



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Clarifying and Modeling the Association Between Internal Marketing, Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction in The Hotel Sector in Iraq

Muntadher Kadhim Shamran¹, Mohammad Safari^{2*}, D Mahmood Yahyazadehfar³, Morteza Movaghar⁴

¹PhD student of Marketing Management, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, University of Mazandaran, Babolsar, Mazandaran, Iran

^{2,4}Assistant Professor, Dep. of Business Management, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, University of Mazandaran, Babolsar, Mazandaran, Iran

³ Professor, Dep. of Business Management, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, University of Mazandaran, Babolsar, Mazandaran, Iran

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***Corresponding Author:**

mo.safari@umz.ac.ir

ABSTRACT

The current research is interested in studying the nature of the relationship between the study variables (internal marketing, service quality, and customer satisfaction) in terms of correlation and influence. The research was applied in terms of the qualitative aspect (interviews) and the quantitative aspect (questionnaire form) in the hotel sector in Iraq / the city of Karbala. The research sample targeted a different group of managers working in 14 hotels in the city of Karbala. The quest to obtain answers to the research tool is a questionnaire in order to find out Their opinions on the research topics, as the number of questionnaires distributed was 70. The answers were analyzed using the statistical program SPSS and the SmartPLS to determine the nature of the relationship and influence between the variables. The statistical analysis led to the research accepting the hypotheses that support the nature of the relationships between the research variables. In addition, the research was interested in providing a set of recommendations that emphasize the importance of research variables and serve the field aspect of hotels.

INTRODUCTION

The research problem stems from the lack of interest of previous researchers in applying the concept of internal marketing in the Iraqi hotel sector and the need for research to shed light on the human resources working in hotel establishments and considering them as internal customers and a tool for internal marketing to raise the quality of services and to promote the offers presented for the purpose of achieving the goals of the hotel establishment and to gain customer satisfaction (Huang , 2020). the necessity and importance of research should be mentioned through the implementation of internal marketing strategies and programs, which reflects positively on enhancing the quality of hotel services in the Iraqi hotel sector, which in turn is reflected in customer satisfaction, by including all the ideas and aspirations of employees in the process of formulating

organizational plans and strategies and enabling them to participate effectively in decision making (Karta, 2023). The hotel sector lacks such studies that address employees, their interests, their loyalty and their organizational commitment, which is considered the basis of internal marketing. The research fills an important gap in the academic literature by clarifying and modeling the relationship between internal marketing, service quality and customer satisfaction in the hotel sector in Iraq. In general, the research aims to provide future hotel policy makers with evidence of the implications of the role of internal marketing in improving the quality of service provided to customers to achieve their satisfaction in Iraqi hotel establishments (Rihayana et al., 2021; Kanval et al., 2024).

The research questions were as follows:

- What are the dimensions and components of internal marketing in the hotel sector in Iraq?
- What is the role of internal marketing in service quality in the hotel sector in Iraq?
- What is the role of internal marketing in customer satisfaction in the hotel sector in Iraq?

Theoretical Background

Internal marketing

Organizations today face stiff competition due to the volatile and dynamic nature of the business environment, which is driven by the information technology revolution and market liberalization, and the changing needs of customers and investors. So organizations must focus on marketing both internally and externally to ensure an effective response to their competition in the market. The term that describes this inbound focus is "inbound marketing". The idea of internal marketing, although it was introduced in the late 1970s, gained prominence in the 1990s, because it is a mixture of marketing philosophy and human resource management practices aimed at enhancing the performance of the external market (Qaisar & Muhamad, 2021; Jam et al., 2016).

The concept of internal market orientation is defined as the extent to which an organization is committed to creating value for its employees by effectively managing the relationships between employees, supervisors, and managers. The organization's approach to internal marketing encourages organizations to build effective relationships with employees, based on a commitment to deliver higher value to employees (i.e. to the internal market), through understanding and meeting expressed and latent needs, in the same way that such commitment is required to produce higher value for customers. The internal orientation of the market is a mechanism for instilling "people orientation" within and within the organization and is a prerequisite for improving the quality of customers and enhancing the service provided by employees within public institutions and in the case of these in particular. The internal market expresses a permanent trend focusing the marketing activities conducted in the organization on employees (Naghi, et al., 2018; Jam et al., 2019).

(Moody), he explained that internal marketing can contribute to raising the level of quality of services provided by organizations by supporting education and development programs, motivation, communication, information and coordination of activities, and thus is greatly reflected in achieving a competitive advantage. The organization in the labour market in front of competitors, and also aims (IM) to meet the needs and desires of employees as internal customers, as well as achieve their job satisfaction, based on the modern management philosophy based on the principle that customers always expect the best from the organization (Mudie, 2016). Dimensions of internal marketing are including: a) Empowerment of employees: Empowerment from the point of view of (Opoku et al) is a broad participation of workers in management and work, as the workers will contribute to

a large extent in making strategic and executive decisions, as well as drawing policies and solving problems facing human resources (Opoku et al., 2009); and b) Training of employees: Training is a learning process and an effective means aimed at acquiring the desired skills, attitudes, and behaviors required by the employees of the organization to increase their performance and efficiency (Peter, J. Paul, H., 2013).

Service Quality

Service quality is one of the important topics in the marketing literature for services that have it he has received extensive academic research for more than three decades. Thus, many researches have Establishing service quality as an important determinant of customer satisfaction, as it is considered a personal philosophy, organizational culture, administrative techniques and cooperation to achieve the set goals, and plays a key role in designing, producing and marketing the service in a way that achieves the benefit of both the service provider and the beneficiary (Izogo & Ogba, 2015).

It has been defined as the difference between the services that the customer expects and that he realizes. If the expectations exceed the performance of the actual service provided to the customer, he will be dissatisfied with it. The quality of hotel service expresses the level of service provided to the customer at a level consistent with expectations, and the focus of hotel organizations on achieving the benefit of the customer. And striving to obtain them in order to gain their satisfaction and motivate them to continue dealing with them, so at the same time the hotel organization will be able to achieve profitability in the medium and long term (Ahmed Talib et al., 2020).

The importance of service quality is highlighted by building positive relationships between the organization and customers on the basis of service quality that can achieve many benefits for both parties within the so-called (relationship benefits), as this concept refers to the assumption that long-term relations between the organization and its customers will be reflected in achieving benefits for all parties. For customers, some benefits are built on the basis of the quality of the service itself or through the nature of the relationship with the organization, as continuing this relationship with the organization can achieve many benefits for them, which in turn go beyond the essence of the service, and among these benefits including trust, social benefits and the benefits of distinguished dealing or private (Bowen & Chen, 2011).

The tangible

Tangible things are all things that have physical existence or appearance while we can see and Touch with them.

Reliability

It is the service provider's ability to provide committed goods and services consistently and honestly. It reflects positively on customer satisfaction when they are provided with reliable services that they can rely on.

Response

It is the employee's readiness for the purpose of providing services to customers.

Emphasis

Staff awareness and kindness is the main factor towards affirmation when clients provide services, And the ability of employees to create mutual trust between them and customers.

Kindness

Empathy relates to the ability of a service organization to show personal care and concern for its customers and to correctly and effectively eliminate problems to meet needs and

concerns and finally resolve those (Akdere et al., 2020).

Customers satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is important for commercial and service organizations due to its impact on the financial and economic situation of the company and the positive impact towards the public perception of the company. As a result, it is important for the company to ensure customer satisfaction, by providing the best products, good service experiences, and effective solutions to the problems facing the customer (Aminuddin et al., 2020).

From the viewpoint of (Chen) customer satisfaction was defined as a one-dimensional construction. It reflects the overall impression of the guest, which is formed over time about the services provided by the hotel workers(Chen, 2008). As for (Haralayya), customer satisfaction was defined as “the number of customers, or the percentage of total customers, whose reported experience with the organization or its products or services exceeds specific satisfaction goals.”(Haralayya, 2021).

A lot of literature indicates the importance of customer satisfaction through the results achieved as it stimulates customer loyalty and leads to fewer customer complaints. Furthermore, there is an abundance of literature examining customer satisfaction, in general. Satisfaction is mainly driven by customer expectations and perceivable in every form. Exceeding customer expectations with a product or service leads to higher customer satisfaction, while poor service quality lowers customer satisfaction (Eckert et al., 2022). On the other hand, there are several factors that affect the consumer's purchasing behavior:

Cultural factors: The values, perceptions, behaviors and preferences are the factors basically learned at the very early stage of childhood from the people and the common behaviors of the culture. norms and values are carried forward by generation from one entity to the other. Cultural factors represent the learned values and perceptions that define consumer wants and behaviors.

Social factors: a person’s behavior is influenced by many small groups like family, friends, social networks, and surrounding who have different buying behaviors. these groups form an environment in which an individual evolves and shape the personality.

Personal factors: This consumer behavior includes personal factors such as age, occupation, economic situation, and lifestyle. consumer changes the purchase of goods and services with the passage of time. occupation and the economic situation also have a significant impact on buying behavior.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research will be done qualitatively and quantitatively.

Collection tool

Theoretical foundations in this research are collected using library resources. The analysis is done using a questionnaire as well as analysis.

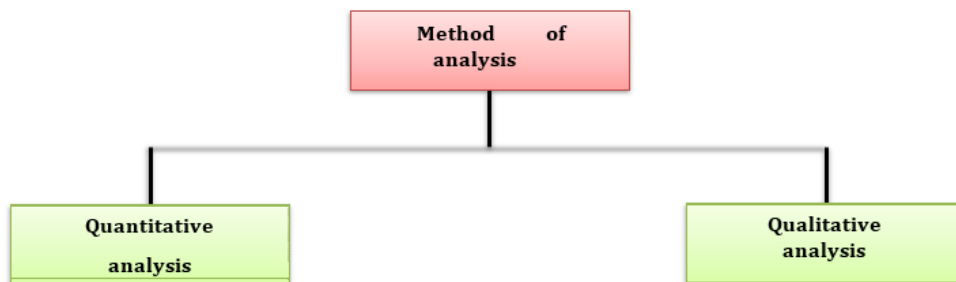


Figure (1) Analysis method

Qualitative phase of research

The qualitative approach is considered the first step in defining the topic under study. By conducting interviews with experts in a group of Iraqi hotels (hotel managers, front desk managers, human resources managers, marketing and sales managers) who have experience in the field of internal marketing. In this study, qualitative analysis is conducted using interviews. In qualitative analysis, questions are asked to respondents and results are obtained through mental analysis and interview results. What is meant by qualitative research is a systematic research process that aims to identify an uncertain social situation, through which the studied phenomena are examined in their natural environment, and this type of research confirms the meaning in the minds of the relevant people involved in the process. (research) of the phenomenon under study (Thompson, 2011). Researchers using the qualitative research method investigate their natural circumstances and attempt to understand the meaning attributed to people associated with these phenomena emerging from the data. It is a qualitative research method (Strauss, A., Corbin, 2018).

There are many necessary and mandatory reasons for conducting qualitative research, both related to the nature of the research problem, and of course some areas related to qualitative research. Qualitative methods are used to reveal hidden phenomena and find out what is not evident within them, as well as to obtain a new perspective on things in which there is a certain degree of awareness. Qualitative methods can provide detailed details about phenomena that are difficult to obtain with quantitative methods (Corbin & Strauss, 2012).

Axial coding

The purpose of axial encoding is to establish relationships between the generated concepts (during open coding). This process is usually based on a paradigmatic pattern and helps theory-building process to proceed smoothly. The basis of relational coding lies in the expansion and extension of one of the concepts. The main category (such as a central idea or event) is defined as a phenomenon, and other categories are associated with this main category. Axial coding essentially involves conceptually categorizing articles under a semantic label that is of the highest level of abstraction and cannot be placed under another code or concept. In fact, Strauss and Corbin (1992) view axial coding as the stage of forming independent concepts. Additionally, Saldana (2010) refers to these meaningful units, which are dependent on research strategies, as independent exploratory units relevant to the respective research objectives, and considers them suitable for presentation and publication in journals specific to each research field. Axial coding reflects the flow of processes and activities that have occurred within the framework of this study. Accordingly, the extracted concepts from raw interview data are gathered in a pattern called the axial coding pattern. In this section, sub-concepts have been placed in the axes of the paradigm model. These axes will be further explained.

- "Casual Conditions": Concepts related to conditions that influence the central concept.
- "Contextual Conditions": Specific conditions that impact strategies.
- "Phenomenon": A mental representation of a phenomenon that forms the basis of the process.
- "Intervening Conditions": General background conditions that influence strategies.
- "Strategies": Actions or specific interactions that result from the central phenomenon.
- "Consequences": Outputs resulting from the implementation of strategies.

Casual Conditions

Casual conditions refer to the circumstances and events that lead to the emergence and development of a phenomenon. Casual conditions are referred to as the primary factors that give rise to the studied phenomenon (such as customer satisfaction) (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). The analysis of interviewees' responses indicates the existence of six factors related to alien conditions, which are presented in Table (1).

Table 1. Concepts and Subcategory Factors of Casual Conditions

| Sub-construct | Initial code |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Employee Training | Programs and courses to develop skills and knowledge |
| | Providing training programs for staff |
| | Customer service training |
| | Language skills and cultural awareness training |
| | Technical skills related to specific job duties |
| Employee development processes | Updating the work processes of employees according to the needs of customers and based on goals |
| | Holding meetings with employees to get ideas to solve problems |
| Learning capacities of employees | Continuous learning of employees |
| | Training new members |
| | Continuous training of human resources |
| | Constantly growing and developing |
| | Access to experts |
| | Patient workforce |
| Information sharing | Sharing information between members |
| | Increasing the quality of cooperation in terms of knowledge sharing |
| | Employee access to information |
| | Enhancing member learning by sharing information |
| | Physical facilities |
| | Collecting employee complaints |
| | Providing constructive feedback and coaching |

Contextual Conditions

These are general background conditions that are effective in shaping the phenomenon under study (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). The results of the analysis of interviewee responses indicate the existence of three category related to contextual conditions, and the initial concepts related to them are presented in Table (2).

Table 2. Concepts and Subcategory Factors of Contextual Conditions

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Weakness in structure | Communication problems between employees |
| | Lack of transparency in organizational structure |

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Cultural weaknesses of employees | The need for a common language among members |
| | Problems caused by cultural differences between employees |

Intervening Conditions

Intervening conditions are specific contextual conditions that are effective in shaping the phenomenon under study (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). These conditions are a set of situations that, while influencing the strategies (actions) and the central core concept, facilitate or restrict the intervention of other factors. In the present study, based on the analysis of interviews, two components have been identified as intervening conditions, and the initial concepts related to them are presented in Table (3)."

Table 3. Concepts and Subcategory Factors of Intervening Conditions

| | |
|--|--|
| Organization policies | Financial and spiritual support for organization members |
| | Avoid inconsistency |
| | Promoting organization policy and the organization itself to employees |
| The right atmosphere in the organization | The existence of a suitable atmosphere in the organization |
| | Proper cooperation between members |
| | Promoting a cooperative and supportive work environment |
| | Encouraging cross-departmental collaboration |
| | Promote a collaborative work environment |
| | Establishing a people-oriented corporate culture |

Central Phenomenon

The central phenomenon is an event or occurrence that is subject to series of actions/interactions aimed at controlling or managing it (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). The central phenomenon encompasses the phenomenon that forms the basis and core of the process. The central phenomenon studied in this research is service quality and customer satisfaction.

Strategies

Actions or interactions that are performed to control, manage, respond to, and engage with the central concept (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Strategies represent purposeful behaviors, activities, and interactions that are adopted in response to the central phenomenon and are influenced by contextual conditions.

Table 4. Concepts and Subcategory Factors of Strategies

| | |
|---|--|
| Creating common understanding among members | Encouraging members to comply with the organization's strategies |
| | Creating a strong body in the organization to adapt to changes |

| | |
|--|--|
| | Convergence of the organization's activities with the needs and interests of employees |
| | Recognition and understanding of social and organizational complexities by employees |
| | Communicating the hotel's mission and values |
| Communication strategy | Establishing effective communication channels |
| | Sharing information and updates with employees |
| | Encouraging two-way communication |
| | Conducting regular team meetings and briefings |
| | Internal communication tools |
| | Internal communications support |
| | Providing seamless and uncomplicated communication options |
| Leadership and Management Support | Providing strong leadership skills and guidance |
| | Supporting managers in their roles |
| | Empowering managers to make decisions |
| | Offering mentorship and coaching for managers |
| | Leadership and administrative support |
| Strengthening synergy between members | Distribution of power according to the importance of the members |
| | The existence of a coordination mechanism among employees |
| | Team building between worker |
| | Creating additional incentives for network members to cooperate |
| | Building mutual trust between employees |
| | Learning new ways to collaborate |
| | Supporting employees in solving their problems |
| Considering employee Satisfaction and Well-being | Supporting employee well-being and health |
| | Satisfying the demand of employees |
| | Improving salary and welfare |
| | Promoting work-life balance initiatives |

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| | Job security |
| | Offering employee assistance programs |
| | Providing flexible scheduling options |
| | Facilitating team-building activities |
| Performance Management | Implementing performance evaluation systems |
| | Setting clear performance goals and expectations |
| | Recognizing and addressing performance issues |

Consequences

Consequences are the outcomes or results that occur as a result of implementing strategies (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Some of the concepts represent the results and consequences that emerge as a result of adopting strategies and being influenced by the central phenomenon, contextual conditions, and intervening conditions. These consequences are developed and manifested, and the initial concepts related to them are presented in Table (5).

Table 5. Concepts and Subcategory Factors of Consequences

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Increasing Customer Satisfaction | Meeting guest expectations |
| | Adapting the service to guests' needs |
| | Increasing customer loyalty to the hotel |
| | Smooth handling of guest needs |
| | Reducing wait times and disruptions |
| | Recommending the hotel to friends |
| | Customer loyalty |
| | Customer's willingness to perform "partner-like" activities |
| Improve hotel performance | Rating score and number of stars |
| | Enhancing the hotel's reputation |
| Enhancing Service Quality | Providing suggestions and feedback for better service delivery process |
| | Regular surveys |
| | Providing service according to standard standards |
| | Providing a positive service experience |
| | Providing a positive service experience |
| | Services tailored to individual needs |

Selective coding is the process of selecting a main category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating these relationships, and completing categories that need further refinement and development. Selective coding is the primary stage of theoretical coding based on the results of open coding and axial coding. It involves systematically linking the

central phenomenon to other concepts, presenting these relationships within a narrative framework, and refining concepts that require further improvement and development. Based on the research findings, 19 sub-categories were identified within 6 main categories, following the framework model of scientific collaboration networks and innovation in the country. The research model in the current study will be as follows.

In the process of open coding, (397) concepts were obtained, which were classified into (85) sub-categories and these sub-categories were placed in 6 general main categories as follows:

Causal conditions (23 categories), main phenomenon (2 categories), contextual conditions (4 categories), intervening conditions (9 categories), strategies (35 categories) and consequences (12 categories).

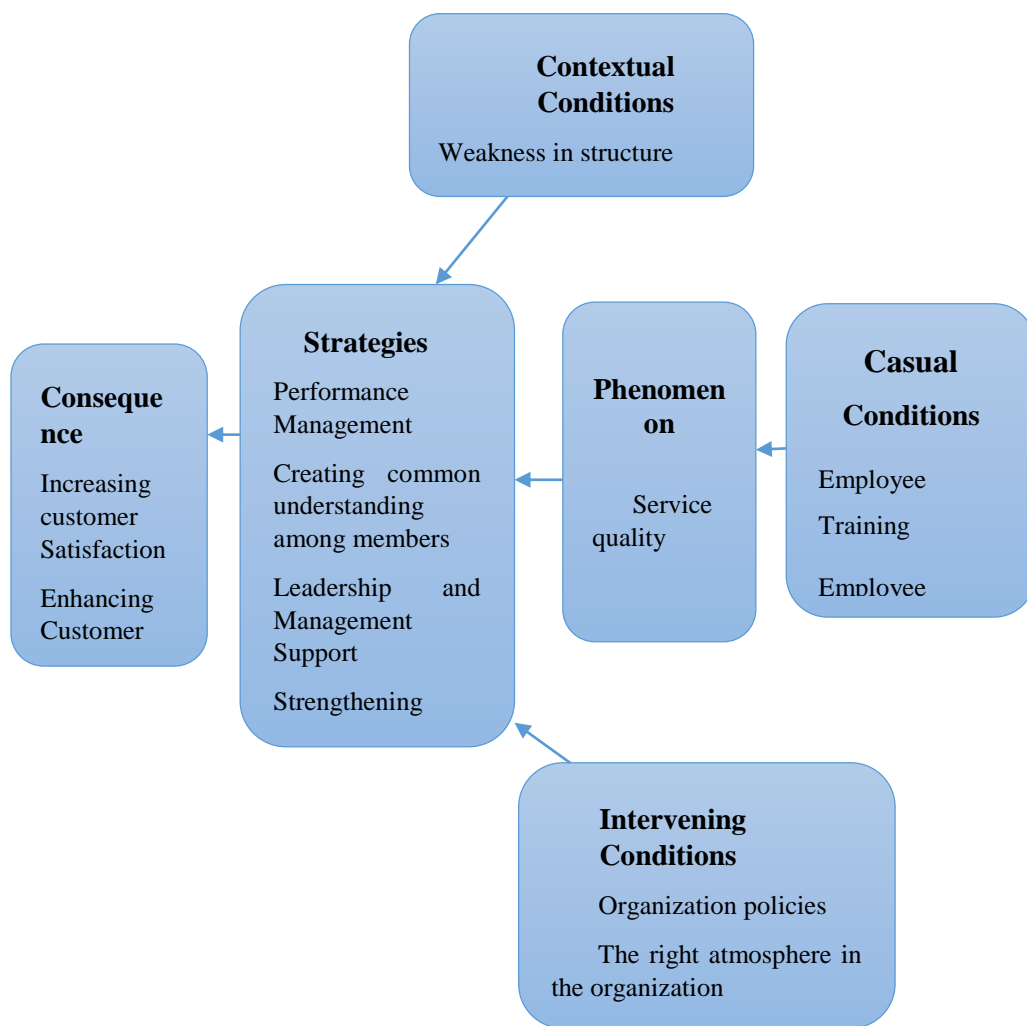


Figure 2. The model extracted from the research

Quantitative phase of research

The data was analyzed based on the quantitative approach, which is the main part and is considered the most important part of the research, by distributing the questionnaire to the

research sample of (70) people from various administrative titles. The quantitative part is divided into two parts: The first part uses descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage to describe the sample studied. The second part is related to analyzing the raw data using statistical programs, and after processing it, it is presented to users in the form of information. Then, the research results are presented using the descriptive and inferential statistical analysis program (PLS_SMART), and the results related to the questions are presented using inferential statistics.

Inferential analysis of research data

VALIDATION OF MEASUREMENT MODELS (CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS)

Confirmatory factor analysis is one of the oldest statistical methods that is used to investigate the relationship between hidden variables (main variables) and observed variables (questionnaire items) and it represents the measurement model (Bern, 1994). Factor analysis is based on two types of exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. In exploratory factor analysis, the researcher tries to discover the underlying structure of a relatively large set of variables, and the initial assumption is that each variable may be related to each factor. In other words, the researcher does not have any initial theory in this method. In confirmatory factor analysis, the basic premise is that each factor is related to a specific subset of variables. The minimum necessary condition for confirmatory factor analysis is that the researcher has a certain presupposition about the number of factors in the model before conducting the analysis, but at the same time, the researcher can include his expectations based on the relationships between variables and factors in the analysis. To evaluate the validity of the measurement models, we calculated the following values and if the conditions listed in Table 6 are met, we can claim that the measurement model has appropriate and favorable conditions.

Table 6: Conditions for establishing reliability and convergent validity

| Indicator | Limit | Source |
|---------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Reliability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha should be above 0.7. | Joseph et al.) 2016) |
| Convergent validity | Factor loadings should be significant ($t > 1.96$) Standardized factor loadings should be greater than 0.4. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CR > AVE AVE > 0/5 Rho_A > 0/7 | |
| Divergent validity | AVE > MSV <ul style="list-style-type: none"> | |
| Model fit indices | GOF > 0/36 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SRMR < 0/1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> | |

*AVE: Average variance Extracted, CR: Construct Reliability, MSV: Maximum Shared Squared variance, GOF; Goodness of fit

Quantitative section

Structural equation modeling

In this type of factor analysis, the basic assumption of the researcher is that each factor is related to a certain subset of indicators. The minimum requirement for confirmatory factor analysis is that the researcher assumes the number of factors in the model before anything else, but at the same time, this researcher usually includes his expectations about which factors will load. For example, the researcher tries to determine whether the variables used to construct and display a latent variable really belong to each other or not. Other applications for confirmatory factor analysis can be drawn, which include:

Casual Conditions

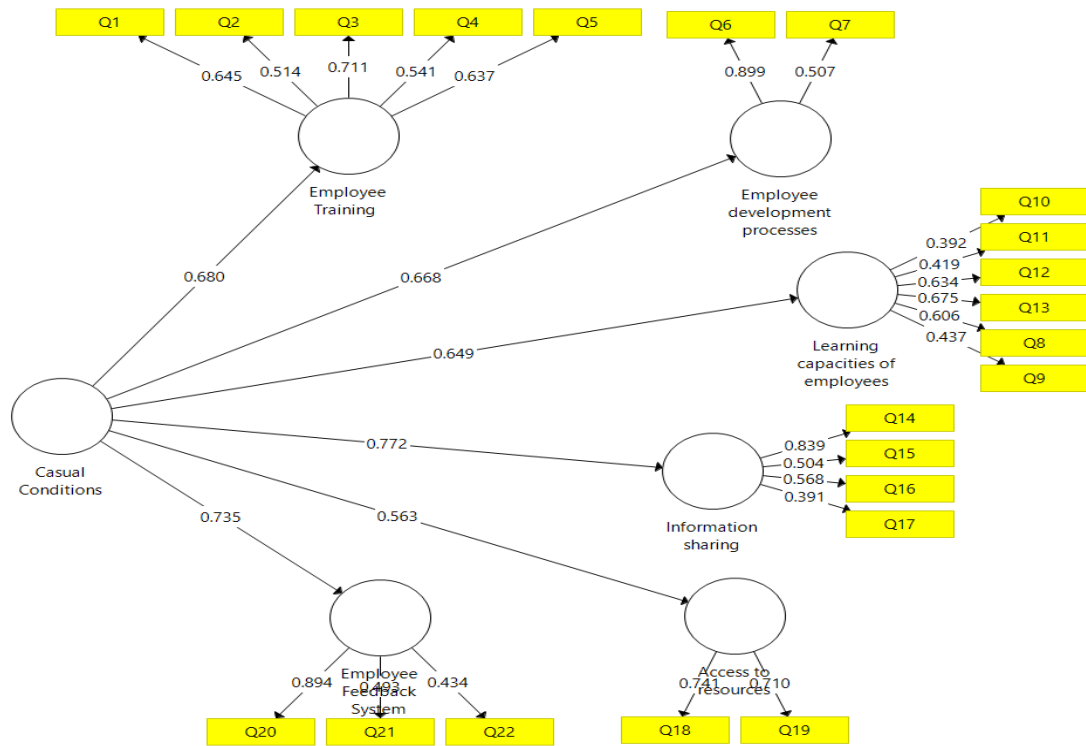


Figure 3: Values of factor loads Casual Conditions

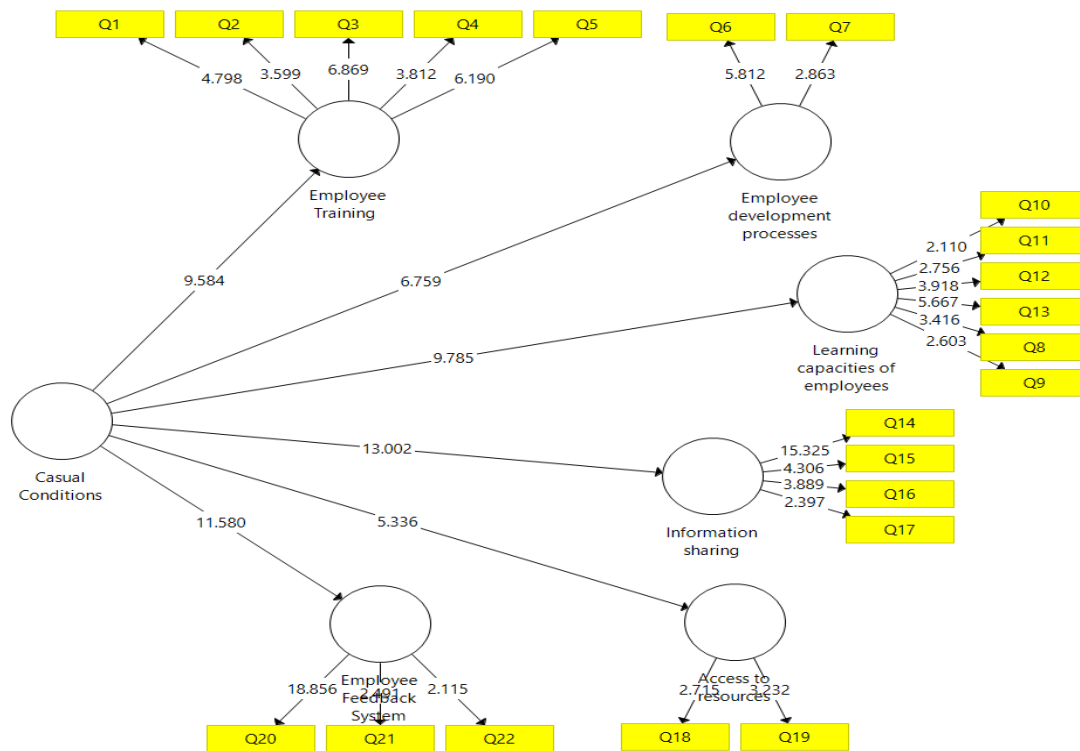


Figure 4: Significance of factor loadings Casual Conditions

RELIABILITY OF MEASUREMENT TOOLS

1) Values of the factor loadings of the observed variables: according to the researchers, if the reflective measurement model is a homogeneous model, the absolute value of the factor loading of each of the observed variables corresponding to that hidden variable of that model has a value of at least 0.7. For this purpose, factor loading values were examined. Some suggested to remove the reflective observed variable from the measurement model that is below 0.4, that is if the composite reliability of the corresponding reflective measurement model increases by removing it (Hair et al., 2017).

2-Significance of factor loadings: The results of the significance of factor loadings (external) are given in the table. If the obtained value is above the minimum statistic at the confidence level, that relationship or hypothesis is confirmed. At the significance level of 90%, 95%, and 99%, this value is compared with the minimum t statistic of 1.64, 1.96, and 2.58, respectively.

Table 7: The results of factor loading values of observable variables

| | first time | | | second time | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|--------------|----------|----------------|--------------|----------|
| | Factor Loading | T Statistics | P Values | Factor Loading | T Statistics | P Values |
| Q1 <- Employee Training | 0.645 | 4.798 | 0.000 | 0.68 | 9.584 | 0.000 |
| Q2 <- Employee Training | 0.514 | 3.599 | 0.000 | | | |
| Q3 <- Employee Training | 0.711 | 6.869 | 0.000 | | | |
| Q4 <- Employee Training | 0.541 | 3.812 | 0.000 | | | |
| Q5 <- Employee Training | 0.637 | 6.19 | 0.000 | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|-------|--------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| Q6 <- Employee development processes | 0.899 | 5.812 | 0.000 | 0.668 | 6.759 | 0.000 |
| Q7 <- Employee development processes | 0.507 | 2.863 | 0.004 | | | |
| Q8 <- Learning capacities of employees | 0.606 | 3.416 | 0.001 | 0.649 | 9.785 | 0.000 |
| Q9 <- Learning capacities of employees | 0.437 | 2.603 | 0.01 | | | |
| Q10 <- Learning capacities of employees | 0.392 | 2.11 | 0.035 | | | |
| Q11 <- Learning capacities of employees | 0.419 | 2.756 | 0.006 | | | |
| Q12 <- Learning capacities of employees | 0.634 | 3.918 | 0.000 | | | |
| Q13 <- Learning capacities of employees | 0.675 | 5.667 | 0.000 | | | |
| Q14 <- Information sharing | 0.839 | 15.325 | 0.000 | 0.772 | 13.002 | 0.000 |
| Q15 <- Information sharing | 0.504 | 4.306 | 0.000 | | | |
| Q16 <- Information sharing | 0.568 | 3.889 | 0.000 | | | |
| Q17 <- Information sharing | 0.391 | 2.397 | 0.017 | | | |
| Q18 <- Access to resources | 0.741 | 2.715 | 0.007 | 0.563 | 5.336 | 0.000 |
| Q19 <- Access to resources | 0.71 | 3.232 | 0.001 | | | |
| Q20 <- Employee Feedback System | 0.894 | 18.856 | 0.000 | 0.735 | 11.58 | 0.000 |
| Q21 <- Employee Feedback System | 0.493 | 2.491 | 0.013 | | | |
| Q22 <- Employee Feedback System | 0.434 | 2.115 | 0.035 | | | |

As the results of the table show, the factor load values of all items are greater than 0.4, and therefore the measurement model is a homogeneous model and the factor load values are acceptable values.

The results of the significance of the t-statistic values in the table showed that the t-statistic values for all items were reported to be greater than 2.58. This means that the relationship between the items and the related variable is accepted at the confidence level of 99%.

Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability

method Cronbach's alpha is used to calculate the internal consistency of measurement tools, including questionnaires or tests that measure different characteristics. In such a tool, the answer

to each question can have different numerical values. To calculate Cronbach's alpha, first, the variance of the scores of each subset of the questionnaire questions and the total variance should be calculated. Cronbach's alpha index assumes that the observable variables of each measurement model have the same weights and in fact equates their relative importance. In order to solve this problem, the index proposed by Verts et al. (1974) with the title of composite reliability is used. In this index, because the factor loadings of the items are used when calculating, it shows the composite reliability values more and better than Cronbach's alpha.

Table 8: Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability

| | Cronbach's Alpha | rho_A | Composite Reliability |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|
| Access to resources | 0.702 | 0.803 | 0.890 |
| Employee Feedback System | 0.734 | 0.860 | 0.882 |
| Employee Training | 0.787 | 0.801 | 0.849 |
| Employee development processes | 0.743 | 0.880 | 0.899 |
| Information sharing | 0.713 | 0.813 | 0.774 |
| Learning capacities of employees | 0.799 | 0.818 | 0.872 |
| Casual Conditions | 0.768 | 0.807 | 0.833 |

The results of examining Cronbach's alpha coefficients and composite reliability in the table showed that the values of these indices for all hidden variables are greater than 0.7, and therefore the reliability of the measuring instruments was confirmed using these two indices (Hensler et al., 2011 and Heyer, 2017).

Validity of measurement tools

1) Convergent validity: The meaning of the convergent validity index is to measure the degree of explanation of the hidden variable by its observable variables (Barkley et al., 1995). For the extracted average variance index, the minimum value of 0.5 is an acceptable value, which indicates that the observable variables explain at least 50% of the variance of the hidden variable.

Table 9: Average extracted variance

| | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Access to resources | 0.527 |
| Employee Feedback System | 0.511 |
| Employee Training | 0.577 |
| Employee development processes | 0.532 |
| Information sharing | 0.558 |
| Learning capacities of employees | 0.591 |
| Casual Conditions | 0.526 |

As can be seen in the table, the results of the analysis of the extracted variance values of the hidden variables of the research showed that all the variables had values greater than 0.5. Based on this, it can be said that the convergent validity of the measurement tools was confirmed using the extracted average variance index.

2) Diagnostic or divergent validity: Diagnostic or divergent validity measures the ability of a reflective measurement model to differentiate the hidden variable observables of that model from other observables in the model. Diagnostic validity is actually a complement to convergent

validity, which indicates the differentiation of indicators of a latent variable from other indicators in the same structural model.

A) Fornell-Larker test: According to this criterion, a hidden variable should have more dispersion among its observables compared to other hidden variables, so that it can be said that the hidden variable in question has high diagnostic validity. Accordingly, the root mean extracted of each latent variable must be greater than the maximum correlation of that latent variable with other latent variables (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Table 10: Fornell-Larker test

| | Access to resources | Employee Feedback System | Employee Training | Employee development processes | Information sharing | Learning capacities of employees |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Access to resources | 0.726 | | | | | |
| Employee Feedback System | 0.290 | 0.760 | | | | |
| Employee Training | 0.442 | 0.418 | 0.729 | | | |
| Employee development processes | 0.357 | 0.478 | 0.533 | 0.747 | | |
| Information sharing | 0.383 | 0.645 | 0.467 | 0.482 | 0.769 | |
| Learning capacities of employees | 0.440 | 0.465 | 0.656 | 0.436 | 0.498 | 0.725 |

Based on the results obtained from the table, the root mean extracted of each hidden variable is more than the maximum correlation of that hidden variable with other hidden variables. Based on this, the divergent validity of the measurement model was confirmed using the Fornell-Larker test.

Strategies

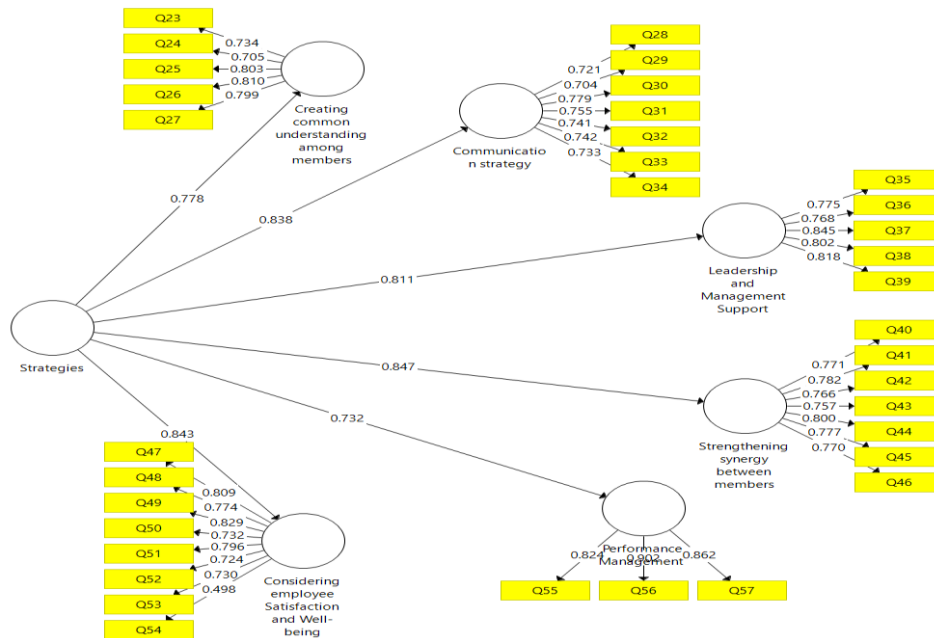


Figure 5: Values of factor loads Strategies

Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability:**Table 11: Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability**

| | Cronbach's Alpha | rho_A | Composite Reliability |
|--|-------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|
| Communication strategy | 0.862 | 0.864 | 0.894 |
| Considering employee Satisfaction and Well-being | 0.881 | 0.896 | 0.906 |
| Creating common understanding among members | 0.829 | 0.831 | 0.880 |
| Leadership and Management Support | 0.861 | 0.864 | 0.900 |
| Performance Management | 0.828 | 0.829 | 0.898 |
| Strengthening synergy between members | 0.889 | 0.890 | 0.913 |
| Strategies | 0.785 | 0.789 | 0.848 |

The results of examining Cronbach's alpha coefficients and composite reliability in the table showed that the values of these indices for all hidden variables are greater than 0.7, and therefore the reliability of the measuring instruments was confirmed using these two indices (Hensler et al., 2011 and Heyer, 2017).

Validity of measurement tools

(1Convergent validity: The meaning of the convergent validity index is to measure the degree of explanation of the hidden variable by its observable variables (Barkley et al., 1995). For the extracted average variance index, the minimum value of 0.5 is an acceptable value, which indicates that the observable variables explain at least 50% of the variance of the hidden variable.

Table 12: Average extracted variance

| | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) |
|--|---|
| Communication strategy | 0.547 |
| Considering employee Satisfaction and Well-being | 0.552 |
| Creating common understanding among members | 0.595 |
| Leadership and Management Support | 0.643 |
| Performance Management | 0.745 |
| Strengthening synergy between members | 0.600 |
| Strategies | 0.584 |

As can be seen in the table, the results of the analysis of the extracted variance values of the hidden variables of the research showed that all the variables had values greater than 0.5. Based on this, it can be said that the convergent validity of the measurement tools was confirmed using the extracted average variance index.

Diagnostic or divergent validity**a) Fornell-Larker test:****Table 13: Fornell-Larker test**

| | Communication strategy | Considering employee Satisfaction and Well-being | Creating common understanding among members | Leadership and Management Support | Performance Management | Strengthening synergy between members |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|---|--|--|-------------------------------|--|
| Communication strategy | 0.740 | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Considering employee Satisfaction and Well-being | 0.735 | 0.743 | | | | |
| Creating common understanding among members | 0.767 | 0.594 | 0.771 | | | |
| Leadership and Management Support | 0.715 | 0.706 | 0.593 | 0.802 | | |
| Performance Management | 0.598 | 0.706 | 0.536 | 0.639 | 0.863 | |
| Strengthening synergy between members | 0.735 | 0.719 | 0.590 | 0.768 | 0.595 | 0.775 |

Based on the results obtained from the table, the root mean extracted of each hidden variable is more than the maximum correlation of that hidden variable with other hidden variables. Based on this, the divergent validity of the measurement model was confirmed using the Fornell-Larker test.

Contextual Conditions

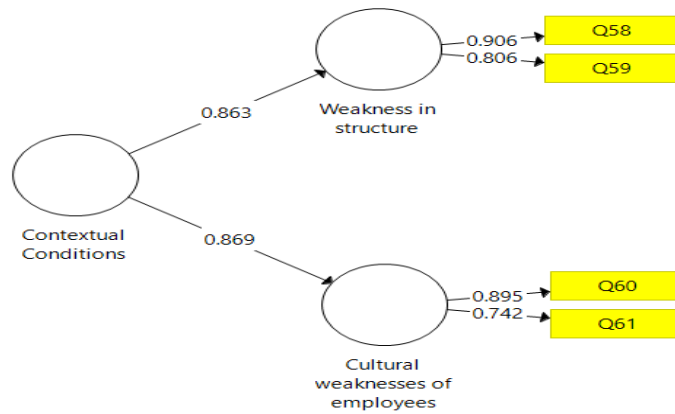


Figure 6: Values of factor loads Contextual Conditions

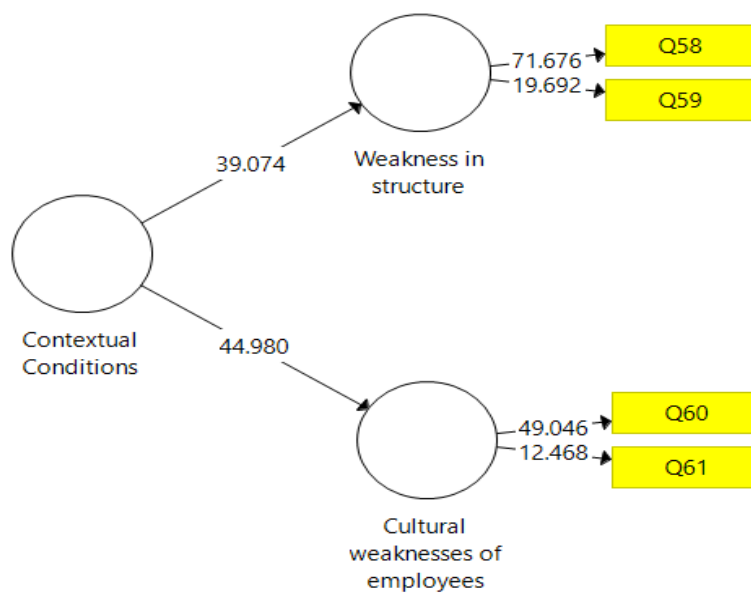


Figure 7: Significance of factor loadings Contextual Conditions

Table 14: The results of factor loading values of observable variables

| | first time | | | | second time | | |
|-----------------------|---|--------------|----------|----------------|--------------|----------|----------------|
| | Factor Loading | T Statistics | P Values | Factor Loading | T Statistics | P Values | Factor Loading |
| Contextual Conditions | Q58 <- Weakness in structure | 0.906 | 71.676 | 0.000 | 0.863 | 39.074 | 0.000 |
| | Q59 <- Weakness in structure | 0.806 | 19.692 | 0.000 | | | |
| | Q60 <- Cultural weaknesses of employees | 0.895 | 49.046 | 0.000 | 0.869 | 44.98 | 0.000 |
| | Q61 <- Cultural weaknesses of employees | 0.742 | 12.468 | 0.000 | | | |

As the results of the table show, the factor load values of all items are greater than 0.4, and therefore the measurement model is a homogeneous model and the factor load values are acceptable values.

The results of the significance of the t-statistic values in the table showed that the t-statistic values for all items were reported to be greater than 2.58. This means that the relationship between the items and the related variable is accepted at the confidence level of 99%.

Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability

Table 15: Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability

| | Cronbach's Alpha | rho_A | Composite Reliability |
|----------------------------------|------------------|-------|-----------------------|
| Contextual Conditions | 0.718 | 0.789 | 0.829 |
| Cultural weaknesses of employees | 0.734 | 0.792 | 0.805 |
| Weakness in structure | 0.748 | 0.798 | 0.847 |

The results of examining Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability coefficients in the table showed that the values of these indices for all hidden variables are greater than 0.7, and therefore the reliability of the measuring instruments was confirmed using these two indices.

Validity of measurement tools

1-Convergent validity: The meaning of the convergent validity index is to measure the degree of explanation of the hidden variable by its observable variables (Barkley et al., 1995). For the extracted average variance index, the minimum value of 0.5 is an acceptable value, which indicates that the observable variables explain at least 50% of the variance of the hidden variable.

Table 16: Average extracted variance

| | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Contextual Conditions | 0.708 |
| Cultural weaknesses of employees | 0.676 |
| Weakness in structure | 0.735 |

As can be seen in the table, the results of the analysis of the extracted variance values of the hidden variables of the research showed that all the variables had values greater than 0.5. Based on this, it can be said that the convergent validity of the measurement tools was confirmed using the extracted average variance index.

Diagnostic or divergent validity

Fornell-Larker test

Table 17: Fornell-Larker test

| | Contextual Conditions | Cultural weaknesses of employees | Weakness in structure |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Contextual Conditions | 0.842 | | |
| Cultural weaknesses of employees | 0.819 | 0.822 | |
| Weakness in structure | 0.813 | 0.668 | 0.857 |

Based on the results obtained from the table, the root mean extracted of each hidden variable is more than the maximum correlation of that hidden variable with other hidden variables. Based on this, the divergent validity of the measurement model was confirmed using the Fornell-Larker test.

Intervening Conditions

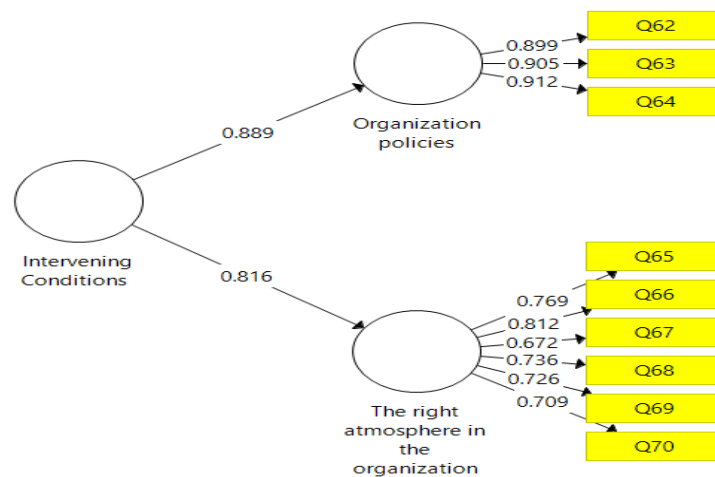


Figure 8: Values of factor loads Intervening Conditions

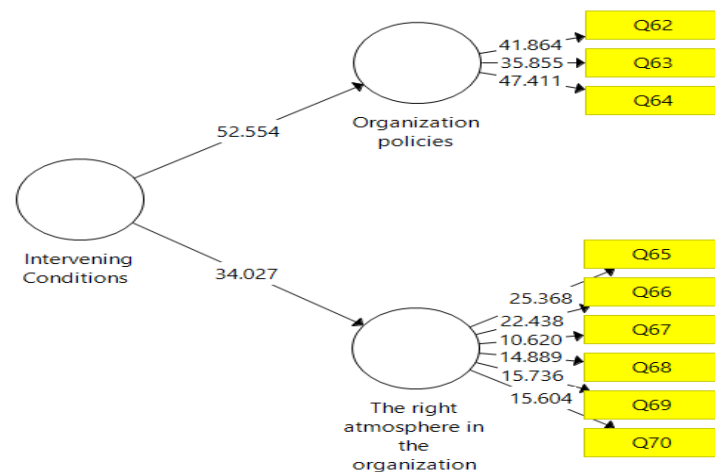


Figure 9: Significance of factor loadings Intervening Conditions

Table 18: The results of factor loading values of observable variables

| | Marneba first | | | The second marbane | | | |
|------------------------|---|----------------|--------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------|----------|
| | | Factor Loading | T Statistics | P Values | Factor Loading | T Statistics | P Values |
| Intervening Conditions | Q62 <- Organization policies | 0.899 | 41.864 | 0.000 | 0.889 | 52.554 | 0.000 |
| | Q63 <- Organization policies | 0.905 | 35.855 | 0.000 | | | |
| | Q64 <- Organization policies | 0.912 | 47.411 | 0.000 | | | |
| | Q65 <- The right atmosphere in the organization | 0.769 | 25.368 | 0.000 | 0.816 | 34.027 | 0.000 |
| | Q66 <- The right atmosphere in the organization | 0.812 | 22.438 | 0.000 | | | |

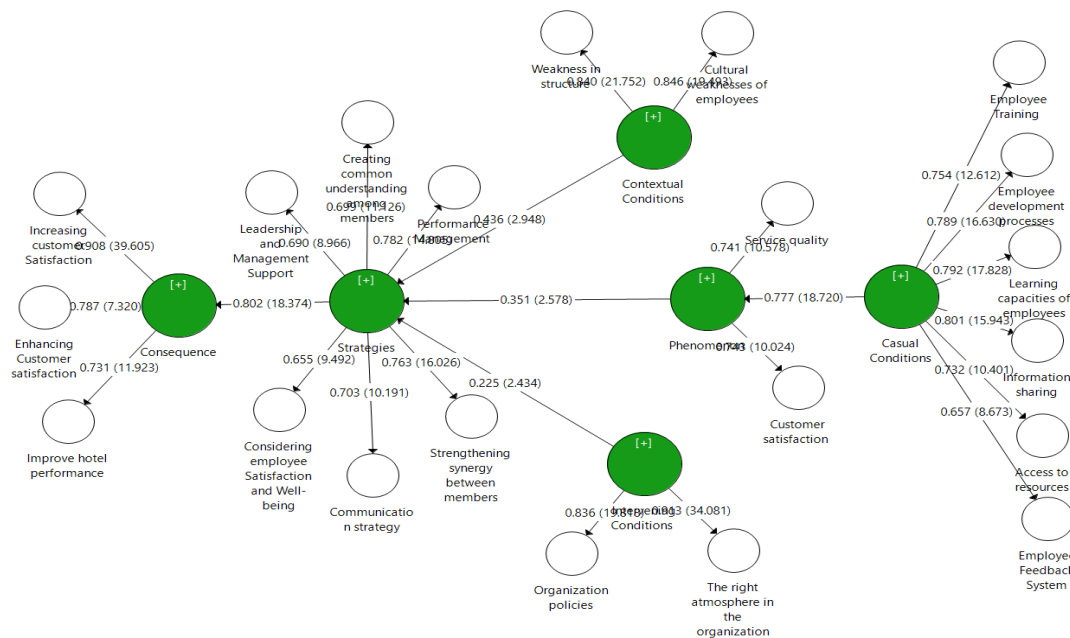


Figure 10: Figure of path coefficients and determination coefficients

The above Figure, called the path coefficient Figure, examines the path coefficient of the variables and the effect of each of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The value of the path coefficient is in the range of -1 and 1. The more positive this value is, the greater the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

The coefficient of determination shows the degree of explanation of the variance of the dependent variable by the independent variables. One of the problems of the coefficient of determination is that it overestimates the success rate of the model and takes less into account the number of independent variables and the sample size, so some researchers prefer to use another index called the adjusted coefficient of determination (Saroukhani, 2012). The results of the determination coefficients are given in the table.

Significance of path coefficients (beta): One of the indicators of confirming relationships in the structural model is the significance of path coefficients. The significance of the coefficients of the complementary path is the magnitude and direction of the beta coefficient of the model. If the obtained value is above the minimum statistic at the confidence level, that relationship or hypothesis is confirmed. At the significance level of 90%, 95%, and 99%, this value is compared with the minimum t statistic of 1.64, 1.96, and 2.58, respectively.

The above graph shows the significance of the path coefficients. The results obtained from this graph showed that the obtained value is above the minimum statistic at the reliable level (1.96), so the relationships are confirmed.

Table 19: Determination coefficient

| | R Square | R Square Adjusted |
|-------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Consequence | 0.644 | 0.639 |
| Phenomenon | 0.604 | 0.598 |
| Strategies | 0.783 | 0.773 |

The adjusted coefficient of determination states that more than 59% of the changes in outcomes are influenced by the variables studied in the research and the rest are factors that are not considered in the model.

Another criterion is to examine the structural model of the effect size. Cohen (1988) values of 0.02; 0.15 and more than 1 have been evaluated as weak, medium and strong values, respectively.

Table 20: Effect size

| | Consequence | Phenomenon | Strategies |
|------------------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| Casual Conditions | | 1.526 | |
| Contextual Conditions | | | 0.411 |
| Intervening Conditions | | | 0.135 |
| Phenomenon | | | 0.284 |
| Service quality | | | |
| Strategies | 1.809 | | |

The results of examining the effect size values in the table showed that this value was reported for effects in the weak to strong range.

Model predictive power or shared redundancy is another criterion to check the structural model. The purpose of this index is to check the ability of the structural model to predict by blind method. The most famous and well-known criterion for measuring this ability is the Q2 index, based on this criterion, the model must predict the indicators of the reflective endogenous current variable. The values obtained from this test are positive, which indicates the appropriate quality of the structural model (Hensler et al., 2009). Regarding the predictive power of the model regarding endogenous latent variables, three values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 have been introduced as weak, medium, and strong values for this index, respectively (Hensler et al., 2009).

Table 21: Predictive power of the model

| | SSO | SSE | Q ² (=1-SSE/SSO) |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------------------------|
| Consequence | 1,120.000 | 950.256 | 0.152 |
| Phenomenon | 700.000 | 607.714 | 0.132 |
| Strategies | 2,590.000 | 2,223.168 | 0.142 |

The results of the table showed that the predictive power of the model is above average.

The overall fit of the structural equation model: the models that are analyzed with a variance-based approach through variance-based software such as Smart PLS do not have a general index to look at the model at once. That is, there is no index to measure the whole model similar to the covariance-based approach. But in various researches in this field, it was suggested that an index called GOF was proposed by Tenenhaus et al. This index considers both structural and measurement models simultaneously and tests their quality. This index is manually calculated as average R² and average shared values.

$$GOF = \sqrt{\text{communalities} \times R^2}$$

This index is the square of the two average values of common values and the coefficient of determination. Since this value is dependent on the two mentioned indices, the limits of this index are between zero and one, and Wetzles et al. (2009) three values of 0.01; 0.25 and 0.36 respectively as weak values; Medium and strong were introduced for GOF .

Table 22: Overall fit of the model

| Variable | R ² | √ R ² | AVE | √ AVE | GOF |
|--|----------------|------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Casual Conditions | 0.644 | 0.673 | 0.526 | 0.654 | 0.440 |
| Strategies | | | 0.584 | | |
| Intervening Conditions | 0.783 | | 0.759 | | |
| Consequence | | | 0.709 | | |
| Contextual Conditions | | | 0.708 | | |
| Phenomenon | 0.604 | | 0.669 | | |
| (SRMR)The square root of the standardized residual mean square | | | | | 071.0 |

According to the value obtained for GOF, it is 0.440, which is more than the average value suggested by Wetzles et al. (2009), which is 0.36, which shows that the overall fit of the model is strong.

The optimal value for this index is 0.08 at most. The results obtained from this index showed that its value was reported to be equal to 0.071, which is a favorable value, and therefore the appropriate fit of the overall model is confirmed.

Table 23: Results of model relationships

| | R | T Statistics | P Values | Results |
|--------------------------------------|-------|--------------|----------|---------|
| Casual Conditions -> Phenomenon | 0.777 | 18.720 | 0.000 | ✓ |
| Contextual Conditions -> Strategies | 0.436 | 2.948 | 0.003 | ✓ |
| Intervening Conditions -> Strategies | 0.225 | 2.434 | 0.015 | ✓ |
| Phenomenon -> Strategies | 0.351 | 2.578 | 0.010 | ✓ |
| Strategies -> Consequence | 0.802 | 18.374 | 0.000 | ✓ |

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS & PROPOSALS

Conclusions

5-1-1. Referring to previous articles and studies, we find that internal marketing programs contribute to building good functional relationships between many departments and divisions within the hotel organization.

5-1-2. Internal marketing achieves effective communication between members of the organization, which in turn allows the creation of harmonious work teams that seek to provide the best services with high quality, which reflects positively on customer satisfaction.

5-1-3. Internal marketing has a positive impact on job satisfaction, which in turn is reflected in the quality of services provided to customers, which leads to increased customer satisfaction.

5-1-4. The results of the qualitative analysis showed that the concepts extracted from the interviews amounted to **(85)** concepts extracted from the **(6)** interview questions. These concepts were used as a measure for the questionnaire tool used in the research.

5-1-5. The results of the statistical analysis showed that the confirmatory factor analysis values for all items are greater than 0.4, and therefore the measurement model is a homogeneous model and the factor loading values are acceptable values.

5-1-6. The results of the statistical analysis showed that the value of (T) The calculated value is greater than (T) Tabular (2.58) for all elements. This means that the relationship between the items and the variable associated with them is acceptable at a 99% confidence level.

5-1-7. The results of examining Cronbach's alpha coefficients and composite reliability in all tables showed that the values of these indicators for all hidden variables are greater than **(0.70)** and thus the stability of the measurement tools using these two indicators was confirmed.

5-1-8. the results of the analysis of the extracted variance values of the hidden variables of the research showed that all the variables had values greater than 0.5. Based on this, it can be said that the convergent validity of the measurement tools was confirmed using the extracted average variance index.

Recommendations & proposals

5-2-1. Directing the researched hotel institutions to the need to (empower employees) in a way that contributes to raising the level of services provided and meeting the needs, desires and expectations of customers, which reflects positively on their level of satisfaction.

5-2-2. It is necessary to train employees on internal marketing practices in hotel establishments, because increasing the employee's experience in his work and developing his skills and information during the training phase gives him an internal sense of security and importance, which may contribute to reducing work problems and difficulties.

5-2-3. The researched hotel institutions must treat employees as internal customers and involve them in decision-making to increase their job satisfaction, which will reflect positively on the level of quality of service provided to customers.

5-2-4. In order to properly implement internal marketing procedures, the focus must be on front-office workers in hotels and implemented on middle management, with an appropriate physical environment represented by a system of incentives and rewards that ensures internal communication.

5-2-5. For hotel establishments that rely heavily in their activities on the interaction of the human resources working in them to provide their services with high quality in various fields such as restaurants and hotels, to raise the level of customer satisfaction, it is necessary to focus on some aspects of satisfaction related to the interactions of employees who treat customers well and ensure customer satisfaction.

5-2-6. Supporting and improving internal marketing practices by activating the reward and incentive system that is reflected in the level of employee performance and the quality of service provided to customers.

5-2-7. Increase job satisfaction by listening to suggestions from employees, making them feel valued and enjoy the same contribution and rights as other employees.

5-2-8. Maintaining and improving the quality of service by always providing special treatment to guests and understanding their personal needs, which leads to raising the level of customer satisfaction with the services provided by the hotel.

Answers to research questions

what are the dimensions and components of internal marketing in the hotel sector in Iraq?

Internal marketing in the hotel sector in Iraq, especially in Karbala, is an important aspect of the overall marketing strategy. Main dimensions and components include:(Rihayana et al., 2021)

- Empowering and motivating the employee
- Internal communications
- Focus on hotel service that meets customer desires
- Regulatory compatibility and integration
- Recruiting and retaining employees

what is the role of internal marketing in service quality in the hotel sector in Iraq?

Internal marketing has a major role in improving the quality of service provided to guests in the hotel sector in Iraq. There are several ways through which internal marketing can contribute to improving the quality of service to customers:(Mansour, 2020)

- Focus on quality culture: Internal marketing helps instill a culture of quality and service excellence among employees, and makes it part of the organization's identity.
- Improve communication and communication: Internal marketing enhances communication and communication between management and employees, which helps in exchanging information and better understanding guest needs.
- Enhancing loyalty and belonging: Internal marketing contributes to increasing employees' loyalty to the organization and their sense of belonging, which is reflected in the level of service provided.
- Designing motivational programs: Internal marketing can help develop motivational programs for employees, such as rewards and incentives, to enhance performance and commitment to providing distinguished service.

In summary, internal marketing has a pivotal role in developing and improving the quality of service in the hotel sector in Iraq by empowering employees and promoting a culture of quality and excellence.

what is the role of internal marketing in customer satisfaction in the hotel sector in Iraq?

- Raising the level of job satisfaction: Internal marketing seeks to make employees more satisfied and happy with their jobs, which reflects positively on the level of hotel service provided to guests.
- Q. Creating a culture of providing distinguished service: Internal marketing helps build an organizational culture within hotels that focuses on providing the best services to customers and a distinctive stay experience.
- Internal marketing is considered an important strategic tool for achieving customer satisfaction in the hotel sector in Iraq by improving the level of services provided.

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