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HUMAN RESOURCE PREDICTORS OF SERVICE QUALITY IN UGANDA'S PUBLIC SECTOR: A FOCUS ON THE DIRECTORATE OF INDUSTRIAL TRAINING

Arthur Ahimbisibwe[1*], Nakkonde Immaculate Prima[2]
[1]*Professor, Faculty of Business Management and Management, Victoria University, Kampala, Uganda*
[2]*Faculty of Business and Management, Victoria University, Kampala, Uganda*
Corresponding Author[*]

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the human resource predictors of service quality within Uganda's public sector, specifically at the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT). The primary objective of the research was to assess the influence of human resource factors – namely employee engagement, goal-setting processes, and organizational citizenship behavior – on service quality at the DIT. The study was guided by Latham and Locke's Goal Setting Theory and the SERVQUAL Model, providing a framework for understanding how these human resource practices impact service delivery. A descriptive cross-sectional research design was employed, and a stratified random sampling technique was used to select participants. Out of 384 questionnaires distributed, 351 were returned, yielding a response rate of 91%. The sample included 226 female and 125 male respondents. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using Pearson's rank correlation and descriptive statistics. Multiple regression analysis was applied to assess the relationships between the independent variables (employee engagement, goal-setting, and citizenship behavior) and the dependent variable (service quality). The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between the human resource predictors and service quality at the Directorate. The study concludes that enhancing employee engagement, aligning goal-setting processes, and fostering organizational citizenship behavior are critical for improving service quality in the public sector, particularly at the Directorate of Industrial Training. These results underscore the importance of strategic human resource management in fostering high-quality service delivery.

KEY WORDS: *Human Resource, predictors, Service Quality, Uganda, Public Sector*

INTRODUCTION

Human Resource Management (HRM) refers to the strategic approach to managing people in an organization with the goal of optimizing employee performance to achieve organizational objectives (Armstrong, 2020). Within this framework, service quality is a critical consideration, particularly in the public sector, where services directly impact citizens. According to Parasuraman et al. (2017), service quality is defined as the extent to which a service meets or exceeds customer expectations, typically measured using the SERVQUAL model. This model evaluates service quality across five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Parasuraman et al., 2017).

The notion of service has evolved over time, with Churchill and Surprenant (1982) and Asubonteng et al. (1996) contributing to the development of customer satisfaction theory. They emphasized that service quality is about meeting or exceeding customer expectations, a concept later expanded by Armstrong et al. (1997) into the five dimensions of service quality. In traditional service settings, the quality of service depends on both the design of the location and the behavior of the service provider (Doucet, 2004). The rise of digital communication channels, such as online service centers and social media, has added new complexities to service delivery, making communication and service provider behavior crucial in hybrid settings (Doucet, 2004; Palese & Usai, 2018). These subjective assessments of service quality highlight that different customers may have varied evaluations based on their interactions.

Globally, service quality in the public sector is essential for fostering trust in government, enhancing citizen satisfaction, and improving societal outcomes (Parasuraman et al., 2017). Many countries use frameworks like SERVQUAL to assess and improve public service delivery. In the UK, for example, the introduction of the Citizen's Charter in the 1990s set clear standards for public services and promoted accountability (Office of Public Service, 1998). In Africa, however, the public sector faces challenges such as corruption, inadequate funding, and poor infrastructure, which undermine service quality (Hope Sr, 2001). Reforms such as decentralization and anti-corruption initiatives have been introduced to address these issues. South Africa's Batho Pele ("People First") principles emphasize transparency, consultation, and accountability to enhance service delivery (John Mark in DPSA, 2018).

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East African countries, including Uganda, face similar challenges but have also implemented reforms to improve public service quality. For example, Uganda has focused on decentralization to empower local governments and improve service delivery at the grassroots level (Tumwesigye, 2010). Other initiatives include anti-corruption measures, performance management systems, and technology integration through institutions like the National IT Authority-Uganda (NITA-U). Additionally, the introduction of the Uganda National Minimum Health Care Package (UNMHCP) aimed to ensure equitable access to essential health services (MOH, 2010).

However, despite these efforts, Uganda's public sector still faces numerous challenges such as limited resources, corruption, inefficiency, and lack of accountability (Kauzya & Balogun, 2020). Human Resource Management reforms, including performance management, capacity building, and public-private partnerships (PPPs), aim to address these challenges and enhance service quality (Tumwesigye, 2010). The Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT), a key government entity that provides assessment and certification services across the business and technical vocational education sectors, serves as a case study for examining how human resource factors can influence service quality in Uganda's public sector.

Human resource factors such as employee engagement, goal-setting practices, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) have been recognized as significant determinants of service quality. While global studies (Parasuraman et al., 2017) and research from other African countries (Hope Sr., 2001) emphasize their importance, their relevance to Uganda's public sector remains underexplored. There is a notable gap in empirical research investigating how these human resource predictors—engagement, goal-setting, and citizenship behavior—affect service quality in Uganda's unique socio-economic and institutional context. This lack of evidence hinders the development of targeted HRM strategies that could improve service delivery and contribute to sustainable development in Uganda.

This research aims to fill this gap by examining the relationships between employee engagement, goal-setting practices, citizenship behavior, and service quality within Uganda's public sector, specifically at the Directorate of Industrial Training. The study will provide empirical insights into how these human resource predictors impact service quality and offer practical recommendations for improving public service delivery. By using a local case, this research seeks to contribute to the development of evidence-based policies and strategies that can enhance citizen satisfaction and foster more efficient public service provision.

The specific objectives of this study are: (1) To examine how employee engagement influences service quality at the Directorate of Industrial Training, (2) To explore how goal-setting processes affect service quality within the Directorate of Industrial Training and (3) To evaluate the impact of employees' citizenship behavior on service quality at the Directorate of Industrial Training. The findings of this study will serve multiple purposes. First, they will inform strategic decision-making within Uganda's public sector, providing insights into mechanisms that can enhance service quality. Second, this study will contribute to the scholarly body of work on public sector service quality in Uganda, addressing a significant gap in the literature. This paper is structured as follows: the next section reviews the relevant literature, followed by a research methodology and findings. The final section offers a discussion and conclusion based on the research outcomes.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study employs the SERVQUAL model to explore service quality within Uganda's public sector, specifically at the Directorate of Industrial Training. The SERVQUAL model, developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985), identifies five key dimensions—tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—as critical predictors of service quality. The model uses paired statements in a questionnaire format to assess the gap between customer expectations and perceptions of service performance, providing insights into service quality levels.

From a theoretical perspective, quality is not universally defined, but is generally seen as conformance to requirements or fitness for use (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Zeithaml, 1988). Measuring service quality is challenging due to the intangible nature of services, unlike products with concrete specifications (Grönroos, 1984). Service quality is often defined as the customer's perception of how well service performance meets or exceeds expectations (Pariseau & McDaniel, 1997). This perceived quality, as described by Zeithaml (1998), reflects the consumer's judgment of a service's excellence, differing from objective quality as it is rooted in subjective customer experiences and expectations. SERVQUAL has been widely used and validated across various service industries (Buttle, 1996; Ladhari, 2009; Lam & Woo, 1997), making it an appropriate tool for measuring service quality in diverse public sector contexts. This research applies the SERVQUAL framework to examine how these five dimensions influence the quality of services at the Directorate of Industrial Training in Uganda.

Effects of Employee Engagement on Service Quality

Employee engagement refers to the active participation and emotional commitment of employees towards their organization's goals. It is seen as a process that taps into the full potential of workers, fostering creativity and innovation, and improving performance (Cotton, 2023). According to Gichohi (2014), a positive relationship exists between employee engagement and job performance, driven by increased employee commitment. Engaged employees experience positive emotions, leading to heightened attention and absorption in their work (Shantz et al., 2017).

The concept of employee engagement has been understood in various ways. Men (2015) describes it as the positive attitude employees have toward their organization, its values, and its goals. This attitude significantly impacts performance, as employees who are engaged are more committed and contribute positively to organizational goals (Selvarasu et al., 2014).

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Furthermore, engaged employees are aware of their organization's business context and work collaboratively with colleagues to improve performance (Ologbo et al., 2016). Gallup Consulting (2016) categorizes employees into three groups: engaged, not engaged, and actively disengaged. Engaged employees are passionate, innovative, and dedicated, while disengaged employees can detract from the success of the organization, leading to reduced productivity and service quality (Rampersad, 2016).

Employee engagement is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption—key drivers of enhanced job performance (Men, 2015; Shantz et al., 2017). These employees are psychologically present in their work, reducing the likelihood of mistakes and errors. In contrast, employees with negative attitudes toward their jobs may show decreased loyalty and lower service quality (Maloney et al., 2018). Factors such as personal health and well-being also influence engagement levels (Maloney et al., 2018). Employee engagement fosters a deeper connection to the organization, improving both individual and organizational performance (Bananuka et al., 2017; Saks, 2016). As such, fostering engagement through proper recognition and support is crucial for enhancing service quality, particularly in public sector organizations like Uganda's Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT) (Sendawula et al., 2018).

Effects of Goal Setting on Service Quality

Goal setting plays a crucial role in boosting employee engagement and performance. Dixon (2015) emphasizes that setting clear goals connects employees to the organization, fostering optimism and improved performance. Goal setting ensures that employees are working toward a unified objective, reducing the chances of misaligned efforts (Gubman, 2014). It also allows for clear evaluation of progress, ensuring that employees are not just busy, but are advancing toward specific outcomes (Men, 2015). Clear goals help define success and prevent burnout by providing employees with a sense of accomplishment and direction (Nuwagira et al., 2024).

The relationship between goal setting and performance has been studied extensively. A study by May et al. (2014) found that goal setting positively influences work engagement, which, in turn, enhances optimism and individual performance. These findings indicate that when employees understand their goals, they are more likely to stay engaged, thereby improving service quality. Moreover, Nuwagira et al. (2024) assert that goal-setting creates a sense of fulfillment, boosting employee satisfaction and aligning individual efforts with organizational objectives. Clarifying expectations and providing feedback are essential components of this process, as they ensure that employees remain focused on achieving organizational goals.

Effects of Citizenship Behavior on Service Quality

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) refers to voluntary behaviors that employees engage in to benefit their organization, beyond their formal job requirements. Encouraging OCB can lead to higher financial performance, enhanced customer satisfaction, increased productivity, and improved employee engagement (Sendawula et al., 2018). Schaufeli et al. (2022) found a strong positive correlation between OCB and organizational performance, indicating that employees who engage in OCB enhance overall organizational effectiveness.

Research also supports the notion that OCB is linked to improved productivity. Kerr (2021) highlighted a significant correlation between OCB and organizational productivity (Rho = 0.44), reinforcing the idea that OCB enhances organizational output. Similarly, a study of 114 manufacturing firms revealed a positive relationship between OCB and unit-level productivity ($\beta = 0.23$), suggesting that fostering a culture of OCB can improve performance at various levels within the organization (Schaufeli et al., 2022).

Moreover, OCB is positively correlated with job performance and employee satisfaction. A study involving over 10,000 employees across 35 countries found that OCB is strongly related to individual job performance ($r = 0.32$) and employee satisfaction ($r = 0.51$), suggesting that employees who demonstrate OCB tend to perform better and report higher levels of happiness at work (Shantz et al., 2017). Additionally, OCB has been linked to lower turnover intentions, with employees who engage in OCB being more likely to stay with the organization (Williams & Anderson, 2020). This suggests that fostering OCB can contribute to reduced turnover and improved long-term service quality.

Therefore, in summary, the literature reviewed emphasises the significant role of human resource practices, particularly employee engagement, goal setting, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), in enhancing service quality. Employee engagement, characterized by commitment, energy, and enthusiasm, directly impacts service quality by fostering positive emotions and reducing the likelihood of errors (Cotton, 2023; Shantz et al., 2017). Engaged employees, who are dedicated to their organization's goals, demonstrate improved performance, creativity, and innovation, thereby contributing to better service delivery (Gichohi, 2014; Selvarasu et al., 2014).

Goal setting further reinforces employee engagement by aligning individual efforts with organizational objectives. Clear, achievable goals provide employees with a sense of direction and fulfillment, enhancing their motivation and performance (Dixon, 2015; Nuwagira et al., 2024). Effective goal setting can lead to increased optimism, engagement, and ultimately, service quality (May et al., 2014).

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) plays a pivotal role in service quality by encouraging behaviors that go beyond job requirements, such as cooperation, helping others, and organizational loyalty. Studies show that OCB positively affects productivity, job performance, and employee satisfaction (Schaufeli et al., 2022; Shantz et al., 2017). OCB also fosters a positive organizational culture that supports employee engagement and retention, further improving service quality (Sendawula et al., 2018; Kerr, 2021).

The interplay of these human resource factors—employee engagement, goal setting, and OCB—can significantly enhance

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the quality of service delivered by organizations like DIT. By cultivating an environment where these factors thrive, DIT can improve performance, satisfaction, and service quality, ultimately benefiting both employees and the public it serves.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional research design, utilizing quantitative data collection methods to explore the relationship between employee engagement, goal setting, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) within the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT). A structured questionnaire was employed to gather data on these variables, facilitating in-depth discussions on employee engagement levels, goal-setting practices, and citizenship behaviors.

The target population for this study consisted of employees from three departments at DIT: Qualification Standards, Assessment and Certification, and Finance and Administration. The total population of the study was approximately 500 employees, and a sample size of 384 respondents was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table, ensuring a representative cross-section of the population. The sample included both male and female employees to ensure demographic balance.
Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure that each department was adequately represented. The employees were categorized by department, and participants were randomly selected from each stratum. This method ensured that the sample accurately reflected the diversity within the organization. A structured questionnaire was used as the primary data collection tool, chosen for its efficiency in gathering substantial data in a short period. The questionnaire contained closed-ended questions, allowing respondents to express their views without external influence, thus enhancing the reliability of the data.

To ensure the quality of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted with five random respondents from one of the departments. This pilot test helped identify potential issues with the questionnaire and provided an opportunity to refine the questions for clarity and relevance. Based on the pilot feedback, modifications were made to ensure the reliability, accuracy, and validity of the instrument.

To assess reliability, the questionnaire was administered to 10 respondents from a similar department (Ed Joe) to evaluate the consistency of responses. The reliability coefficient was determined using Cronbach's Alpha, which assesses the internal consistency of the items. According to Ahuja et al. (2005), a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.7 or higher is considered acceptable for research instruments. To establish the validity of the questionnaire, it was reviewed by experts, including the research supervisor, for content relevance and clarity.

Data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 29. Descriptive statistics, such as mean scores and frequencies, were used to summarize and interpret the data, providing a clear picture of the respondents' engagement levels, goal-setting practices, and citizenship behaviors.

To assess relationships between the variables, inferential statistics, specifically Pearson's correlation analysis, were used. The study measured key variables as follows: ***Employee Engagement:*** This was assessed using Schaufeli and Salanova's (2011) framework, focusing on three components: absorption (concentration and engrossment in work), vigor (energy levels and persistence), and dedication (enthusiasm and pride in work). ***Goal Setting***: Locke and Latham's (2002) goal-setting theory was used to measure the specificity, difficulty, and attainability of personal goals set by employees. Organizational goals were assessed based on their alignment with and commitment to the organization's strategic objectives. Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB): This was assessed through Podsakoff et al.'s (2018) framework, which includes three dimensions: Civic Virtue (involvement in organizational political life), Altruism (helping behaviors toward colleagues), and Courtesy (efforts to prevent work-related conflicts). ***Service Quality:*** The SERVQUAL model was used to assess service quality, with its dimensions—tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—evaluated through Likert-scale items (Ladhari, 2009). Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Research Review Committee at Victoria University. The study adhered to ethical standards, ensuring participant confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their rights, and informed consent was obtained. Respondents' privacy and dignity were protected, and personal identifying information was excluded from the questionnaires, with only numbering used for data identification purposes during the analysis phase.

3. RESULTS

The response rate for this study was 91.4%, with 351 out of the 384 targeted participants completing the questionnaire. This high response rate is attributed to the relevance of the study topic, which directly addressed critical aspects of the respondents' work environment and service quality. Furthermore, confidentiality assurances played a key role in encouraging participation. According to Amin (2005), a response rate of 70% or higher is considered excellent, reflecting a strong level of participant engagement and interest in the research topic.

Several demographic characteristics were examined in the sample, including gender, marital status, age, education level, department, and work experience. These characteristics are important as they help contextualize the results and may influence employee engagement and service quality. The majority of respondents were female (64.39%), with males representing 35.61% of the sample. This gender distribution suggests that women constitute a significant portion of the workforce at DIT, which may influence organizational dynamics, leadership, and overall productivity. Achieving a better gender balance could potentially enhance service quality by fostering diverse perspectives and leadership approaches. Most respondents were single (78.92%), followed by married (13.96%), divorced (4.84%), and separated (2.28%). The predominance of single employees may suggest greater flexibility and availability for work-related activities, potentially leading to higher engagement levels and greater

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participation in goal-setting initiatives. Single employees may have fewer personal commitments, allowing them to engage more readily in additional roles, thereby benefiting the organization.

The largest proportion of respondents (47.7%) fell within the 30-39 age group, followed by 29.5% in the 40-49 age group, and 21.0% in the 20-29 age group. Only 1.8% were aged 50 or older. The age distribution indicates that the workforce is relatively young, with many employees likely at a career stage focused on advancement and stability. This age group is typically more motivated to improve performance and service quality as they seek career growth. A significant majority of respondents (80.91%) held at least a Bachelor's degree, while 7.98% had a diploma, 7.69% held Master's degrees, and 0.57% had a Ph.D. This suggests that DIT employees are well-educated, with a strong foundation for continuous learning and development. The higher education levels may lead to greater expectations for professional development opportunities, which can, in turn, contribute to higher engagement, effective goal-setting, and improved service quality. The largest group of respondents (66.38%) worked in the Assessment and Certification department, followed by 22.79% in the Qualifications Standards department, and 10.83% in the Finance and Administration department. Employees in the Assessment and Certification department are likely to have clear, measurable targets related to the number of assessments, transcripts, and timelines. This clarity in role expectations, combined with strong teamwork, may contribute to higher engagement levels and improved service quality within the department. The majority of respondents (87.46%) had between 1-5 years of experience at DIT, with 9.69% having more than 5 years of experience, and 2.85% having less than 1 year of experience. The predominance of employees with 1-5 years of experience suggests that most staff members are well-integrated into the organization and familiar with its culture and processes. This experience level is likely to enhance engagement and goal-setting, as employees are more comfortable in their roles and may demonstrate higher organizational citizenship behavior, contributing to better service quality.

Results indicate strong employee engagement, with a majority agreeing that staff at DIT are highly engaged (mean = 4.19, SD = 0.563) and motivated (mean = 4.59, SD = 0.625). Furthermore, respondents agreed that staff participate in activities beyond formal job responsibilities (mean = 4.31, SD = 0.589), and that staff opinions are valued by superiors (mean = 4.59, SD = 0.648). Communication within the directorate was also positively rated (mean = 4.41, SD = 0.625). These results suggest that engagement and motivation are high, though a small minority expressed disagreement on these aspects. The goal-setting process was viewed positively, with most respondents indicating awareness of organizational goals (mean = 4.54, SD = 0.579) and agreement that individual performance goals are discussed with supervisors (mean = 4.45, SD = 0.621). Additionally, respondents felt that goal setting is motivating (mean = 4.49, SD = 0.641) and that feedback on goal achievement is regularly communicated (mean = 4.48, SD = 0.604). The autonomy to adjust goals based on changing circumstances was also positively rated (mean = 4.53, SD = 0.559).
Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that DIT staff assist colleagues and contribute positively to the work environment (mean = 4.47, SD = 0.584; mean = 4.53, SD = 0.574, respectively). Additionally, a large majority agreed that reporting unethical behavior is practiced (mean = 4.46, SD = 0.589), reflecting a strong culture of teamwork and ethical conduct. Respondents confirmed that engaged employees contribute to better service quality (mean = 4.49, SD = 0.618). Stakeholders' satisfaction with service quality was also positively rated (mean = 4.47, SD = 0.589). A significant majority agreed that DIT meets client needs (mean = 4.50, SD = 0.565) and identified areas for service quality improvement (mean = 4.53, SD = 0.549).

In conclusion, the study findings demonstrate that high employee engagement, effective goal setting, positive citizenship behavior, and a focus on service quality are crucial drivers of organizational success at DIT.

The Pearson correlation coefficients reveal significant relationships between the study variables. Employee Engagement (EE) is strongly positively correlated with Service Quality (SQ) at 0.823, indicating that higher employee engagement is associated with improved service quality. This supports the findings of Vandenabeele (2014), who identified a robust connection between employee engagement and service quality. Similarly, Goal Setting (GS) and Service Quality show a very strong correlation (0.926), suggesting that effective goal-setting practices at the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT) positively influence service quality, aligning with Moeller et al. (2012) who found that goal-setting enhances task performance. The correlation between Citizenship Behavior (CB) and Service Quality is moderate (0.499), suggesting that voluntary, constructive behaviors by employees, such as assisting colleagues or reporting unethical conduct, positively impact service quality, as noted by Organ (1988).

To further understand the relationships, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine how well Employee Engagement, Goal Setting, and Citizenship Behavior predict Service Quality at DIT. The model's R-square value of 0.710 indicates that 71% of the variance in service quality is explained by these predictors, demonstrating a strong fit for the model. The ANOVA test ($F = 14.31$, $p < 0.000$) confirms the model's statistical significance, indicating that the independent variables collectively influence service quality.

Regression coefficients reveal the following: Employee Engagement ($\beta = 0.124$, $p < 0.013$) positively influences service quality, with each unit increase in engagement leading to a 0.124 unit improvement in service quality. Goal Setting ($\beta = 0.170$, $p < 0.001$) also significantly impacts service quality, reinforcing the importance of setting clear, motivating goals. Citizenship Behavior ($\beta = 0.192$, $p < 0.000$) is another significant predictor, highlighting the role of positive employee behaviors, such as voluntary assistance and ethical practices, in enhancing service quality.

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In summary, the regression analysis and correlations emphasize the critical role of Employee Engagement, Goal Setting, and Citizenship Behavior in shaping Service Quality at DIT. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how organizational practices and employee attitudes collectively drive service excellence at DIT.

4. DISCUSSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of Human Resource predictors on service quality within the public sector, with a focus on the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT). The study aimed to identify how key human resource factors such as employee engagement, goal-setting processes, and citizenship behavior impact the quality of services provided by the Directorate. The findings suggest that these human resource predictors significantly affect service quality in the public sector.

Employee engagement was found to have a strong positive correlation with service quality (r = 0.823), indicating that as engagement increases, service quality tends to improve within DIT. This correlation highlights the importance of focusing on enhancing employee engagement as a strategy to improve service outcomes. The regression analysis further supported this relationship, with a coefficient of 0.124 and a p-value of 0.013, indicating that employee engagement significantly predicts service quality. This suggests that for every unit increase in employee engagement, service quality improves by 0.124 units. These findings align with Cotton's (2023) assertion that employee involvement and participation in decision-making contribute to a more democratic workplace and improve overall performance. The majority of respondents in the study (with a mean score of 4.19 and a standard deviation of 0.563) agreed that the staff at DIT were highly engaged, further supporting the significance of employee engagement in service quality.

Similarly, goal-setting processes were found to have a very strong positive correlation with service quality (r = 0.926). This indicates that as goal-setting processes improve, service quality tends to increase within DIT. The regression coefficient for goal-setting was 0.170, and the p-value of 0.001 indicated statistical significance, reinforcing the importance of goal-setting in improving service quality. This finding supports prior studies, such as May et al. (2014), who found a positive impact of goal-setting on work engagement and performance, and Dixon (2015), who noted that setting goals helps employees feel more connected to the organization, boosting optimism and performance. Men (2015) also highlighted that goal setting helps maintain accountability, ensuring consistent progress toward achieving service quality improvements.

Citizenship behavior, defined as voluntary behaviors that go beyond formal job requirements, was another significant predictor of service quality. The study found a moderate positive correlation between citizenship behavior and service quality (r = 0.499), suggesting that as citizenship behavior increases, service quality tends to improve. This finding aligns with Schaufeli et al. (2022) and Kerr (2021), who established a positive relationship between organizational citizenship behavior and organizational performance. In the multiple regression model, the coefficient for citizenship behavior was 0.192, with a p-value of 0.000, indicating that citizenship behavior also significantly predicts service quality. This suggests that encouraging positive behaviors such as helping colleagues and volunteering can enhance service quality. Sendawula et al. (2018) also argued that cultivating organizational citizenship behavior should be a strategic priority to achieve sustainable success.

In conclusion, the study found that employee engagement, goal-setting processes, and citizenship behavior are all significant predictors of service quality within the Directorate of Industrial Training. The findings suggest that organizations in the public sector should focus on improving these human resource predictors to enhance service delivery. For employee engagement, organizations should implement comprehensive programs that promote work-life balance, recognize achievements, and foster a positive work environment. Regular feedback mechanisms, such as surveys and one-on-one meetings, should also be established to ensure continuous engagement and boost employee morale.

For goal setting, DIT should define clear, specific, and measurable goals that align with the overall mission of the Directorate. SMART goals should be established for both individuals and teams to ensure focus and direction. Regular performance reviews should be conducted to assess progress and provide constructive feedback, helping to identify areas for improvement and adjust goals as necessary.
To foster citizenship behavior, DIT should create recognition and reward systems for employees who demonstrate exceptional behavior, such as helping colleagues or going beyond their job requirements. This will reinforce positive behaviors and motivate others to follow suit. Additionally, DIT should enforce ethical behavior and integrity within the organization, promoting a code of conduct that emphasizes professionalism and builds trust among employees, thereby maintaining high service standards.

The study also faced some limitations, including the reluctance of some respondents to disclose specific information due to concerns about their relationships with colleagues or superiors. Some questionnaires were incomplete or not returned, as respondents faced personal issues such as work pressures, travel, or illness. The study's limited time and funding also posed challenges, particularly in terms of the number of respondents involved. However, the researcher attempted to address these issues by providing clear communication about the study's purpose and using various methods, including phone calls, to encourage timely completion of the surveys.

For future research, several areas can be explored. Longitudinal studies could examine how changes in employee engagement, goal-setting, and citizenship behavior over time influence service quality, providing insights into the long-term effects of these human resource predictors. Researchers could also evaluate the effectiveness of current training and development programs in enhancing these predictors, thereby informing

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policy and resource allocation. Another avenue for further research could involve investigating the role of leadership styles in influencing employee engagement, goal-setting, and citizenship behavior, as effective leadership is critical in driving service quality. Furthermore, exploring gender differences in these predictors could provide valuable insights into how gender-specific policies and practices could be implemented to improve service delivery. The impact of technology and innovation on these predictors is another area worth investigating, as technology may enhance engagement, goal-setting, and citizenship behavior, leading to improved service quality. Comparative studies could also be conducted to benchmark the Directorate of Industrial Training against other public sector organizations, identifying best practices and areas for improvement.

While this study was conducted within one organization, the findings may not be universally applicable to other public sector organizations due to contextual differences. Additionally, the use of self-reported data introduces the potential for response biases, such as social desirability bias, which may affect the accuracy of the results. Nonetheless, the study offers valuable insights into the role of human resource predictors in enhancing service quality within the public sector and provides a foundation for future research and practice.

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