

The Causes of Negative Perception Towards Human Resource Department Personnel: A Case Study of Tanzania Public Service College (TPSC), Mtwara Campus

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Abstract

This study examined the causes of negative perceptions of HR personnel at the Tanzania Public Service College (TPSC), Mtwara Campus. A case study design was adopted, with a census of 45 staff members. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analysed using descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha for reliability, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression. The findings revealed that perceived favouritism ($\beta = 0.44$, $p < 0.001$) significantly increases negative perceptions of HR personnel, whereas communication effectiveness ($\beta = -0.31$, $p < 0.01$) and service delivery efficiency ($\beta = -0.36$, $p < 0.01$) significantly reduce these negative perceptions. The regression model explained 55% of the variation in employee perceptions, indicating strong explanatory power. The study concludes that negative perceptions of HR personnel are primarily driven by organisational practices, particularly favouritism, inadequate communication, and delays in service delivery. The study recommends improving transparency in HR processes, strengthening communication mechanisms, and enhancing service efficiency to foster positive employee perceptions and improve organisational performance.

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Employee Perception, Organisational Communication, Service Delivery Efficiency, Favouritism, Public Sector Institutions.

1.0 Introduction

Human Resource (HR) departments play a central role in organisational effectiveness by managing recruitment, employee relations, performance appraisal, and policy implementation. In contemporary organisations, HR is increasingly viewed as a strategic partner responsible for enhancing employee performance and organisational outcomes (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023). Beyond administrative functions, HR is expected to foster employee engagement, ensure fairness, and maintain effective communication within the organisation.

Employee perception of HR personnel is a critical factor influencing organisational behaviour outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment, and trust. Recent studies indicate

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that positive employee perceptions of HR practices enhance organisational performance, whereas negative perceptions can lead to disengagement and reduced productivity (Alfes et al., 2022; Jiang & Messersmith, 2023).

In public sector institutions, HR functions are often constrained by bureaucratic procedures, centralised decision-making, and rigid regulatory frameworks. These conditions may result in delays in service delivery, limited communication, and perceived lack of transparency, all of which contribute to negative employee perceptions (Mutonyi et al., 2022). Furthermore, perceptions of favouritism and unfair treatment have been identified as key factors undermining trust in HR departments (Otoo, 2022).

The Tanzania Public Service College (TPSC), as a government training institution, plays a vital role in building the capacity of public servants in Tanzania. At the Mtwara Campus, HR personnel are responsible for managing staff-related functions, including leave administration, performance appraisals, promotions, and employee welfare. However, as with many public institutions, employees may develop negative perceptions of HR due to perceived favouritism, ineffective communication, or inefficiencies in service delivery. Understanding these perceptions is essential, as they directly affect employee morale, organisational commitment, and overall institutional performance (Guest, 2022).

Despite the strategic importance of HR departments, employees in many organisations continue to develop negative perceptions toward HR personnel. These perceptions often arise from experiences such as delays in HR service delivery, lack of transparency in decision-making, ineffective communication, and perceived favouritism in HR practices (Otoo, 2022; Mutonyi et al., 2022).

Negative perceptions toward HR personnel can significantly affect organisational outcomes, including reduced employee trust, low morale, decreased job satisfaction, and poor cooperation between staff and management (Alfes et al., 2022). In public sector institutions, where HR processes are governed by strict regulations and administrative procedures, these challenges may be more pronounced.

At the Tanzania Public Service College (TPSC), Mtwara Campus, there is limited empirical evidence regarding the specific factors contributing to employees' negative perceptions of HR personnel. Without such evidence, it is difficult for institutional management to design effective interventions to improve HR service delivery and strengthen employee relations. Therefore, this study addressed this gap by examining the causes of negative perceptions of HR personnel at TPSC Mtwara Campus. Specifically, the study examines how favouritism in HR practices influences employees' perceptions of HR personnel, assesses the effect of communication effectiveness on these perceptions, and evaluates how the efficiency of HR service delivery affects them.

2.0 Literature Review

Employee perceptions of Human Resources (HR) personnel are largely shaped by fairness, communication, and the quality of service delivered within an organisation (Guest, 2022; Alfes et al., 2022).

The study was guided by Organisational Justice Theory, which posits that employees evaluate HR practices based on fairness in procedures, outcomes, and interpersonal treatment, and that any perceived favouritism or inconsistency can lead to negative attitudes toward HR personnel (Colquitt et al., 2023; De Clercq et al., 2022). In this context, fairness in HR processes such as recruitment, promotion, and performance appraisal is critical in influencing how employees perceive HR personnel. When employees perceive injustice, they are more likely to develop distrust and dissatisfaction toward HR functions.

Similarly, Social Exchange Theory suggests that employee–organisation relationships are built on reciprocal exchanges. When employees perceive that they are treated fairly and supported by HR, they are more likely to respond with positive attitudes and behaviours (Cropanzano et al., 2022). Effective communication and timely HR support signal organisational commitment to employee well-being, thereby strengthening trust. Conversely, poor communication and inefficiencies in HR services may be interpreted as a lack of organisational support, leading to negative perceptions. Attribution Theory further explains that employees tend to assign responsibility for workplace outcomes to specific actors, such as HR personnel, even when such outcomes are influenced by broader institutional constraints (Park & Kim, 2023).

Empirical evidence supports the argument that favouritism, communication, and service efficiency are key determinants of employee perception toward HR departments. For example, Otoo (2022), in a study among public sector employees in Ghana, found that perceived unfairness and favouritism in HR decisions significantly reduced employee trust and job satisfaction. Similarly, Mensah (2023) reported that biased promotion and recruitment practices negatively affected employee morale and organisational commitment. These findings suggest that employees who perceive unfair treatment are more likely to develop negative attitudes toward HR personnel.

In addition, Alfes et al. (2022) found through a meta-analysis that transparent communication and timely feedback significantly improved employee engagement and trust in management. Likewise, Jiang and Messersmith (2023) established that clear communication in HR processes reduces uncertainty and enhances perceived fairness. Conversely, poor communication often leads to dissatisfaction and mistrust toward HR personnel.

Furthermore, the efficiency of HR service delivery plays a vital role in influencing employee perception. Delays in processing employee requests, handling grievances, or implementing HR decisions are associated with frustration and negative attitudes, particularly in public sector institutions characterised by bureaucratic procedures (Mutonyi et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2023). Based on these theoretical and empirical insights, this study conceptualises favouritism, communication effectiveness, and HR service delivery efficiency as significant

determinants of employees' perceptions of HR personnel. While favouritism is expected to increase negative perceptions, effective communication and efficient service delivery are expected to reduce negative attitudes. However, there remains limited empirical evidence examining these relationships within public institutions in Tanzania, particularly at Tanzania Public Service College, Mtwara Campus. This study addresses this gap by providing empirical evidence from a public training institution.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable. This framework guides the study's empirical analysis.

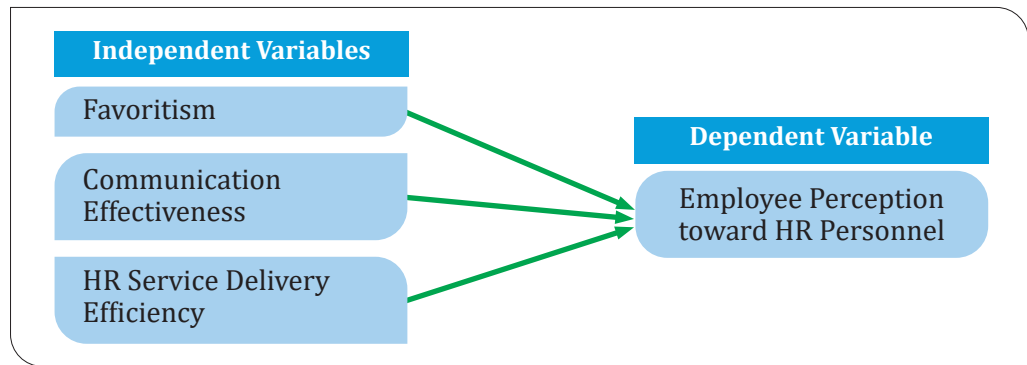


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher (2026)

3.0 Methodology

This study employed a case study design to examine the causes of negative perceptions of Human Resource (HR) personnel at the Tanzania Public Service College, Mtwara Campus. The study targeted all staff members on campus, totalling 45 employees. A census approach was adopted to ensure comprehensive coverage and eliminate sampling bias. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising Likert-scale items measuring favouritism, communication effectiveness, HR service delivery efficiency, and employee perceptions of HR personnel. The instrument also included demographic questions and open-ended items to capture additional insights.

Quantitative data were coded and analysed using descriptive statistics, Cronbach's Alpha to assess reliability, Pearson correlation to examine relationships among variables, and multiple regression to determine the influence of independent variables on employee perceptions. Composite variables were computed by averaging responses for each construct. The analysis was conducted using statistical software (SPSS/Excel), and results were presented in tables with interpretations to support the study objectives.

4.0 Results and Discussion

A total of 45 respondents participated in the study conducted at Tanzania Public Service College, Mtwara Campus. The respondents comprised both academic and administrative staff with diverse educational backgrounds and work experience, ensuring that the findings reflect a broad range of perspectives regarding HR practices within the institution.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 45)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	27	60.0%
	Female	18	40.0%
Staff Category	Academic	26	57.8%
	Administrative	19	42.2%
Education Level	Diploma	7	15.6%
	Bachelor	21	46.7%
	Master	15	33.3%
	PhD	2	4.4%
Work Experience	<2 years	6	13.3%
	2–5 years	14	31.1%
	6–10 years	17	37.8%
	>10 years	8	17.8%

Source: Field Data (2026)

The demographic profile indicates that the majority of respondents were male (60%) and academic staff (57.8%), suggesting that teaching personnel constitute a significant proportion of the campus workforce. The dominance of academic staff suggests that the findings strongly reflect individuals directly involved in institutional delivery and likely to interact frequently with HR services.

In terms of educational attainment, most respondents held bachelor's (46.7%) and master's degrees (33.3%), indicating a relatively well-educated workforce. This is important because higher levels of education are often associated with greater awareness of organisational policies, fairness, and professional expectations. As a result, such employees are more likely to critically evaluate HR practices and identify inconsistencies or inefficiencies.

Additionally, the majority of respondents had more than 5 years of work experience, with 37.8% having 6–10 years. This suggests that respondents had sufficient exposure to HR processes, including promotions, leave administration, and performance appraisal systems. Employees with longer tenure are more likely to form stable perceptions based on repeated interactions with HR departments (Alfes et al., 2022). Therefore, the demographic characteristics enhance the credibility of the findings, as they are based on informed and experienced respondents.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Favouritism	3.87	0.74
Communication	3.31	0.81
Service Efficiency	3.28	0.77
Employee Perception	3.92	0.69

Source: Field Data (2026)

The descriptive results indicate that favouritism (Mean = 3.87) is perceived as relatively high among employees. This suggests that many respondents believe HR decisions may not always be based on merit or fairness, but are instead influenced by personal relationships or the inconsistent application of policies. Such perceptions are particularly critical because they directly undermine trust in HR systems. According to Otoo (2022), perceived favouritism is one of the strongest predictors of negative employee attitudes because it violates the principles of organisational justice and fairness.

On the other hand, communication effectiveness (Mean = 3.31) and service efficiency (Mean = 3.28) received moderate-to-low scores, suggesting employee dissatisfaction. These findings suggest that HR may not be communicating policies, decisions, or feedback effectively to employees, leading to uncertainty and misinterpretation. This aligns with Jiang and Messersmith (2023), who argue that inadequate communication reduces transparency and weakens employee confidence in HR processes.

Similarly, the relatively low score for service efficiency indicates that employees experience delays in HR-related services, including leave approvals, grievance handling, and administrative support. In public sector institutions, such inefficiencies are often attributed to bureaucratic procedures; however, employees may still attribute these delays directly to HR personnel, as explained by Attribution Theory (Park & Kim, 2023).

The overall employee perception score (Mean = 3.92) suggests that employees hold generally negative or sceptical attitudes toward HR personnel. This supports Social Exchange Theory, which posits that when employees perceive low organisational support, they reciprocate with negative attitudes (Cropanzano et al., 2022). Thus, the descriptive results highlight key areas of concern in the institution's HR practices.

4.3 Reliability Analysis

Table 3: Reliability Statistics

Variable	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Favouritism	4	0.84
Communication	4	0.81
Service Efficiency	4	0.86
Employee Perception	4	0.83

Source: Field Data (2026)

The reliability analysis shows that all constructs have Cronbach's alpha values above 0.80, indicating high internal consistency across the measurement items. This suggests that the questionnaire items used to measure each construct were well-designed and consistently captured the intended concepts.

High reliability is essential to ensure that the results are dependable and not influenced by measurement errors. According to Hair et al. (2022), a Cronbach's alpha above 0.70 is considered acceptable, while values above 0.80 indicate strong reliability. Therefore, the results of this study are robust and suitable for further statistical analysis.

4.4 Correlation Analysis

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	Favouritism	Communication	Service Efficiency	Perception
Favouritism	1			
Communication	-0.46	1		
Service Efficiency	-0.42	0.51	1	
Perception	0.65	-0.59	-0.67	1

Source: Field Data (2026)

The correlation results reveal that favouritism is strongly and positively related to negative perception ($r = 0.65$). This indicates that as employees perceive greater favouritism in HR practices, their attitudes toward HR personnel become increasingly negative. This finding strongly supports Organisational Justice Theory, which emphasises that perceived unfairness leads to dissatisfaction and reduced trust (Colquitt et al., 2023).

Conversely, communication ($r = -0.59$) and service efficiency ($r = -0.67$) show strong negative relationships with employee perception. This implies that improvements in communication and service delivery are associated with more positive perceptions of HR personnel. Effective communication reduces uncertainty and enhances transparency, while efficient service delivery improves employee satisfaction.

These findings are consistent with empirical studies by Alfes et al. (2022) and Nguyen et al. (2023), which highlight that HR practices that promote clarity, responsiveness, and fairness significantly improve employee attitudes. The stronger correlation observed for service efficiency suggests that timeliness and responsiveness may be particularly critical in shaping employees' perceptions in public-sector institutions.

4.5 Regression Analysis

Based on the regression results from the study at Tanzania Public Service College, Mtwara Campus, the estimated regression model is expressed as follows:

Table 5: Model Summary

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
0.74	0.55	0.52	0.51

Source: Field Data (2026)

The estimated regression model indicates that all three independent variables significantly influence employees' perceptions of HR personnel at Tanzania Public Service College, Mtwara Campus. Specifically, favouritism ($\beta = 0.44$) has a positive and statistically significant effect on negative perceptions, implying that increased perceptions of unfair treatment in HR practices lead to more negative attitudes among employees. In contrast, communication effectiveness ($\beta = -0.31$) and service efficiency ($\beta = -0.36$) have significant negative effects, indicating that improvements in HR communication and timely service delivery reduce negative employee perceptions.

Overall, the model explains 55% of the variation in employee perceptions ($R^2 = 0.55$), indicating strong explanatory power. These findings suggest that employee attitudes towards HR personnel are largely shaped by organisational practices, particularly fairness, communication, and service responsiveness. The results align with Organisational Justice Theory and Social Exchange Theory, which emphasise that perceived fairness and organisational support are key determinants of employee attitudes (Colquitt et al., 2023; Cropanzano et al., 2022).

Table 6: ANOVA Results

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	11.62	3	3.87	16.87	0.000
Residual	9.48	41	0.23		
Total	21.10	44			

Source: Field Data (2026)

The ANOVA results indicate that the overall regression model is statistically significant ($F = 16.87$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that the independent variables, favouritism, communication, and service efficiency, jointly have a significant effect on employees' perceptions of HR personnel. This confirms that the model provides a good fit to the data and is suitable for explaining variations in employee perception.

The residual sum of squares (9.48) represents the portion of variation in employee perception that the model does not explain. This implies that while the model explains a substantial proportion of the variance ($R^2 = 0.55$), other factors not included in the study may still influence employee perceptions. Such factors may include organisational culture, leadership style, or individual employee expectations. Nonetheless, the relatively lower residual variance compared to the regression variance indicates that the model has strong explanatory power.

Table 7: Regression Coefficients

Variable	Beta (β)	Std. Error	t	Sig
Constant	1.05	0.36	2.91	0.005
Favouritism	0.44	0.11	4.12	0.000
Communication	-0.31	0.11	-2.88	0.006
Service Efficiency	-0.36	0.11	-3.21	0.003

Source: Field Data (2026)

The regression results indicate that all independent variables significantly influence employees' perceptions of HR personnel at Tanzania Public Service College, Mtwara Campus. The constant ($\beta = 1.05$, $p < 0.01$) suggests the baseline level of perception when all predictors are held constant. More importantly, favouritism ($\beta = 0.44$, $p < 0.001$) has a positive and statistically significant effect, indicating that increased perceptions of favouritism in HR practices lead to higher levels of negative perception among employees. This finding reinforces Organisational Justice Theory, which posits that perceived unfairness in procedures and decisions leads to dissatisfaction and reduced trust in organisational agents (Colquitt et al., 2023). It also aligns with empirical studies by Otoo (2022), which highlight favouritism as a key determinant of negative employee attitudes.

In contrast, communication ($\beta = -0.31$, $p < 0.01$) and service efficiency ($\beta = -0.36$, $p < 0.01$) have significant negative effects on employee perceptions. This implies that improvements in HR communication and timely service delivery reduce negative perceptions and enhance employee trust. The stronger effect of service efficiency compared to communication suggests that responsiveness and timely handling of employee issues are particularly critical in shaping perceptions within public institutions. These findings are consistent with Social Exchange Theory, which emphasises that employees reciprocate positive organisational treatment with favourable attitudes (Cropanzano et al., 2022). Similarly, studies by Jiang and Messersmith (2023) and Nguyen et al. (2023) confirm that effective communication and efficient HR services play a crucial role in improving employee satisfaction and trust. Overall, the results demonstrate that employees' perceptions of HR personnel are largely influenced by organisational practices, particularly fairness, communication, and the efficiency of service delivery.

5.0 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study demonstrate that employees' perceptions of Human Resource (HR) personnel at Tanzania Public Service College, Mtwara Campus, are significantly influenced by organisational practices, particularly favouritism, communication effectiveness, and service delivery efficiency. Descriptive statistics revealed relatively high perceived favouritism (Mean = 3.87) and negative employee perceptions (Mean = 3.92), while communication effectiveness and service efficiency recorded comparatively lower mean scores. These findings suggest that employees perceive unfair treatment, inadequate communication, and delays in HR service delivery as major challenges affecting their relationship with HR personnel. This aligns with Otoo (2022) and Mensah (2023), who

found that perceived bias in HR practices reduces employee trust and organisational commitment. The findings also support Organisational Justice Theory, which posits that employees' attitudes are strongly shaped by their perceptions of fairness in organisational procedures and decisions (Colquitt et al., 2023).

The correlation analysis further revealed that favouritism had a strong positive relationship with negative employee perceptions ($r = 0.65$), while communication effectiveness ($r = -0.59$) and service efficiency ($r = -0.67$) showed strong negative relationships with employee perceptions. These results imply that increased favouritism worsens employee attitudes towards HR personnel, whereas improvements in communication and service delivery reduce negative perceptions. The stronger negative correlation for service efficiency indicates that responsiveness and timely handling of employee concerns may be particularly important in public institutions. These findings are consistent with Alfes et al. (2022) and Nguyen et al. (2023), who reported that transparent communication and efficient HR service delivery significantly improve employee satisfaction and trust. The results also align with Social Exchange Theory, which suggests that employees reciprocate fair treatment and organisational support with positive attitudes and behaviours (Cropanzano et al., 2022).

The regression and ANOVA results provide further evidence of the significance of these relationships. The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 16.87$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that the independent variables jointly explain variation in employees' perceptions of HR personnel. The model explained 55% of the variation ($R^2 = 0.55$), indicating strong explanatory power and suggesting that the selected variables are meaningful predictors of employees' perceptions. Among the predictors, favouritism emerged as the strongest determinant ($\beta = 0.44$, $p < 0.001$), followed by service efficiency ($\beta = -0.36$, $p = 0.003$) and communication effectiveness ($\beta = -0.31$, $p = 0.006$). This indicates that perceived favouritism significantly increases negative perceptions, whereas better communication and improved service delivery reduce negative attitudes. These findings support Attribution Theory, which holds that employees often attribute negative workplace experiences, such as delays, poor feedback, or denied requests, directly to HR personnel, even when broader institutional or bureaucratic factors may be responsible (Park & Kim, 2023). Overall, the study confirms that employees' perceptions of HR personnel are largely influenced by fairness, communication quality, and service responsiveness, highlighting the need for HR departments in public institutions to adopt more transparent, employee-centred, and service-oriented practices.

6.0 Conclusion

This study examined the causes of negative perceptions of Human Resource (HR) personnel at the Tanzania Public Service College, Mtwara Campus, focusing on favouritism, communication effectiveness, and service delivery efficiency. The findings revealed that employee perceptions are largely shaped by organisational practices rather than individual factors. Specifically, favouritism emerged as the strongest predictor of negative perceptions, indicating that perceived unfairness in HR processes significantly undermines employee

trust and confidence. In contrast, effective communication and efficient service delivery were found to reduce negative perceptions, highlighting the importance of transparency, responsiveness, and timely support in HR functions. Overall, the study concludes that negative perceptions of HR personnel are primarily driven by perceived lack of fairness, inadequate communication, and inefficiencies in service delivery. These findings underscore the need for HR departments in public institutions to move from purely administrative functions towards more strategic, employee-centred roles.

7.0 Recommendations

Based on these findings, the study recommends that the HR department at Tanzania Public Service College enhance fairness and transparency across all HR practices by ensuring merit-based decision-making and clearly communicated procedures. Additionally, improving communication channels through regular feedback and information sharing is essential for reducing misunderstandings and building trust. The institution should also strengthen service delivery efficiency by minimising delays in HR processes and introducing clear service timelines. Furthermore, continuous training for HR personnel and the establishment of effective feedback mechanisms are recommended to improve professionalism, accountability, and employee satisfaction.

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