

Staff Responsiveness and Passenger Satisfaction in Tanzania's Standard Gauge Railway Services

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Abstract — This study examined the influence of staff responsiveness on passenger satisfaction in Tanzania's Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) services. Staff responsiveness forms a critical component of service quality in transport operations, encompassing prompt assistance, courteous communication, and professional interaction between service providers and passengers. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study collected quantitative data from 117 passengers through structured questionnaires and qualitative data from key informant interviews. Quantitative results showed that respondents were generally satisfied with staff responsiveness, recording high mean scores for prompt response, courtesy, and assistance (mean values ranging between 3.81 and 4.13). However, regression analysis revealed that staff responsiveness had an insignificant statistical influence on overall passenger satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.013$; $p > 0.05$). Qualitative results complemented these findings, indicating that while passengers appreciated politeness and professionalism, responsiveness alone did not fully determine satisfaction due to communication challenges and limited staffing during peak hours. The study concludes that passenger satisfaction in SGR operations is multidimensional and depends on the integration of staff responsiveness with other service quality factors such as scheduling and facility standards. It recommends continuous staff training, improved communication systems, and coordinated service delivery to enhance passenger experience.

Keywords — Staff responsiveness, passenger satisfaction, Standard Gauge Railway, Tanzania Railway Corporation, service quality

I. INTRODUCTION

Rail transport is a cornerstone of national and regional connectivity, supporting economic growth, social integration, and trade competitiveness. Across the globe, railway systems have evolved from traditional meter-gauge lines to modern Standard Gauge Railways (SGR), providing faster, safer, and more efficient mobility (Lu, Han, & Zhou, 2018). In Africa, the development of SGR networks reflects a shift toward modern transport infrastructure capable of meeting contemporary passenger and freight demands (Afolabi, 2018). Tanzania's SGR project, initiated in 2017 and operated by the Tanzania Railway Corporation (TRC) is one of the flagship infrastructural projects under the national industrialization agenda, intended to enhance logistics efficiency and passenger comfort while reducing dependence on road transport (Nkunda, 2023).

The introduction of the SGR aims to transform Tanzania's mobility ecosystem by providing reliable, affordable, and safe transport services. The first operational phases, Dar es Salaam to Morogoro and later to Dodoma have demonstrated the potential of modern rail systems to improve punctuality, comfort, and safety. However, despite the technical achievements, passenger satisfaction remains a multidimensional challenge (The Citizen, 2024; The EastAfrican, 2024). Studies in transport management emphasize that service quality is not determined solely by infrastructure and technology but also by human interaction, the conduct, responsiveness, and professionalism of front-line staff (Bakti & Sumaedi, 2021; Chombo & Sikujua, 2020).

Staff responsiveness, in particular, represents a core component of perceived service quality, shaping how passengers evaluate their experiences. It involves the willingness and ability of railway employees to provide

timely assistance, accurate information, and courteous service (Kumar, 2020). Responsive staff interactions often influence satisfaction more strongly than tangible service elements, especially when passengers encounter disruptions or delays (Widyastuti, 2018). Inconsistent responsiveness, however, may lead to frustration and diminished trust in the system (Otele, 2021). As a result, the interpersonal dimension of railway operations is as critical as physical infrastructure in determining overall service quality. In Tanzania's SGR context, staff responsiveness has received limited empirical attention compared to operational reliability or scheduling efficiency. Although TRC has invested heavily in modern rolling stock and station facilities, there remains a need to understand whether service personnel meet passenger expectations for professionalism, courtesy, and efficiency. Prior studies have examined customer satisfaction within bus and commuter rail systems (Mapunda, 2021; Chombo & Sikujua, 2020) but have not explored the behavioral dynamics of the SGR workforce. Given that SGR is a newly established system, assessing how staff responsiveness contributes to satisfaction can inform managerial strategies and policy interventions to improve service delivery.

Therefore, this study was conducted to assess the influence of staff responsiveness on passenger satisfaction in Tanzania's Standard Gauge Railway. It specifically explores whether courteous, prompt, and helpful staff behavior contributes significantly to overall passenger satisfaction. Beyond its practical implications for TRC management, the study contributes theoretically to the SERVQUAL framework by testing the responsiveness and assurance dimensions in the context of a modern African railway system. Understanding the human dimension of service delivery is essential for achieving both operational excellence and long-term customer loyalty in the rapidly evolving transport sector.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study adopted the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985) as its theoretical foundation. The model identifies five dimensions of service quality including tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Staff responsiveness directly aligns with two of these dimensions: responsiveness (willingness to assist customers) and assurance (staff competence and courtesy that inspire confidence). Applying SERVQUAL enables an assessment of how interpersonal service behaviors influence passenger perceptions and satisfaction (Kewate & Gandhewar, 2023).

Staff responsiveness refers to the willingness and ability of service personnel to provide timely and effective assistance to customers (Kumar, 2020). It captures promptness, accessibility, and courtesy in addressing passenger inquiries and resolving issues (Widyastuti, 2018). Responsiveness directly shapes service experiences, as delays or unhelpful behavior can erode satisfaction even when other service elements perform adequately (Bakti & Sumaedi, 2021). Passenger satisfaction reflects the degree to which service performance meets or exceeds expectations (Bakti & Sumaedi, 2021). In the railway context, satisfaction is driven by a blend of tangible and intangible factors, including punctuality, safety, cleanliness, and staff behavior (Vickerman, 2024; Massawe, 2024). Positive interactions with responsive, professional staff increase perceived service value and encourage customer loyalty (Siti & Muhammad, 2024).

Collectively, the studies reveal that responsiveness, though often acknowledged as a key service quality dimension, interacts with multiple operational and contextual variables in shaping passenger perceptions. In Asia, Widyastuti (2018) studied commuter rail services in Indonesia and found that staff promptness and courtesy significantly influenced overall satisfaction, though the impact varied depending on travel purpose and frequency. Similarly, Kumar (2020) analyzed Northern Railway services in India and concluded that responsiveness and assurance were the strongest predictors of satisfaction among all SERVQUAL dimensions. The studies emphasize that the manner in which staff handle inquiries, provide information, and resolve problems directly shapes the perceived reliability and professionalism of transport services. In Malaysia, Hizam et al., (2021) investigated commuter loyalty and satisfaction in Greater Kuala Lumpur. The study reported that passengers valued efficient communication and immediate assistance during service interruptions, which strengthened loyalty even when delays occurred. The findings highlighted that responsiveness mitigates the negative perception of operational failures, reinforcing the importance of interpersonal engagement in passenger retention strategies.

Within the African context, Otele (2021) examined Kenya's Standard Gauge Railway and noted that although modern infrastructure improved travel comfort, passenger satisfaction depended largely on the attitude and responsiveness of operational staff. The study revealed that poor communication and lack of staff empowerment limited passengers' confidence in the system. Similarly, Bagwandeen (2023) observed that in several African SGR projects, limited experience in modern railway operations reduced service quality, with inadequate staff training undermining responsiveness to passenger needs. In Tanzania, Chombo and Sikujua (2020) analyzed urban commuter satisfaction and identified responsiveness as a crucial determinant of perceived service reliability. Passengers appreciated staff politeness and helpfulness but were dissatisfied with inconsistent

communication during delays. Muya et al. (2023) supported these findings in their assessment of the SGR marketing mix, emphasizing that well-trained personnel are essential for realizing the system’s full potential. They argued that the “people” component of the marketing mix, the front-line staff, represents the operational link between the railway and the public, directly affecting user experience and service sustainability.

Beyond Africa, Siti and Muhammad (2024) explored rail transit satisfaction through a consumption value perspective and found that emotional and social dimensions including interactions with responsive staff, play a substantial role in shaping perceived service quality. Their findings indicate that responsiveness contributes not only to utilitarian satisfaction (efficiency and functionality) but also to hedonic satisfaction (comfort and emotional well-being). Although existing studies confirm the relevance of staff responsiveness, they also expose regional gaps. Most African research has concentrated on technical and infrastructural performance rather than human-centered factors. Studies from Kenya and Nigeria highlight persistent deficiencies in staff communication, professionalism, and customer handling (Zhao, 2020; Oluochi, 2019). In Tanzania, where SGR services are relatively new, empirical evidence linking staff responsiveness to passenger satisfaction remains limited. This research, therefore, extends the existing body of knowledge by offering integrated quantitative and qualitative evidence from Tanzania’s

SGR context. It demonstrates how human interactions complement technological and infrastructural systems to shape passenger experiences in modern railway operations.

Conceptual Framework

The study conceptualized staff responsiveness (measured by inquiry response, courtesy, and helpfulness) as the independent variable influencing passenger satisfaction, the dependent variable (measured by perceived service quality and travel experience). The figure 1 illustrate the variable relationship.

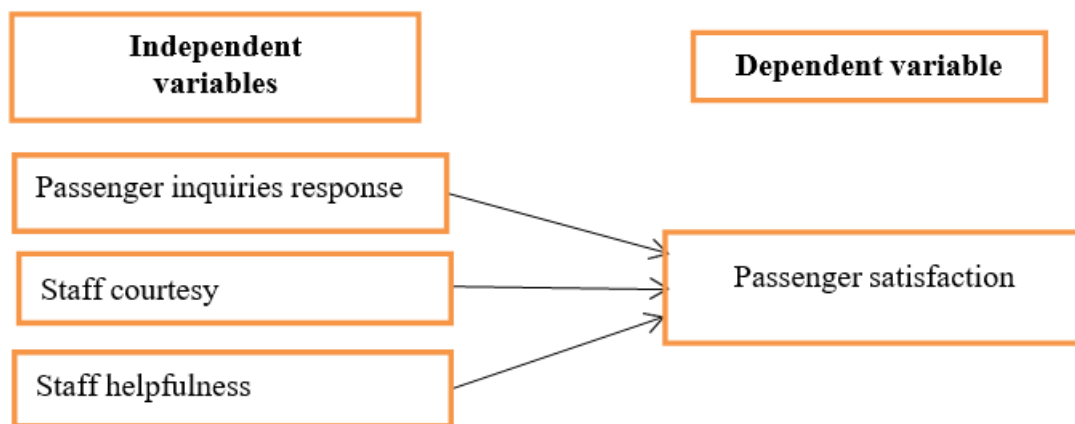


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: Author, (2025)

III.METHOD

Research Design

The study employed a mixed-methods design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches (Creswell, 2014). This approach captured both measurable patterns and in- depth perceptions regarding SGR staff responsiveness.

Study Area and Population

The research was conducted along the SGR route between Dar es Salaam and Morogoro, a high-traffic corridor representing diverse passenger categories. The target population comprised passengers using SGR services during April–June 2025.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A total of 130 passengers were selected using Slovin’s formula, with a 90% response rate (117 respondents). Simple random sampling ensured representativeness, while convenience sampling was used for interviews.

Data Collection

Quantitative data were gathered through structured Likert-scale questionnaires (1–5 scale), while qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with selected passengers. The instruments were validated by transport experts, and reliability was confirmed through Cronbach’s Alpha exceeding 0.8.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS version 25, employing descriptive and regression analyses. Qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis, with direct quotations used to illustrate emergent patterns. Ethical procedures, including informed consent and anonymity, were strictly observed.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Understanding the demographic characteristics of respondents is crucial because it provides context for interpreting perceptions of service quality and satisfaction. Differences in age, gender, education, and occupation influence expectations and responses toward railway services. Table 1 below presents the demographic profile of the 117 Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) passengers who participated in the study.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents (n = 117)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	57	48.7
	Female	60	51.3
Age group	Below 17 years	2	1.7
	18–25 years	11	9.4
	26–35 years	27	23.1
	36–45 years	46	39.3
	46–60 years	26	22.2
	Above 61 years	5	4.3
	Education level	Primary	2
Secondary		3	2.6
Diploma/Certificate		37	31.6
Bachelor’s Degree		55	47
Occupation	Master’s or Higher	20	17.1
	Student	10	8.5
	Employed	73	62.4
	Self-employed	18	15.4
	Unemployed	11	9.4
	Retired	5	4.3

Source: Surveyed data, (2025)

The demographic findings indicate a balanced gender distribution, with 51.3% female and 48.7% male respondents. This parity suggests that both genders are well represented in SGR usage, allowing gender-neutral inferences about satisfaction. Most respondents (39.3%) were between 36 and 45 years, followed by those aged 26–35 (23.1%) and 46– 60 (22.2%), implying that SGR primarily serves working-age adults who travel for employment or business purposes.

Education data revealed that 47% held a bachelor’s degree and 31.6% had diploma or certificate qualifications. This dominance of educated passengers indicates a population capable of critically evaluating service quality and articulating informed opinions about staff behavior. Regarding occupation, 62.4% were formally employed, showing that most respondents represent active commuters who value punctual and reliable transport systems. Such a socio-economic profile enhances the credibility of the study because respondents’ feedback likely reflects frequent, experience-based engagement with SGR services.

Staff Responsiveness and Passenger Satisfaction

This section presents findings on how staff responsiveness affects passenger satisfaction within the SGR system. Quantitative results were obtained using descriptive and regression analyses, while qualitative data were derived from semi-structured interviews. Table 2 below summarizes the key quantitative findings.

Table 2: Summary of findings on staff responsiveness and passenger satisfaction

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Beta	t-value	Sig. (p)	Interpretation
SGR staff respond promptly to inquiries and concerns	3.97	0.75	-0.041	-0.42	0.678	Passengers generally agree that staff are prompt in response.
Ease of obtaining assistance when needed	3.93	0.82	0.024	0.24	0.813	Most passengers find it easy to get help from staff.
Staff are knowledgeable and provide clear information	4.09	0.87	-0.008	-0.08	0.939	High perceived competence among staff.
Staff are polite and professional	3.81	0.92	0.032	0.31	0.758	Passengers perceive courteous and respectful behavior.
Passengers feel respected and valued	4.03	0.89	0.035	0.34	0.738	Passengers appreciate respectful treatment.
Staff maintain friendly attitude and willingness to help	3.98	0.92	-0.033	-0.34	0.733	Staff friendliness positively influences passenger comfort.
Adequate help with ticketing and boarding	4.13	0.78	-0.018	-0.18	0.857	Satisfaction with assistance during boarding and ticketing.
Model summary						
R² = 0.013						
F = 0.16						
p = 0.997						
Model statistically insignificant (p > 0.05).						

Source: Surveyed data, (2025)

SGR staff respond promptly to inquiries and concerns

The analysis shows that passengers generally agreed that SGR staff respond promptly to their inquiries (Mean = 3.97, SD = 0.75). This indicates that most passengers perceive the staff as willing and able to provide timely assistance when needed. Prompt responses create confidence and convenience during travel, enhancing perceptions of service reliability. Qualitative interviews supported this result, with one respondent stating, “Service quality starts with well-trained staff. Providing regular workshops to equip with the necessary skills enables staff to handle passenger concerns quickly and respectfully.” However, some interviewees noted that responsiveness declines during peak travel hours due to limited staffing. This finding supports the SERVQUAL “responsiveness” dimension, emphasizing the value of promptness in shaping satisfaction (Kumar, 2020; Widyastuti, 2018).

Ease of obtaining assistance when needed

Results indicated that passengers found it generally easy to access help from SGR staff when required (Mean = 3.93, SD = 0.82). This suggests that staff are approachable and visible at service points such as ticket counters and boarding gates. Passengers acknowledged that assistance is readily available, although a few mentioned waiting longer during crowded times. Interview feedback reinforced this perception; one passenger remarked, *“It’s easy to get help, but during rush hours, it takes a little longer.”* The finding aligns with Chombo and Sikujua (Chombo & Sikujua, 2020), observed that visibility and accessibility of staff improve trust and satisfaction among passengers in urban rail services.

Staff are knowledgeable and provide clear information

Respondents highly rated this aspect (Mean = 4.09, SD = 0.87), indicating that passengers perceive SGR staff as competent and confident in providing accurate information. This reflects positively on the training and professionalism of TRC employees. Passengers in interviews praised staff for providing clear explanations regarding schedules and ticketing processes, with one noting, *“They know what they are doing and explain things clearly when there is a delay.”* This result supports the SERVQUAL “assurance” dimension, where knowledgeable and confident employees enhance passenger trust (Kewate & Gandhewar, 2023). Similar patterns have been reported by Otele (2021) in Kenya’s SGR, where staff expertise contributed to perceived reliability of the service.

Staff are polite and professional

The study found a mean score of 3.81 (SD = 0.92), suggesting that passengers agreed SGR staff display politeness and professionalism during service interactions. Politeness creates a welcoming atmosphere that positively influences passengers’ emotional experiences. Interviewees confirmed this perception, as one respondent shared, *“The staff are always polite and professional; they make you feel comfortable.”* However, a few participants indicated variability in courtesy across stations, hinting at the need for standardized service behavior. This finding aligns with Bakti and Sumaedi (2021), emphasized that courtesy and respect enhance customer satisfaction in public transport systems.

Passengers feel respected and valued

With a mean score of 4.03 (SD = 0.89), passengers agreed that they felt respected and valued by SGR employees. Feeling valued contributes to emotional satisfaction and loyalty because passengers associate respect with service excellence. During interviews, several respondents expressed appreciation for the courteous treatment they received, such as personalized greetings and assistance for elderly passengers. One noted, *“They treat passengers well, and I feel valued every time I travel.”* These findings resonate with Siti and Muhammad (2024), found that emotional connection and perceived respect play a key role in building satisfaction in rail transit services.

Staff maintain a friendly attitude and willingness to help

The results (Mean = 3.98, SD = 0.92) show that passengers recognize staff friendliness and their willingness to assist as contributing factors to a positive travel experience. Friendliness was consistently mentioned during interviews; for instance, one respondent remarked, *“They always smile and greet you nicely, even when busy.”* Such behavior fosters a sense of warmth and personal connection between passengers and staff. According to Muya et al. (2023), friendliness represents a marketing strength that enhances brand image and customer retention within railway services. However, the study also found that the positive attitude must be sustained across all stations to ensure uniform service quality.

Adequate help with ticketing and boarding

This variable recorded the highest satisfaction level (Mean = 4.13, SD = 0.78), indicating that passengers appreciate the assistance provided during ticketing and boarding processes. Staff were observed to support passengers in locating their seats, managing luggage, and clarifying boarding procedures. One participant stated, *“The ticketing process is smooth because staff are always around to help.”* The high mean score highlights operational efficiency in customer assistance and aligns with findings by Hizam et al. (2021), demonstrated that effective boarding assistance enhances perceived service quality and loyalty in commuter systems. Nonetheless, maintaining this performance requires adequate staff numbers and continuous monitoring of queue management systems.

Model summary and statistical interpretation

Although descriptive statistics reflect positive passenger perceptions, the regression model indicates that staff responsiveness did not significantly influence overall passenger satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.013$, $F = 0.16$, $p = 0.997$). This suggests that while passengers appreciate courteous and responsive behavior, such attributes alone cannot predict their total satisfaction. Qualitative evidence explained this outcome, as passengers often valued punctuality and cleanliness equally as markers of quality. This finding aligns with Zhao (2020) and Bagwandeem (2023) argued that responsiveness must operate alongside reliability and tangibility dimensions for satisfaction to be fully realized. Therefore, TRC should manage responsiveness as part of an integrated service-quality strategy that balances human and operational aspects of railway performance.

DISCUSSIONS

SGR staff respond promptly to inquiries and concerns

The study revealed that passengers generally agreed that SGR staff respond promptly to their inquiries and concerns (Mean = 3.97, SD = 0.75). This finding suggests that timeliness and readiness to assist are key attributes shaping positive passenger perceptions. Passengers indicated that quick responses reduce anxiety and enhance trust in SGR operations. One respondent emphasized, *“The staff usually respond immediately when you ask for help, especially when you are confused about schedules.”* Another added, *“They always make time to listen even when there are many passengers.”* These findings are in line with Widyastuti (2018), who found that the speed of response is among the most influential factors in determining satisfaction in Indonesia’s commuter lines. Similarly, Kumar (2020) emphasized that prompt service delivery under the SERVQUAL framework significantly improves perceived quality in public transport. Chombo and Sikujua (2020) also reported similar trends in Tanzania’s urban commuter systems, where prompt staff assistance-built confidence among passengers. However, Otele (2021) in Kenya’s SGR observed delayed communication and inadequate staff empowerment, leading to passenger dissatisfaction. The difference could be attributed to Tanzania’s newer SGR operations and focused staff training initiatives. Overall, the current findings confirm the SERVQUAL “responsiveness” dimension, highlighting that timely attention to passenger needs contributes directly to satisfaction and loyalty.

Ease of obtaining assistance when needed

The study found that passengers generally agreed that it is easy to obtain help from SGR staff (Mean = 3.93, SD = 0.82). This suggests accessibility and approachability of front-line staff, an important feature in customer-oriented service delivery. Passengers reported that staff are visible and approachable at ticketing points, stations, and boarding areas, which facilitates quick assistance. This was supported by one interviewee who said, *“It is very easy to find someone to help you; they are everywhere in the station.”* Another added, *“Sometimes, when you look confused, staff come by themselves to ask if you need help.”* This finding aligns with Chombo and Sikujua (2020), who observed that the availability of support staff in Tanzania’s commuter trains promotes passenger confidence. In contrast, Bagwandeem (2023) noted that in other African SGR projects, understaffing and limited communication channels constrained passenger access to help. The consistency between this study and prior Tanzanian findings may reflect TRC’s deliberate effort to ensure visibility of personnel at all contact points. Therefore, this study reinforces the argument that ease of obtaining assistance is a crucial determinant of passenger satisfaction, as accessibility builds trust and reduces service uncertainty.

Staff are knowledgeable and provide clear information

The results revealed that passengers strongly agreed that SGR staff are knowledgeable and provide clear information (Mean = 4.09, SD = 0.87). This finding demonstrates passengers’ confidence in the competence and expertise of TRC employees, especially in providing accurate schedule, fare, and boarding information. One passenger confirmed, *“They know what they are doing and explain things clearly when there is a delay.”* Another respondent said, *“When you ask a question, they don’t guess—they give you the right answer straight away.”* The finding agrees with Kewate and Gandhewar (2023), who emphasized that professional knowledge enhances the “assurance” dimension of SERVQUAL by instilling confidence in passengers. Similarly, Otele (2021) found that knowledgeable staff in Kenya’s SGR improved public trust in the new transport system. However, Muya et al. (2023) argued that while competence improves satisfaction, it must be complemented by effective communication and interpersonal skills. The current findings therefore highlight that in Tanzania’s SGR, staff knowledge plays a dual role: it ensures accurate information sharing and strengthens the perceived reliability of the service, thereby enhancing passenger satisfaction.

Staff are polite and professional

The mean score of 3.81 (SD = 0.92) indicates that passengers perceive SGR staff as polite and professional in their interactions. Courtesy and respect are vital behavioral attributes that shape passengers' emotional connection to the service. Passengers in interviews described staff as "kind" and "respectful," with one respondent saying, *"They greet you nicely and handle everyone respectfully even when it's busy."* Another participant added, *"The way they talk to passengers makes you feel you are important."* This finding is consistent with Bakti and Sumaedi (2021), who reported that politeness and empathy are key in achieving satisfaction among public transport users. Likewise, Siti and Muhammad (2024) found that courteous behavior contributes to both functional and emotional satisfaction in rail transit systems. The current finding also supports Chombo and Sikujua (2020), who noted that politeness among commuter staff in Dar es Salaam improved perceptions of service quality. However, minor differences were observed compared to Otele (2021), whose study in Kenya reported inconsistent professionalism due to limited staff training. The difference may result from Tanzania's early-stage management oversight, where stricter monitoring and guidance promote professional conduct. Overall, this study confirms that politeness and professionalism strengthen the psychological bond between staff and passengers, enhancing satisfaction and loyalty.

Passengers feel respected and valued

The study found that passengers felt respected and valued by SGR staff (Mean = 4.03, SD = 0.89), reflecting positive interpersonal relations. Respectful treatment increases passengers' sense of dignity and appreciation, thus improving their emotional attachment to the service. One participant expressed, *"They treat passengers like customers who matter, not just people they have to serve."* Another emphasized, *"Even when you ask small questions, they answer politely and never ignore you."* This finding is supported by Siti and Muhammad (2024), who established that feeling valued is a strong emotional driver of satisfaction in rail transport. Similarly, Hizam *et al.*, (2021) found that respect and personalized attention contribute to long-term passenger loyalty in Malaysia's commuter trains. These findings also echo Bakti and Sumaedi (2021), who asserted that empathy and individual attention are important aspects of perceived service quality. However, Bagwandeem (2023) noted that in many African railways, lack of consistent customer relations weakens passenger loyalty. Thus, the current study's positive results indicate that TRC's customer-oriented culture is beginning to take root, leading to improved passenger perceptions.

Staff maintain a friendly attitude and willingness to help

The study revealed that passengers viewed SGR staff as friendly and willing to assist (Mean = 3.98, SD = 0.92). Friendliness in service delivery generates positive emotions that reinforce satisfaction and repeat patronage. Passengers described SGR staff as approachable and cheerful, creating a welcoming travel environment. As one respondent stated, *"They always smile and greet you; it makes you feel relaxed even before the trip starts."* Another noted, *"If they see someone struggling with luggage, they rush to help even without being asked."* This finding aligns with Muya *et al.* (2023), who noted that the "people" component of the marketing mix, especially friendliness and approachability is vital for sustaining customer satisfaction in Tanzania's SGR. It also corresponds with Kumar (2020), who reported that staff willingness to help enhances the overall perception of reliability and empathy. Contrarily, Otele (2021) observed that lack of motivation among Kenya's SGR staff reduced willingness to assist passengers, implying that institutional culture affects responsiveness. The Tanzanian experience, therefore, demonstrates that fostering a supportive work environment and staff recognition programs can help sustain friendly and helpful behavior in the long term.

Adequate help with ticketing and boarding

This aspect received the highest satisfaction rating (Mean = 4.13, SD = 0.78), showing that passengers highly value staff assistance during ticketing and boarding. The findings indicate that effective queue management, clear directions, and personal assistance contribute to smooth passenger flow and satisfaction. Interview evidence supported this, as one respondent noted, *"The ticketing process is smooth because staff are always there to help with printing and guiding people."* Another added, *"They assist elderly passengers and mothers with children to board comfortably."* Similar results were obtained by Hizam *et al.*, (2021) in Malaysia, where

boarding assistance positively influenced passenger loyalty. Additionally, Chombo and Sikujua (2020) found that supportive staff interactions during ticketing improved user satisfaction in Tanzania's commuter systems. However, Bagwandeem (2023) cautioned that in some African countries, inadequate staffing leads to congestion and reduced satisfaction during ticketing processes. The consistency between the present findings and prior research underscores that effective ticketing assistance is a key operational factor in maintaining passenger satisfaction. It also reinforces the importance of staff responsiveness as a functional and relational component of quality service.

Model summary and overall discussion

Despite the positive perceptions observed across all dimensions of staff responsiveness, the regression analysis revealed no statistically significant effect on overall passenger satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.013$, $p = 0.997$). This suggests that while responsiveness enhances the experience, passenger satisfaction in Tanzania's SGR is influenced by a combination of factors—such as timeliness, safety, comfort, and price fairness, rather than staff behavior alone. Interview data provided insight into this complexity, as one passenger stated, *“Even when staff are nice, delays or power cuts make the trip stressful.”* Another explained, *“You can have friendly staff, but if the train is late, it still affects your satisfaction.”* These qualitative voices reveal that staff responsiveness, though valued, must be complemented by reliable operations and well-maintained facilities to achieve comprehensive satisfaction. These results correspond with Zhao (2020) and Bagwandeem (2023), who emphasized that responsiveness must be complemented by reliability and tangibility to yield significant satisfaction outcomes. The mixed-method findings of this study therefore highlight that staff responsiveness functions as a necessary but not sufficient condition for overall satisfaction. Tanzania Railway Corporation must adopt an integrated service-quality approach, combining human interaction, operational efficiency, and infrastructure maintenance to strengthen passenger experiences and promote loyalty.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of staff responsiveness on passenger satisfaction in Tanzania's Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) using mixed methods. The findings revealed that passengers perceived SGR staff as generally prompt, polite, knowledgeable, and helpful, with high satisfaction scores across all responsiveness indicators. However, regression analysis showed that staff responsiveness alone had no statistically significant impact on overall passenger satisfaction, indicating that satisfaction in SGR services is multidimensional and depends on a combination of factors such as punctuality, reliability, comfort, and safety. Qualitative evidence confirmed that passengers appreciated courteous and professional interactions but noted that challenges such as peak-hour congestion and communication gaps occasionally affected service consistency.

Theoretically, this paper contributes to the SERVQUAL model by extending the responsiveness and assurance dimensions into the context of modern African railway services. It demonstrates that interpersonal responsiveness, while valuable, must operate in tandem with operational reliability and tangible service quality to produce full customer satisfaction. Practically, the study provides evidence that improving staff responsiveness enhances perceived service quality and emotional satisfaction, but sustained passenger trust requires integrated management that connects human behavior with operational performance. This insight helps railway managers, policymakers, and transport authorities design more holistic service-quality frameworks that align both human and technical dimensions of railway performance in Tanzania and beyond.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the Tanzania Railway Corporation (TRC) should strengthen customer service training to sustain polite, prompt, and professional staff behavior across all stations. Staff should be equipped with communication and problem-solving skills that support timely responses even during peak periods. TRC should also improve staff deployment by ensuring adequate personnel during high-demand hours to prevent service delays and maintain consistent passenger assistance. Furthermore, enhanced communication systems such as real-time information screens, multilingual announcements, and mobile help platforms should be developed to address information gaps and improve responsiveness. Finally, TRC should adopt an integrated service-quality framework that combines staff responsiveness with operational efficiency, cleanliness, and safety to achieve comprehensive passenger satisfaction. Collectively, these actions will strengthen passenger trust, increase ridership, and enhance Tanzania's competitiveness in modern rail transport.

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