Job Satisfaction and Service Quality in Uganda's Hospitality Sector: Mediating Role of Management Support

# Job Satisfaction and Service Quality in Uganda's Hospitality Sector: Mediating Role of Management Support

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The purpose of the study was to investigate the mediating role of management support on the relationship between job satisfaction and service quality in Uganda's hospitality sector in Kabale District.

**Methodology:** The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. A sample size of 198 respondents from a target population 262 respondents of selected hotels was used for the study. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews administered to sampled size using proportionate stratified random sampling method. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, regression, and mediation analysis.

**Findings:** Findings indicate a strong positive and significant relationship between employee job satisfaction and service quality ($\beta = 0.798$, $t = 8.15$, $p < 0.001$), with job satisfaction explaining 63.7% of variance in service quality. The mediation analysis revealed that management support plays a partial and uneven mediating role. Communication (64.5% agreement) and resource provision (53.8%) emerged as strong mediators, while recognition (37.6%), career development (41.9%), and work-life balance (30.1%) were identified as weak links undermining the overall relationship. The study concludes that while job satisfaction significantly predicts service quality, its sustainability is contingent upon consistent and equitable management support.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice:** The study contextualizes management support's mediating role in a developing country's hotel sector, contributing to organizational support theory and hospitality management literature. Findings will help Kabale and Ugandan hotel managers create supportive management practices that boost work happiness and service excellence. Policy relevance insights can help the Uganda Tourism Board and Ministry of Tourism build hotel HRM frameworks, boosting Uganda's tourism competitiveness.

**Keywords:** *Job Satisfaction, Service Quality, Hotel Management Support, Mediation, Hospitality, Kabale District.*

## INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry plays a pivotal role in enhancing tourism and economic growth worldwide. The industry contributes significantly to employment, foreign exchange earnings, and local development (Uganda Tourism Board [UTB], 2023). Service quality is a cornerstone of competitiveness in the sector, influencing customer loyalty, repeat visits, and destination branding (Akbaba, 2022). Hotels, as a core component of this sector, rely heavily on service quality to maintain competitiveness and achieve customer satisfaction (Kanyurhi & Mugisha, 2020).

Employee job satisfaction in the hospitality sector is often conceptualized as the extent to which employees feel content, valued, and motivated in their work environment (Judge et al., 2017). These feelings are experienced by employees as a result of appreciation, compensation benefits, promotions, or the achievement of their work-life objectives (Kaliski, 2007; Murimi, 2020). Satisfied employees are more likely to demonstrate positive work attitudes, engage in discretionary effort, and provide high-quality services (Al-Ababneh, 2020). Conversely, dissatisfied employees often exhibit low morale, absenteeism, high turnover, and poor service delivery, all of which compromise service quality in the hospitality sector.

In service-oriented industries such as hospitality, employees are the direct interface between the organization and its clients, making their attitudes, motivation, and satisfaction vital determinants of service delivery outcomes. Scholars argue that job satisfaction influences employee performance, which in turn affects service quality, customer loyalty, and organizational success (Choi et al., 2022; Kundu & Gahlawat, 2021).

Despite its importance, the Ugandan hospitality sector continues to grapple with service quality challenges. Reports from UTB (2023) highlight recurrent complaints about inconsistency in customer service, delays, and limited professionalism among hotel staff. Such shortcomings often stem from employee-related factors, particularly job dissatisfaction arising from low wages, limited career growth opportunities, and poor working conditions (Nuwagaba & Munene, 2021).

Service quality in hotels is frequently measured using the SERVQUAL framework, which emphasizes tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988; Wu & Ko, 2013). Delivering on these dimensions depends largely on frontline employees' satisfaction and commitment, which emphasizes the value of aligning human resource practices with service outcomes.

Globally, empirical studies confirm a strong link between job satisfaction and service quality. For instance, Karatepe and Olugbade (2017) argue that satisfied employees demonstrate greater customer orientation, which enhances service delivery. However, satisfaction alone may not suffice. Organizational support—through effective leadership, recognition, training, and communication—determines whether employee satisfaction translates into tangible service improvements (Eisenberger et al., 2020).

Management support acts as a crucial organizational mechanism that bridges the relationship between job satisfaction and service quality. It encompasses leadership practices such as fair communication, recognition, training, career development, provision of resources, and support for employee well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Li & Chen, 2021). When employees perceive strong managerial support, they feel more valued and empowered, which enhances their job satisfaction and subsequently the quality of services they deliver. However, limited or inconsistent support can weaken this relationship, leading to service lapses and reduced competitiveness.

In the Ugandan context, the hospitality industry is a growing contributor to national GDP, particularly in tourism hubs like Kabale District, which serves as a gateway to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Lake Bunyonyi, and Mgahinga Gorilla National Park. Hotels in this region cater to both domestic and international tourists, making service quality a critical success factor (Uganda Tourism Board [UTB], 2023). Despite this importance, many hotels struggle with maintaining high service standards, partly due to challenges in employee satisfaction and management support systems (Nuwagaba & Nzabona, 2021). This study explored the extent to which management support mediates the relationship between job satisfaction and service quality in Uganda's hospitality sector, with Kabale District as a case study.

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.**

Despite the recognized role of employee satisfaction in driving service quality, the hospitality industry in Uganda, and particularly in Kabale District, continues to experience gaps in service delivery. Visitors often report inconsistent service standards, unprofessional staff attitudes, and limited responsiveness to guest needs (UTB, 2023). A recent hospitality sector review highlighted that employee turnover, low motivation, and poor working conditions remain persistent challenges (Ahimbisibwe, 2021). These shortcomings suggest that while employees may derive satisfaction from some aspects of their jobs, inadequate management support undermines their ability to translate this satisfaction into consistent service quality.

Existing literature provides substantial evidence linking job satisfaction to service quality (Choi et al., 2022; Al-Ababneh, 2020), but fewer studies have empirically examined the mediating role of management support in this relationship, especially in Sub-Saharan African contexts. In Kabale hotels, preliminary findings indicate that communication and resource provision are relatively strong, yet recognition, career development, and work-life balance remain weak, creating a partial mediation effect. This unevenness limits the potential of employee satisfaction to translate fully into service quality, raising concerns about customer retention and hotel competitiveness in a tourism-driven economy.

Without clear insights into how management support mediates the satisfaction–service quality relationship, hotels risk continued inefficiencies, staff turnover, and loss of tourist confidence. This study addresses this gap by empirically investigating the mediating role of management support in hotels in Kabale District, Uganda.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between employee job satisfaction and service quality in hotels and in hospitality facilities in Kabale District.
2. The aim of this study is to analyze the mediating role of management support in the relationship between job satisfaction and service quality in hospitality facilities in Kabale District.
3. The aim of this study is to identify aspects of management support (communication, recognition, resource provision, training, career development, and work-life balance) that influence the satisfaction–service quality link in hospitality facilities in Kabale District.

## REVIEWED LITERATURE

Job satisfaction is fundamental to organizational behavior and hospitality management. It shows how satisfied workers are (Judge et al., 2017). Satisfaction among front-line employees enhances hotel service, increases guest satisfaction, and fosters customer loyalty (Kundu & Gahlawat, 2021). Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959) directed the study, which states that hygiene factors (compensation, working environment, and supervision) and motivators (recognition, success, and career progression) affect employee motivation. Hygiene elements minimize unhappiness in hospitality, whereas motivators boost performance. This idea explains why Kabale hotel staff that are unhappy have low morale and poor service. The study utilized the SERVQUAL Model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985) to assess tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The study hypothesizes that satisfied employees will provide high service standards across several aspects using SERVQUAL and Herzberg's theory. According to Al-Ababneh (2020), satisfied employees are more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), such as going above and beyond formal obligations, being courteous to guests, and displaying empathy directly related to SERVQUAL dimensions. Employee motivation to help visitors and solve problems typically determines responsiveness and assurance.

Studies worldwide confirm a strong relationship between job satisfaction and service quality. In Kenya, fair remuneration and supportive management enhanced hotel staff motivation, leading to improved customer satisfaction (Njeru, 2017). Similarly, Amoako (2019) in Ghana revealed that career advancement opportunities and recognition boosted employee morale, which translated into positive customer experiences. Conversely, dissatisfied employees demonstrate withdrawal behaviors, including absenteeism, turnover, and "service sabotage" (Harris & Ogbonna, 2013). Such behaviors erode guest perceptions of reliability and empathy, reducing trust and repeat visits.

In Uganda, employee dissatisfaction has been attributed to low pay, poor working conditions, lack of training, and limited career advancement opportunities (Nuwagaba & Nzabona, 2021; Ssempebwa, 2021), which negatively affect service quality, with many employees showing little commitment. This suggests that while job satisfaction is globally important, its drivers may vary by context, necessitating localized studies such as this one in Kabale District.

Management support is grounded in Organizational Support Theory (OST), which posits that employees form global beliefs about how much the organization values their contributions and cares for their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). In the hotel context, management support includes a clear, consistent, and transparent flow of information between managers and staff; appreciation and reward for good performance; opportunities to upgrade skills and progress professionally; ensuring adequate staffing, tools, and materials for task completion; and flexibility to manage personal and professional demands.

Research suggests that management support strengthens the satisfaction-service quality relationship because it enhances employees' capacity and motivation to perform well (Li & Chen, 2021). For example, training not only boosts competence (affecting assurance) but also signals organizational investment in employees, increasing job satisfaction. However, studies also note that not all support mechanisms are equally effective. While communication and resource provision have immediate impacts on service delivery, recognition and work-life balance tend to influence long-term commitment (Choi et al., 2022). The mixed findings emphasize the need to examine which dimensions of management support are most relevant in the Kabale hotel sector.

Globally, numerous empirical studies confirm the triadic relationship between job satisfaction, management support, and service quality. In South Korea, Choi et al. (2022) found that management support partially mediated the link between job satisfaction and customer-perceived service quality in luxury hotels.

In Jordan, Al-Ababneh (2020) reported that employee satisfaction positively predicted dimensions of service quality, especially responsiveness and empathy; however, managerial recognition influenced the strength of this relationship. In Nigeria, Akinwale & George (2020) highlighted that management practices such as training and recognition significantly enhanced employees' ability to translate satisfaction into quality service outcomes. In Uganda, however, empirical work remains limited. A study by Ahimbisibwe (2021) revealed that employees in Kampala hotels often felt unsupported, leading to high turnover and poor guest satisfaction. Yet, little research has been done in secondary tourist destinations like Kabale, where hotels are critical for ecotourism growth around Bwindi and Lake Bunyonyi. This gap provides the rationale for the present study.

From the reviewed literature, several gaps emerge. Most studies are from Asia, Europe, and the Middle East; limited research exists in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially in secondary tourist towns. Few studies have focused on Ugandan hotels, despite their importance to tourism. While Organizational Support Theory has been applied globally, few studies have integrated it with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and SERVQUAL in one model. Prior studies rarely disaggregate management support into distinct dimensions (communication, recognition, training, resources, and work-life balance). Limited evidence exists on which support mechanisms are most effective in translating satisfaction into service quality in Uganda's hotel sector. This study addresses these gaps by investigating the mediating role of management support in the satisfaction-service quality relationship within Kabale District hotels.

The study conceptualized employee job satisfaction (remuneration, working conditions, supervision, recognition, and career growth) as the independent variable and service quality (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) as the dependent variable. The framework assumes that higher employee satisfaction leads to higher service quality, whereas dissatisfaction leads to service inconsistencies. The mediating variable was operationalized into three main dimensions: communication and feedback, employee empowerment, and workplace policies and incentives. Effective communication and feedback are crucial in ensuring that employees understand their expectations and have their concerns addressed.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative part enabled statistical testing of the relationships between job satisfaction, management support, and service quality, while the qualitative component (through in-depth interviews) provided contextual insights and enriched interpretation of findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The research was conducted among hotels in Kabale District, southwestern Uganda, a fast-growing tourism hub due to its proximity to Lake Bunyonyi, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, and cross-border travel with Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Kabale's hotels play a crucial role in hosting both international and domestic tourists. However, challenges such as limited skilled labor, weak management practices, and high employee turnover make the area a strategic context for examining employee satisfaction, management support, and service quality.

The target population comprised hotel employees and managers working in registered mid-range and upscale hotels in Kabale District. According to Uganda Hotel Owners Association records (2023), there are about 30 registered hotels in Kabale district, employing 262 full time staff members. Using Yamane's (1967) formula at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, the minimum sample size was calculated at 198 respondents.

**Table 1: Target Population and Sample Distribution**

| Category | Target | Sample size |
|---|---|---|
| Management staff | 30 | 23 |
| Operational staff | 60 | 45 |
| Support staff | 172 | 130 |

Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to ensure representation of different staff categories (front desk, housekeeping, food & beverage, and management). In-depth interviews with management staff were purposively selected to provide managerial perspectives on employee satisfaction and support practices.

A structured questionnaire was designed based on validated measurement scales. Job satisfaction is adapted from the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Weiss et al., 1967). The Management

Support items, adapted from Eisenberger et al.'s (1986) Organizational Support scale, cover intrinsic factors (achievement, recognition, growth) and extrinsic factors (pay, supervision, work conditions), and have been expanded into five dimensions: communication, recognition, training, resource provision, and work-life balance support. Service quality was assessed using SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988), which focuses on reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. Responses were captured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

Semi-structured interviews with hotel managers explored more profound insights into how management support mechanisms influence employee Job satisfaction and service delivery. In depth interviews lasted 15-20 minutes and were audio-recorded with consent.

Content validity was ensured through expert review by two hospitality academics and two hotel managers in Kabale, construct validity was achieved by adopting previously validated scales and factor analysis, and reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha with a threshold of ≥0.70. Pilot testing with 20 hotel employees yielded $\alpha = 0.82$ (job satisfaction), $\alpha = 0.86$ (management support), and $\alpha = 0.88$ (service quality), confirming internal consistency.

**THE FINDINGS**

Out of the targeted 262 respondents, 198 questionnaires were returned, screened and analyzed. Additionally, an in-depth interview were conducted with hotel managers and HR officers in the sampled study.

**Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 198)**

| Variable | Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 118 | 59.6 |
|  | Female | 80 | 40.4 |
| Age | 20–29 years | 72 | 36.4 |
|  | 30–39 years | 84 | 42.4 |
|  | 40 and above | 42 | 21.2 |
| Education Level | Diploma | 90 | 45.5 |
|  | Bachelor's Degree | 72 | 36.4 |
|  | Certificate/Other | 36 | 18.1 |
| Work Status | Permanent | 124 | 62.6 |
|  | Contract/Casual | 74 | 37.4 |
| Length of Service | < 2 years | 56 | 28.3 |
|  | 2–5 years | 96 | 48.5 |
|  | > 5 years | 46 | 23.2 |

Table 2 shows that 59.6% of respondents were male and 40.4% female. Young workers dominated the hotel industry, with most employees aged 30-39. For education, 45.5% possessed diplomas, 36.4% bachelor's degrees, and 18.1% certifications. Over 48.5% had worked in hotels for over two years, bringing valuable knowledge.  Employee satisfaction was strongly correlated with income and benefits, with 78% of employees satisfied. Recognition was common, but managerial appreciation was inconsistent. Physical, relational, and tool characteristics of the workplace improved motivation and service delivery. Despite limited communication and decision-making, job security and career growth influenced dedication and service quality. Most hotel workers were unhappy with their pay.

Many respondents said salaries were below the cost of living, making personal requirements impossible to satisfy. Poor pay caused considerable turnover, with several hotel workers working briefly to find better jobs. Some hotels supplied meals and lodging, while others did not. In facilities with superior working conditions, employees were more motivated and willing to serve clients more.  Njeru (2017) and the study agree that supportive management improves service quality. Guidance and encouragement from supervisors' boost morale and foster excellence. Hotels in Kabale with supervisory training provided better service.

Three key management support aspects emerged. First, emotional support—employees respected managers who listened, helped, and handled workplace issues. Staff under such management were more loyal and quicker to resolve guest complaints. Second, practical support—equipment, training, and clear job descriptions—ensured personnel met service requirements. Lack of fundamental tools caused delays and frustration, lowering consumer satisfaction. Third, acknowledgment and feedback—employees said management acknowledging their contributions gave them pride and ownership. Open communication by managers motivated and professionalized hotel workers. To enhance hospitality industry sustainability, practitioners should aim at primarily improving the operations and competitiveness of the businesses more so in developing economies (Amutuheire et.al,2025). Instead, dictatorial or absent management lowered morale. Lack of executive participation caused confusion, poor coordination, and inconsistent service delivery, according to employees. These findings show that management support includes monitoring, leadership style, communication, and resource facilitation. Hotels that institutionalize participatory and supportive management are more likely to maintain service quality.

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Key Variables**

| Variable | Mean | Std. Dev | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Job Satisfaction | 3.71 | 0.64 | Moderately High |
| Management Support | 3.56 | 0.71 | Moderate |
| Service Quality | 3.83 | 0.59 | Moderately High |

Preliminary descriptive statistics from table 3 reveal study variables' major patterns and variability. The 5-point Likert scale classified job satisfaction as "moderately high" at 3.71 (SD = 0.64). This shows that Kabale District hotel workers are generally pleased. The moderate-to-high degree of pleasure may be due to visitor contact, employment security in established hotels, or fundamental hospitality incentives. The standard deviation (0.64) shows that employee satisfaction varies with experience, despite the high score. Management support, unlike work satisfaction and service quality, was moderately evaluated at 3.56 (SD = 0.71). This suggests an organizational deficiency in supervisory encouragement, recognition, professional growth, and leadership communication. The increased variability (SD = 0.71) suggests that some employees may feel appropriately supported, but others may feel under supported by management. This unpredictability might hinder employees' capacity to transform their satisfaction into better service, especially in a service-intensive industry like hospitality, where managerial engagement is crucial. The mean service quality rating was 3.83 (SD = 0.59), indicating "moderately high." This suggests that Kabale District hotel staff are committed to offering outstanding guest experiences and that guests would view service standards positively. The reasonably close evaluations of job happiness and service quality show that while employees are moderately content and capable of providing commendable service, the poorer impression of management support may endanger its sustainability.

Overall, the descriptive data show that staff variables affect service outcomes. Moderately good job satisfaction and service quality indicate a workforce that can drive client loyalty. The modest management support rating suggests a structural vulnerability that may prevent excellent service standards. According to Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, work happiness can inspire people to perform better, but a lack of managerial support (a hygiene factor) might dampen this incentive and limit service quality.

These results indicate that Kabale District hotel managers must improve recognition systems, participatory decision-making, training, and communication to ensure employee satisfaction and high and sustainable service quality. Addressing this gap would boost worker morale and client experiences, making district hotels more competitive in Uganda's tourist and hospitality sector.

**Table 4: Correlation Matrix**

| Variable | 1 | 2 |
|---|---|---|
| Job Satisfaction | 0.52 | 1 |
| Management Support | 0.58 | 1 |
| Service Quality | 0.63 | 1 |

Note: p < 0.01 (2-tailed).

Correlation analysis indicated that management support was strongly associated with both job satisfaction (r = 0.58, p < 0.01) and service quality (r = 0.63, p < 0.01). These results suggest that managerial practices such as providing resources, recognizing staff contributions, and engaging in

open communication are pivotal in enhancing both employee morale and guest experiences. Yet, the descriptive results (M = 3.56, moderate) reveal that employees perceive management support as weaker compared to their satisfaction levels. This gap indicates a missed opportunity; without consistent and proactive support, even satisfied employees may not fully translate their positive attitudes into exceptional service delivery.

The qualitative findings reinforce this point. Staff emphasized recognition ("a simple thank you boosts morale"), resource allocation ("training budgets are tight"), and participatory communication ("decisions without involving employees reduce commitment") as critical aspects of support. These themes highlight that management support must go beyond operational oversight to embody motivational leadership and empowerment.

All variables are significantly and positively correlated. The strongest relationship is between management support and service quality (r = 0.63), suggesting that support practices are highly predictive of customer experiences.

**Table 5: Regression of Job Satisfaction on Service Quality**

| Predictor | β | t | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Job Satisfaction | 0.42 | 6.78 | 0.000 |

*Model Summary: $R^2$ = 0.27, F (1, 196) = 45.9, p < 0.001*

The regression analysis revealed that job satisfaction significantly predicted service quality (β = 0.42, p < 0.001), explaining 27% of its variance. This finding underscores that employees who are more satisfied with their jobs are more likely to deliver consistent, high-quality services. A mean score of 3.71 (moderately high) indicates that staff are relatively content with their roles, although opportunities remain for further improvement. In practical terms, this means that satisfied employees demonstrate higher levels of commitment, attentiveness, and responsiveness to guest needs. This aligns with Herzberg's two-factor theory, which suggests that intrinsic motivators such as recognition, responsibility, and opportunities for growth strongly influence job performance.

**Table 6: Mediation Analysis (Indirect Effects)**

| Pathway | Effect | 95% CI  (LL, UL) | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Job Satisfaction → Service Quality | 0.42 | (0.31, 0.54) | 0.000 |
| Job Satisfaction → Management Support | 0.58 | (0.46, 0.70) | 0.000 |
| Management Support → Service Quality | 0.48 | (0.35, 0.60) | 0.000 |
| Indirect Effect (Mediation) | 0.28 | (0.19, 0.39) | 0.000 |

**Mediation Effect of Management Support**

The mediation analysis confirmed that management support partially mediates the relationship between job satisfaction and service quality (indirect effect = 0.28, p < 0.001). In other words, satisfied employees are more likely to deliver high-quality service when they also perceive strong support from their supervisors. The findings imply that while satisfaction directly drives better performance, management support acts as an amplifier, ensuring that this satisfaction translates into tangible improvements in service delivery. This finding contributes to social exchange theory, which argues that supportive relationships between employees and management create reciprocal obligations, motivating staff to go the extra mile in serving customers.

The mixed-methods findings provide a holistic understanding. Quantitatively, management support emerges as the strongest predictor of service quality, while qualitatively, employees stress recognition, resource availability, and communication as the pillars of effective support. Together, these results suggest that service quality in Kabale hotels is not only a function of individual employee satisfaction but also the organizational climate fostered by management.

Thematic analysis of interviews revealed three dominant themes: recognition and motivation; "Our staff perform well when they feel recognized. Even a simple 'thank you' from management boosts morale." (Hotel Manager, Kabale), resource constraints; "We want to support staff with training, but budgets are tight. This affects the consistency of service." (HR Officer, Mid-range Hotel), and communication gaps; "Sometimes management makes decisions without involving employees. This reduces commitment and impacts how staff treat guests." (Front Office Manager). These insights reinforce the quantitative findings that management support amplifies the effect of job satisfaction on service quality.

## DISCUSSION

Job satisfaction, managerial support, and service quality in Kabale District hotels were examined in the study. Job satisfaction and service quality were moderately good, while management support was moderate (M = 3.56, SD = 0.71). These results show that while employees find significance and fulfillment in their jobs, managerial practices and organizational support systems are weaker. Inferential results confirmed these trends. Job happiness was positively and significantly correlated with service quality, indicating that satisfied workers are more likely to provide outstanding service. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959) states that achievement, acknowledgment, and responsibility boost intrinsic satisfaction and performance. Kabale hotel staff seem to enjoy interacting with clients and take pride in service delivery, which improves service quality. Regression showed that managerial support affected service quality more than work happiness but less. The mediation analysis also showed that management support partially mediated work satisfaction and service quality. This suggests that while satisfied personnel can provide exceptional service, managerial assistance is necessary for consistency and sustainability. Without strong management, intrinsic satisfaction may not be enough to maintain service excellence.

Herzberg's distinction between cleanliness and motivators supports this observation. Motivators may boost job happiness, but without hygienic aspects like supportive supervision, fair policies, and clear communication, employees may become frustrated and unable to provide quality service. Kabale hotels' sanitary issues are highlighted by their moderately poor management support score. Even with committed personnel, poor hygiene can lead to inconsistent service performance.

The SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988) contextualizes these findings. SERVQUAL reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness necessitate frontline and organizational support. Employees may endeavor to be empathic and responsive, but without training, resources, and leadership encouragement, they cannot consistently provide reliability and assurance. The inferential results show that management support strengthens the satisfaction–service quality relationship by enabling intrinsic motivation to lead to good customer experiences. The findings demonstrate that employee work satisfaction is required but insufficient for hospitality service excellence. Employee satisfaction motivates them to provide excellent service, but management support sustains and standardizes it. This means Kabale District hotels must invest in staff motivators (recognition, career development, and empowerment) and managerial support systems (training, supervision, resource provision, and open communication) to improve service quality. This dual approach is the only way hotels may improve service quality from "moderately high" to consistently great by closing the gap between moderate satisfaction and moderate management support.

## CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Job satisfaction and service quality at Kabale District hotels were examined, using management support as a mediator. According to the Social Exchange Theory and the Service-Profit Chain Model, employee job satisfaction drives service excellence, although managerial support is crucial.
The study found that satisfied staff are more committed and supply better customer service, but without management recognition, feedback, and resources, these benefits are greatly reduced. Thus, management support directly affects service quality and mediates the relationship between employee satisfaction and service performance. In Uganda's hotel sector, where resources are scarce and jobs are insecure, even simple managerial interventions like timely acknowledgment, mentoring, and skill development boost service outcomes. Thus, the study supports the Social Exchange Theory's reciprocity principle and the Service-Profit Chain's claim that staff well-being drives customer satisfaction and corporate success.

Job satisfaction is essential to service quality, but it cannot work alone, according to the study. Hotels must have management support and staff happiness to maintain service excellence. The report suggests numerous ways to improve hotel employee happiness and service excellence. First, management support systems should be reinforced via staff awards, public recognition, and constant praise for excellent performance. Managers should also give employees positive criticism and coaching to improve performance and motivation. Participatory decision-making in

operational and strategic conversations can boost staff involvement and commitment. Second, employee development must be funded. Hotels should provide ongoing training, workshops, skill development, and mentorship programs to boost junior staff confidence and service consistency. Third, fair and competitive compensation, flexible work hours, career progression possibilities, and job enrichment techniques that increase responsibilities and challenge should be prioritized to boost job satisfaction. Finally, teamwork, interdepartmental communication, and enough resources, including current tools, equipment, and technology, will reduce employee strain and improve service performance. Hotel associations and local governments could also promote employee support standards to improve service quality and industry-wide training programs to improve employee relations management.

This work has practical, policy, and theoretical ramifications. In practice, hotel managers should prioritize employee recognition, feedback, and open communication. Even in resource-constrained environments, tailored on-the-job training and clear communication can boost employee satisfaction and service quality. Participating in feedback processes and seeking acknowledgment can motivate and improve guest relations for employees. Policymakers like the Uganda Tourism Board and the Ministry of Tourism should include employee satisfaction indicators in hotel quality assurance systems. Government and industry associations should prioritize subsidized training to improve personnel skills and service delivery. Stronger labor protections for casual and contract workers may minimize job insecurity-related unhappiness, indirectly boosting service quality. The study supports the Social Exchange Theory by showing that management support mediates work satisfaction and service quality in emerging economies. It provides localized data from Uganda's hospitality sector and specific recommendations for improving service results through targeted recognition, communication, and training.
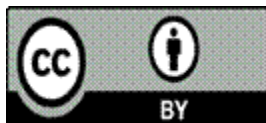
## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper. The study was conducted independently without any financial or commercial support that could have influenced the findings, interpretation, or reporting of the results. The author conceptualized the study, designed the research methodology, and coordinated data collection. He conducted the data analysis, interpreted both quantitative and qualitative findings, and drafted the initial manuscript. Critical revisions, theoretical framing, and integration of literature were also led by him. The author approved the final version of the manuscript for submission and takes full responsibility for its content. All procedures followed the ethical guidelines of Kabale University and the principles of academic integrity.

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