

Investigation of the Effect of Internal Marketing on Quality of Work-Life: Evidence from Sport Organizations

Suleyman M. Yildiz* 

Mugla Sitki Kocman University, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Turkey

Research Article

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the effect of internal marketing (IM) on quality of work-life (QWL). The data were obtained from the employees of sports organizations providing public service in western Turkey. As a data collection tool, the IM-11 scale developed by Yildiz and Kara (2017) was used to measure IM, and the QWL scale developed by Chen and Farh (2000) was used to measure QWL. Descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis were used in the analysis of the data. Analysis results showed that IM had a significant and positive effect on QWL. The strongest effect of IM was on the “compensation & benefits” dimension, one of the sub-dimensions of QWL.

Keywords: Internal marketing, Quality of work-life, Employee, Sport organizations

İçsel Pazarlamanın İş Yaşam Kalitesi Üzerine Etkisinin İncelenmesi: Spor Örgütlerine Yönelik Bir Çalışma

Öz

Bu çalışma, spor örgütlerinde içsel pazarlamanın iş-yaşam kalitesi üzerindeki etkisinin incelenmesi amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veriler Türkiye'nin batısında bulunan ve kamu hizmeti veren spor örgütlerinin çalışanlarından elde edilmiştir. Veri toplama aracı olarak, içsel pazarlamayı ölçmek için Yıldız ve Kara (2017) tarafından geliştirilen IM-11 ölçeği, iş yaşam kalitesini ölçmek için Chen ve Farh (2000) tarafından geliştirilen iş-yaşam kalitesi ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Verilerin analizinde betimsel istatistikler, korelasyon ve regresyon analizi kullanılmıştır. Analiz sonuçları, içsel pazarlamanın iş-yaşam kalitesi üzerinde anlamlı ve pozitif bir etkiye sahip olduğunu göstermiştir. Analizlerde içsel pazarlamanın en güçlü etkisi, iş-yaşam kalitesinin alt boyutlarından biri olan “ödü & yarar” boyutu üzerinde olmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İçsel pazarlama, İş yaşam kalitesi, Çalışan, Spor örgütleri

* **Corresponding Author:** Suleyman M. Yildiz, e-mail: smyildiz@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Internal marketing (IM) and quality of work-life (QWL) issues have started to attract more attention from researchers in recent years (Diana et al., 2022; Qiu et al., 2022). The basis of this interest is what organizations should do in order to achieve success in the competition within the sector (Yildiz, 2016). Research shows that the way to be successful in competition is to offer good working opportunities to employees (Basalamah & As'ad, 2021). Organizations that satisfy the expectations of their employees get more efficiency from them (Shah, 2014). In this context, the issue of IM, which is effective in meeting the expectations of the employees, and the issue of QWL, which makes the employees happier in the work environment, are always at the forefront of the issues that should be on the agenda for organizations.

Organizations providing sports services are among the most interesting organizations in the service industry (Yildiz & Yildiz, 2022). With the increasing interest of people in activities that provide performance, health and physical fitness, the proliferation of organizations that produce these services has brought competition to the agenda in the sports sector as in other sectors (Foroughi et al., 2019; Leon-Quismondo et al., 2020; Yildiz et al., 2021). In today's environment of intense competition, organizations that are successful in competition continue their lives, while the unsuccessful ones have to withdraw from the market (Grönroos, 1990). Therefore, organizations that provide sports services, like other organizations, are faced with the necessity of developing more effective marketing strategies in order to maintain their existence (Yildiz & Tüfekci, 2010). In this context, practices that will motivate and make employees happy are at the forefront of these strategies. IM practices that motivate employees (George, 1990) and QWL efforts that increase employee happiness (Chan & Wyatt, 2007) have recently become a more strategic approach for organizations.

The goal of service-producing organizations is to continue their existence and develop. For this, organizations try to satisfy customers who buy products by providing service quality. In recent years, it has been realized that the way to provide customer satisfaction is through the employees (De Bruin et al., 2021; Eneizan et al., 2021). Considering that service quality is determined mostly by employees in service sectors, it is clear that human resources are a very important issue for organizations in the sports sector, as it is in all organizations. Employees in an organization are affected by relations with management, physical and social environment, organizational norms and opportunities, organizational climate, and similar situations (Asio & Jimenez, 2020; Pratiwi et al., 2019; Tripathi et al., 2020). Organizations that meet the physical, psychological, social, and economic needs of their employees retain their employees, and those who cannot meet them lose their employees (Cloutier et al., 2015; Kossivi et al., 2016; Sandhya & Kumar, 2011). From this point of view, IM and QWL phenomena, which meet the expectations of employees and ensure their satisfaction and happiness, gain importance for organizations. IM is an approach that focuses on the expectations and needs of employees, while QWL is an approach that helps to increase the perception of employees' work environment quality. There is no study in the literature dealing with the relationship between IM and QWL. Therefore, there is a need to explore the relationships between these two issues.

Therefore, this study aimed to examine the effect of IM on QWL by focusing on the employees of sports organizations.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Internal marketing

Today's modern marketing approach sees employees in organizations as customers and evaluates them as domestic markets (Johnston, 1989; Mudie, 2003; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993). Thus, besides external marketing, the concept of IM has emerged. While external marketing focuses on meeting the expectations of the customers receiving service from the organization and their satisfaction, IM applies the marketing tools and techniques developed by the organization for external marketing to the employees (Lings, 2004). In other words, IM is seen as the key element to achieving success in external marketing and focuses on the effective exchange between the organization and the employee. In this exchange, while the expectations of the employees are met by the organization and their motivation is ensured, the employees are expected to focus on the satisfaction of their customers. In this framework, IM includes activities that focus on attracting qualified employees to the organization, keeping them in the organization, ensuring their loyalty by satisfying them, and creating customer focus in this process (Yildiz, 2013).

Rafiq and Ahmed (2000) argue that within the framework of IM applications, it is necessary to focus on the expectations and needs of the employees first and then implement the strategies that will ensure the motivation and satisfaction of the employees. As a result of these practices, the employee, whose expectations and needs are satisfied, will focus more on external customers and ensure their satisfaction, so that the organization will reach a high-quality level in the products it offers (Joseph, 1996).

There are some studies in the literature on what the structure of IM consists of. One of them is Foreman and Money's (1995) approach consisting of vision, reward, and development dimensions. Researchers argue that if vision, reward, and development are provided, employee motivation and satisfaction will be provided. On the other hand, Yildiz and Kara (2017) do not consider the dimensions of vision, reward, and development sufficient, and focus on other features that will meet the needs and expectations of employees. For instance, physical facilities, career advancement opportunities, equal treatment, soliciting employee opinions, etc. The researchers argue that the eleven features they have revealed in their studies will provide motivation and satisfaction to the employees, which will increase the quality of the service provided.

Quality of work-life

QWL is a concept that expresses a perceptual situation that occurs when the expectations of the employees in the business environment are met or not met by the organization. In other words, QWL is the degree to which the personal needs of the employee are met by the organization (Sirgy et al., 2001). In the minds of the employees, if the expectations are met, high QWL occurs, and if they are not met, low QWL occurs.

“Fair pay, safe working conditions, opportunities to learn and use new skills, career development opportunities, protection of individual rights, and job pride” are some of the areas related to QWL (Schermerhorn et al., 1994). Improvements in these areas ensure that employees are engaged in their organizations (Wardani & Anwar, 2019). Studies show that employees with high QWL perception have high motivation and job satisfaction (Sari et al., 2019). Therefore, QWL is an important concept that ensures employees’ intention to stay in the organization (Agus & Selvaraj, 2020). From this point of view, it is clearly understood that one of the most important tools for organizations to achieve their goals is the employees, and therefore, the QWL, which improves the working environment, must be included in the modern management approach (Yildiz, 2013).

Relationship between internal marketing and quality of work-life

In the literature, IM and QWL have been the subject of separate studies, but no study examining the relationships between these two variables has been found. Therefore, determining the relationships between both variables is important in terms of providing new evidence to the literature and providing a perspective to the field and other researchers. There are some studies on what affects QWL. For instance, organizational culture (Goodman et al., 2001), leadership style (Owolabi, 2015), and office harassment (Nazir et al., 2011) are among the factors that QWL is affected by.

Studies in the literature show that IM has positive effects on many variables. For example, employees’ job satisfaction (Arslanoglu et al., 2020; Srinivasa & Muramalla, 2021), job attitude (To et al., 2015), and organizational citizenship behavior (Akyüz & Yazici, 2022). One of them can be QWL. Therefore, in this study, the following hypotheses were developed to examine the effect of IM on QWL in the context of sports organizations:

- H₁. Internal marketing will have a positive effect on work / life balance.
- H₂. Internal marketing will have a positive effect on job characteristics.
- H₃. Internal marketing will have a positive effect on supervisory behavior.
- H₄. Internal marketing will have a positive effect on compensation & benefits.
- H₅. Internal marketing will have a positive effect on quality of work-life.

METHOD

Research model

The conceptual model of this study conducted to investigate the effects of IM on QWL in the context of sport organizations are illustrated in Figure 1. This model shows IM as the independent variable while QWL and its sub-dimensions (work/life balance, job characteristics, supervisory behavior, compensation & benefits) as the dependent variables.

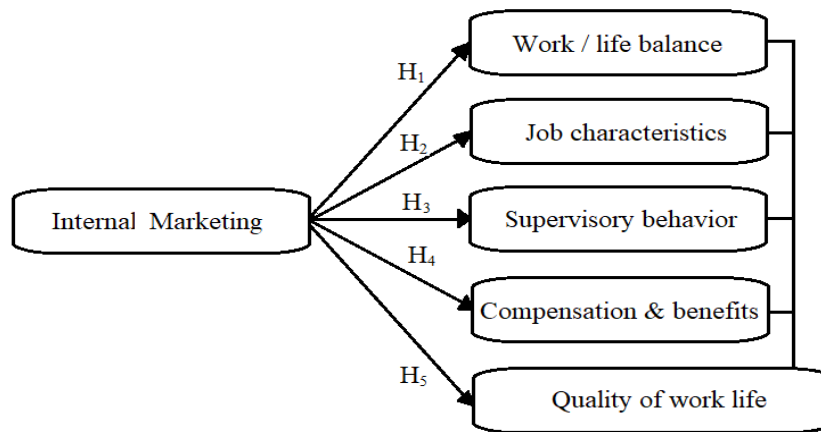


Figure 1. The effect of internal marketing on quality of work-life

Sample size and procedure

In this study, the data obtained by the convenience sampling method were collected from the employees of sports organizations that provide public service in the west of Turkey. Communication with all employees was provided by electronic communication tools. First, an invitation to participate containing the purpose of the study was sent to 160 employees. Then, 119 volunteer employees answered positively and filled out the questionnaires. The completed questionnaires were found to be error-free and all were found suitable for analysis.

Measurement instruments

In this study, the IM-11 Scale developed by Yildiz and Kara (2017) was used to measure the IM perception of employees. This instrument is unidimensional and consists of eleven items. Statement examples include: “This organization provides training/development programs to improve knowledge and skills of its employees,” and, “This organization treats its employees equally and fairly.” The statements were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”).

The quality of work-life scale developed by Chen and Farh (2000) was used to measure the QWL perception of employees. This scale consists of four dimensions (work/life balance, job characteristics, supervisory behavior, compensation & benefits) and each dimension consists of 3 items (Huang et al., 2007). Statement examples include: “My current job does not interrupt my family life,” and, “My job is creative and meaningful.” The statements were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”).

Research Ethics

This study was approved by the Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Mugla Sitki Kocman University (23.02.2023 - 32/230016).

Statistical analysis

Descriptive statistics were used for the analysis of demographic properties in the study. Both validity and reliability analyzes were performed on the scales. Correlation analysis was used to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between variables, and hierarchical regression analysis was used to determine the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable.

FINDINGS

Sample characteristics

The majority of the participants are “male” and those who are between the ages of “31-45”. The majority of the employees are “permanent staff” and those with “undergraduate” education. In the working time variable, the excess value is in the range of “1-5 years”, followed by the range of “6-10 years” (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics

Variables		f	%
Gender	Male	89	74.8
	Female	30	25.2
Age	30 and less	24	20.2
	31–45	87	73.1
	46–50	8	6.7
Employment status	Fixed-term contract	42	35.3
	Permanent staff	77	64.7
Education	Lycée	18	15.1
	Undergraduate	69	58
	Master’s	32	26.9
Length of working life in current institution (years)	1–5	36	30.3
	6–10	48	40.3
	11–15	15	12.6
	16–20	9	7.6
	21–25	6	5
	26–30	2	1.7
	Over 31	3	2.5

Source: Yildiz, 2023

Test for validity and reliability

The IM-11 scale is unidimensional and the factor loads of the items vary between 0.644 and 0.840. The Cronbach alpha coefficient is 0.904. These high values indicate that the IM-11 scale is consistent with the original scale values.

The QWL scale has four dimensions and the factor loads of the items vary between 0.643 and 0.926. The Cronbach alpha coefficient is 0.742 for work/life balance, 0.743 for job characteristics, 0.818 for supervisory behavior, and 0.825 for compensation & benefits. These high values indicate that the QWL scale is consistent with the original scale values.

Correlation analysis

IM and QWL are significantly and positively correlated ($r = 0.763$). The strength of this relationship is quite high. This level of relationship shows that when IM increases, employees’ QWL perception increases strongly. Similarly, IM is significantly and positively associated with all sub-dimensions of QWL. The highest correlation belongs to the “compensation & benefits” sub-dimension ($r = 0.763$). On the other hand, it is seen that QWL is only significantly and negatively related to the age variable among the demographic variables ($r = -0.192$). This value shows that the perception of QWL increases as the age of the employees decreases (Table 2).

Table 2. Results of correlation analysis

Variables	M	1	2	3	4	5
1. Gender ^a		1				
2. Age ^b		-.192*	1			
3. Employment status ^c		-.057	.328**	1		
4. Educational degree ^d		.075	.260**	-.277**	1	
5. Length of working life in current institution ^e		-.008	.657**	.467**	.033	1
6. Internal marketing	3.36	.013	.009	.114	-.012	.243**
7. Work / life balance	3.60	.051	.104	-.189*	.092	.239**
8. Job characteristics	3.77	-.406**	.149	.072	.037	-.049
9. Supervisory behavior	3.31	-.398**	-.033	-.067	-.195*	.059
10. Compensation & benefits	2.71	-.127	.061	.061	.102	.205*
11. Quality of work-life	3.35	-.272**	.088	-.045	.014	.161

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Source: Yildiz, 2023

Key. ^aGender: 1=male, 2=female. ^bAge was measured in 3-year intervals, coded as 1=less than 30 to more than 46.

^cEmployment status: 1=fixed-term contract, 2=permanent staff. ^dEducational degree: 1=lycée, 2=undergraduate, 3=master's.

^eLength of working life in current institution was measured in 7-year intervals, coded as 1=less than 5 years to 7=more than 31.

Table 2. Results of correlation analysis (continued)

Variables	M	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender						
2. Age						
3. Employment status						
4. Educational degree						
5. Length of working life in current institution						
6. Internal marketing	3.36	1				
7. Work / life balance	3.60	.408**	1			
8. Job characteristics	3.77	.584**	.330**	1		
9. Supervisory behavior	3.31	.597**	.278**	.527**	1	
10. Compensation & benefits	2.71	.734**	.346**	.502**	.671**	1
11. Quality of work-life	3.35	.763**	.651**	.745**	.813**	.839**

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Hierarchical regression analysis

Table 3 shows the hierarchical regression analysis results. According to the analysis results, IM affects QWL significantly and positively. The strength of this effect is quite high ($\beta = 0.790$). Similarly, IM significantly and positively affects all sub-dimensions of QWL. Compensation & benefits sub-dimension has the highest impact ($\beta = 0.725$). When demographic variables are examined, QWL is significantly and negatively affected by the “gender” variable. Accordingly, men have a higher perception of QWL than women. The QWL is significantly and negatively affected by the “employment status” in the second step of the analysis. This shows that employees with fixed-term contracts have less QWL perception.

Table 3 – Hierarchical regression analysis among independent and dependent variables

Independent variables	Dependent variables										
	Work / Life Balance		Job Characteristics		Supervisory Behavior		Compensation & Benefits		Quality of Work-Life		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	
	β	β	β	B	β	β	β	β	β	β	
1. Gender ^a	.022	.039	-.374**	-.342**	-.429**	-.400**	-.188*	-.154*	-.306**	-.269**	
2. Age ^b	-.064	.053	.166	.382**	-.180	.011	-.268*	-.044	-.131	.112	
3. Employment status ^c	-.387**	-.399**	.115	.093	-.214*	-.233**	.016	-.006	-.166	-.191**	
4. Educational degree ^d	-.015	-.041	.061	.015	-.185	-.226**	.178	.130	.014	-.038	
5. Length of working life in current institution ^e	.462**	.300*	-.217	-.517	.280*	.013	.366**	.056	.322*	-.016	
6. Internal Marketing	-	.379**	-	.700**	-	.623**	-	.725**	-	.790**	
	<i>F</i>	4.851	8.216	5.579	32.764	7.255	26.919	2.566	25.060	3.415	41.791
	<i>R</i> ²	.177	.306	.198	.637	.243	.591	.102	.573	.131	.691
	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	.140	.268	.162	.618	.210	.569	.062	.550	.093	.675

Note: Standardized beta values were used, ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

Source: Yildiz, 2023

Key. ^aGender: 1=male, 2=female. ^bAge was measured in 3-year intervals, coded as 1=less than 30 to more than 46. ^cEmployment status: 1=fixed-term contract, 2=permanent staff.

^dEducational degree: 1=lycée, 2=undergraduate, 3=master's. ^eLength of working life in current institution was measured in 7-year intervals, coded as 1=less than 5 years to 7=more than 31.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the literature, there are many studies in which IM and QWL are handled separately and their relations with other variables are examined. However, there is no study examining the relationships between IM and QWL. Therefore, this study, which deals with the relationships between both variables, will contribute to the literature.

The results of this study showed that IM practices in sports organizations affect employees' QWL perceptions positively and strongly. Similarly, IM significantly and positively affected all sub-dimensions of QWL. The most strongly affected sub-dimension of IM was "compensation & benefits". This sub-dimension is a sub-dimension that emphasizes the importance of employees. Therefore, these results show how important IM applications are in employees' QWL perceptions. On the other hand, when demographic variables were examined, it was seen that QWL was significantly and negatively affected by the "gender" variable. Accordingly, apart from the effect of IM, men have a higher perception of QWL than women. Along with the fact that women have the feature of being a housewife, the fact that men are more in working life may have been effective. The QWL is significantly and negatively affected by the "employment status" in the second step of the analysis. This shows that employees with fixed-term contracts have less QWL perception. The lack of a full job guarantee may have been effective in the low perception of QWL of such employees.

The literature shows that QWL perception has positive effects on employees. On the one hand, high QWL perception increases job performance (Tripathy, 2017), productivity (Nayeri et al., 2011), organizational commitment (Özgenel, 2021), and organizational citizenship behavior (Sumarsi & Alimuddin, 2022) of the employees, on the other hand, it decreases absenteeism (Magnavita et al., 2022) and turnover intention (Almalki et al., 2012). These results seen in studies show that a high QWL perception of employees is very important in terms of organizational performance and service quality.

In conclusion, this study shows that effective IM practices increase the QWL perceptions of employees in organizations. Accordingly, thanks to IM applications, employees maintain a healthy balance between work and life, are more motivated to work, receive more support from managers, and are rewarded when high performance is demonstrated. Therefore, considering that employees with high QWL perception perform better (Beh & Rose, 2007), it can be suggested that organizations that want to provide better and higher quality service to their customers should have effective IM applications.

Limitations and future research

This study is limited to the employees of public institutions providing sports services. In the sports sector, there are commercial organizations as well as sports organizations that provide public services. Therefore, the results obtained in this study are not generalizable to the entire sports industry due to the limited sample size used. More research is needed in other sports organizations to determine whether the results obtained are consistent across different samples. In further studies, researchers can conduct similar studies on commercial organizations that provide sports services.

Conflict of Interest: There is no personal or financial conflict of interest within the scope of the study.

Researchers' Statement of Contribution Rate: Research Design, Data Collection, statistical analysis-, Preparation of the article, SMY.

Information on Ethics Committee Permission

Committee: Ethics Committee of Mugla Sitki Kocman University, Turkey.

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