The Strategic Dimension of Service Quality and Performance in Public Libraries

البعد الإستراتيجي لجودة الخدمة والآداء بالمكتبات العامة

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Abstract:

Our study focuses on the public library's, because The modern theme of quality and its comprehensive culture in public libraries, coupled with the obligatory establishment of strategic thinking principles to ensure service quality, has led them to strive for measuring the quality of their information services the main library for public reading province. We aim to examine its reality, measure the effectiveness of its services, and identify areas for improvement.

The study revealed several results the necessity of enhancing and developing the library's performance through the practical application of comprehensive quality management, followed by strategic measures ; Therefore, our objective analysis of the library's current state requires us to appreciate our study and propose a set of objective recommendations.

Keywords: Public Libraries ; TQM ; Performance ;Measurement of the Quality.

ملخص:

جاءت تفاصيل هذه الدراسة من منطلق إدراكنا لمدى توافق ثقافة الجودة مع الفكر الإستراتيجي كأسس لتقديم الخدمة المعلوماتية بالمكتبات العامة ؛ وهذا ما يستدعي قياس الخدمات المقدمة وفق معايير ومؤشرات الجودة وهذا ما هدفت إليه دراستنا هاته بناءا على دراسة استطلاعية ؛ وقد أظهرت الدراسة عدة نتائج تبين من خلالها ضرورة الإهتمام بتحسين وتطوير أداء المكتبة وذلك بالتطبيق العملي لإدارة الجودة الشاملة وعلى ضوء تلك النتائج حرصت الباحثتان على إدراج بعض المقترحات والتوصيات التي يجب أخذها بها؛ فهي كفيلة بتطوير مستواها الخدماتي وتحقيق آدائها الفعال والمتميز وفق مقاييس ومؤشرات الجودة .

كلمات مفتاحية: جودة الخدمة ؛ البعد الإستراتيجي ؛ جودة الآداء ؛ المكتبات العامة

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1. INTRODUCTION

One of the distinguishing features of our current era is the modern and successive waves of management that have taken over managerial thinking and practices. The increased spread of these waves is attributed to the logic of globalization. One of the most prominent modern waves is Total Quality Management, where quality has become the primary challenge for achieving success and excellence, especially in profit and service-oriented organizations. As Joseph Juran stated, "As much as the twentieth century was the century of productivity, the twenty-first century will be the century of quality" , Many public libraries have responded to the culture of quality in their services, considering it a major focus to achieve comprehensive development in society. In our study, we will present and analyze the practical reality of the main library for public reading in Tipaza province ; We aim to conduct an objective evaluation of library operations as a measure of service quality and outstanding performance within the standards and indicators in the field of libraries and information centers.

2. Research Methodology:

Research Problem:Given the importance and feasibility of applying the administrative approach of measuring service quality and performance in public libraries, our study focuses on shedding light on the performance reality of the main library for public reading, The research problem is encapsulated in our main question:

-Does the library under studyrely on quality measures in its performance of tasks, and what does Total Quality Management mean to it?

In service of our research problem, we aim to answer the following sub-questions:-Does the library under study seek to measure the quality of its services according to the standards and indicators specific to libraries and information centers?

-Do the information services provided by the library meet the specifications and standards of Total Quality Management?

As part of our research problem, we further inquire through the following sub-questions:-What does quality represent for library staff, and what are the methods for evaluating its performance?-What are the distinguished strategies in library services according to the perception of library staff ?.

3. Study Hypotheses:

We have formulated the general hypothesis as a temporary solution based on the study variables. It is represented as follows:

- The adoption by the library under study of mechanisms and modern management principles to enhance and improve its services, which fall under the umbrella of Total Quality Management and service performance excellence.

- The absence of a clear evaluative policy in the library based on scientific and objective standards and criteria.

4. Study Significance:

The significance of our study is manifested in several elements, which can be summarized as follows:

4.1. Recognition of the Importance of Public Libraries:

-Realizing the significance of public libraries and their strong connection to information services for individuals inclined towards reading and scientific research The community as a whole reflects positive interaction with library services, both in educational and research aspects. This represents a cultural demand in our current era.

4.2 Relevance of Total Quality Management:

- Addressing the topic of Total Quality Management, specifically the culture of quality, which is a modern philosophy for library management in its various forms, including public libraries. This philosophy reflects the real image of societal development, enrichment, and scientific advancement.

4.3 Alignment with State Policy:

-Following and implementing the state's policy in developing and enriching the culture, obligating the adoption of methods and approaches for outstanding performance based on Total Quality Management standards and indicators, especially in the field of libraries and information.

4.4 Confirmation of Quality Culture and Mandatory Application:

Emphasizing the culture of quality and its obligatory implementation in the services of public libraries aims to achieve continuity through outstanding performance and the desired efficiency. This is crucial for meeting the requirements of beneficiaries and assessing their satisfaction. Additionally, it involves activating other mechanisms such as change management to adopt the principle of service quality.

5. Clarification of Readiness in Public Libraries:

This involves elucidating the preparedness of public libraries in general, with a specific focus on the main public library "Assia Jabar," the subject of our study. The library's efforts in adopting Total Quality Management programs are highlighted,
providing a comprehensive view of how to optimally benefit from modern management methods and programs. This is done while considering the available data and resources.

6. Objectives of the Study: Our study aims to:

6.1 Confirm the culture of quality and its mandatory application in the services of public libraries to achieve continuity based on outstanding performance and the desired efficiency, meeting the requirements of beneficiaries. This includes evaluating their

satisfaction to activate other mechanisms like change management to adopt a service quality philosophy.

6.2 Clarify the readiness of public libraries in general, and specifically the main public library the subject of our study. It explores their efforts in adopting Total Quality Management programs, providing an extensive view of how to optimally benefit from modern management methods and programs considering available data and resources Methodology:

Given the nature of our study, addressing the problem statement and hypotheses, we adopted a descriptive methodology that aligns with the research's nature and requirements. This involved examining the practical reality of the main public library, its various services, and assessment methods.

The researchers utilized a descriptive-analytical approach, analyzing statistics obtained from the answers provided by the library staff. To emphasize the importance ofour study and place it within its correct framework, we employed a questionnaire survey.

This method allowed for easy and comprehensive responses, serving the practical and functional understanding of the library. We used observation to gather additional information, focusing on the importance of our study and placing it objectively within its context.

Our survey instrument included a questionnaire designed to give an overview of the library's operational reality, evaluating its services and performance based on specific criteria. The questionnaire covered essential aspects of the evaluation process for service quality and excellence. We emphasized the importance of our study and placed it within its correct framework, using the questionnaire to provide a convenient way for respondents to share their views. The study sample consisted of 48 employees from the administrative and technical staff who possess the ability to perform services according to a culture of performance, excellence, and quality.

7. Conceptual Framework of Quality:

7.1 Concept of Quality in Islam:

Islamic administrative thought precedes the establishment of the quality system, emphasizing precision and excellence in work, regulating various transactions among members of society, overseeing business activities, promoting good deeds, and prohibiting wrongdoing to enhance social interaction ethics. In Islam, the concept of quality is intertwined with the concepts of mastery (Itqan) and excellence (Ihsan). The distinction between these concepts can be understood through the linguistic root of the word "quality" derived from "jood," meaning goodness or excellence. Ibn Manzur (2005) explains this by stating that "jood" means turning something good between

quality and goodness. It implies bringing forth goodness through speech or action.There is a relationship between the concept and principles of Total Quality Management as a modern managerial philosophy and the concept of management in the Islamic perspective. Therefore, we will elaborate on some of the essential concepts related to this relationship:

-**Role Modeling (Qudwa)**:In the Islamic context, "Qudwa" refers to the model or example that others follow in terms of words and deeds. It serves as the foundation for positive change, aligning with the appropriate leadership requirements adopted by Total Quality Management in applying its concepts.

7.2.Concepts Related to Quality :

Mastery (Itqan):

Derived from the verb "atqana," meaning to strengthen or perfect something. Mastery involves strengthening and perfecting things. The Quran emphasizes God's mastery, stating, "Allah is the best of creators" (Quran, Surah An-Naml 27:88). In Islam, mastery goes beyond the concepts of goodness and quality. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) stated, "Indeed, Allah loves that when one of you does something, he does it with perfection.

"Excellence (Ihsan):

The word "Ihsan" is derived from the verb "ahsana," meaning to do good. It represents doing goodin both words and actions Allah mentions in the Quran, "He who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed" (Quran, Surah Al-Mulk 67:2).

This explains the concept of continuous improvement embraced by Total Quality Management.Another aspect of Ihsan is highlighted in a hadith where the Prophet (peace be upon him) defines it as worshipping Allah as if you see Him, and if you cannot see Him, knowing that He sees you. This relates to the internal control aspect of Islam, fostering self-accountability.

Collective Action:

Islam encourages collaboration and collective performance to strengthen relationships within society, as stated in the Quran, "And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression" (Quran, Surah Al-Ma'idah 52).

This principle aligns with the concept of employee involvement in Total Quality Management, emphasizing the necessity of working with a team spirit.

Shura (Consultation):

The Quran emphasizes consultation, "And their affairs are determined by consultation among themselves" (Quran, Surah Ash-Shura 42:38). Islam calls for adherence to the principle of Shura in all decisions. The excellence of collective decisions, as affirmed by modern administrative systems like Management by Objectives and Participatory Management, aligns with the Islamic principle of Shura. Shura in Islam complements the concept of continuous improvement as seen in brainstorming sessions.These concepts from Islamic thought, including mastery,

excellence, collective action, and consultation, are in harmony with the principles of quality management. .

8. Regarding the term "Quality"

The term "Quality" is derived from the Latin word "Qualitas," which refers to the nature of a person or thing and the degree of excellence.The American Society for Quality defines quality as "the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy given needs and implied needs." Quality is the degree to which a set of inherent characteristics fulfill requirements, which may be explicit or implicit, optional or mandatory .

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) defines quality as "the degree to which a set of inherent characteristics fulfills both stated and implied needs through a set of predetermined key characteristics" **(Al-Azzawi, 2005, p.15)**.

The multitude of definitions provided by researchers and quality enthusiasts has given quality various dimensions, encompassing social, managerial, and behavioral concepts. The term "quality" holds two interconnected meanings:

the realistic commitment to applying realistic and real indicators based on specific standardsand measures, and the sensory consideration of the feelings and satisfaction of the service recipient regarding the service's competency level .

9. Quality Culture and its Relation to Organizations:

The concept of quality and its culture emerged in Europe during the 18th century with the aim of reforming or improving standards. Over time, the concept evolved to mean the enhancement of individual skills through education and upbringing during the 19th century. It wasthen used synonymously with the term civilization. By the 20th century, the concept began to signify human phenomena. After World War II, interest in this concept grew across various fields such as social sciences, organizational psychology, and management sciences.

Quality culture and its understanding have multiple definitions, reflecting its significance in various areas.

Culture is the language of evaluation, refinement, and education, balancing the development of mental faculties and refining human personality to its utmost perfection.

It is the way of life for people, encompassing their behaviors, attitudes, habits, traditions, and various influences. Culture comprises a set of values, ideas, trends, and symbols passed down from generation to generation, forming the foundation of social communication.

Key characteristics of culture include being a human process, not innate but acquired, evolving over time, and capable of being passed on; Quality culture is a set of values related to quality, collectively learned to enhance organizations' ability to face external and internal environments, It distinguishes between negative quality culture,

rooted in negative habits and beliefs, and positive quality culture, arising from unconventional steps aimed at satisfying customers.

From what has been mentioned, the quality culture reflects the expansion of elements and concepts of performance quality across various organizational units, influencing the institution's performance. This results in continuous commitment to quality, continuous improvement, and effective performance, ensuring the following characteristics for the organization:

-Customer orientation, focusing on understanding their desires and expectations.

-Encouraging employees in organizations to be creative and innovative.

-Operating in a flexible environment that seeks optimal utilization of human resources.

The strategic dimensions of service quality in library andinformation management can be focused on the following key aspects:

-Alignment of Information Service with Total Quality: This refers to the extent to which the information service aligns with overall quality and sustainability.

-Response Time: It is the speed of response and provision of information service within the specified timeframes set by the beneficiary client.

-Competence: The degree of availability of professional human skills necessary for achieving the self-content of information service quality, such as the required skills and knowledge.

10. Matching Information Service with Beneficiary Client's Requirements:

Information service relies on meeting the needs of clients, thus it should be suitable for the beneficiary's use.

-Empathy and Sympathy: Behavioral skills necessary in dealing with the beneficiary client to achieve harmony and interaction when providing information service.

-Communication: The ability to listen to the client and accept their feedback.

-Understanding and Perception: The readiness of information service workers to train on how to accurately identify and understand the client's needs.

-Level of Technical Design for Prints and Models Specific to Information Service.

-Tools: All material tools necessary for performing information service.

-Trust in Information Service Performance: The degree of client trusts in specialized workers regarding their ability to provide high-quality and accurate information service consistently.

-Design of the Physical Environment Surrounding Information Service: This includes designing the building, document center, and customer service hall, as well as the proper material and essential facilities such as furniture, decor, colors, ventilation, lighting, security, safety, etc. **(Abu Haymad, 2006, p.33).**

-Competence: The degree of availability of professional human skills necessary for achieving the self-content of information service quality, such as the required skills and knowledge.

11. Measuring Service Quality:

Service-oriented institutions needeffective management that relies on the efficiency of activities and necessary processes to achieve their goals. They need to determine whether there is a discrepancy between the targeted results and the actual results, comparing the achieved results withthe predefined standards. Measurement is the second face of the standardization process. The success or transformation of any organization from working in a non-standardized environment to working in a standardized environment, and avoiding random work, ensures the shift from failure to success.

However, studies have pointed to two fundamental models widely accepted in the field of measuring service quality.

Servperf Model:

This measure relies on assessing service quality through measuring the customer perception and attitudes toward the actual performance of the service provided. It is based on the five dimensions used in the Servqual scale but does not focus on measuring perceived quality, meaning quality achieved in reality without considering expected quality. It can be expressed by the equation:

Service Quality = Actual Performance, Despite the various measurement methods and several attempts in this field, everyone agrees on the objectives and justifications of this measure, including:

-Recognizing the level of service quality before and after developments.

-Establishing clear standards for quality control.

-Identifying and diagnosing problems that hinder achieving high levels of quality.

Servqual Model:

After conducting a comprehensive survey in 1986, Parasuraman introduced the Servqual model, incorporating various service areas based on the Service Gap, presenting a general scale called Servqual with 22 elements distributed across five basic dimensions: tangible aspects of the service, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.

This model measures service quality by comparing what customers perceive from the received service with their pre-existing expectations. According to this model, there are five gaps:-The gap between customer expectations and management's perception of those expectations.-The gap between management's perception of customer expectations and the specified actual quality standards.-The gap between specified standards and the actual performance of the service in practical reality.

-The gap between the actual level of service provided and the promises made by the organization.-The gap between customers' perception of the actual performance level of the service and their expectations regarding the quality of this service.

Libqual Scale:

Due to shortcomings in Servqual, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), in collaboration with Texas University, developed, tested, and revised Servqual into the Libqual Plus + Libqual scale in 2000.

It serves as a standardized tool for evaluating library service quality, involving 22 elements across five dimensions.Libqual aims to:-Promote a culture of excellence in library services.

-Help libraries understand the opinions and impressions of beneficiaries regarding the qualityof services provided.

- Collect and analyze opinions and impressions of beneficiaries regularly.

- Providing comparative information from competitive libraries, which the library can benefit from in the evaluation process.
- Identifying best practices in providing library services.
- Enhancing analytical skills among library staff to interpret the collected data.

The advantages of this standard include:-Serving as an assessment tool available to beneficiaries online, anytime, anywhere.
- Acting as a standardized assessment tool that supports many of the library goals.

Saving libraries the effort and cost of preparing their own assessment tool, which may not be as accurate and comprehensive.
- Allowing the inclusion of text, images, and audio in responses.
- Enabling direct and accurate electronic transfer of quantitative and qualitative data.
- Allowing the library to identify services that are of interest to the community of beneficiaries and support and enhance them **(Abdelhadi, 2015, p. 111).**

12. Concept of Information Service Quality:

Efficient and successful provision of information services relies on several material and human elements that integrate with each other, **Key elements include**:

Good and Diverse Information Sources: Information services should provide sources that align with the beneficiaries' needs.

Information Organization: Information should be organized in a way that allows easy identification and access when needed, through suitable retrieval systems such as indexes and catalogs.

Competent Information Specialists :Competent and qualified information specialists play a crucial role in determining the quality of the provided information service.

13. Elements of Information Service Quality:

Information service, at times intangible, is directly or indirectly provided to the beneficiary client. Professional and personal skills of information management workers play a significant role in determining the quality of the service. Comprehensive quality elements in information service are divided into three main elements that interact to represent the client's evaluation of the actual comprehensive quality level in information service:

- ✓ **Technical Quality Element (Procedural Element):** The ability of information service to perform what is required to match technical usage. Technical characteristics are determined by specialized workers based on customer needs.
- ✓ **Non-Technical Quality Element (Human Element):** Non-technical quality is fundamental in providing technical quality. It depends on the performance of specialized workers and significantly influences the client's evaluation of the provided quality.
- ✓ **Information Service Environment Element:** The physical environment associated with information service provision, influencing the client's evaluation of achieving comprehensive quality in information service.

14. List of Performance Indicators for Public Libraries:

Several performance indicators have been implemented in public libraries, including:

-Market penetration:
-Percentage of used books compared to the basic user population.
-Percentage of user categories compared to other categories (such as final-year students) for various age groups.
-Working hours compared to demand.
-Remote usage.

-Quality of holdings:
-Usage of holdings.
-Holdings available for external and internal management.
-Percentage of unused holdings during a specific period.
-Recently acquired subject holdings.

-Indexing quality:
-Search for known materials.
-Search for subjects.
-Provision of titles in the holdings

15. ISO Standards and Quality Assurance in Libraries:

Libraries and information centers have become a focal point of interest for various stakeholders, including economists and businesses.

They are now obligated to evaluate their performance credibly based on international and Arab organizations' standards, led by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), ensuring standardized practices in the application of performance quality in libraries and information services.

Numerous standards have been established for library professionals,including:
-ISO/R4: International rules for journal and periodical title abbreviations
-ISO/R8: Volumes.
-ISO/R18: Lists of journal content abbreviations.
-ISO/R7: Bibliographic standards (basic elements).
-ISO/R169: Paper or microfilm copies.
-ISO/R193: Thumbnails.
-ISO/R215: Presentation of journal content.
-ISO/R216: Typefaces and printing tools.
-ISO/R218: International exchange of microfilms.
-ISO/R233: International system for Arabic character conversion and transliteration.
-ISO/R260:Microfilm terminology.
-ISO/R690: Bibliographic rules (basic and additional elements).
-ISO/R833: Abbreviations for generic (games) and journal titles.
-ISO/R988: Publishing schedules.
-ISO/R1086: Book titles.
-ISO/R2108: International Standard Book Numbering (ISBN).
-ISO/R2146: Library, information, and documentation center management.
-ISO/R2636: Information evolution, cooperative agreements, covenants.

-ISO/R2789: International library statistics.
-ISO/R50149: The official standard for CD-ROM books.

Additionally, ISO 9000 standards have been introduced as a genuine mark and expression of a product or service's credibility concerning total quality management and quality assurance:
-ISO 9000: Quality management fundamentals.
-ISO 9001: Model for quality assurance in product production and installation.
-ISO 9002: Model for quality assurance in product production and installation.
-ISO 9003: Model for quality assurance through final inspection control. **(Hassab Allah, 2001, p.379).**

16. Library's Adoption of Standards and Indicators in its Evaluation:

Libraries of various types and work patterns are now adopting a new policy, the Quality Policy in delivering their services. This involves measuring their performance according to international and Arab standards and indicators. Therefore, we aimed to inquire about performance measurement and the criteria used in that regard.

Percentage	répétition	Answer
43.75 %	**21**	Total Quality Indicators during service delivery
18.75 %	**09**	Six Sigma Approach to Performance Improvement
31.25 %	**15**	ISO standard, quality assurance levels and performance
35.41 %	**17**	Performance Indicators for Public Libraries: Quality of Balance, Quality of Indices, Service of Beneficiaries, EFLA Directives
16.66 %	**08**	Arab Federation for Libraries and Information: Performance Indicators for Measuring Libraries' Performance
18.75 %	**09**	Unified Arab Standard for Public Libraries

Table (01): Distribution of the sample according to criteria and indicators for evaluating service performance

Considering the important roles assigned to public libraries, the necessity for them to adopt effective policies to perform their tasks and focus on evaluating their performance has become imperative. The researchers attempted to translate the

quality of performance by improving library services according to proposed and well-thought-out visions and plans. This ensures comprehensive quality and its administrative understanding among some employees. They concentrated on methods and ways to enhance services, ensuring the highest levels of excellence in performance 36without delving into detailed indicators of quality, efficiency, and effectiveness. This was reflected in the answers, with the highest percentage (43.75%) favoring evaluation based on comprehensive quality indicators during service delivery. The culture of quality declared by library staff, their conviction in the necessity of continuous improvement and service development, was evident, securing the library's commitment to service quality and excellence for a steadfast vision toward achieving library goals. The second-highest percentage (35.41%) was attributed to the inclination of some workers based on their knowledge and experience in library management, recognizing the need to fulfill the information needs of users in public libraries. Achieving this requires a detailed understanding of performance indicators specific to public libraries, including collection quality, index quality, and user service. The variations in other percentages were attributed by the researchers to either the lack of awareness of the precise application of such detailed standards or the limited resources available in the library under study. Despite the variations, employees demonstrated a focus on service quality, client satisfaction, and periodic and continuous evaluation of library services, even if not precisely in regulated forms, reaching the desired objectives.

17. Study Recommendations:

Given the positive results and the identification of some unsatisfactory outcomes in our study, the researcher aims to propose some suggestions and recommendations that could be considered to enhance the current level of the main library for public reading, The most notable recommendations include:

Application of Total Quality Management Concepts:

It is crucial to implement comprehensive quality concepts as an integrated administrative system in a regulated manner, following ISO standards and requirements. This ensures the highest levels of performance and excellence.

Establishment of a Quality Cell:

Create an effective working environment by establishing a quality cell at the library level. This cell should conduct periodic evaluations of library services based on service improvement indicators.

It should develop and apply methodologies, approaches, and mechanisms for improvement. Additionally, involve supervisors in activities and workshops related to quality to support efforts to enhance information services.3. Promotion of Collaboration and Coordination: Foster a spirit of collaboration and teamwork at the organizational level to overcome material and organizational obstacles. Benefit from modern trends in library services, aligning them with quality requirements.

Conclusion:

The modern theme of quality and its comprehensive culture in public libraries, coupled with the obligatory establishment of strategic thinking principles to ensure service quality,

has led them to strive for measuring the quality of their information services. Public libraries aim to enhance their leading social and cultural role in the development, progress, and formation of an educated community based on global indicators and standards. Information has become a fundamental resource in societal advancement. Consequently, it is imperative for public libraries to adopt the latest methods and implement effective models to establish the foundations of library services.

Libraries and information centers are now obligated to assess their performance, they have adapted to various developments in their services and adopted a culture of quality, a fundamental requirement for measuring their success and meeting the needs of clients at differentlevels, ages, and preferences. Quality of service has become the guiding philosophy for these scholarly institutions. Public libraries, such as the main library for public reading, have responded to the culture of service quality. They prioritize achieving comprehensive social development by evaluating the quality of their distinguished performance within the standards and practical indicators of library and information centers.

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