Understanding The Relationship Between Customer Service Strategies And Customer Satisfaction At Mulonga Water Supply And Sanitation Company Ltd.

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Abstract:
This study examined the relationship between customer service strategies and customer satisfaction at Mulonga Water Supply and Sanitation Company Ltd (MWSC), a public utility operating under monopolistic conditions in Zambia. A mixed-methods research design was adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were collected using a structured online questionnaire administered to a stratified random sample of 354 residential customers from Chingola Central and Riverside, while qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with purposively selected MWSC staff members. Data collection was conducted through community WhatsApp groups. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS Version 26, employing descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression analysis, whereas qualitative data were analysed thematically. The findings revealed that customer service strategies, including responsiveness, communication, complaint resolution, and service quality, did not have a statistically significant effect on customer satisfaction. Instead, customer satisfaction was largely influenced by systemic factors such as infrastructure reliability, billing transparency, and institutional trust. The study concluded that in public utility monopolies, conventional customer service strategies act primarily as hygiene factors and are insufficient to enhance customer satisfaction without accompanying structural reforms. The findings provide practical implications for improving service delivery and customer-focused policies in water utilities within developing country contexts.
Key Word: *Customer Satisfaction; Service Strategies; Public Utilities; Water and Sanitation; Infrastructure Reliability*

I.   Introduction

Customer satisfaction has become a critical performance indicator for organisations operating in both competitive and monopolistic environments. In public utilities such as water supply and sanitation, satisfaction is influenced not only by service encounters but also by reliability, transparency, and institutional trust. In Zambia, the water sector is regulated by the National Water Supply and Sanitation Council, which emphasises customer satisfaction as a licensing and performance criterion. Mulonga Water Supply and Sanitation Company Ltd (MWSC) serves the Copperbelt towns of Chingola, Chililabombwe, and Mufulira and has implemented several customer service strategies to improve service delivery. Despite these initiatives, persistent customer dissatisfaction remains evident, raising questions regarding the effectiveness of conventional customer service strategies in monopolistic utility contexts. This study therefore investigates the relationship between customer service strategies and customer satisfaction at MWSC.

II.   Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter reviews existing literature on customer service strategies and customer satisfaction, drawing from empirical, theoretical, and conceptual perspectives. The review synthesises studies from global, regional, and local contexts to establish the current state of knowledge, identify areas of convergence and divergence, and highlight research gaps relevant to public utilities. Particular emphasis is placed on water utility services in developing economies, with specific reference to the Zambian context and Mulonga Water Supply and Sanitation Company Ltd (MWSC).

Empirical Literature Review

The empirical literature examines the relationship between customer service strategies and customer satisfaction across different service environments. This section is structured into global, regional, and local perspectives to provide comprehensive contextual understanding.

Global Perspectives

Globally, empirical studies consistently demonstrate a positive relationship between customer service strategies and customer satisfaction, particularly in competitive service industries. Hassan et al. (2015) examined the effect of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) practices on customer satisfaction and retention and found that effective service delivery, customer care, and complaint handling significantly enhanced satisfaction and loyalty. The study further noted that retaining existing customers is more cost-effective than acquiring new ones.

However, although the study by Hassan et al. (2015) established a general link between CRM and satisfaction, it did not disaggregate the effects of individual service attributes such as responsiveness, reliability, and complaint resolution. This limitation underscores the need for sector-specific studies that examine how particular service strategies influence customer satisfaction outcomes.

Waqas et al. (2020), through a systematic review of customer experience research, emphasized the role of attribution theory in explaining customer satisfaction, arguing that customers evaluate services based on perceived fairness and service outcomes. This perspective suggests that satisfaction is shaped not only by service interactions but also by customers' interpretations of organizational intentions and constraints.

Widely applied theoretical models such as SERVQUAL and Expectation–Disconfirmation Theory dominate global customer satisfaction research. The SERVQUAL model identifies responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy, and tangibility as key dimensions of service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1988). While these models have proven effective in competitive markets, their applicability to monopolistic public utilities has been questioned due to contextual constraints such as limited customer choice, regulatory oversight, and infrastructural challenges.

Regional Perspectives

Regional studies within Sub-Saharan Africa indicate that customer service strategies play an important role in shaping customer satisfaction in public and private service organisations. Moosa and Kashiramka (2022) found that responsiveness, communication, and service reliability positively influenced customer satisfaction and loyalty. Their study emphasized the importance of customer feedback mechanisms and timely complaint resolution in enhancing service perceptions.

In East Africa, research on public utilities suggests that New Public Management (NPM) reforms have contributed to improvements in customer satisfaction by increasing managerial autonomy and accountability. Tumuheirwe et al. (2024) reported that the adoption of performance-oriented management practices improved service responsiveness and customer engagement in water utilities. The authors stressed the importance of clear service delivery policies and continuous improvement systems.

Despite these positive findings, regional studies caution against the uncritical transfer of service strategies across different contexts. Haider et al. (2022) argue that demographic, economic, and infrastructural differences significantly influence service outcomes, necessitating the adaptation of customer service strategies to local conditions. This highlights the need for context-sensitive approaches when evaluating customer satisfaction in public utilities.

Local Perspectives

Within Southern Africa, empirical studies demonstrate that customer satisfaction is closely linked to service reliability and operational efficiency in utility services. Gulyani et al. (2005) found that in urban water services, customer satisfaction was strongly influenced by service continuity, affordability, and infrastructure reliability rather than customer service interactions alone.

In Zambia, empirical research focusing specifically on customer service strategies in the water utility sector remains limited. Mwape and Chibomba (2025) identified significant gaps in the implementation of customer-oriented service strategies within the Zambian water sector, noting that regulatory constraints and infrastructure limitations often overshadow service interaction improvements.

Due to the scarcity of Zambia-specific studies, insights are frequently drawn from comparable regional cases. Existing literature suggests that while service quality and customer satisfaction are distinct constructs, they are closely related, with service quality forming a component of overall satisfaction (Moosa & Kashiramka, 2022). However, in monopoly utility settings, customer satisfaction appears to be shaped more by structural and institutional factors than by conventional service quality dimensions.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the SERVQUAL model and Expectation–Disconfirmation Theory.

The SERVQUAL model, developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988), conceptualizes service quality across five dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The model is widely

used to assess gaps between customer expectations and perceived service performance and provides a useful framework for evaluating customer service strategies in service organisations.

Expectation–Disconfirmation Theory, proposed by Oliver (1980), posits that customer satisfaction results from a comparison between prior expectations and perceived service performance. Satisfaction occurs when performance meets or exceeds expectations, while dissatisfaction arises when performance falls short. This theory provides a basis for examining how customer service strategies influence satisfaction outcomes in utility services.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the assumed relationship between customer service strategies and customer satisfaction. Customer service strategies constitute an independent variable, represented by responsiveness, communication, service reliability, complaint resolution, and service quality. Customer satisfaction is treated as the dependent variable and is measured through overall service evaluation.

The framework assumes that effective customer service strategies positively influence customer satisfaction; however, this assumption is tested within the context of a monopolistic public utility.

Conceptual Definitions of Terms

Customer Satisfaction: The extent to which customer expectations are met by an organization's services and overall experience.
Communication: The exchange of information between an organization and its customers to ensure clarity and transparency.
Responsiveness: The ability of a service provider to promptly address customer inquiries and complaints.
Service Reliability: The consistency and dependability of service delivery.
Complaint Resolution: The process of receiving, managing, and resolving customer grievances.
Service Quality: The perceived excellence of service delivery relative to customer expectations.

Research Gaps

The literature review identifies several gaps that justify the present study:
Industry-Specific Gap: Most customer service studies focus on competitive sectors such as banking and telecommunications, with limited attention to monopolistic public utilities.
Contextual Gap: There is a lack of empirical studies focusing on MWSC and the Zambian water utility sector, particularly across urban and peri-urban settings.
Strategic Gap: Limited research examines the effects of specific customer service strategies on satisfaction in water utilities.
Measurement Gap: Conventional satisfaction models may not adequately capture utility-specific factors such as service continuity, infrastructure reliability, and billing transparency.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter reviewed empirical, theoretical, and conceptual literature on customer service strategies and customer satisfaction, with emphasis on public utilities in Sub-Saharan Africa and Zambia. The review identified significant research gaps and established the SERVQUAL model and Expectation–Disconfirmation Theory as guiding frameworks. These gaps provide the foundation for examining the relationship between customer service strategies and customer satisfaction at MWSC.

III. Material And Methods

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data were collected from 300 MWSC customers using structured questionnaires, while qualitative data was obtained through interviews with 10 MWSC staff members. Stratified random sampling was used for customers, and purposive sampling for staff. Data were analysed using SPSS for quantitative analysis and thematic analysis for qualitative data. Reliability and validity were ensured through pilot testing and Cronbach's Alpha. Coefficient.

Study Design: A cross-sectional mixed-methods research design was employed, combining quantitative survey methods with qualitative interviews. Integration of findings was conducted during data interpretation.

Study Location: The study was conducted at Mulonga Water Supply and Sanitation Company Ltd (MWSC), a public water utility operating in the Copperbelt Province of Zambia. The empirical investigation focused on MWSC service areas within Chingola District, specifically Chingola Central (urban) and Riverside (peri-urban) communities, where the company provides water supply and sanitation services to residential customers.

Study Duration: January 2025 to May 2025.

Sample size: 354 respondents.

Sample size calculation: The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. From a population of 3,100 customers, a sample of 354 was calculated, of which 300 valid responses were analysed.

Subjects & selection method: The study subjects included MWSC residential customers and selected MWSC employees. Customers were selected using stratified random sampling based on geographical location, while employees were selected purposively based on their roles in customer service delivery.

Inclusion criteria:
1. Residents of Chingola Central and Riverside residential areas
2. Either sex
3. Aged ≥ 18 years
4. Customers with active accounts in the last 12 months
5. Willing volunteers to participate in the survey
6. MWSC employees whose jobs involve customer interaction.

Exclusion criteria:
1. MWSC customers who do not reside in Chingola Central and Riverside.
2. Customers of MWSC whose accounts are inactive.
3. Aged below 18 years
4. Those unwilling to volunteer
5. Non-customer facing staff/ those not directly involved in customer service

Procedure methodology

The study followed a systematic and sequential procedure to ensure methodological rigor, reliability, and ethical compliance.

First, a comprehensive review of relevant literature was conducted to identify key variables related to customer service strategies and customer satisfaction. This informed the development of the study objectives, conceptual framework, and data collection instruments.

Second, structured questionnaires were designed for the quantitative component of the study. The questionnaire consisted of three sections: Section A captured demographic information; Section B assessed customer service strategies using Likert-scale items; and Section C measured overall customer satisfaction. The questionnaire items were adapted from established service quality and customer satisfaction literature to ensure content relevance.

Prior to full deployment, the questionnaire was pilot-tested with 10–15 MWSC customers who were excluded from the main sample. Feedback from the pilot test was used to refine question wording, improve clarity, and enhance the internal consistency of the instrument. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, and items that reduced scale reliability were revised accordingly.

Following pilot testing, official permission to conduct the study was obtained from Mulonga Water Supply and Sanitation Company Ltd (MWSC) management. Ethical clearance was also secured from the relevant institutional ethics committee.

Quantitative data collection was conducted using an online survey questionnaire. Survey links were distributed to selected customers through official community WhatsApp groups administered by MWSC for Chingola Central and Riverside areas. This approach was adopted due to high mobile phone penetration and widespread use of digital communication platforms among customers. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained electronically before respondents proceeded with the survey.

For the qualitative component, semi-structured interviews were conducted with purposively selected MWSC staff involved in customer service delivery, billing, and operational management. Interviews were guided by an interview schedule designed to explore service strategy implementation, operational challenges, and perceptions of customer satisfaction. Interviews were conducted until data saturation was achieved.

Upon completion of data collection, quantitative data were screened for completeness and accuracy before analysis. Valid responses were coded and entered the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26 for analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondent characteristics and service perceptions, while inferential statistics—including Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression—were applied to test relationships between customer service strategies and customer satisfaction.

Qualitative data from staff interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically. Emerging themes were identified, categorized, and compared with quantitative findings during the interpretation stage. Integration of quantitative and qualitative results enabled triangulation and strengthened the credibility of the study's conclusions.

Statistical analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS Version 26. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondent characteristics and service perceptions. Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression analyses were conducted to examine relationships between customer service strategies and customer satisfaction at a 5% significance level.

IV.   Result

This study examined the relationship between customer service strategies and customer satisfaction at Mulonga Water Supply and Sanitation Company Ltd (MWSC), a public utility operating under monopolistic conditions in Zambia. The findings reveal a paradoxical outcome in which high levels of customer dissatisfaction coexist with statistically insignificant relationships between customer service strategies and overall customer satisfaction.

Table no 1 shows the customers' perception of essential service strategies, including timeliness, complaint resolution, communication, and overall satisfaction. Percentages represent the proportion of respondents choosing the most prominent response options.

Table no 1: Perception of Service Strategies

Service Strategy	Key Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Responsiveness to enquiries/complaints	Very Dissatisfied	60	20%
Overall Quality of Service	Dissatisfied	90	30%
Overall Quality of Service	Satisfied	30	10%
Effectiveness of Complaints Resolution	Good	3	1%
Effectiveness of Complaints Resolution	Very Poor	48	16%
Communication of Information about Services	Good	105	35%
Communication of Information about Services	Very Poor	30	10%
Overall Customer Satisfaction	Very Bad	135	45%
Likelihood to Recommend MWSC	Never	129	43%
Likelihood to continue using MWSC services	Neutral/No Choice	174	58%

Figure no.1: Customer ratings of Responsiveness
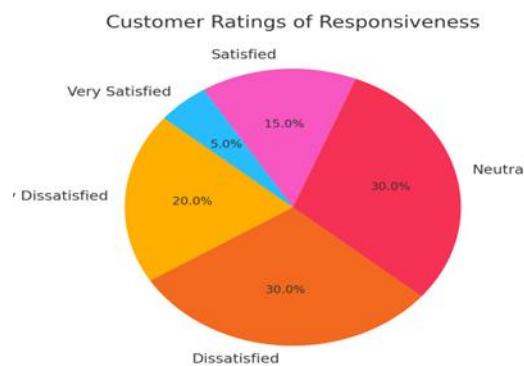
Correlation Analysis

Table no 2: The table below displays the Pearson correlation coefficients linking various customer service strategy variables to overall customer satisfaction. The analysis utilizes data gathered from 300 respondents. The Pearson correlation (r) values reflect both the strength and direction of relationships, whereas the p-values assess the statistical significance of these observed relationships.

Table no2: Pearson Correlation Analysis

Service Strategy	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value
Responsiveness	-0.075	0.194
Quality	-0.001	0.983
Complaint Resolution	-0.079	0.172

Communication	-0.008	0.884
Recommend	-0.071	0.219

Correlation Analysis Results

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between customer service strategies and overall customer satisfaction at Mulonga Water Supply and Sanitation Company Ltd. (MWSC), based on 300 responses. The results indicate that none of the service strategy variables exhibited a statistically significant relationship with customer satisfaction.

Responsiveness to enquiries and complaints showed a weak negative and statistically insignificant correlation with customer satisfaction (r = −0.075, p = 0.194). Similarly, overall quality of service demonstrated a negligible correlation (r = −0.001, p = 0.983), suggesting that general service quality perceptions do not meaningfully influence satisfaction levels. The effectiveness of complaint resolution also exhibited a weak negative relationship (r = −0.079, p = 0.172), indicating that dissatisfaction may be influenced by broader systemic issues beyond complaint handling.

Communication of service-related information showed a near-zero correlation with customer satisfaction (r = −0.008, p = 0.884), while likelihood to recommend MWSC also demonstrated a weak and insignificant relationship (r = −0.071, p = 0.219).

Overall, all correlation coefficients were weak and statistically insignificant (p > 0.05), indicating the absence of both statistically and practically significant relationships between customer service strategies and customer satisfaction within the study sample.

Regression Analysis and Interpretation

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to assess the predictive influence of customer service strategies on overall customer satisfaction at Mulonga Water Supply and Sanitation Company Ltd. (MWSC). The results indicate that the regression model had very low explanatory power ($R^2 \approx 0.009$), showing that responsiveness, service quality, complaint resolution, communication, likelihood to recommend, and likelihood to continue using MWSC services jointly explained less than 1% of the variation in customer satisfaction.

None of the independent variables significantly predicted customer satisfaction (p > 0.05). Although responsiveness and service quality showed positive coefficients, their effects were statistically insignificant. Complaint resolution and communication exhibited weak negative coefficients, suggesting that dissatisfaction may stem from systemic service constraints rather than frontline service interactions. Similarly, recommendation and continued usage were not significant predictors, reflecting service dependence within a monopolistic utility context.

These findings challenge the assumptions of the SERVQUAL model, which posits that dimensions such as responsiveness, reliability, and service quality are key drivers of customer satisfaction (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The results also contradict the Expectation–Confirmation Theory, which suggests that satisfaction increases when service performance meets or exceeds customer expectations (Oliver, 1980). In the MWSC context, customer satisfaction appears to be influenced more by structural factors such as service continuity, infrastructure reliability, and institutional trust than by conventional service quality dimensions.

Overall, the regression results indicate that traditional customer service strategies function as baseline expectations rather than determinants of satisfaction in monopolistic public utilities, underscoring the need for context-specific models of customer satisfaction.

Table no 3: Regression Coefficients for Customer Satisfaction Model

Variable	Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	t-value	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
Constant	**1.9107**	**0.471**	**4.054**	**0.000**	**[0.983, 2.838]**
Responsiveness	0.0603	0.055	1.105	0.270	[-0.047, 0.168]
Quality	0.0309	0.064	0.486	0.627	[-0.094, 0.156]
Complaint Resolution	-0.0612	0.070	-0.878	0.381	[-0.198, 0.076]
Communication	-0.0160	0.061	-0.264	0.792	[-0.136, 0.104]
Recommend	0.0205	0.054	0.379	0.705	[-0.086, 0.127]
Continue Use	0.0293	0.074	0.398	0.691	[-0.116, 0.174]

Table no 4 demonstrates how the empirical findings of the study align to the SERVQUAL model and Expectation–Confirmation Theory (ECT).

Table no 4: Alignment of Theoretical Expectations and Empirical Findings

Theory / Construct	Theoretical Expectation	Empirical Result (MWSC Study)	Interpretation / Contribution
SERVQUAL – Responsiveness	Prompt responses to customer queries and complaints enhance	Weak, negative, and statistically insignificant relationship with satisfaction (r = −0.075, p > 0.05);	Responsiveness functions as a baseline expectation rather than a satisfaction driver in a monopoly

	customer satisfaction	non-significant regression coefficient	utility context
SERVQUAL – Service Quality	Higher perceived service quality leads to increased customer satisfaction	Negligible correlation with satisfaction ($r = -0.001$, $p > 0.05$); no predictive power in regression analysis	General service quality perceptions do not significantly influence satisfaction where service availability is constrained
SERVQUAL – Complaint Resolution	Effective complaint handling improves customer satisfaction	Weak and statistically insignificant negative relationship with satisfaction ($r = -0.079$, $p > 0.05$)	Dissatisfaction likely reflects systemic service limitations beyond complaint-handling processes
SERVQUAL – Communication	Clear and timely communication enhances customer satisfaction	Near-zero correlation with satisfaction ($r = -0.008$, $p > 0.05$)	Communication alone does not offset infrastructural and operational deficiencies
SERVQUAL (Overall Model)	Service quality dimensions significantly predict customer satisfaction	Regression model explains <1% of variance in satisfaction ($R^2 \approx 0.009$)	Challenges the universal applicability of SERVQUAL in monopolistic public utility settings
Expectation– Confirmation Theory (ECT)	Satisfaction results when service performance meets or exceeds customer expectations	High dissatisfaction persists despite service strategies; no significant predictors of satisfaction	Customer expectations may be shaped by necessity rather than service performance
Satisfaction–Loyalty Link (ECT Extension)	Satisfied customers are more likely to recommend and remain loyal	Likelihood to recommend and continued usage not significant predictors of satisfaction	Continued usage reflects forced consumption rather than attitudinal loyalty
Contextual Extension (This Study)	Not explicitly addressed by traditional models	Structural factors (infrastructure reliability, service continuity, trust) dominate satisfaction outcomes	Extends theory by introducing structural determinants as primary satisfaction drivers in monopoly utilities

Table no 5 Shows the thematic analysis of MWSC staff interviews. It identified challenges related to infrastructure capacity, customer engagement, digital service initiatives, performance monitoring, staffing levels, management responsiveness, and organizational reputation. Staff reported issues associated with aging infrastructure, limited customer understanding of billing and service procedures, uneven use of digital communication platforms, inconsistent monitoring practices, shortages of customer service and maintenance personnel, varying management responses, and a negative public image linked to past service experiences.

Table no 5: Thematic Summary of Findings from MWSC Staff Interviews

Theme	Key Issues Identified	Illustrative Insights from Interviews	Implications for Customer Satisfaction
Capacity and Infrastructure Constraints	Aging infrastructure and limited technical capacity	Frequent pipe failures and outdated systems delay repairs	Service interruptions undermine perceived service reliability
Customer Engagement and Education	Limited customer understanding of billing and procedures	Misinterpretation of bills and service processes leads to complaints	Poor understanding contributes to dissatisfaction and mistrust
Digital Transformation Initiatives	Uneven adoption of digital communication tools	WhatsApp and e-billing exist but are underutilized in some areas	Digital tools alone are insufficient to improve customer experience
Internal Performance Monitoring	Inconsistent application of monitoring and feedback systems	Limited training and follow-up for frontline staff	Weak accountability reduces service efficiency
Resource and Staffing Limitations	Shortage of skilled staff in customer service and maintenance	Delays in complaint handling due to understaffing	Slow response times heighten customer frustration
Management Responsiveness	Mixed perceptions of managerial support	Some staff report delayed decisions on operational issues	Delayed management action affects service delivery outcomes
Organizational Reputation	Negative public image shaped by past service failures	Historical issues continue to influence customer perceptions	Reduced trust limits the effectiveness of service improvements

Triangulation and Integration of Results

The quantitative data provided measurable evidence on customer satisfaction levels and the perceived effectiveness of customer service strategies, while the qualitative interviews offered complementary insights into operational constraints, underlying causes of dissatisfaction, and contextual factors shaping customer experiences. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data enhanced the study's internal validity and strengthened the robustness of the findings.

The triangulated results, shown in table no 6, revealed both areas of convergence between customer and staff perspectives, as well as notable differences in perceptions, thereby highlighting key issues and

opportunities within MWSC's customer service framework that may inform future service improvement strategies.

Table no 6: Triangulation Matrix – Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Findings

Service Dimension	Quantitative Findings	Qualitative Insights
Responsiveness	20% very dissatisfied; weak, non-significant correlation with satisfaction	Staff cited limited workforce and delays in follow-up as major concerns
Overall Quality of Service	30% dissatisfied; no significant predictive power in regression	Infrastructure and budget constraints cited as major quality barriers
Complaint Resolution	16% rated it very poor; not a significant predictor	Lack of training, poor coordination highlighted by staff
Communication of Information	35% rated good, but 10% very poor; no clear impact on satisfaction	Digital platforms helpful but underutilized in peri-urban areas
Customer Satisfaction	45% rated very bad overall; satisfaction levels generally low	Staff aware of negative perceptions; link to systemic issues
Likelihood to Recommend	43% would never recommend; not statistically significant in model	Poor public image tied to historical failures and lack of engagement
Likelihood to Continue Use	Majority neutral; forced usage due to lack of options	Acknowledged customer dependency due to utility monopoly

V. Discussion

This study examined the relationship between customer service strategies and customer satisfaction at Mulonga Water Supply and Sanitation Company Ltd (MWSC), guided by the SERVQUAL model and Expectation–Confirmation Theory. These theoretical frameworks assume a direct and positive relationship between service strategies—such as responsiveness, service quality, complaint resolution, and communication—and customer satisfaction. However, the empirical findings of this study necessitated a refinement of this assumption.

Despite high levels of reported dissatisfaction, particularly with responsiveness (20% very dissatisfied) and overall satisfaction (45% rated "very bad"), the regression and correlation analyses revealed that customer service strategies did not significantly predict customer satisfaction. The regression model explained less than 1% of the variance in satisfaction ($R^2 \approx 0$), indicating that the selected service strategy variables had minimal explanatory power. This finding contradicts established service marketing literature, which identifies these dimensions as key determinants of satisfaction in competitive service environments (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Zeithaml et al., 1996).

The absence of statistically significant relationships suggests that, within a monopolistic public utility such as MWSC, customer service strategies function primarily as baseline or hygiene factors. While their absence contributes to dissatisfaction, their presence alone does not enhance satisfaction. This finding highlights the limited applicability of conventional service quality models in essential-service monopolies, where customers lack viable alternatives and service usage is driven by necessity rather than preference.

The findings further indicate that customer satisfaction in this context is likely shaped by structural and institutional factors that were not directly captured in the service strategy variables. These include infrastructure reliability, continuity of water supply, transparency in billing and pricing, affordability, and institutional trust. Such factors appear to exert a stronger influence on customer perceptions and satisfaction than interpersonal or procedural service interactions.

Additionally, the study revealed a disjunction between dissatisfaction and loyalty-related behavior. Although 43% of respondents indicated that they would not recommend MWSC, many remained neutral regarding continued service usage. This neutrality reflects constrained choice within a monopolistic framework rather than customer approval, reinforcing the notion that satisfaction–loyalty relationships proposed by Expectation–Confirmation Theory are weakened in monopoly utility settings.

These findings are consistent with prior studies on public utilities in constrained environments, which suggest that satisfaction is more strongly influenced by systemic conditions such as infrastructure investment, institutional capacity, and regulatory effectiveness than by frontline service quality alone (Gulyani et al., 2005). The results therefore underscore the limitations of applying customer satisfaction frameworks developed in Western, competitive markets to African urban utility contexts without contextual adaptation.

In summary, the study does not support the hypothesis of a significant positive relationship between customer service strategies and customer satisfaction at MWSC. Instead, it highlights the need for a refined conceptual framework that incorporates structural realities, operational constraints, and contextual consumer psychology to better explain customer satisfaction in monopolistic public utilities.

VI. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between customer service strategies and customer satisfaction at Mulonga Water Supply and Sanitation Company Ltd (MWSC) and found no significant association between

responsiveness, service quality, complaint resolution, communication, and overall customer satisfaction. Despite high levels of reported dissatisfaction— with 45% of customers rating their satisfaction as very poor— regression analysis revealed that customer satisfaction is largely independent of frontline service interactions. Instead, satisfaction appears to be shaped by broader structural and institutional factors, including infrastructure reliability, service continuity, billing transparency, pricing equity, and institutional trust. The findings demonstrate that in monopolistic public utilities, customer service strategies function primarily as hygiene factors: their absence intensifies dissatisfaction, but their presence does not enhance satisfaction. Continued use of MWSC services reflects necessity rather than loyalty, underscoring the limitations of applying conventional service quality frameworks in no-choice service environments. Consequently, the study rejects the hypothesis of a significant positive relationship between customer service strategies and customer satisfaction and highlights the need for systemic reforms and infrastructure-focused interventions to achieve meaningful improvements in customer satisfaction.

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