Be-Beirut is the only restaurant which is focused on marketing its identity as an “authentic” restaurant which aims at attaining customers from inside the ethnic group (Lebanese and other Arabs). When it comes to the rest of the other Lebanese restaurants, which I have visited, their objective is to attain as much customers as they can no matter what their nationality or ethnicity is. These reasons convinced me that Be-Beirut is a special restaurant to be further investigated. Additionally, since I will be investigating the authenticity construct in ethnic restaurants, I thought that exploring the relationship between authenticity and customer incivility is best studied from the view of connoisseurs or those who are very familiar with the cuisine and its offerings, and that is why focusing on customers from inside the ethnic group seems significant to this study.

Be-Beirut opened approximately five years ago and now it has over 25K followers on Instagram, compared to other London based Lebanese restaurants, such as Ishbilia restaurant with 856 followers, and Yalla Yalla restaurant with 2336 followers. Since the social media is recently utilised by users to create, modify, share, and discuss internet content (Kietzmann et al., 2011), it is an indication which shows that "Be-Beirut" restaurant is widely visited and is well known by many customers who are keen to experience the ethnic Lebanese food and dining culture. The followers on Instagram are not solely Lebanese expats. Instead, they come from various nationalities including British, Europeans and Middle Easterners. This diversity is evident while reading through the individual comments on photos and videos posted on the restaurant's Instagram page. Most commentators have explicitly mentioned their country of origin when they wrote a comment. I have to emphasise that not all of the followers are amongst the restaurant's regulars. Some are following the page to show love to the Lebanese food and to Be-Beirut in specific, but they are residing far from London. For instance, there is a comment on one of the pictures which says "Are you planning to open in Manchester? I love your food".

Another example of a video of food served posted on 'Be-Beirut' Instagram page and the caption underneath says: "Perfect day is always accompanied by perfect Lebanese food #Lebanon #Lebanesefood#foodie#london#Be-Beirut". This video is viewed by 3828 viewers and 14 people commented on it. Six of these comments are from already existing customers and the rest are from people who are tagging their friends' names to plan a 'soon' visit to the restaurant.

Of course, Instagram is one of the many platforms besides Facebook, TripAdvisor and Google which allows for evaluating the popularity and rating of a restaurant. However, I chose to use Instagram as a point of reference for many reasons. On Instagram, unlike Facebook, information on the platform about user's pages does not need the approval for articulated list of friends, this means that users are largely able to communicate with weak ties without any approval of reciprocation, through either following the page or a hashtag '#' they are interested in (Lup et al., 2015; Waterloo et al., 2018). The gradual increase of followers on Instagram is not always an indicator of interest in a page content. Sometimes followers show common dislike about breaking news and celebrity gossip (Cha et al., 2010). However, on a restaurant Instagram page people are mostly following the page to show common interests and passion for food photos and a restaurant ambience. Thus, the increase of followers on a restaurant's Instagram page might be an indicator of an increase in its popularity. This is obvious while I was reading through the comments on the pictures posted on Be-Beirut's Instagram page.

3.2.2 Gaining access to Be-Beirut

When I first found Be-Beirut on Instagram, I sent a private message to the restaurant's page. The message contained a short bio about me being a Lebanese student who is always in search for a Lebanese restaurant with much resemblance to those found back in Lebanon. I was lucky to be answered back by the owner who invited me for a free breakfast at Be-Beirut, and after that I became their frequent customer.

3.2.2.1 Pilot study

My preliminary access to Be-Beirut, started with a pilot study which lasted for 3 months. During this period, I did my best to visit the restaurant as a customer at least 2-3 times a week on busy days, such as Thursday, Friday, Saturday or Sunday. In total I visited the restaurant 30 times. Throughout the period of the pilot study, the restaurant's primary gatekeeper, the owner, introduced me to the rest of the team as a 'special' customer before I started my work as a hostess in May. The visits as a customer allowed me to establish service relationships with the rest of the team such as the supervisors and the service employees and thus, became their frequent, loyal customer. Consequently, I was able to collect ample data about customer-employee relationships through observations.

While I was collecting data through observations, I was jotting down information in my diary. My pilot study focused on collecting data about employees' interactions with customers, employees' interrelations, the design of the restaurant, the tables, the chairs, the serving plates, the music, and of course the food. Note that I did not take the consent of the employees or the owner of the restaurant to conduct my pilot study, because Be-Beirut is a public place, and no consent is deemed necessary.

The data collected from the pilot study is jotted down in a form of bullet points on my field diary. I made sure to transcribe the data in detail and then to analyse it after each day when the observation takes place. Reading carefully through the data from the pilot study (which is around 58 pages in total, approximately 1-2 pages of data each time I visit). I was able to use this data to come up with initial thoughts about the potential themes that might be useful for analysing the data. Additionally, this helped me to design the preliminary research questions, and also to start choosing the appropriate interview questions. Some of the interview questions were assigned to specific employees depending on my observations. I must note that, the size of the sample of the pilot study was the same sample size when I collected data via participant observation, and this emphasises the elements of success of the pilot study which determines the feasibility to conduct this research, such as determining the responsiveness of employees (Morin, 2013).

3.2.2.2 Accessing Be-Beirut

Gaining access to "Be Beirut" was easier than expected. As (Reeves, 2010) has noted, that an organisation's gatekeepers at all levels can have a huge impact on the shape of research. The basis of a good relationship between the people introducing a researcher to an organisation usually plays a significant role in shaping a researcher's access as well as the research experience (Reeves, 2010).

Gaining easy access to the restaurant is an excellent opportunity to collect ample data in their naturalistic state via observations (pilot study); however, this does not mean that I gained full access to data from participants, especially when collecting data via interviews (Briggs, 1986). Briggs (1983) argues that during an interview process, informants might be distorted by a tape recorder used to record the conversation between him and his informant. He refers to this issue a "procedural problem" which obstructs the transmission of ethnographic data to the interview process (Briggs, 1983).

Additionally, Briggs (1983) reflects on another problem which faces an interviewer, and it is when his/her participants refuse to disclose reliable and credible data because they are not interested, or they did not carefully listen to the question. In order to bypass this limitation, the researcher should find compatibility in shared values between him/her and their informants, which is to have ways to motivate his/her informants to carefully answer all his/her questions (Briggs, 1986).

In relation to this study, first I gained easy access to the restaurant because I am of Lebanese origins and I'm a special customer—as the owner refers to me. As such, I was offered a special treatment every time I visit the restaurant. For example, I come in without a reservation, employees seat me on the VIP table, and they offer me free drinks and desserts. At this stage I was an outsider as a frequent customer.

One day, I went to the restaurant to dine with a friend. I saw the owner "Ziad" sitting on his usual table in the VIP section and smoking shisha. I approached him, and he warmly welcomed me to sit on his table. I started the conversation by reminding him that I am a PhD candidate and that my research is focused on the restaurant industry. I mentioned later that, to collect data for my study I have to collect data from a Lebanese restaurant, and if he is willing to give me the permission to collect it at Be-Beirut. He did not show any signs of repulsion to the idea, and he welcomed me dearly. Once I took his approval, my position as a researcher forced me to explicitly explain to Ziad what my research is about, what data I'm willing to collect, from whom and what advantages this will give his restaurant.

Once I elaborated on my major objective of this research which is to explore the coping tactics of employees when they experience customer incivility, the owner genuinely showed interest in knowing more about his employees and customers. The owner admitted, during the first encounter with him as a researcher, that he is encountering a retention problem of his employees, although he is paying a fair salary, treating them as family, and also providing them with a free meal every day—as he mentioned during an informal conversation. Additionally, he was interested in knowing what employees suffer from while dealing with customers, so that he tries to find solutions for that.

I was not able to establish such a genuine and comfortable relationship with service employees without the help of the owner. Per se, the informal introduction of myself to the owner and his genuine enthusiasm in engaging in this research has helped me gain credibility among frontline employees before the fieldwork has commenced.

Negotiating preliminary access to the restaurant does not mean that I gained full access to the restaurant. The negotiation over accessing a field occurs on many levels (Nadai and Maeder, 2008; Reeves, 2010). The primary access was done through negotiating my recruitment as a hostess, and I was getting paid for this job £8/hour. While I was being introduced by the owner to the rest of the employees and supervisors, the owner informed his employees that I am a researcher and that I will be working with them temporarily until I finish data collection. During this brief meeting, I introduced myself and my research in more detail, and I distributed to the owner and the employees copies of the consent document (Appendix A). The consent is written in the English language and most of my participants asked me to translate it to the Arabic language. When employees finished reading/understanding the consent, I asked them to sign the form if they agree on its terms. All employees signed the consent, and no objections or concerns were raised by employees, which has given my job as a hostess/researcher a smooth start.

The first encounter for me as a hostess was with one of the supervisors, when he tried to oblige me to do tasks which I am not required to do, such as lighting up the candles on each table. Later, when employees got used to my presence amongst them as an employee and a researcher, they respected my position, and this has made my ice-breaking informal chats over breaks or lunch-time successful. I will be exploring my relationship with the employees in more detail in chapter four.

3.3 Methodology

As mentioned earlier in chapter two that the research questions are developed after indulging in the literature and identifying gaps. Going back to the main research question of this thesis:

> How do employees cope with customer incivility initiated by frequent customers in the context of service relationships?

This question is very broad and requires ample amount of data to answer all its sub-questions, where I am concerned about the information which I will derive from the data collected. “Sensitive and context-embedded” data is not able to be captured in quantitative methods such as surveys, since quantitative methods lack the capability in capturing the richness in insightful data collected by direct observation of service employees (Gamble and Huang, 2009).This does not mean that quantitative data is not valuable, but it is inadequate and insufficient to answer the aforesaid research objective.

The research question of this thesis needs **messy texts** that have some degree of verisimilitude, that is, texts that allow readers to imaginatively feel their way into the experiences that are being described by the author (Denzin, 1996a), and I am perhaps the major researcher who is able to collect and write down these messy texts with full credibility (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Martin, 1992). Denzin (1996) reflects the ability of ethnography not only in allowing me to experience a nuanced understanding of the phenomena under study, but also in making the data easy for the reader to understand.

Martin (1992) supports this claim when she presented the limitations she faced while conducting her research via semi-structured interviews and informal conversations. Martin (1992) suggests that collecting data via interviews allows the researcher to gather ample data enough to answer the research questions of her research. However, Martin (1992) faced an obstacle in presenting this data in a narrative structure, which is a way that encourages the reader to identify and accept the ethnographer’s authority. This was problematic since her collection of data integrates a sample from one company which has around 80,000 employees. Additionally, the plethora of vivid scene details, also known as “thick description” (Geertz, 1973), creates an illusion for the reader that he/she is present through every detail of participants’ lives and culture under study (Van Maanen, 1988).

In the foreground of this process, I **chose in-depth ethnography techniques** as means to develop clear perspectives, which could clearly investigate how incivility is constructed in the chosen context and also could ascertain the coping strategies of service employees when they are exposed to customer incivility from frequent customers, in the context of service relationships.

3.3.1 Research strategy

Choosing an appropriate research strategy is largely dependent on the research aim and questions. In line with the ontological and epistemological stance of this research, a qualitative-ethnographic approach deemed the most appropriate to achieve the aim of this research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Van Maanen, 1988).

This research adopts a qualitative approach using participant-observation, informal interviews, semi-structured interviews, and virtual ethnography. To my knowledge there is no study, which has employed four qualitative methods simultaneously in the field of customer incivility and employees' coping behaviours.

3.3.1.1 Participant-observation

There are three ethnographic techniques that could be used by researchers to allow him/her to integrate in the lives of their participants (Saunders et al., 2012). Participant-observation is regarded as the main data collection method in an ethnographic approach (Atkinson et al., 2001).

I mentioned earlier that my first role at Be-Beirut was an observer, where I was visiting the restaurant as a customer over the course of 3 months before I started my post as a hostess in May 2017. I need to mention that I have been offered a waitress position, but I refused to take it for one reason which is, the inability of the researcher to write down incidents due to time restrictions and the toughness of the job. Thus, taking the role of a hostess puts less pressure on me as a researcher and allows me to observe the interactions between employees and customers more clearly.
May 25, 2017 was the first day for me as a hostess at Be-Beirut. I undertook the role of '**participant-as-observer'** where my identity as a researcher is overtly known to participants and

I became part of the service team (Bryman, 2016). This allowed me to develop relationships with participants under study (Bryman, 2016; Saunders et al., 2012).

The notion of 'participant-as-observer' rests on the supposition that although the actions of individuals in social life are observable, they do not portray the truth in actions, which is a reflection of an individual's true feelings. Thus, I will be describing observed actions different to actors' meaning to these actions. As a matter of fact, I should probe on the meanings of these actions by sharing them with actors. This will eliminate the distinction between the observer (myself) and the observed phenomena (the employees), while I become a full organisational member and overtly collecting data (Lee et al., 1999). Per se, I became fully immersed in the field setting that permits me to hear, to see and to begin experiencing participants' reality (Patton, 1980). The requirement to capture and write down the right data during participant observation is essential in fieldwork. I was able to capture data with reference to the dimensions presented by (Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater, 2011). Figure 3 shows the essential steps that an ethnographer should follow while collecting data from observations.

1. Date, time and place of observation
2. Specific facts and details of what happened at the site
3. Sensory impressions: sights, sounds, textures, smells, taste
4. Personal response to the fact of recording fieldnotes
5. Specific words, phrases, summaries of conversations and insider language

Table 1: Dimensions of noting down fieldwork (Adopted from Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater, 2011)

At the beginning of the field work, I made sure to clarify my position as a researcher and that I am collecting data about employees' coping strategies and not about each person in specific. This problem almost faded after a week or so as employees got more comfortable with me, and they almost forgot my position as a researcher.

On the first day of being a hostess, I arrived early at lunchtime, so I would get more familiar with the task. One of the restaurant's supervisors started informing me about the table numbers and how customers should be seated depending on their orders, age, gender, and their newness to the restaurant.

I was instructed verbally about my task as a hostess. For example, if the customers had children with them, they should be seated in the restaurant area or the back area. If customers are frequent customers mostly, they should be seated in the lounge area, and some should be seated on the same table every time. Besides, if a bunch of male customers arrive together, I should try to seat them in the 'restaurant' area or the 'back' area because according to the management rules, they always wanted the restaurant to portray an image of a family restaurant (this will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4). I was positioned mostly in the restaurant area, which connects the "lounge" area and the "back" area. This allowed me to observe employee-customer interactions mostly from the "lounge" area and the "restaurant" area, which are the busiest sections of the restaurant. Although my positioning in the restaurant area was the best spot to collect ample data, this had put me under a lot of stress of multitasking. I was responsible for taking reservations over the phone, seating people and also observing and writing down my notes. I spent 1 month and a half working as a hostess and collecting data on field until no more data was to be collected.

My position as a hostess gave me the opportunity to mostly communicate with all employees working at the restaurant ranging from the security to chefs, waiters/waitresses and supervisors. During participant-observation, I observed waiters and waitresses while taking orders, serving food and handing bills to customers. I observed their facial expressions, such as when they are smiling, upset or frowning. I also focused on observing employees if they only put on a smile while at the time of the service interaction with customers, or if they keep the smile after they finish dealing with the customer. I also observed service employees' hand gestures; if they look irritated or confused whilst dealing with customers. In case the waiter/waitress did not take an order, serve food or gave the bill to a customer, most probably the customer made a complaint. In this case, I made sure to immediately ask this particular member of staff about their incident and ask them how they dealt with it.

Being a hostess in the restaurant, allowed me to observe and identify, through data collection, the various reasons behind the construction of incivility in this case study restaurant, and also about the coping strategies deployed by service employees. My ideal position between the three sections of the restaurant; the lounge, restaurant and back areas, allowed me to regularly note down field notes about the employee-customer interaction. I collected data over six weeks which is noted on 102 pages (1.5 space, 12 font), including the data collected from informal conversations. The notes are noted as narratives, then data was transcribed to be later analysed using a grounded theory approach (discussed in later section on data analysis).

3.3.1.2 Informal interviews

Side talks with employees, the so-called "**informal interviewing**" is the second data collection method used to collect data for this research. Informal interviews allow me "to participate in naturally unfolding events, and to observe them as carefully and as objectively as (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011:120). My aim whilst using this method is to encourage the informants to freely talk without blocking the flow of the interaction or having an impact on the topic (Bernard, 1996; DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011).

During informal conversations, I engaged in casual conversations with frontline employees; waiters/waitresses, security guy and supervisors, to ask them about their day, their mood and to narrate any incident they have encountered while dealing with customers and how they coped with it. By incidents, I refer to any kind of uncivil behaviour directed by customers on frontline employees like complaints, being rude or disrespectful.

Many times, while I was conducting "informal interviewing", I was not able to instantly note data on my notebook. Rather I try to remember conversations heard during the course of the day 'in the field'. This requires constant jotting and daily sessions "in which you sit at a typewriter, unburden your memory and develop your field notes" (Bernard, 1996:209).

Other "informal conversations" with frontline employees were recorded on my mobile, after having the consent of informants. I had rare incidents when employees refuse to talk to me during their shift unless they were busy. I also had many opportunities to socialise with my colleagues during their cigarette breaks or lunchtime, but this relationship stops after I leave the fieldwork. The only communication with colleagues outside working hours is via WhatsApp. On the day I joined the team at Be-Beirut, the supervisor added me to a WhatsApp group called "Be-Beirut". The group includes all staff from the owner, supervisors, chefs, and service employees. This group is intended to be used for work purposes only and to inform staff of any work-related updates, but sometimes they misuse it for sending jokes and socialising – as the owner claims. One incident over WhatsApp was about one of the frequent customers who is perceived stingy, and one employee was bantering about him:

> "Mr. Generous man has reserved a table today. I am sure that every one of you would be happy to serve him. HAHAHA. You will definitely get high tips"

Although my engagement via WhatsApp was very limited to work purposes, I was also able to collect very minimal data on employees' behaviours through WhatsApp messenger. The data collected is not more than 6 pages, underpinning my analysis across the entire set. I need to emphasise that before using any information extracted from WhatsApp, I orally asked permission from those involved (the employees, supervisors and the owner). This collection of data is referred to as content analysis, which is “a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text. These inferences are about the sender of the message, the message itself, to the audience of the message” (Weber, 1990:10). As such, content analysis enables the researcher to indulge objectively and systematically through the data and to identify thoroughly the messages characteristics (Stemler, 2015; Weber, 1990). Although through content analysis, I was able to collect data about participants and their feelings about some customers, this data is insufficient and is prone for criticism (Steinmetz, 2012). One major limitation of content analysis is that participants might take an “active role in adapting, altering, and even producing content” (Neuendorf, 2017:202) that might not be true, and that might induce feelings of hatred from employees towards some customers based on one employee’s bad experience (domino effect). Another limitation of content analysis could be related to the researcher’s inability to identify the real identity of their participants, since some might adopt false identities that could mislead the ethnographer (Hine, 2000; Steinmetz, 2012). To avoid this limitation, the researcher might consider focusing on the reflected identities, rather than focusing if the identity is real or fake (Hine, 2000). However, in this study I avoided these limitations since I have already personally met my participants, I know who is chatting with me via WhatsApp, and I am also aware of my participants identities and characteristics. Using WhatsApp has helped in revealing more facts about my participants’ identities, such as those who are shy to reveal their true personality during face-to face interactions, such as some employees who were acting more liberal in terms of expressing their opinions about customers.

In addition to WhatsApp, I collected data via Instagram by adopting virtual ethnography. Virtual ethnography is “an ethnography research within online environment or virtual world…the ethnographer can gather data from online environment and using the method of data collection computer-based” (Kurniasih, 2019:239). Through Instagram, I also collected minimal data about customers such as who the frequent customers are, their comments about their dining experiences, their nationalities, and how do they comment on the authenticity of the restaurant, and also, I collected data about the common hashtags used to promote the restaurant. The data from Instagram (around 3 pages) is stored on a Word document with the data from WhatsApp in the same folder titled virtual ethnography.

3.3.1.3 Semi-structured Interviewing

To meet the study objective, I selected in-depth semi-structured interviews as the most appropriate method, enabling me as a researcher to gain further insights on data collected during observation (pilot study), participant-observation, informal interviews, and virtual ethnography. Before taking any step to conduct my interviews, I orally took the permission of the owner to start this step for data collection. Note that the owner and the employees have already signed a consent form at the beginning of my data collection, which explicitly mentions that I will also conduct interviews after finishing my participant observation.

I conducted semi-structured interviews "to encourage respondents to think about and describe situations that would normally be dealt with on automatic pilot, as 'expert' members of that culture" (Sandiford and Seymour, 2007:731). In semi-structured interviews, I prepared a set of questions, which addresses each theme of my research questions; however, I had the freedom to probe into more questions to inquire about my informants' answers and to gather the necessary information I need (Saunders et al., 2012; DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011). Designing the interview guide facilitated the process of interviewing since I prepared a set of primary questions which directly address the research questions, and also reflect on ambiguities that arose during my participant-observation. Simultaneously, I prepared a set of probing questions that might be beneficial in further examining my respondents' answers which are considered relevant to the research questions, and to enable me to create insights from the interviews. The set of interviews and the probing questions can be found in Appendix B. Note that, not all responses of the probing questions were considered relevant to the themes generated in this study. Since this research is exploratory in nature, I have given the respondents the chance to freely express their emotions, thoughts, and opinions without restrictions. In other words, as an interviewer I have taken a romanticist stance while collecting data to demonstrate to my respondents that I am genuinely committed to understanding their suffering (Alvesson and Ashcraft, 2012) . This has elevated my credibility amongst my respondents.

This is made possible since through ethnography I will be questioning my informants from an insider's perspective who already has had experience in the field and about informants' activities and shared values (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Fetterman, 2009). In that way, I will have the opportunity to compare between data observed and data reported by participants; thus, giving a better understanding for conclusions made.

Informants were selected based upon their job title and their extensive communication with customers. A total of 12 interviews (1 female, 11 male) were conducted with service employees, middle managers, and the owner (see table 2 below) which are noted down on 70 pages on Microsoft word. Interviews were conducted individually, audio recorded on my mobile phone, and lasted around 30 to 50 minutes. I made sure to replace respondents' names with pseudonyms.

Participant pseudonym	Age	Title/Profession	Experience	Nationality
Ziad	41	Owner	5 years	Lebanese
Rami	30	Waiter	6 years	Lebanese
Daniel	19	Waiter	1.5 years	Lebanese
Rawad	21	Waiter	1.2 years	Lebanese
Said	38	Waiter	22 years	Lebanese
Walid	20	Waiter	8 months	Syrian
Mohammad	28	Shisha guy	1.5 years	Iraqi
Anthony	41	General Manager	25 years	Lebanese
Hussein	19	Shisha guy	3 months	Iraqi
Sarah	23	Waitress	5 years	Moroccan
Sami	23	Waiter/Cashier	6 weeks	Lebanese
Altan	38	Security/Host	2 years	Turkish

Table 2: List of Participants' Characteristics

Before commencing with an interview, each participant (including the owner and the general manager) was handed the same consent previously signed by them at the beginning of my participant-observation, and also reminded them that if any person feels they want to opt out from the interview they are free to do so. I also orally took the permission of each participant to record the interview on my mobile for the purpose to remembering and documenting information for research purposes (all this information is written on the consent form). Participants were always reminded that their names will be mentioned as pseudonyms and their confidentiality is my top priority.

First, I began conducting interviews with service employees (10 respondents in total). The interviews were held on the restaurant's premises on a private table inside the restaurant area. Each interview began by collecting data about participants' demographics, such as age, gender, education, marital status, nationality (defines ethnicity) and years of experience. The average age of female employees is (20 years) and the average age of male employees is (27.1). The minimum experience of employees is 3 months, and the maximum is 22 years. All informants work a nightshift, and they work at least 8 hours which is a full-time shift (starting 6 pm till closing around 2 am).

Service employees were asked to describe a "critical incident" when they experienced customer incivility in the past two months, which had the most negative influence on them. Critical incidents offer a detailed step-by-step of incidents experienced and witnessed by participants, how they reacted, and how they feel about it (Kashif and Zardaka, 2015). Thus, critical incidents offer participants the flexibility to easily recall incidents they have stored in their memories and to narrate them accordingly (Kashif and Zarkada, 2015). I stopped conducting interviews when theoretical saturation is reached, which means no further new information is disclosed.

After collecting data from service employees, I was interested in collecting information from the management of Be-Beirut, which includes the owner and the general manager. I began both interviews the same way by presenting the consent form and also asked for their permission to record the interviews on my mobile phone. However, I prepared slightly different interview questions for each of the owner and the general manager. The interview with the owner was focused on the below questions (table 3). I have to mention that this set is not rigid, and I got the chance to probe into each answer and thus more questions have surfaced while conducting the interview.

- What problems do you usually face in such a business and how do you deal with it? - How do you find the right people for the job? - Do you have a problem recruiting female or male employees? Whom do you prefer recruiting the most? Why? -Do you undergo any training for your employees? What does this training focus on? -Is there a difference in training between female employees and male employees? -How do you retain your employees? -Do you stand by the mantra that the customer is always right? -What makes your restaurant different from other Lebanese restaurants located in the city of London? -Who are your competitors? Why? -Does the management sympathise with employees who deal with a bad customer? And how do you do that? -Who is more important to you, your employees or your customers? Why? -What procedures or tactics does your organisation follow to make your employees feel appreciated? -Do you think being friendly with employees will drive them to engage in activities that might challenge the status quo?

Table 3: Interview questions with the owner

The interview with the owner was conducted while seated on his VIP table and lasted around 1 hour. During this interview, he revealed his true personality as a previous waiter, a restaurant owner and a boss. He discussed his initial plan when he decided to open Be-Beirut, and how he constructed his notions of authenticity (detailed in chapter 4). He also explained how he chooses his employees, how they are being trained and also treated by the management (also detailed in chapter 4).

After finishing the interview with the owner, I had one interview left which is with the general manager, which was conducted in his office and lasted around 1.5 hours. I asked him many questioned about the restaurant's rules on employees, and also when he interferes if the employees experience incivility. Below in table 4 is a sample of the interview questions with the general manager:

-What are the standards of service that the restaurant instructs their employees to follow and to abide with? -Do you believe that the customer is always right? -Do you normally take breaks? Does this system apply to service employees as well? -In your opinion, who is the bad /good customer? -Have you ever reacted badly towards a bad customer? Is this your coping strategy? -Do you have a special training scheme designed for your employees? What does it include? -How do you motivate your employees to work more effectively? -What makes your employees inefficient? How are you dealing with this problem? -What is more important to you, to retain your employees or your customers? -What if customers were acting badly with your employees? What would you do in such a situation?

Table 4: Interview questions with the general manager

The interview with the general manager was very insightful as it speaks volumes about how the management perceives its employees and how it treats them in this particular restaurant. It also indicates the organisational/managerial rules (middle and senior management) as antecedents to customer incivility (Details are discussed in chapter 5).

I have to mention that 90% of the interviews (with service employees and the management) are conducted in the Arabic language, and later translated to the English language by myself. I have to accentuate that my native language is Arabic, and my second language is English. I conducted the interviews in the Arabic language upon the request of my respondents as many claim that they are better able to express their thoughts and feelings that way.

3.4 Data analysis

Miles and Huberman (1994:10) claim that "the strengths of qualitative data rest very centrally on the competence with which their analysis is carried out". Therefore, I took good consideration in the steps of data analysis.

To reiterate, I collected data from 6 different sources which are a pilot study (observation), participant-observation, informal interviews, semi-structured interviews, content analysis and also virtual ethnography. The data from the pilot study was saved in a separate Word document under the title "observations". The data from social media was also documented in a separate Word document and was divided into two sections are WhatsApp and Instagram information. The data from field notes, informal interviews are transcribed separately on Microsoft Word Document on a daily basis, so that I do not miss any scene or information. The audio-recorded interviews are transcribed on a software called oTranscribe.

3.4.1 Thematic Analysis

When I finished transcribing my data, I was coding it manually either on my laptop or on paper transcripts. I followed the six phases process of thematic analysis proposed by (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to analyse the data. Thematic analysis "is a method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning ('themes') within qualitative data… provides accessible and systematic procedures for generating codes and themes from qualitative data (Braun and Clark, 2006: 297).

The thematic analysis is known for its flexibility in identifying patterns and understanding participants experiences and behaviours (Braun and Clarke, 2006), researchers are required to explain in detail the analysis procedure for credibility reasons (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

3.4.1.1 Thematic analysis process

There are six steps I used to analyse my data which helped me in generating codes and themes for this study. I adopted the six phases of thematic analysis from Braun and Clarke (2006) and (Terry et al., 2017); Besides, I used the coding steps in phase two of the thematic analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Step one: Familiarize with the data

When I finished transcribing the data from all my data sources, I reread the whole transcripts to refamiliarise myself with the content of information. I created separate files for the data collected from observations, participant-observation, content analysis and virtual ethnography. As for interviews, I created several word documents where each file has a name (pseudonym) to help me navigate within the file. Each file has information about each participant (gender, education, marital status, age, experience) and the interview transcripts.

While reading through the transcripts from observations, participant-observation, virtual ethnography, and interviews, I was coding a lot of information that are descriptive by nature; simultaneously, I was writing my thoughts about the data on a margin on the right on Microsoft word.

Step two: generating codes

Following Strauss and Corbin (1998), I started the coding process by what is called open coding. Open coding allows me to read the data line by line and to manually mark the interesting statements in accordance with the research objectives set originally for this thesis. Later, I started comparing the data and aggregating similar themes to form categories, this is called axial coding. When I was done with axial coding, I utilised selective coding in order to identify the core themes to be discussed in the finding’s chapters. Although the codes inductively emerged from the data (Azungah, 2018), the research questions shaped those initial codes.

Step three: Constructing themes

In this step I compiled codes into themes and sub-themes, and I also integrated the quotes from the data relevant to each theme/sub-theme. Besides, I explored the links between different codes to highlight similarities or differences amongst different codes. Throughout this process, I had to add new codes, rename codes, and/or merge them with other codes (Cormack et al., 2018). Thus, the data is clustered into themes and sub-themes using Braun and Clarke's (2006) data thematic analysis method. The themes formed constitute a core meaning and understanding relevant to the research questions.

Step four: Reviewing potential themes

In this step, I intended to reexamine the themes and the codes whenever a complexity with data or meaning is identified. This includes referring to my notes to make sure that I have enough relevant data to support my themes.

Step five: Defining and naming themes

Analysis of the field notes and interview transcripts identified 3 primary interconnected themes which were consistent among informants. I must mention that each theme and its subthemes are discussed separately each in an individual chapter. They are also discussed in the same order as the table below shows.

Theme 1: Workplace culture of Be-Beirut	***Theme 2***: How incivility is constructed	***Theme 3*** How employees cope with incivility
Sub themes: -The restaurant setting -The restaurant layout -The restaurant atmosphere -The restaurant servicescape -Owner's construction of the Lebanese identity -Role of the researcher (hostess) -Role of female employees -Role of male employees -Relationship between female/male employees -Relationship between service employees and middle managers -Relationship between service employees and owner -Relationship between customer and service employees	**Sub themes:** Top management practices -The organisational culture -Promoting authenticity -The design of the seating plan Middle management practices -Organisational climate Frontline employees' practices -Service relationships with customers -Forms of uncivil behaviours	**Sub themes:** -Individual coping -Collective coping -Difference in coping between gender -challenges

Table 6: Research major themes

Quotes from participants are thoroughly used as examples to describe each theme within the text. This process was taken by hand and no software was deemed required for data analysis. The reason lies behind the consistency in employees' behaviours and answers during data collection. Such commonalities from line-to-line data assisted me in finding commonalities and/or abnormalities arising from the data.

Step six: Producing the report

Generating the report is one of the most complex stages throughout the thematic analysis process. I had to write a concise, interesting, and convincing report which highlights the main findings of this study, and it also reflects critically on the data. Each theme was identified by codes and supported by quotes from the data. Additionally, I discussed relationships between the findings, claims and the existing literature, which means that I have moved from being descriptive to becoming interpretivist (Braun and Clarks, 2006).

This approach to data analysis is not consistent with the traditional grounded theory approach developed by (Glaser and Strauss, 2017). A "grounded theory" method of analysis is "a set of flexible analytic guidelines that enable researchers to focus their data collection and to build inductive middle-range theories through successive levels of data analysis and conceptual development." (Charmaz, 2005:2).

This definition provided by Charmaz fits the mode of analysis of data for this research, but it lacks the inclusion of the researcher's input in the interpretation of data collected. In a traditional grounded theory approach the researcher takes a distant position; aka an observer; which limits his/her entry into the lives of participants. With reference to this research, I have taken the position of a participant-observer where I was fully immersed in the world of my participants and my data input is considered highly influential in building the theory from this data. Therefore, I have analysed my data according to a constructivist grounded theory.

3.5 Credibility, Reflexivity and Transferability

In the previous sections, I explicitly discuss the methodology process which entails gaining access to the context under investigation, the methodology, and the analysis process. In this section, I will discuss what are the criterions used for evaluating and enhancing the quality of qualitative data.

3.5.1 Credibility

The credibility criteria depend on three different elements are the credibility of the researcher, gathering high quality data, and the belief in the value of the collected qualitative data (Patton, 1999a) . My credibility as a researcher is built from the moment, I decided on choosing Be-Beirut as the context of my study, continued throughout the data collection and reached the analysis. I created this credibility when I negotiated my access to the restaurant and when I provided the management and the employees a written consent which explicitly discusses my role at the restaurant as an employee and a researcher. In addition to that, my credibility as a researcher is also enhanced because of my nationality and my cultural background where I am an insider to the culture of the restaurant. Although being an insider might raise issues of subjectivity and trustworthiness of the researcher (Noble and Smith, 2015), I surpassed such misconception by being an impartial evaluator of the findings, where my analysis shows clearly that I am caring and interested in the people and the context under study, but I am also neutral in my approach to the findings (Noble and Smith, 2015; Patton, 1999).

Additionally, in this research, I view knowledge as socially constructed, which changes with circumstances(Glaser and Strauss, 1964; Golafshani, 2003). Constructivism aims at probing into knowledge and to understand it from a deeper perspective rather than examining surface elements (Johnson, 1995). Thus, reality is forever changing (Golafshani, 2003). To acquire credible data that could possibly uncover the possibly diverse constructions of reality, multiple methods for collecting data are particularly needed (Golafshani, 2003). This is called data triangulation (Kozinets, 2007; Patton, 1990). The method to collect data for this research is ethnography based upon observations (pilot study), participant-observation while interpretating peoples' behaviours in their natural state (Kozinets, 2007), content analysis, virtual ethnography and semi-structured interviews. Later, I triangulate data sources by cross-checking the consistency of information extracted from different methods, at different times (Patton, 1999b). Luckily, while triangulating data sources the data yielded to the same result which essentially strengthens the credibility of the data collected (Patton, 1999).

The credibility of the data did not only consider triangulating data sources, but also triangulating analysis. Before commencing with the coding steps suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and the thematic analysis method developed by (Braun and Clarke, 2006), I intended to differentiate between two sets of data collected: first-order and second-order concepts. The first-order concepts refer to the "facts" that I collected during my participant-observation, while the second-order concepts refer to the "theories" that I used to organise and explain facts (Van Maanen, 1979). For instance, if one service employee always swears when he/she sees a customer entering the restaurant, then this might implicit several second-order concepts: (1) the employee hates his job; (2) it is something he/she is used to do which is to swear at customers he/she already served before; and (3) this employee might be showing out his stress and tiredness by using swearing words as a coping strategy.

In order not to draw upon faulty second-order concepts, I tried to limit my misconceptions primarily by eliminating the thin line between presentational and operational data which I recorded of first-order concepts (Van Maanen, 1979). Presentational data refers to the data that the researcher descriptively collects and denotes in his/her research diary. This data is often spontaneous and reflects participants' real engagement in activities and conversations (Van Maanen, 1979).

However, Operational data refers to the data that the ethnographer collects while his/her participants are in a conscious state that they are being observed. Per se, participants strive to maintain a specific appearance or try hard to create a specific image of him/herself in the eyes of the fieldworker (Van Maanen, 1979).

To overcome such misconceptions in what is being observed and what the informants would like to show is a very significant analytic approach, which does not allow "masking the difference between facts and findings generated from ethnographic study" (Van Maanen, 1979:543). To do so, I noted down separate data labelling them as operational and presentational. Later, I probed into the presentational data through semi-structured interviews to further test and retest theories created while collecting data via participant-observations (Van Maanen, 1979). Such an approach is attainable given the analytical **reflexivity** of the ethnographer.

3.5.2 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is the second element which enhanced the quality of the qualitative data collected for this study. Reflexivity is the process by which the researcher engages in interpreting findings and drawing conclusions, at the same time acknowledging the researcher's effect on subjects under study (Davies, 1999). It allows the researcher to make better guesses and fewer big mistakes (Lichterman, 2017; Sanders, 1999). The epistemological stance of interpretivism allows this reflexivity to observe, communicate and interpret data (Hall, 2014).

In this research, my position as a hostess allowed me to tackle the ambiguity of data collected through reflexivity. I was collecting data every Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday at the same time while observing the same team who work a nightshift. Additionally, my hostess position allowed me to experience incidents of incivility with customers, since my task is to interact directly with customers. Although the data input is ontologically subjective, it is not considered biased and invalid due to the reflexive approach that ethnography offers to the researcher. Although reflexivity is essential for the researcher in ethnography, Pillow (2003:186) believes the nature of reflexivity is dangerous for many researchers:

> "Prominent in much qualitative research is the idea that the researcher, through reflexivity, can transcend my own subjectivity and own cultural context in a way that releases her/him from the weight of (mis)representations. Self-reflexivity can perform a modernist seduction — promising release from your tension, voyeurism, ethnocentrism — a release from your discomfort with representation through a transcendent clarity."

This assertion is certainly dangerous, in one case if the ethnographer could not find a correlation between his/her position as a researcher and the data extracted from research (Litcherman, 2017). Besides, it is considered dangerous if the ethnographer does not occupy a professional position whose claims are distinctive for its universal view of the social field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Lichterman, 2017). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) believe that reflexivity in ethnography allows the ethnographer to detect common sense assumptions, which objectify all claims in a social field. And since ethnography is used as a tool to solve communication problems in human action

(Dewey, 1927; Pillow, 2003), reflexivity gave me the ability to interpret the meanings behind the data I collected from the participants and to reflect on it to readers in a transparent view.

3.5.3 Transferability

The third quality assessor for qualitative data is its transferability. When it comes to the transferability of qualitative data, unlike statistical data, the aim of the researcher is not focused on its generalizability to other contexts. However, the qualitative researcher's role is to provide the reader with enough thick descriptions about "the time, the place, the context, the culture, in which the hypothesis in this study are to be found salient" (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:241-242). The transferability of the data to other contexts depends on the receiver's judgment and assessment whether the data can be applied in their own situations (Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Symon and Cassell, 2012). In my study, I made sure to provide the reader with very detailed, thick descriptions that allow them to utilise my findings and to apply them in other contexts (I elaborate on this in chapter 7). The next section discusses ethical considerations.

3.6 Ethical considerations

When conducting this research, I considered ethics before collecting data from or about participants. This is called an informed consent "a concept which attempts to capture and convey what is regarded as the appropriate relationship between researcher and research participant" (Miller and Boulton, 2007:2199). Guillemin and Gillam (2004) distinguish between two dimensions of ethics in research are "procedural considerations" and "ethics in practice".

Procedural ethics refers to gaining authoritative consent to collect data. With regards to procedural considerations, I completed a form provided by the ethical committee at my institution. This form cleared the research from any ethical dilemmas that I might face during data collection. With regards to practical issues, I provided the organisation and employees with a written consent (Appendix A), which informs them about the project, my role as a participant observer, and how will I conduct the interviews. I also took approval from the management and the employees to note down notes on a diary and to record any informal or formal interview with subjects using my mobile phone. Participants were informed that they have the full right to opt out of research and to refuse to answer any question if they felt uncomfortable in doing so. Confidentiality was a key topic for participants, which informed them that their names are pseudonyms to make it clear from the outset.

Ethics in practice refers to the day-to-day ethical issues that the researcher might face during data collection. For instance, while I was asking one of the waitresses the reason behind her tears that I witnessed during my shift, the waitress started blathering about her supervisor by using very harsh and disrespectful language. During this incident, I was recording this informal conversation on my mobile; however, I turned off the recording, so that I give the waitress the comfort that my conversation will not be shared with anyone. Such acts gave me more credibility and allowed me to gain the trust of employees. The reflexivity in ethnography gives me the ability to take immediate decisions about ethical concerns during data collection.

Since ethnography requires the researcher to be present for long hours in the social field, participants might feel uncomfortable at some point. Therefore, I considered contextual sensitivity where I informed participants that I am willing to stop observing them if this will make them feel discomfort. However, for this study I did not face any problems with participants due to two reasons. First, the restaurant's busy environment has only allowed participants to concentrate on their job task. Second, since my job position is a hostess, participants almost forgot that I am a researcher, and they were collaborating with me as if I am one of the team. For example, employees come to me (the hostess) and ask about reservations and table numbers, which is the hostess's job to provide such information.

3.7 Conclusion

This research adopts a subjective ontology and interpretivist epistemology, which is grounded in the theoretical framework of this thesis. As this work is concerned with how employees cope with incivility, it means they are considered social actors who are responsible of constructing realities within a situation. Such a process supports the research's subjective ontological perspective; therefore, it allows to present subjective experiences of employees.

Data is collected through multiple ethnographic techniques, observation, participant-observation, informal conversations, content analysis, virtual ethnography and semi-structured interviews. Subsequently, data is thematically analysed by comparing similarities and abnormalities across data collected by different techniques.

Finally, due to the sensitive nature of employees and their behaviours with customers, ethical considerations played an instrumental role in this research. Participants' confidentiality is guaranteed, and I made sure to use pseudonyms to cover employees' identities.

Chapter Four: Workplace Culture at "Be Beirut".

4.0 Introduction

This research aims to build and expand on previous studies on customer incivility (Andersson and Pearson, 1999), centered on how service employees develop specific coping strategies when they deal with uncivil customers. I argue that the case study ethnic restaurant has many frequent customers and thus, incivility takes a particular form in this context and is therefore experienced in a certain way which could be potentially different from other already-studied restaurant settings.

The purpose of this chapter is to contextualise subsequent findings by describing the workplace culture of the case study restaurant. Central to my argument is the relationship between authenticity, and its role in triggering incivility initiated by frequent customers. The empirical data presented in this chapter reveals how and why the owner sought to provide an authentic experience by directing his efforts to homesick Lebanese people and Arab customers through constructing 'Lebaneseness' and emphasising ways customers could feel "home away from home", by consuming food that is "traditional and authentic" in a "lively" Lebanese atmosphere. The owner intents to help Lebanese customers in specific and Arab customers in general to feel relieved from the feelings of alienation in a big city like London. Using the same techniques, the owner also aims to help ensure repeat customer patronage, which is the main determinate of customers' loyalty and satisfaction (Barber et al., 2011).

However, my findings show that repeat customers are creating uneven hierarchies between customers and service employees, which contribute to particular forms of customer incivility that will be discussed throughout chapter 5. I will initiate this empirical section by exploring the physical settings of "**Be-Beirut**". This information details how the owner is constantly seeking to reproduce his version of an "authentic" Lebanese restaurant through the use of practices, namely utilising the Arabic language as the main communicative language at the restaurant, adapting employees' interactive, courteous, and hospitable manner, working on the design of the restaurant, and providing customers with an extensive coverage of "authentic" Lebanese food/cuisine identity. After exploring the physical setting of the restaurant, I will then continue to describe my role as a hostess, and the overall workplace culture which includes a discussion of the lived experiences of ‘frontliners’, their relationships with each other, with the middle management and with the top management. This section will provide the foundation for the ethnological analyses that will be presented in the following chapter, which discusses the construction of customer incivility at “Be-Beirut”.

4.1 ‘Be-Beirut’ restaurant

“Be-Beirut” restaurant is a fairly new restaurant which was opened almost five years ago by a Lebanese entrepreneur, Ziad (pseudonym). His love for his country, his family, his roots, and his traditions, together with his homesickness, all acted as his incentives to open a Lebanese restaurant in London. He focuses on introducing an “authentic” and “traditional” menu which caters to most customers who are either vegetarian, vegan, and/or those who only eat Halal food. Following his passion for his Lebanese origins, he established “Be-Beirut” in an elegant location situated in the heart of Northwest London in a non-commercial area, which the owner describes as being:

> “a very quiet area facing a beautiful canal with an amazing scenery of ducks, geese and swans visiting the canal all day long. This would allow for a spacious restaurant like those found in Lebanon”
>
> (Ziad, 41, Lebanese)

Now I will start describing the restaurant according to my observations. The décor of the restaurant is very modern. The green and white colours are the dominant colours, which resemble the olive trees in Lebanon. The restaurant’s walls are decorated with photos of famous classic-old Lebanese singers such as Fairuz, Sabah, Wadih El Safi, some of whom have already passed away. However, they symbolise Lebanese history and traditions. Additionally, the walls are decorated with Arabic phrases and proverbs *e.g.* “meet me with warmth, before feeding me”. This Lebanese proverb is one of the very famous proverbs, which signals the welcoming hospitality of the Lebanese people. Through this proverb, the owner tries to show customers that his restaurant is unique since it is an “authentic” Lebanese restaurant, which welcomes everyone as family rather than customers.

The owner instructs the warm welcome by the restaurant décor, and the staff's hospitable greeting of customers complements it. They all put on a smile and welcome the customers to the restaurant. This kind of hospitality and courtesy practices over food are considered essential components of communication in the Lebanese society. Hospitality lies in the heart of the Arabic, mainly Lebanese identity (Ladki et al., 2002; Matta, 2017), where this duty is ranked over prayer (Fletcher et al., 2019). While customers are seated, Lebanese songs are always played in the background. However, Thursdays and Fridays are the special nights for this restaurant. On each of these days, a Lebanese singer sparks the place with all the old classic and new pop Arabic songs where customers start singing and dancing along with the singer. I need to emphasise that these particular symbols of "Lebaneseness" are aspects reflecting cultural elements that appeal as authentic to customers, since they reflect on the same atmosphere and ambience found in Lebanon. Thus, 'Be-Beirut' functions as a 'cultural ambassador' providing customers with a constructed image of the Lebanese entertainment and happy life, which is sought to be a cultural destination to many tourists coming from around the world, specifically from the gulf area.

Most customers visiting on Thursdays and Fridays are Arabs who always make a booking and attempt to reserve the same table each time. They do so to make sure that they are seated near the singer, and that they have enough space to dance. This shows that the owner is being successful in using his restaurant to communicate the characteristics of the Lebanese identity by simultaneously generating favourable impressions and images of the restaurant to specific customers (Anholt, 2010). Customers of Be-Beirut seem emotionally and cognitively attached to the Lebanese 'authentic' identity by fostering repeat customer patronage, which is a major success that the restaurant aims at achieving. The only thing, which is missing during these frequent parties at 'Be-Beirut', is alcohol. 'Arak'[2] is the primary alcoholic beverage, which is associated with a Lebanese cuisine and with the dancing atmosphere at a Lebanese restaurant. Most Lebanese enjoy drinking 'Arak' when they are groups of people gathered to enjoy a night of Lebanese food, music and dancing. However, at 'Be-Beirut' the owner has refused to include any alcoholic beverage on the menu. The quote below elaborates on this:

[2] Arak is a traditional Lebanese alcoholic beverage which is known for its white colour and aniseed-flavour

> "I am not selling any alcohol because first I am a Muslim and my co-owner is a 'Hajj[3]', so he will never accept that this restaurant to be against the rules of the Islamic religion. We also care about celebrating Ramadan in which most customers won't be our customers in case we were selling alcohol. In addition to that, when customers start drinking, they might start acting weird, and most of them are hot-headed where fights might happen. This might put me at risk of closing my restaurant if any severe problem occurs. I know that selling alcohol is very much profitable, but I have to choose between profitability and peace of mind, so I have chosen peace of mind. The people who want to drink they can either choose to drink before they come to dine, or after they leave. It is up to them, but no alcohol on my restaurant's premises"
>
> (Ziad, 41, Lebanese)

Ziad aims at promoting the image of 'Be-Beirut' as being an undefiled family-restaurant which caters Halal food, and it also celebrates Ramadan. The bookings on Ramadan are different from normal business days as customers are obliged to pay a standard fee to enjoy Ramadan food buffet, which is very profitable. The Ramadan buffet has a wide selection of appetisers, main courses, Lebanese sweets, Lebanese coffee, and juices.

Additionally, the owner thinks that alcohol is associated with problems and fights, and he does not want to risk anything to happen at his restaurant on foreign soil as this might put him at risk of closing the entire establishment. Ziad's claim supports the idea on how drunkenness is recognised as a socially embedded part of customers' experiences (Lugosi, 2019). Restricting selling alcohol at 'Be-Beirut' projects elements of irony in which the owner is prioritising the Islamic identity over the Lebanese identity. Restricting alcohol at 'Be-Beirut' is in some senses inauthentic since in Lebanon drinking alcohol, specifically 'Arak', is part of the Lebanese cultural aspects, which signifies health, congruence, and happiness. None of the customers, especially those who are Muslims, who dine at Lebanese restaurants in Lebanon, asks the frontliners if they serve or do not serve alcohol because they expect that alcohol is normally found on the menu.

[3] The word Hajj is a religious nickname given to any Islamic person who has performed pilgrimage in Mekka, Saudi Arabia

Despite this inconsistency, customers did not care much for alcohol as the décor and the overall atmosphere of the restaurant are enough to construct 'Lebaneseness' at Be-Beirut, which allow customers to enjoy an experiential authentic experience of Lebanon in London. Various olive trees decorate the space at this restaurant, which is also the main logo of the restaurant on their social media platforms and at the front signage of the entrance. Using the green olive tree as a logo has a powerful resonance embedding nature and the cultural authenticity of Lebanon, which is known for its fine production of olives and olive oil. Additionally, the trays, plates, cups and cutlery tools are all shipped from Lebanon. Most of the plates are coloured in greenly yellowish colour, which reinforces the colour connection to olive oil produced locally in Lebanon. The employees also hand in the bill to the customer in a vintage Lebanese wooden box where the word "Lebanon" and a cedar tree are engraved on its front side. The cedar tree is the national emblem of Lebanon, which refers to strength, power and continuity. These motifs represent the use of 'natural' materials, which are made from Lebanese cedar wood.

All these details emphasise the Lebaneseness of the restaurant and also reflect on the owner's self-reflection of "pure authenticity", in which consumers have all the means to find evidence that the offered food and service have provided them with "unbroken commitments to tradition and place of origin" (Beverland et al., 2008:7). This was further highlighted by the owner in a very recent TV interview on a very popular TV station, which is mostly common among Arabs living in the UK. He said:

> "I have made this restaurant feel like home to myself first, before designing it for customers. I focus on the little details from the moment that you enter the door, until you eat and leave. Every single item in this restaurant is shipped from Lebanon. Every single plate reflects our heritage. It took me a lot of time and money to create such a Lebanese environment, which will make Lebanese expats and students, and all other Arab customers to feel as if they are in the heart of Beirut, or the village they belong to. I can assure you it wasn't an easy process where I have faced many difficulties especially through the recruitment of the right staff, but "Al Hamdulliah" (means thank God in the Arabic language) the feedback on the restaurant setting, food and service is fascinating and my customers are absolutely happy with everything we offer them from an experience of the Lebanese culture, but in a place located in London"
>
> ('Be-Beirut' restaurant in London, Al Mayadeen, 9 July2019.Telivision)

The quote above explains the owner's passion in creating a Lebanese culture in the heart of London, specifically targeting Lebanese customers who could be feeling homesick away from their roots and heritage. The owner's creation of the image of Lebanon and by targeting a mass audience on the television, aims at creating an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 2006) where people could feel and imagine themselves that they belong to Lebanon and that they have to visit the restaurant to enjoy a Lebanese experience, which relieves them from their homesickness to their roots. Clearly, the owner relies mostly on customers who dine-in, and he has made it attractive for customers to keep visiting the restaurant. For example, when a customer first arrives at the main entrance of the restaurant, they will walk on a green carpet which reads:

"This restaurant runs on positive vibes, Lebanese food and lovely people".

The reason I have enlarged the font of these phrases is to reflect how they are literally written on the carpet. Clearly, the restaurant emphasises that it runs on positivity, home-like Lebanese food but most importantly, an exceptional caring and loving service quoted by "lovely people".

The restaurant is designed to have four sections: the 'back area', the 'restaurant' area, the 'lounge area' and the 'home yard' - a new section which is an extension to the 'lounge area'. The interior design of the restaurant is similar to restaurants in Lebanon. In Lebanon most of the sit-down restaurants are spacious where they provide customers with the choice to be seated indoors or outdoors. However, the only difference between Lebanese restaurants located in London and the ones located in Lebanon is the smoking rules. Although according to the Lebanese law smoking indoors is prohibited, none of the restaurants are abiding by this rule as all restaurants' owners have collectively agreed that prohibiting customers from smoking Shisha indoors will tremendously cut down their revenues. This collective agreement has made restaurants' owners stronger than the law itself.

Now I will start describing each of these sections individually. The "back area" is the first section of the restaurant facing the road. It is a rectangular outdoor section with comfy sofas and tables where people could either eat, smoke and/or play board games without the management being fussy about strict restaurant rules *e.g.* “you are not allowed to play board games or cards”, or according to the UK governmental rules *e.g*. “you are not allowed to smoke here, and your child is sitting near you”. This section is decorated with flowers and plant pots all over the walls and near each table to give some life to its atmosphere. This decoration was added after I finished my participant-observation as a lot of people refuse to be seated in this area due to its dull atmosphere and also because it is far from the music vibes, especially when a singer is performing. Therefore, the owner decided to bring the area to life by decorating the place. He also connected a speaker where the customers could enjoy listening to songs while seated.

The ‘restaurant’ area is the middle indoor section of the restaurant, where the till is located, it is mostly reserved for families with children, and it is non-smoking due to UK regulations which prohibits smoking indoors and is quiet. This section has long rectangular tables with up to 10 armed chairs. It also has two big, rounded tables which fit a maximum of 8 people. It also has four wooden trap chairs for children. In this section lies all the main decoration and lightening. You can see all the Lebanese proverbs written in Arabic on walls and the pictures of classic Lebanese singers hung above most of the tables. In this section, the customer has a view of the open-plan kitchen of the restaurant where they can be seeing the chefs preparing the food. Customers can hear the chefs talking to each other. It is particularly interesting that you could see the “Shawarma” stands and smell the freshly-baked bread and Lebanese Manoushe. The ‘Shawarma’ is a delicious chicken or meat sandwich which the Lebanese eat as their fast-food on lunch and/or dinner, while the ‘Manoushe’ is mostly eaten for breakfast or as a light dinner. These two items are the most favourable and the most rapidly bought around every corner in Lebanon. [4]

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[4]“Shawarma” is a traditional Lebanese wrap stuffed with either lamb or chicken and special sauces. It is famous for its special display on a long metal stand where chefs cut the meat or chicken diagonally.

“Manoushe” is a kind of a Lebanese pizza where they top it up with thyme, dried yogurt, or cheese. It is one of the very famous Lebanese breakfast items that is generally not expensive.

Now back to the open-kitchen design at 'Be-Beirut'. During my participant-observation, many customers stand facing the kitchen and enjoy watching the 'Shawarma' being cooked while the chef is preparing a sandwich. Customers seem very happy that they are enjoying the visibility and cleanliness of the kitchen where their food is being prepared. This gives a sense to customers that they are in power to witness any service failure that might occur (Byun and Jang, 2018). This kind of open-plan kitchens is very admirable among the Lebanese people, and they often become repeat customers to restaurants where kitchens are visible to the public (Alonso and O'Neill, 2010). The reason is related to hygiene factors, and if one customer was unsatisfied about the hygiene of a restaurant, he/she could ruin its reputation. Lebanon is a very small country, and you rarely meet someone who does not know someone that you already know. Hence, a rumor about a restaurant could be easily transported from one person to another as a snowball effect. Therefore, at 'Be-Beirut' the open-plan kitchen is designed to meet the expectations of the Lebanese people and to assure them of the hygienic factors that the restaurant relishes and attains. Now when you step out the 'restaurant area' you will be entering the 'lounge area'.

The 'lounge' area and the "restaurant area" are intimately connected to one another which allows the customers and workers to freely move between the two areas. The 'lounge' area is the most desirable outdoor area by the customers, where they are allowed to smoke whilst seated on comfortable sofas and also enjoy the beautiful canal. The "lounge area" is the largest section amongst all other sections which is popular for its open-air settings. It also boasts different seating plans. When customers first step into this section and look to the left, they can see the music band equipment *i.e.* a keyboard, a flute and a doumbek, all connected to a sound system and speakers located in the lounge area. The singer sits on a highchair and sings the night away with popular Lebanese songs. People often step in and dance along with the singer at the restaurant. This is a common practice that traditionally takes place in Lebanon where the Lebanese never refrain themselves from dancing, especially when the musician starts striking the outside edges of the doumbek head and complements the sound with the Arabic notes of the keyboard and the flute.

Over 90% of the lounge section is occupied by rectangular tables and comfortable floral sofas coloured in Fushia (dark pink), pink and green. Some tables can fit 2-3 people while others fit 4-5 persons. When a big group of guests comes in, employees will combine rectangular tables together.

While waiting to be served, the customer could read about Lebanese cities' histories written on a one-page long descriptive histories of several cities in Lebanon covering the tables. Not to mention that some of the food items found on the menu are associated with the names of these cities. For instance, there is an item called 'Hummus Beiruty' which signifies that this item is cooked the same as the inhabitants of Beirut cook it.

About 10% of the lounge area is dedicated to the VIP lounge section. There are two steps to reach the VIP lounge section which is mainly reserved for the VIP customers *i.e* frequent customers who spend more than £150 per table and/or those who are the owner's friends and family. The VIP section is popular for its very comfortable sofas, special service, additional menu items and most importantly, unlike other sections, it is neither overcrowded nor noisy. Customers could notice that it is a distinct section since there is a red velvet rope which separates it from the main "lounge" section. There is always one waiter or waitress standing at the entrance of this section in order to make sure no one occupies the tables unless they have a reservation, are friends with the owner, or are customers who have paid an extra charge to be seated in this section. It is not uncommon that a lot of customers pay extra money and sometimes they even fiercely argue to sit in this section not only because it is comfortable, but also to be categorised amongst the rich and VIP customers of the restaurant. During my stay as a hostess at this restaurant, I witnessed many such occurrences. VIP special treatment is a common act at famous Lebanese restaurants in Lebanon, where frequent customers who are known by the restaurant owner or those who pay higher bills are the ones who are preferred to occupy a table even without a reservation. Additionally, many restaurants offer a special treatment for customers who own expensive cars, which means that they are wealthy and that they are able to pay higher tips and spend more money on tables. This is also happening at Be-Beirut, where the expensive cars of customers, such as Ferraris and Lamborghinis, are always parked at the front and their owners are treated with special care, relative to other customers.

Through this classification, the restaurant's management is clearly differentiating among the customers, and this could consequently give employees working on this section (lounge-area) a false sense of status. As such, this uneven classification of people and prioritising customers over others is creating hierarchies of customers, in which it leads to incivility due to changing the power dynamics between customers and the staff. For instance, when a customer is treated as a VIP and he is seated in the VIP section, this is visible to all the other customers that he/she is treated differently from them. Additionally, the employee serving the table of the VIP might feel that he/she should be offering a special treatment to those customers, which is faster and more reliable. Therefore, giving power to a customer will alter the power dynamics between them and the employee which could lead to incivility in cases of a minor or major service failure or dissatisfaction. This factor of customer incivility is created by the management and will be discussed in detail in chapter 5.

The fourth outdoor section, the 'home' yard, is the newest addition to this restaurant which opened after I finished my participant-observation work. This section is popular for the special display of international and Lebanese sweets and also for its extensive selections of coffee and tea. It is decorated with plants hanging off from the ceiling and is known for its very bright setting. Additionally, there is a round fountain in the middle of the space of the 'home yard' area, which is decorated by colourful mosaic tiles. The mosaic tiles are a symbol of the Lebanese heritage, which is a popular design previously used in decorating Lebanese old/traditional houses. Customers, while seated in this area, can enjoy the sound of water trickles coming down from the fountain, a tranquil experience which is similar to that enjoyed at a Lebanese house located in the village. The 'home yard' area hosts rectangular tables with a mix of yellow and green wooden chairs. Customers are allowed to smoke in this section. The owner decided to open the 'home yard' section to increase the space of the restaurant and to welcome and occupy more customers. The owner also decided to include Western selection of sweets on the restaurant's menu because that is what they serve customers in Lebanese restaurants in Lebanon too. Besides, he also believes that the Lebanese people have a 'sweet tooth', and they are fond of trying different kinds of sweets which are exotic in their taste and many of chocolate base sweets which are different from the Lebanese sweets that mostly rely on milk and sugar syrup.

The layout of this restaurant and the way it is divided into sections is similar to the Lebanon-based counterparts, which consequently, contributes to the construction of the "Lebaneseness" identity. Lebanon is a country, which enjoys four different seasons around the year and therefore, restaurateurs aim at designing their environment in a way where the customer has an option either to dine indoors or outdoors to enjoy the scenes of either the beach or the mountains. Additionally,

it is very unlikely that a customer visiting a Lebanese restaurant in Lebanon finds it undecorated according to local traditions (*e.g.* walls painted in bright colours such as white, green, pink, light blue with plants, olive trees or pressed olive jars placed around the restaurant).
After detailing the restaurant's setting and layout, it is time to delve into frontliners experiences at the case study restaurant and in the next section I will commence in describing my role and experience as an employee at Be-Beirut.

4.2 My role as a hostess

During the course of my employment at Be-Beirut, I took the role of a hostess. I was positioned mostly in the restaurant area, which connects the "lounge" area and the "back" area. This allowed me to observe employee-customer interactions mostly from the "lounge" area and the "restaurant" area, which are the busiest sections of the restaurant. This was a strategically good location since I was able to collect more data from my colleagues although this has put me under a lot of stress caused by multitasking. I was responsible for taking reservations over the phone, seating people and also observing and writing down notes. I collected the data over a period of a month and half until no further relevant data could be collected.

As a hostess, I was instructed by the management to follow the seating policies and rules of the restaurant. For example, if the customers are accompanied with children, they should be seated in either the restaurant or the back area. If customers are frequent customers, they should be ideally seated in the lounge area. These customers should also be seated at the same table every time. Besides, if a group of male customers arrive together, I should convince them and sometimes force the rules on them to be seated in the "back" area. This is because according to the management rules, the restaurant must always portray the image of a family-oriented restaurant as described by the owner as no "men-only" groups of guests. The construction of the 'family' identity at 'Be-Beirut' comes on many levels. On one hand the 'family' identity is constructed through instructions made by the owner on where to seat a group of male customers. During a briefing meeting, Ziad once said:

> “No single men [means not accompanied with at least one lady] to be allowed in the restaurant area and the lounge area… but this is alright for women… [he laughs] … women give the restaurant life, but if the restaurant is only men, then women and families will never come”

From the quote above, the owner is also highlighting the family-like image of the restaurant, which links the female gender to family in a patriarchal society, where the mother is always the significant face of a family. Although the seating plan instructed by the management is successful in portraying the restaurant as a family restaurant, it also has an effect on the power dynamics between staff and customers, which is potentially a trigger for incivility. For instance, as a hostess I was always put in a position where men start arguing with me and calling the restaurant names due to such strict rules. Therefore, it is evident that the seating plan of the restaurant ignites anger among customers, especially men. The quote below from one of the customers explains this point:

> “Tell the managers to go fuck themselves and their shitty rules… we are the customers, and we can choose where we want to sit… I will never visit this place again”
>
> (Personal observation)

On the other hand, the ‘family’ identity is constructed through the management’s concern about families enjoying a happy meal with their kids. During my observation, personnel often warmly welcome families, and they help parents with strollers and/or provide them with baby chairs, in which 4 chairs are located at one of the corners in the restaurant area. The restaurant area is designed in a way where rectangular and round tables can fit families of members between 8 and 10. The chairs and tables are easily replaced which facilitates the navigation of strollers, and also keeps space to place the long baby chair which is provided by the restaurant. Additionally, the construction of the ‘family’ identity comes with the restaurant’s marketing which relies on ‘homemade’ food that helps parents, especially mothers, to outsource their household tasks and provide leisure to themselves, as well as to their kids by eating out (Karsten et al., 2015). There is also a section on the menu titled ‘Kid’s menu’ which has healthy and desirable options for kids, such as a kid’s meal that contains a chicken sandwich, fries, and orange juice. This meal is sold at an affordable price.

4.3 Employees of “Be-Beirut”

This restaurant is one of the biggest Lebanese restaurants in London, boasting a capacity to host 300 people. There are 45 staff members working as the front-of-house and the back-of-house employees. Most of the front-of-house employees are assigned several tasks. They should function as food runners, drink runners, waiter/waitress and as shisha guys. The service employees are all Arabs who comprise mainly Lebanese staff with two Syrians, an Iraqi male server and one Algerian female worker (this classification of employees is during conducting interviews). The management instructed all its Arabic-speaking employees to communicate in the Arabic language with all customers unless the customer starts their conversation in the English language. In this way, the management is emphasising on the ‘Lebanese identity’ in which the Arabic language supports portraying the Lebaneseness of the restaurant. There are only two non-Arab employees; the security guard who is Turkish and the Romanian lady janitor. During the fieldwork, there were six female employees. However, by the end of data collection through participant-observations, there were only two female workers left. This suggests that the workforce of the case study restaurant is somewhat different to the industry as a whole, which previous reports suggest is predominantly female (Erickson, 2004; Paules, 1996).

After nine months, I returned to conduct my interviews. I interviewed 11 employees (10 males and 1 female) who were between 43 and 19 years old. Many of them (around 6 employees) were also pursuing their university studies while some were planning for it. Three of them were married and the rest were all single. Almost all the employees were financially supporting their dependents (parents, spouse and children) who were living either in the UK or abroad. There are also two-line (middle) managers, one general manager and one woman responsible for the accounting business of the restaurant *e.g.* paying wages to employees. None of the employees are UK-born citizens. All the Lebanese employees immigrated alone or with their families to the UK during the Lebanese civil war in 1975, and the rest of the employees moved to the UK as refugees, except for the Turkish employee who moved to the UK on a student visa and then found a job that could sponsor his stay, and the Romanian lady janitor who had moved temporarily to the UK in search for a better-paid job compared to available opportunities back in Romania. The restaurant would rather employ a non-Lebanese as the cleaner for two reasons. The first reason is that it would be culturally difficult to appoint a Lebanese to such jobs; and the second reason is that the owner prefers to take the opportunity of a Lebanese employee to recruit him/her as a service employee in order to emphasise the Lebaneseness of the restaurant.

The owner fostered Lebaneseness by employing mainly Lebanese migrants which can serve as an attractive opportunity for them to work in the UK. For example, while I was working at Be-Beirut, the owner attempted to sponsor a Lebanese singer to work at “Be-Beirut”. The owner met this singer while he was singing in one of the local restaurants in the South of Lebanon (*i.e.* the owner’s hometown in Lebanon). The owner liked his voice and the atmosphere he created. He then became interested in knowing the singer better. In my conversation with the owner, he further expanded on this. The singer comes from an unprivileged background and his wage in Lebanon was too low to help him get married. The owner promised to help him move to London and to sponsor his visa and transform his entire life for the better. The owner kept his promise and now the singer is one of the very famous Lebanese singers in London. The owner sponsored his working visa, and also offered him a flat to live in. The story above depicts the owner’s generous, helpful and motivating personality, to all the people, which he likes, and those whom he thinks are able to construct authenticity the way he sees it possible.

Another story can be told about the owner’s 23-years-old nephew who is studying at a London-based university and is also working at “Be-Beirut” as a cashier, and sometimes as a waiter - depending on the occasion. The university tuition fees are fully covered by the owner. His uncle (*i.e.* the owner) recruited him at “Be-Beirut” in order to gain enough experience in the restaurant business so that by the time he graduates, his uncle (*i.e.* the owner) would be able to effectively sponsor him to live and work in the UK. This also reflects on the helpful traits of the owner towards hard-working Lebanese people in general, and his relatives in particular; however, it mostly reflects on his nepotist personality.

Although the owner requires his employees to have valid work permits, he found it difficult to find Arabic speaking employees holding working permits and legally working in the UK. As such, around four of his non-Lebanese employees were working without any working permits, which is unethical and/or illegal. Although these four employees were illegally working at his restaurant, the owner still wants them to work since they are Arabic speaking, and they require minimal training about the menu and on the ways to deal with Arabic customers. This helps the owner to construct his intended vision of "authenticity" at 'Be-Beirut. However, this backfired one Thursday afternoon. On that day, the UK immigration officers invaded the restaurant's premisies within seconds. I saw many of the employees jumping off the tables and running to the canal. By that time, the officers checked the legal papers of each employee including mine and left without making an arrest of anyone on the restaurant's premises. Later, I knew that two of the restaurant's employees were arrested and put into custody to be later sent back to their home countries. The employees were Syrian refugees who were given the right to live in the UK, but they were not permitted to work in the country. This incident tremendously overwhelmed everyone at the restaurant, and they kept talking about the incident for almost a week. After a few months, the owner recruited a general manager called Anthony, who is Lebanese-British and has 22 years of experience in the restaurant business. His role is to recruit and train legitimate workers only. When I interviewed Anthony, I asked him about his role at the restaurant, he said:

> "I am here to build the foundation of the restaurant. I have made legal documents, which are all signed by employees. In these employment document each employee has signed on his obligations and his rights during his work at this restaurant. All the current employees are permitted to work in the UK and all this information is copied and filed in separate documents to each employee. I also have made sure that their work uniforms to be designed differently and that their appearance to be clean which suits the appearance of a waiter/waitress at a respectful restaurant".
>
> (Anthony, 41, Lebanese)

Anthony is a very strict manager who deeply emphasises employees' aesthetics. During our interview, he talked almost 15 minutes about his attractive physical looks, which gave him a lot of confidence when he used to work as a waiter. He said:

> "Customers used to like me because of how I look… I am always neat, clean and attractive… I also had few female customers who asked me out although I would not have expected this to happen as they are of higher status than myself".

Scholars in a variety of disciplines, including sociology and anthropology, agree that the organisational dress serves two functions, in which it asserts control, and it also conveys identity (Pratt and Rafaeli, 1997). Pratt and Rafaeli, (1997:864) refer to the dress code as "a symbol that can be expected to reflect those organisational characteristics that refer to the question, who am I?". This assertion supports the concept of aesthetic labour, in which service employees use their attractive appearances and voice as an environmental stimulus to affect customers' emotional responses and behavioural intentions (Tsaur et al., 2015; Williams and Connell, 2010).

The current uniform at 'Be-Beirut' emphasises these points. Male and female service employees at 'Be-Beirut' adopt a customer-centered professional identity where they are instructed by their management to wear the same uniform, which consists of a conservative white shirt and a black jeans, which is covered with a green functional apron (*i.e.* it has a large pocket for carrying a notebook and a pen). In contrast, the line managers wear a black suit with a tie, which symbolises an autonomous and powerful professional identity, that suggests, managers should be decision-makers, and they are in control of service employees.

This differentiation in appearance fosters the power imbalance between managers and service employees, where service employees working at 'Be-Beirut' perceive themselves to have less power and status compared to their managers, which keeps them organisationally isolated from their managers. The existing nature of the rank structure and power imbalances amongst employees is a reason to construct customer incivility at 'Be-Beirut' (discussed in section 4.3.4 and will be further developed in chapter 5). The quotes below support this argument:

> "He (the manager) makes me irritated… I hate the way he talks to me as if I'm his personal servant… every time he talks to me impolitely, he F**** my mood and this makes me work with no interest in my job… customers can feel it and they often start being a**** with me because of my bad mood and poker face"
>
> (Informal conversation with Sarah)

> “He treats us bad and unprofessionally, but what can we do? He is a manager, and we are service providers, so if he is not happy about our work, he has the power to convince the owner that any of us should be disbarred”
>
> (Informal conversation with Mohammad)

4.3.1 Lived experience as a waiter

The majority of the waiters at “Be-Beirut” are males. They either call each other by their last names, or they refer to each other by the nationality of the employee as a point of reference (*e.g.* The Egyptian guy). Frontline employees cooperate with each other, cover for each other, and also meet on lunch breaks during which their conversations are mainly focused on customers. They gather at a separate table in the “back area” where they eat, smoke, enjoy talking to each other for around an hour. In the many times I observed them, none of them seem to be content and comfortable with their work environment, rather they are eating just to fuel their bodies before they start working again. The ones who sit with each other are mostly of the same age (in their 20s). During the lunchtime, they are allowed to choose food from a limited selection of food items including burgers, hummus and pasta (this applies to waitresses). The selection of meat and chicken items are limited to customers only. Waiters were unhappy about their food options and during interviews, they showed their frustration. One said:

> “Why are they doing this? We are working like a machine and the least they could offer us is to allow us to choose whatever food items we want…this is driving me crazy”
>
> (Rami, 30, Lebanese)

On the other hand, the lunchtime window varies between the waiters and line managers. Line managers always have lunch breaks once frontliners finish theirs, and they sit at different tables, mostly in the restaurant area. The line managers can sit at any desired table dedicated to customers. Sometimes they join the owner’s table for lunch. Food items for the line managers are not restricted to a limited menu. The social isolation of service employees from their managers is another indicator of the power imbalance between service employees and their line managers, that could possibly lead to customer incivility (discussed in chapter 5).

Such power imbalance creates a hostile environment if power is used in a systematic manner over a longer period of time (Grandey et al., 2004). Scholars working on human relations and organisations agree that power gives rise to bullying which is based on discriminatory behaviours (Caponecchia and Wyatt, 2011). There are several bullying behaviours associated with power imbalance such as forcing employees to overwork, intimidate them, and/or isolate them on lunch breaks (Salin, 2003; Caponecchia and Wyatt, 2011). Such bullying is associated with emotional exhaustion, higher absenteeism, decreased commitment and lower productivity (Salin, 2003). The aforementioned consequences of bullying could be a reason of constructing customer incivility.

I argue that when managers bully their employees, employees could become emotionally exhausted. This will eventually decrease their productivity, since they might be more sensitive in assessing customers' behaviours, especially with whom they have built a service relationship. Therefore, they might recognise many of customers' normal behaviours as misbehaviours/incivility (later discussed in chapter 5).

During my participant-observation, I learned that waiters are competing with one another over their favoured customers, especially those who are responsible for the lounge area since they serve the VIP customers and those who are big spenders. Therefore, there is a clear preference for the waiters to serve those guests. Male employees, unlike their female counterparts (*who were six waitresses at the time I was collecting data via participant-observation)*, have a sense of achievement whenever they are serving a table whose customers order a lot of food and the bill is high compared to other tables. As one employee told me:

> "I feel pleasure when the bill of my table is above £100, and they are only 2 customers on one table. I try my best to sell them 2 shishas, a variety of food selection, and lastly I encourage them to eat delicious Lebanese sweets and tea…I hate customers who are stingy, and they spend 2 hours without ordering much food-this is a rip off".
>
> (Said, 38, Lebanese)

Although the number of female employees decreased from six to one after I came back for my interviews, I believe it is a meaningful observation. Firstly, during my participant observation I was observing 6 female employees. I collected so much data that encouraged me to stop my observation after reaching data saturation. Secondly, after I came back for interviews there was only one female employee (Sarah) who used to be a very good friend to all the females who left work. Sarah was able to explain any ambiguity I had observed during participant observation. She claims that her female colleagues left their work because of the work stress they were suffering from, and also because of the location of the restaurant that is not convenient and unsafe. This information clearly reflects the patriarchal system where female employees feel more stressed and unsafe compared to their male employees and thus, it explains why the number of female employees decreased and why the owner is finding it difficult to recruit new female employees. Thirdly, since I was a female employee who interacted with the 5 female employees who left work, I am also able to confirm the information I collected during my participant-observation from the 6 female employees and also to assert on the data I gathered from Sarah.

Furthermore, some male informants remarked on tips being an essential motivator to serve specific customers, where some customers tend to hand their servers extra personal tips as a gesture. I need to mention that the service charge is inherently part of the bill, and the sum of it is usually distributed equally among employees. The example below builds on this claim:

> "This customer is my favourite. When he comes, he always asks about me, as I know where he likes to sit and what he likes to order. Please whenever you see him coming, call me and I will take care of him. He is also very generous as he always pays me around £50-£70 tips just for my own pocket"
>
> (Mahmoud, 30, Egyptian, informal conversation)

This particular customer always requests to sit at a two-person table in the VIP section. Upon his arrival, Mahmoud always rushes to serve him. This ignites potential problems with his colleagues and distorts the allocation of tasks of employees around the different sections of the restaurant. In conclusion, "fighting over favoured customers is one of the problems faced by the employees at this restaurant, with the root-cause always being a frequent but fussy and demanding customer", as Rami (male employee) said once.

I have mentioned earlier that waiters, unlike waitresses, compete over customers, and they feel a sense of achievement whenever they serve the customer they desire. During my observation, none of the waitresses have shown interest in achievement or competition to serve particular customers, like their male counterparts. As Sarah said once:

> "All I care about is to arrive on time, do my work and leave as soon as I can…nothing could change or be different for a woman in this restaurant…I work harder than the manager, but I will never be recruited as a manager because they think I am not strong enough to manage a team of male employees and also to be respected by male customers who are mostly originated from patriarchal societies"
>
> (Sarah, 23, Moroccan)

It is clear that male power is implicitly reinforced at the restaurant where women are perceived weak and intimidated easily, while males are strong and able to intimidate (Collinson and Hearn, 1994). Such a classification of gender roles is a socially constructed set of processes which equalizes the role of the women due to positioning women as 'weak' and as 'subjects of masculine desire' (McDowell, 1997:27). Constructing the image of women as a sexual entity dominated by the man is possibly due to the Middle Eastern patriarchal mindset of sexualising the workplace that provides a context for the continued display and performance of heterosexuality (Collinson and Hearn, 1994; McDowell, 1997). This results in selective recruitment, and special aesthetic looks for each gender dictated by the management, which in some cases might indicate a blatant prejudice against woman (Christopher and Wojda, 2008; Welle and Heilman, 2007). For example, at 'Be-Beirut' women are not allowed to be recruited as managers because they are perceived as weak in handling the workload and also to deal with tough situations (as Sarah stated while I was interviewing her).

The results of this study contradict many studies on gender roles specifically in interactive jobs such as a restaurant service employees, such as (Leidner, 1993) and (Crang, 1994). Their data shows that women are given more power than their male counterparts, since women rely on their heterosexual feminine aesthetics' power that could serve customers with a generous attention to their needs (McDowell, 1997), which is an indicator of their social power during interactive transactions (Korsmeyer, 2004). The section below develops this subject on female gender roles in more detail.

4.3.2 Lived experience of a waitress

Data from my fieldnotes and from interviews with female waitresses support the argument that women struggle more than men in the workplace, due to the occupational sex segregation. Researchers interested in occupational sex segregation, specifically working on gender roles, conceptualise gender as an activity that occurs while people interact in situated contexts (LaPointe, 1992). This means that 'doing gender' involves countless socially constructed relationships between men and women, among women and among men in a social group (West and Zimmerman, 1987); LaPointe, 1992). Studies on gender relations and their daily struggle in the workplace, such as receiving fringe benefits, is mostly experienced by women (Hochschild, 1983), especially those who work as waitresses in restaurants (Reskin and Roos, 1987). For instance, Sarah approached me once complaining about an outing, which was planned by the restaurant's owner and only designated for male employees. She said:

> "Imagine all male employees have taken a day off and enjoyed a free day away from work at a spa… no one has mentioned anything to us about this away day, but I only saw pictures which were shared on the WhatsApp group chat…it feels as if they are the only ones who need a relaxing day which is already paid by the owner"

I asked her:

> "Haven't you asked to be treated the same?"

She said:

> "We (female employees) have mentioned it several times that we want to be offered an away day and the answer was always 'yes of course' and this day has never come"

Clearly, male employees receive fringe benefits unlike their female employees, which further reinforces women's inferior status relative to men (Spradley and Mann, 2008). Additionally, I mentioned earlier in section 4.3 that waiters and waitresses wear the same uniform which is decent and functional. However, this does not indicate that males and females are treated equally. While wearing this uniform, waitresses are obliged to wear a 'generic male' shirt which is loose and has wide sleeves. As such, the restaurant's management is trying not to expose female sexuality to avoid many critics and problems, such as being sexually harassed by male employees or customers, as Anthony mentioned once. Additionally, a male uniform is a symbol of higher status, which is associated with the restaurant's image (LaPointe, 1992). Despite these facts, none of the waitresses at 'Be-Beirut' expressed concerns over their uniform as they think it is "time efficient and it also prevents sexual harassment", as Manal (Algerian female worker, 27 years old) stated during an informal conversation.

Naming is another way of segregating sex occupation at 'Be-Beirut'. For instance, female employees are always referred to as 'a girl' rather than 'a lady' if someone does or does not recognise her name tag. When I first started my participant observation, I heard one of the managers asking the waiter about me, by referring to me as 'that girl Nolla…". I felt humiliated as the manager did not address me as 'the lady or the woman', but it reveals the male dominated environment I am working in. Male workers regard females as being unskilled and unpowerful enough to match the demands of the job, such as holding heavy trays or dealing with a conflict with a customer. My analysis claims that women's status might be degraded due to the low-status occupation which categorises the 'natural' job of women as a housewife or a mother in a patriarchal society. The quote below justifies this:

> "This job is draining my energy… I can't keep on serving customers all my life, I do have a capacity to manage employees, but no one would ever accept me as a manager here because I am a woman"
>
> (Informal conversation with Sarah)

This finding aligns with the various studies pertaining to the reinforcement of sex roles differentiations demonstrated by males who use a demeaning communication with their female counterparts, specifically in such a context where patriarchy seems to be strongly accepted by the management (Lugosi, 2019; Spradley and Mann, 2008). Such a finding could possibly highlight the social dilemmas pertaining to the role of women in the current society (Spradley and Mann, 2008).

In addition to occupational sex segregation implied by waitresses at 'Be-Beirut', they have also expressed their views about their safety concerns. For instance, during my participant-observation, Manal (Algerian female waitress) approached me and said:

> "I am staying very late at night and commuting lines are very bad. I'm always terrified to take the bus that late as all drunk men will be around and this is really dangerous… I wish I can take an Uber back home, but then I will be paying all my salary on taxis"

This particular waitress is brusque with the customers but kind and friendly with the fellow staff. She never smiled to the customers. She also seems that she is always in a rush while taking orders. When she is stressed, her face turns red. According to standardised organisational expectations, in her role she is a weak performer on stage (Goffman, 1959), and she is also dissatisfied with her job. This has led her to create problems with her colleagues. For example, she left her job in the middle of her shift without giving a notice to the managers. When I came back for the interviews, a Syrian waitress, Linda, also has quit her job. I asked her friend, Sarah, why she left, and I was told:

> "She had a huge argument with one of the line managers as he was accusing her of being rude to one of the customers…she started screaming at him, threw her uniform on the floor and left the restaurant without even asking for her salary…Linda wasn't happy with her work not because the work is stressful, but she always nags about the time and she is always in a rush to leave before it's too late…I don't blame her really because I suffer the same. We are women and leaving work at 1am and sometimes at 3am is very dangerous. People might think we are prostitutes and we have just finished our stripping job".

If that is made explicit by the waitresses in the quote above, there might be an implicit patriarchal phenomenon. Patriarchy "entails cultural constructs and structural relations that privilege the initiative of males and elders in directing the lives of others" (Joseph, 1993:453). Thus, patriarchy might be obstructing females from feeling safe to work at this restaurant compared to their male counterparts. This could be due to the relatively undesirable location of the restaurant, lacking proper public transport to where this employee lives. Women's fear of crime or violence is located within the gendered-structured societies where concerns about danger might begin with women as school children, where they are always been advised by superiors to be cautious and not to talk to strangers (Goodey, 1994). As such, women in a patriarchal society might be raised to be vulnerable to men's violence, which could be experienced by constructing fear and associating it mostly with rape (Stanko, 1995).

On the other hand, male employees state their concerns about the restaurant's inconvenient location, but none have expressed any feelings of anxiety in terms of reaching their homes safely. These employees are mainly concerned about the long commute that they have to make on a daily basis and the fact that taxis would not be an affordable alternative to public transport. As one male employee said:

> "The restaurant is located very far from central London, and I live almost near Hammersmith. So, it takes me a minimum of 1.5 hrs to reach here. I don't mind that during the day, but at night sometimes I leave so late that I find no trains back home and I am then obliged to take a cab which is expensive-so it is inconvenient".
>
> (Daniel, 19, Lebanese)

4.3.3 Relationship between the waiters and waitresses

The management reinforces group work in this restaurant. The managers created a WhatsApp group where they shared all work-related updates. Sometimes the employees misuse the formality of this platform, for banters and sharing jokes. They mostly share jokes about customers they collectively recognise and had all previously served. For instance, Rami once said:

> "Remember [customer X] he came yesterday, and I was really frustrated because he never stops on asking for stuff. I was really trying to hide myself around tables, but his eagle eye caught me straight… (emoji laughing with tears) … he can't live without me my bad… (emoji laughing with tears)"

Such a connection among the employees also takes place before their working shifts when they meet to smoke marijuana before starting work. As will be discussed in chapter six, smoking marijuana, or using drugs was a coping strategy to help the employees deal with their job stress and the associated demands.

The relationship between frontliners outside working hours seems to be friendly. They tend to express the frustrations of their work and blaming it all on the customers, but without expressing it with anger. They might use humor and illegal drugs as a coping strategy, but this seems to assist them to endure the stress they experience during their job shift. This can be explained because during their working hours, employees might have no time to engage in humor with their coworkers and/or to engage with a relaxing (though illegal) coping behaviour (*e.g*. smoking marijuana). Evidently, the customers, whom employees are expressing their thoughts about, are the ones they already know due to their recurrent visits to the restaurant. This indicates that employees' source of stress could be an unintentional uncivil act from frequent customers with whom they have built a service relationship, an idea that will be developed in chapter 5.

4.3.4 Relationship between front-line employees and middle managers

Collecting data about the relationship between middle managers and frontline employees was not central to what I was trying to find, but the process of data collection underlined this is important. During my participant-observation, I was introduced to two middle managers, Shadi is a Lebanese and Nadim is an Egyptian. Neither were loved by their employees.

Most employees shared their thoughts about Shadi by saying that he is a very arrogant person, and that he acts as if he owns the place. Shadi was probably using an authoritarian leadership style, which stresses personal dominance over subordinates (Ertureten et al., 2013). This kind of leadership can make the person lose control over his/her emotions; thus, they can be prone for an abusive behaviour, such as mobbing (Aryee et al., 2007; Ertureten et al., 2013). Mobbing is defined as "hostile and unethical communication that is directed in a systematic way by one or more persons, mainly towards one targeted individual" (Leymann, 1996b:120). For instance, when the owner is not around, he acts similar to the owner by giving orders to everyone which he is not supposed to do so, such as allowing customers to sit on the VIP tables that are only designated to the owner's special guests and/or family. For instance, I told him once: "the owner won't be happy to see anyone being seated on these tables", he said: "I am the boss now and I decide who should or should not sit there". In addition to his impersonalised actions, employees never liked Shadi's conversations. The performativity of his language was very demeaning, such as calling employees by clicking his fingers or shouting, 'Hey you!'. Additionally, he randomly swears whenever arguing about something with his employees. I asked him to explain his role to me and if he likes what he does. He said:

> "I wana work to eat and live … I don't like my job, but this is the only thing I could do in this country as I don't have a degree and I'm not British. I like this restaurant and I like the restaurant's owner, but employees are so unprofessional, and they drive me mad"

His answer is very straightforward and made it obvious that he did not like his job nor the people around him. This is problematic, as many employees express their thoughts about him especially on lunch breaks, such as that "he lacks any managerial skills, or experience on how to deal or train them for the job". During one incident and in my presence, he started shouting at a waitress because she arrived to work. He said (loudly and in front of everyone):

> "If you'll be late one more time you are fired. You'd better not show your face at this restaurant"

The Syrian waitress, Linda, started crying. She approached me and said:

> "He humiliated me in front of everyone. He doesn't know what I am passing through and what problems I have. I haven't seen my family for over than 2 years now and I'm working just to live a decent life without needing anyone. This is unacceptable".

When I came back for interviews, I asked whether Linda is still around. Her friends told me that she had left after having a fight with the Lebanese manager, Shadi. Then I became curious to know if he was around to interview him about this. It transpired that he was temporarily suspended as he was caught stealing money from the till. He did this by deducting the service charge from many tables whose bills were above £100. This would put approximately £12 straight into his pocket. I learned about this from one of the Lebanese waiters of whom I interviewed. However, this manager, Shadi, was later re-recruited not because the owner trusts him, but because the management failed to find anyone suitable to replace him. In other words, someone Lebanese who is familiar with the rules of the restaurant. Although the manager was not liked by the other employees, the owner still puts emphasis on appointing a Lebanese to the position to stress on the notions of "authenticity" and "Lebaneseness" of the restaurant. Additionally, I had suspected from the beginning that Shadi was recruited because the owner knew his family in Lebanon and you could say that he empathises with his family who relied on him for money each month.

This depicts a clear image of the nepotistic personality of the owner, which favours mostly Lebanese employees over any other nationality, even in the cases where dishonesty prevails. Furthermore, emphasising on constructing 'authenticity' at the expense of recruiting the right manager for the job will lead to having unhappy employees working in an unhealthy organisational climate. Thus, employees' productivity might decrease, and they might be more prone to incivility due to customers' unmet expectations of the service (discussed in section 4.3, 4.3.1 and will be further developed in chapter 5).

On the other hand, the Egyptian manager Nadim was also inexperienced, very rude and uses humor with the wrong people and at the wrong time — as the owner and most of the respondents claim. The employees seem to avoid him as much as they could so they would not be given any orders or complaints made by him. This manager was also fired when I came back for interviews and was replaced by Ali, a newly recruited Lebanese manager, instead. I asked the owner, Ziad, why Nadim left. He said:

> "He is a liar, unprofessional and also not Lebanese. I prefer to recruit Lebanese employees to project an authentic Lebanese image of my restaurant. The Lebanese employee knows how to talk to people, and he knows what they want".

This again, emphasises the fact that the owner would favour having a Lebanese working as the manager to boost the "authenticity" of the restaurant. The owner has actually protected the

Lebanese manager, Shadi, and forgave him for his misconduct just because he has no alternative option to find another Lebanese to be recruited as a manager — as the owner claims during an informal conversation. The owner shows prejudice and dislike to any nationality other than the Lebanese majorly to construct his version of "Lebaneseness" at Be-Beirut. Besides, recruiting Lebanese employees needs minimal training to work at a Lebanese restaurant because they are familiar with the menu, and also with the overall Lebanese culture, which is hospitable and generous – as the owner Ziad claims. He thinks that when customers are being served by non-Lebanese employees many Lebanese customers will not be satisfied with the service due to dialect and accent differences; additionally, he believes that a Lebanese restaurant should portray a Lebanese image portrayed by the setting of the restaurant, the food and the employees. This is another example, which shows the nationalistic personality of the owner. The owners' reliance on constructing an experiential 'authentic' experience leads him to overlook the significance of having happy employees who are trained well to deal with the complex parts of their job; consequently, having unhappy employees will increase the turnover of employees and also increases their absenteeism (Fisk and Neville, 2011).

Throughout the interviews, none of the interviewees (10 waiters and one waitress) pointed out something positive about their line managers. Employees blame all their work problems and job dissatisfaction on middle managers because they tend to lack experience in training them. Additionally, frontliners blame the line managers for being the reason behind their discontent, due to the lack of appreciation of their hard work. As Sarah said once:

> "Look at them, they never say 'thank you Sarah you worked hard tonight'. All what they say is 'we will see you tomorrow and tonight was great'. I lost interest in my work as no one appreciated what we do and how hard we work every single night… I come to work just for the sake of being paid… I also lost interest in serving all customers, including the ones whom I have personally built a relationship with during my work here… many of them they know me too much to start asking why you are not happy? Why you look pale?why?why?why?... this makes me more uncomfortable because these customers they expect me to serve them quickly what they usually ask for, but I am not in the mood to do so, so they start being impatient while stressing me out more and more"

Clearly, from the quote above, Sarah's productivity is weakened due to the lack of an individual appreciation of her hard work. I argue that when the organisational climate is tense between line managers and frontliners, there will be changes in productivity; hence, employees will not be capable of meeting customers' expectation of the service, such as smiling and being hospitable and courteous. When customers are dissatisfied about the service this will render a lower quality of the overall service of the restaurant to the customer (Kim et al., 2005). This means all what the owner is trying to engrave in customers' minds about the authenticity of the restaurant and the professionalism of its employees will suddenly disappear; thus, allowing customer incivility to arise. My argument shows that employees' productivity levels are negatively impacted when they are not on good terms with their line managers.

4.3.5 Relationship between frontline employees and the owner

The owner of 'Be-Beirut' restaurant, Ziad, is a Lebanese entrepreneur who is constructing his restaurant's Lebanese ethnic identity by marketing his restaurant as being "authentic" and "real", compared to Lebanese restaurants located in Lebanon. In social sciences, ethnic identity "is socially constructed and depends on a set of consistent actions that permits others to place an individual in an ethnic category" (Alba, 1990:75). This process is fluid and negotiable which means it is prone to be shaped by acquaintances or resistance of members of a new culture in which the ethnic group is embedded (Denzin, 1996b; Lu and Fine, 1995). Despite this reality, Ziad's goal is to rely primarily on the internal market of customers who are co-ethnic (Aldrich and Waldinger, 1990), such as Lebanese or other Arab customers who flew to the UK as immigrants, expats, students and/or for tourism.

This ethnic concentration is likely to be limited in its growth pace, due to the existence of a very competitive free market and due to the ethnic population, which is usually quantitatively small and generates a limited buying power sufficient for high revenues and growth (Aldrich and Waldinger, 1990: 115). Therefore, some restaurants try to cut down on labour and material costs to balance the quality and cost of the food they serve (Lu and Fine, 1995). Conversely, at 'Be-Beirut' this is ultimately denied by the owner. Ziad's aim is not only to generate profit, but also to cater to homesick customers. When Ziad decided to open the restaurant, he wanted to enjoy proper

Lebanese food which possibly could replace his mom's and his wife's cooking who are both residing in Lebanon.

Therefore, opening 'Be-Beirut' is not directly linked only to profitability but also to personal needs of being relieved from homesickness. Ziad's construction of authenticity became the main potential resource which is 'connoisseur-oriented' to attract customers who are of higher economic resources and who emphasise on the need to experience a unique and special quality of food, service and an overall dining experience which meets their expectations (Lu and Fine, 1995:544). Not to mention that authenticity is relational, and customers' assessment of the food and ambience is associated with their own social experiences.

The relationship between the employees and the owner deserves particular attention. The owner utilises a transformational leadership style with his employees, which depends on social exchanges (Bass and Avolio, 1994). His transformational leadership style focuses on two components that are, being an idealised influencer through his charismatic personality, and also being an inspirational motivator by communicating his vision and discussing his past goals and ways on how he did achieve them (Arnold and Walsh, 2015). During my participant observation, I attended many briefing meetings where the owner shares his thoughts about the restaurant's progress. He always stresses increasing employees' understanding about the importance of the restaurant's offerings to customers and the collective goal that they should be seeking to attain. His words are always motivational and inspirational, which promote shared vision and goals (Bass and Avolio, 1994; Holtz and Harold, 2008), such as 'tonight we will rock', 'we are all one team and our goal is to make customers happy', 'you are the best employees, and this is your home protect it'. Clearly, Ziad is igniting the sense of belonging to the restaurant to increase employee's loyalty to the firm and to decrease their turnover. Ziad's transformational personality is successful as one of his employees (Said) reveals. Said happens to be a family relative as well:

> "Ziad is a young entrepreneur who grew up in a small village in Lebanon with a fairly poor family who were not able to provide him with the proper education. Everyone in the village knew that he is smart and then he had the opportunity to travel to London to work at a famous Lebanese restaurant like many other Lebanese expats. Imagine that he started off his restaurant career as a dish-washing employee. Could you imagine Nolla that this rich man used to clean peoples' plates for many years? He was persistent and lucky I should say. He started to grow after he was promoted to work on the floor as a waiter. Because he is very ambitious not like me (he laughs), he did not stay long as a waiter and he started building connections with rich customers. You could see he is charming, and he knows how to talk blab la (he laughs again) … He has been luckily chosen to work for a royal Arab family, and that's when his journey just began to take off. He established his first business as a luxury car hire company. It is obvious he likes cars. Did you even see his red Ferrari? My God it kills me (laughs again). And ya, later he opened Be-Beirut when he had the enough money to do so… This is his story… don't be surprised I know all this information; he is my relative and I know everything about him… I actually was the first employee to be recruited here so I know every single detail"

Ziad's relationship with his employees is perceived by employees as professional in many ways. He is present in the restaurant every day from midday until closing. He often appraises good workers. Everyone looked up to him and considered him as their role model. However, he is really smart in hiding from his employees his nepotistic and nationalistic personality, which he only revealed to me during our ample discussions about the dynamics of his restaurant business. When I asked one of the Lebanese waiters, Rami, about customer incivility and how he coped with it, he said:

> "Most customers are rude, and they want you to serve them as if you are their personal employee, but what keeps me going in this job is the owner. He is my idol and I want to be just like him."

This power relationship between the owner and frontline employees shows the impact of higher management on employees' job satisfaction; thus, having an impact on employees' coping behaviours with customer incivility. Although this subject will be covered in further depth in chapter six, it is briefly outlined here.

Frontline employees built a loyal relationship with the owner *i.e.* they are also loyal to the business. Being loyal to the business means that the employees do care about satisfying the customers to help increase the profits. This implies that, the employees' coping behaviour might be shaped according to the strong owner-employee relationship, in favour of the restaurant's image and profitability to preserve the status quo. Previous research argues that employees tend to care for the organisation they work for due to a relationship built on the basis of trust, specifically when this relationship is formed with the top management (*e.g.* owner) (Mishra and Morrissey, 1990).

I interviewed the owner and the general manager. The interview with the owner reveals his lack of high experience in the industry, but he only worked as a dishwashing employee prior to taking up his current job. In that time, he was subsequently promoted to become a waiter before he began working in luxury aviation services. Having adequate personal financial support, his main drive to open up this restaurant stems from his homesickness. He mentions that:

> "I want my employees to be working as if they are working for their parents' restaurant".

In the quote above, Ziad explains the idea behind creating an occupational environment where employees should interact with each other as members of the same family. During the interview he presents himself as an ideal boss who treats all his employees equally. However, this is contradicted to some extent by his observed behaviour. For example, while attempting to construct a loving, helpful and ethical image of himself, at the same time he allows illegal recruitment, and he replaces non-Lebanese employees with Lebanese ones. Although the owner is engaged in unethical recruitment and discriminatory recruitment acts, he is providing his subordinates with perceived desired outcomes. These outcomes are mainly focused on exchanging empathy and showing concerns about employees' emotions and willingness to protect and empower them, which is a sign of his effectiveness and success in covering up his personality pitfalls (Mahsud et al., 2010).

An interview with the waitress Sarah confirms this, during which I asked her why she did not quit her job after she had burst in tears during our interview. Before she replied, she asked me to stop the recording and insisted on me not to tell anyone, especially the owner, about her future work plans and that she is crying. She said:

> "I don't want to leave my job because I love the place and I love the boss. I am sure I will not find someone like him who listens to my problems and treats me as family. I feel that I owe him a lot of respect and that I should stay here until he finds someone who could full heartedly take my place at this restaurant. However, in the meantime he needs me, and I will not let him down".

Clearly, the owner has built an idealized image of himself to his employees where his approach is based on positive politics that are entrepreneurial by nature (Block, 2016) . This was evident during the interviews where many of the respondents brought up their opinions about the owner, especially when they were asked if they are willing to change their job. Many describe the owner as 'professional', an 'entrepreneur' and he 'always pushes our limits'. Therefore, the defined aspects of the owner Ziad fits the notion of professionalism. Professionalism is 'an attitude that motivates individuals to be attentive to the image and ideals of their particular profession… to improve their skills (VanZandt, 1990). Therefore, the owner is playing the role of a facilitator and a coach simultaneously, in reference to the traditional organisational hierarchy. A facilitator "is someone who expects others to make the decision, but prepared to give input into the decision" (Burdett, 1998:143), and a coach is someone who focuses on enhancing employees' performance by sharing his experience (*i.e.* this was evident as everyone at the restaurant knows that the owner Ziad started his business from scratch and he is an entrepreneur).

Although Ziad is seen as a professional person, it can also be argued that he is covertly controlling others by manipulating their behaviours, in which he seeks to illuminate the problems that employees face with customers, but tries to persuade them to manage their skills by constructing a trust environment with the abusive customer (Nutt, 1983).This is achieved for example by convincing them that they are family, and that the restaurant is their home rather than their workplace. This kind of manipulation can be framed as a kind of a hidden exploitive and abusive behaviour towards employees, which possibly highlights the power imbalance between customers and employees and thus, encourages incivility to happen.

4.3.6 The relationship between customers, "Be-Beirut" and frontline employees

During my position as a participant-observer, I had the opportunity to communicate with few customers at "Be-Beirut" and to ask them about their opinions about it. Most of the customers used the words "authentic Lebanese", "traditional food", "home-like food", "I feel home", "lovely environment", "good food and lovely service". The guests who were either Lebanese diaspora or had visited Lebanon at least once in their lifetime, opened up about their experiences with a pronounced nostalgia. Below is a conversation with one Lebanese customer:

> **Me**: What is special about "Be-Beirut"?
>
> **Lebanese guest**: You know that I spend over an hour drive to reach this restaurant. It has a special place in my heart. It reminds me of my childhood and my mama's food. All the items on the menu are delicious and authentic. I specifically love to eat Manoushe it's the yummiest especially for breakfast, and what is better than smoking a shisha with this view?
>
> **Me:** So is it only the food that brings you here?
>
> **Lebanese guest:** Of course not. I am friends with all employees now. They know where I like to sit and what I like to eat. I feel like home and sitting with a family. I enjoy spending time here because this brings all the good memories of my village and family back home. I will never get bored of the food, the atmosphere and the people.

Although some customers claim they are friends with the employees (the quote above), this relationship is not necessarily transported after employees' work shifts are over. Customers seem to take advantage of being friends with the staff, so that they could benefit from being offered their choice of table location regardless of how busy the restaurant is and to be preferentially served as quickly as possible. This shows that customers exploit employees by taking advantage of this relationship, which essentially comes to an end when the customer leaves the restaurant. According to my own experience and during my observations, I sensed that the customers might, in fact, look down on the employees while still pretending that they were in a genuine friendship with those staff. This highlights the drawbacks of service relationships between customers and employees which is one major source of constructing incivility due to putting employees at risk of compassion fatigue (this is discussed in detail in chapter 5). Another conversation with a Jordanian customer below.

Me: What do you love about this restaurant? I have seen you several times now and you are the owner's special guest.

Jordanian lady: You are Lebanese, and you know that people who visit Lebanon once, they are hooked to the food and the people of Lebanon. You are people who know how to live a happy life. I come here to enjoy traditional Lebanese food just the same as I have tried in Beirut. The people here became my family as you can see, I kiss and hug everyone when I arrive, I sit on the same table, and they know what to order for me without even asking them to do so. I feel privileged to be one of their loyal customers.

Me: How many times do you visit "Be-Beirut"?

Jordanian lady: I almost come every day with my daughter to have mostly shisha and coffee and enjoy the lovely music here, but on the weekends, I invite my girlfriends and enjoy a morning Lebanese breakfast feast and spend around 3 hours here. Don't laugh, but sometimes I also come twice.

Me: Do you live nearby?

Jordanian lady: Not very near really. I drive around 45-50 minutes to reach here, depending on traffic.

There are various reasons, which encourage Lebanese diaspora and other Arab customers to visit this particular restaurant. Customers' expectations fall within the bounds of cultural expectations such as experiencing "authenticity" of the food, the "good service" and also by being "loyal to the firm". Claiming authenticity unpacks many sociological concerns on its nature and how it is framed to the audience (*i.e.* customers in this case). The social construction of authenticity is merely related to customers' expectations in a competitive market (Lu and Fine, 1995). Nevertheless, in this study, the owner made sure that the "Lebaneseness" and authenticity of the food was not adjusted to the culinary life of the British people. His aim was to transport a "pure" and "real" Lebanese culinary experience all the way from Beirut to London without compromising on the ingredients, taste or the presentation of the food. Such a decision should not raise questions about authenticity; nonetheless, complaints about food, setting or the service is commonplace in almost every restaurant and are almost uncommon to be fully absent. The emphasis on "authenticity" helps to construct incivility by not meeting customer expectations about the food and service, since authenticity is socially constructed, and it is perceived differently amongst customers. This will be further discussed in chapter 5.

Customers of “Be-Beirut” are always expecting a service which should meet their recurrent expectations of the food and the service. If any changes occur to the food or to the service, customers are prone to express their dissatisfaction about what they have been offered by acting uncivil with employees. This might be seen by the employees as uncivil or rude, but from the customer’s point of view it is just a normal expression of dissatisfaction. This assertion highlights the power imbalance between employees and customers in such a hierarchal organisation. Customers perceive themselves powerful relative to employees, and they act as if they are the friends of the employees in return, they expect a special service, and employees in turn might feel powerless and perceive that customers are exploiting them. Such a complicated relationship between employees and customers speaks volumes on incivility being a socially constructed phenomenon, where employees differ in the way they perceive it.

4.4 Conclusion

In this empirical chapter, the workplace culture of “Be-Beirut” is discussed. The restaurant’s physical setting is comprehensively and contextually illustrated. The experiences of the frontline employees as waiters and waitresses are described. The relationships between the frontline employees, their middle managers, the owner, the customers and with myself are all explained in detail.

This study uncovers that the owner devotes all his efforts to create his vision of an ‘authentic’ and ‘traditional’ Lebanese restaurant by investing money in recruiting the right Lebanese employees, such as the chef and the singer. He also devotes time and efforts on constructing authenticity through the very small details which constitute the settings of the restaurant, such as the design of the tables and chairs found at ‘Be-Beirut’. The authenticity created at Be-Beirut is experiential by nature as it relies on the authenticity of the service provider, the food, the consumer and the overall experience (Le et al., 2019; Le et al., 2020; Penrose, 2018; Wang, 1999). Therefore, the owner’s focus on ‘authenticity’ attracts many customers of whom many become frequent customers and thus, customer incivility takes a particular form in this case study restaurant compared to other already-studied restaurants. The reason is that authenticity is one significant factor which attracts customers to dine at an ethnic restaurant, but if the restaurant fails to induce positive emotions, then incivility might occur. Although the results in this study emphasise on the role of authenticity in providing customers a unique dining experience (Jang et al., 2012; Le et al., 2019; Le et al., 2020), the data in this study contribute to the authenticity literature by adding this construct as a key motivator in causing incivility due to the discrepancies between customers' expectations of the service provided, and what they are being offered by their employees.

This chapter also highlights the importance of having satisfied and productive frontliners to project the quality of the overall service of the restaurant, including its 'authenticity'. This chapter shows that employees' productivity is volatile due to their bad relationships with line managers, who are expected to train employees on a well detailed service orientation program. Furthermore, the data shows that there are obvious sex differences in which the management expresses skepticism about women's' ability to adopt managerial roles and responsibilities (Brewer et al., 2002). ˙In conjunction with that, the management tries undermining the feminine role by dressing females with a uniform which is the same as their male colleagues. This gives a clear idea about the organisational climate which relies on constructing a masculine identity which is a product of a patriarchal society (Berger et al., 1995; Colville, 2003), similar to those found in Lebanon.

In addition to that, this chapter emphasises the complex power imbalance between employees and customers, and it also uncovers the many factors that contribute to the construction of customer incivility at "Be-Beirut". This construction of incivility could be either organisational and/or individual, depending on the nature of the incident encountered by service employees. This route to the construction of customer incivility will be discussed in detail in chapter 5.

Chapter Five: Construction of Customer Incivility at "Be-Beirut"

5.0 Introduction

Existing research on customer incivility is limited to studies which claim that customer incivility is associated with emotional exhaustion, burnout, stress levels, job productivity, job satisfaction and turnover intentions of restaurant workers (Cho et al., 2016; Han et al., 2016; Schuster et al., 2016). Other studies on customer incivility propose factors which might reduce the impact of customer incivility on restaurant frontliners (Cho et al., 2016). Most of the current studies are conducted quantitatively and focus on exploring the customer incivility construct during service encounters. However, to date there is no research study which qualitatively explores how customer incivility is constructed, specifically among frontliners working at an ethnic "authentic" restaurant, in the context of service relationships. Therefore, the data in this chapter fills this void by answering the questions: "How is customer incivility constructed at this case study restaurant?"

In the previous chapter, I discussed how the owner invested his efforts to construct his version of 'authenticity' and 'Lebaneseness' to ensure repeat customer patronage, and I also discussed the nature of the relationships between the management and employees, and also employees with customers. This chapter will build on these findings to explore how the restaurant's top management service and dining rules, and the middle managers managerial practices, affect the way that customer incivility is perceived by employees of 'Be-Beirut". In addition to that, in this chapter I argue that customers' repeat patronage leads to the formation of service relationships with service employees; thus, creating uneven hierarchies between customers and employees, which contribute to particular forms of customer incivility.

This chapter is divided into five sections. In section one I am looking at how customer incivility is constructed by the managerial practices of the top management, which encompasses the dining and service rules. In section two, I am looking at how customer incivility is constructed by the middle management managerial practices, as a result of the organisation's climate and thus, fewer formal factors. In section three, I explore how service employees' relationships with customers influence the way customer incivility is perceived and experienced within the case study restaurant. Finally, in sections four and five I discuss customers' uncivil behaviours noted under the title "transgressing boundary rules".

5.1 Constructing customer incivility: Top management practices

According to my findings, which I have gathered during my participant-observation and also from interviews with service employees at 'Be-Beirut', it is evident that the top management dining and service rules affect the way customer incivility is experienced and perceived by service employees. The restaurant's dominant managerial service and dining rules, which foster the construction of customer incivility can be encapsulated in three major points are: (1) The organisational culture (2) Promoting authenticity of the food, service and the restaurant setting (3) The design of the seating plan.

The findings of this research show that these rules are widening the gap between employees and customers and thus, emphasising the unequal power balance between customers and employees. When this happens, incivility arises.

5.1.1 The organisational culture (embedding the notion of customer sovereignty)

Organisational culture is a significant construct within the oganisational behaviour field due to its considerable influence on the organisational effectiveness (Wallace et al., 1999). By definition, organisational culture refers to the shared perception, which is made up of a collection of fundamental values and beliefs about the organisation (Ashforth, 1985; Wallace et al., 1999). In this study, I refer to organisational culture as a set of values and beliefs that are recognised as part of the top management dining and service rules at the case study restaurant, which lie beyond managerial control (Alvesson and Berg, 2011). For instance, there is a common belief among frontline employees and the restaurant management at this case study, which accommodates the view that customer incivility is "unacceptable, unbearable and considered as a crime against employees"—as the owner Ziad claims during an informal conversation.

Despite Ziad's claim, which is an indicator of the management's beliefs, customer incivility is not always recognised by the management in the same way as it is recognised by service employees.

Therefore, there are no adequate organisational policies to sanction any inappropriate customer behaviour that might have a negative impact on employees (Handy, 2006; Lugosi, 2019). The data collected from my personal observations and from interviews suggest that the management blames the employees for being the reason behind customers' uncivil reactions due to their disqualified service offerings. This puts a lot of pressure on employees who take this responsibility to cope individually with incivility. Despite that, the restaurant's management at Be-Beirut does not prepare the employees nor trains them on how to cope with customer incivility—as most of the employees claim, during my course of collecting data. This responsibility falls under the umbrella of the management, which believes in a major element of the organisational culture, which is the endorsement of customer sovereignty, which means to believe in the myth that the customer is always right.

Restaurants' managements particularly train their employees to embed the nature of the notion "customer is always right" during service interactions with customers, which is a key factor in the production of value with the customer (Sosteric, 1996). In some cases when the customer is disappointed by the service, he/she is prone to react uncivil towards the employee (*e.g*. shouting at the employee), in which the notion "the customer is always right" is transformed by employees to become "the customer is a nuisance" (Uncles et al., 2003). Despite this fact, the management expects employees not to negatively react to incivility, such as reciprocating incivility to customers, as they would be engaging in a counterproductive work behaviour that challenges the status quo (Penney and Spector, 2005; Van Jaarsveld et al., 2010). To avoid employees' counterproductive behaviours, the management should acknowledge and train its employees on the various negative aspects they might encounter during their job (Bishop et al., 2005). Training employees on ways to deal with customer misbehaviours is vital to avoid detrimental impact on employees' well-being and overall job dissatisfaction (Hallowell, 1996); however, this was not the case at 'Be-Beirut'. For instance, during the recruitment process employees expect to engage in some training to teach them all the details about their job, but the management of 'Be-Beirut' follows a counter strategy in which all its focus was on identifying the VIP customers and their desires, and this is highlighted in the following quote:

> "When I first got recruited here, the supervisor gave me a very brief training on the seating plan of the restaurant, and he also specified which section I am responsible for. My section was the VIP section in the lounge area where all the frequent customers desire to be seated. He told me that some customers are extremely VVIP, some come every day and some come as the guests of the owner. You have to be very careful when dealing with them and you have to make sure to find them a table even if you have to remove some customers from their own table. I was really shocked with that as I have worked in other restaurants around London, but I have never been asked to do so, this is really disrespectful. He has also told me that, no matter what they tell you just say yes and bring them what they need. Try not to piss them off because some are ambassadors and come from governmental positions. If you face any situation in which you are not able to manage then call me to sort it out for you".
>
> (Rawad, 21, Lebanese)

It is clear from the quote above that the management fails to train Rawad on the basic requirements of his job, it also fails to identify Rawad as a valuable addition to the restaurant's employee board, where the customer's needs are portrayed as more valuable to the management than the employee's well-being. Clearly, the management entirely endorses the aspects of a customer-oriented industry, which provides the customer with power relative to employees, without investing time in training employees on problems they might encounter from customers of higher social class and/or those who are frequent customers. Effective training could simply be focused on informing employees about the common uncivil behaviours they might face like shouting and/or clicking fingers to call an employee; besides, to train them on how to react to such misbehaviours without instigating incivility back at customers. The quote also illustrates that the management instructs its employees on individual coping strategies at the first stages of incivility, but not on how to deal with the situation if it gets complex. Additionally, it is evident from the quote above that the management never uses the words "uncivil" or "disrespectful" or "misbehaved", they refer to situations as things that could be managed individually. This puts a lot of pressure on the employee as the management does not recognise that customers can be very rude and sometimes violent, which may be due to the customer's personality trait and/or what he/she is feeling on that specific day.

I had the opportunity to interview Anthony, the general manager, who is a new addition to the board of management and in his job he is responsible for employees' recruitment and training. I asked him if he has a specific training scheme to train newly recruited employees, and also if he trains newly recruited employees the same as the experienced ones, he said:

> "Not specific, but instead of me saying Go and start I make sure I explain to them [employees] everything crystal clear before they start. When I started working here (Be-Beirut) there were no drafted contracts for staff, now I drafted contracts. They all [employees] now have their files, they all have their documents legal in place. I have created them [the legal documents] and made sure they are all filed. None of this was available so I've basically started ground zero. So yeah, when I employ them, I make sure its crystal clear, when do you start and when you stop, what's your duties, what's your responsibilities, what I do not allow and what I allow. I haven't had any problems with them… As for experienced employees, I have to alter a bit. One of the main things I had to alter is their appearances. One of the other things is the way they approach colleagues as well as customers and another one is that they respect the establishment because they are sometimes very violent verbally to each other. They'd be disrespectful to each other, and they had to stop."

The above quote reflects a manager's formal policy in training his employees. He puts emphasis on "duties and responsibilities", on "formal contracts" and also on "appearance". The manager focuses on "violence", but among employees, while nowhere in this conversation has he ever stated anything that underlies incivility or on how to deal with a difficult or aggressive customer. For example, such as dealing with a customer who is shouting, or the one who shows no respect while expressing his dissatisfaction towards the food and/or the service. The emphasis on training is always on "how to serve the customer right" whilst the attitude of the customer is not even mentioned.

Since the management does not acknowledge incivility experienced by employees, employees often view their training as unrealistic and unprofessional. For instance, if a manager wants to advise an employee on how to deal with an uncivil customer, they often ask the employee to "stay calm and absorb incivility" claims Mohammad, during an informal conversation. Thus, all what the management cares for is the customer's happiness and the restaurant's reputation on social media. This was illustrated by the owner, Ziad, when he said:

> "The customer should be considered as always right so we are following this path because if one unsatisfied customer goes out the restaurant unhappy, he will give you a zero review and fucks us all over the internet on all social media platforms. This has happened with us several times here and they also use their friends and colleagues to hurt us and review us badly".

Again, this quote illustrates the significance of the customer relative to employees, which creates an instant power imbalance between the two and could possibly enable future forms of customers' uncivil behaviours. Paradoxically, the management always blames employees for causing customers incivility due to their inadequate service skills—as Ziad (the owner) claims during our side chats. Besides, such claims were often personally observed especially during briefing meetings which occur daily around 5 p.m. before the rush hour during the night shift. For instance, in one of the briefing meetings the waitress, Linda, expressed her annoyance from one of the frequent customers by saying:

> "This lady [X] was so disrespectful, she actually entered and sat on a table which I have already said that it is booked for 9 p.m… I couldn't hold myself, I asked her to move to another table and I promised her that I will seat her on the desired table once a table gets free… she got more angry and left the restaurant while she was swearing at me and at the restaurant"

The manager, Shadi, answered her by saying:

> "Well, you were the reason why she got really angry. You should have given her what she wants in a very smart way. You should have created a table outside near the VIP lounge where she would feel comfortable and important. Next time you should wisely interact with her or any customer who acts the same, such as to listen to the customer, recognise his anger or dissatisfaction, and most of all stay calm in order to neutralise the situation"

Although there are many exterior contextualities which could be a trigger to customers' misbehaviours, such as whether they have had a bad day or maybe they have lost a dear one, the quote above from Shadi (the manager) suggests that employees are the reason behind customers' anger. The management denies the reality that anger could normally exist in the first place. Therefore, employees are positioned by managers as the punching bags of customers, where they are held responsible for customers' incivility due to service failure. Consequently, the management expects its employees to recognise customers' anger, familiarise themselves with the difficult customer and also to alter their behaviours to fit the situation in favour of the customer. This sums up the management's concern, which particularly focuses on the customers, their sovereignty and their satisfaction.

5.1.2 Promoting authenticity of the food, the service and the restaurant setting

Some researchers argue that authenticity is not something tangible, but its value is placed in the eyes of the beholder (Chhabra, 2016). This is certainly true depending on the customers and their previous experiences at various restaurants. In the case of "Be-Beirut", more than eighty percent (80%) of its customers come from the Middle East who have either visited Lebanon or have tried Lebanese food in their home countries. Such customers place a higher pressure on the restaurant's management, service employees and the chefs to provide customers with the best quality of food which is— "traditional", "tasty" and "authentic" as evaluated by a "local", Lebanese customer on one of the restaurant's pictures on Instagram. When I asked the owner, Ziad, what differentiates his restaurant from his competitors[5], He said:

> "What differentiates us is everything we have from the location, the setting, the food, the chefs, the vibes, and the ingredients we use. Everything is different. We are competing with large restaurants which have at least 25 branches in London, but our food is better, and the vibes are better. Additionally, if you compare the biggest branch of our competitor to us, we are bigger, and we acquire better operation."

The quote above illustrates that Ziad is looking for a competitive advantage by stressing on constructing a Lebanese identity and by utilising "authenticity" as a tool to communicate the ethnic identity of his restaurant. In other words, Ziad aims at providing customers with an experiential "authentic" experience that is capable of engaging customers' five senses throughout their dining experience (Berg and Savon, 2014). He emphasises on the idea that customer retention is attained because they are being offered a unique Lebanese dining experience which is "real, "traditional

[5] By competitors I mean other Lebanese cuisine restaurants based in the city of London

and “authentic”, and its alternative can only be found in Lebanon. This shows that the owner accentuates on three main elements of authenticity that are heritage and style, nostalgia, and experience assurance (Mohammad and Chan, 2011).

5.1.2.1 Heritage and style

During interviews, most participants including the founder Ziad emphasise on the “traditionality” of the food and its unique presentation. One waiter suggests:

> “The food here is similar to that what my grandma used to cook for us when we were children and living in a very small town in South Lebanon. So, the recipes and the variety of food is transcending from one generation to another and this what really gives our cuisine [Lebanese] a different taste and nature compared to other cuisines such as Saudi, or Syrian cuisines”
>
> (Said, 38, Lebanese)

The quote above highlights the importance of heritage and the passing on of food traditions between generations. This attachment to roots is discussed by the owner, Ziad, who claims that his restaurant provides the “authenticity” and the “traditionality” of the food through the professionalism of his head chef. The owner mentioned during an informal conversation that his Lebanese head chef is sponsored by him and brought all the way from Beirut to London. Ziad also expresses his excitement in showing the world the real taste of the Lebanese cuisineband to reduce the homesickness of the Lebanese people who live in London by making them feel like they are dining at home with their families.

> “When I started this business, my ultimate concern was to compete with restaurants not only based in London, but also in Lebanon. I will honestly tell you that I have succeeded in doing so. The food and the variety that you find here at our restaurant is of a very good quality. I brought my chef all the way from Lebanon just for the sake of this experience. I care about food quality and also in the consistency of the food taste which is similar to that of our ancestors.”
>
> (Ziad,41, Lebanese)

Emphasising on the above claim, Ziad describes how the traditionality of the Lebanese cuisine and serving customers “real” Lebanese food could be sustained by shipping cooking products and ingredients from Lebanon to London. This claim emphasises on the prominence of the country-of-origin which aims at ascribing authentic features to Be-Beirut's products' and food ingredients', which can be a significant stimulant for customers' purchasing intentions (Andehn et al., 2019). Ziad, the owner, claims that by highlighting the country-of-origin it signifies the "authenticity" of the food and the tools used in preserving the Lebanese heritage, outside the Lebanese borders.

> "Do you know that all our ingredients are shipped from Lebanon, just for the sake of our restaurant? The owner makes sure to ship the best ingredients such as flour, olive oil, olives, spices and rice all the way from Beirut to here, so that nothing will alter the taste of the food [found back in Lebanon]. He also ships all the plates, cutlery, and kitchenware from Lebanon so that the experience of the Lebanese cuisine in London to be incomparable."
>
> (Said, 38, Lebanese)

To an aware customer, who had lived in Lebanon or had visited Lebanon, consistency in the product/food with the original is something very important for their assessment and evaluation of the food and the atmosphere in a restaurant. Therefore, the owner's focus on heritage and style is something very valuable to him, to the employees and also to the customers who are seeking to try "traditional" and "authentic" Lebanese food outside Lebanon. However, the owner's construction of 'authenticity' is problematic, because some customers will regard this perceived 'authenticity' as 'unauthentic' according to their beliefs and childhood experiences which might give rise to incivility due to unmet customers' expectations of the food taste and quality.

5.1.2.2 Nostalgia

Among those customers who could be nostalgic are the ones who have experienced the Lebanese food either during their childhood (Mohammad and Chan, 2011), or during someone's recurrent visits to Lebanon.

> "All I want from this restaurant is to make me feel I am dining at a restaurant in my hometown and sitting with family, eating, dancing and happy"
>
> (Ziad, 41, Lebanese)

> "Although my family lives here in the UK and my mom cooks us Lebanese food, the food there [in Lebanon] has a different taste and a different meaning. However, here at "Be-Beirut" we feel as if we are back in our home country since mostly everything is shipped from there and the whole atmosphere reminds us of home, like everyone speaks Arabic, we listen to Arabic music, and mostly everyone smokes shisha which is something cherished in the Middle East as part of our culture (he laughs)".
>
> (Rami, 30, Lebanese)

Another employee referred to nostalgia by claiming:

> "Everything here is very delicious and healthy. Especially the olive oil and the olives… yum they just come all the way from Lebanon from South Lebanon where I grew up… I absolutely love it"
>
> (Said, 38, Lebanese)

As I mentioned previously in chapter 4, the owner is strictly emphasising his version of 'authenticity', which his employees seem to believe is successful. However, again this might be problematic because some customers might not evaluate the food taste and quality as satisfactory while comparing it to that found in Lebanon. I have to reiterate that authenticity is socially constructed and thus, one person perceives it differently from another person. This gives rise to customer incivility due to customers' unmet expectations of the 'authenticity' of the food provided.

5.1.2.3 Experience assurance

To my participants, authenticity refers to the overall dining experience, which is related to the restaurant setting, such as the tables and chairs, the decoration, the tools used to prepare the food and also the plates and cutlery used to serve the food; in addition, to the music played in the background. This is referred to as experiential authenticity (previously discussed in chapter 2 section 2.2.2).

> "What I really love about this restaurant compared to other Lebanese restaurants I have worked at is that everything is really authentic and purely Lebanese. The tables and chairs are so Lebanese style and if you have noticed that on each table there is a huge paper covering it with Lebanese city name written in it with a description of its heritage."
>
> (Rami, 30, Lebanese)

> "The decoration of the restaurant was planned and designed by a Lebanese designer who studied, works and lives in Lebanon. I contacted her and she came to London and done all that. I wanted the restaurant to look very Lebanese by stacking all these plants and flowers on the walls and on tables"
>
> (Ziad, 41, Lebanese)

> "We enjoy every Thursday night brings all the because of the music and the Lebanese singer who sings all the pop old and new songs while playing on his Arabic instrument OUD … I personally feel alive, and I enjoy working with customers as my mood would be very happy in spite of the business of the restaurant".
>
> (Sarah, 23, Moroccan)

The emphasis on the experiential authentic Lebanese dining experience is very important to the owner and his employees, and it is illustrated in the quotes above. The management plays an important role in promoting this "authenticity" to its customers through social media, such as on Instagram and Facebook. If any user opens the Instagram profile of "Be-Beirut", the first thing he/she will see is the leaves of an olive tree as a profile photo, written underneath it "A Lebanese restaurant which pays homage to the heritage of the Mediterranean, the bread and butter of its culture" (Of course it's rephrased to protect the confidentiality of the restaurant). Then the profile page is mostly photos of tables stacked with a variety of food plates and presented in a very Lebanese way (*e.g.* decorated with vegetables and nuts), and underneath it the management uses captions such as:

> "Bringing Lebanese cuisine, the best and most fun atmosphere, live music, river views and seating, and family values in the London scene"
>
> "Just another day in Lebanon, but In London"
>
> "This is a true Lebanese meal in London"
>
> "Colours of Earth… our food is fresh and comes straight from our grounds"

Be-Beirut has over 25k followers on Instagram and most of the followers are reading these captions which emphasise the "authenticity and traditionality" of the food and the experience. Many of the followers interact with the restaurant's Instagram page by commenting on photos, tagging their friends, tagging the restaurant's name in live videos and stories, and they also post pictures of food or themselves dining at the restaurant. However, this emphasis on authenticity is a social construction which is likely to rely in part on childhood memories and/or an individual's attachment to their heritage.

There is no one experience of Lebanese food, which is the same to everyone. Every person could evaluate authenticity depending on different criteria and on different values. This is true because even though people come from the same country Lebanon, their taste and evaluation of authenticity differs depending on which region they come from in Lebanon itself. For instance, in Lebanon there are many villages in the South, North, Beqaa valley and in Mount Lebanon, where no one expects that all these villages have the same food items. There are many Lebanese food items that are cooked differently according to the village that you eat it from. Therefore, the emphasis on authenticity might put off some customers who visit "Be-Beirut" as they might expect a certain food item to be cooked or prepared the way they have tried it at a very small village in North Lebanon, but the food prepared in "Be-Beirut" is perhaps cooked according to the chef who is from South Lebanon. Therefore, any restaurant, which promotes authenticity, might encounter some customers whose experiences are different from what is being offered at 'Be-Beirut', which gives rise to incivility due to customers' dissatisfaction about the food, service and/or atmosphere. In addition to customer incivility that could arise from promoting the authenticity of the food, customers might practice incivility towards employees due to language differences.

5.1.2.4 Language and dialect attitude

Language/dialect attitude refers to various judgments that people have about language/dialect of person A as opposed to person B (Kulbrandstad, 2010). I tend to argue that there exists a 'complete otherness', which Lebanese people would generically call "All Lebanese and the rest of the world". This argument emphasises the attachment of the Lebanese people to their Lebanese identity and the 'authenticity' of their food, language, dialect and culture. In relation to this study, issues of language attitude are raised by Lebanese customers towards employees who are not Arabs, whilst dialect attitudes are raised by Lebanese customers towards employees who are Arabs, but not Lebanese. Consequently, service employees express concerns about language and dialect attitudes in which they refer to as customers' uncivil behaviours. Non-Arab service employees at 'Be-Beirut' vigorously reported to me during informal conversations that some customers shamefully admitted to them they get annoyed if they were served by an employee who is unfamiliar with the customer's spoken language (which is the Arabic language in reference to this study). Despite this racist attitude towards non-Arab low status workers and their continuous questioning of their choice of this job, employees tend to endure such an incivility just for the sake of staying in their jobs. The quotes below illustrate this notion:

> "If I find things complicated and it is very difficult and going to be terrible then I seek the management assistance. And sometimes because this is an Arab environment and my background is not Arab, I have a problem, I prefer a person who has the Arab culture and Arabic language to deal with it"
>
> (Altan, 38, Turkish)

> "They start to treat you in a grumpy attitude from the starting point, sometimes a racist attitude as well because you don't speak the language, they click their fingers together to call you, and they look at you as if you are a cheap person"
>
> (Anastasia, Ukrainian-Informal conversation)

The findings here are consistent with the findings of (Stevens et al., 2012) whose study focuses on exploring the nature of racism among migrant social workers working in the UK. Their findings highlight racist comments and refusals of Eastern European workers by UK-born users of social services.

An emphasis on norms of customers' language attitude is a useful point to clarify the negative emotions associated with such an incivility, but it overlooks the contingent effect of racism on employees. I argue that employees who experience any kind of language attitude will typically formulate immediate, sometimes false, evaluative judgments towards Arab customers (*e.g.* only Arabs are vulgar and racist).

Such a negative affective emotion is consistent with the theory of modern and aversive racism, where people are simply discriminating towards others belonging to a different ethnic background, and perhaps they feel discomfort working with and/or around them. This form of contingent racist incivility is consistent with the theory of instigated incivility developed by Andersson and Pearson, (1999), where employees affected by racism might instigate incivility to other Arab customers and their fellow Arab co-workers.

In the same vein, dialect and/or accent attitude in a restaurant setting may exist among high-information control customers (Mittal et al., 2008). The high-information control customers in this research are the customers who are Lebanese and familiar with the menu. These customers proliferate the power dynamics between customers and employees; thus, placing employees as a target of racist incivility.

Interestingly, the findings of this research confirm that dialect and accent attitudes of customers who are 'Lebanese' and "familiar with the menu" are manifested towards non-Lebanese Arab employees. Arab employees (those who are not Lebanese) claim they are exposed to incivility from customers who express their dissatisfaction about the service provided when they are being served by employees who are not familiar with names of some Lebanese food items, which some are not even found on the menu.

This kind of personality tries to show off knowledge about the culture and authentic food names, whilst trying to show the other person (*e.g.* the employee in this case) that he/she is ignorant and unprofessional. For example, one respondent claims:

> "Some customers ask for food using their own language. Like one day a customer asked for 'Ouzi'. I asked myself "what the hell is that" it ends up being "stuffed sheep". When you ask "what is this and could you please explain". They instantly ask me "you should know and where are you from". I tell them "This word in specific is not found on the menu, and if you explain to me what it is, I might go to the kitchen and cook it myself with a laugh".
>
> (Sarah, 23, Moroccan)

The respondent of the above quote reports that she felt humiliated since the customer has made her feel stupid and unprofessional.

Language could be used as a marker to classify and evaluate peoples' cultures. Aversive language racism is not considered hostile, but it makes the racist feel discomfort and fear while hanging around people of racial minority. However, language/dialect attitudes at "Be-Beirut" are not only occurring between people of different racial groups and with different languages, it is actually happening among people who are coming from the same ethnic background, where they speak the same language, but sometimes the dialectics of the words differ between one country and another (*e.g*. bread in Egypt is called A'aysh, while in Lebanon is called khoboz). I argue that, since the owner is hardly emphasising on the 'Lebanese identity' of Be-Beirut, customers are expecting to be served with fully knowledgeable employees who are only of Lebanese origins. Thus, if they were served by a non-Lebanese this might root doubt in the authenticity of the restaurant, and also might ignite their anger and thus, they will become uncivil to employees. Having a full equip of Lebanese employees emphasises the 'authenticity' of the restaurant, and it also supports the owner's attitude in creating a Lebanese identity at Be-Beirut, but it is so difficult to maintain such promises to customers without experiencing difficulties and hurdles. For example, the owner had to re-recruit a Lebanese supervisor (pseudonym Shadi), who has previously engaged in acts of stealing money from the till just because he is Lebanese, and also, he had to fire an Egyptian manager just because he is Egyptian (as I previously discussed throughout chapter 4). This speaks volumes about the management of the restaurant, which is the main reason in causing incivility to occur in the first place.

5.1.3 The seating plan of the restaurant

Most restaurants establish a unique service scheme which should apply to all customers without differentiating among them (Gilmour, 2017); however, this is not the case at “Be-Beirut”, which was quite surprising to exist in London.

As I mentioned earlier in chapter 4, “Be-Beirut” has four sections, the “back area”, the “restaurant area”, the “lounge area” and the “home-yard area”. The “lounge area” is split into two sections, where one section is open to all customers without any reservation and the second one is mainly reserved for the very important customers who could be either frequent customers, or the owner’s family and guests, including those who are celebrities and/or governmental employees. This does not mean that non-frequent customers get lesser treatment than frequent customers, but frequent and VIP customers are prioritized in terms of service and in terms of allocating them on the VIP tables. Once you enter the lounge area you could feel that it is reserved for special people because the entrance is restricted by a banner, and one service employee would be standing there to make sure that no one enters without a reservation.

"This lounge area has better colourful and comfortable sofas which are wide, it is facing the beautiful scenery of the canal, it has a separate special menu, there are minimum of two to three service employees only responsible to serve this area, especially during busy times. The availability of the lounge tables is restricted to special customers no matter what time they arrive, or if they have done a reservation or not. Such a differentiation has created a lot of problems among customers especially those who are frequent customers. They felt much undermined that they are not able to sit on these sofas unless they agree to spend at least £100-150 per table on whatever they ask for. Additionally, customers are not restricted with the restaurant's maximum time policy which is to stay seated for a maximum of 2 hours on each table. Customers in the VIP lounge section are free to sit as much as they want without any disturbance. During my participant-observation, I had many incidents with customers who insist to be seated in the VIP lounge area without abiding by its pricing and seating rules. The data from my personal observation highlights this issue: "The security connected with me through the walkie-talkie and asked me to come to the front to talk to one of the customers who claimed that they do not have a reservation. I came to the front door at the back area. One male customer said: "I need a table for three people for dinner and shisha and I want it in the lounge area". I said:" Sir, we are fully booked at the moment and there is a waiting list. You could sit here at the back". (Male customer) "I know the owner call him for me." I talked over the walky-talky with the owner and he said, "do not let him in let him leave I do not want him here today". I then told him "Sir, I am really sorry I cannot let you in". He forced himself inside and dragged the lady who was with him and went directly outside to talk to the owner. Then he [the owner] was obliged to seat him on one of the tables which is already reserved to a group who were coming in an hour or so. I later asked the owner why you offered him a table, he said: "I wana save face and he has a woman with him". Why didn't you want to let him in? "he is a pimp and I guess families won't be happy to be around such people, but I am obliged to let him in because he pays good and he did not do anything which allows me to prohibit him from coming as a customer"

(Personal observation/informal conversation)

> “Two ladies were sitting on one of the lounge tables which are reserved for other people in like 15 minutes. I said, “hey ladies this table is reserved and the policy on Ramadan is that people to be seated no more than 2 hrs on the same table, could you please pay the bill as we need to prepare the table for next customers”, Both of them angrily and disrespectfully answered “NO we are not moving go find them another table” They completely ignored me and continued laughing at me and smoking shisha. I called the supervisor and told him what is happening. He said, “these 2 bitches in specific I don’t want to talk to them because they are disrespectful, and I am not in a mood to kick someone out”. I came back to them and said: “will you please leave this table as we are expecting people to arrive”. One of them said in a very loud tone: “would you leave otherwise I’ll break this shisha on your fucking brains”. I became very angry, and I couldn’t control my emotions and said: “I would definitely teach you a lesson when you leave this place”. Then the supervisor came to end this hassle. I was about to drop my work and never come back again.
>
> (Personal observation)

In reference to the incidents above, it is quite obvious that customers do care to be treated as VIP (very important person) and to be seated in the exclusive lounge section that is facing the beautiful scenery of the canal. Customers love to feel special and appreciated relative to others around them. Such differentiation is creating two kinds of power distance where one is between customers themselves, and another between customers and employees. This results with the construction of incivility which has various negative impacts on service employees. Now that I clarified the three elements of the top management practices, the next section explores the middle management practices which fosters customer incivility.

5.2 Constructing customer incivility: Middle management practices

The findings of this study show that there are middle management practices which affect the way customer incivility is perceived by employees at Be-Beirut. This construction is a product of the poor relationship between frontliners and their middle managers, which was previously discussed in chapter 4 in section 4.3.4.

I argue that employees who are not trained on handling tough situations with customers, those who are being treated in an authoritative leadership style, and those who are not individually appreciated on their hard work are prone to experience customer incivility. I develop on this argument in the section below on the organisational climate.

5.2.1 Organisational climate (unskilled management)

The organisational climate, like the organisational culture, is established as a primary construct within the field of organisational behaviour research (Wallace et al., 1999), but scholars often overlap its meaning with organisational culture, which I have discussed earlier in section 5.0.1. By definition, the organisational climate is made up of shared assumptions and consists of more behavioural and attitudinal characteristics, which are empirically accessible elements (Wallace et al., 1999; Ashforth, 1985).

In this study, I refer to the organisational climate as the informal behavioural and attitudinal characteristics of the management, which lies within the managerial control. I have discussed in chapter four (section 4.3.4) the relationship between frontliners and their middle managers. The data shows that frontliners are not on good terms with their middle managers, due to the latter's inexperience and lack of managerial training skills —as many employees claim. Such claims are brought up by all of my respondents who are working as service employees at Be-Beirut, such as 'he is unprofessional', 'they are disrespectful', 'he is authoritative', 'everyone hates him', 'I wish he leaves so that I won't be seeing his face ever again'.

Consequently, the data from my respondents shows that the attitudinal and behavioural characteristics of middle managers may lack one major element of a healthy organisational climate, which is to be a leadership facilitator and supporter (Jones and James, 1979). According to my findings, when the middle manager lacks a leadership style and he/she does not support his/her employees, this will decrease their productivity; hence, making them more prone to encounter customer incivility due to either service failure, or not meeting customers' minimal expectations of a hospitable interaction with the frontliner. The quotes below explain this, one is from Linda and another from Sarah (*this quote is already mentioned in chapter 4)*:

> “He humiliated me in front of everyone. He doesn’t know what I am passing through and what problems I do have. I haven’t seen my family for over than 2 years now and I’m working just to live a decent life without needing anyone. This is unacceptable”.

> “Look at them, they never say ‘thank you Sarah you worked hard tonight’. All what they say is ‘we will see you tomorrow and tonight was great’. I lost interest in my work as no one appreciated what we do and how hard we work every single night… I come to work just for the sake of being paid… I also lost interest in serving all customers, including the ones whom I have personally built a relationship with during my work here… many of them they know me too much to start asking why you are not happy? Why you look pale?why?why?why?... this makes me uncomfortable and sometimes angry because these customers they expect me to serve them quickly what they usually ask for, but I am not in the mood to do so, so they start being impatient while stressing me out more and more”

From the quotes above it is clear that the supervisor’s behaviour impacts employees’ perceptions of organisational justice (Lugosi, 2019). This finding supports the “psychological breach theory” which argues that supervisor’s actions trigger dissatisfaction among employees, and it also affects their service performance (Bal et al., 2010; Lugosi, 2019).

Although employees regard middle managers as unprofessional and being the reason behind their job dissatisfaction or low performance, there is a very significant point to stress on here. While judging middle managers’ incompetency, service employees are either disregarding the tough job of middle managers, or they are unaware of their responsibilities. In the hospitality industry, and specifically at restaurants, the middle managers’ job is very complex and requires longer hours of work relative to middle managers working in different industries (Kuruuzum et al., 2008). Middle managers are required to respond to the customers’ demands, the employees’ and also the senior management (Kuruüzüm et al., 2008; Tabacchi et al., 1990). Such role ambiguity and task complexity and workload are major antecedents of burnout (Kuruuzum et al., 2008). Burnout among middle managers has grasped the attention of many scholars in human resources management across the hospitality sector (Kuruüzüm et al., 2008; Singh et al., 2016; Teare and Bowen, 1997). Middle managers’ burnout is ought to lead to emotional exhaustion, job dissatisfaction and low job performance (Singh and Dubey, 2011). This leads to various consequences on middle managers including alcohol and drug abuse, psychological (Singh et al., 2016) disorders, desire to leave the job, and diminished low performance and thus, they will fail in supporting their employees (Kuruuzum et al., 2008). All these consequences on middle managers can be reasons to explain middle managers' failure in supporting their employees and making them feel that they are being coerced by the supervision of authoritative and unprofessional supervisors (Zhang et al., 2008) —as the data reveals.

Although employees are encountering incivility from customers, none blame the customer for being rude. I argue that this kind of incivility is instigated because the managers are causing stress and anger to the frontliner, in retrospect the employee's performance is weakened, and the customer is acting back with incivility. This aligns with the theory of instigated incivility developed by Andersson and Pearson, (1999). This section has defined the process in which the organisational climate construct incivility at 'Be-Beirut'. The next section discusses the employees' construction of incivility through service relationships.

5.3 Constructing customer incivility: Service employees

At 'Be-Beirut', employees often covertly blame the management (top and middle) for customer incivility, caused by endorsing the notion of customer sovereignty, promoting authenticity, creating inequalities amongst customers via the restaurant's seating plan, and also for practicing authority over employees. However, employees are ignorant to the fact that they could also be the reason behind exacerbating incivility through investing in service relationships with frequent customers.

Previous research on service relationships claims that customers usually form a service relationship with employees to fulfil a need by obtaining benefits from the relationship (Reynolds and Beatty, 1999). Subsequently, previous research emphasises on exploring the consequences of service relationships on customers that are ultimately recognised as positive, such as increasing customer satisfaction, loyalty, and also increasing the flow of favourable word of mouth (Berry and Parasuraman, 2004; Czepiel, 1990). However, none of the studies on service relationships tackle the negative consequences of these relationships on members of an organisation, who are the frontliners in this case study.

Therefore, I argue that when frequent customers form a service relationship with service employees, customers expect to receive satisfactory delivery of service, which means that customers predict to receive additional and unique benefits out from their relationship with the employees (Reynolds and Beatty, 1999). In that vein, employees' role at Be-Beirut is not only to serve these customers as part of their job, but also to personalise the service for them, since employees perceive customers are their commercial friends (Rosenbaum, 2009). Consequently, customers might start exploiting the relationship with their 'employee friend' and thus, employees might regard such acts as deliberately uncivil—As Rami claims. However, I will not be emphasising on the deliberate incivility construct since I have only collected data from employees, and I am not certain about customers' intentionality which is fairly cognitive. I suggest that employees feel this way when they reach the tipping point. By reaching the "tipping point" it means that employees have fallen into the trap of compassion fatigue (Conrad and Kellar-Guenther, 2006; Figley, 2002).

Such an argument is consistent with the research on 'compassion fatigue', which "is the very act of being compassionate and empathic extracts a cost under most circumstances… like any other fatigue reduces our interest in bearing the suffering of others" (Figley, 2002: 1434). Compassion fatigue is a condition characterised by peoples' gradual decrease of compassion over time (Figley, 2002; Moeller, 2002). Such a condition results in many psychological uncertainties such as fatigue and burnout (Potter et al., 2010). Consequently, employees' service relationships with customers at Be-Beirut construct incivility as a result of employees' suffering from compassion fatigue, in which they might recognise all their customers' behaviours as uncivil. The section below expands on this argument by providing a better understanding of the experiences of Be-Beirut's employees who have built service relationships with customers following their recurrent visits to the restaurant.

5.3.1 Service relationships

By definition, a service relationship is a product of an accumulation of service encounters between the customer and the service provider (Bitner, 1995; Guerrier and Adib, 2000; Yagil, 2008), which results in the relative absence of formality in the service process (Yagil, 2008). There will be an exchange relationship where the employee starts to get to know the customer better, such as where they like to be seated, what they like to order and how they like to be treated. The quote below shows this:

> "… I have few customers who literally come every single day, approximately at the same time where they demand to be seated on the same table and they actually order the same thing like water, tea and double apple shisha, and sometimes they actually order the same item of food too… Some are like my friends, they come into the restaurant ask about me, and some hug and kiss me as a matter of friendship"
>
> (Linda, 28, Syrian)

I argue that such relationships enhance the attractiveness of the service but are risky to the employee if they are built on an unstructured environment of informalities (Yagil, 2008; Guerrier and Adib, 2000). Consequently, the undefined boundaries of a relationship between a customer and an employee will encourage customer accidental perception of incivility, which overcomes the management's ability to intervene (Guerrier and Adib, 2000).

The findings of this research support the argument above in which service employees are performing friendships with the customer, making the latter feel they care about their needs and demands. However, this is risky and critical for the employee. For instance, if an employee acts in a formal way with the 'customer friend,' the latter might act uncivil in response to the belief that the employee has violated the polite behavioural role (Yagil, 2008). Additionally, when a customer portrays an employee as a friend, he/she expects the employee to offer extra special service, and if the employee refuses to do so this will ignite the customer's uncivil actions due to the employee's switch of behaviour (Yagil, 2008). The quotes below illustrate these arguments.

"I saw many employees sharing food and also smoking shisha with frequent customers whom they have built a service relationship with… when the restaurant is not busy, some employees sit on customers' tables where they chat, eat, laugh"

(Personal observation)

"Whenever this customer comes, he greets me and sometimes we friendly hug each other, I know what he wants, and I know where he likes to be seated… I make sure that I serve him myself because he feels very comfortable dealing with me. Even if I wasn't responsible for the section he sits in, I always serve him… he usually gives me an extra tip off the bill around £60-70."

(Walid, 20, Syrian)

"One of the incidents that has occurred with me during my employment is that one frequent customer, who I knew over the course of one month and a half, has arrived without a reservation and fought to be seated on his regular VIP lounge table. Since I know him very well and we usually have side talks when I am not busy, he shames me for not responding to his demands… it is a kind of exploiting the relationship between us"

(Personal observation)

"VIP customer came in and found that there are no tables. He didn't listen to anyone, and he came all the way to the back side where he wants to sit and started making a show in front of all other customers that he wants his table. No one of the waiters were able to calm him down so he won't make a scene from it, except one waiter who always serves this particular customer… this waiter had to remove people from the table that he wants and seated him on it… when I asked him why did he do that? He said that this customer is his friend, and he doesn't want him to leave upset"

(Personal observation)

> "Yesterday Salim a frequent customer called to book a table for 3 people. When I knew its him, I greeted him with pleasure as he is one my favoured customers and I feel he is a friend because we chat whenever he is dining here (at Be-Beirut) … unfortunately, the restaurant was fully booked, and I had to apologise for booking him a table… his answer wasn't polite and angrily said that he is coming as a walk in… When he arrived, he insisted on sitting on a table although I have already clarified to him that we are fully booked… I was lucky and seated him on a table and was very clear that I need it after 1 hour… He thanked me and showed me appreciation… when the other reservation arrived after 1 hour, I asked him to move to the back area because I need his table… he refused and started screaming at my face as if I switched from being his friend to become his enemy… I was really angry, I realised how he was using our friendship for his personal gains… he disrespected me by all means… I turned the heater down which is hung over his table, and it was freezing cold that night… I didn't care"
>
> (Sarah, 23, Moroccan)

Such kinds of incidents frequently occur at "Be-Beirut." Employees are required by the restaurant's management to absorb the customer's incivility and disrespect and to fulfil their demands without questioning customers' misbehaviours. In this case, the management expects the employee to deal with such incidents individually, giving the utmost right to the customer because he or she is categorised as VIP and/or frequent. It is clear from the quotes above, sometimes the customer encourages the employee to become unethical (*e.g.* turning off the heater). Such service relationships work against employees since the customer holds the power over employees on many levels, unlike other businesses such as supermarkets. Since a supermarket, unlike a restaurant, is a mass-market retail, sometimes it acquires a geographical monopoly that forces its customers on repeat patronage regardless of their preferences (Czepiel, 1990).

Although service relationships between employees and customers is causing employees to encounter incivility, some employees discuss their satisfactions from those relationships. The data shows that some employees, who are successful in establishing a service relationship with frequent customers, perceive themselves they have superior service skills and power over the customer. For example, many Be-Beirut employees discuss their success and satisfaction when they sell a customer more than the customer is willing to pay. The quote below from an informal conversation with Said builds on this argument:

> "You know customers are painful, especially those who are frequent, and they become sort of our friends, but sometimes being the friend of the customer gives me a feeling of control. I know what he likes or dislikes; thus, I have the ability to sell him more; For example, if he likes sweet food. I'd tell him that I will serve him with different sweet plates and that he should tell me which one he likes. He leaves with a table bill min of £100… The owner checks the bills at the end of each day, and he likes to see transactions of £100 and above… I feel a guru in front of others"

In this way, these employees are emphasising to their colleagues and managers they have superior service skills, and that they are contributing to increasing the profitability of the organisation. They also highlight their feelings of power relative to the customer. Although employees might perceive a feeling of power, in principle the power is in the hands of the customer. For example, if in any case the customer was not hungry, he could simply ask Said not to serve him several kinds of sweets. If the customer feels that he/she is being pushed to buy more items, they might feel that they are being exploited and thus, incivility will arise. This scenario emphasises on the corrupt managerial rules, which heavily focus on employees' superior service skills and also in giving employees the burden to increasing profits. Corrupt managerial rules are encouraging employees to engage sometimes in unethical actions with customers, which might have an impact on the overall reputation of the restaurant, in case one angry customer decides to spread rumours about employees unethical selling strategies.

From the data above, it is evident that employees experience various uncivil behaviours. They regard some uncivil behaviours as accidental and others as intentional/deliberate. However, I must emphasise that since I have collected data from service employees, customers' intentionality of performing incivility is absent from the data. Therefore, I will not be dissecting uncivil behaviours into accidental and deliberate, rather I will list them under the title of "Transgressing Boundary Roles". These uncivil behaviours, summarized in table 5 below, are a product of the top and middle managerial practices and also of the service relationships with customers.

Transgressing Boundary Rules
• Impatience • Redundant orders • Neglecting affinity • Rule-breaking reservation norms • Altering/disrespecting servicescape • Absence of gratitude • Hunt for deceitful redress • Trespassing employees' authority

Table 5: Customers' uncivil behaviours

5.4 A typology of customers' uncivil behaviours: Transgressing boundary rules

I refer to uncivil behaviours enacted unintentionally by frequent customers on service employees by "transgressing boundary rules". I argue that employees perceive such kinds of acts as uncivil as a result of compassion fatigue (Figley, 2002). I suggest that employees become traumatised by the requirement for excessive caring for their frequent customers, with whom they have formed personal and/or commercial relationships, which puts them at risk of mental exhaustion and burnout (Potter et al., 2010). According to the data collected, customers' uncivil behaviours are: impatience, redundant orders, neglecting affinity, altering servicescape, absence of gratitude, hunt for deceitful redress and trespassing employees' authority.

5.4.1 Impatience

In the context of queueing theory, Movaghar (1998:338) refers to impatient customers as "customers with limited waiting time". According to a study on 194 observed transactions between cashiers and customers by (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1989), customers' impatience and irritation is a result of employees' positive display of emotions during busy times. This implies that, customers become cranky and irate during busy times if the employee is serving them “with a smile”. This leaves employees emotionally and psychologically tired of their jobs.

However, service employees in this study refer to impatience as a customer uncivil behaviour, exercised by frequent customers, especially during busy time. Such a claim by respondents frames customer’s incivility as a behaviour that serves the customers’ needs at the expense of the employee’s comfort. The quote below illustrates this notion:

> “I will tell you this and you will laugh. When the customer sees that you are busy and running errands from one place to another, his/her orders increase”
>
> (Sarah, 23, Moroccan)

> “A lot of customers don’t appreciate that you are busy and start calling you and saying "come now". What do they do that? I am working and busy.
>
> (Said, 38, Lebanese)

> “Sometimes they ask for their drinks they have ordered like 5 minutes after they ordered. They don’t understand that there are other customers who ordered drinks before them”
>
> (Sami, 23, Lebanese)

In general, employees view this kind of incivility as extremely negative. There are many reasons behind customers’ impatience. Customers’ impatience could be related to customers’ natural behaviour where some enjoy asking a lot of questions and to be served promptly all the time, which is the core of the mantra “the customer is a king”. Additionally, frequent customers might have a feeling that their commercial friends (employees) should only respond to their demands by virtue of the relationship they have established together.

My respondents also mention that customers show impatience and disrespect when they start shouting or using demeaning hand gestures to grasp the attention of employees and make them respond to their requests. While observing and recording employees’ reactions towards customers’ hand gestures at Be-Beirut, this gave me an interpretation that employees are far from perceiving hand gestures as communicative. The following quotes are illustrative:

> "When someone starts waving to me in a disrespectful way in order to come his table, does he think that I am only working for him? he should say "excuse me, please come and take an order". as such, "I will put him over my head", but when you want to degrade me with the way you treat me, this way I won't accept it and I totally refuse it"
>
> (Said, 38, Lebanese)

> "The worst behaviours are when he waves disrespectfully to us, so we come to his table. I understand that we are here to serve him, but there are always respectful ways to do so. "
>
> (Sarah, 23, Moroccan)

> "I cannot overstep the respect level between me and the customer no matter what for the sake of the business. But when this [clicking fingers] happens I come to the customer and ask him to call me with my name or do any other action in order to get my attention"
>
> (Rami, 30, Lebanese)

Hand gestures are among the most commonly used emblems to communicate with service employees during a service interaction at "Be-Beirut" restaurant. This includes waving hands, and/or clicking fingers to call the waiter/waitress. The majority of respondents report that customers humiliate them by using hand gestures, which has an impact on their dignity and well-being. Consequently, employees at "Be-Beirut" rather consider hand gestures as idiosyncratic (Mahl, 2014), which is a gesture that frames odd and demeaning nature.

Furthermore, the negative verbal communication is illustrated by customers' grumpy attitude, and by also shouting and using despised language with the employee. For example, one respondent expresses her anger towards any customer who calls her by using the word "eeehhh". Consequently, such a behaviour instantly makes her feel sad, less energetic and reduces her productivity as she feels humiliated. This finding is consistent with Porath and Pearson (2012) findings whose study shows targets of incivility engage in absenteeism, exit strategies and also instigate incivility to co-workers.

The finding in this section builds on employees' experiences with customers who are perceived by employees as impatient to be served, or the ones who use demeaning verbal words to call the employee. It is evident that the quotes above show employees' dissatisfaction of how they are being treated by the customer, and they regard their acts as unfair and uncivil. Although impatience is regarded by employees as an uncivil behaviour, employees are disregarding the fact that customers might not be aware that their behaviours are hurtful or stressful in the first place. Customers might be acting naturally during a service interaction where they come to a restaurant and expect to be served promptly by employees. They might also think that they are paying for the service, and employees' behaviours should cater their expectations.

However, in Be-Beirut, since service employees are engaging in service relationships with frequent customers, service relationships might be giving customers more power over employees. Simultaneously, employees are becoming more powerless due to their inability of challenging the status quo. Such a feeling of powerlessness in relation to customers shows that employees are put at risk of compassion fatigue which shields their feelings towards the 'commercial friend', and they associate customers' impatience as a form of incivility.

5.4.2 Redundant orders

In this study the definition of "redundant requests" refers to subsequent service requests by a sole customer during a face-to-face interaction. While analysing the data for this research, redundant orders was one of the most common uncivil behaviours raised by respondents of Be-Beirut. All my respondents claim they suffer from customers' redundant orders which play a critical role in causing them stress and anger during a service interaction. One male employee said:

> "Yesterday, I had a customer who asked for ketchup, I got him ketchup, bring me mayo, I brought him mayo…can I get a spoon, I got him a spoon. I gave him all what he asked for subsequently and yet he later says that the service is bad "I swear I was burning from the inside and I wanted to kill him and stab him with a knife".
>
> (Hussein, 19, Iraqi)

This type of perceived incivility clearly has a high negative impact on employees' mental health, which might cause them to become abusive and aggressive. This kind of transmitted incivility between the customer and the employee goes in line with instigated incivility (discussed in section 2.1.7). Additionally, existing literature on customers' deviant behaviours supports my claim (Belding, 2004; Gursoy et al., 2017). These studies argue that customers can be wishy-washy wendys or outlandish requesters meaning they ask for extra service from the employees than is usually normal. Although Be-Beirut employees perceive redundant orders as an uncivil behaviour, employees are not realising the impact of the already established service relationship on customers' behaviours. Employees' service relationships with customers might be providing customers with feelings of belonging to the place, and also customers might be enjoying a feeling of loyalty to the employees whom they are friends with. Since a relationship is based upon a give and take mechanism, customers might expect employees to exchange loyalty and to treat them distinctively relative to the rest of the customers.

5.4.3 Neglecting affinity

Neglecting affinity is a form of an indirect or covert aggressive or harmful behaviour initiated by customers, which disrespects the close relationship between them and the organisation's members (employees). Frontliners classify a bad comment on social media as a neglecting affinity behaviour only if it is coming from customers, they have built with a service relationship. One respondent said:

> "Personally, the worst customer is the one who is a frequent comer, whom we have built a close relationship with and once his expectations do not meet with the service offered to him, he rushes to post it on google or Instagram. I hate this customer and I am also losing interest in serving other customers".
>
> (Said, 38, Lebanese)

I mentioned in section 5.0.1 how the management endorses the elements of customer sovereignty by training their employees that the customer is always right, and they have to offer customers an ultimate dining experience to encourage them to write good reviews on social media. The owner claims:

> "Our reputation is largely connected through social media such as Instagram and Facebook… our ultimate concern is that customers leave us a good review after they experience a nice service and food at our restaurant".

Although the top management emphasises social media integration with the restaurant's reputation, employees of 'Be-Beirut' did not mention that the management is putting the onus on them. My respondents show that they care for the restaurants' reputation and in many cases, they blame the customer for breaking the rules of a good relationship. They might be blaming the customer so that the management does not blame them for service failure. In other words, the employee feels betrayal when a customer brags about their service, not in person, but on social media.

Truthfully, it is the customer's right to decide whether to review a restaurant negatively or positively, at the end it is a subjective assessment. However, employees of Be-Beirut show dissatisfaction when some customers review them badly on social media, even though they are aware that their service was not up to the expected level. The reason behind this blame is explained below.

When employees at 'Be-Beirut' form a service relationship with employees, they believe that even in cases of service failure, customers should not rush to write on social media because they have built with them a relationship in good faith. They expect the unsatisfied customer to approach them individually and discuss their concerns, so that the problem can be solved whilst customers are already dining at the restaurant. Customers who neglect the service relationship and do write a bad review on social media are regarded by employees as bad customers who are broking the basics of a good, trustworthy relationship with the restaurant and its employees. This can result in feelings of hatred from the employee's side, and he/she might also become unproductive as an end result of being "over-nice" with frequent customers. Although this might be reasonable to do, employees are ignoring the fact that nowadays it is very common for customers to express their opinions of satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction on social media platforms. By doing so, this does not mean that customers are targeting to hurt their relationship with their commercial friend (the employees), but maybe they are doing so either to acknowledge the management there is a problem, seeking redress, or maybe it is something they are used to normally do in their lives.

5.4.4 Rule-breaking reservation norms

Rule-breaking reservation norm refers to the behaviour by which frequent customers call and reserve a table, but then they would either cancel last minute, do not show up, or show up late and argue about it. During my participant observation, I encountered many incidents like this since I was the hostess, and I was responsible for the reservations. For example:

> "A customer came in late for her reservation and I told her to wait as someone else has already occupied this table. She got furious at me and started naming every person she knows at the restaurant, like where is Mohammad? Where is Ali? Where is Linda? Call any of these they know me, and I will not wait even for one minute…. Later, the supervisor approached her, greeted her and said "I will do my best to find a place I am so sorry for such inconvenience"
>
> (Personal observation)

Another female employee claimed:

> "They never show up to a reservation, and sometimes they arrive late and start blaming you for not finding their reservation, how could this be possible?".
>
> (Sarah, 23, Moroccan)

The aforementioned quotes describe the situation when a customer stretches the boundaries of expected norms during a service relationship and infringes workplace etiquette, which might lead to demeaning and disrespecting the position and the role of the employee. Although some employees do understand that customers might probably cancel a reservation due to many different circumstances, but all what they really care for is customers to be respectful enough to at least "call and cancel or apologise for being late"—as Sami claims. The claim of Sami might sound plausible to many employees and also other customers. Nonetheless, employees are overlooking their positions relative to customers, where they have no right and power to teach customers how to react and/or interact with them according to their rules.

Previous studies claim that employees fail to deal with such kind of customer misbehaviours due to the absence of customer orientation programs, which train employees on understanding the customer's behaviour, rather than highlighting it (Thorsten Hennig-Thurau and Thurau, 2003). However, in my study, I argue that employees suffer from such incidents (*e.g.* rule-breaking reservation norms) due to the toxic management which has given customers the power over its employees. In many cases during my personal observation, frequent customers come in either late or without a reservation, and most of the times I was asked by the owner to seat them in the VIP section. This implies that, the management of Be-Beirut might be responsible for inspiring frequent customers to get what they want even if this could result in violating the rules of the restaurant and in disrespecting its employees.

5.4.5 Altering and/or disrespecting servicescape

Servicescape refers to the physical settings of a service firm (Daunt and Harris, 2011; Harris and Reynolds, 2004; Reimer and Kuehn, 2005; Reynolds and Harris, 2009). Various studies tackle the impact of customers' interpretations of the servicescape on customers' behaviours, which constructs give rise to feelings of disaffection and is also associated with acts of deviant behaviour (Reynolds and Harris 2009; Harris and Reynolds 2004; Daunt and Harris 2011). However, there is no study which claims that altering and/or disrespecting servicescape is a form of customers' uncivil behaviours in a restaurant setting. In this case study restaurant, I asked one of my respondents "whom do you consider is a bad customer?", one employee responded:

> "The customer who puts his feet on the table-they become very comfortable with us to a point that they start being annoying, disrespectful and they almost feel they are napping on their home couch. This is bizarre."
>
> (Said, 38, Lebanese)

This respondent shows anger toward frequent customers. He thinks that frequent customers become very comfortable to an extent they engage in acts of disrespecting the image of the restaurant, and its classy ambience—as he claims. This highlights the employee's loyalty to the restaurant in which he rejects any defection that might affect the image of the restaurant. Another employee said:

> "I literally hate it when customers start moving their chairs to the right, to the left just to sit in a desirable place which could allow him/her to sit next to his/her partner-Why the hell should they do that? They know that we have worked hard on planning the design and the seating plan of our tables, and they also know is that moving chairs will result in losing a place for placing another table near them- as a result we are losing customers"
>
> (Rami, 30, Lebanese)

In the above quote, the employee discusses his irritation from customers who alter the servicescape, and he argues that such an act will cause the restaurant to lose customers. He assumes that customers already know that moving chairs will result in losing space for new customers to fit. This claim is coming from an angry employee who is very loyal to his restaurant, but he is ignorant to the fact that customers are probably unaware of the problems they are creating related to the seating plan. He also forgets that customers come to the restaurant not only for the food, but also for the experience and to meet their loved ones and to enjoy the moment away from the rigidity of the workplace. These paradoxical situations are stressful to the employee, who is obliged to deal with the situation with intelligence in order not to irritate the seated customer and at the same time not to lose space for new customers to fit in.

This kind of situations highlight the distinct power relationship between the customers and the employees. However, if the employee looks at this situation objectively, he/she could understand why a customer disrupts servicescape where there exists a logic that lies behind employees' illogic or customers' behaviours. It's actually the management at Be-Beirut which is instructing its employees on how to design the tables to occupy as much customers as they can. When employees fail to do as instructed, the management blames them for being the reason behind losing extra customers and consequently, for decreasing the profit margin. This speaks volumes about the toxic management which is putting employees in a vulnerable position by making them perceive the dimensions of their work as powerless, and they are not able to perform their job the way they think is the right way to do it (Kinnunen et al., 1999) ; as a result, they perceive altering and/or disrespecting servicescape as an uncivil behaviour.

5.4.6 Absence of gratitude

The absence of gratitude in this research refers to customers' behaviours who refrain from using the word "please", "If you may", or "excuse me" during a service interaction. This highlights the complex relationship between customers and employees in which employees do not receive the expected level of gratitude and respect from customers. Employees perceive 'the absence of gratitude' as a very demeaning behaviour, and it also disrupts the formalities of respect during a conversation. Many employees emphasise on the notion that frequent customers forget the simple and basic elements of a conversation, which is to show some gratitude for the services provided to them. One respondent said:

> "Once a group of customers arrived, where one of them is a frequent customer whom I know. He asked me to serve his table myself because I am familiar with what he likes and how to be served. Of course, I have agreed on that; however, I haven't heard from him any word which could show that he is thankful for my serviced. I felt that I have been treated like a dog to someone whom I have agreed on serving him just on the basis because I know him, but look what he has done"
>
> (Rami, 30, Lebanese)

Such kind of incidents also highlight the fact that the customer/frontline relationship is complicated. The waiter/waitress is performing something that normally a person should be thanked for doing and yet very few customers do. This shows that the customer is ultimately in control of the customer/employee relationship where the employee puts efforts in contributing to a mutual benefit relationship, while the customer puts minimal efforts to maintain this relationship. The customer-employee relationship is constricted only by placing an order, and in return the employee must respond to the customer's desires, so that they will not switch to a competitor (Bergeron, 2004). This could be a result of service relationships built with frequent customers. Again, this denotes the clear elements of the ineffective management at Be-Beirut, which is not providing its employees with the proper training on how to be good and friendly with a customer without establishing a service relationship that possibly backfires on their well-being, dignity, job performance and job satisfaction. Clearly, through service relationships employees are giving customers a superior power over them; hence, making themselves powerless.

5.4.7 Hunt for deceitful redress

This kind of incivility refers to a fraudulent or illegitimate complaint behaviour that offers customers the possibility of gain (*e.g.* free food, VIP table with no extra charge). Such a behaviour is morally questionable where either customers seek unfair compensation for a service failure, or express dissatisfaction of a dining experience that does not actually exist. Indeed, the importance of addressing service failure is one of the major concerns of restaurants. It is the customer's right to complain and to seek redress in case of service failure. However, do all managements evaluate customers' complaints as legitimate? The answer is indeed negative.

Although most service managers are aware of customers' illegitimate requests for remedy, they blame the employee for their weak service skills, and they favour employees to engage in immediate service recovery to improve service in the long run. Therefore, employees are often given the right to address any remedy and at the expense of the management. However, this is leading employees to be negatively influenced by ***etiquette infringement,*** which they regard as uncivil and abusive. The etiquette infringement uncivil behaviour is similar to the intentional deviant behaviour "belligrement norm infringement" (Daunt and Harris, 2012).

Many researchers working on the service industry field often claim that the overall management system of an organisation, such as clinging to the idea of customer sovereignty, is responsible for encouraging customers to seek unlawful redress (Blodgett et al., 1995; Hansen et al., 2008). However, this is not the only reason behind such kind of incivility in the body of this research. The findings of this research show that service employees are also the ones responsible for allowing this incivility to happen, due to their engagement in service relationships with frequent customers. This positions the employee in a vulnerable position in which the employee feels trapped in a relationship with a commercial friend who is opportunistic (Hansen et al., 2008); hence, causing employees to perceive customer behaviours uncivil.

Participants argue that such an incivility is abusive and breaks the rules of etiquette while dealing with customers, as sometimes they have to either pay the price of food and/or drinks from their own pockets, or they have to steal from the kitchen without the management knowing. They do this so that the management will not blame them for their inadequate service skills—as Sarah claims during an informal conversation. Hence, frequent customers who *hunt for deceitful redress* are reducing the job productivity of the employee, where he/she becomes uninterested in satisfying their customers as he/she is required. This will have an impact on their job satisfaction that will accumulate and might lead them to quit their job. One male employee said,

> "I have customers who ask me to check their shisha, once I smoke a bit to check its quality, they start complaining that I have burnt the shisha and that I have to change it for them for free … these customers do it on purpose, and I have learnt not to do any extra service to them, but this is backfiring on other customers who are getting upset from this".
>
> (Mohammad, 28, Iraqi)

Consequently, customers hunting for deceitful redress is one kind of incivility resulting from the service relationship formed between customers and service employees. This type of misbehaviour might be an antecedent to trigger incivility from other customers or a form of (customer-employee-customer) instigated incivility.

5.4.8 Trespassing employees' authority

The data of this research shows that employees' motivation and their social skills are weakened due to their loss of authority during a service interaction. For instance, every employee working at any organisation has a specific task assigned to them. Being assigned a task means "you are the boss of this position"- said by a male security guy, Altan. However, at "Be-Beirut" customers are ignoring the job role of employees, specifically the security guard and the hostess, in order to get what they want. This claim makes it clear that the deterrence technique employed by the management of Be-Beirut (*e.g.* recruiting a security guard) is unsuccessful in preventing incivility at this particular context. This might be due to the power imbalance between customers and employees, created as a result of service relationships and the marketing strategies of the organisation which promote an ideology of customer sovereignty (Fullerton and Punj, 2004).

Knowing that most customers are frequent, the management might consider controlling incivility by educating customers about the harm they are causing employees and other customers when they are trespassing employees' authority (Gursoy et al., 2017).

What is happening here is that customers are frequent customers, and some have established commercial friendships with service employees or the restaurant's management. This gives customers the ability and the right to demand relational benefits. According to a study done by Gwinner et al., (1998), customers seek four benefits from the service organisation, and they are social (friendship; personal recognition), economic (discounts), customisation (offering and services), and psychological (confidence, trust, no anxiety). Customers believe in the idea that when they are frequent customers to an organisation, it means they are loyal. Being loyal to a firm, customers expect a special treatment that is able to enhance their trust and confidence in the firm, so they reduce the switching provider cost on them personally, and on the organisation (Gremler and Brown, 1999; Gwinner et al., 1998). Therefore, customers might be engaging in this kind of incivility as a result for being frequent and loyal customers, as well as it could be due to service relationships with employees. The personal incident below illustrates this notion:

> "Since I am responsible for the bookings and the seating no one is allowed to enter the place without giving the security the permission to do so. In spite that, customers ignored the security and came in after the security has taken permission from the manager. These people know one guy owns shares at this place, so the manager (against his will) was obliged to find them a table. The table that they've got was reserved to a group of customers, but then I had to find them another table. The manager came to me: sometimes we have to do things that we don't like, but we have to do it. This is customer service. I said: you could have given them a table inside. Manager: they are my partner's relatives and he personally called to seat them in the lounge area. These are Arabs you see. I smiled and said "its ok it happens".

Consequently, trespassing employees' authority is one of the major uncivil behaviours reported by service employees, in which employees perceive customers as opportunistic, and they are taking advantage of their relationships with the restaurant and the service employees. Thus, they coercively oblige employees to respond to their demands. This incivility is mostly reported by the person who is responsible for the gate's security, and the hostess who is responsible for allocating seats for customers.

Theorists in the marketing field agree that building long-term relationships with customers is a building block for the success and profitability of the economy, and they also agree that acquiring new customers is a highly ineffective procedure, which is money and time consuming (Donavan et al., 2004; Hennig-Thurau, 2004), Therefore, it is efficient and effective for companies to focus their activities on fulfilling their existing customers' needs by following a construct of customer orientation of service employees, which is similar to the four dimensions proposed by (Brown et al., 2002): social skill, technical skill, motivation and decision making authority.

- Social skill dimension refers to an employee's casual, cognitive and emotional ability to understand the customer's perspective during a service interaction.
- Technical skill dimension refers to an employee's knowledge about technical skills he/she possess to be able to respond to customers' needs
- Motivation dimension refers to an employee's positive attitude towards his job which allows him to satisfy customers' needs.
- Decision-making authority dimension refers to employees' authority in decision making on issues that concerns customers' needs and interests.

I would emphasise on the last dimension since it is the most relevant in the current context of this study. Therefore, the management might consider giving employees a decision-making authority as many of them express their task role as being unclearly identified by the management. For example, the quotes from respondents below clarify this point:

> "I don't know what my role is, am I a shisha guy, or food runner or a waiter…I really don't know. Every day or every hour I have a different role to do depending on the availability of staff and the business of the restaurant. Sometimes also I am assigned different jobs where I'd be jumping from one shisha to another to change the coal, and then jump to the kitchen to get the food, and then serve it"
>
> (Hussein, 19, Iraqi)

> "I really would love to have the ability to choose what I really like to do. Since I'm doing a task that I don't like, I am always angry, frustrated and this is clearly reflected on my face and my performance. I often face incivility from customers, and many argue with me over my behaviour, which they think is offensive. I hate that. The truth is that I am just given the wrong job, which is to manage the shisha, but I don't smoke, and I hate the fact that customers ask me to start it for them. My health is being affected by that, and the management feel that I am not qualified to be a waiter. They are not even thinking of giving me a chance to prove myself. I think if I stayed like that for one more month, I'd be changing my work"
>
> (Rawad, 21, Lebanese)

The quote above shows that the performance of this particular employee, Rawad, is very low due to allocating him in a role that he does not like. Since his performance is low, he is often encountering incivility from customers. Therefore, service employees' well-being is also attached to having the authority to decide on their desired task, which is consistent with what they love to do and does not harm their health. When the management gives them the power of decision-making, they might acquire more confidence in the task they are performing, and also this could possibly empower them to smoothly deal with the incivility they experience, without having the fear of acting unethically (*e.g.* bribing customers).

5.5 Conclusion

Within this case study, the restaurant's top management dining and service rules, the middle managerial practices paralleled with service relationships, affect the way incivility is constructed and perceived by service employees. This gives rise to various kinds of uncivil behaviours, which are a result of either the restaurant management rules, the relationship of employees with their middle managers, or employees' service relationships with frequent customers. I categorized customers' uncivil behaviours under the title of "transgressing boundary rules". This exploration acknowledges incivility being a result of interaction (Walker et al., 2017).

To sum up, the data reveals that the top managerial rules, such as the embeddedness of the notion of customer incivility, the promotion of authenticity and the allocation of the seating plan at Be-Beirut are responsible for constructing customer incivility. In addition to that, the middle managerial practices, and their poor relationship between middle managers and their frontliners is a trigger for incivility. I argued that employees who are not on good terms with their managers, they often become unproductive and unsatisfied about their job and thus, they are prone to encounter customer incivility due to service failure. Besides, managers sometimes could be tough and disrespectful to their employees, which makes employees angry. When employees are angry, they might instigate this anger to customers; consequently, triggering customers to act uncivil.

Furthermore, the data reveals that the construction of customer incivility could be a product of the individual, due to the formation of service relationships with frequent customers. When employees establish a service relationship with frequent customers, they might fall in compassion fatigue and thus, they start perceiving most of customers' behaviours as uncivil, although it might not be the case.

Consequently, I can see a subtext of frustrated employees projecting the stresses of their job onto the customers, which are actually not caused by customers. This speaks volumes about the toxic management which is attributing the blame to service employees' inadequate service skills and incompetency, rather than holding some responsibility for causing this incivility to happen due to the organisational culture, climate and management. This means that the management individualises incivility and thus, it expects employees to cope with incivility, individually or collectively depending on the kind of incivility they are facing. Therefore, the next chapter will explore the various coping behaviours of service employees when they encounter incivility.

Chapter Six: Service Employees' Coping Strategies

6.0 Introduction

This chapter looks at coping strategies adopted by service employees to deal with customer incivility initiated by frequent customers, in the context of service relationships. Existing studies on incivility in the workplace suggest that it is a downward phenomenon, where mostly the target (*e.g.* the employee) has less legitimate power than his/her offender (e.g. customer) (Johnson and Indvik, 2001; Pearson and Porath, 2005; Porath and Pearson, 2012). In most cases, the management individualises incivility and uses customers' dissatisfaction against employees (Bishop et al., 2005; Hutton and Gates, 2008; Miller et al., 1995; Newton, 1995a). Hence, customer incivility potentially causes employees to feel largely powerless and to suffer burnout, this encourages them to engage in coping strategies to deal with the imbalances of power that render them vulnerable to incivility from customers (Hutton and Gates, 2008; Miller et al., 1995). The management expects coping tactics to help employees maintain the 'status quo' with customers, instead of challenging the current paradigm, which abides by the myth of customers' sovereignty (Bishop et al., 2005). In this chapter, I argue that despite the fact that the management of Be-Beirut is blaming employees for incivility, and it expects them to deploy individual coping mechanisms, the data reveals that there are some incidents in which employees cope with incivility collectively (see table 6 below).

Individual Coping	Collective coping
• Performing gender	• Consuming soft drugs
• Observe patrons	• Seeking emotional support from co-workers
• Emotions in power	• Seeking supervisory assistance
• Threatening to hurt the customer	• Collective retaliation tactic
• Bribing	• Swearing (waitresses)
• Humor	
• Apologising	
• Consuming hard drugs	
• Procrastinate to take an order	
• Swearing (waiters)	

Table 6: Employees' coping tactics

I previously argued in chapter 5 that customer incivility is constructed by employees as a result of the top and the middle managerial practices, as well as due to the formation of service relationships with frequent customers. Despite this, the systematic nature of incivility at "Be-Beirut" is blamed by the restaurant management on the service employees' poor service abilities, and who are also held accountable for forming a kind of "intimate" relationship with the customer (as one of the managers said). The study of Newton (1995b) suggests a similar contradiction, whereby organisations individualise stress and blame the employee for causing it to customers, and it is less likely that the organisation and the customers to be seen as the cause of stress. Through this attribution of blame, the management gives complete responsibility for employees to cope and/or avoid customer incivility, by doing so individually simultaneously preserving the status quo.

Customer incivility is generally tolerated by employees due to the management's acknowledgement the power of the customer as a sovereign agent is the main determinant of a service organisation's success, within the confines of an employment relationship (Bolton and Houlihan, 2010). Subsequently, customers are capable of practicing incivility as a form of power over employees in an environment that normalises the elements of this sovereignty (Bolton and Houlihan, 2010; Rosenthal et al., 2001). Customer sovereignty is a norm imposed by service organisations to render incivility invisible, and thus to force employees to accept responsibility for the incivility they experience (Bishop et al., 2005).

Additionally, I argue that the management positions service employees at the end of the organisational hierarchy where customers are superior to them, and they are supervised by unprofessional and authoritarian managers. These employees perceive themselves largely powerless and thus, they sometimes perceive a lack of control over the environment in which they are working, and this affects their mental health and task performance (Sliter et al., 2011; Cortina and Magley, 2009). Although the management reinforces the idea that employees are subordinates to both the customers and the management, the management has limited ability in controlling the interaction between employees and customers. This implies that service employees are not completely powerless, but they might feel powerless because they have been instructed by the powerful management to cater to customers' needs (Edgell et al., 2015). This reasoning suggests that employees are capable of controlling uncivil events by engaging in emotional and/or behavioural coping strategies to mitigate the negative feelings and consequences of incivility on their well-being and service performance.

By studying elements of power in relation to customer incivility, the goal of the study is to enhance our critical understanding about organisational behaviour in a restaurant setting by uncovering ways employees cope with incivility. This will provide the management with significant cues for actions to curtail and manage incivility in the workplace. Hence, HRM practices will have an effective and positive impact on employees' overall workplace environment, which is known for its continuous abusive culture (Bishop et al., 2005; Horwitz and Neville, 1996).

6.1 Employees coping strategies

This section presents the coping tactics employed by service employees, which aim at dealing with customer incivility while maintaining the status quo in congruency with the management policies, which focuses on keeping customers happy. Employees of Be-Beirut engage in coping strategies, which are highly impacted by their management's emphasis on incivility being an individual problem (Bishop et al., 2005). Therefore, the management expects its employees to engage in coping that allows them to sustain customer sovereignty, while at the same time trying to protect themselves from the negative feelings they are encountering from frequent customers. In reference to the data collected for my study, employees seem to have developed their own individual as well as collective tactics to cope in response, due to the absence of formal training on ways to handle tough situations, such as customer incivility. Employees claim they received very basic training when they were recruited. Employees' informal training is based on engaging in daily briefings, which only give them an idea about the section that each staff is responsible for, which tables are reserved and for whom (VIP vs non-VIP customer). The lack of training highlights the problematic management culture, which fails to provide its employees with the proper training to learn ways to deal with work-related stress and difficult incidents.

During data collection via interviews, most employees were able to recall a critical incident with a difficult frequent customer. They were asked what was the most common form of incivility they have experienced, and how did they cope with it? None of the employees had a specific coping strategy to a specific uncivil behaviour. Having discussed the common uncivil behaviours of frequent customers in chapter 5, below is an analysis of the coping tactics employed by service employees at Be-Beirut

6.1.1 Performing gender: Power of gendered aesthetic labour

This section draws upon employee's adoption of aesthetic labour as a coping strategy to prevent and/or cope with customer incivility. The data of my study indicates how aesthetic labour is extended from being a managerial requirement, to becoming an element of sexualising the service interaction by employees. Sexualising the service interaction refers to employees' performativity of gender as a means to affect customers' impressions and definitions of reality through their behaviour, language and the way they dress (Hancock and Tyler, 2007; Warhurst and Nickson, 2009) , in pursuit of preventing and/or coping with incivility. In other words, I suggest that during service interactions with customers, service employees tend to "mobilise and develop their own sexuality through aesthetic labouring" (Warhurst and Nickson, 2009:9) to deal with incivility.

Hochschild (1983) in her theory of emotional labour segregates gender by signifying woman as employees who are expected by the management to enact a particular heterosexual performance of emotional labour, which is mostly achieved by flirting with male customers (Hall, 1993; Yagil, 2008). Hochschild argues that the emotional performances of a service job depend on whether a man or a woman is performing it; besides, she often associates emotion work with burnout and inauthenticity (Hochschild, 1983). Additionally, the theory on performativity developed by Butler (1988) refers to gender as a performance and argues that emotional labour employees perform gender roles in a way which serves the 'gender order' in a patriarchal society, where men are superior and acquire more privileges than women (Butler, 1988; Butler, 2007; Connell, 1998). Additionally, Butler (2004) focuses on gender performance as a way to project a coherent and compelling identity of oneself and thus, gender becomes real when it is performed in a repetitive manner (Butler, 2004). Both theories disregard the power of aesthetic labour during service interactions which is "the mobilisation, development and commodification of the embodied capacities and attributes of employees to produce favourable interaction with the customer" (Nickson et al., 2001:176-177). Therefore, in this section I attempt to show how service employees utilise the power of gender aesthetics, which combines both aesthetic appearance, skills and gender, in preventing and/or coping with incivility. Aesthetic labour is the practice of screening, managing, and controlling workers based on their physical appearance.

The restaurant management at Be-Beirut attempts to lever competitive advantage through using employees' appearance, where the aesthetic criteria is highly gendered for both men and women (Warhurst and Nickson, 2007). While I was collecting data through participant observation and interviews, I concluded that most employees are recruited according to their 'aesthetic skills' which encompass attitude and appearance (Gustafsson et al., 2005). All of my informants, both male and female, mention that they make sure to 'look nice', as required by the restaurant management, before they start their working shift. By looking 'nice' they mean to look sharp, neat and clean- as Sarah said. This is one of the major requirements of an aesthetic economy where employees develop subjective aesthetics to "be seen, to dress up, to stage oneself" (Hancock and Tyler, 2007:512), to contribute to a successful organisation based on expression of one's identity (Adkins and Lury, 1999) .

From the previous sections, it is evident that the management's focus on aesthetic labour could be a way to control employees' personal identity, by dictating employees' looks and attitude. However, the data also shows that many employees in this research express their passionate and personal attitude towards looking sharp for work, which sometimes is going beyond the requirement of the organisation (*e.g.* waitresses wearing long and flashy earrings). Many employees, both male and female, claim they enjoy looking clean, sharp and nice to work, since it gives them more confidence to interact with customers; thus, strengthening their service performance.

The confidence they acquire from their aesthetics gives them a feeling of power over customers. The power of aesthetics is not simply limited to displaying emotions and attitude required by the organisation, rather the issue lies in the hands of the employees' ability to display socially expected emotions and attitude. Therefore, aesthetic labour is used as a coping method in which employees create a branded style service interaction that might prevent customer incivility to occur in the first place (Lopez, 2010a; Nickson and Korczynski, 2009). For example, waitresses have the "ability to enact caring styles in body language, manner of speech, and physical interactions in body work" (Lopez, 2010a:261). Therefore, employees are moving beyond the emotion-nature of their service job, to recognising the materiality of the service job which plays a significant role in dealing with incivility from frequent customers (Lopez, 2010a).

In the case study Be-Beirut, female employees differ in their employment of aesthetics labour, compared to their male counterparts. The quotes below support this claim:

> "When I started working here, the manager emphasised on looking good to work. He instructed me on wearing soft makeup, to fix my nails, and also to wear soft perfume which does not irritate the customer. I honestly abided by these rules as I wanted to prevent any issue that might ignite the customers' anger in any way possible. Therefore, every day before I come to the restaurant, I take a very nice and warm shower, fix my hair, I fix my nails if I needed to, and wear some makeup so that I can reflect some femininity to customers. I also tend to wear tight pants so that I could be feeling feminine in my looks and to give me some confidence whilst working around customers"
>
> (Sarah, 23, Moroccan)

> "Being sexy and beautiful gives me confidence and it also decreases customers' demands as they feel that they are exhausting us with their orders"
>
> (Informal conversation with Linda)

Exposing a particular version of femininity in service interactions seems to be very common among female employees working at "Be-Beirut". Female employees expect customers to treat them softly, while not abusing their femininity with excessive demands. Such a strategy is commonly used by Arab female employees at Be-Beirut, since they come from the same patriarchal society of the customers. Generally, women in a patriarchal society experience a minority status, and their managers expect them to demonstrate a feminized emotional and aesthetic labour (Dean, 2005; Hochschild, 1983; Warhurst and Nickson, 2007). For example, women in a patriarchal society are seen as soft, weak and should be taken care of, while the man is the one who is strong and responsible for protecting the woman. As such, the management at Be-Beirut tends to make patriarchy invisible to women, and it makes sure that women perceive their role as being weak and submissive to the opposite sex as something natural and universal (Bartky, 1997; Kilianski, 2003). In a culture characterized by male dominance and female subordination there are restrictive gender identities, which are gender norms mainly enforced by the society, such as peers and the family (Kilianski, 2003). The cultural norm in a patriarchal society expects males to endorse specific norms such as toughness, status and anti-feminine components, while females are expected to be soft, caring and submissive to men (Bartky, 1997; Kilianski, 2003). Since gender norms in a patriarchal culture are usually enforced during childhood, females and males are used to perform their identities according to how they have been raised, or what is expected from them to perform in order to conform to the social order, which is constrained by cultural expectations (Kilianski, 2003). Having said that, female employees at Be-Beirut might be unconscious of the patriarchal structures they inhabit.

For instance, the waitresses of Be-Beirut are possibly conforming to the idea that a strong/tough woman in a patriarchal society is no longer perceived feminine, rather she is attributed to have masculine features. Therefore, we can assume that waitresses of Be-Beirut might be enjoying the privilege of being women and to be treated nicely and in softness. This is one major reason why they are falling in false consciousness, whereby they might not be recognizing their powerlessness relative to men (Jost and Banaji, 1994; Matsuda, 1989). For example, some women fail to associate the term of being 'soft' with weakness, rather they associate it with femininity and sensitivity and thus, the man should take care of them and treat them just like princesses, the same way they retrieve from popular cartoon characters such as Cinderella. The media plays a very important role in allowing women to believe they are princesses who should be acting soft, speaking slowly and not to be carrying heavy stuff. Evidently, being treated by men as a 'princess' is associated with weakness and subordination, but women do not realise it that way. Thus, females are reclaiming language such as the phrase 'soft woman' to mean 'strong, powerful, sexy and controlling' to the man's emotions to alter his reactions. However, women are not realizing that being 'soft' in a patriarchal society means they are establishing a subordinate relationship with men who can exert control over them. Therefore, the reality is far more complex, where female employees might be attempting to gain power and recognition within the structures of a patriarchal environment, but in principle they are simultaneously empowered and lacking power.

Since female employees of Be-Beirut believe that by exposing their femininity they can be successful to prevent incivility from male customers, they are ignoring the fact that being feminine in a patriarchal environment might also put woman at risk of exploitation. The role of the waitress is to enhance the customers' status during a service interaction, which provides the customer with extra power to use over female employees. Consequently, the power of males in a patriarchal society might put females at risk of being sexually harassed by male customers, and sometimes by their male colleagues (Hennekam and Bennett, 2017; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2009; Reynolds and Harris, 2006; Williams et al., 1999)

The data from my study supports the findings of other studies on aesthetic labour, which claim that the gender of the employee influences the dynamics of the service provider (Warhurst and Nickson, 2009; Warhurst and Nickson, 2007). However, previous studies, unlike the findings of my study, suggest that female employees alter their looks to be less sexy and feminine to prevent sexual assault. For instance, a female employee who tied her hair up in order to prevent customers' dirty hands to be running down her hair- a claim made by one of the informants in Reynolds and Harris (2006) study. Existing studies as well as my study, highlight the position of women in a patriarchal environment. Women are treated by males as subordinates and powerless, but women fail to recognise their oppression, injustice and exploitation in a patriarchal society, which generally neutralises the existence of gender inequality. This might suggest that women are in a state of false consciousness which could be preventing them from revolting against their current situation and thus, might fail to realise their powerlessness and injustice relative to males.

Evidently, the vast majority of research on aesthetic labour in the service industry examines the sexual harassment of women by men, but many studies also tackle the issue of male employees being harassed by male customers (Street et al., 2007; Waldo, 1999), which has negative consequences on their psychological functioning (Street et al., 2007). However, the findings of my study show that male employees alter their appearances while expecting female customers to provide them with many gains which could be psychological, financial and/or personal, such as to ask them out for a date. The quotes below elaborate on this point:

> "We can feel sometimes that female customers they start flirting with me by commenting on uniform that it is very formal and elegant. Some do enjoy it and I do enjoy it as well as I'll be engaging in conversations with them where some have given me their numbers… I feel unique and this makes them very respectful in the way they interact with me…guess what I went out with 2 ladies, and it was like I hit the jackpot… they are rich and highly educated customers"
>
> (Anthony, 41, Lebanese)

> "One female employee asked me if I'm Lebanese, and she started telling me that I love Lebanese men and that my green eyes are a killer… I ended up asking her out, but she refused to do that I still don't know why, but whenever she is around, I am the only one who serves her, and she gives me extra tips as well"
>
> (Rami, 30, Lebanese)

> "Because I am handsome and I always look sharp to work, gives me a feeling of power over female customers. I can feel it whenever I serve a female customer that I can easily attract her by just looking sharply straight to her eyes… I feel that I no longer serve her, but actually doing her a favour that I am responding to what she asks for since I am a man, and she is a woman… women like to be given what they want nicely"
>
> (Anthony, 41, Lebanese)

> "I work around 15 hours and my social life almost doesn't exist, so why not to find a beautiful lady from the customers to hang out with… I always try, and I'm confident that it will happen one time… female customers of Be-Beirut come from outer space they are very sexy and elegant… whenever I serve a female customer I try to be flirty in a way where I comment on her beauty or by telling her that she is shining today… females are weak towards the masculinity that I can make her feel… sometimes I make her feel uncomfortable in a good way and she leaves happy and content"
>
> (Informal conversation with Rami, 30, Lebanese)

> "The female customers of whom I attract with the way I talk, and act make me feel that I exist as someone in this world, and not as a number… I love it when female customers smile back at me when I pass by… I often face situations where my colleagues ask me to serve a particular table, it ends up that one of the female customers asked for me to serve her… WOOHOO I like that… they'd be sweet customers and no hassle to deal with"
>
> (Informal conversation with Mohammad)

The quotes above highlight the core values of a patriarchal society. Let me start by expanding on how customers view a service employee at a restaurant. Normally when an employee is working as a waiter/waitress, he/she is automatically classified as a low-income employee who is only working at a restaurant because he/she is not smart enough to be working as a doctor or an engineer —as Sami claims during our interview, not to mention that Sami is a university student at one of London's top universities. Of course, customers who are being served by Sami or others are ignorant of employees' social status or educational level. This is completely normal since customers can only see an employee who is serving them, fulfilling their requests and coming to them whenever they wave their hands. This reflects on the customer-employee relationship which is very complex and sometimes demeaning to employees.

However, male employees working at "Be-Beirut" are using their "masculinised" aesthetics as a coping mechanism to attract wealthy female customers as an element to increase their power and to prevent customer incivility. They are using their deliberate masculine attitude, such as giving sexy looks, using sexual banter and flirting with female customers, as a form of power to regain what these waiters have lost from power and status in a patriarchal culture. It is evident from the quotes above that male employees refer to their acts with female customers as heroic, since they perceive they are able to control the service interaction according to their terms and by emphasising the dominance of heterosexuality (Lopez, 2010b; Schippers, 2007).

Although male respondents quoted above emphasise the perceived success of their ***masculine power of aesthetics*** in preventing incivility to occur, it is not an easy objective to achieve at Be-Beirut. The majority of female customers at Be-Beirut come from a very high economic class, where you rarely see women not wearing luxurious brands, such as Chanel or Gucci bags. This means that no matter what the waiters of Be-Beirut narrate stories of success and sexual attraction with wealthy female customers, they are inherently in a subordinate position to these wealthy customers. Despite those male employees are trying to use their masculinity to dominate female customers, in fact these narratives are an example of a failed attempt to overcome structural inequity (Bowman, 1989). All these narratives of waiters on seduction and flirtation with female customers at a restaurant dominated with a patriarchal environment is only a case of imagining and believing oneself able to be a masculine and strong man in a job where the man's power is subordinated by wealthy and educated females.

Despite the former fact, male employees of Be-Beirut are feeling pleasure using their aesthetics power during their interactions with female customers and thus, they often perceive themselves successful in preventing incivility from happening. In some cases, these performances of masculinity are certainly enjoyed by their performers, and they are unlikely challenging the gendered status quo during service interactions, rather they are adjusting to the elements of customer sovereignty and thus, keeping female customers happy about the service provided to them by their very caring male employees.

Although aesthetics skills are highly emphasised by the management of Be-Beirut, employees are using the power of aesthetics, central to my point the aesthetics of gender, in order to cope with and/or prevent incivility, simultaneously affirming the managerial desires and thus, maintaining the status quo (Hancock and Tyler, 2007). The findings of this research show that the waiters and waitresses aesthetically perform gender in the pursuit of dealing with incivility, just the way customers who belong to a patriarchal culture understand and react toward aesthetics and to employees' physical appearances. As such, employees might be 'doing gender' according to the restaurant's management requirements.

Consequently, the data shows that Be-Beirut's service employees might attempt to either prevent or cope with incivility by refusing to be passive performers. In doing so, they do not challenge the status quo but instead reproduce gendered criterions imposed on them by the management and the restaurant's overall environment—which is patriarchal by nature (discussed in chapter 4). This notion is particularly interesting because it highlights the image of the management which is dictating rules on its employees that are interfering in changing one's identity. For some employees, managerial aesthetic rules might work for their benefit as it might have a positive impact on their performance whereby, they perform service as customers expect (*e.g.* waitresses acting feminine during the service interaction with male customers). However, for other employees imposing a gendered criterion might be of a burden which is not sustainable, and they might perceive customers acts as a form of incivility and thus, aesthetics would be an element of exacerbating incivility. For example, during my participant-observation I have heard the owner commenting on a male customer who is wearing a tight pink pants[6]. He said to one of the waiters:

> "Look, look at this lady, sorry at this man (he laughs) … pink tight pants my lord (he laughs) … the world is changing to the worse"

After hearing this comment, I became interested in knowing more about the owner's perspective towards recruiting gay/lesbian workers. Thus, during an informal conversation with the owner, I asked him if he has a problem in recruiting employees who are not performing gender as the societal order in a patriarchal environment expects them to perform. He claims:

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[6] In Lebanon (like many other countries), the pink colour is associated with females, and the blue colour is associated with males

> “I don’t care where he or she sleeps and with whom, but yes I do care about my employees’ physical appearance and attitude with my customers… a man is a man and a woman is a woman… full stop”

As such, the owner made it very clear that he does not accept recruiting men whose attitude is not masculine, and women whose attitude is not feminine. For him, gender roles are dictated by a heterosexual nature. In a patriarchal society, males are required to reveal masculinity, which is meant to imbue power (Bartky, 1997). Thus, the owner makes it clear that if the waiter is gay, the masculine environment of Be-Beirut does not allow him to reveal his identity and thus, his gender role will be oppressed by the management, which clearly is the case at Be-Beirut. This oppression might cause an employee psychological distress (Fassinger, 1991), due to his full emersion in “impression management” (Goffman, 1959). Thus, the management requires the employee to always reveal masculinity in the front stage with customers as well as in the backstage in front of the management and also his colleagues. Hence, the employee might become very sensitive to customers and thus, they might perceive normal behaviours of customer as uncivil. The same applies to women, if they were lesbian and having masculine attributes.

Clearly, the management is trying to control the service interaction between its employees and the customers. By utilising the elements of aesthetic labour, it is a way the management uses to make sure that the employee is providing the customer with what they expect from the service, such as being served by a waitress who is good looking, sexy and feminine. Consequently, this is putting employees in a vulnerable position because they are being treated by customers according to their performed gender, which might be degrading for some, and for others is uncomfortable because of loss of identity. Therefore, employees are controlling their appearance and behaviour in the name of customer service, which best appeal to the senses of customers (Warhurst et al., 2000). This data evidently shows the very complex relationship between customers and employees, but specifically it reveals the image of the toxic management which is not only dictating employees’ emotions and physical appearance, but also their gender identity.

6.1.2 Power of observing patrons

According to Reynolds and Harris, (2006), observing new patrons is a tactic used by employees to identify customers who *potentially might be deviant*. However, according to this case study restaurant, observing patrons is one popular tactic used by employees to inquire individually or from their colleagues about the *frequent customers* currently dining at "Be-Beirut". This helps them to engage in two kinds of coping tactics that are to ***ask a colleague to serve this particular customer,*** or to use the ***power of personalistion and/or naming*** to prevent incivility from happening.

6.1.2.1 Ask a colleague to serve a particular customer

Employees of Be-Beirut engage in this form of coping when they feel powerless, and when they feel not ready to deal with the demands of frequent customers, they perceive abusive and annoying. Employees base their reasoning on past experiences with these customers and thus, they try to prevent future incivilities from happening by ignoring the customer and asking for assistance from their colleagues. The quotes below elaborate on this point:

> "If I see that there is a customer who I don't like, I feel as like what the hell… why now… I am always obliged to serve them because most of the customers whom I hate, they actually like to be served by me and definitely I am not position to choose whom to serve and whom to ignore, but sometimes when I am in very bad mood I ask one of my colleagues to cover for me… most of the time it works and thankfully I succeed by not serving this customer; however, all the time that this customer is dining I'd be stressed and afraid that they see me and ask for something"
>
> (Sarah, 23, Moroccan)

> "Before I come in, I observe the area and if I found a customer which I have had an issue with, or he/she is someone who is very painful, I make sure to ask my colleague to cover for me so that I would start my working shift in a calming mind".
>
> (Rawad, Lebanese)

At first glance it might appear that the waiters and waitresses of Be-Beirut are passive actors who submit to the adversities of their work. In one case they create power through discourse with colleagues on potential incivilities they might encounter, and on the other side they give themselves a feeling of perceived power that they are able to choose whom to serve and how to serve them. In addition to that, employees might perceive their actions as a victorious relative to customers, but at the end when a customer calls this specific employee, the employee must and will most of the times respond. In other cases, if the manager asks an employee to serve a particular customer whom he was avoiding, the employee has no power to refuse to a superior power, who is the manager. Otherwise, they would be engaging in acts of challenging the status quo and this is not accepted in a restaurant, which puts the employee at risk of being fired.

The data of my study shows that the information collected by employees about customer's attitude through service relationships made some employees less submissive to these customers. This led employees to serve these particular customers according to their own terms, but without challenging the status quo. They are not challenging the status quo since they are willing to do anything to get the job done without changing the restaurant's rules, which commit to serve the customer and making him/her happy (Strebel, 1996). The frequency of interactions with the same customers and also forming service relationships with them is giving employees the power to admonish uncivil customers, and to have the power to enhance their position by engaging in a collective action as a form of resistance in the face of expected incivility. Knowing the customers, their attitudes and their inherent hostile characteristics, encourages employees of Be-Beirut not to be in the service of customers' demands. In addition to that, service relationships with frequent customers have also given employees the power to manipulate the service provided and the tipping system without challenging the status quo or retaliating abuse back at the customer.

6.1.2.2 Personalizing service and naming

Another powerful resisting action used by employees of Be-Beirut is the power of personalisation and naming. Personalising service is a strategy used by marketing specialists to include personalised service plans that fit the customers' values and needs (Kokko and Moilanen, 1997). For example, if an employee knows that a frequent customer hates the hustle of kids around him/her, the employee makes sure not to seat them around kids-as Said reports. The quote below explains this point:

> "I usually start my work at 6.30, but sometimes I arrive early and sit in the back office while my shift time starts… Every day, I walk around from the canal side of the restaurant to observe who is dining, and when I see one of frequent customers dining, I automatically come to his table before anyone else… I know what he likes, what he eats and what shisha he smokes… I sometimes don't ask him what he wants, I go order him what he loves before he speaks a word… Now that we became friends…Thank God he smiles back at me… I start his dining experience with a smile, and it continues with a smile… Before becoming friends, this customer comes mostly everyday around 6 pm to dine and smoke shisha after he finishes work as he told me once… He is not a very friendly customer and sometimes he waves his hands towards me impolitely, and what makes me angry is that he only likes to be served by me. This situation has been very tough until I became friends with him…"
>
> (Informal conversation with Rami)

Naming is another coping tactic used by employees to prevent incivility from frequent customers. Naming is the act of addressing customers by their names during a service interaction. This helps the employee to create a personalised experience, and also to maintain a respectful communication with the customer that reflects special care and respect for them (Martin, 1986). See the quote below:

> "One of my very successful strategies is to warmly greet a customer I hate and call him by his name… Hello 'Sheikh' Ahmad, how are you today? Mnawerna layli… ahla w sahla[7]… this way of greeting makes the customer feel as if he is the lion among the cats… I make him happy, and I also seize any initiative which might make him angry… customers like to feel that… it is a win-win… no headache for me and also he dines happy and leaves me with a high tip"
>
> (Rami, 30, Lebanese)

Both coping tactics, personalisation of service and naming the customer, emphasise the power of service relationships in a restaurant setting. This allows the employee to use the perceived power of information derived from frequent customers during service relationships to prevent expected

[7] Mnawerna layli… ahla w sahla means you are shining on us tonight, you are very welcome

incivility. In other words, developing relationships with frequent abusive customers, gives employees the power to personalise their service to this specific customer, in which they presumably know what makes him/her angry or what irritates their mood. This is only a feeling that employees perceive because if the customer was not in the mood to 'be nice' to the employee, then the power of the employee's personalisation of service or naming gives the employee no advantage in preventing or coping with incivility. This contrast emphasises the complex relationship between employees and customers, which indicates that no matter what kind of power that the employee holds against customers (*e.g.* information about customer's likes/dislikes or attitudes), the employee is always situated in a subordinate position relative to the customers, whose power lies in the core elements of the mantra "the customer is always right".

6.1.3 Consuming drugs

Consuming soft and/or hard drugs is illegal in the UK. However, at Be-Beirut service employees seem to engage in any coping method, which helps them to mentally disengage from work stress (Carver et al., 1989; Korczynski, 2002; Skinner et al., 2003), including consuming illegal soft drugs such as smoking marijuana. This kind of coping strategy is similar to the escape-avoidance strategy previously explored by Skinner et al., (2003), Korczynski (2002), and Reynolds and Harris (2006). The escape-avoidance strategy is characterised as protecting oneself from psychological harm by making an effort to disengage from the problem (Skinner et al., 2003, Yagil, 2008).

According to the social bonding theory, people also engage in a collective positive deviant behaviour to strengthen their social cohesion, which is predicted to make them feel powerful relative to customers (Hollinger, 1986; Lugosi, 2019). The findings of my research show that employees of Be-Beirut are frequently engaging in this tactic (smoking marijuana), and they anticipate it helps them deal with uncivil customers. Put another way, they smoke to endure the load of the workday (Reynolds and Harris, 2006). Collecting such sensitive data was not easy at all, because smoking marijuana is considered by the management as unacceptable, especially if it was consumed during shift time. However, I was able to collect this kind of data from Sarah due to the trust relationship I formed with her, first when I was one of her frequent customers and later when I became her colleague. Of course, I need to mention that it is not necessary that Sarah trusted me by the time I was her customer, because the data shows that employees have ambivalent feelings towards frequent customers, and they perceive many of customers' acts as uncivil, although this is not the reality per se. However, when Sarah got the chance to interact with me as an employee/researcher the prejudice if any, would have vanished. Therefore, I was able to get an explanation from Sarah, who is part of the marijuana group, when I asked her what the nature of employees' gatherings pre-working shift in the small bush near the restaurant (personal observation) is. She said:

> "All the employees gather themselves near the restaurant and smoke a Marijuana joint before coming to work… Nothing is impossible… They have all the right to do whatever makes them happy… Working at a restaurant pushes you to things you never have imagined of doing… can't you see how calm WE are doing OUR jobs… WE don't care for anything because they are mentally relaxed… it's not only about smoking marijuana, it's about the gathering itself which gives US some space to discuss our work, the hardships we face and we also try to seek ways to deal with them… Honestly, these gatherings work as an adrenaline shot to everyone, where we come to work READYYYY for customers and the workload"

Smoking marijuana is a form of an ***'active solidarity'*** coping tactic, which is an "interrogation of power imbalances and the creation of opportunities for cooperation across difference through norms of deliberation" (Einwohner et al., 2016:3). In other words, active solidarity is an active engagement from the employees of Be-Beirut who believe in the significance of a routine engagement in a collective discourse, which might help them discuss issues of work-related stress sourcing from frequent customers. As such, employees are creating a dichotomy of a WE versus THEM phenomenon, in which they support each other to leverage their power to be able to deal with incivility in a more relaxed and strategic manner. Although smoking marijuana in a collective manner ought to be successful as Sarah claims, this solidarity is very minimal and is difficult to sustain particularly in contexts of lack of trust, or in cases of breaching the trust circle through gossip or accusations. For instance, if you go back to the quote above, Sarah admitted that her friends are smoking marijuana, but she is not. Throughout the conversation with her, I noticed that she accidently referred to herself as one of the members who is also smoking marijuana with her peers.

> “… can’t you see how calm WE are doing OUR jobs… WE don’t care for anything because they are mentally relaxed”—Sarah

Sarah knows that smoking marijuana before work is considered illegal; despite that she has broken the trust with her peers by admitting to me that they do so. Of course, I am not in a position to report to the management; however, my point is that Sarah or others could trust anyone else and admit about their marijuana consumption and thus, all of the members who are engaged in the circle of active solidarity would be put at risk of being fired—it is the rule of the management and instructed to employees upon their recruitment (personal observation). In addition to that, marijuana is a drug, this means its effects on one person might be different on another person, sometimes it gives a relaxing effect, a paranoia effect or it might make its users very slow and detached. If any of the former negative effects happen to an employee, this might result in slowing their task performance or their mental abilities to listen and promptly respond to customers. Consequently, this might put employees at risk of deliberate incivility from customers (discussed in chapter 5). Although consuming marijuana is risky and might have adverse impact on its users, none of the employees at Be-Beirut are being negatively impacted by it. This shows that marijuana is an adaptive coping tactic which preserves the status quo.

In addition to consuming soft drugs, I asked Sarah if they use any other kinds of recreational drugs, but due to the sensitivity of the question her answer was a sudden “NO”. Later, I asked Said if he or any of his colleagues use hard drugs, he said:

> “Can’t you see that he [Shadi-the middle manager] asks the owner to work a full shift means from the moment the restaurant opens at 8-9 am till 2-3 am in the morning. Who could handle all this stress for that long? Only the cocaine user. He [Shadi] goes outside to the parking and does what he should be doing. This guy is unbearable he is always angry and edgy with us [employees] and customers”.

In chapter four, the data derived from my observations and from interviews describes the unstable relationship between middle managers (especially the manager Shadi) and the rest of the employees. Employees noted that Shadi is always angry, shouting and treating them in a very authoritarian style. Moreover, I also highlighted the tough job of middle managers, which might be a reason for being perceived as authoritarian by employees. However, consuming hard illegal drugs, such as cocaine, could be one of the reasons behind his aggressive personality, which is used on employees since using cocaine has a direct impact on the mental health of its users (Newcomb and Bentler, 1988). Of course, all these stories about Shadi's consumption of cocaine and its relation to his aggressive personality are plausible rumors. A plausible rumor is "tied to some known facts yet is incapable of total verification… it may exaggerate, but it stops short of the incredible. It frequently appears as an inside story" (Henry, 1988:331). Thus, there is no actual construct that could confirm that Shadi is using cocaine, or if cocaine is the reason behind his bad attitude. This emphasises the power imbalance between employees and their supervisors, where the latter is in a higher power position relative to frontliners. When this is the case, employees might use rumors against their supervisors to feel good or to justify their managers' abusive actions.

In addition to that, if it is true that Shadi is a cocaine user, then we could understand that there might be other situational and contextual factors which makes cocaine usage a dysfunctional coping tactic because it leads to instigating incivility. I have discussed in chapter 4 that Shadi is one of the Lebanese managers whose family is a friend of the owner's and hence, he was recruited at Be-Beirut. When I started my first day as a hostess at Be-Beirut, I had the chance to sit with Shadi and to ask him few questions about his family, work and his current position as a manager. Shadi seemed to me confused and stressed, he said:

> "I come from a middle-class family from Lebanon… my family knows Ziad's (the owner) …I love it there, but the economic situation in Lebanon is not stable and everyone is searching for a job outside… I was lucky I know Ziad and that I was able to get a working visa in the UK… honestly, I hate what I do, and I hate that I am working in the restaurant industry… it is just a very chaotic environment, very stressful and makes me powerless as if I'm a servant for people… why should I be working as a servant for this and that and most of them they value S***… But hey, I can't do anything about it… I need the job as I am also responsible for my parents… I spend all my time here at Be-Beirut… more work more money"

Later during my participant-observation, I witnessed Shadi on many occasions using impolite words and demeaning tonality while talking to his employees. I have made a link between his cocaine usage and his actions. Shadi unwillingly left Lebanon and his family due to the bad economic situation back home. He is working as a restaurant manager because this is the only way he could be on a working permit in the UK. Besides, he works long hours to earn more money to cover his bills and simultaneously help his family back home. Therefore, Shadi had to do anything which could allow him to work more and earn more money, but the only way he found useful is by using cocaine in order to be energetic for longer hours at the restaurant. For Shadi cocaine is a functional tool that makes him feel powerful and able to control his subordinates. Although his feelings of power are exercised in a demeaning and aggressive way as perceived by his employees, it might be making him get over his feelings of hatred for his job and the situation he is embedded in. This is a form of an "**active rebellion**" coping tactic, which signifies unconformity and unacceptance with the current socioeconomic position a person is occupying (Kohn and Mercer, 1971).

Although Shadi has been accused by employees for using cocaine and also the owner is aware of that-as Said claims, the management is turning a blind eye since Shadi is a hard worker and very productive. This shows how the management is taking advantage of Shadi by allowing him to hurt himself while abusing harmful substance and yet, all what the management cares about is the customers and profitability and hence, maintaining the status quo.

6.1.4 Seeking emotional support from equal-status coworkers

Seeking emotional support from equal-status coworkers is when the frontline employee seeks emotional support from the waiters and waitresses—in the case of this study. The respondents of my study claim to seek comfort by venting emotions to coworkers and by discussing their experiences with difficult customers (Goussinsky, 2012b; Korczynski, 2016; Skinner et al., 2003; Yagil, 2008). Such social support happens very often between frontliners during shift time (personal observation).

> “Nolla honestly you have to thank God that you are not serving customers… it’s such a hard job… Look at this woman who is wearing a green jacket on table 9… Everytime she comes, she gives me a hard time, she never stops on asking for stuff… Ahhh… what can I do… sorry for stressing you out most of the times, but I feel better to talk… I just want to remove the burden of this pressure off my heart… thank you for always listening to me”
>
> (Informal conversation with Linda)

> “Meeting with colleagues before I start working is like practicing meditation for me. I clear my mind as I tell them (colleagues) everything without being afraid of who is listening or who is watching. It really helps me a lot… stories about our frequent customers never ends… They (customers) think as if you are their lifetime servant… this is awful”
>
> (Sarah, 23, Moroccan)

> “Every day we meet before our shift starts to discuss events that has occurred with us the day before. Many of us start swearing and bragging about customers’ awfulness… this helps me to calm down, especially when I know that someone is actually listening to what I’m suffering from”
>
> (Hussein, 19, Iraqi)

It is evident from the quotes above that frontliners are having a hard time dealing with frequent customers. I have to reiterate that these frequent customers, which employees are discussing above might not be acting uncivil with employees. These customers are people who come to Be-Beirut to be pleased and served, but employees assume they are uncivil maybe due to falling in compassion fatigue (discussed earlier in chapter 5). Below I elaborate on this point since I was a frequent customer myself, and then I became an employee at Be-Beirut.

Being a frequent customer myself and later an employee at Be-Beirut, I was able to understand how and why employees have ambivalent feelings towards their customers. For example, I used to be a frequent customer at Be-Beirut, the owner is my friend, and I know all the employees. Once I arrive, they all greet me, and they seek to find me a table instantly. I almost believed the idea that I own the place, where I rarely called to reserve a table because I expect to show up at the restaurant and employees will give me a table anyway. While being served, I used to talk to employees as if

I am the boss, and I expect employees to stay available near my table and to respond to my multiple requests. At that time, I was an ignorant customer who did not realise the damage that I was causing to many employees of whom I sincerely loved and respected, until I was recruited at Be-Beirut. When I got recruited as a hostess at Be-Beirut, I realised how demeaning and stressful it is to treat employees the same way I, as a frequent customer, was treating them. I experienced many incidents from frequent customers who unintentionally demean or use our friendship for their own benefit (*e.g.* come in without a reservation and shame me if I told them the restaurant is fully booked). I became more interested in knowing other employees' thoughts about such incidents, and that encouraged me to fully immerse myself in hearing stories about employees' experiences with frequent customers. Later, I understood that service employees fall in compassion fatigue that makes them regard most of customers' acts as uncivil.

Previous research claims that venting emotions to coworkers as a coping strategy has the propensity to lower employees' service quality as they will not be performing their duties as expected (Bailey and McCollough, 2000). However, the results of my research claim that seeking emotional support from equal-status coworkers is a very efficient and successful strategy in managing employees' stress. Through seeking emotional support, employees have the chance to discuss their stories about difficult customers without fearing that any of the managers or the customers are hearing. Many employees at Be-Beirut claim they feel more alive, less-stressed and also not alone, since they have someone who cares for them and their feelings.

Venting out emotions and talking about past experiences with uncivil customers is a habitual tactic among employees of Be-Beirut. Employees of Be-Beirut perceive themselves empowered and motivated when they discuss their negative emotions with their colleagues. The implications of seeking emotional assistance on power is useful for predicting when the help seeking behaviours will occur. This means that in the context of Be-Beirut when employees perceive themselves as largely powerless, gaining power might be one of their critical emphasis in order to deal with abusive interactions with frequent customers. Seeking emotional support has no intention in changing ones' power in such a salient relationship; however, it aims at gaining some power to deal with incivility and that is by managing stress and calming ones' temper. This implies that, engaging in this type of coping preserves the status quo which works in favour of the customer, and respects their sovereignty.

This finding is consistent with the concept of emotional labour where Hochschild (1983) talks about the ways flight attendants use to express their emotions about customers. Such kind of coping is regarded as intrapsychic tactic, which is maladaptive in nature since it distracts employees from achieving their goals, while they assess their situation and focus on the negative feelings (Brown et al., 2005). However, in this study this kind of coping usually happens on lunch breaks or before employees start their shift; thus, they are not distracted at work, and they are well focused on achieving their goals and enhancing their task performance.

6.1.5 Seeking supervisory assistance

The data of my study shows that employees of Be-Beirut engage in this form of coping resort when they perceive themselves helpless, and that their usual tactics are no longer working in favour of solving an issue with the abusive customer. In severe cases of incivility when the employee fails to deal with incivility, he/she would best ask for managerial support. Employees are advised, but not formally instructed, on many occasions to ask for managerial assistance in case they are not able to deal with tough situations with customers.

> "I once had a very tough encounter with a frequent customer who arrived suddenly to the restaurant without a reservation. It was Thursday night, which is one of the busiest nights at Be-Beirut". It is very rare to expect customers to arrive without a reservation on this day because there is a singer and places are limited. The customer with his family insisted that he wants to be seated on his usual table in the VIP lounge.

"I said:

> Sir it is fully booked".

He said:

> "I don't care if it fully booked or empty, it is my table, and everyone expects that I come to dine on a Thursday night with my family".

> "This customer ignored me and dragged his wife to the table he desires and refused to be seated elsewhere. He caused me a problem because this particular table was already booked by another frequent customer who arrived just 5 minutes after all what happened. I was put in a very critical position which I couldn't solve myself, then I had to call the manager. Who was able to solve it by convincing the customer who reserved that he has a better table for him than the one he asked for and he offered him a free shisha"?
>
> (Personal observation)

From the quotes above, this coping tactic is usually utilised by employees who are almost ready to lose their temper and might become aggressive with customers. However, they manage to ask for assistance to preserve the status quo. The quotes below illustrate that:

> "This customer was so rude and shouting at me although I was trying to respond to his demands. He was saying I want this table and I will not leave until you seat me there. I am a frequent customer, and this is not a way to deal with your loyal customers. I tried to seat him on different tables, and I tried to convince him that his table will be ready in 15-20 minutes after the customers occupying it leave, but he insisted on asking me to ask the customers occupying the table to leave and that I seat him on that table. Oh my God! How could this be possible? The situation went out of my control, and I had to call the manager to sort it out. The manager had to remove the customers from the desired table to seat this frequent customer. Imagine how rude they could become"
>
> (Sarah, 23, Moroccan)

> "Frequent customers are the most demanding and these are the ones that we cannot be firm with them, especially if they are friends with the owner. If they ask for something, we have to do what they ask us for because at the end it is us who will suffer from the blame of managers. Therefore, if any situation with a frequent customer exceeds my limit of bearing their incivility, I just call my supervisor on the walky-talky to come and solve the problem for me".
>
> (Altan, 38, Turkish)

Although seeking supervisory assistance is deemed for most employees a successful coping tactic, it does not come without a price. When frontliners seek support from a higher-status employee, they might entail social costs in an organisation. The managers might indicate them as subordinate actors who are in need of help from powerful people who "control resources that can be used to reward or punish other members of the group… have the capacity to influence other people" (Case et al., 2015:378; Lee, 1997). Additionally, when lower-status employees (frontliners) ask for help from a higher-status employee (supervisors), they will automatically be allocated by the management as powerless individuals and therefore, this will acknowledge their incompetence and dependency on others (Lee, 1997).

Furthermore, seeking assistance from a higher-status employee will provide him/her with more power to practice over the help seeker (the employee), and it also gives an incompetent impression about the help seeker that he/she is not able to deal with the shortcomings of his/her job. This idea is attached to the theory of impression management of (Goffman, 2004), where employees can be weak performers on stage. Consequently, the frontliner creates a negative impression of him/herself to managers and customers and this impacts supervisors' and customers' impressions of the employees' abilities to perform their assigned jobs (Lee, 1997; Case et al., 2015). In many cases, employees feel helpless and powerless when they are put in a situation to seek supervisory help and this might have negative consequences on their task performance and overall satisfaction of their job. Such information clearly indicates the existence of a highly corrupt management whose only concern is satisfying its customers at the expense of its employees. Thus, the management in this case is evidently the major reason behind employees' distress and potential burnout. The quote below builds on that:

> "You know something, I hate to ask for help from my supervisors. It feels like you are not able to perform well at the job… from one side the customer is painful, and we have no right to be disrespectful with him/her and from the other side our managers make us feel like S*** if we ask for their help… I hate that so much"
>
> (Informal conversation with Sarah)

During my participant-observation, female employees were more engaged in seeking help compared their male counterparts. Females seek help not only from their managers, but also from male frontliners—their coworkers. This finding builds on many existing literatures, which claim that female employees seek to build relationships with employees, rather than decreasing interpersonal distances created by power (Lee, 1997). This is evident from the data collected for my study since female employees are not really concerned with looking or acting powerful, rather they emphasise on their femininity which is less powerful in nature compared to males. When female employees are less likely to seek and use power in an organisation, they emphasise the presence of a patriarchal society in the culture of Be-Beirut, which accentuates women for being weaker and more dependent on males.

6.1.6 Emotions in power

The theory of emotional labour developed by Hochschild (1983) discusses the social construction of emotion, in which the person chooses what, when and to whom they can reveal inner felt emotions. The theory also theorises that engaging in emotional labour forces an employee to split between his/her inner feelings and public feelings (Hochschild, 1983; Newton and Fineman, 1995). I have previously discussed in chapter two the three kinds of display rules that are surface, deep and genuine acting that employees engage in depending on their appraisal of stress during a service interaction with customers. The findings of my study show that employees of Be-Beirut engage in surface acting and deep acting to cope with incivility initiated by frequent customers.

Surface acting is the act where employees modify their facial expressions to portray an affective expression to customers (Grandey, 2003). It is widely accepted that employees engage in surface acting as part of their job requirement in exchange for a wage (Hochschild, 1984). Researchers in the fields of psychology and organisational behaviour seldom associate surface acting with burnout and emotional exhaustion (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002; Grandey, 2003). During my participant observation, smiling for a customer was a major requirement by the management for an employee's job. The restaurant's management of Be-Beirut has always brought this subject up during briefings that "you have to always smile for the customer, if you were sad or happy it doesn't matter, you have to smile, especially when you first meet the customer"—As the owner Ziad stated once. Many of the employees whom I have observed were smiling back at customers, but it shows that it is a fake smile, and they are doing it just because they were asked to do so. However, when I conducted interviews surface acting came up in the results as a coping behaviour to deal with tough customers. As Sophia said:

> "Sometimes when I have to deal with a difficult customer who is complaining just for the sake of it, I smile at him. Whatever he says I keep on smiling. I say no word, no reaction at all, I just smile. It is of course a smile which is fake, but I do it hoping that the customer will realise that he has exceeded his limit and that he/she has to stop".

This kind of tactic signifies that service employees are distancing themselves from the deviant behaviour of customers by faking their smiles (Reynolds and Harris, 2006). Many employees have mentioned they feel tired from being hypocrites in the way they express their emotions to customers. As Said said:

> "I smile what shall I do… I am fake and some know that I am lying, but I keep on doing it… but trust me it is really tiring… sometimes when I feel really stressed and when I find myself in a situation where I cannot do anything, I wait once a customer I know comes in to sit and vent out my emotions to him. I know it is wrong, but I feel the urge to spit the words out to someone other than employees… this is risky though because if my manager knows that might put lead to kicking me out of my job"

Although employees of Be-Beirut are engaging in surface acting and preserving the status quo, this adaptive response to incivility works in favour of the restaurant's management and not the employees. From the quotes above, it is evident that employees feel estranged when they fake their smiles, and this might cause future consequences on their psychology and well-being, such as causing them emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion results in widening the power imbalances between employees and uncivil customer and thus, might lead employees to challenge the status quo. For example, employees might be encouraged to express their inner thoughts and negative emotions about uncivil customers with other customers, to whom the employees feel they are his/her "friend". These findings complement the research which acknowledges the link between emotional labour and the negative consequences on the employees' mental and psychological stability (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002; Kinman et al., 2011; Reynolds and Harris, 2006).

In addition to surface acting, one of the very common coping tactics among employees is deep acting, where they mentally prepare their psychological and mental abilities for work. Previous research refers to deep acting as the process by which employees alter their inner feelings to match required display of emotions while serving customers (Grandey, 2003). Rafaeli and Sutton, (1987:32) refer to deep acting as the process of "faking in good faith". Researchers have always referred to deep acting as a requirement imposed by the management on employees in which employees are actors, and they are expected to show emotions consistent with managerial and customers' expectations of service provided (Hochschild, 1983; Grandey, 2003, Goffman, 1959); thus, employees are expected to feel and look happy during a service interaction.

The findings of my research suggest that employees use deep acting as a coping mechanism to deal with their work stress before they start their shift. In that vein, employees try to alter their inner emotions by convincing themselves that what they feel at work is temporal, and they are working just for the sake of making a living. This gives them the power to accept many difficulties that they face during their work as they consider it part of the job, which is not long-lasting, it is only bound by the working hours during the day. Some employees explained:

> "Every day before I come to work, I take a shower and then stand in front of the mirror and literally talk to myself. I start telling myself to be calm, that I am strong, I am confident, and nothing is going to get on my nerves today… I am aware that customers could be painful and sometimes hurtful, but at the end they are right, and we are always wrong. Preparing myself helps me a lot and gives me some motivation to go to work despite all the bad things we face during our shifts"
>
> (Sarah, 23, Moroccan)

> "I usually go to gym before I come to work. I play kickboxing which allows all my stress to be pulled out from my body and put on a punching bag. Trust me it helps me a lot, because otherwise I will be aggressive on customers especially those who are difficult"
>
> (Rami, 30, Lebanese)

> "On my way to work I always wear my earphones and start listening to very calming music to relax my body and mind. I start saying to myself that I am great, I am happy, I am confident and that no one is able to break me"
>
> (Sarah, 23, Moroccan)

> "Convincing myself that everything is short-term is one of my talents. Before I come to work, I start telling myself that everything that I will be experiencing when I get to work is something temporal which should never have an impact on my psychology-I usually succeed in that as I arrive to work with a positive attitude"
>
> (Daniel, 19, Lebanese)

The finding I have discussed above about deep acting could be linked to the plethora of studies on emotional labour by Hochschild (1983), and it is also related to the conceptualisation of 'service as theatre' where employees are portrayed as 'actors' who should 'perform' during a transaction (Goffman, 1959; Goffman, 1990; Grove et al., 2000; Reynolds and Harris, 2006). This kind of coping is suggested to help employees focus on the goal they want to achieve, which is servicing with high performance simultaneously having the ultimate control over any negative feeling they might feel. The findings of this study support the findings of Wang et al., (2016) and Kim et al., (2014) who study the effects of salesperson deep acting on adaptive selling behaviour and individual performance. Their results show that employees with high emotional labour engage in deep acting; thus, increasing sales performance and strengthening customer orientation.

The findings of my research claim that deep acting is a positive coping strategy which helps employees to improve their responses to incivility previously initiated by frequent customers (Grandey, 2003). Additionally, deep acting helps employees gain power to convince the audience with their positive felt emotions through working on inner feelings to appear authentic to customers. Thus, deep acting is a very efficient way to preserve the status-quo between employees and their customers, which stresses on the notion of customer sovereignty.

In addition to that, the findings of my study also show that the emotional responses of the employees at Be-Beirut, surface acting and deep acting, are linked to how the relation between employees and frequent customers is reproduced and maintained. In other words, when service employees engage in service relationships with frequent customers, they might perceive a feeling of power and control over the situation with the customer; however, if incivility occurs employees might suddenly feel a loss in control and a threat to their power. Therefore, I argue that employees do engage in surface acting when they appraise incivility as very high from customers during a service interaction, while they engage in deep acting before they start their work since they are acknowledged about the customers attitudes and the nature of incivility they might encounter during their shift. In either case, employees' engagement in emotional responses to incivility emphasises the power imbalances between those involved. However, engaging in emotional responses preserves the status quo and thus, stresses on the elements customer sovereignty. Additionally, it speaks volumes about the corrupt management which is forcing its employees to engage in emotional responses that keep them estranged from their genuine feelings, which are mostly exhausting to oneself.

6.1.7 Bribes

The data collected for this study shows that one of the very common coping tactics practiced by employees is to bribe customers with goods and services at the expense of the restaurant. By bribing customers, employees hope they will no longer experience any future forms of incivility from particular abusive customers. Bribing occurs by offering customers free drinks or food, or gratuitously seating them in the VIP section, which normally requires customers to pay an extra charge. The quotes below explain that:

> "Sometimes you have these fussy customers who start complaining on everything, the food, the service and sometimes they complain about their actual existence in this life (laughs) so basically they are pain in the a***. To shut their mouths down I usually offer free tea/coffee or a famous Lebanese dessert KNEFE which is really tasty, and customers do love it… They drink or eat, and they feel gain as they have made the restaurant pay something, but actually the restaurant management doesn't know because they'd think that I have failed in my service then I have to pay the price of the drink or dessert from my own salary."
>
> (Sophia, 23, Moroccan)

> "Sometimes I face a major problem where a customer reserves a table and when he/she arrives the table is still occupied by some other customers who have been sitting there for so long. In order to avoid the customer to treat me uncivilly I suggest he/she sits in the VIP section while his table is being prepared and ready. In this way, I made him feel valuable and I also avoided that he starts arguing or shouting at me. I honestly don't have the energy for this anymore. I just need things to be solved quietly and smoothly without any fuss… Once someone paid me £20…Jackpot"
>
> (Sami, 23, Lebanese)

The acts of bribery mentioned above are clearly unethical as employees are engaging in acts of theft to make the customer happy, at the expense of the restaurant. In addition, during my observation, I have witnessed many incidents whereby employees tend to delete items from a customer's bill as a gratitude for paying higher tips to a specific employee. When I asked this specific employee during an informal conversation, why did he do that? He said:

> "This customer he never opens a table less that a £100 and he gives me high tips … it is ok to be generous with a cake or tea"
>
> (Ammar, 31, Egyptian)

Most of the employees I interviewed or had a conversation with at Be-Beirut express a tone of success and feelings of victory when they solve an issue with a customer by bribing them. They perceive a feeling of power and control over the situation, which is successful by unlawfully increasing their tips in an exchange for a bribe at the expense of the restaurant. However, what employees are not aware of is that customers are the powerful actors during this service exchange. They are already in a superior position to employees and above all those customers are also receiving extra care with no extra cost (*e.g* VIP table for free, free food or drinks). For example, to be seated in the VIP section, the customer is obliged to spend a minimum of a £100, but when the employee seats him/her for free in exchange for a £20 tip, the restaurant is technically in deficit of £80. Hence, in all cases the customer is the winner from this transaction.

This shows the nature of employees who are willing to go the extra mile to satisfy a customer as they are so immersed in the notion of customer sovereignty (Gay and Salaman, 1992; Reynolds and Harris, 2006) and hence, preserving the status quo. Although this kind of coping is functional in increasing service performance and helps the employee solve the problem, it puts the employee in a vulnerable position in front of the organisation he/she is working for; thus, increasing their stress. Consequently, he/she is betraying the trust with the organisation when he/she solves an individual problem at the expense of the organisation, which might cause them losing their work.

Although employees are conceived unethical since they are engaging in bribery acts to satisfy the customer, the major reason behind such acts is the management. The management is the reason behind introducing employees to the bribery actions, since many times it instructs its employees to offer customers free food/drinks/VIP tables to satisfy them (personal observation/informal conversations). Simultaneously, employees are keener to hide customers' incivility and/or dissatisfaction from the management, so they will not be labeled as incompetent. Thus, employees might start engaging in covert bribery acts to satisfy the customer, without the management knowing.

6.1.8 Apology

By definition, apologies are "an effective strategy used by transgressors to restore relationships with an injured party" (Gopinath, 2011:8). Other researchers look at an apology as a tool for service recovery to satisfy and retain employees (Yavas et al., 2004). However, in this research an apology is practiced by employees to seize further customer incivility, not only during a service failure, but also during incidents when customers are unsatisfied about what they are being offered (*e.g.* a customer wanted to be seated in the VIP section which is fully booked).

Apologising to a customer carries an emotional response to solve a certain incivility encounter with customers. This strategy can be successful if the employee uses the right verbal and non-verbal components of a message (Gopinath, 2011), such as "I am deeply sorry for not meeting your expectation, but I promise that I will make it up for you"-as Sarah claims. It makes customers feel that employees are accepting the responsibility for not meeting customers' expectations, and it also helps them show care for the customer. This shows the level of emotional intelligence that an employee acquires (Stock, 1996). The genuine apology coping behaviour is utilised by employees when they believe that the customer (frequent or not frequent) misbehaves because he/she has a reason to due to a service failure. The example from Sarah below illustrates this point:

> "Sometimes the problem is not the customer, it is actually the kitchen. Many times, it happens when a customer asks for certain plate such as "shish tawook[8]" with fries and salad on the side. The chef decided to put rice instead. What happens is that the hungry customer gets angry with me since I am the one who is serving him, and he doesn't know that the chef is stupid, and he didn't read the order correctly. In that case, I start apologising from the heart to this customer and sometimes I remove the service charge from the bill since he is right and we [the restaurant employees] are wrong… Despite everything we do with the customer, and we try to remedy the failure, he/she leaves upset and many times they review us badly on social media"

In the case above, employees do believe that the customer is right, but they are the ones who receive the hostility. After such incidents, frontliners often transmit their negative felt emotions to their colleagues, in this case to the chef, who is the one responsible for delivering food. Such situations might create an atmosphere of hostility among co-workers (Andersson and Pearson, 1999). I observed many incidents where the food runners start arguing and screaming at the chef for being late or wrong with an order. This is problematic because the chef then gets angry and this might lead to more service failures, and so the mistakes will continue to happen. It is somehow similar to a snowball effect, where a mistake from one person could affect others, and so on. Therefore, apologising to the customer is not a powerful coping tactic, rather it is a form of coping which extra shrinks the power of the employee relative to customers. This will result in recognising the employees' unprofessionalism, and it will also have an impact on the restaurant's reputation. However, despite its weakness, this coping tactic does not challenge the status quo since the employee is doing his/her best to give the employee what he/she wants.

In addition to genuinely apologizing to a customer, sometimes employees use a kind of coping which I called "***surface apology***" coping behaviour. Employees use this kind of coping mostly when they face an incident with a frequent customer. The employee apologises to the frequent

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[8] Shish Tawook is chicken skewers cooked with Lebanese spices

customer to make him feel appreciated and valuable to the firm. In this tactic the employee attempts to relax the customer and make him delusional to expect that his needs will be met in a timely manner. The quote below explains this point:

> "The customer who makes me angry is the one who books a table at 8 pm and arrives to the restaurant at 9 pm [incivility type: rule-breaking reservation norms] and he starts arguing that he needs the table that he reserved… he starts saying are bad employees and the service is shit. Well honey, you came late it is not my problem. Such customers drive me crazy… Since they are frequent customers, I have to apologise and try to fix the situation no matter what. My apology is not from the heart indeed, I just say it because I am obliged to say it, so that they won't raise their voice and start shouting or talking to me in a disrespectful way which is demeaning to myself, other employees, and the customers. I apologise by saying I am sorry and we [the restaurant management and employees] are sorry to disturb you I will make sure to fix that for you and I will find you a table ASAP. It is like a small apology on behalf of the restaurant".
>
> (Sami, 23, Lebanese)

This type of coping is similar to 'surface acting' in the emotional labour research (Hochschild, 1983), but in this example the employee is not only faking his emotions to meet the customers' expectations, but also, he/she is using specific apologetic words. The employee uses this strategy as a technique to alter customers' feelings to become calmer and more understanding of the situation, rather than becoming angry and uncivil. This finding builds on the reasoning of the "control and attribution model of service production and evaluation" proposed by (Van Raaij and Pruyn, 1998).

According to this model, both the employee and the customer should cooperate in order to create a pleasant dining experience. During this negotiation, the employee listens carefully to the customer's needs, uses this information, and promises him/her to be offered what they desire. Hence, the customer is given the sense of delusional control over the employees. This could emphasise on the power imbalance between customers and employees, which puts employees in a weaker position, where they become obliged to respond to customers' needs in a timely manner. However, it assists employees to preserve the status-quo since apologising permits the employee to respond to customers' needs in an organisationally and socially accepted form.

6.1.9 Humor

This section discusses employees' use of humor as a coping strategy to deal with incivility during a service interaction. Previous studies in the organisational behaviour literature, largely focus on humor and on determining its function in the workplace. Bradney (1957) suggests that humor is used as a tool to seize boredom in bureaucratic systems. Collinson (1988) conducted a study on working class masculine culture in an engineering shop floor and suggests that humor is used to reinforce gender hierarchies as a tool to conform to a particular version of the working-class masculinity, where masculinity is projected by jokes, swearing and the man being a provider (Collinson, 2014; Westwood and Johnston, 2013). Both studies of Brandey (1957) and Collinson (1988) emphasise on the significance of the organisational context where humor is being used to enabling scholars to interpret the type and function of humor in an organisation, specifically when the masculine culture is dominating.

The multifaceted nature of humor has made it a very complex phenomenon for researchers to study and understand its function. Humor has a dual function which depends on the context and culture where it is being used (Westwood and Johnston, 2013). Humor can be both resistive and akin to satire, or it might contribute to conformity and reinforcing (Collinson, 1988; Simon, 2002). The former function of humor allows employees to resist managerial authority and thus, challenge the status quo (Collinson, 1988; Westwood and Johnston, 2013). As for the later function, employees use humor to reinforce consensus (Simon, 2002).

In reference to my study, the data shows that humor is one of the most frequently used coping strategy, especially popular among male employees of Be-Beirut. Going back to chapter four, I describe the culture of Be-Beirut being family-oriented, chilled and based on spreading laughter and joy among customers. This is clear from the décor of the restaurant, the music, the food and also from the employees who are recruited based on their aesthetics and based on their good sense of humor (as the owner claims). From this data, it is clear that service employees are free to use humor while interacting with customers, but it is not a formal requirement by the organisation.

During my personal observation, I noticed that most male employees utilise humor as a coping strategy to deal with customer incivility. Waiters at 'Be-Beirut' use humor for many reasons that could be adaptive or maladaptive depending on the situation. In its adaptive sense, some employees use it as a tactic to enhance the customer's mood, and to shift their attention from service failure or any kind of dissatisfaction during their experience at the restaurant. Others use humor as a maladaptive coping mechanism to distance themselves from the stressful situation, which helps controlling the emotional and cognitive aspects of their personality (Dwyer and Ganster, 1991). During informal conversations, I asked Rami and Said what is the secret behind their humor and joking attitude, they said:

> "I joke with customers for many reasons, the 1st is to make the customer feel that he fits in in our family [the restaurant atmosphere]. 2nd in case he got angry with me regarding the service, food or he wasn't satisfied about the table he was sitting on, I feel joking with him is the best way to diffuse the negative energy and replace it with some positivity. I believe that humor is one of the very important strategies which allows the employee to get close to the customer and make him [the customer] to feel ashamed of his/her aggressive or uncivil reaction with us. 3rd, personally I use humor in order to distance myself from the stressful situation. I feel as if I have been split into two characters in which one who is listening to the difficult customer and solving his problem, and another character who is trying to protect itself from stress so that I will not get angry. It is very difficult I know, but this is the nature of our work what can I do about it?"
>
> (Rami, 30, Lebanese)

> "I laugh Nolla I laugh… I laugh to distract them… I laugh to make them smile and to gentle… I know a lot of customers who like to listen to jokes, I mostly tell them sexual jokes… I literally write jokes on my notebook, so that I won't forget them… Most of the times it works"
>
> (Said, 38, Lebanese)

From the quotes above, it is evident that employees use humor as a preventive mechanism. These waiters think that humor helps them to 'do power' and to exercise their masculine control over customers in a patriarchal environment (Holmes, 2000). In other words, by being good with the customer, employees think that the customer is placed in a weaker power position relative to them and thus, employees perceive to have the potential not to allow the customer to react to a bad service or to express his/her feelings of dissatisfaction. The findings here are consistent with various studies which claim that humor is largely used by individuals as an emotion regulation tactic to deal with difficulties (Holmes, 2000; Kuiper and Martin, 1993; Rim, 1988; Samson and Gross, 2012).

Although the power of humor used by Said and Rami helps them in performing their tasks by maintaining a positive solidarity with the "commercial friend", and it also helps them to influence customers' actions by reducing emphasis on power imbalances, the use of humor has a camouflaged intention. Some customers might misinterpret the reasons behind employees' humor in many ways. Some customers might think of the employee as being silly or satirical, and they might consider that humor is a way in which the employee is making fun of them. Besides, customers might perceive humor as contensive, which means it is a way in which the employee is signaling disagreement with the customer (Holmes, 2000). The quote below elaborates on these points:

> "Once I was serving a table of frequent customer and the restaurant was busy as F***. He ordered shish tawook and took me a very long time like more than 20 minutes to bring him the plate… when I arrived at his table, and I was putting his plate on his table he furiously looked to my eyes and said I DON'T WANT THIS ANYMORE BRING ME ONLY HUM MUS [9]. I was really surprised by his reaction, and I knew that he is angry because of the wait. I wanted to change his mood… I told him what I can do, the chef was slaughtering the chicken fresh just for you and laughed to make him laugh… Later I wished that I haven't said this lame joke because he got angrier and accused me of making fun of him… later he left and backfired with a bad review on Facebook… Geez man I was just making him laugh I swear"
>
> (Informal conversation with Said)

In addition to the aforementioned potential misinterpretations of employees' humor by customers, sometimes humor might be understood as a form of sexual harassment. I have mentioned earlier that humor is mostly used by waiters at Be-Beirut. This speaks volumes about the patriarchal

[9] Hummus is a traditional Lebanese plate made of chickpeas and sesame oil

environment of Be-Beirut, which reinforces gender hierarchies by performing masculinity. By performing masculinity, waiters are vulnerable to fall into the trap of using humor that might sound sexist or racist. For example, humor might be confused with sexual harassment especially if the elements of discourse are occurring between female customers and male employees. The quote below supports this claim:

> "Samia is one of the frequent customers who literally comes every day to Be-Beirut… sometimes she dines in and sometimes she only smokes shisha. Samia knows everyone here and she is popular for her elegant style and beautiful green eyes. Samia once came on a Thursday night without a reservation. The lounge area on Thursdays is always full and we only seat customers who have pre-booked. Since Samia is a frequent customer, I thought that she would be understanding, and she would accept to be seated in the back area. I was really mistaken. She got really angry at me, and she insisted to be seated in the lounge area no matter what the cost is. In order to calm her down I said to her, Will you sit in my heart, you can smoke shisha there I promise... I winked at her, then laughed and waited that she'd laugh at my joke as well; however, Samia was surprised by my question, she calmed down, but later I the manager lectured me on being professional with female customers since Samia accused me of harassing her. I learned not to do that again… Never ever"
>
> (Rawad, Lebanese)

Rawad claims that he used humor to calm the situation between him and the angry customer. Rawad also denies the fact that he took advantage of opening a conversation with Samia, who he admits that she is beautiful and elegant, to express his feelings towards her. His denial of affection reflects on the power relationship between those involved, where Rawad is using his heterosexual attractiveness in a patriarchal society to practice power over a female customer, who is in superior power position relative to him.

From the findings of my research, it is evident that humor has a heterogeneous function that has a resistive as well as a subversive potential, which depends on the mood and the gender of a customer. However, since the overall culture of Be-Beirut supports the use of humor, no matter what the result of humor is (*i.e*. resistive or aversive) employees are not challenging the status quo. The main intention of employees at Be-Beirut is to embed incivility in a socially acceptable form, that might become “socially risky” depending on the customer and how he/she perceives it (Holmes, 2000:177).

6.1.10 Agreeableness

By definition, agreeableness refers to an employee who is flexible, good natured, cooperative, friendly, sympathetic and who has the ability to control their anger and cognitive inhibition (Barrash and Costen, 2007; Blickle et al., 2008; Chait et al., 2000). Many researchers working in the field of customer service orientation studied the relationship between the quality of service and the significance of the agreeableness personality of the service employee to resolving conflicts and therefore, to increasing customers’ satisfaction by enhancing their job performance (Barrash and Costen, 2007; Field et al., 2014). Data shows that employees who enjoy an agreeable personality perceive less incivility, and their performance will increase; therefore, leading to higher customer satisfaction and retention respectively (Barrash and Costen, 2007; Sliter et al., 2010; Stewart and Carson, 1995). However, an employee who disagrees with the customer could trigger customer incivility (Sliter and Jones, 2016).

In the past research on agreeableness, it is treated as a personality trait which an employee should have in order to satisfy the customer, and to prevent any situation in which the employee might experience customer incivility. However, the data from my research suggests agreeableness as a coping behaviour in which an employee engages in to deal with a difficult customer who is being uncivil. Employees at Be-Beirut use agreeableness as a tool to deceive uncivil customers by telling them that their requests will be solved, or by agreeing on everything they complain about. The quotes below explain this:

> “You know what, most of customers who visit the restaurant I know them, and I know how they think and what they want, so most of the time I just agree with everything they say without arguing because I know arguing with them will just give me headache… If they tell me that the music is loud, I agree with them. They expect me to lower the volume, but I like loud music so I just agree and ignore… you know something even if they said that the sky is green, I would agree with that and move on”
>
> (Sarah, 23, Moroccan)

> "If any of the customers starts bragging about the food or the service of other employees, and I know they are just complaining for the sake of it, all what I do is to say to him/her that you have all the right, or yes indeed, I'll try and fix it for you… you just have to go with the flow otherwise they'll get angry with me and I am not always in the mood for the headache they cause me… Ignorance is the key for our perseverance"
>
> (Said, 38, Lebanese)

Generally, agreeing with the customer although knowing he/she is wrong is a sign of maturity and experience of the employee, and it also indicates that the employees are immersed in the 'cult of the customer' (Gay and Salaman,1992: 613). Consequently, employees feel the obligation to take personal risks to keep the customer satisfied (Reynolds and Harris, 2006). This kind of tactic supports the findings of Huang and Miao (2016) which suggests that employees could reach a state of '***emotional evolvement'*** that refers to their dynamic and evolved responses to customer incivility. Employees could reach the state of emotional evolvement when their experiences of incivility accumulate with frequent customers. However, this is not the case at Be-Beirut.

Frontliners at Be-Beirut are using agreeableness as a tactic which strongly exhibits acknowledgment of customers' needs during a service interaction, but in principle they are not actually acting upon customers' needs and/or requests. From the employees' perspective, using agreeableness as a coping strategy gives them a feeling of power that they are successful in managing the situation with the customer by manipulating them, but simultaneously doing what they think is right.

By doing so, employees are theoretically upholding the status quo. However, in essence employees of Be-Beirut are in a lower power position relative to customers, so it is expected that they agree with the customer even if he/she is being uncivil—in line with the norms of customer sovereignty. Yet, employees are agreeing with the customer without an actual remedy or response to the customers' requests (who is in a higher power). Since customers are in a higher power position relative to employees, they care less for agreeableness, and they care more about consciousness and task performance (Ames and Bianchi, 2008). Therefore, employees at Be-Beirut are not committed to work performance. Rather they are ignoring the customer, and hence they are not being cooperative and considerate to their customers' feelings and opinions (Mechinda and Patterson, 2011). Saying all this, employees of Be-Beirut are strongly emphasising on the power imbalance with customers, and also, they are exposing themselves to customers as powerless individuals who are incompetent and unprofessional; thus, it encourages future similar incivilities to happen from the same customers.

6.1.11 Swearing

Rassin and Muris (2005:1669) suggest that swearing is "the use of taboo words", and it is does not align with the societal norms. Other studies suggest that swearing became a norm specifically because of the usage of profanity in language on the mass media, such as in movies (Baruch and Jenkins, 2007a). On a study on drivers' reactions during rush hour congestions, results show that drivers usually use swearing as a coping behaviour accompanied with an aggressive behaviour (Hennessy and Wiesenthal, 2002). Another study on how nurses cope with their work stress reveals that many use swearing at home as a coping behaviour, and they recognise as an antisocial behaviour (Happell et al., 2013). Besides, in a study assessing the impact of swearing used by retail employees on their stress, suggests that swearing helps employees to let off steam (Baruch and Jenkins, 2007b). Evidently, swearing is a common coping behaviour among workers who are facing stressful moments with customers during service interactions.

Although swearing is studied by many scholars as a coping strategy to cope with work stress, no study categorises swearing as a coping strategy among restaurants' service employees to deal with customer incivility. The data collected for my study shows that swearing is used as coping behaviour to cope with incivility, but it is mostly common among male employees. For instance, during my observation I have often heard male employees covertly swearing at a customer after they have finished serving them. I heard phrases like: "f****n' b****', 'bloody ***hole', he is a f*****'". Most of the swearing performed individually or is directed by male employees to their male colleagues.

As for female employees, I rarely heard them swearing at customers, except once when Sarah was really angry and approached me by saying:

> "F****** A***** they can't be polite, we work our a**** off and they never appreciate… Oh God I feel better"

> "It happened many times where I had a contact with a frequent customer, and once he/she turns their back I start swearing at them to my female colleagues, I didn't want to look disrespectful among male employees… but it helped me to express myself and release some negative feelings"
>
> (Personal observation)

It is evident from the data above that gender plays a powerful role in the usage of swearing, where most employees swear around colleagues of the same gender (Jay and Janschewitz, 2008). The data shows that female employees use the power of swearing as a coping tactic more than their male counterparts, since they only use it as a tool to vent and share their emotions with same-sex colleagues. The waitresses of Be-Beirut are possibly reflecting a type of false consciousness (Jay and Janschewitz, 2008; Jost and Banaji, 1994), whereby they refrain from swearing in front of the opposite sex, because in a patriarchal environment a woman who swears will be stereotyped for being impolite and immoral. This finding contradicts past research which suggests that female employees are more likely to swear in mixed sex groups to assert their presence as 'women' and to prevent the conversation for being male-dominated (Limbrick, 1991). On the other hand, male employees at Be-Beirut tend to swear either individually, or to their colleagues of the same and opposite sex. This way of coping is believed to let off steam among waiters at Be-Beirut, but it also has other implications. Since some waiters swear individually without intending to be heard by their colleagues, the power of swearing might seem to reflect a habit they have carried from their childhood. Other waiters might be enjoying swearing with the same-sex colleagues to let off steam and also to reinforce in-group solidarity, where waiters tend to acknowledge an us (employees) and them (customers) phenomenon (Baruch and Jenkins, 2006). The quote below builds on this argument:

> "Sometimes when I deal with an a****** (customer), I feel so angry to a point that I'd like to punch him in the face or tell him straight to his face you are a d*** a***… you know I cannot do this… the only way to cool down is when I start using swearing words to explain my feelings about customers to my colleagues…rarely my colleagues disagree… man this relaxes me"
>
> (Rami, 30, Lebanese)

Additionally, waiters might be engaging in swearing not only to let off steam, but also to reflect power and to emphasise their manhood in front of their male and female colleagues, especially when they feel they are challenging the organisational norms. Principally, waiters use the power of swearing in their 'employee area' away from the 'customer area' (Baruch and Jenkins, 2007). This separation is linked to the impression management theory of Goffman, which claims that employees are actors on stage (Goffman, 1950). In their employee area, employees are in the backstage where they are able to discuss anything they like on their terms even if this includes using profanity in language, which is against the organisational rules. Swearing seems to give employees the feeling of power and robustness, but in principle the ones who swear are the ones who are subordinated and socially powerless since their language does not align with the societal norms, as well as with the organisational norms (Fägersten, 2012; Jay and Janschewitz, 2008).

Although the use of profanity in language is perceived by employees as a positive strategy which allows them, both male and female, to manage their stress when they experience customer incivility, it is prohibited and disliked by the management at Be-Beirut. Swearing falls against the norms of the restaurant which is focused on performing the family-identity (as discussed previously in chapter 4), and it also distorts the image of the restaurant which relies heavily on offering an excellent customer service for competitive advantage. However, since the employees of Be-Beirut are using swear words away from the ears of the management and the customers, they are upholding the status quo with no violations to the restaurant's service rules. Indeed, employees should be careful in engaging in such a coping strategy especially if they are around customers and their families, otherwise they will be put at risk of being disrespected by customers and might cause future incivilities. This emphasises that customers are in a higher powerful position than employees and thus, I can argue that swearing is potentially marked by power and status (Jay and Janschewitz, 2008; Baruch and Jenkins, 2006).

6.1.11 Retaliation

Retaliation is the covert and/or overt act of revenge towards the instigator. Previous research claims that employees usually refrain from responding to mistreatment from customers, since they are powerless relative to their perpetrator (Aquino et al., 2001; Tepper et al., 2009). Conversely, other research refutes this argument and findings show that employees retaliate to perpetrators by acts of deviance in rare cases, such as if employees have an intention to quit their jobs, or they have found a better job (Tepper et al., 2009). The findings in my research support the latter argument, where data shows that employees engage in various kinds of retaliating/resistive acts towards customers. The most common retaliatory acts of Be-Beirut employees are procrastinating to take an order, threatening to hurt the customer and also engaging in a collective retaliation act.

procrastinate to take an order

Procrastinate to take an order is a form of coping where employees delay in responding to the customer who has previously been abusive to them, and yet the employee did not have the chance to take revenge from him/her. For instance, I heard Said telling Shadi once:

> "You see this bold guy there, he came last time, and he was the most disrespectful customer I have ever seen, but this time I will be the nasty one and I will let him wait to be served".

I mentioned in chapter four that Said is a Lebanese employee who was employed at Be-Beirut based on the kinship relationship with the owner. Said was one of the first employees who were recruited at Be-Beirut since the first day it opened. This might give us an idea of the power of kinship that Said maintains from the owner, which makes enables him to engage in a retaliatory action with a frequent customer without risking getting fired from his job.

Threatening to hurt the customer

The other retaliatory act is threatening to hurt the customer. Although threatening to hurt the customer will cost the employee his/her job and maybe his/her career, these consequences did not stop Rami from attempting to respond in an act of deviance towards an abusive customer. See the quote below:

> “I don’t care, if a customer shouted at my face, I would knock him out instantly… I have another job as a security guy at one of London’s famous clubs, I like being a security guy it suits me better that this S***** job”
>
> (Rami, 30, Lebanese)

From the quote above Rami might sound powerful, angry, aggressive, or simply a man with dignity. However, the power which is being emphasised by Rami does not come from his dignity or his aggressiveness, it is simply because he already has a job, and also, he is thinking of changing his career. This means that hurting an abusive customer at Be-Beirut will not cost him neither his job, nor his career as the job that he likes requires him to be aggressive with customers.

Collective retaliation

The third retaliatory action of employees comprises engaging with what I called **“***collective retaliation***”** against an uncivil frequent customer. Findings of my research show that employees cooperate to support each other if an employees is dealing with an abusive customer. There are two aims for this act, either to make the customer angry or to encourage him/her not to come again to the restaurant. During my observation, two decent ladies have come in and they wanted to be seated in the lounge section. Sarah, Linda, Said, and Rami approached me all at once and convinced me to say:

> “Sorry there is no place outside”

One of the lady customers said:

> “Well, it’s ok I can sit on one of tables outside [in the lounge area] and then move me when the customers for this booking arrive”

> "I was put in a very sensitive position where I have to support my colleagues and also to do my job and seat the customers. Then I had to seat them outside and gave them only 1 hour to move to the back area, since they want to smoke shisha. After I seated them, none of the employees were around them to take any orders. I saw these ladies trying to wave to Sarah and Linda, but both are pretending that they are not seeing them"

Through the behavioural act of retaliating incivility, employees are trying to get back to the provocateur with an action that might get him/her angry the same way he/she has caused them to feel. As such, employees might feel a sense of power as they enjoy 'positive emotional ambivalence' that might amplify their feelings of success when they perceive the benefits of personal confidence through the process of dealing with incivility (Huang and Miao, 2016:669). However, such a retaliatory tactic could backfire at employees when these particular customers become disrespectful to employees due to unmet service expectations and thus, encouraging other forms of incivilities to arise. For example, customers might also react towards employees by taking revenge; for example, by posting a bad review on social media, which is one of the most important sources to build a positive or negative reputation about Be-Beirut. This claim is enforced by the owner so many times during meetings.

Interestingly, employees might engage in the first and the second retaliatory acts to assert power and to believe that they are in a powerful position relative to customers, in which their actions might not cause them economic or social costs. Furthermore, employees engage in the third retaliatory act by using the collective power as a form of an **"active rebellion"** against abusive customers, which signifies unconformity and unacceptance with the current socioeconomic position a person is actually occupying (Kohn and Mercer, 1971). In all cases, it is clear that some service employees are engaging in resistive coping strategies to assert power and cope with the negative feelings they experience from customers. However, employees are not aware that by engaging in retaliation this signifies less power, which also leads to reducing individual performance. Employees' performance might decrease because their attention is diverted toward retaliation tendencies rather than performing their job (Skarlicki et al., 2008).

6.2 Conclusion

The ample research on customer incivility focuses on determining the existence of customer incivility, specifically in the service industry, and highlights the impact of this stressor on service employee's well-being, job satisfaction, job performance and turnover intentions (Arnold and Walsh, 2015; Kim et al., 2014; Han et al., 2016). Former research also shows that the consequences of customer incivility on the employee are a product of the customer's power, and organisations' embeddedness of the cult of the customer, which abides by the myth of customer sovereignty (Kim et al., 2014b; Yagil, 2017). Clearly, the management individualises incivility and renders the employee responsible of coping with it. Following this claim, other studies focus on exploring the coping behaviours of employees as they encounter customer incivility (*e.g.* Reynolds and Harris, 2006). Although theoretically substantial, existing studies only focus on exploring employees' coping behaviours during service encounters, where customers are not frequent customers and thus, they have not formed service relationships with employees.

Employees of Be-Beirut encounter various kinds of uncivil acts from frequent customers. The management expects employees to individually cope with incivility as there is no formal construct or training scheme in which employees are instructed on how to deal with or manage the anguish from incivility. This research fills this void by exploring the coping behaviours of service employees as they encounter customer incivility from frequent customers, in the context of service relationships. Analysis of interviews and personal observations show that service employees adopt a range of individual and collective coping tactics (see table 4). This study shows how the employees develop coping tactics that tend to reinforce the processes set in place by the management and thus, making incivility invisible. Consequently, I can see a subtext of frustrated employees who are victims of their corrupt management, which is a reason behind incivility to happen in the first place.

Chapter Seven: Discussion and Conclusion

7.0 Introduction

The major objective of this research is to critically and qualitatively explore employees' coping tactics that are used to deal with customer incivility from frequent customers, in the context of service relationships. By doing so, the main contribution of my research is to provide a critical review of uncovering the ways in which managers exploit their staff. Therefore, I explored incivility from a subjective stance, which means that I regarded incivility as a social construct that is perceived differently by employees. Following this main objective, the study has three aims. The first one is to explore the context of the research and how it appeals to customers from within the same ethnic group. The second one is to critically investigate how customer incivility is constructed within the context under investigation. The third aim is to explore employees' coping tactics, and if the gender of employees shapes their coping behaviours. These research aims were addressed by conducting a qualitative, interpretivist study. I used ethnography (participant-observation) as the main tool for data collection. Besides, I collected data via observations (pilot study), informal interviews with employees (during participant-observation), followed by semi-structured interviews (11 male and 1female), and I also used content analysis (WhatsApp) and virtual ethnography (Instagram).

This chapter provides an overview of this thesis, focusing on its significance to research on customer incivility and employees' coping tactics. It summarises and discusses the key findings of this research. The discussion section is followed with sections on theoretical contributions and the managerial and practical implications. Finally, this chapter will acknowledge the limitations of the research and present suggestions for future research.

7.1 Summarising key findings

Ample research focuses on the literature on customer incivility, its impact on employees and the organisation, and also on employees' coping behaviours (Goussinsky, 2012; Reynolds and Harris, 2006; Grandey et al., 2005; Andersson and Pearson, 1999). These studies are largely linked to the theory of coping developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and also to the literature on emotional labour developed by Hochschild (1983). However, the current research extends existing research and focuses on exploring precisely the ways that service employees use to cope with incivility initiated by frequent customers, in the context of service relationships.

This thesis integrates the literature on customer incivility, emotional labour, service relationships, compassion fatigue and authenticity. This is done not only by qualitatively exploring the ways that frontliners cope with customer incivility, but also by deepening our understanding about the customer incivility construct from a micro level, which means from employees' subjective stance. This research fills the gap in literature discussed in chapter one of this thesis. I argued that this case study restaurant has many frequent customers and incivility takes a specific form different from already studied restaurants. To my knowledge there is no study which has yet critically and qualitatively investigated the coping behaviours of employees when they experience incivility from frequent customers in the context of service relationships at an ethnic "authentic" restaurant. This research gives a clear insight on the complex life of service employees not only in the ethnic "authentic" restaurant industry, but also in the service industry in general especially in contexts where the authenticity construct is used as a marketing strategy to attract customers from inside the ethnic group.

The task of employees working at the case study restaurant, which caters to customers inside the ethnic group (Lebanese and other Arab customers), is carried out to supply customers with an optimum experiential "authentic" Lebanese service experience, such as "feel at home" and "an experience same as the one found in Lebanon"—as the data reveals. Promoting authenticity and emphasising the Lebanese identity of the restaurant is one of the major ways in which Be-Beirut retains frequent customers. Although it is a very profitable strategy, authenticity exerts higher pressure on employees since sometimes it gives rise to discrepancies between customers' expectations of the food and the service provided. As I mentioned before that authenticity is socially constructed, it means it is perceived differently by customers. This results in negative feelings, which is expressed by customers' uncivil behaviours experienced by service employees.

The results indicate that "Be-Beirut" has many frequent customers and incivility takes a specific form different from already studied restaurants. The data shows that service employees within this case study restaurant perceive most of customers' behaviours as uncivil. Most of these incivilities experienced by employees occur as a consequence of service relationships when employees fall in compassion fatigue, and they start perceiving much of customers acts as painful and uncivil. The way customer incivility is exacerbated in this case study restaurant by the top and the middle managerial practices as well as by employees, emphasises the power imbalance between employees and customers. The results show that the toxic management of Be-Beirut provides the customers with a superior power relative to the employees, especially by embedding the notion of customer sovereignty. In this way, the employees are put by the management as a human shield between the management and the customers, and when any dissatisfaction from the customers' side occurs, the customers respond with incivility toward the employees. Therefore, this finding highlights that the role power that plays part in the construction of incivility and influencing the ways employees cope, which renders employees to suffer from high levels of stress and job dissatisfaction (as the data reveals).

As previously discussed, this thesis was able to examine how the top and the middle managerial practices, which cause customer incivility to happen, underpin the way that service employees cope with incivility.

7.1.1 The managerial practices of the top management

According to my findings, which I gathered during participant-observation and interviews with service employees, the restaurant's management dining and service practices affect the way customer incivility is perceived by service employees. The three managerial practices which foster incivility at "Be-Beirut" are the organisational culture, promoting authenticity and the design of the seating plan.

7.1.1.1 Be-Beirut organisational culture

The **organisation culture** at "Be-Beirut" emphasises on the embeddedness of the notion of customer sovereignty, which believes in the myth that "the customer is always right". The data shows that the management of Be-Beirut is using the customer sovereignty ideology to force employees to accept responsibility for the incivility experienced. This is reflected within employees' coping tactics (discussed earlier in chapter 6). When the management forces employees to treat customers as sovereign agents, automatically it is giving the customers higher power relative to their employees. This fact highlights the power dynamics between employees and customers; thus, allowing the latter to use incivility as a form of power over employees. In addition to the power which customers gain from being sovereign agents, this power is also enhanced by the frequency of their custom. The power granted to customers by the management and by being frequent customers, plays an important role in constructing incivility experienced by employees.

Although incivility is prevalent within the context of Be-Beirut, the management does not overtly acknowledge it amongst its employees. The management vaguely mentions that incivility might happen, and if it ever happens the employees must not react to customers' uncivil behaviours, such as reciprocating incivility to other customers, to maintain the status quo. Evidently, such a case puts the employees under a lot of pressure since the data collected shows that there is no clear construct or training scheme that trains employees on how to deal with such incidents. As such, the management expects employees to individually cope with incivility, in which the management regards it as the employees' fault. Thus, the ideology of customer sovereignty is one major aspect behind employees' construction of customer incivility at 'Be-Beirut'.

7.1.1.2 Promoting authenticity of the food and the restaurant setting

I discussed in chapter four how the owner of 'Be-Beirut', Ziad, implements his efforts to create a restaurant which caters mostly to homesick Lebanese people (and other Arab customers). In order to do that, Ziad paid attention to the smallest details when he opened the restaurant. These details include constructing an experiential authentic Lebanese identity through investing in the furniture, the walls, the cutlery, the food, the music played, and also through the service provided. Ziad is successful by doing so, but promoting authenticity among Lebanese customers, as well as other Arab customers is problematic. Authenticity is socially constructed, which means what could be seen as "authentic" to one person might be "inauthentic" to the other person. Clearly, the owner attempts to provide his customers with an exclusive, authentic experience (as the data reveals); however, the emphasis on authenticity consequently is ought to create disillusionment between customers' expectations and what is being offered to them from products and services. When this discrepancy arises, the customer might become angry and thus, incivility arises. Although this incivility is a product of the management's practices, the frontline employee is the one who endures it, and the management expects employees to take responsibility for it. This speaks volumes about the toxic management, which is allowing its employees to suffer incivility not caused by their inadequate performance.

7.1.1.3 Seating plan of the restaurant

In addition to the promotion of experiential authenticity, and its relevance in causing incivility at 'Be-Beirut', frontliners construct incivility as a result of the restaurant's seating plan. To reiterate, Be-Beirut is divided into four sections are the 'back area', 'the restaurant', 'the lounge' and the 'homeyard'. However, not all sections permit customers to occupy them without the management's approval. Part of the "lounge section" is designated only for VIP (very important person) customers, and VIP customers are either related to the owner (friends and/or family), or those who pay an extra charge (around £100/person). Dividing customers in this way gives more power to some customers over employees, as the findings show.

Normally, customers know that they are the only resource of profitability and continuity of the restaurant, this argument supports the "resource dependence theory" (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003). However, at 'Be-Beirut' some customers are given exclusively greater power to exercise over the employees, and the whole organisation. This results in creating much larger power imbalances between the customers and the employees, which act as an incentive to incivility. As previously noted, again the management of Be-Beirut is situating the employees in a position, whereby they are used by the management as human shields with customers, and they are the ones who experience incivility and simultaneously the management blames them for causing it to happen.

7.1.2 The managerial practices of the middle management

The findings of the thesis suggest that the managerial practices of the middle managers affect the way incivility is constructed by employees in the case study restaurant. Findings show that the authoritative leadership style of middle managers coupled with the absence of the appropriate training of service employees, decreases employees' productivity and decreases their job satisfaction. This is putting them in a vulnerable and powerless position relative to customers and hence, to experience incivility due to service failure. This finding is consistent with the theory of "psychological breach theory", which argues that the service performance of employees is influenced by their job dissatisfaction, due to the terrible and toxic supervision (Wei and Si, 2013). This emphasises the covert role of the toxic management in causing incivility and also in making the employees to endure it and also to cope with it.

7.1.3 Employees' service practices

The results suggest that employees' engagement in service relationships with frequent customers might be an overt reason to causing incivility to happen. Service relationships are those which provide customers with "extra ingredients that deliver more than mere commodity value" (Christy et al., 1996:197). The limits of this kind of relationship might extend beyond the normal and expected economic interaction between the customer and the employee, as the findings reveal. Results show that when frequent customers establish service relationships with employees, customers might take advantage of this relationship to ask for additional relational benefits (*e.g.* free food, VIP table with no additional fees). This could give rise to the exploitation of employees by the customers, which is a form of incivility as regarded by service employees at 'Be-Beirut'.

This finding is consistent with the theory of "compassion fatigue", which "is the very act of being compassionate and empathic extracts a cost under most circumstances… like any other fatigue reduces our interest in bearing the suffering of others" (Figley, 2002: 1434). This means that in this case study restaurant service employees' compassion towards frequent customers decreases over time, and employees might start acting weird with the 'commercial friend' (*e.g.* ignoring the customer) (Han et al., 2008). This is predicted to cause future incivilities from the same customers, since customers are more likely to feel vulnerable in this relationship, causing them to foster feelings of distrust in the employees and the whole organisation (Bowden et al., 2015). Therefore, according to the findings, service relationships are an antecedent of incivility as perceived by employees in the study. This research is the first research which applies the theory of compassion fatigue to the restaurant industry, which provides an important contribution to theory and research.

It contributes to the literature on customer incivility by showing that incivility is a social and subjective construct. This implies that, customers might be sometimes acting uncivil, but its psychological impact on employees depends on how the employees perceive it.

Although the findings overtly show that the employees are falling in compassion fatigue because they willingly establish service relationships with frequent customers, the covert reason behind their distress is the management. The toxic management of Be-Beirut instructs its employees to provide customers with an optimum service performance, and also to smile to the customer and to act friendly. Therefore, the management is the settler in allowing service relationships to be established between customers and employees without instructing and training employees on ways how to manage and limit this relationship.

7.1.4 Coping behaviours of frontliners

As discussed in chapters 5 and 6, the management of Be-Beirut individualises customer incivility and hence, the management expects employees to cope with it individually while preserving the status quo. The data from my study shows that, service employees cope with incivility individually or collectively depending on the incivility they encounter. Service employees feel largely powerless relative to customers and thus, they individualise incivility. They engage in coping tactics to protect themselves from the anguish of incivility; simultaneously, preserving the status quo. In addition to that, the data shows that some employees' tactics are performed by both male and female, but each gender has its own way of performing it, such as refining appearances (discussed in chapter 6).

7.2 Discussion of findings

Although service employees experience various types of uncivil behaviours, the findings did not show that employees personalise their coping according to a specific kind of incivility they encounter. The data shows that service employees are negatively influenced by incivility, and they engage in different kinds of coping behaviours to cope with its anguish. The results show that due to the recurrent exposure to incivility from frequent customers, employees learn which tactics to retain and which to discard.

7.2.1 Why customer incivility is constructed at Be-Beirut?

In this section I critically reflect on the findings explored in chapters four and five. The data from chapter 4 shows that the owner, Ziad, focuses extensively on creating a Lebanese identity that caters to people inside the ethnic group (*e.g.* Lebanese and other Arabs). This attracts ample customers to Be-Beirut, who are frequent and loyal customers to the firm. In addition to that, this means that most of the customers who visit this restaurant have the same cultural definition of performances that are occurring, as well as have an expectation of the service to be provided (Spradley and Mann, 2008).

Be-Beirut as most restaurants, promotes the idea of customer sovereignty and that the customer is always right, even if the management knows that customers are not always right—as the owner Ziad admits during an informal conversation. Noticeably, the management at Be-Beirut only trains its employees on serving the customer right, amidst dragging them to abide by the myth of customer sovereignty. The management never seems to formally instruct employees on how to perform the job (*e.g.* how to position cutlery on the table, or how to react to customer's dissatisfaction about the food or the service provided).

I discussed through chapter 5 that the top and middle managerial practices are reasons behind employees' construction of incivility at Be-Beirut. Despite that, the management attributes customer incivility to the employees' fault. The top management believes that by adhering to the rules of customer sovereignty, this will make the customers happy, and they will be able to retain them to the firm and thus, profitability increases. This implies that, the management is using customer sovereignty as a tool to force the employees to accept and take responsibility for incivility experienced. Clearly, the management does not acknowledge incivility, rather it individualises it, and employees should take responsibility to dealing with it. The coping tactics used by employees in this case study reflect on this fact. In addition to that, the top management ignores the fact that, customers have different tastes and different experiences, and that authenticity is socially constructed; thus, it might be a major reason behind customers' dissatisfaction. For example, the top management has created a VIP seating section to increase the restaurant's profits, by encouraging customers to pay more for a service that might allow them to feel important relative to other customers and also to the restaurant. The management is not aware that such kind of behaviours create power imbalances between customers, and also between customers and their employees. Since employees are following the management's instructions, they are automatically allocated by the management in a weaker power position relative to customers and causing them to experience incivility.

Furthermore, the middle management practices are also a reason behind employees' construction of incivility at Be-Beirut. Employees claim that the middle managers of Be-Beirut are unprofessional, authoritarian and lack managerial skills, and they fail to empower employees and thus, they might not be performing their major role at Be-Beirut, which is to empower their employees and to back them up in case they needed support when dealing with an unsatisfied customer. This might result in weakening employees' performance due to the unmotivating atmosphere they are creating. Therefore, employees are becoming more powerless relative to customers and thus, their performance levels are dropping, which puts them in a further vulnerable position to experience incivility from customers. I have to note that, although employees regard their middle managers as unprofessional, we cannot deny the tough job that managers are responsible for in such a dynamic environment. Managers are expected to deal with problems created by the customers, their employees and also deal with issues created by the senior management (I elaborated more on this point in chapter 5). This emphasises the fact that the incivility perceived by service employees is ultimately subjective, and that managers at Be-Beirut might not be as unprofessional as perceived by employees.

In addition to the above managerial practices of both the top and the middle management, the data also shows that customer incivility is constructed at Be-Beirut by employees' engagement in service relationships with frequent customers. When service relationships are established with frequent customers, the latter start to engage in acts which could possibly exploit the employees and thus, employees fall into the trap of compassion fatigue. When employees fall into compassion fatigue, they become uncapable of limiting this relationship, since they are instructed by the management to abide by the myth of customer sovereignty.

From the data, service employees engage in service relationships with frequent customers for two reasons. Firstly, some employees think that by making the customer their friend, he/she will not act abusive. Secondly, service employees are encouraged and instructed by the management to establish such relationships with customers *e.g* to smile and to be empathetic with the customer. Therefore, the employee is put in a position where he/she is unwillingly forced into establishing a service relationship with frequent customers, which renders their positions vulnerable during a service interaction. This means that employees are not able to make the customer unhappy by refusing to respond to their demands, and also, they are not able to report to the management because they will be blamed for establishing this relationship in the first place. In all cases, the data shows that employees are held responsible by the management for causing incivility to occur and also to individually dealing with it. However, in principle the management is using its employees as a tool to satisfy customers, and simultaneously using its employees as a human shield with the customers.

7.2.2 Who is attributed the blame for constructing incivility?

This section critically reflects on the reasons behind employees' blame on customers for the incivility they experience, and it also reflects on the reasons behind the management's attribution of blame on its employees for causing incivility. The three findings discussed above, show that the management (top and middle) is the reason behind causing customer incivility.

Primarily, the management will not blame the customer for incivility due to the promotion of customer sovereignty. The myth of customer sovereignty does not allow the management to give any opportunity for the employees to start giving reasons for their incapacity and the ineffectiveness of their service skills and thus, to attribute the blame to the customer for being the reason behind it. Through this strategy the employee will always be positioned in a weaker power position relative to customers and thus, emphasising the power imbalance between those involved.

Additionally, the management blames employees for incivility since it is avoiding shedding the light on the impotency of their organisational system (Vredenburgh, 2002), which inherently causes incivility to occur as the data shows in chapter 5. As such, if for any reason the management confesses that its managerial rules are inadequate, then employees might care less to provide customers with an optimum service, because they will be evaluating the management as powerless and unprofessional. If the employees feel that their management is powerless, then many employees will be positioned in a higher power position relative to the management and the customers. If this happens, employees might engage in unexpected misbehaviours with the customers (*e.g*. shout at a customer) and/or unethical acts with the management (e.g. stealing food and/or money).

Clearly, we can conclude that the toxic management at Be-Beirut is voluntarily positioning employees in a weaker position relative to the management and the customers due to the reasons discussed above. Additionally, the management is not acknowledging that the employees are positioned as the punching bags of the middle managers and the customers. Employees' performance is consequently shrinking, and this is leading them to suffer from burnout. Since the management individualises coping, the employee is held responsible to deal with incivility, and the organisation holds no responsibility for helping the employee to do so. In order to cope with the negative impact of incivility, employees are engaging in individual as well as collective coping behaviours. The data on coping was previously discussed in chapter 6.

7.2.3 How do employees cope?

The data in chapter 6 shows that employees cope with incivility, either individually or collectively. Although the data shows that employees engage more in individual coping than collective coping, they seem to find comfort and satisfaction more if they engage in collective coping because they are in solidarity with each other. This solidarity gives them a feeling of power since they are a solid group against one (*e.g*. US vs THEM). One of the collective copings which helps employees cope with incivility is smoking marijuana.

The data shows that employees engage in a mode of coping that preserves the status quo while attributing the blame to the customer for being uncivil. Consequently, they tend to cope with incivility without acknowledging the management. As such, it seems that they are joining efforts with the management by contributing to making incivility invisible (Bishop et al., 2005). None of my respondents seem to discuss incivility with the management, and that is one major reason for the widespread phenomenon of incivility at Be-Beirut. Consequently, the data shows that employees blame the customers for various reasons discussed below.

For instance, if employees report to the management about customer incivility, the management will automatically start blaming the employee for his/her weak service skills (Newton and Fineman, 1995). The management will also indicate the employee as incompetent and inadequate to fit the basic element of the service job, which runs on the customer sovereignty ideology (Bishop et al., 2005). Additionally, employees might be blaming the customer for incivility so that they convince themselves and to show their management they are professional and also very competent workers in doing their job. Thus, this encourages them to engage in coping tactics to feel they are in a higher position of power relative to the customers, rather than perceiving themselves as weak and fragile.

Although it is evident from the data that employees engage in a mode of coping which preserves the status quo, and they blame the customer for incivility, in fact it is the management to blame for all this anguish which employees are suffering from. From one side, employees are trying to maintain a good relationship with the management, so they can secure their jobs and also to preserve the status quo. From another side, they are engaging in coping tactics that might protect and help them deal with incivility.

7.3 Theoretical contributions

This thesis contributes to the existing literature on customer incivility in various significant theoretical senses. The major contribution of this research is that it provides a detailed critical and interpretivist review of the customer incivility literature by looking at its cause and impact on employees from a micro level. In doing so, this research uncovers details behind the causes of incivility, how employees cope with it, and also why do they cope the way they do. By studying incivility from a micro level, this research introduces the concept of frequent customers, service relationships, compassion fatigue and experiential authenticity to the customer incivility literature. However, unlike previous studies that focus on identifying the impact of customer incivility on employees by putting the utmost blame on customers for misbehaving, this research explores the covert reason behind customer incivility that seems to manipulate customers' misbehaviours, which is the management. The management plays a focal role in causing incivility to occur and employees are not passive recipients to incivility as they play a significant role in obscuring it, just like the management does (Bishop et al., 2005). Employees tend to do so by engaging in coping tactics, that tend to maintain the status quo set out by the management.

The second contribution of this thesis, it is the first empirical study which provides evidence about the negative unintended outcomes that result from service relationships established between employees and customers. This thesis argues that service relationships can be an antecedent to customer incivility initiated by frequent customers. The findings suggest that when customers become frequent customers, they establish service relationships with employees. When this happens, employees start to perceive many of customers behaviours as uncivil due to employees falling in compassion fatigue; therefore, customer incivility is a social construct, and it is perceived differently by employees. When employees fall in compassion fatigue, they no longer become interested in responding to their commercial friend as customers expect them to behave, which gives rise to incivility due to customers' disappointment with the service provided to them. Therefore, this finding contradicts the many studies on incivility which claim that incivility is a product of dissatisfaction (Harris and Reynolds, 2004). This study shows that incivility can stem from the managerial policies and/or from employees' unstructured relationships with customers, which contribute to destabilizing the power between those involved.

The third contribution of this thesis, it reveals a typology of customer uncivil behaviours, which led to the emergence of eight kinds of uncivil behaviours solely based on the perspectives of employees. Although many previous studies label customers' misbehaviours with employees as common and endemic (Reynolds and Harris, 2006), this study shows that customers' misbehaviours can be uncommon, and they can be a result of their loyalty to the firm. This loyalty is created through the promotion of experiential authenticity and the formation of service relationships with employees. Such a finding might emphasise to marketing managers or theorists that the customer is not always right, and that customers frequently engage in behaviours that might hurt the employee and cause them stress (Harris and Reynolds, 2004). This could be a result of the way managements market their business as being accommodating to all customers regardless of their behaviour. I agree that the findings of this research explore incivility enacted by frequent customers in this particular context and maybe it's a Lebanese offering, but the same uncivil behaviours could be happening in any other service relationships context, including any hospitality sector which tries to enact the same culture by promoting its identity as relevant to a specific culture. Additionally, the study provides us with a holistic critical review looking at the coping tactics of employees when they experience incivility specifically in the context of service relationships and thus, presents rich insights about the sufferings of service employees in the hospitality industry (Reynolds and Harris, 2006). Employees' suffering is encouraging them to engage in coping strategies to mitigate the negative impact of their jobs, and sometimes the coping tactics may include dysfunctional coping such as consuming drugs (Reynolds and Harris, 2006). This finding contributes to the research looking at exploring the coping behaviours of employees in various industries (Begley, 1998; Haar, 2006; Han et al., 2016; Holton et al., 2016; Pienaar and Willemse, 2008b; Reynolds and Harris, 2006; Spielmann et al., 2012).

The fourth contribution, it introduces the concept of experiential authenticity as a facet to cause incivility. Although data builds on the many previous research on experiential authenticity that reveals the capability of place branding and country-of-origin to attract and retain customers (Andéhn and L'Espoir Decosta, 2020; Andéhn et al., 2020; Ebster and Guist, 2005; Jang et al., 2012; Tsai and Lu, 2012), businesses eminent marketing focus on such elements might hinder its real purpose. By focusing on experiential authenticity, managements attempt to force their employees to perform a phantasm of a specific authentic culture, which causes them a lot of stress. Additionally, exerting too much focus on experiential authenticity as a marketing tool gives rise to customer incivility, due to the discrepancies between the expectations of customers and what is being offered to them by the employee from food and service. Therefore, managements of any service business, including restaurants, hotels and coffee shops, should be aware of the downsides of their marketing strategies which highly emphasise on authenticity being the major tool to attract and retain customers. This finding contributes to the research looking at exploring the antecedents of customer incivility in a service context. I also suggest that the construct of authenticity is a critical concept and the findings on authenticity related to this context can be transferred to other service settings, including other ethnic restaurants, having the same power relations between its customers and employees.

The fifth and final contribution of this research revolves around the role of the social dimensions of servicescape in influencing the interactions between customers (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1994) and also the interactions between customers and employees. This research shows how the servicescape in a service context is capable of changing the power dynamics in customer-to-customer relationships, which might result with causing incivility directed by customers onto employees. This incivility is triggered due to customers' dissatisfactions about the servicescape provided or planned by the organisation. Additionally, this research reveals how the potential usage of servicescape can acquire a facilitator role that could either aid or obstruct employees from performing their job (Bitner, 1992) . These findings contribute to the ample research acknowledging the servicescape literature, which mainly focuses on customers' consumption behaviours, perceived service quality, pleasure-feeling, and loyalty to an organsitaion (Bitner, 1992; Hanks and Line, 2018; Kim and Moon, 2009; Meng and Choi, 2017; Spielmann et al., 2012; Wakefield and Blodgett, 1994).

7.4 Managerial and practical implications

This thesis suggests many implications for service and marketing managers, as well as to human resources managers who can be the middle managers responsible for managing the frontline.
First, as for service managers the findings of this study claim that managing the servicescape is a focal element in limiting incivility to occur (Harris and Reynolds, 2004). The most significant servicescape that should be considered is the seating plan. The way the seating plan is designed and distributed in a restaurant either allows customers to feel they are all equal, or they might sense a power imbalance between them and employees, and also with other customers. Therefore, designing a homogeneous seating plan helps to minimize the power imbalance between customers and employees, and this might limit incivility from happening.

Second in regard to marketing managers of service organisations, they should be careful while utilizing the authenticity construct as a marketing tool. The findings of this study demonstrate the difficulties associated with recruiting service employees who are familiar with the authentic identity being promoted, and also in finding the country-of-origin ingredients to process the food. Stressing on the authenticity construct and promoting it to people from inside the ethnic group of any service organisation, especially restaurants, may increase customer incivility, and it also limits the number of newly acquired customers due to the focus on attracting only one particular ethnic group. Therefore, marketing managers should revisit their segmentation and targeting of customers whose needs and expectations are strictly in line with that of the organisation's. Such a practical implication contradicts the various studies which suggest that organisations should eliminate their segmentation to customers who are incompatible with the organisations needs (Harris and Reynolds, 2004). Focusing on customers whose expectations are compatible with the organisation might put the organisation and the frontliners in a continuous pressure to keep up with the needs of those customers, and if they fail, incivility is expected to occur. The best advice to give for marketing managers is to expand their market and to lean back from focusing on a very specific segment of customers.

In addition to the aforementioned practical implications, the management should aim for emancipatory objectives, which could contribute to increasing employees job satisfaction and also in liberating employees from the restrictive tradition, ideology assumptions and power relations that distorts employees' ability to discuss their wants and needs (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992).

First, this could be made possible by favoring democratic forms of management over technocratic ones (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992). By implementing a democratic style of management, this will give employees the chance to understand the problems they are facing, and to provide them with opportunities to speak up suggestions for change. In addition to that, democratic forms of management allow the management to reduce the use of rules and thus, it pushes to create a classless organisation that contributes to a radical break of the socio-symbolic structure within the confines of the organisation (Cliver, 2009). This includes giving employees the right to be part of the decision-making process in the organisation (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Jianping and Ziwei, 2010). This is ought to give employees freedom, boosting their creativity and innovation prospects, which will increase their satisfaction and will definitely increase the performance of the organisation (Jianping and Ziwei, 2010).

Second, middle and executive managers are advised to revisit the customer sovereignty phenomena which instructs employees that the “customer is always right”. Unfortunately, the customer is not always right, and many studies prove this claim (Grandey et al., 2004; Sorell, 1994). Those studies encourage managers to implement deterrence techniques such as installing CCTV or educating customers about the harm they are causing to employees (Gursoy et al. 2016; Gursoy et al., 2017). Such deterrence techniques can be successful but not in every context. Installing CCTV can be successful in very specific contexts such as nightclubs and supermarkets, but not at restaurants especially if managers aim at monitoring low-intensity uncivil acts. Also, educating customers might be unattainable due to the very limited time given to the employee while they are performing their job, especially at a restaurant. Therefore, middle and executive managers are advised to support their employees by promoting their organisation to customers as an organisation which fully respects the rights of its employees and cares for their well-being, and if anyone disrespects them, he/she will be asked to be dismissed from the premises immediately. This might increase employees’ loyalty to the firm and thus, it will decrease the rate of employees’ turnover.

Third, when employees feel the support of their managers, this might change their behaviours to become proactive employees (Campbell, 2000). By being proactive, employees might no longer look at customers as a source of sorrow, rather they will be motivated to solve issues with customers effectively since they are aware that the management will look at this as a form of accomplishment (Kim et al., 2009), instead of an incompetency and unprofessionalism. Consequently, employees’ job satisfaction is ought to increase (Zhu et al., 2015), and this will create a positive environment around the customers. Securing happy employees will be tough to manage in the long run since employees might challenge the status quo, but it might be a positive thing where employees could help the management in investing in new ideas and inventions that might increase the restaurant’s productivity and improves its success. This kind of managerial support is largely related to the literature on employees’ empowerment.

Employee empowerment is a managerial process, which enhances employees’ satisfaction, empathy with customers and their responsiveness to service failure (Hocutt and Stone, 1998).

Employee empowerment takes many forms, and it has a differing impact on service employees, such as allocating tasks to the right people, distributing power information and knowledge, and also getting rid of the top-down managerial control (Bowen and Lawler III, 1995).

Allocating tasks refers to a technocratic allocation of tasks, where each employee will be working in what he/she likes and in what he/she is good at doing. For example, if an employee likes to work as a waiter, he should only be assigned the job of a waiter and not that of a food runner, or vice versa. Allocating tasks could be one successful strategy to help employees gain confidence and trust in what they are doing; thus, minimising the possible service failures that could happen with customers during a service interaction.

Distribution of power of information and knowledge refers to the act of immersing employees in the restaurant's decisions, such as asking their opinion about introducing a new menu, or a new employee the management wants to recruit. This might give employees the sense that they are part of the restaurant's management and not as an inferior group of people, whose task is restricted to serving customers.

When the management becomes successful in distributing power of information and knowledge, they might be capable of getting rid of the ***top-down managerial control***, which is the third element of the employee empowerment process. Consequently, employee empowerment could strengthen the bond between employees and their management; thus, it might give them the strength to overcome customers' uncivil behaviours by being responsive to solving service failures, and also to feel empathetic with customers if they acted uncivil (*e.g.* thinking maybe the customer had a bad day, or he lost a dear one). Therefore, empowerment techniques could possibly have a strong influence on employees' coping tactics by making them more adaptive and functional (*e.g.* seeking support), while eliminating their engagement with dysfunctional coping tactics (*e.g.* consuming drugs).

Furthermore, the management is advised to engage in economic emancipatory objectives, which could be beneficial in changing employees' working conditions and increasing their satisfaction (Hault et al., 2010). This could be achieved by increasing employees' salaries (*e.g.* a salary that is compatible with the workload they perform), giving them longer break hours (*e.g.* more than 30 minutes), improving their working condition by providing them with a private spot to relax, eat and chat away from the sight and monitoring of the management and the customers. These changes could give employees a sense of autonomy and freedom that could help them temporarily detach from the work environment and get recharged to start their work fresh minded. Such relaxation might increase their productivity and job satisfaction.

The management's emancipatory objectives should also focus on reducing and/or eliminating gender inequality. The data from this study demonstrates that the culture of Be-Beirut maintains the status quo that is male dominated and is perpetuated in the management's everyday practices (Kornberger et al., 2010) and thus, female employees are being dominated by their male colleagues, as well as from male customers who predominantly come from a patriarchal culture. Having said that, the data shows that gender inequality is one of the major reasons behind female employees' psychological strain and the retention problem of female employees at Be-Beirut. Therefore, managers of any organisation especially where the patriarchal system is dominating are advised to seek emancipatory objectives that could eliminate or at least reduce the gender inequity. This could be achieved by changing the language/discursive practices of the organisation (Kornberger et al., 2010). Language plays a significant role in determining female employees' interpretation and their activities (Kornberger et al., 2010). For example, male employees should be trained on referring to their female colleagues by 'the lady' rather than 'the girl'. Referring to a female by the word 'lady' is ought to give her a sense of respect and appreciation. When male employees alter their discursive language with female employees, customers will witness this respectful interaction and thus, gradually will learn how to communicate respectfully with female employees without undermining their abilities just because they are women.

In addition to language, it might be helpful if managers are more considerate of their female employees' life conditions. This can be achievable by promoting flexibility among female employees (Rogier and Padgett, 2004; Scandura and Lankau, 1997). Flexibility could be on two levels that are the uniform and the working hours. Referring back to the data collected for the study, female employees are obliged to wear the same 'male-like' style uniform as their male counterparts. From the management perspective, they are protecting their female employees from getting sexually harassed by male employees and customers (as the owner reveals during a conversation). This gives us a clear image of the male dominated management perspective, whose practices are shrinking females' power relative to males. In order to promote gender equity, female employees should have the right to choose for themselves if they would like to wear a unisex uniform or a uniform which is more feminine. As for the working hours, female employees should be given flexibility in choosing their working hours. This will give female employees the freedom to give time to their families (*i.e.* especially if they are mothers), as well as they will be given the privacy and the right to be flexible while working and/or resting when they are sick (i.e. period pain).

In addition to that, the management should be a good listener and supporter of its employees, especially when they experience customer incivility. Thus, the management should accept incivility and acknowledge it accordingly. When the management acknowledges incivility, it will allow employees to trust the management and to discuss their uncivil experiences with customers, without being afraid to be labeled as inadequate and unprofessional. In order to do that, managers efforts can be focused on training its employees not only on how to perform the service, but also to engage in sharing their experiences with customers, and on how to deal with it. In this way, employees can feel the management's support in doing its best to reduce and/or prevent incivility in the workplace. When incivility decreases in the workplace, this indicates that customers are satisfied and happy. This will result in optimizing employees' satisfaction for their job since they are able to secure happy customers. In addition to that, employees will feel happy when securing happy customers, because this is what their organisation is seeking and thus, they are reinforcing the status quo (Bishop et al., 2005; Korczynski, 2002).

7.5 Limitations and future research

In this section I will explore the possible limitations of my research. I will focus on examining the potential drawbacks of the methods used to collect data and will also recommend potential actions and scientific studies that should follow.

Firstly, by referring back to chapter three, I adopted a qualitative approach to collect data for this study. The collection of data was through participant-observation, informal conversations; as well as 12 semi-structured interviews with 10 (9 male and 1 female) service employees, 1(male) general manager, and the owner (male). Although I reached data saturation and the data is sufficient to reach my conclusions, I believe that the ratio of female participants compared to males during the period of conducting interviews is low, and this might cause an underreporting of female employees' experiences and coping behaviours with customer incivility. Future research is recommended to collect data from a larger sample of female employees to construct a comprehensible representation of female employees in a patriarchal environment. Moreover, I have a several months gap between the time when I collected data by participant-observation and when I came back for interviews. This gap might result in a false reporting of employees' experiences, because employees' personalities, experiences, performance could possibly change during such a long-time frame. In addition to that, I agree that the findings of this thesis are based on a small sample in a singular context and thus, the generalisability of the data to other contexts might not be applicable. However, to enable the transferability of the data, the thick description of the data allows readers/scholars to use the findings in different contexts, such as in other restaurants or any other service sector.

This approach adopts a subjective view of the world, which could be problematic to extend the findings to other contexts. I have to stress on the purpose of this inductive research which is not focused on extensive generalisations of the data, rather its purpose is to critically and intensively explain employees' experiences and behaviours in this case study. Consequently, the significance of this research lies in identifying phenomenon that can lead to the development of new theory.

Besides, this research collected data from only one single source in one particular Western city (London), which raises the potentiality of method incredibility and results invalidity. Therefore, this study could be expanded to other ethnic restaurants operating in different countries with different cultures, such as Asian or Middle Eastern. The results might be different in other cultural population, which is capable of validating the results of this study (Kim and Qu, 2019b). Additionally, further research and testing of the method must be carried in order to validate the reliability of this study. It might be interesting to know the outcomes of this study in a culture which is not patriarchal by undergoing a cross-cultural research study. Also, collecting data on a longer timeframe is recommended.

Although this study is focused on exploring customers' uncivil behaviours from the perspective of employees, further research might explore the same study from the perspective of customers to highlight the intentionality of customers in acting deviant and what the motives are behind their behaviours. Additionally, it might be interesting to uncover the reasons behind incivility at a restaurant whose customers are frequent, but authenticity is not necessarily a criterion for attracting/retaining loyal customers. Moreover, the focus of this study has been on an ethnic "authentic" restaurant which does not serve alcohol; thus, the typology of uncivil behaviours might be applicable to contexts where alcohol is being served. Future research might focus on exploring this phenomenon in broader contexts in the service industry, such as bars, hotels, and other restaurants.

Additionally, further research needs to be carried out in this area to explore the ways employees could engage in to balance the relationship with customers in the context of service relationships. There must be ways to do that without entirely breaking up this relationship between employees and frequent customers, which results in losing loyal customers to the firm. The employee construction of incivility is an important point, and it is underdeveloped in the customer incivility literature. It might also be interesting to uncover the role of job autonomy in helping employees control the stress they experience with uncivil customers such as taking a break (Grandey et al., 2004), offering free food/drinks as a courtesy without taking the permission of the higher management.

Secondly, the use of participant-observation brings many disadvantages because it was often difficult to write down all the information due to the very busy environment of the restaurant, and also because I was fully immersed in my work as a hostess. During my employment period, employees forgot my role as a researcher and various workload was my responsibility, such as taking reservations, orders and also seating customers. However, I was able to collect ample of data which gave me rich insights about the research questions answered throughout this research.

Thirdly, although I had a dual perspective in the organisation being myself as a customer and an employee at the case under study, I could not get the managerial perspective of the organisation. Thus, incivility could be very interesting if studied by a researcher who acquires a managerial role to see if he/she will have a different perspective on customer incivility and on how the management could prevent incivility from happening.

Fourthly, the data of my research shows that customer incivility and the coping behaviours of employees are both a product of a corrupt management, which puts employees in a vulnerable position to encounter incivility. In addition, the data shows that the management affect the coping tactics of employees, in which they reinforce the status quo. In the restaurant industry, there will always be uncivil customers where sometimes they might become violent. Thus, incivility might be used by the management as a way to make violence invisible. Therefore, more research is needed to build on this argument and reinforce its existence. It might be interesting to examine how training employees on emotion regulation assists them to deal with their work-stress.

Fifthly, I overlook the problems faced by the top and middle managers. For example, the owner might also be experiencing incivility from frequent customers due to service relationships. Thus, the owner might throw the blame on his managers, and the middle managers will throw their blame on employees. Therefore, further research is needed to explore the tough job that the managers experience and how do they deal with incivility from customers. The study should focus on exploring if the managers attribute all the blame on employees, or if they tend to deal with incivility individually. In all cases, there should be a study which confirms the idea that both the incivility and the responses to re-incivility might be both a redirected anger from customers towards the managers, but it is the employee who suffers the anguish from customers since he/she is situated on the frontline. In order to reinforce this claim, the study should be collecting data from both employees and customers, simultaneously. This could be a very interesting body of research, which will be a significant contribution to the literature on customer incivility where the constructor of incivility is a target and also a victim simultaneously.

Additionally, it is very interesting to study the coping behaviours of service employees dealing with frequent customers over-the-phone, such as in the context of letting agents who deal with the same customer over a period of a year or more. Lastly, although the nature of this study focuses on identifying the antecedents and the coping behaviours of employees in the context of service relationships, further research should focus on exploring the consequences of incivility in this particular context.

7.6 Conclusion

This research aims to extend our understanding of customer incivility, specifically investigating how service employees cope with incivility initiated by frequent customers, in the context of service relationships. I hope that my research contributes to extending our understanding on the discourse of customer incivility beyond the ethnic "authentic" restaurant industry context. The findings of this research show that service employees in this case study restaurant are suffering from customer incivility due to their corrupt management, and it is very significant to understand this concept and how employees cope with it. My research aims at contributing to the knowledge on customer incivility; however, as mentioned in the limitations section, more research is needed to fully understand how employees cope with incivility from frequent customers, and also to address ways that could inform managers on ways to prevent incivility from happening in the first place.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant-observation and Interviews Consent Form

Project Title: Customer Incivility from Frequent Customers in the Context of Service Relationships: Critically Exploring Service Employees' Coping Tactics

Researcher: Nolla Haidar, PhD candidate at Royal Holloway, University of London.

Email Address: pctm004@live.rhul.ac.uk

Before we start, I will explain the project to you. If you have any questions about the project, please do not hesitate to ask me. Each participant is required to agree on the terms of this consent form to commence with this research. I will provide you with a copy of the consent form, if requested.

I will be collecting data via two methods are participant-observation and interview questions (please ask if you need more clarity on the nature of both methods). During participant-observation, I will be collecting data about employee's interactions with customers and also with their colleagues by observations and noting down information on my field diary. The length of the study depends on data saturation. I might note down the name of employees on my field note, but names will be pseudonyms in the research. Neither of participants' names or the restaurant's is identified in the research project or any other publication. This data is treated in high confidentiality. I will be recording conversations/interviews on my mobile phone, and later it will be transcribed on Microsoft Word using a software called oTranscribe. If participants ever feel uncomfortable to be recorded or observed, they are required to notify the researcher, and this will end promptly. Participating in this research is voluntary, and there are no risks associated to participation in this study. If the respondent ever feels they want to opt out, they should never feel the need to give any reasons for doing so.

Name (printed):

Signature:

Date:

Appendix B: Interview questions with service employees

Project Title: Customer Incivility from Frequent Customers in the Context of Service Relationships: Critically Exploring Service Employees' Coping Tactics

Researcher: Nolla Haidar, PhD candidate at Royal Holloway University of London.
Email Address: pctm004@live.rhul.ac.uk

This is a list of the most common questions I asked my participants. Of course, it was not a set of a rigid template since many questions have emerged during the interview sessions. Many questions might sound irrelevant to the research questions, but the data extracted from asking these questions does. This is the reason I highlighted them here in this template.

Demographics:

Name:
Age:
Gender:
Experience:
Nationality/ethnicity:
Job title:

Customer incivility

Describe a critical incident where you experienced customer incivility in the past two months:
What form of incivility you have experienced?
Who is this customer (frequent/random)?
How did you react at the time when the incivility occurred?
How did you cope after the uncivil encounter?
Why do they think that incivility is occurring/who is responsible for allowing it to happen?
How can this be solved?

Antecedents of Incivility

In your opinion, why do you think customers act uncivil?
How can this be eliminated?
Do you believe in the mantra that the customer is always right? Explain your answer and how does this make you feel?
What is the role of the management when incivility occurs?

General Questions about job satisfaction, managerial rules, training schemes and service performance

Do you like your job?
If yes, what makes you love it? If not, what makes you hate it?
What role does the management play to enhance your job performance and satisfaction?
What standards of service does your management recommends? Explain each rule
How did the management communicate service rules with you?
Did you receive any training to perform your job?
Do you always adhere to the service standards recommended by the management? If not, what do you engage in?
How do you serve a good customer?
How do you deal with a bad/uncivil customer?
What behaviours you consider uncivil?
Why do you think customers act uncivil? Reasons for their action?
Who is the perfect customer that you love to serve in your opinion?
If you were dealing with an uncivil customer and you tried to deal with them, but you failed, what other ways you consider on doing to solve this problem?
Is there a difference in behaviours between frequent customers and new comers? Who is more uncivil and why?

Changing career/solution for not doing so
Are you thinking of changing your job? Why?
What are the motives/solutions that could make you stay in your job?

Relationships with organisational members

Describe your relationship with your colleagues (both female and male)

Describe your relationship with the middle managers

Describe your relationship with the owner

Questions about Be-Beirut

What differentiates Be-Beirut from the rest of the restaurants you worked at?

What is your opinion about the outlet space, decoration, food?