

Effect of Internal Service Quality on Employee Job Satisfaction: Evidence from Abubakar Gimba Library, IBB University, Lapai – Nigeria

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Abstract

In a bid to verify the conception that internal service quality steers employee job satisfaction, this study examines the effect of internal service quality on employees' job satisfaction. The Abubakar Gimba Library of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai was purposively selected for the study; the entire staff of the library were surveyed. SERVPERF scale was adopted to measure internal service quality of the University library, while Herzberg's job satisfaction scale was employed to evaluate job satisfaction of the University library staff. Measures of averages were used to measure the research explanatory variables, while linear regression was employed to test the hypothesis. Data were analyzed electronically using SPSS. The study found that, though the internal-service-quality of the University library as well as job-satisfaction of its staff were high, the internal-service-quality of the University library has no significant impact on the job satisfaction of library staff.

Keywords: Internal Service Quality, Library, Employee Job Satisfaction, Nigeria

Introduction

The service quality of a university institution or any of its units such as library deserves to be measured (Mawoli, 2012). Superb and superior service quality of a university and its library in particular could attract students and scholars globally, build good image and reputation, attract funding and contribute to global innovation and human and societal development. Service quality increases customer satisfaction (Fen and Lian, 2007; and Ree, 2009), customer patronage (Mawoli, 2011), customer loyalty (Kotler and Keller, 2006; and Lovelock and Wirtz, 2004), purchase intention (Cronin and Taylor; 1992), and financial returns (Wiele *et al.* 2002; Bates *et al.* 2003; and Ree, 2009).

The service quality of a service organization such as a library could be measured using either outside-in approach (OIA) or inside-out approach (IOA) otherwise called internal-service-quality. OIA evaluates service quality based on the perspective of the customers, while IOA measures service quality from the perspective of service providers or employees (see: Ling *et al.* 2010). Internal-Service-Quality (ISQ) is an antecedent and precursor of external service quality and customer satisfaction (Heskett, *et al.* 1994).

Though most organizations today aim to provide superior service quality to their external customers in order to increase customer satisfaction and its attendant benefits, they often fail to fully accord ISQ due recognition in company-service-quality policy framework and implementation. Unlike many libraries of first, second and third generation universities in Nigeria, Abubakar Gimba Library of IBB University is relatively new and equipped with current books, electronic library and effective internal services. In line with the SERVCOM policy of Federal Government of Nigeria, the University has taken the issue of quality assurance to its targeted clients (students, academic staff, non-academic staff and the general public) very seriously.

The service quality of a university library can affect the job performance and satisfaction of its staff on one hand, and academic performance and satisfaction of students on the other hand. Employee satisfaction is of significant importance to organizations and their customers. Past studies contend that satisfied employees perform better (Gunu, 2003; and Judge *et al.*, 2001), provide external service quality, customer satisfaction and profit growth (Heskett *et al.*, 1994; Davis, 1994; and Finn *et al.*, 1996).

However, these studies were conducted using organizations other than university library. Thus, by replicating past studies using university library as a case study, will ISQ of a university library exerts significant influence on job-satisfaction of the library staff? This is the gap in knowledge that this study intends to fill. The broad objective of the study is therefore to investigate the effect of Internal Service Quality on employee satisfaction. In line with the broad objective of the study, the following specific objectives were achieved:

1. To evaluate the internal-service-quality of a university library using SERVPERF model.
2. To assess the level of job satisfaction of the library employees.
3. To determine whether internal service quality influences employee job satisfaction.

The paper is presented in six sections. Section one is this brief introduction while subsequent sections discuss: literature review; methodology; analysis and interpretation; discussions; and conclusions and recommendations

Literature Review

Extant literature reveals that internal service quality is sufficiently researched upon and there is consensus of opinions on its constituents. Internal service quality comprises of service quality and internal services. Service quality refers to the extent to which a service meets customers' expectations (Palmer, 2005), that is, a positive gap between customer perception and expectations of a service offer (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). Service quality is also considered to mean the outcome of an evaluation process, where the customers compare their expectations with the service they have received (Gronroos, 1984: 25). However, it was slightly divergently defined as the 'feel good' factor by the consumer during and after service delivery (Green Jr *et al.*; 2007). That is, a form of attitude representing a long-run overall evaluation of organization and its services (Cronin and Taylor, 1994).

Two approaches have been employed in evaluating the service quality of organizations in the extant literature, namely Outside-In-Approach (OIA) and Inside-Out-Approach (IOA). While both approaches focus on customers as the data source for the evaluation of service quality, OIA focuses on external customers of the organization (external service quality) and IOA concentrates on internal customers or employees within the organization (internal service quality).

The concept of internal service – the idea that the whole organization must serve those who serve – has emerged as one of the most important principle of the service management approach (Farner *et al.* 2001:351). Put succinctly, internal service refers to services provided by distinctive organizational units or people working in these departments to other units or to the employees within an organization (Miguel *et al.* 2006). McCarter (1992) as cited in Azzolini and Shillaber (1998) defines Internal Service as meeting the expectations and requirements for success of those people inside the company so they can delight customers in the marketplace. To Strauss (1995), internal service quality is characterized by the attitude that people have towards one another and the way people serve each other inside the organization and it is necessary to superior external service quality.

Yet, Mawoli (2012) regards ISQ as meeting or exceeding the quality expectations and requirements of employees to enable them provide superior services to the delight of external customers. Frost and Kumar (2000) developed an internal service quality model based on the concept of GAP model of Parasuraman *et al.* (2005). The model specifies three internal service gaps. Gap 1 shows the difference in support staff's perception of front-line staff's expectation.

Gap 2 shows the difference between service quality specifications and the service actually delivered resulting in an internal service performance gap. Gap 3 shows the difference between front-liners' perceived and expected services quality of the support staff. Just like service quality, ISQ is an aggregate of several dimensions or components, namely tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Zeithamal, *et al.* 1993). 'Tangibility' refers to the appearance of physical facilities, equipment and personnel in a service organization. In other words, every material used to give tangibility to service.

'Reliability' has to do with the firm's ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. 'Responsiveness' is the willingness on the part of the service supplier (employee) to assist the customer and provide prompt service. 'Assurance' implies the knowledge-ability and courtesy of employees toward the customers. It also refers to the employees' ability to inspire trust and confidence in handling the customers. 'Empathy' is concerned with the attitude of the employee to care for the customer and give them individualized attention.

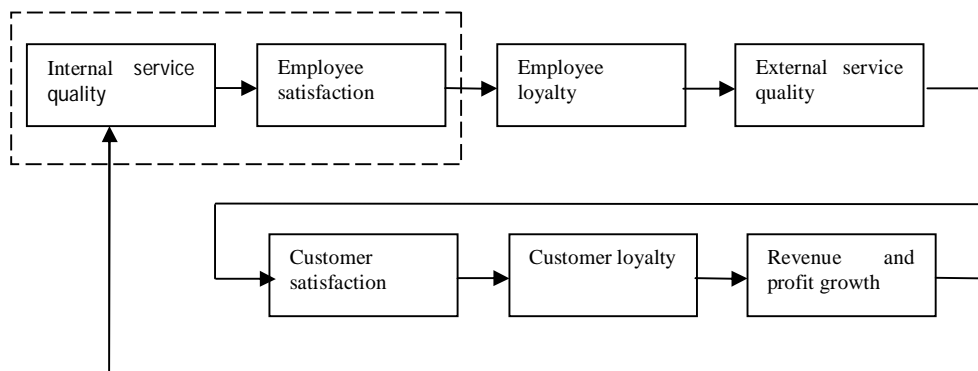
Employee Job Satisfaction

Employee satisfaction is the gratification or prosperity that the employees get from their job (Hellriegel *et al.*, 1999). Locke (1976) sees job satisfaction as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences. To Cranny *et al.* (1992), job satisfaction is an effective reaction to one's job. The commonest way of measuring job satisfaction is the use of rating scales where employees report their reactions to their jobs, and satisfaction questions usually relate to rate of pay, work responsibilities, variety of tasks, promotional opportunities, the work itself and co-workers.

Previous Studies on the Relationship between Internal Service Quality and Employee Satisfaction

Perhaps the first publication linking internal service quality to employee job satisfaction is Heskett *et al.*'s "Service-Profit Chain" model (1994). The model theorizes that employee satisfaction is a function of internal service quality (see the demarcated portion in figure 1). The model's claim sparked several empirical researches, mostly in advanced countries, on the causal relationship between the constructs.

Fig. 1: The Service Profit Chain



Source: Retzer, J. (2007), Examining the Customer-Employee Satisfaction Feedback Loop (P.1).
web-site: <http://www.maritzresearch.de/pdf/Examining-the-Customer-Employee-Satisfaction-Loop.pdf>.

The dimensional and overall ISQ of health care industry in Southern California, U.S.A. was reported to be very high and satisfactory (see: Gunawardane, 2009). Similarly, Bellou and Andronikidis (2008) found in their study that ISQ is quite satisfactory both in public and private sector banks. Farner *et al.* (2001) established that a company's sales representatives who perceived a higher level of ISQ were associated with external customers who felt they were receiving better services. Empirical evidence lacks consistency as regards the relationship between internal service quality and employee satisfaction. A study by Khan *et al.* (2011) found that perceived ISQ and employee job satisfaction are positively correlated; it also established that internal service quality in human resources has positive and significant effect on employee job satisfaction. Also, Coenen, Waldburger and Felten (2012) established that ISQ exerts strong influence on internal-customer-satisfaction (i.e. employee satisfaction), while internal-customer-satisfaction is found to be a strong determinant of customer retention.

The research conducted by Mohammah *et al.* (2012) shows that there is strong positive correlation between ISQ and organizational performance. Related studies have further established that employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction on one hand, and employee satisfaction and profitability on other hand are associated. Yee *et al.* (2008) found from their study that employee satisfaction is significantly related to external service quality and customer satisfaction. They also found that customer satisfaction influences company profitability. On the contrary, Silvestro and Cross (2000) reported that there is no significant relationship between the ISQ and employee satisfaction.

Methodology

The population of the study comprises all the staff of Abubakar Gimba Library, IBB University, Lapai – Nigeria. The library was purposively selected, while all the staff numbering thirty-one (31) employees were surveyed. The research data were gathered by means of a questionnaire, which is made up of two sections. Section ‘A’ comprises of a SERVPERF scale and Section ‘B’ contains job satisfaction scale. The independent variable (Internal service quality) was measured using a modified SERPERF scale – a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 for ‘strongly disagreed’ to 5 for ‘strongly agreed’. SERVPERF evaluates employees’ *perceptions* of the library services using five dimensions – tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy as suggested by Cronin and Taylor (1993) and adopted by authors like Boshoff and Mels (1995), Frost and Kumar (2000), and Mawoli (2011).

The data obtained from the respondents were summarized by means of descriptive statistics such that mean values that lie between 1.00 to 1.49, 1.50-2.39, 2.40-3.49, 3.50-4.49 and 4.50-5.00 were considered to symbolize very poor, poor, moderate, high, and very high ISQ respectively. Furthermore, the index of perceived internal service quality represented the independent variable which was regressed against the dependent variable. The dependent variable (employee job satisfaction) was also measured using 5-point likert-type scale (1 to 5) and a set of six items as suggested by Hsu *et al.* (2010), Herzberg (1966), and Cranny *et al.* (1992) and adopted by Abdulsalam and Mawoli (2012). Mean scores that fall between 1.00 to 1.49, 1.50-2.39, and 2.40-3.49 were considered to symbolize ‘very low job satisfaction’, ‘low job satisfaction’ and ‘moderate job satisfaction’ respectively.

On the other hand, mean scores of employee job satisfaction that lie between 3.50 to 4.49 and 4.50-5.00 represented ‘high job satisfaction’ and ‘very high job satisfaction’ respectively. However, the index of job satisfaction was obtained by summing each of the respondents’ perceived level of job satisfaction. The index represented the dependent variable in the regression analysis. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed for data analysis. In particular, descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were applied to summarize the data and measure the identified variables, namely ISQ and Employee Job Satisfaction (EJS). However, linear regression was used to test the hypothesis. All analyses were facilitated electronically using SPSS V.20.

The study tested the following hypothesis

H₀: Internal Service Quality (ISQ) has no significant influence on employees’ job satisfaction.

H_A: Internal Service Quality (ISQ) has significant influence on employees’ job satisfaction

The Research Model

In order to determine the effect of internal service quality on employees’ job satisfaction, a linear regression model was developed:

$$EJS = f (ISQ) \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

$$EJS = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ISQ + e \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

Where:

EJS = employee job satisfaction

F = Function of

ISQ = internal service quality

β_0 = constant or intercept term

β_1 = the coefficient of employee job satisfaction

e = error term

Analysis and interpretation

Of the 31 copies of questionnaire distributed to the respondents, only 29 copies equivalent to 94 percent were retrieved. All the returned copies were properly filled by the respondents and thus found usable. Analysis revealed that SERVPERF scale is reliable by 87% and 'employee satisfaction scale' is reliable by 70% (see table 1). *Alpha* ranges from 0 to 1, and is a measure of internal consistency of multi-item scales. According to Legcevic (2009), a coefficient alpha of 0.50 (i.e. 50%) or higher is considered to be adequately reliable for group data purposes (also see Peighambari, 2007).

Internal service quality of Abubakar Gimba Library

Having considered worthy to evaluate the internal service quality of Abubakar Gimba library, data analysis revealed that all except one of the ISQ dimensions of the university library is high. Precisely, the expected and perceived service quality of the University library is high for each of the reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. However, the dimension of tangibility is rated poor. It is evident from table 2 that the 'assurance' aspect of the library services has highest service quality, followed by empathy, reliability and responsiveness in that descending order (see ranking column in table 2).

It was also considered necessitous to evaluate the level of job satisfaction amongst the University's library staff. Table 3 disclosed that one out of six indicants of employees' job satisfaction is 'very high' {e.g. work environment [mean=4.59]}. However, all other properties of employees' job satisfaction are rated just high.

Effect of Internal Service Quality on Employee Job Satisfaction

The research hypothesis which states: "Internal Service Quality (ISQ) has no significant influence on employees' job satisfaction (EJS)" was tested by means of linear regression statistical instrument. The computer generated results are summarized in table 4. Table 4 shows the summary of statistics of the analysis of predictor variable (ISQ) on the dependent variable (EJS). The coefficient of correlation (R) = 0.271; the coefficient of determination (R^2) = 0.074; and the standard error estimate of 3.077. These indicate that 27.1% of the employees' job satisfaction is associated with internal service quality of the library.

The result further shows that 7.4% variation in employees job satisfaction is explained by the internal service quality of the university library. This further implies that factors other than internal service quality are responsible for as much as 92.6% of the variation in employee job satisfaction. The table further shows that the f-ratio of 2.144 is not significant at P value of 0.155, which suggests that the equation is not a good fit of 'Y' (or EJS). Furthermore, the coefficients (B_0 and B_1) of the ISQ, as contained in the equation (2), are given as 18.358 and .271. Thus, the analysis yielded the following regression equation:

$EJS = 18.385 + 0.079B_1 (0.271)$ Therefore, the hypothesis (ISQ has no significant influence on EJS) is tested using equation '2', but with specific attention to the F-statistics as shown in table 4. The F-cal of 2.144 is not significant at 0.05 level. Consequently, the hypothesis is accepted, suggesting that ISQ has no significant influence on EJS. This finding contradicts the Service-Profit-Chain of Heskett *et al.* (1994) which states that ISQ creates employee satisfaction, which in turn increases external service quality, customer satisfaction, and company profit or performance.

Discussions

Having considered it quintessential to evaluate the ISQ as well as EJS of university library, data analysis revealed that the ISQ of the university library is significantly high. This finding is in concordance with findings from previous related studies. In particular, the dimensional and overall ISQ of health care industry in Southern California, U.S.A. was reported to be very high and satisfactory (see: Gunawardane, 2009). Similarly, Bellou and Andronikidis (2008) found in their study that ISQ is quite satisfactory both in public and private sector banks. This connotes that private and public organizations have recognized that quality services can only be provided to the external customers when quality services are maintained and guaranteed internally.

Farner *et al.* (2001) established that a company's sales representatives who perceived a higher level of ISQ were associated with external customers who felt they were receiving better services. As noted by Gunawardane (2009) and Hart (1990), the importance of studying the ISQ is that the quality of the service to the customer is highly dependent on the internal service encountered.

Another possible implication of the findings from the current study is that the perceived high ISQ of the state university library in Nigeria might have resulted from the reforms within the Nigerian university system. For example, the periodic accreditation of Nigerian universities by National University Commission (NUC) has made the management of the universities to upgrade teaching, administrative and learning facilities to secure accreditation and at least, save their jobs. Also, the injection of special funds from Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETF) for developmental purposes could have boosted ISQ of universities.

Result also shows that there is equally high job satisfaction among the librarians or the library staff. This is consistent with the findings of Mawoli and Babandako (2011) who reported in their study that employee motivation and job satisfaction among academics in the university is high. These could be attributed to the improvement in the welfare of the academic and non-academic staff since late 1990's to date. For example, salaries, staff training and promotions in the Nigerian universities have arguably improved in the last decade. Remarkably, ISQ and EJS in the university library are positively correlated ($R = .271$ or 27%). This entails that increase in ISQ could lead to increase in librarians' or library staff job satisfaction.

This is confirmed by earlier findings by Khan *et al.* (2011) that perceived ISQ and employee job satisfaction in the Pakistan telecom and IT sector are positively correlated. As theorized by Heskett *et al.* (1994), high ISQ triggers high EJS (as in our case), which in turn boost service quality delivery to external customers (e.g. students, academic staff, and members of the public), customer/user satisfaction and increase patronage of libraries.

Amazingly, this study revealed that ISQ has no significant influence on EJS ($P = .155$). This result is consistent with that of Silvestro and Cross's (2000) study.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Consequence to the conceptualization and postulation that ISQ triggers EJS, an attempt was made in this study to evaluate the ISQ of a university library in Nigeria on one hand, and EJS on the other hand. The library staff perceived the ISQ of the library to be impressive and satisfactory. Similarly, there is perceived high job satisfaction among the internal customers (e.g. librarians). Importantly, ISQ and EJS are positively correlated even though the former does not exert any significant influence on the later.

Thus, the study recommends that the Management of universities should upgrade and sustain the ISQ of their libraries so as to facilitate quality service delivery to external customers, which is a prerequisite for customer satisfaction, delight, loyalty and patronage.

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Appendix

Table 1: Reliability Coefficients of the Measurement Scales

Factor	Number of items	Cronbach Alpha
Internal service quality	21	.87
Employee satisfaction	6	.70

Source: Researchers' Computation, 2012

Table 2: SERVPERF Results for the ISQ Dimensions

Service dimensions	quality	Mean	Standard deviation	Ranking	Internal Service Quality
Tangibility		3.44	1.291	5	Poor
Reliability		4.03	0.894	3	High
Responsiveness		3.80	0.976	4	High
Assurance		4.28	0.812	1	High
Empathy		4.12	0.851	2	High
Grand mean = 3.93					High

N=29

Source: Field Survey, 2012.

Table 3: Indices of Employees' Job Satisfaction

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Ranking (based on mean values)	Employee Satisfaction
Satisfied with my achievements at work	4.38	.728	2	High
Satisfied with my recognition at work	4.31	.761	3	High
Satisfied with the work itself	4.59	.628	1	Very high
Satisfied with the responsibilities given to me	4.21	.675	4	High
Satisfied with my level of advancement at work	3.59	.907	6	High
Satisfied with my personal Growth at growth	3.86	1.156	5	High
Grand mean = 4.16				Very high

N = 29

Source: Field Survey, 2012.

Table 5: Index of the explanatory variables

Respondents	Tan	Rel	Res	Ass	Emp	ISQ	EJS
1	18	20	16	18	18	90	24
2	9	16	15	14	15	69	23
3	13	19	16	16	16	80	25
4	11	23	18	20	19	91	23
5	9	20	19	19	19	86	22
6	13	18	18	18	18	85	24
7	13	18	16	14	14	75	24
8	14	20	17	19	17	87	24
9	10	14	12	14	10	60	23
10	4	19	17	19	17	76	17
11	17	25	19	19	18	98	27
12	12	15	14	16	16	73	30
13	18	23	15	19	14	89	27
14	11	19	17	19	17	83	28
15	19	25	20	20	20	104	27
16	19	25	20	20	20	104	27
17	14	24	10	14	16	78	24
18	18	20	16	17	17	88	27
19	18	21	17	17	16	89	27
20	19	19	10	8	12	68	26
21	18	22	16	16	17	89	29
22	11	23	20	19	18	91	22
23	18	20	16	18	18	90	24
24	9	16	15	14	15	69	23
25	13	19	16	16	16	80	25
26	4	19	17	19	17	76	17
27	17	25	19	19	18	98	27
28	12	15	14	16	16	73	30
29	18	23	15	19	14	89	27

Source: Field Survey, 20112.

Table 4: Summary of Regression Result Relating to ISQ and EJS

Statistics	Results
Coefficient of correlation (R)	.271
Coefficient of determination (R ²)	.074
F-cal. (at 1% level of significance)	2.144
Significance level (α)	.155
Constant term (β_0)	18.358
Unstandardized coefficient of (β_1)	.079
Standardized coefficient (Beta)	.271

**Highly significant.

N = 410

Source: Field Survey, 2012