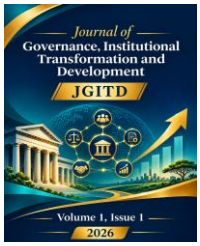
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*Customer Service Training Content and Quality Service Delivery at Julius Nyerere International Airport, Tanzania*




# Customer Service Training Content and Quality Service Delivery at Julius Nyerere International Airport, Tanzania

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**Abstract**

**Purpose:** This study examined the effects of customer service training content on the provision of quality service delivery at Julius Nyerere International Airport (JNIA), where passenger complaints have risen despite a regulatory requirement for structured customer service training.

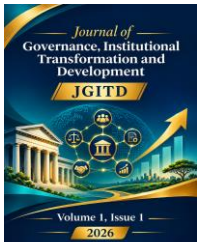
**Design/methodology/approach:** An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design guided by Public Strategic Implementation Theory, New Public Governance Theory and Public Value Theory was adopted. Questionnaires were completed by 82 of 86 frontline staff selected through stratified random sampling (95.3%), and 12 purposively selected supervisors and managers were interviewed. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, multiple regression and thematic analysis.

**Findings:** Training content was rated highly (overall M = 4.09). Improvement of staff professionalism (M = 4.32) and relevance to passenger service tasks (M = 4.20) were the strongest aspects, while reflection of real operational challenges at JNIA was the weakest (M = 3.83). Training content was positively correlated with quality service delivery ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$) and remained a significant predictor when training frequency and delivery methods were controlled ($\beta = 0.261$, $p = 0.006$). Interviewees stressed the value of realistic, scenario-based content.

**Research limitations/implications:** The study relied on staff perceptions at one airport; passenger-reported measures were not collected.

**Practical implications:** Airport authorities should make training content more practical and scenario-based, aligned with real operational challenges such as delays, complaints and processing pressure.

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## INTRODUCTION

Public service delivery has become a central concern of public administration reform, particularly in developing countries where governments face growing pressure to improve efficiency, accountability and citizen satisfaction. Contemporary public administration scholarship emphasises that public institutions should serve citizens effectively and create public value rather than merely control administrative processes (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015; Bryson et al., 2014). Airports are an important arena for such service delivery: they are public service points where citizens and visitors directly experience the competence and courtesy of public institutions.

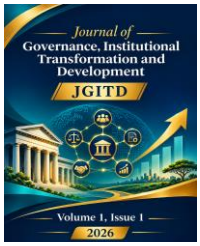
Customer service training is one of the main instruments through which airports seek to improve service quality. From a public administration perspective, training is not only a human resource activity but also a policy implementation tool that translates regulations into practical administrative behaviour. Airports with continuous staff training and performance monitoring systems have consistently achieved high passenger satisfaction ratings (Airports Council International [ACI], 2024; Changi Airport Group, 2024). In Africa, however, service quality has not kept pace with growth in passenger traffic, and training programmes have produced uneven results where enforcement, supervision and evaluation are weak (African Airlines Association, 2025; World Bank, 2024).

In Tanzania, Julius Nyerere International Airport (JNIA) is the largest airport and serves as a key gateway for international and domestic passengers. According to the Tanzania Civil Aviation Authority (TCAA, 2024), JNIA handles approximately 2.8 to 3.0 million passengers annually. The airport is managed by the Tanzania Airports Authority (TAA) under the Ministry of Transport. The TCAA Regulatory Policy (2021) requires all frontline staff to undergo structured customer service training of at least 40 hours annually in order to improve service delivery quality.

Despite this policy requirement, evidence from institutional reports shows that service delivery challenges still exist at JNIA. The Tanzania Airports Authority (2024) reports that passenger complaints increased by about 42 per cent between 2019 and 2023. The most common complaints include staff rudeness, slow service, poor communication, and weak complaint handling systems. At the same time, passenger satisfaction levels declined from about 73 per cent to 62 per cent over the same period. These statistics indicate that service delivery quality is declining despite the existence of a formal training policy.

Further administrative records from TAA (2025) indicate that only about 34 per cent of frontline staff have received structured customer service training since the introduction of the TCAA policy. This means that a large proportion of staff may be performing service delivery tasks without adequate training support. In addition, training is often irregular, not fully aligned with policy requirements, and rarely evaluated in terms of its impact on service delivery performance.

These trends suggest that the problem may lie less in the absence of policy than in the effectiveness of its implementation, and particularly in the quality of the training itself. Training that does not reflect the situations staff actually face may raise awareness without changing practice. Yet little empirical evidence exists on how frontline staff at JNIA assess the content of their customer service training or on how that content relates to the quality of service they deliver. This article reports the first objective of a broader study on the effectiveness of the customer service training programme at JNIA: to examine the effects of customer service training content on the provision of quality service delivery.




## Theoretical Framework

*Public Strategic Implementation Theory*

Public Strategic Implementation Theory was advanced by Mitchell (2020) to explain how public organisations translate policies and strategic objectives into practical outcomes. The theory emphasises that successful implementation depends on organisational capacity, leadership commitment, effective coordination, resource availability, monitoring mechanisms, and employee competence. According to Mitchell (2020), even well-designed policies may fail to achieve their intended objectives if implementation systems are weak or poorly coordinated.

The theory argues that implementation should be viewed as a strategic process rather than a purely administrative activity. Public institutions must ensure that policies are supported by adequate resources, staff capabilities, communication systems, and accountability mechanisms. Effective implementation therefore requires continuous monitoring and evaluation to ensure that intended outcomes are achieved.

This theory is highly relevant to the study because customer service training at JNIA is implemented through policies and administrative procedures developed by aviation authorities. Although training policies exist, service delivery challenges continue to be reported by passengers. Public Strategic Implementation Theory helps explain that the existence of a policy alone does not guarantee success. The effectiveness of customer service training depends on how well training programmes are implemented, monitored, funded, and supported by management.

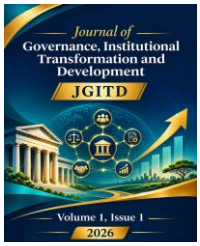
*New Public Governance and Public Value Theories*

New Public Governance Theory views public service delivery as a relational and collaborative process in which service users, frontline staff and institutions jointly shape outcomes (Osborne, 2010). From this perspective, training content should equip staff with the communication, empathy and problem-solving skills required in direct interactions with passengers. Public Value Theory adds that public organisations should be judged by the value they create for citizens, including fairness, responsiveness and trust (Moore, 1995; Bryson et al., 2014). Together, the three theories suggest that training content contributes to service quality only when it is relevant, practical and aligned with the service expectations of users, and when it is supported by implementation systems.

## Empirical Literature

Empirical literature widely confirms that customer service training plays an important role in improving quality service delivery in public sector organisations. Quality service delivery in this context refers to how effectively public institutions respond to service users in terms of speed, communication, professionalism, and problem-solving ability. However, scholars also emphasised that training alone does not automatically improve service delivery unless it is supported by strong organisational systems and policy enforcement.

Tharenou et al. (2007), in a meta-analysis of 67 empirical studies, found that training significantly improved employee performance and service outcomes across public and private organisations. Their findings showed a moderate positive effect size (Cohen's d = 0.48), meaning that training has a meaningful but not automatic impact on service delivery. Importantly, they found out that training focusing on customer interaction skills such as communication, empathy, and complaint handling produces stronger improvements in service quality compared to general training. However, most of the studies which have been reviewed were conducted in developed countries, which limits their application to developing public service systems where institutional constraints are stronger.




In a public sector study, Borins (2018) found that customer service training improved citizen satisfaction and service quality by about 22 per cent in Canadian government agencies. However, agencies that combined training with strong supervisory reinforcement achieved much greater improvements (34 per cent). This showed that training must be supported by management systems to improve actual service delivery outcomes.

In African public institutions, Olowo (2022) found that customer service training improved service delivery outcomes in Nigerian hospitals by 31 per cent. However, the effect declined after several months due to a lack of refresher training and weak follow-up systems. This indicates that without continuous institutional support, improvements in service quality are not sustainable.

In aviation, the evidence points in the same direction. Kumar and Singh (2022) found that Indian airports with regular customer service training achieved faster passenger processing and higher passenger satisfaction, while Martinez et al. (2023) reported that continuous training combined with supervisory coaching reduced passenger complaints in European airports. In Africa, Adeyemi and Ogunleye (2025) found a moderate positive relationship between training and service quality, but noted that weak infrastructure, limited training resources and poor supervision reduced performance. At Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Otieno and Mwangi (2025) found that training improved service delivery but that differences between terminals were explained more by management commitment than by individual training.

Taken together, these studies show that the content of training, particularly its focus on customer interaction skills such as communication, empathy and complaint handling, matters for service outcomes (Tharenou et al., 2007). However, most of the evidence comes from developed or Asian contexts, and few studies have examined how frontline staff in African public airports assess the relevance and practicality of the training they receive. The present study addresses this gap at JNIA.

## METHOD

### Research Approach and Design

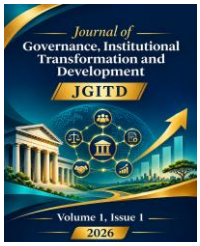
The study adopted a pragmatic research philosophy, which allows the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to address practical problems (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was used (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In the first phase, structured questionnaires measured the training dimensions and quality service delivery; in the second phase, interviews and documentary review were used to explain the quantitative results. This design allowed the study first to identify statistical relationships and then to explain them within the institutional context of JNIA.

### Study Area

The study was conducted at JNIA in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania's largest and busiest airport and the country's main international gateway, which handles about 78% of Tanzania's international passenger traffic (Tanzania Civil Aviation Authority, 2024). JNIA was selected because of the documented decline in passenger satisfaction and rise in complaints, and because it operates under the TCAA Regulatory Policy (2021), which makes it possible to examine how training is implemented under a formal regulatory requirement.

### Population, Sample and Sampling

The target population consisted of 110 JNIA employees directly involved in passenger service: 30 Operation Officers, 25 Security Officers, 30 Customer Service Officers and 25 Customer Service Assistants. Employees whose duties were not directly related to passenger service were excluded. The sample size of 86 was




determined using Yamane's (1967) formula at a 5% margin of error and allocated proportionally across the four strata, with simple random sampling within each stratum (Saunders et al., 2019), as shown in Table 1. For the qualitative phase, 12 supervisors and managers were selected purposively on the basis of their experience in customer service operations and training implementation (Patton, 2015).

*Table 1. Distribution of the quantitative sample*

| Stratum | Population | Percentage | Sample Size |
|---|---|---|---|
| Operation Officers | 30 | 27.3% | 24 |
| Security Officers | 25 | 22.7% | 20 |
| Customer Service Officers | 30 | 27.3% | 24 |
| Customer Service Assistants | 25 | 22.7% | 18 |
| Total | 110 | 100% | 86 |

Source: Computed using Yamane (1967).

### Data Collection

A structured questionnaire adapted from validated instruments was administered to sampled employees. Training content was measured using six statements on relevance to passenger service tasks, communication with passengers, complaint-handling skills, reflection of real operational challenges at JNIA, staff professionalism and alignment with aviation service standards. Quality service delivery was measured using six indicators: staff courtesy, complaint handling, processing speed, accuracy of information, professional treatment and overall improvement due to training. All items used a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

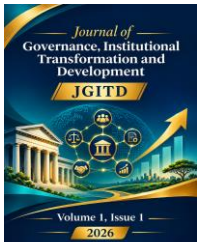
Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 12 key informants in private settings within JNIA, audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Documentary review covered the TCAA Regulatory Policy (2021), JNIA training records, passenger complaint logs, passenger satisfaction reports and training budget reports.

### Validity and Reliability

Content validity was ensured by grounding questionnaire items in the conceptual framework and literature and by review from academic supervisors and aviation sector experts. The questionnaire was pilot-tested with respondents who were not part of the main study. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with 0.70 as the acceptable threshold (Field, 2018). All scales exceeded 0.80; the training content scale had an alpha of 0.872 and the quality service delivery scale 0.889. For qualitative data, a second coder analysed a subset of transcripts to check coding consistency.

### Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed in SPSS version 29 (IBM Corp., 2024). Descriptive statistics summarised respondents' characteristics and the training content and service delivery items, with mean scores interpreted as very low (1.00–1.80), low (1.81–2.60), medium (2.61–3.40), high (3.41–4.20) and very high (4.21–5.00). Pearson correlation measured the relationship between training content and quality service delivery, interpreted following Cohen (1988), and multiple linear regression estimated the contribution of training content while controlling for training frequency and delivery methods. Interview data were analysed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006).




### Ethical Considerations

The study has followed strict ethical standards. Approval was obtained from the KIUT Research Ethics Committee and permission from TAA and JNIA management.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring voluntary participation without coercion. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time.

Confidentiality was strictly maintained. No names appeared in the report, and all data were stored securely in password-protected systems. Audio recordings were deleted after transcription verification.

## RESULTS

### Response Rate and Respondents

Of the 86 questionnaires administered, 82 were completed and returned (95.3%), and all 12 scheduled interviews were completed. Most respondents were aged 25–44 years (63.4%) and 61.0% were male. Customer Service Officers formed the largest group (42.7%), followed by supervisors (26.8%) and management personnel (22.0%). Most respondents held a bachelor's degree (45.1%) or a diploma (32.9%), and 93.9% had worked at JNIA for at least one year.

### Perceptions of Customer Service Training Content

Training content was measured using six statements. The results are presented in Table 2.

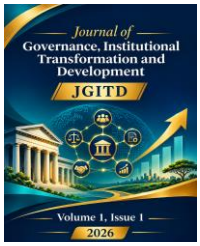
*Table 2. Customer service training content (n = 82)*

| Statement | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Training content is relevant to passenger service tasks at JNIA | 2 (2.4%) | 4 (4.9%) | 8 (9.8%) | 30 (36.6%) | 38 (46.3%) | 4.20 | 0.98 |
| Training improves communication with passengers | 2 (2.4%) | 5 (6.1%) | 9 (11.0%) | 33 (40.2%) | 33 (40.2%) | 4.10 | 0.99 |
| Training includes complaint handling skills | 3 (3.7%) | 5 (6.1%) | 11 (13.4%) | 32 (39.0%) | 31 (37.8%) | 4.01 | 1.05 |
| Training reflects real operational challenges at JNIA | 4 (4.9%) | 7 (8.5%) | 13 (15.9%) | 32 (39.0%) | 25 (30.5%) | 3.83 | 1.13 |
| Training improves staff professionalism | 1 (1.2%) | 3 (3.7%) | 7 (8.5%) | 29 (35.4%) | 42 (51.2%) | 4.32 | 0.91 |
| Training aligns with aviation service standards | 2 (2.4%) | 5 (6.1%) | 10 (12.2%) | 32 (39.0%) | 33 (40.2%) | 4.09 | 1.00 |

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree; figures are frequencies (percentages). Source: Field data (2026).

The findings indicate that training content was perceived positively, with an overall mean of 4.09, which falls in the high range. Improvement of staff professionalism recorded the highest mean (M = 4.32), with 86.6% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing; this was the only item in the very high range. Relevance of training to passenger service tasks followed (M = 4.20; 82.9% agreement), together with improvement of communication with passengers (M = 4.10; 80.4%) and alignment with aviation service standards (M = 4.09; 79.2%). Inclusion of complaint-handling skills recorded a mean of 4.01 (76.8%).

Reflection of real operational challenges at JNIA recorded the lowest mean (M = 3.83), with 69.5% agreement and 13.4% disagreement, and the largest standard deviation (SD = 1.13). Although still in the high range, this indicates that the practical, context-specific dimension of training content was the weakest. Staff therefore perceived training as strong in shaping professional conduct and general job relevance, but less effective in preparing them for the specific operational situations they face at JNIA.




### Quality Service Delivery

*Table 3. Quality service delivery indicators (n = 82)*

| Statement | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Passengers are satisfied with staff courtesy | 2 (2.4%) | 5 (6.1%) | 12 (14.6%) | 36 (43.9%) | 27 (32.9%) | 3.88 | 0.86 |
| Complaint handling is effective and timely | 4 (4.9%) | 8 (9.8%) | 16 (19.5%) | 34 (41.5%) | 20 (24.4%) | 3.62 | 0.96 |
| Passenger processing speed is satisfactory | 5 (6.1%) | 9 (11.0%) | 18 (22.0%) | 32 (39.0%) | 18 (22.0%) | 3.51 | 1.01 |
| Staff provide accurate information to passengers | 1 (1.2%) | 4 (4.9%) | 10 (12.2%) | 35 (42.7%) | 32 (39.0%) | 3.94 | 0.82 |
| Passengers receive professional treatment | 1 (1.2%) | 4 (4.9%) | 11 (13.4%) | 35 (42.7%) | 31 (37.8%) | 3.91 | 0.84 |
| Overall service delivery has improved due to training | 1 (1.2%) | 3 (3.7%) | 8 (9.8%) | 36 (43.9%) | 34 (41.5%) | 4.02 | 0.80 |

Note. Figures are frequencies (percentages). Source: Field data (2026).

In general, the findings indicate that quality service delivery at JNIA was generally perceived positively, with an overall mean of 3.81 and a standard deviation of 0.88. The statement that overall service delivery had improved due to training recorded the highest mean (4.02), followed by the provision of accurate information to passengers (3.94), professional treatment (3.91) and staff courtesy (3.88). In contrast, passenger processing speed recorded the lowest mean (3.51), followed by complaint handling (3.62). This pattern suggests that interpersonal service and information provision were perceived more positively than the speed of processing and resolution of passenger complaints.

### Relationship between Training Content and Quality Service Delivery

Pearson correlation analysis showed a positive and statistically significant relationship between training content and quality service delivery ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$), a strong relationship according to Cohen's (1988) criteria. In a multiple regression model including training content, training frequency and training delivery methods, the three training dimensions jointly explained 52.0% of the variation in quality service delivery ($R^2 = 0.520$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.501$; $F(3, 78) = 26.19$, $p < 0.001$). As Table 4 shows, training content remained a significant positive predictor when the other dimensions were controlled ($B = 0.247$, $\beta = 0.261$, $p = 0.006$).

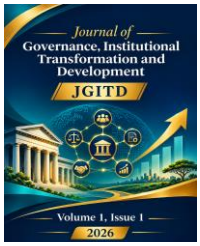
*Table 4. Regression coefficients for training dimensions predicting quality service delivery*

| Predictor | B | Std. Error | Beta (β) | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constant | 1.084 | 0.381 | — | 2.84 | 0.006 |
| Training content | 0.247 | 0.087 | 0.261 | 2.84 | 0.006 |
| Training frequency | 0.219 | 0.081 | 0.238 | 2.70 | 0.009 |
| Training delivery methods | 0.331 | 0.089 | 0.349 | 3.72 | <0.001 |

Note. Dependent variable: quality service delivery. Source: Field data (2026).

### Qualitative Findings

Interviews consistently indicated that practical and relevant content was essential for improving customer service. One informant explained: "The training is most useful when employees are exposed to situations that they actually meet while dealing with passengers." Another added: "Practical examples make it easier for staff to understand how to respond when passengers are angry, confused or under pressure." These accounts suggest that training is most effective when it reflects real workplace challenges and equips staff with practical skills to listen, communicate clearly, remain calm and resolve complaints without escalating conflict.




## DISCUSSION

### Content Matters, but Practical Relevance Lags

The findings show that frontline staff at JNIA regard their customer service training content as relevant and beneficial, particularly for professionalism and communication, and that better-rated content is associated with better perceived service delivery. The independent contribution of content in the regression model indicates that what staff are taught matters for service outcomes, even after accounting for how often and how training is delivered. This is consistent with Tharenou et al. (2007), who found that training focused on customer interaction skills produces stronger improvements in service quality than general training.

However, the weakest content item—reflection of real operational challenges—mirrors the weakest service delivery indicators, processing speed and complaint handling. Staff appear to have been well prepared in courtesy and professional conduct, which are reflected in comparatively high ratings for professional treatment and accuracy of information, but less well prepared for the operational pressures that generate delays and complaints. The interview evidence supports this interpretation: informants emphasised that training is most useful when it simulates the situations staff actually encounter. This finding is in line with Kumar and Singh (2022) and Martinez et al. (2023), who showed that training linked to operational practice and supervisory coaching produces measurable improvements in airport service delivery.

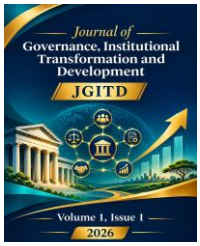
### Theoretical and Policy Implications

From the perspective of Public Strategic Implementation Theory, the results show that the existence of a training policy is not enough: the substance of training must be designed to support the outcomes the policy intends (Mitchell, 2020). New Public Governance and Public Value perspectives further suggest that training content should be oriented towards the lived experience of service users, so that staff can respond to passengers' needs during disruptions and complaints. The rise in complaints despite favourable ratings of training content may therefore reflect a gap between generic customer-care content and the operational realities of a busy international airport, as well as the limited coverage of training, since only about 34% of frontline staff had received structured customer service training.

### Training Content within the Wider Training System

The results should also be read alongside the other dimensions of training. In the regression model, delivery methods had the largest standardised coefficient ($\beta = 0.349$), followed by content ($\beta = 0.261$) and frequency ($\beta = 0.238$). This suggests that content and method are closely linked: practical, scenario-based content is most effective when it is delivered through interactive methods such as role-play and coaching. The relatively strong correlation between content and delivery methods supports the view that improving what staff learn and improving how they learn should be treated as a single design task rather than as separate reforms. This is consistent with Borins (2018), who found that customer service training produced much greater improvements in citizen satisfaction when it was combined with supervisory reinforcement, and with Olowo (2022), whose evidence showed that the effects of training faded without refresher sessions and follow-up.

The findings also have implications for how the regulator measures compliance. The TCAA Regulatory Policy (2021) specifies a minimum number of training hours, but hours alone do not guarantee that content addresses the problems passengers experience. Regulatory monitoring that focuses on inputs such as hours and attendance may therefore overlook gaps in content relevance. Linking training content to the airport's complaint statistics and passenger satisfaction reports would allow the regulator and the Tanzania Airports Authority to assess whether training is responding to the actual sources of service failure (Tanzania Civil Aviation Authority, 2023;




Tanzania Airports Authority, 2023). This approach is consistent with the public value perspective, in which the success of public programmes is judged by the outcomes they produce for service users rather than by administrative outputs (Moore, 1995; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015).

### Limitations

The study relied on staff self-assessments, which may overstate the benefits of training, and did not collect passenger-reported measures of service quality. The sample was drawn from a single airport and was relatively small, which limits generalisation. Future studies should combine staff surveys with passenger satisfaction data and complaint records and should evaluate changes in service outcomes before and after redesigned, scenario-based training.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the effects of customer service training content on quality service delivery at JNIA. It concludes that training content is perceived as relevant and valuable, particularly in improving professionalism, communication and job relevance, and that it is positively and significantly associated with quality service delivery. Nevertheless, the content does not sufficiently reflect the real operational challenges of the airport, which corresponds with comparatively weaker performance in processing speed and complaint handling. Strengthening the practical, context-specific dimension of training content is therefore central to improving service delivery at JNIA.

### Recommendations

i. The Tanzania Airports Authority and JNIA management should redesign customer service training content around real operational scenarios, including flight delays, baggage problems, peak-hour congestion and passenger complaints.
ii. Training should incorporate practical methods such as role-plays, case studies and simulations that allow staff to rehearse responses to angry, confused or distressed passengers.
iii. Complaint-handling and service-recovery modules should be strengthened and linked to the airport's complaint logs, so that recurring problems inform training content.
iv. The Tanzania Civil Aviation Authority should monitor not only training hours but also the relevance and practical quality of training content, and should expand coverage so that all frontline staff receive structured training.

### Acknowledgements

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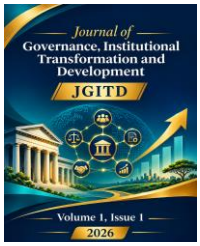
### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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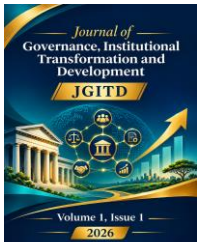
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