



ROLE OF STAFF BEHAVIOR AND SERVICE ATTITUDE IN SHAPING PASSENGER EXPERIENCE IN TNSTC

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Abstract

This study explores how staff behavior and service attitude shape passenger experiences in Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation (TNSTC) with reference to Tiruppur city. Using primary data from 93 respondents, the research examined demographic profiles, travel frequency, and perceptions of staff behavior. Chi-square tests were applied to Analyze the association between passenger characteristics and key service factors. Results indicate that politeness, helpfulness, and clear communication are highly valued by passengers. Significant relationships were found between demographic variables (age, gender, income) and perceptions of staff behavior, as well as common problems faced. The findings stress the importance of staff training, empathy, and a customer-first approach to enhance satisfaction and loyalty.

Keywords: *Public Transportation, Customer Service, Travel Experience, Service Quality*

1.Introduction

Public transportation is one of the most essential services in developing countries, ensuring mobility for millions of people at affordable prices. In India, the Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation (TNSTC) has been a backbone of passenger mobility, connecting urban, semi-urban, and rural areas. However, in the era of growing customer expectations and competition from private operators, merely providing affordable transport is not enough. Passengers increasingly value service quality—a factor strongly influenced by the behavior and attitude of staff. Drivers and conductors are the first point of contact for passengers. Their politeness, communication skills, helpfulness, and overall attitude significantly affect how passengers perceive the corporation. Even if buses are timely and affordable, negative staff behavior such as rudeness, indifference, or lack of concern may cause dissatisfaction and discourage passengers from choosing TNSTC services. Conversely, positive interactions build trust, loyalty, and a sense of comfort. This study, therefore, focuses on exploring how staff behavior and service attitude shape the overall passenger experience in TNSTC with special reference to Tiruppur city, an industrial hub where thousands rely on public buses every day.

2.Statement of the Problem

Though TNSTC has an extensive network and is known for its affordability, customer satisfaction remains a challenge. Passengers often express dissatisfaction regarding rude responses, lack of assistance for senior citizens or differently abled travelers, and inadequate communication by drivers and conductors. These service-related issues negatively impact the organization's reputation and reduce passenger loyalty. The problem lies in the fact that while infrastructure and affordability receive attention, the human element of service quality is often overlooked. A disconnect between staff attitude and passenger expectations results in complaints, negative word-of-mouth, and in some cases, a shift towards private alternatives. Without addressing this issue, TNSTC risks losing relevance in a competitive mobility market.

3.Need of the Study

While previous studies on public transportation largely focus on infrastructure, scheduling, affordability, and safety, less attention has been given to the human element—the staff who directly interact with passengers. Since drivers and conductors are the face of TNSTC, their attitude strongly influences how passengers perceive the corporation's service quality. With rising competition from private bus operators and app-based mobility services, TNSTC must prioritize customer service through better staff behavior. Therefore, this study is essential to highlight the need for behavioural training, improved grievance handling, and a customer-first approach to enhance passenger loyalty and satisfaction.

4.Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the role of staff behavior and service attitude in shaping passenger experiences in Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation (TNSTC), with reference to Tiruppur city. This design is appropriate as it aims to describe existing conditions, Analyze patterns, and interpret relationships between demographic factors and passenger perceptions.

4.2 Data Collection Method

Both primary and secondary data were used. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire survey administered to 93 respondents who regularly travel by TNSTC buses. The questionnaire included questions on demographic profile, travel frequency, expectations of staff behavior, and common problems faced during travel. A purposive sampling method was employed to capture responses from different age, gender, occupation, and income groups.

Secondary data were obtained from journals, research articles, and reports on service quality and passenger satisfaction in public transportation.

4.3 Tools of Analysis

Percentage analysis was used to study the demographic profile and travel frequency of respondents. The Chi-square test was applied to examine the association between demographic variables (age, gender, occupation, and income) and factors such as staff behavior and common problems faced by passengers.

5.Objective

- 1.To Analyze the travel frequency of passengers and their dependence on TNSTC buses.
3. To identify the most Important factors in staff behavior.
4. To study the common problems faced by passengers.

6.Review of Literature:

Srinivas (2023) conducted a study on “Passenger satisfaction towards TNSTC services” Findings showed that while passengers appreciated affordability and wide service coverage, they expressed dissatisfaction regarding frequency, maintenance, and most importantly, staff behavior. The study reported that unfriendly or unhelpful conductors reduced passengers’ perception of service quality and overall comfort. It also highlighted that positive staff interactions can mitigate dissatisfaction from delays or poor infrastructure. The research concluded that TNSTC must adopt a people-centered approach by strengthening staff training, enhancing grievance redressal, and ensuring polite communication to improve public trust and encourage long-term ridership loyalty in Tamil Nadu.

Das (2022) explored “The influence of service quality dimensions on passenger satisfaction using the SERVQUAL model.” The study emphasized the five dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Among these, responsiveness and empathy—linked directly to staff behavior and service attitude—were found to be most critical for shaping passenger trust and loyalty. Results indicated that even if operational efficiency was high, negative staff interactions could lower overall service perception. The study highlighted that courteous, empathetic, and responsive staff could significantly increase satisfaction and repeat usage. It recommended investing in customer service training as a core strategy for bus operators.

Christy Priya (2017) investigated passenger satisfaction towards Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation (TNSTC) in Salem division. The study found that passengers were moderately satisfied with aspects such as safety, security, and seating comfort. However, dissatisfaction was particularly noted in relation to staff behavior, waiting facilities, and grievance handling. The study emphasized that staff attitude plays a crucial role in shaping the travel experience, often outweighing infrastructure improvements. Passengers valued politeness, helpfulness, and clarity in communication from staff. The research concluded that to improve overall satisfaction, TNSTC must focus on customer-friendly staff training and better passenger service practices.

7.Analysis and Interpretation

The demographic analysis shows that the majority of TNSTC passengers are young adults aged 21–35 years (64.5%), followed by middle-aged commuters, while females (61.3%) form a larger share than males. Employees (45.2%) and students (29%) are the main user groups, and more than half of respondents fall in the middle-income category of ₹15,001–25,000. Travel frequency patterns reveal that 38.7% of passengers commute daily and 32.3% weekly, highlighting TNSTC’s role as a regular commuting option for work and education.

Chi-square analysis indicates significant relationships between age, gender, and income with passengers’ expectations of staff behavior, while occupation showed no influence. Younger passengers emphasized politeness and communication, and female passengers valued respectful interactions. Income differences also shaped expectations of service standards. Further, the analysis of common problems reveals that all demographic variables—age, gender, occupation, and income—significantly affect passenger experiences. Major issues include rude responses, lack of assistance for vulnerable passengers, and poor grievance handling. Overall, the findings establish that staff behavior and service attitude strongly influence passenger satisfaction. Enhancing politeness, empathy, and responsiveness can address common issues and improve trust, making TNSTC more competitive and passenger-friendly.

7.1 Profile of the Respondent

Table 1. Profile of the Respondent

Profile		Number of respondents	Percentage to Total
Age	Above 18	9	9.7
	21-35	60	64.5
	36-50	24	25.8
	Total	93	100.0
Gender	Male	36	38.7
	Female	57	61.3
	Total	93	100.0
Occupation	Student	27	29.0
	Business	6	6.5
	Employee	42	45.2
	Self employed	15	16.1

Monthly Income	Others	3	3.2
	Total	93	100.0
	Below 15000	30	20
	15001-25000	51	54.8
	25001-35000	12	12.9
	Total	93	100.0

Source: Primary data

The demographic analysis of the 93 respondents reveals that the majority (64.5%) fall in the age group of 21–35 years, indicating that young adults form the core group of TNSTC bus users. Respondents aged 36–50 years represent 25.8%, while only 9.7% are just above 18 years, showing comparatively fewer younger commuters. In terms of gender, females dominate the sample with 61.3% compared to 38.7% males, suggesting higher usage among women. Regarding occupation, employees form the largest group (45.2%), followed by students (29%) and self-employed individuals (16.1%), while businesspersons (6.5%) and others (3.2%) represent smaller proportions. Income distribution highlights that more than half (54.8%) of respondents earn between ₹15,001–25,000, while 20% earn below ₹15,000 and 12.9% fall in the ₹25,001–35,000 bracket. This shows that the majority of TNSTC passengers belong to the middle-income category.

7.2 Travel Frequency by TNSTC

Table 2. Travel frequency by TNSTC

S,No	Travel By TNSTC	Frequency	Percentage
1	Daily	36	38.7
2	Weekly	30	32.3
3	Monthly	15	16.1
4	Rarely	12	12.9
Total		93	100.0

Source: Primary data

The frequency analysis shows that daily commuters account for the highest share at 38.7%, indicating strong dependence on TNSTC for everyday travel. Weekly travelers form 32.3%, reflecting regular but not daily reliance. Monthly users comprise 16.1%, while occasional travelers who use TNSTC rarely account for only 12.9%. This reveals that TNSTC primarily serves as a vital daily and weekly commuting option for the majority of passengers, especially those belonging to working and student groups.

7.3 Factor in Staff Behaviour

Table 3 Result of chi square analysis

Profile and Most Important factor in Staff behaviour	Calculated Value	Table Value	Degrees of Freedom	Null Hypothesis Accepted or Rejected	Inference
Age and Most Important factor in Staff Behaviour	16.118	12.592	6	Rejected	Significant
Gender and Most Important factor in Staff Behaviour	8.100	7.815	3	Rejected	Significant
Occupation and Most Important factor in Staff Behaviour	20.363	21.026	12	Accepted	Not Significant
Monthly Income and Most Important factor in Staff Behaviour	32.274	15.507	8	Rejected	Significant

Source: Computed da

The chi-square analysis highlights the relationship between demographic factors and the most important aspects of staff behaviour as perceived by passengers. The results show that age has a significant influence on the staff behaviour considered important, as the calculated value (16.118) is greater than the table value, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Gender also exhibits a significant association, with the chi-square value (8.100) exceeding the table value. Similarly, monthly income plays a significant role, with a calculated value of 32.274, indicating strong variation in staff behaviour expectations across income groups. However, in the case of occupation, the null hypothesis is accepted since the calculated value (20.363) is less than the table value (21.026). This suggests that occupation does not significantly influence the most important factor in staff behaviour. Overall, the findings indicate that age, gender, and income significantly shape passengers' expectations of staff behaviour, whereas occupation does not.

7.4 Common Problems Faced by Passengers

Table 4 Result of chi square analysis

Profile and Common Problems faced by Passenger	Calculated Value	Table Value	Degrees of Freedom	Null Hypothesis Accepted or Rejected	Inference
Age and Common Problems faced by Passenger	16.412	15.507	8	Rejected	Significant
Gender and Common Problems faced by Passenger	22.157	9.488	4	Rejected	Significant
Occupation and Common Problems faced by Passenger	62.156	26.296	16	Rejected	Significant
Monthly Income and Common Problems faced by Passenger	32.274	15.507	8	Rejected	Significant

Source: Computed da

The chi-square test results also demonstrate the association between demographic characteristics and the common problems encountered by passengers. Age is found to have a significant relationship with problems faced, as the calculated value (16.412) is greater than the table value, resulting in rejection of the null hypothesis. Gender also shows a significant association, with the chi-square value (22.157) being higher than the table value. Occupation exhibits the strongest relationship, as the calculated value (62.156) far exceeds the table value, clearly establishing significance. Monthly income also influences the problems faced by passengers, with the calculated value (32.274) greater than the table value. These findings suggest that all the selected demographic variables—age, gender, occupation, and monthly income—significantly affect the nature and extent of common problems experienced by passengers.

Findings

1. Most respondents are young, middle-income employees who depend on TNSTC for daily commuting.
2. Women constitute a majority of users, underlining the importance of staff behavior in ensuring safety and comfort.
3. Travel frequency highlights TNSTC's role as a daily service provider rather than occasional use.
4. Staff politeness, communication clarity, and helpfulness are the most critical behavior factors.
5. Demographic factors such as age, gender, and income significantly influence both staff behavior expectations and perceived service problems.
6. Major issues reported include rude staff responses, inadequate assistance for elderly/disabled, and poor grievance handling.

Suggestions

1. Staff Training – Conduct regular behavioural and customer service training programs for drivers and conductors.
2. Gender-Sensitive Service – Improve staff sensitivity to women commuters through awareness and monitoring.
3. Grievance Redressal – Establish a passenger-friendly complaint system with faster resolution.
4. Assistance for Vulnerable Passengers – Ensure staff provide help to senior citizens and differently abled travelers.
5. Performance Incentives – Reward staff for positive passenger feedback to encourage good behavior.
6. Awareness Campaigns – Promote a “customer-first” culture across TNSTC operations.

Conclusion

The study confirms that staff behavior and service attitude are as important as affordability and accessibility in shaping passenger satisfaction in TNSTC. Since passengers rely heavily on public transport for daily mobility, negative staff behavior can diminish loyalty and push commuters toward private operators. Strengthening staff training, empathy, and grievance handling is essential for TNSTC to remain competitive and relevant in an evolving transport market. Enhancing the human element of service will not only improve passenger experience but also build long-term trust and loyalty.

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