

Front Office Employees Against Customer Misbehavior in Hospitality Businesses

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Customer misbehavior Customer incivility Dysfunctional Customer Behavior Deviant Customer Behavior Jaycustomer Received 16 Augustus 2025 Revised 10 September 2025 Accepted 14 September 2025 Article Classification: Research Article	Purpose – Customer misbehavior creates serious consequences for employees, businesses, and other customers. In this regard, the aim of this study is to reveal the customer misbehaviors encountered by front office department employees who are in close contact with guests in hospitality businesses, as well as the behaviors and approaches used by employees to deal with these situations. Design/methodology/approach – In the study, interview method, one of the qualitative research methods, was used. In this context, interviews were conducted with 15 front office department employees working in hospitality businesses. The data obtained were subjected to content analysis. Considering the ease and speed it provides in qualitative research, the analyses were performed using MaxQDA 24 Pro software. Results – As a result of the research, it was determined that all front office department employees were exposed to different customer misbehaviors. Young male employees, especially those working in the front office department, receiving indecent proposals and signs of sexual harassment in their interactions with customers are factors that should be taken into consideration. Another unique finding of the study is the finding that guests migrating from underdeveloped or developing countries to developed countries (e.g. France, England, etc.) generally draw a negative guest profile. This study also reveals that customer misbehavior causes financial damage to front office employees. Discussion – This study emphasises that customer misbehavior is not only an issue that needs to be addressed in terms of each individual's coping behavior, but also an issue that needs to be considered as a whole in the solution-finding process of hospitality businesses. Our findings will help hotel managers better understand how to deal with customer misbehavior and help employees better understand the factors that minimise negative consequences for other customers and the business.

1. Introduction

Customer satisfaction is considered an important component of the success of a service organization (Bani-Melhem, Quratulain & Al-Hawari 2020). Phrases such as 'The customer is king', 'Friendly service' and 'The customer is always right' are often used to emphasize the importance of customer service and customer satisfaction in service-oriented businesses (Wen et al., 2024; Abhipsa Rout, Piramanayagam & Mallya, 2025). It is generally believed that satisfying customers is a crucial factor for business success, and employees are eager to transfer their marketing power to their more demanding customers today. Arslan & Tanrısevdi (2022) and Liu, Lee, & Choi (2024) even emphasized that since customer satisfaction directly affects the competitiveness and stability of businesses, an increasing number of businesses are prioritizing customer satisfaction over employee well-being.

Increasing consumer sovereignty as a result of the priority that businesses give to customers poses complex ethical dilemmas for businesses. However, research in business ethics has begun to document the negative aspects of consumer sovereignty (Bhatnagar et al., 2023). It is stated that customers seem to be reluctant to comply with institutional or societal rules and norms that require them to behave in a compliant and obedient manner during service consumption (Fisk et al., 2010). Some customers exhibit deliberate and unexpected behaviors towards customer-centric approaches. In this context, a close examination of customer behavior reveals that customers can be not only wrong but also blatantly unfair. Unfair customers take advantage of being "always right" by claiming unfair privileges and compensation, which negatively impacts companies and, in some cases, employees and other customers (Berry & Seiders, 2008).

Those working in the service sector often encounter customer behavior in their daily interactions with customers. Customer behavior that violates generally accepted norms is common in everyday service

Önerilen Atıf/Suggested Citation

Esen, O. (2025). Front Office Employees Against Customer Misbehavior in Hospitality Businesses, *İşletme Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 17 (3), 2510-2525.

encounters (Reynolds & Harris, 2009; Tan et al., 2020; Tuncer, 2025). A study conducted in the US reveals that service workers suffer from customer verbal aggression, on an average, 10 times a day (Grandey, Dickter & Sin, 2004). Yagil (2008) argues that the reason for this is that the service role makes employees vulnerable because their priority is to meet the demands of customers. Customers' sense of entitlement influences their reactions when they are dissatisfied with the service; organizations convey the message that customers can take advantage in any situation. This leads to service interactions becoming an environment where customers exhibit unusual behavior. The activities of misbehaving customers are considered a major challenge for organizations in different sectors that want to improve their service encounters.

Guests have always been the most important factor for businesses operating in the hospitality sector. Businesses want to manage their communication processes correctly to learn about their consumers' needs and satisfaction trends (Chung et al., 2021). Due to the high levels of interaction in the hotel sector, it is not surprising that employees experience misbehavior from customers (Torres, Niekerk & Orlowski, 2017). Misbehavior of customers has a negative impact, especially on front office employees. However, the underlying mechanisms, from customer misbehavior to negative employee outcomes, need to be further uncovered and examined (Zhao et al., 2024). Pu et al., (2024) stated that research on mistreatment against frontline employees in the hospitality industry is still limited. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to examine the rude customer behaviors encountered by front office employees who are in close contact with guests in hospitality businesses and the methods used by employees to deal with these situations. Therefore, the article reviews the published literature on the manifestation and prevention of unethical customer behavior in tourism from the perspective of front office employees.

2. Literature Review

The hospitality sector is known to be highly interactive and high-touch by nature. The focus of employees is on conducting effective interactions with customers (Pu et al., 2024). Those working in the hospitality sector, especially in the hotel sector, have to endure a unique working environment that is different from the working environment in other business sectors (Chung et al., 2021). Hospitality businesses and their employees need to meet the demands of their customers to ensure customer satisfaction and loyalty. The customer plays an important role in the service delivery process, especially in the hotel sector (Çalışkan ve Gürbüz, 2022). Due to the heterogeneous and inseparable nature of the industry, customers are largely involved in the service production and delivery process as compared to its manufacturing counterpart. Since the service is produced and consumed simultaneously, both contact personnel and customers are crucial in a service encounter (Tsang, Lee & Chan, 2011). More specifically, in the hotel context, guests and employees interact multiple times during their stay. For example, in a resort hotel, customer and guest interactions may include reception, concierge, room service, pool staff, restaurant waiters and bellboys. Given the length of stay and the likelihood of a guest interacting with the same employee multiple times, the hotel sector presents a unique scenario where attention to unethical customer behavior becomes even more critical (Torres, Niekerk & Orlowski, 2017).

In service sector encounters, although customers are considered to behave rationally, some customers deliberately violate commonly accepted norms (Fisk et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2014). Customers constantly deviate from social norms in their interactions with service employees (Yagil & Luria, 2014). Past studies use many terms to describe the activities of customers who behave in a way that is contrary to the organization's expectations and broader societal norms. Bitner, Booms & Mohr (1994) identified problematic incidents encountered by employees as problematic customer behavior and categorized them into four groups: drunkenness, verbal and physical abuse, violations of company policies or laws, and uncooperative customers. In 1994, Lovelock defined such disruptive customers as "Jay Customers" - those who are loud and disruptive, damage service goods or even mistreat other customers or service providers - and classified six categories of customers' misbehavior: thieves, irresponsible, vandals, rule-breakers, brawlers and domestic squabblers (Chung et al., 2021; Widmier Gala & Koufodontis, 2024). In the literature, concepts such as dysfunctional customer behavior (Harris & Reynolds, 2003), deviant customer behavior (Mills & Bonoma, 1979), consumer misbehavior (Fullerton & Punj, 2004), aberrant consumer behavior (Fullerton & Punj, 1993) and customer incivility (Kern & Grandey, 2009) have also been used to describe this type of behavior. The reason for this difference is that the concept has attracted academic attention in the field for a long time and the ways of categorizing behaviors differ among academics (Chung et al., 2021). In this research, to avoid confusion, the concept of "misbehavior" will be used, which includes all the negative behaviors mentioned above.

Employees working in hospitality businesses encounter different types of unethical customer behaviors. Esen (2024), in his research conducted with front office, food and beverage services, housekeeping and animation department employees, revealed that all participants encountered unethical customer behavior. Misbehaviors experienced, witnessed or heard about by employees include what guests do, showing rude behavior, shouting at employees, insulting, humiliating employees, accusing employees of sexual harassment or theft etc., assaulting them, throwing dangerous items, stabbing employees and mostly verbal sexual harassment (Aslan & Kozak, 2012). Torres et al. (2017) reported that customers show insulting comments, anger, frustration, verbal attacks and condescending behavior towards employees. Yagil (2008) identified aggressive and sexually harassing behaviors exhibited by customers in service encounters and revealed that the factors existing in the service provider-customer relationship form the basis of customer aggression and sexual harassment.

In the face of the prevalence of customer misbehavior in the hospitality industry, industry employees appear to have developed some coping strategies. Yagil (2008) found that employees who are prohibited from responding directly to customer aggression and sexual harassment often attempt to cope with such behavior with emotion-focused strategies that reflect denial and withdrawal, which are ineffective in terms of stress reduction. Huang & Miao (2016) determined that employees use problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and process-focused coping strategies in response to customers' misbehavior. Esen (2024) found that hotel employees use the strategies of reporting to senior managers, trying to explain, apologizing and ignoring in the face of customer misbehavior. These results indicate that hotel employees are generally vulnerable to customers' misbehavior.

The importance of studying customers' rude behavior is highlighted in research that indicates the deep and pervasive consequences of customer behavior. In this context, it is stated that misbehavior of the customers creates harmful effects on other customers, employees and organizations (Reynolds & Harris, 2006). Pu et al. (2024) found that customer incivility has a significant negative impact on employees' job satisfaction while it has a significant positive impact on emotional exhaustion and turnover intention. Liu et al. (2024) show how unethical customer behavior negatively affects employees and threatens their well-being. In addition, Im et al. (2024) found that unethical customer behavior triggers cognitive reactions in employees, leading to a desire to retaliate and negatively affecting their service performance. Particularly in cultures or environments where there is no institutional support or interest in service providers, customer attitudes can make service providers feel disempowered (Yagil, 2008). As a result, even though service providers consider rude customer behavior as part of their business (Yagil, 2008), they are still affected by the negative consequences that occur in the service sector (Liu, 2024).

Customer misbehavior has significant consequences for businesses and other customers. Tan et al. (2019) stated that misbehavior of the customers leads to inadequate service delivery by triggering daily anger and anxiety. It has been found that problematic customers can undermine service quality by using verbal and physical aggression against service employees (Harris and Daunt, 2013). Fong, So, and Law (2017) found that a rude customer affects other customers' willingness to stay with service providers and their satisfaction with their service experience. Generally speaking, Misbehavior of the customers is said to have a negative impact on the service organization (Tsang, Lee & Chan, 2011).

Investigating the negative effects caused by customer misbehavior and clarifying the conditions for reducing the negative effects are of great importance both in theory and in practice (Pu et al., 2024). Given the potentially significant consequences of rude customer behavior for service encounters, it is not surprising that some theorists and researchers have investigated the causes of rude customer behavior (Harris & Reynolds, 2004). Reynolds and Harris (2006) stated that customer misbehavior varies across sectors. However, different findings may be revealed when the sectoral characteristics of hospitality businesses are taken into consideration. Given the harmful consequences resulting from customers' misbehavior, there is an urgent need to investigate managerial practices that can mitigate the negative effects of this behavior in the hotel sector (Fisk et al., 2010; Tan et al., 2019). As far as is known, no department-based customers' misbehavior study has ever been conducted in hospitality businesses, leaving a gap that needs to be filled with current studies. In the light of these data, it is thought that determining the customers' misbehaviors and their consequences experienced by the front office department employees who have the most frequent and close contact with customers will make significant contributions to the relevant literature and the tourism sector.

Because frontline employees are the face of service organizations; with their positive attitudes and behaviors, they ensure satisfactory service delivery and help customer loyalty. Customer incivility poses a challenge for service organizations because employees' negative reactions to incivility can jeopardize the success of the organization (Bani-Melhem, Quratulain & Al-Hawari 2020). Research on incivility towards frontline workers in the hospitality industry is still limited. However, it is thought that examining customers' misbehavior on a departmental basis in different cultures will reveal different findings (Aslan & Kozak, 2012; Pu, 2024). It is especially important for hospitality businesses to identify unethical customer behaviors encountered by front office department employees with whom guests come into close contact and communication upon arriving at hospitality businesses and to present solution suggestions for these behaviors. In this context, the sub-objectives of the article are as follows:

1. To determine the customers' misbehavior encountered by front office department employees
2. To reveal the customers' misbehavior trends according to nationality / gender / age factors
3. To determine the coping methods of front office employees for the customers' misbehavior.

3. Research Method

In the process of preparing a scientific study, the dilemma of which research approach to use stands out as a serious problem (Mwita, 2022). While quantitative research provides numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research explores the rich textures of human experience and perspective, capturing contexts and nuances that quantitative processes often miss (Lim, 2025). Mwita (2022) revealed that the qualitative approach is flexible, provides in-depth and detailed information, allows the use of multiple data collection methods and minimizes the possibility of missing data, integrates the human touch, and is cost-effective. Qualitative research is widely used to understand people's experiences and express their perspectives when little is known about a topic or phenomenon and one wishes to discover more about it (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Aspers & Corte, 2019). Qualitative methods have emerged as indispensable tools for gaining deep insights and understanding complex phenomena (Lim, 2025). Qualitative research can help researchers access the thoughts and feelings of participants, which can lead to an understanding of the meaning people attach to their experiences. The phenomenological approach within qualitative research focuses on understanding how people experience the world and gives researchers the opportunity to put themselves in someone else's shoes and understand the subjective experiences of participants (Sutton & Austin, 2015). In this direction, qualitative research methods and phenomenology approach were adopted in this study, which aims to evaluate the misbehaviors of customers from the perspective of front office department employees. This study was taken with the approval of the Ethics Committee of Aydın Adnan Menderes University Social and Human Sciences Research with the decision numbered 15/13 and dated 09/07/2024.

3.1.. Data Collection

In qualitative research, the quality of the data obtained is important depending on the data collection method (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). Obtaining data from participants through interviews is a key feature of many qualitative studies. Interviews provide the simplest and most straightforward method of obtaining detailed and rich data about a particular topic. The type of interview to be used to obtain data can be changed depending on the research question, the qualifications of the participants and the method chosen by the researcher (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). Semi-structured interviews are a popular type of interview and include an interview guide with a series of questions for discussion. Questions are determined to include research objectives or questions. However, the researcher has the right to ask questions in any order, to change the topic or to ask for clarification of previous answers or for more detailed answers. To put it another way, semi-structured interviews offer flexibility and at the same time guide the interview (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). In this direction, the interview form created by the researcher consists of two parts; in the first part, the demographic information of the participants, and in the second part, the opinions of the participants were collected with the interview form containing the research questions. Interviews were conducted individually and separately with each participant and lasted an average of 20 minutes. In order to prevent data loss during the interviews, audio recordings were made with the consent of the participants. Field notes were taken during the interviews. Because field notes can provide an important framework for interpreting audio-recorded data

and help the researcher to remember situational elements that need to be taken into account during data analysis (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

3.2.. Study Group

Unlike quantitative approaches, which aim to establish statistical significance by sampling a predetermined number of subjects or elements, qualitative researchers generally do not begin a project with a predetermined sample size. In qualitative research, there are no general formal criteria for determining sample size, and therefore there are no rules that suggest when the sample size is small or large enough for the study (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). In qualitative studies, sample sizes need to be determined as in quantitative studies, but they should not be determined with the same methods (Malterud, , Siersma, & Guassora, 2015). Regarding the number of participants in qualitative studies, the general range is usually between 8 and 15 participants (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). Boddy (2016) shows that samples of 12 may be cases where data saturation occurs among a relatively homogeneous population. Creswell and Creswell (2023) state that in phenomenological researches, research can be carried out with the number of participants in the range of 3-10 people. Additionally, the dominant concept regarding sample size in qualitative research is "saturation" (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora 2015). Therefore, the research data were continuously analyzed before coding. After the 14th interview, when similar answers were observed, the interviews were terminated. Phenomenological studies are often chosen because of the participants' experiences of the phenomenon under study and their ability to express these experiences (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). In this context, the study group of the research consists of 15 front office department employees working in the front office department of different hotels in the Kuşadası region.

3.3.. Data Analysis

Prior to analysis, data obtained from participants were organized into separate files and numbered P1, P2, ... P15 to represent participants. After reading and reviewing these files individually, they were transferred to MaXQDA software (Gülcan, 2025), which is becoming increasingly popular. However, this application was preferred because it has been stated that such software contributes to increasing the reliability and validity of research in qualitative studies (Leitch, Oktay & Meehan, 2016).

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This technique is used to analyze qualitative data consisting of dense descriptive data (Naeem, Ozuem, Howell & Ranfagni, 2023) and provides researchers with both a structured and flexible framework (Ahmed et al., 2025). In this context, the thematic analysis process proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) was followed during the data analysis process. The analysis began with the researcher carefully reading and familiarizing himself with the data. Subsequently, the stages of coding meaningful data segments, grouping similar codes to form themes, reviewing, defining, and reporting themes were followed.

Peer review (information sharing) techniques were used in the review and reporting process. This technique is considered one of the credibility practices in qualitative research, and it is stated that it helps peers ask questions about the process and content, thereby deepening meanings and substantiating interpretations (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In this context, a colleague who conducts both qualitative research and tourism research was consulted. As a result, the codes, themes, and findings were finalized. In this context, a colleague who conducts both qualitative research and tourism research was consulted. As a result, the codes, themes, and findings were finalized. Finally, in the findings section of the study, the codes under the themes are visualized along with their frequency values. This application also reports which data are repeated more frequently within the themes.

4. Findings

Under the heading of findings, firstly the demographic characteristics of the individuals working in the front office department participating in the research are included, then themes related to the experiences of the employees in line with the purpose of the research are presented. In this context, the demographic characteristics of the participants can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Participant Number	Age	Gender	Education	Position	Experience in the Tourism Sector (Year)	Number of Hotels Worked
P1	21	Male	High school	Bellboy	4	4
P2	21	Male	High school	Bellboy	5	4
P3	21	Male	University	Receptionist	5	5
P4	30	Male	University	Assistant Man.	17	4
P5	38	Male	University	Manager	20	5
P6	25	Male	University	Receptionist	4	2
P7	37	Male	University	Manager	20	12
P8	27	Female	University	Receptionist	3	1
P9	21	Male	University	Receptionist	5	2
P10	40	Male	University	Manager	27	4
P11	39	Male	University	Shift Leader	20	5
P12	41	Male	University	Chief	16	2
P13	40	Male	University	Manager	22	2
P14	22	Male	University	Receptionist	4	3
P15	35	Male	University	Assistant Man.	15	3

According to Table 1, it can be seen that the majority of the 15 people who participated in the study were male, and only one participant was female. However, the ages of the participants range from 21 to 41. Participants are mainly university graduates and work in various positions at the front office (manager, receptionist, bellboy, etc.). Participants' sector experience ranged from 3 to 27 years, and the number of hotels they worked at varied from 1 to 12.

Following the demographic findings regarding the participant profile, the qualitative data obtained regarding employee experiences were evaluated through thematic analysis and presented visually in Figure 1. Each theme is explained in detail.

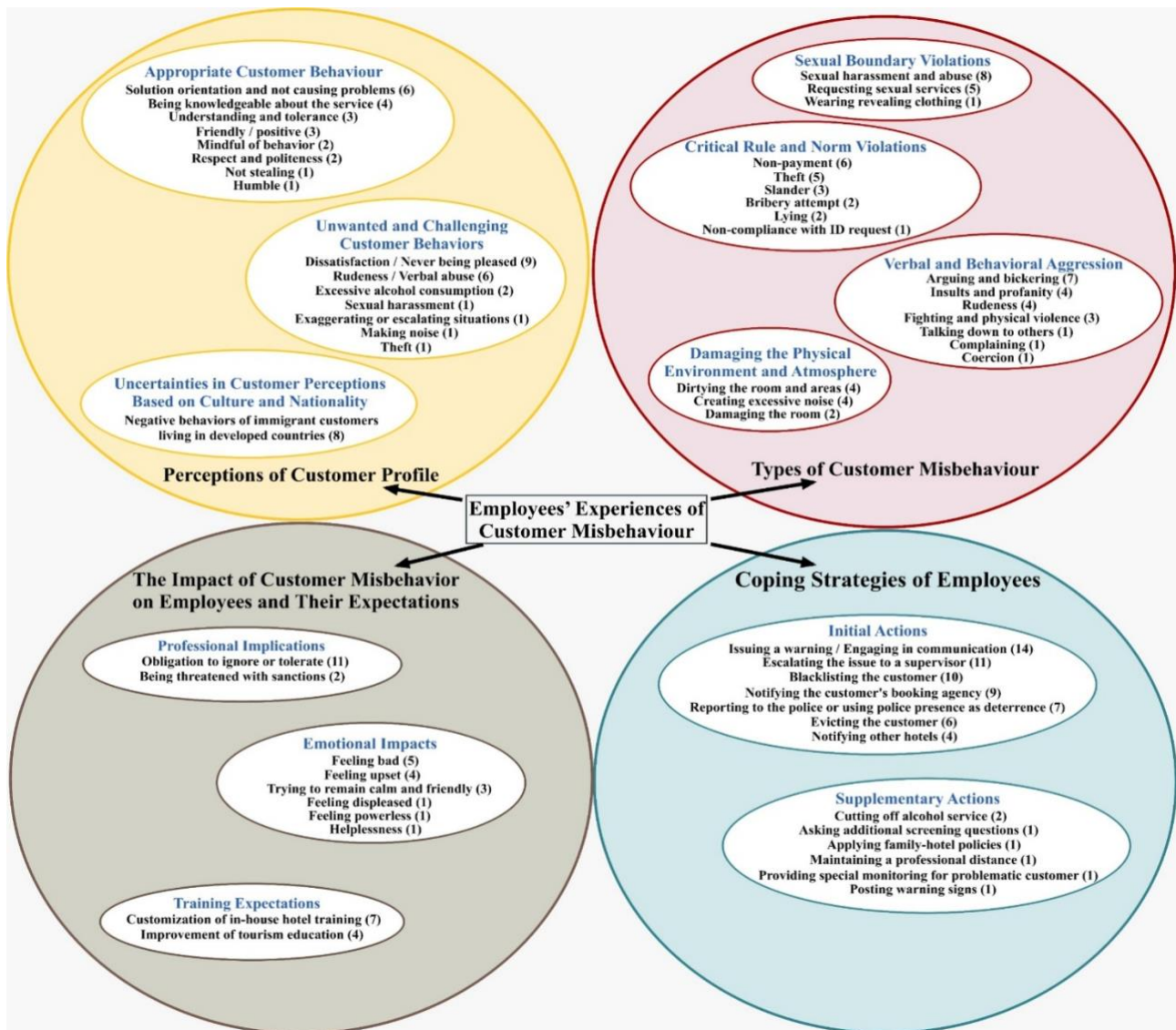


Figure: 1 Findings of Thematic Analysis

In Figure 1, the findings regarding the experiences of front office employees regarding the research purpose are analyzed and presented. When examining the figure, it can be seen that the data is grouped under four main themes. There are sub-themes under each main theme, and the codes that make up these themes are included with their frequencies. Participant opinions were coded semantically. Frequencies represent the frequency of a relevant topic and may vary due to a participant expressing multiple opinions or experiences on the same topic.

Theme 1: Perception of Customer Profile

This theme covers the perceptions that employees develop about different guests and the behaviors with which these perceptions are associated, as well as the evaluation of guest behavior based on nationality and cultural factors. In this context, when the sub-themes were examined, the positive and negative customer descriptions of employees were analyzed first, and two main sub-themes emerged in this direction.

According to the participants, "good/excellent" customer behavior was considered in terms of appropriate customer behavior. According to the sub-theme, the most frequently emphasized code is that guests are solution-oriented and do not cause problems. For example, P2 summarizes this situation with the following statement: "People who communicate their problems calmly and quietly in any situation are the best customers for me. Problems can arise, but when they do arise, customers who focus on solutions rather than exaggerating the problem are the best type of customers for me." However, participants believe that it is necessary to be knowledgeable about the services provided. P13 explains this situation as follows: "The ideal customer is a guest who is aware of their reservation, i.e., which hotel they have made a reservation for, which room type they have reserved, and which concept

they have reserved for, and who has no additional expectations beyond the reservation they have made and the service they have received." In addition, participants associate understanding, tolerant, cheerful, and positive guests with an excellent customer profile. On the other hand, customers' misbehaviors are discussed in terms of unwanted and challenging customers' behaviors. According to the sub-theme, the most frequently expressed undesirable behavior is that the customers have a generally dissatisfied profile or do not like anything. One participant's statement regarding this situation, "I can say that the guests are incomprehensible, make me hassle and make me suffer even with the simplest things. They don't like anything or they ask for things I can't do when they are very drunk..." (P3) explains the relevant sub-theme. In addition, participants described the behavior of customers who frequently used rude or insulting language towards staff as "bad" and stated that this type of guest profile was undesirable. Similarly, excessive alcohol consumption, sexual harassment, theft, creating excessive noise, or exaggerating events are also considered coercive behaviors.

Another sub-theme is about which nationality of the guests has positive/negative behaviors. According to the findings, it was found that there were uncertainties in the perceptions of the employees. While the participants evaluated the guests according to their nationality, they gave examples of negative behaviors by identifying them with expressions such as "Slavs drink too much" (P14), on the other hand, they expressed positive opinions about guests of the same nationality or similar culture. On the other hand, one participant (P1) gave a positive example of Asian guests, saying, "They are very tolerant and understanding people. For example, they even tidy their beds before leaving their rooms." Meanwhile, the statement, "Our local guests, because they feel like they own the hotel," gives a negative example of Turkish guests. However, when the findings are examined, it is seen that there is no general consensus, or it is explained that no nation can be generalized with a statement such as "I think it is more in terms of people's personal behavior, I do not want to generalize." (P6). On the other hand, it has often been stated that guests migrating from underdeveloped or developing countries to developed countries (e.g., France, England, etc.) generally have a negative guest profile (f=8). It has been stated that the reason for these attitudes may be a reflection of individuals' past experiences of exclusion. For example, some participants supported this finding, saying, "Discrimination in their country of origin can cause them to take it out on others elsewhere." (P13) said, "I think it's because of where they're from. They were treated like second-class citizens there, so when they come here, they want to treat others the same way. They're trying to act a bit superior and take out their frustration here." There are efforts to reflect that" (P4) or "because they were oppressed in the past, they now adopt that mindset and constantly think that people are being racist or that the person in front of them is being racist toward them..." (P7).

Theme 2: Customers' Misbehavior

This theme describes customers' misbehavior experienced by front desk staff. According to the theme, four sub-themes can be identified. The sub-theme of sexual boundary violations covers inappropriate or disturbing sexually explicit behaviors displayed by guests towards employees. Participants stated that boundaries were crossed, particularly through body language, verbal innuendos, or direct sexually explicit gestures or offers. For example, the experience of one participant, "We had a guest and she said the room door wouldn't open. We had the key checked once, and we did that. Then she said it wouldn't open again, and we did it again. The third time, she said the same thing, and there was a female staff member with me. I said, 'Okay, I'll go and check, you wait, there must be a problem with the door.' I had already informed housekeeping, and they were supposed to come. I left before them. The guest tried to pull me in, but it wasn't about the door opening. When you're focused on a task and get such a reaction, you're shocked at first... Plus, even if a woman pulls a man inside, she can complain the next day." (P13) clearly reveals this situation. On the other hand, P10 explains the situation with the following words: "We have a problem with video recording. Male guests are recording videos of female guests in the pool and saving them on their phones. This also happens to some of our female employees. It doesn't turn into an attack or anything; our employees are just subjected to verbal abuse or things like 'let's follow each other on social media, let's go out, let's have a drink.' " Similarly, P10's statement, "He comes to the reception drunk at night and asks me to arrange a girl for him. He says he will pay me. They are a bit insistent on this matter," provides evidence of another sexual boundary violation. In this context, questions asked by some guests to staff about whether the hotel offers sexual services are another notable example of boundary violations. Participants who experienced this violation stated that "I had checked in for a room for two gentlemen. After getting in, they came downstairs and asked me directly if there was a woman as a hotel service. I said no, we do not have such a service." (P2) or "it's like male guests usually asking for women, in a colloquial way, for fun..." (P15) are noteworthy.

The sub-theme of critical rule and norm violations covers behaviors of hotel guests that are reported by employees and seriously violate the order of the business. In the sub-theme, actions such as non-payment, theft, slander, non-compliance with ID requests and offering bribes are included as expressions of behavior that are clearly contrary to both business rules and social ethical norms. Regarding guests who leave the hotel without paying for the services they received, one participant said, *'For example, the man has a bill, but he says he won't pay it. We say we'll call the police.'* He says, *'Go ahead and call them,'* and then he leaves. We have no intention of holding him at the door, but because we are restricting his freedom, so we are now in a difficult situation. He doesn't pay, and *'he says you can't take this money',* we say *'you can't leave',* but he says, *'If I know Turkey, I'll leave,'* and he walks out.' (P5) These statements show that some guests do not even care about police intervention to avoid paying. On the other hand, a different participant stated, *"The guest came to the hotel, made a reservation, and tried to escape without paying when leaving. Of course, he was caught and legal proceedings were taken."* (P6). Therefore, this situation indicates that employees have limited authority to intervene and that inconsistencies may arise in practice. In addition, management pressures were identified to compensate front office department employees for the financial loss caused by guests who did not pay for the service they received from the hospitality businesses. Some employees who encountered these situations stated that they had salary cuts and paid money to the business. In this context, it has been determined that customer misbehavior causes financial damage to employees. When other codes are examined, the following statements indicate theft: *"Unfortunately, there are people who fill their suitcases with the minibar in their rooms when they buy an all-inclusive plan..."* (P1); *"They lose any item, a valuable item... Then they slander the hotel. We have guests who slander the staff and the room cleaners."* (P8); and the following statements indicate bribery: *"Let's set the room at 3000 liras or 2500 liras, I'll give you 2750 liras, you can have 250 liras and the hotel can have 2500 liras."* (P15).

The sub-theme of verbal and behavioral aggression describes the verbal or physical violence to which employees are exposed by guests. Behaviors such as provoking arguments, talking down, shouting, rudeness, and bickering expressed by participants were evaluated in this context. When expressing such negative situations experienced with guests, participants often associated the cause of such behaviors with excessive alcohol consumption by the guests or their dissatisfaction with the service (especially the room type). For example, participants' statements such as *"It usually happens at night. During such shifts, the night becomes more difficult. Of course, I have problems with guests who drink too much alcohol, etc., there are arguments, etc."* (P6) or *"At the front desk, where I have encountered guests who are drunk, there are some problems. Sometimes they don't like their room, sometimes they are too drunk. There are also people who are drunk and behave rudely to the staff and speak badly."* (P7) support this situation. In this context, this association made by the participants is a remarkable finding as it shows that employees tend to make sense of customers' misbehavior by establishing a cause-effect relationship. In this context, this association made by the participants is a remarkable finding as it shows that employees tend to make sense of customers' misbehavior by establishing a cause-effect relationship. However, one participant summarized the difficult situation he experienced by saying, *"There might be violence against his wife... Of course, we cannot intervene because it is between them, but if it gets to the point of disturbing the other guests, then we intervene. It is not pleasant, of course, but it is a person's private life"* (P6). Another participant described in detail a major fight he experienced. P5 described this situation as follows:

"They broke each other's noses and mouths and bloodied everything around them. Even though I had nothing to do with the incident, I ended up covered in blood. The individuals who broke tables and glasses at the bar, damaged the hotel, damaged the desk, and beat someone with scissors to the point of death are frightening other guests. Guests are scared while watching them. As a result, we have received numerous complaints from other guests. The unfortunate aspect is that both of them are boxers. Of course, no one separated them out of fear, so there was blood everywhere. I was the last one to go and separate them, and blood was coming out of everywhere I touched. Both of them were drunk, so we called the police, who took them to the station and then sent them back later." These statements show that employees are torn between intervening in violent situations and not violating privacy, while also revealing that employees sometimes take on a kind of crisis management responsibility.

Finally, the sub-theme of damaging the physical environment and the atmosphere reflects the negative behavior of the guests towards the hotel and the general environment. Making noise and polluting the environment and damaging the room are among the most common behaviors exhibited by guests. Participants described this situation as follows: *"When they come to the reception, they are constantly shouting and yelling, and I would even say talking down, so it's hard to communicate with them properly"* (P9), *"they leave the rooms very dirty..."*

The staff on the floor are really bothered by this" (P2) or "they urinate in places where no one is around, like the garden, but of course we immediately investigate that customer. If they're drunk, we immediately cut off their alcohol." (K13).

Theme 3: Coping Strategies of Employees

This sub-theme explains the methods employees resort to when faced with customers' misbehavior. P12's statement, *"First, I try to listen, I try to understand. When someone is drunk, their language becomes a bit slurred, so comprehension can be problematic. When I can't understand, I ask the bellboy to seat the guest or call the night manager. If I can understand what they're saying, then I try to solve the problem and help them,"* illustrates this situation, while also demonstrating various strategies they develop, such as exceeding their authority or escalating the issue to supervisor in difficult situations, blacklisting the customer, notifying the customers' booking agency, reporting to the police when necessary, or intimidating them. Similarly, the participants' statements such as *"When the situation goes beyond a certain point, I pass it on to the authorities, to my superiors. I try to leave it to those above me and run away" (P3) or "I asked someone from the management to help me, explained the situation, and I got as far away as possible because I was going to lose my job. I got as far away from there as possible to avoid being in that situation" (P9)* also support this situation. In some cases, more explicit sanctions are imposed, such as removing the guest from the hotel. It is noteworthy that one participant (P15) used polite language even in such a situation, saying, *"There were insulting, there was profanity. Please let us take you out in our golf cart. We apologize for your negative experience. I hope we would like to host you in the future."* Finally, it was found that in some cases, hotel staff informally shared information about the guest in question with other hotel employees. One participant explained this situation as follows: *"We are calling the front desk staff nearby, we notify other hotels, there is such a situation, its name is... if he comes to your hotel, do not accept him, we are informally warning our friends at other hotels about this" (P7).* Another participant said, *"For example, X caused an incident. We can't say don't take X because there is a personal data protection law, but for example, if they ask if you have experienced such an incident, it is usually group-based, they want to organize something, they ask us if we have had any problems with this group, we share information without giving names" (P4).* These examples reveal that employees sometimes act based on mutual relationships, with a sense of professional solidarity, observing institutional and legal boundaries but also showing flexibility according to the needs in the field.

Other practices demonstrate the limited availability of coping strategies expressed by the participants. As previously stated, these include stopping the service of alcohol to guests who consume excessive amounts of alcohol and begin to behave excessively, and paying special attention to guests who have the potential to exhibit bad behavior. In addition, in cases of sexual boundary violations, practices such as family-hotel practice, maintaining a professional distance with the guest, and asking extra screening questions are also implemented. For example, P11 said, *"This is about sex, like bringing a woman here. Can I get her first and last name? When the guest hesitated, you already knew. Or, a guest came and said my aunt's daughter was coming, and I said okay... There aren't two separate beds, he said... I said I'll take the name and surname of your aunt's daughter, she's Asian... I said again, I'll take her name and surname, he said I don't know. I said, how can you not know your aunt's daughter's name?"* These statements show that he is trying to manage the situation using a questioning approach.

Theme 4: The Impact of Customer Misbehavior on Employees and Their Expectations

This sub-theme covers the emotional impacts and professional implications that employees experience when faced with customers' misbehavior and the expectations they develop regarding such situations. According to the sub-theme of professional implications, employees may be forced to ignore/tolerate the behavior of some guests. Although there are people who do not want to display this behavior, it has been found that certain behaviors may differ when the hotel owner knows the guests, when they are frequent guests, or when they are individuals in high positions (such as district governors or provincial governors). Participants stated that *'some rules can be flexible because the business owner is a close acquaintance' (P7), or "we try to treat all customers equally, whether they are old customers or new customers, and we try not to discriminate, but if a customer is a repeat customer for a long time, things change a little. The guest expects a bit more privilege, so we need to be a bit more accommodating towards them, or we need to act according to their wishes because they have more requests." (P3)* These statements reveal a practice where the principle of equal treatment is relaxed and attitudes may vary depending on the customer profile. However, although not frequent, it has been observed that hotel owners may threaten employees with sanctions. Participants clearly expressed this issue with sentences such as,

"Suppose that the guest escapes through the back door without paying for the extras, we don't notice it. They told us that if something like this happens again, they would charge us for it. They didn't implement it at first, but they did give us a warning saying that if the same thing happens, it will be charged to us." (P2) and "Employees can pay the fee out of their own pockets." (P14). This situation reveals that employees can sometimes be held responsible for financial losses. All these situations experienced by employees, including customers' misbehavior, affect the staff emotionally. Therefore, the sub-theme "emotional impacts" summarizes this situation. According to this theme, participants generally experience negative emotions. Nevertheless, they may still try to remain calm or remain friendly, depending on the sector they work in. However, some participants expressed that the negative situations experienced affect their work motivation, for example, "It makes me feel bad and decrease my motivation. It also makes the rest of my working hours a little difficult" (P2). On the contrary, a different participant clarified this situation by saying, "Frankly, it does not decrease my motivation to work. I continue with the same determination and ambition, but of course, one can inevitably be affected" (P8). Therefore, this situation shows that negative behaviors create emotional and motivational effects on employees, but this effect is not experienced at the same level by every employee.

Since it is not always known how to react to customers' misbehavior, the sub-theme of training expectations has emerged. Although some participants (n=4) received training in the institutions they worked at, they stated that this training was about general guest behavior. It is noteworthy that P4 emphasized his lack of education with the words, "I did not receive any special education, unfortunately I learned through bitter experience." A participant's comments regarding educational expectations are as follows:

"In general, I think there should be training in problem-solving skills for critical situations. This could include training on how to solve problems and what to do in such situations"(P6). Therefore, it has been found that there is an expectation for training on guest behavior within the institution or in tourism education, or for the scope of such training to be expanded.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This research aims to obtain insights into customers' misbehavior from the perspective of front office employees in hospitality businesses. Pu et al. (2024) points out the limited research on customers' misbehavior towards frontline employees in the hospitality sector. Similarly, Zhao et al. (2024) emphasises the need for a more in-depth examination of the underlying mechanisms of the effects of customers' misbehaviors on employees. In this context, the research provides a valuable contribution to the literature by filling the existing gaps in the field. The research examines hotel employees' experiences with customers' behavior in a multifaceted way, revealing that these experiences are not limited to the service process alone, but are also shaped by the unethical attitudes, emotional burdens and managerial preferences that employees encounter.

According to the research, hotel employees categorise customers who are generally solution-oriented, knowledgeable about the services they will receive, not problem-oriented, friendly and understanding as 'excellent'; and dissatisfied, disapproving or rude guests as 'bad'. However, customers' misbehavior can be summarised under four main themes. In this context, Sexual Boundary Violations generally include sexually explicit requests and inquiries about sexual services directed at employees. Critical Rules and Norms Violations include violations such as leaving without payment, theft, slander, or bribery. Verbal And Behavioral Aggression includes attitudes such as arguing, insulting, bickering and rudeness. Finally, Damaging the Physical Environment and Atmosphere includes behaviors such as creating excessive noise or dirtying the rooms and hotel areas. In this context, the research explains specifically which customers' misbehavior occurs and, in general, under which themes these behaviors gain meaning. The research is consistent with other studies in the literature in terms of the types of misbehavior exhibited by customers.

It is emphasized that structural inequalities existing in the service provider-customer relationship form the basis of aggression and sexual harassment behavior exhibited by the customer (Yagil, 2008). In this research, employees generally associated the misbehavior exhibited by customers with excessive alcohol consumption or dissatisfaction with the service. Therefore, it indicates that guest negative behaviors may also be closely related to contextual conditions. However, it has been concluded that immigrants, especially those living in developed countries, have a higher rate of exhibiting misbehavior.

It has been concluded that employees use methods such as warning, escalating to supervisor, evicting the customer, blacklisting or notifying the customers' booking agency to deal with customers' misbehavior. This situation parallels and contributes to the research results of Esen (2024). However, no statistics are kept regarding customers' misbehavior, and the strategy of cutting off alcohol service is not a common practice. Therefore, this result reveals that the practices are shaped by individual preferences within the situation. In other words, it was concluded that employees did not have sufficient knowledge about how to behave in the face of customers' misbehavior. It has been concluded that employees may be subjected to harassment in environments where they are alone, especially in cases of sexual boundary violations, but they do not have sufficient knowledge about how to react to these situations. In addition, employees are concerned about being complained about by customers even though they do not respond. This is an issue that needs to be taken into consideration not only for employees but also for hotel management, who are responsible for taking precautions to prevent such risks. In this context, all misbehaviors encountered reveal the need for employee training and indicate that this issue should be addressed seriously in terms of both sectoral practices and tourism education. However, in some cases, it has been concluded that negative behavior from guests who are known to the business owner, repeat customers, or those in high positions is tolerated. All these situations once again highlight the need for managerial practices that can systematically reduce the harmful effects of customers' misbehavior (Fisk et al., 2010; Tan et al., 2019). On the other hand, since a limited number of participants stated that they experienced managerial pressure that they would be charged for the damage caused by a customer leaving without paying, it is concluded that employees not only provide service but also bear financial responsibility.

All these negative situations faced by employees cause various negative emotional reactions in them. In this context, it has been determined that employees feel bad and experience feelings such as dissatisfaction and sadness. It is emphasized in the literature that one of the main focuses of employees is to establish effective interactions with customers (Pu et al., 2024), and that interaction creates a positive experience by going beyond expectations for the service recipient (Kara et al., 2024). The research results reveal that there are employees who prefer to maintain communication by remaining friendly and calm even in the face of negative situations. Therefore, while this situation may contribute to a positive experience for tourists, it may also create emotional pressure and risk of burnout for employees. In fact, the research concluded that the customers' misbehavior created both emotional and motivational effects on the employees. This result is supported by some studies in the literature (Reynolds ve Harris, 2006; Harris ve Daunt, 2013; Liu et al., 2024; Pu et al., 2024). However, it has been concluded that this effect is not perceived with the same intensity by all employees, and although it has had significant negative consequences for some employees, some do not experience any negative effects on work motivation and service delivery. This result differs from some other researches (Tan et al., 2019; Im et al., 2024). Therefore, it is believed that this difference among employees stems from two main reasons. While the first reason may be individual differences or employees' expectations, the second reason may be related to the acceptance of negative attitudes and misbehavior of customers as a natural part of the industry, as revealed in this study. Indeed, Yagil (2008) also emphasizes that service providers see customers' misbehavior as part of their job.

In this research, it was seen that all front office employees encountered different types of negative customer situations. This situation reveals the prevalence of customer misbehavior. Customer misbehaviors appear to range from customer aggression to theft. This data is similar to previous studies (Goussinsky, 2020; Pratt, 2020; Atanga, Peng & Mattila, 2024). It is observed that front office department managers generally intervene in customer misbehaviors that occur in hospitality businesses. In addition to the lack of training of employees, the lack of authority to employees also makes it difficult to solve problems. Front office employees, especially those working on the night shift, cannot show the right approach to the problems that occur. In this regard, providing training to front office department employees regarding customer misbehaviors they may encounter and delegating authority to resolve problems will increase the self-confidence of employees and reduce the workload of front office department managers.

This study is limited in that it was conducted only with front office staff working at hotels located in a specific tourist area. In addition, the positions of participants working in the front office vary, and there is diversity in terms of job descriptions and work experience. This situation shows that different perspectives and levels of experience can influence the interpretation of the data obtained. Another notable limitation in the participant

profile is the gender distribution. This situation may lead to experiences being represented in a more limited or one-sided manner, particularly in sensitive areas such as sexual boundary violations and aggressive behaviors induced by alcohol. Since female employees' experiences in such situations may vary, future studies may be designed to focus on female employees. However, this study only considered the perspective of the front office department. However, similar situations may be experienced differently by housekeeping (HK) staff or employees working in other service units. In addition, the perspective of agents may enable a more comprehensive assessment of the issue.

Although the study indicates that a small number of participants faced pressure to compensate employees for losses incurred by guests who left without paying, this situation warrants further investigation. How employees experience the threat of wage cuts, the psychological effects of this situation, and its relationship to their commitment to the organization can be examined using qualitative research methods. The legal aspects of the application can also be included in the research. Contrary to previous research, the study found evidence of a higher frequency of customer misbehavior and immigrant behavior in developed countries. In this regard, sociological studies can be conducted to reveal the relationship between customer misbehavior and immigrant behavior.

Finally, the training needs highlighted by participants point to a new area of research. The issue of how to train employees to deal with negative behavior exhibited by guests is an important area of application in terms of both internal hotel training programs and the restructuring of course content at high schools and universities that offer tourism education. In this context, future research can contribute to both the industry and academia by focusing on issues such as determining employee training needs, developing applicable training models, and curriculum integration.

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