

THE EFFECT OF INTERNAL SERVICE QUALITY ON WELL-BEING AND PERFORMANCE AMONG HEALTHCARE EMPLOYEES: MEDIATING ROLE OF EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

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Abstract

Introduction: Healthcare delivery is considered labor-intensive, stressful, and emotionally exhausting. Therefore, staff well-being and satisfaction must be prioritized to provide high-quality care. **Aims:** This study examines the impact of Internal Service Quality (ISQ) on Employee Well-being and performance. Furthermore, the research also explores the mediating role of employee satisfaction in the relationship between internal service quality and employee well-being in terms of employee performance. Settings and Design: This cross-sectional study was carried out between December 2023 and April 2024 among 167 public hospital employees in Indonesia. Methods and Material: Data were collected using a self-administered survey, Performance Excellence questionnaire, Employee Well-Being Scale (EWBS), Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS), and Job Performance questionnaire. Statistical analysis used: The collected data were analyzed by path analysis using Partial Least Squares through Smart PLS 3.2.9. Results: Internal Service Quality has a significant direct impact on Employee Well-being ($\beta=0.651$; T Statistic=10.089), employee satisfaction ($\beta=0.497$; T Statistic=5.980), and performance ($\beta=0.255$; T Statistic=2.286). Employee satisfaction acts as a mediator in the relationship between Internal Service Quality and employee performance ($\beta=0.091$; T Statistic=2.113), while it does not serve as a mediator in the relationship between Employee Well-being and job performance ($\beta=0.010$; T Statistic=0.505). However, Employee Well-being has noteworthy direct effects on job performance ($\beta=0.339$; T Statistic=3.172) and can serve as a mediator in the relationship between Internal Service Quality and employee performance ($\beta=0.221$; T Statistic=3.314). Conclusions: This study's results suggested that enhancing internal service through employee well-being can increase productivity and higher-quality services.

Keywords: Well-Being; Job Satisfaction; Internal Service Quality; Performance; Healthcare Employee.

INTRODUCTION

Hospitals are often seen as labor-intensive and inherently stressful environments, where healthcare professionals display remarkable resilience despite being frequently exposed to various job stressors (Ahmed, 2019; Hall et al., 2016). The demanding nature of the medical profession can negatively impact workers' well-being and psychological health (Quick, 1977). Therefore, it is vital for healthcare organizations, including their employees, to prioritize health and well-being, as they play a significant role in the survival and growth of organizations, especially in turbulent conditions.

Over the past few years, Employee Well-Being has garnered significant attention in studies related to employee satisfaction (Abdullah et al., 2021). The importance of employee well-being has become increasingly evident in the survival and development of organizations worldwide, particularly in organizational behavior and related

discipline (Spreitzer & Porath, 2012). This consequence is due to the current turbulent conditions, which have led managers and academics to recognize the significance of designing workplaces that prioritize safety and promote Employee Well-Being (Voorhees et al., 2020). Although research has extensively explored the impact of employee well-being on work outcomes, there is still a need to understand how it affects job performance (Kundi et al., 2020), particularly in healthcare settings. Studies have revealed that well-being improves organizational performance, productivity, customer satisfaction, employee engagement, and organizational citizenship behavior (Hewett et al., 2018; Mousa et al., 2020; Tisu et al., 2020).

On the other hand, Internal Service Quality (ISQ) also positively influences employee satisfaction and well-being, enhancing employee (Abdullah et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2016). Internal Service Quality (ISQ) refers to an organization's services to its employees (Latif et al., 2016; Osahon & Kingsley, 2016). Organizations that provide high-quality internal services to their employees will develop more and succeed (Khan & Safwan, 2011). Several studies have proven that ISQ influences organizational performance, mediating employee satisfaction (Abdullah et al., 2021; Nurmeksela et al., 2021; Prakash & Srivastava, 2018; Waleed & Mohammed, 2019).

Employee satisfaction is a fundamental concept within the field of organizational science, which pertains to how individuals perceive their work and respond to it (Manolitzas et al., 2014). An organization that prioritizes its internal quality can cultivate a satisfied and loyal workforce (Abdullah et al., 2021; Goula et al., 2022; Nazeer et al., 2014; Pantouvakis & Mpogiatzidis, 2013), thereby facilitating the provision of outstanding service to external customers (Loveman, 1998; Waleed & Mohammed, 2019). Moreover, employees are more likely to be committed to continuous improvement and quality within the organization (Matzler & Renzl, 2006).

While numerous studies have explored ISQ with SERVQUAL in the healthcare sector, fewer studies focus on ISQ using Performance Excellence measurement, particularly in developing countries like Indonesia. This study aims to address this research gap by examining how to improve employee well-being and satisfaction through Internal Service Quality, ultimately leading to enhanced job performance in public hospitals. Therefore, this study is set to investigate the influence of ISQ on employee well-being, employee satisfaction, and job performance in healthcare settings. Further, this study examines the mediating role of job satisfaction between ISQ and employee well-being on job performance.

Proposed Hypothesis

Based on the previous studies on the relationship between Internal Service Quality on Employee Well-Being and performance through the mediating role of employee satisfaction, the researcher can formulate the following hypotheses:

- H1. Internal service quality has a positive effect on employee well-being
- H2. Internal service quality has a positive effect on employee satisfaction
- H3. Internal service quality has a positive effect on employee performance
- H4. Employee well-being has a positive effect on employee satisfaction
- H5. Employee well-being has a positive effect on employee performance
- H6. Employee satisfaction has a positive effect on employee performance

- H7. Employee satisfaction positively mediates the impact of Internal service quality on employee performance
- H8. Employee satisfaction positively mediates the impact of employee well-being on employee performance
- H9. Employee well-being positively mediates the impact of Internal service quality on employee performance

METHODS

Research design, settings, and participants

This quantitative study used a cross-sectional survey design approach to test the proposed relationships. This approach aimed to determine the effect of Internal Service Quality (ISQ) on Employee Well-Being (EWB), employee satisfaction, and job performance in the healthcare sector. Further, this study also examines the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between Internal Service Quality and Employee Well-being and job performance. Data analysis was done using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Smart PLS 3.2.8 software.

The survey was carried out in a Public Hospital in the Central Region of Indonesia, located in Parigi Moutong Regency of Central Sulawesi. Geographically, Central Sulawesi is the largest province on the island of Sulawesi, and Parigi Moutong has the largest population. The survey involved the hospital's inpatient units.

The sampling technique used is exhaustive sampling, namely by taking all population members as samples. In total, 167 responded to this, representing a response rate of 94%. The participants were adults (over 18 years) and healthcare professionals from medical, nursing, and administrative staff. The research was conducted from the 15th of December, 2023, to the 15th of April, 2024. Each participant signed A formal consent form before starting the survey.

Measure

Data were collected using a self-administered survey using a Likert scale. The Likert scale approach is commonly used to collect responses for measuring the latent construct (Kent, 2001). In this study, a 7-point Likert scale was used, starting from 7 for “strongly agree” to 1 for “strongly disagree”.

Internal services quality (ISQ) was measured using a 7-item scale of *Performance Excellence questionnaire* developed by Dhalghard (2011). Participants’ responses on ISQ covered multistage aspects, including leadership, people, partnership and resources, process, and product. *Employee-Well Being* was measured using a 7-item scale developed by Sheng et al. (2015) and adopted in Indonesian by Rahmi et al. (2021). Participants’ responses on *employee well-being* covered life, psychological, and work well-being. Job satisfaction variables are measured using questionnaires from the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) by Spector (1997), which measures employee satisfaction with nine dimensions: pay, promotion, supervision, benefit, reward, operating procedure, co-worker, nature of work, and communication. Job performance variable is measured using the Study of Williams & Anderson (1991) questionnaire, which has been used by Abdullah et al. (2021) in their research to measure the effect of job satisfaction on employee performance.

The questionnaires underwent validity and reliability testing before being used for a survey in Bahasa. The validity of the questions was tested using the Pearson correlation test, and the construct/dimensional reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha test. The analysis was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved testing the validity of the questions in each dimension. The second stage involved removing invalid questions and conducting a reliability test for each dimension. The analysis results indicated that Cronbach's Alpha value for each dimension was more significant than 0.6, concluding that the questionnaire was valid and reliable.

Statistical analysis

The research hypothesis was tested using multivariate path analysis. Based on the results of the multivariate normality test with multivariate normality test with Python, the Henze-Zirkler test result P value = 0.000, meaning the data is not normally distributed. So, the hypothesis testing method uses non-parametric analysis, namely Partial Least Square (PLS), using the SmartPLS 3 program developed by Ringle et al. (2015).

RESULTS

Table 1 represents the respondents' demographic characteristics, including age, gender, job experience, education level, and employment status. According to the results, the majority of respondents were 25 - 44 years old, about 89% (149). The female ratio (87%) was higher than that of males (13%). Most employees had job experience under five years (37%) with a Diploma level of 70% (117). Based on employment status, most respondents were noncivil servants, about 112 people (67%).

Table 1: Demographic Distribution

Attributes	Distributions	Frequency	Percentage
Age	<25 years	8	5%
	25 – 44 years	149	89%
	44 - 60 years	10	6%
Gender	Male	22	13%
	Female	145	87%
Job Experience	<5 years	62	37%
	5 - 10 years	57	34%
	>10 years	48	29%
Level of Education	Diploma	117	70%
	Bachelor degree	43	26%
	Master degree	7	4%
Employment Status	Civil Servant	55	33%
	Non- Civil Servant	112	67%

The hypotheses of the study were tested by using Smart PLS 3.2.9 software. Two effects, including the direct and indirect effects categories, were considered to quantify the dependence between latent variables. The indirect effect explains the degree to which changes in the independent variable influence changes in the dependent variable via the mediating variable. The degree to which a change in the independent variable directly influences the dependent variable without a mediator is known as the direct effect. The p-value, beta, and t-values for each of these three effects were examined, along with a confidence interval, to aid in determining whether the study's hypotheses should be accepted or rejected.

The results reported in Table 2 indicated that Internal Service Quality directly impacts Employee Well-being, employee satisfaction, and employee performance. Additionally, employee satisfaction mediates the relationship between Internal Service Quality and employee performance. However, it does not mediate the relationship between Employee Well-being and job performance. Moreover, Employee Well-being has noteworthy direct effects on job performance.

Table 2: Results of hypotheses testing

Hypotheses		Path Coefficients	T Statistics	P Values	Decision
Direct relationship					
H1	Internal Service Quality → Employee Well being	0.651	10.089	0.000	Supported
H2	Internal Service Quality → Employee Satisfaction	0.497	5.980	0.000	Supported
H3	Internal Service Quality → Employee Performance	0.255	2.286	0.023	Supported
H4	Employee Wellbeing → Employee Satisfaction	0.054	0.561	0.575	Not Supported
H5	Employee Wellbeing → Employee Performance	0.339	3.172	0.002	Supported
H6	Employee Satisfaction → Employee Performance	0.184	2.580	0.010	Supported
Indirect relationship					
H7	Internal Service Quality → Employee Satisfaction → Employee Performance	0.091	2.113	0.035	Supported
H8	Employee Wellbeing → Employee Satisfaction → Employee Performance	0.010	0.505	0.614	Not Supported
H9	Internal Service Quality → Employee Well-Being → Employee Performance	0.221	3.314	0.001	Supported

In addition to determining whether there is a significant relationship between variables, researchers should also assess the strength of the relationship using Effect Size or f-square (Wong, 2013). The f-square for direct effect value represents the effect size, with values of 0.02 or greater considered small, 0.15 or greater considered medium, and 0.35 or greater considered large (Cohen, 1988). The effect size for moderation refers to Kenny's (2018) criteria, with values of 0.005 or greater considered small, 0.001 or greater considered medium, and 0.025 or greater considered large (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 3: Effect Size (f-square)

Hypotheses		f-Square	Categories
H1	Internal Service Quality → Employee Well being	0.737	Large
H2	Internal Service Quality → Employee Satisfaction	0.199	Medium
H3	Internal Service Quality → Employee Performance	0.054	Small
H5	Employee Wellbeing → Employee Performance	0.114	Small
H6	Employee Satisfaction → Employee Performance	0.042	Small
H7	Internal Service Quality → Employee Satisfaction → Employee Performance	0.008	Medium
H9	Internal Service Quality → Employee Well-Being → Employee Performance	0.049	Large

Table 3 indicates the strength of the relationship between variables using Effect Size or f-square. The most significant influence is the impact of Internal Service Quality on Employee Well-Being as shown by the results.

DISCUSSION

As organizations strive to remain competitive in a service-oriented global market, quality has become a primary focus for achieving profitability and gaining an edge (Mugion et al., 2020). Parasuraman et al. (1985) define *quality* as a service that embodies physical evidence, ownership, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Therefore, the human resource element is crucial in shaping the perception of quality, especially in the healthcare industry. Hospitals are complex organizations that rely on continuous interaction between healthcare professionals and their patients. As a result, the internal evaluation of quality and satisfaction by employees is vital to ensure the delivery of high-quality services.

This study, with 167 participants, included health professionals from a public hospital in the Middle Sulawesi Province region. It aimed to assess the hospitals' internal quality, well-being, job satisfaction, and performance. The Performance Excellence questionnaire, Employee Well-Being Scale, and JSS questionnaire were utilized as the research tools of the survey.

The results of this study reveal that ISQ has a positive direct effect on employees' satisfaction and well-being. Similarly, ISQ positively influences employee performance, which is mediated by employee satisfaction. The study's results also revealed that employee satisfaction does not serve as a mediator in the relationship between Employee Well-being and job performance. However, employee well-being can directly affect employee performance without intervening variables. Additionally, employee well-being can serve as a mediator in the relationship between ISQ and employee performance with a large effect size. These findings provide valuable insights into the factors that drive performance in a public hospital operating in Indonesia.

Study results showed that ISQ and well-being are the most significant drivers of performance in a public hospital operating in Indonesia. The results of this study prove the recommendations by Hogleve et al.(2022) based on their extensive study of the Service Profit Chain theory, which suggests conducting further studies regarding Internal Service Quality by adding Employee Well-Being as an additional mediator. Employee well-being is the central construct influenced by internal service quality, emphasizing the influence on various aspects of employee engagement and productivity (Sharma et al., 2016). In this context, well-being has the potential to either replace or complement the traditional satisfaction measures of the Service Profit Chain (Hogleve et al., 2022). Therefore, it is suggested that improving employee well-being through human resource practices can be carried out to produce better performance and better service quality (Benítez et al., 2021).

Concerning the relationship between Internal Service Quality and Employee Satisfaction and performance, the study's results indicated a medium and positive relation—Abdullah et al.'s research. (2021) and Chang & Chang (2007) highlight the critical role of internal service quality in increasing job satisfaction and commitment of nurses in the healthcare environment. Using various human resource management strategies, such as employee rewards and recognition, which are essential elements

of internal service quality, will further strengthen this relationship (Madhani, 2019). Perić et al.(2021) found that internal service quality influences employee happiness, organizational commitment, and worker self-efficacy. The positive impact of internal service quality on employee satisfaction is crucial in encouraging employee loyalty and increasing staff productivity within the company (Wijoyo, 2023).

However, employee well-being did not have a positive effect on employee satisfaction. This finding contradicts the literature, which emphasizes the importance of considering well-being in improving employee satisfaction and performance in the hospital environment (Cai et al., 2021; Wright et al., 2007).

Despite its helpful theoretical and managerial contributions, this study has some limitations, like all other research studies. First, this research was only carried out in one hospital in Indonesia, namely Anuntaloko Regional Hospital, within Inpatient Installation. However, the inpatient installation is one of the units that can represent healthcare professions in hospitals. In the case of Anuntaloko Regional Hospital, the inpatient installation experienced a decline in patient satisfaction levels, making it attractive to use as an example of an analysis unit. The research location was quite far away, so researchers experienced limitations in obtaining more in-depth information regarding the research results through interviews with key informants. These limitations are significant to acknowledge, as they provide a more complete picture of the study's context and methodology.

Therefore, it is recommended that future research expands the sample size and considers multiple units and installations, particularly in private hospitals in Indonesia, for comparison. This broader approach could provide a more comprehensive understanding of patient satisfaction factors. Additionally, future research could explore the effect of Internal Service Quality and employee well-being and satisfaction on external customer satisfaction and hospital financial performance using the Service Profit Chain theory. These future research directions can further enhance our understanding of the multistage effect from internal marketing to external marketing in the healthcare industry.

CONCLUSION

This study assessed the internal quality, well-being, job satisfaction, and performance of health professionals in a public hospital in the Middle Sulawesi Province. The results showed that internal service quality (ISQ) has a positive impact on employee satisfaction and well-being, as well as employee performance. Surprisingly, employee well-being can directly affect employee performance and can serve as a mediator in the relationship between ISQ and employee performance with a significant effect. The study recommends further research on internal service quality and employee well-being. It also suggests that improving employee well-being through human resource practices can enhance performance and service quality. However, the study has limitations, including a small sample size and a focus on a single hospital, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. The study acknowledged these limitations and recommended expanding the sample size and considering multiple units and installations for future research.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted without any commercial or financial relationships that could potentially create a conflict of interest.

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