



The Effect of Internal Service Quality on Employee Performance and the Mediation Role of Digital Transformation in This Effect

Fatih ELİBOL ¹

Abstract

The changing and increasing competitive environment brings new opportunities and risks to enterprises. Developments in the field of information and technology are among the main factors in the formation of this environment. It is an inevitable necessity for enterprises to continuously adapt to the developments in business environment, possibly through digital transformation, in order to seize opportunities and to reduce newly emergent risks. Despite all changes in the competitive environment, employees are still one of the most essential resources for enterprises today. As in the case of all business resources, it is extremely important to use the labor force effectively and efficiently and to keep employee performance at the highest level to achieve business goals and objectives in a sustainably competitive way. The internal service quality approach provides a practical analytical framework to evaluate employee performance. According to the approach, employees are considered as internal customers, the services provided to them by other employees as interior services, and the quality of these services as internal service quality. Improvement of internal service quality and ensuring digital transformation might have a positive effect on the employee performance. Hence, the purpose of this study is to examine the impact of internal service quality on employee performance and the mediating role of digital transformation in this effect. To test research hypotheses formed in the study, data were collected from 133 employees working in an import-export company by online survey method. The data were analyzed through frequency analysis, confirmatory factor analysis and regression analyses. Hayes Process plug-in of SPSS was used to test the mediation hypothesis. According to the research findings, internal service quality and digital transformation have a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Another finding of the study is that digital transformation has a partial mediating role in the effect of internal service quality on employee performance.

Keywords: Internal Service Quality, Digitalization, Digital Transformation, Personnel Resources, Employee Performance

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İç Hizmet Kalitesinin Çalışan Performansına Etkisi ve bu etkide Dijital Dönüşümün Aracılık Rolü

Fatih ELİBOL ¹

Öz

Değişen ve artan rekabet ortamı işletmeler için yeni fırsatlar ve riskleri de beraberinde getirmektedir. Bu değişimlerin başında bilişim ve teknoloji alanında meydana gelen gelişmeler sayılabilir. Ortaya çıkacak fırsatların değerlendirilmesi ve risklerin azaltılabilmesi açısından işletmelerin bu gelişmelere hızla adapte olması ve dijital dönüşümün sağlanması kaçınılmaz bir gerekliliktir. Rekabet ortamında yaşanan tüm değişimlere karşın günümüzde emek işletmeler için hâlâ en önemli kaynaklardan birisidir. İşletmenin amaç ve hedeflerine ulaşabilmesi için; -tüm işletme kaynaklarında olduğu gibi- insan kaynağının da etkin ve verimli kullanılması, çalışan performansının en üst seviyede tutulması ve sürdürülebilir rekabetin sağlanması son derece önem arz etmektedir. İç hizmet kalitesi yaklaşımı, çalışanları iç müşteri, diğer çalışanların onlara sunduğu hizmetleri iç hizmet, bu hizmetlerin kalitesini ise iç hizmet kalitesi olarak ele almaktadır. İç hizmet kalitesinin yükseltilmesinin ve dijital dönüşümün sağlanmasının çalışan performansına olumlu etkisi olacağı değerlendirilebilir. Bu çalışmanın amacı; iç hizmet kalitesinin çalışan performansına etkisini ve bu etkide dijital dönüşümün aracılık rolünü incelemektir. Araştırma kapsamında oluşturulan hipotezlerin test edilmesi amacıyla bir ithalat-ihracat firmasında çalışan 133 kişiden çevrimiçi anket yöntemiyle veri toplanmıştır. Veriler frekans analizi, doğrulayıcı faktör analizi, korelasyon ve regresyon analizleri yardımıyla incelenmiştir. Aracılık hipotezinin test edilmesi için SPSS'in Hayes Process eklentisinden yararlanılmıştır. Araştırma bulgularına göre; iç hizmet kalitesinin ve dijital dönüşümün çalışan performansına pozitif yönde ve anlamlı bir etkisinin olduğu görülmektedir. Çalışmada elde edilen diğer bir bulgu ise, iç hizmet kalitesinin çalışan performansı üzerindeki etkisinde dijital dönüşümün kısmi aracılık rolünün olduğudur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İç Hizmet Kalitesi, Dijitalleşme, Dijital Dönüşüm, Personel Kaynağı, Çalışan Performansı

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Introduction

For enterprises that strive to achieve their goals and objectives in an intensely competitive environment, finding and implementing new strategies and methods to benefit from the talents and experiences of employees, and to maximize their effectiveness and efficiency are becoming increasingly valuable (Güler & Taşlıyan, 2022, p. 1606).

In addition to intense competition, the increasing complexity and turbulence of the working environment has led to an increased interest in the employee performance by enterprises (Jnaneswar & Gayathri, 2022, p. 647). In such an atmosphere, the positive impact of employee performance in achieving business goals and objectives has become an undeniably important value (Bayır & Harmancı, 2021, p. 1695).

Employees are one of the critical resources that have a significant impact on business activities (Almachi & Erdem, 2019, p. 171). High employee performance has the potential to improve organizational performance. Thus, the competitiveness, continuity, and success of the business can increase (Tekin, 2018, p. 344). Higher employee performance can be achieved in enterprises that make their employees feel valued, regard them as internal customers with an approach similar to external customers and meet their requests and needs (Bayır & Harmancı, 2021, p. 1690). At this point, the internal service quality approach can be considered as an effective approach to increase employee performance. According to the approach, business departments and their employees are considered service providers, other business departments and employees who benefit from these services are considered internal customers and the provided services are considered internal services (Stauss, 1995, p. 62).

Another important factor in terms of sustainable competition is the ability of an enterprise to adapt to the changes occurring in their environment. Today, especially the developments in communication technologies and rapid changes in information technologies force enterprises and the workforce to diverge from conventional ways of doing business (Çark, 2021, p. 1684; Abay Çelik, 2023, p. 1001). Digital transformation can be defined as the ability of enterprises to keep up with these developing and changing communication and information technologies and to adapt and make use of them in all their processes (Altuntaş, 2018, p. 8). Digital transformation provides enterprises with the opportunity to change or redesign their business and operational processes (Biyani, Biyani & Işıklı, 2022, p. 3329). Notwithstanding, it can also provide many employee-related benefits such as recruitment, training, talent management, flexible working, effective use of time, ultimately employee harmony, satisfaction, and work engagement. (Calp & Doğan, 2019, p. 393; Ertaş, 2022, p. 19; Bayarçelik, 2020, p. 65).

Based on the assumption that employees who are satisfied with internal service quality perform better, the present study investigates whether internal service quality can be used as a tool to increase employee performance. Moreover, considering the positive impact digital transformation has on businesses in general, and employees in particular, digital transformation carries potential to impact internal service quality and employee performance positively. From this point of view, the empirical part of the study analyzes the effect of digital transformation and internal service quality on employee performance and the mediating role of digital transformation in the effect of internal service quality on employee performance. To the best of my knowledge, these three interrelated variables have not been examined together in previous studies. Thus, it is believed that the present

study contributes to the extant literature by offering an originally different view on the subject matter.

In the first section of the study, employee performance, internal service quality and digital transformation are discussed through the established literature. In the second section, possible interactions between variables are examined, the research hypotheses are formed, and the utilized model is introduced. The third section presents the methodology, in which information about the studied population and the sample are described and the specific scales employed in the study are provided. The fourth section presents the findings, and the last section concludes with recommendations.

Literature Review

Employee Performance

Although achieving business objectives and sustainable competition depend on various factors, the ability to increase organizational effectiveness and efficiency is amongst the most important. Achieving organizational effectiveness and efficiency is closely related to ensuring a performance level where employees can demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and experience at the highest level (Zengin & Boran, 2019, p. 723; Taşhyan & Hırlak, 2016, p. 95). Performance can be defined as the degree of achievement of a targeted goal, or the level of effort, labor and diligence spent towards achieving this goal (Gençel, Akçakanat & Dinç, 2020, p. 2020; Tutar & Altınöz, 2010, p. 201; Turğut & Songur, 2022, p. 396). In accordance, Campbell, McHenry, and Wise (1990, p. 314) define performance as observable actions performed by employees that are important for achieving business goals. Therefore, the individual performance is of vital importance for both employees and the organizations (Sonnentag, Volmer & Spsychala, 2008, p. 427).

Employee performance can be evaluated by comparing expected versus achieved outcomes from employees, taking into account employee qualification and corresponding characteristics and requirements of the undertaken jobs and tasks (Işığışık, 2008, p. 2). Employee performance is said to be positive if the achieved outcomes equal to or exceed the expected outcomes (Gençel et al., 2020, p. 2020).

Numerous factors play role in affecting employee performance positively or negatively. By taken into account these factors such as job suitability, wage, working hours, the meaningfulness of the job for the employee, management style, and in-house communication, the results of performance evaluation can lead to new business decisions such as wage increase, performance rewards, promotion, and in-service training (Dikbaş & Büyükbeşe, 2020, p. 1214; Dikbaş & Özgeldi, 2020, p. 15).

Employee performance can be defined as the amount of time and effort spent by an employee to satisfy her wishes and needs by undertaking duties and responsibilities in an enterprise (Dikbaş & Büyükbeşe, 2020, p. 1214). Based on this definition, employees are expected to show higher performance to the extent that they are satisfied with their working conditions, which include elements such as wage, promotion, reward-and-punishment system, social opportunities provided, and the communication method established within the enterprise (Bayır & Harmancı, 2021, p. 1695).

Internal Service Quality

Today, service quality plays a critical role in terms of business success in competitive conditions (Frost & Kumar, 2000, p. 358). For this reason, enterprises aiming to produce higher quality products for their external customers develop continuous improvement programs. However, the quality of services provided by all internal suppliers to the internal customers, whether they interact with external customers or not, is also very important (Stanley & Wisner, 1998, p. 50).

All business employees who operate to meet customer demands and needs can be defined as internal customers. Employees who receive a certain product or service from previous units or employees while doing their tasks are said to become internal customer. Similarly, employees who deliver a certain product or service to the next unit or employee is said to become internal suppliers (Bulunmaz & Serhateri, 2019, p. 52). Thus, an employee can be both an internal customer and an internal supplier at the same time. This situation can sometimes work vice versa among the employees. Depending on the tasks they fulfill, an employee may be an internal customer of another employee, for whom they are an internal supplier (Bouranta, Chitiris & Paravantis, 2009, p. 276).

In general terms, internal service quality can be defined as the quality of services provided to internal customers (Skarpeta, Koemtzi & Aidonis, 2020, p. 271). Satisfying the demands and needs of external customers and achieving a high level of service quality is closely related to meeting the demands and needs of employees who are seen as internal customers (Şenol & Öngel, 2019, p. 448). In other words, the quality of services provided by employees to external customers is directly proportional to the quality of services they receive as internal customers (Seyhan, 2021, p. 415).

Voss, Calantone and Keller (2005, p. 162-163) list internal service processes as simple standard operations, procedures and activities that support frontline business functions that interact with customers. From a broader perspective, internal services are the services provided by different employees and departments within the organization to other employees and departments. In this respect, internal services cover a wide range of heterogeneous services. In addition to the simple services such as cleaning and maintenance, quite complex service packages like human resources management or marketing activities can also be considered within the scope of internal services (Stauss, 1995, p. 65).

Ensuring the satisfaction of internal customers has the potential to increase their productivity (Pekmezci, Demireli & Batman, 2008, p. 4). Satisfaction of internal customers is, however, directly affected by the internal service quality offered to them (Seyhan, 2021, p. 414). Thus, maintaining high level of internal service quality within a business might have a positive effect on customer satisfaction through increased employee performance. In other words, low service quality offered to internal customers supposedly has a negative effect on the level of service quality offered to external customers. Internal service quality can be considered as a process that emerges with the interaction between management and employees in all sub-departments, and therefore relates to the whole organization. In this process, it is important to understand and fulfil the needs and requests of the employees by providing open and effective communication, and to find solutions upon identification of problems (Demirel, 2009, p. 271; Voss et al., 2005, p. 163).

In the provision of internal service quality, it can be said that factors such as coordination, work and employee harmony, role ambiguity and complexity, training opportunities, authority-responsibility, lack of control, lack of technology, and working style are determinant factors along with employee skills, qualifications, education level, teamwork, cooperation, and team spirit (Demirel, 2009, p. 271). Hallowell, Schlesinger and Zornitsky (1996, p. 23) list the components of internal service quality as tools, principles and procedures, teamwork, management support, goal setting, effective training, communication, rewarding and appreciation.

Digital Transformation

Rapid changes in information and communication technologies and the resulting digitalization occurred in society and enterprises have been the subject of many scientific studies since the early 21st century (Çark, 2021, p. 1685). As business environment has undergone changes along with technological developments, enterprises have become more concerned about digital transformation. Digital transformation for enterprises can be defined as keeping up with the developing digital technologies and adapting them in all business processes (Altuntaş, 2018, p. 8). The main purpose of digital transformation is to provide more effective and efficient service for maintaining customer satisfaction through the implementation of changes in internal business processes and technology elements by making use of developing information and communication technologies (Yankın, 2019, p. 30).

Nowadays, digital transformation stands out as an important approach that cannot be ignored by enterprises regardless of their size (Özmen, Eriş & Özer, 2022, p. 208). In today's world, enterprises that can accomplish the needed digital transformation are expected to make progress, while those who cannot are expected to fall behind in the competition (Sağlam, 2021, p. 398; Çark, 2021, p. 1684). Rapid advancement of innovative technologies such as network technologies, mobile technology, social media applications, internet of things, big data, virtual reality, and data analytics lead to the emergence of new business models. This, in turn, forces enterprises to make and implement more flexible and faster decisions in terms of digital transformation (Şener, Gökalp & Eren, 2022, p. 18; Klein, 2020a, p. 24-25).

Enterprises can increase productivity and gain cost advantages through digital transformation (Nalbantoğlu, 2021, p. 194). Digital technologies affect all business processes from decision-making mechanisms to human resources, from sales and marketing to customer relations, from procurement to production and design processes, from services provided to customers to organization, and from finance to cost structures. Thus, for enterprises who can keep up with the rapidly changing technological environment, digital transformation provides with the opportunity to compete by offering value-added products through changing the way enterprises conduct business (Kumru & Kasimoğlu, 2022, p. 139-141; Çark, 2020, p. 1250). The virtual store environment in marketing and the use of robot technology in production can both be considered examples of digital transformation (Klein, 2020b, p. 998).

It is an important requirement for enterprises to look at digital transformation from a holistic perspective. Only this way, it will be possible to talk about a transformation, in which all processes of the enterprise will have a fast and intelligent functioning, data produced in all units can be stored in databases and useful information interpreted in the

decision-making processes of managers can be presented as reports. This transformation can also be seen as a transformation that occurs in the structural functioning and organizational culture of the enterprise (Çark, 2020, p. 1250). Thus, employees are most probably be exposed to changes due to such a holistic transformation occurring in all business processes. This is because digital transformation of a business also means alteration of the workplace towards a digital one (Yankın, 2019, p. 13). At this point, it can be argued that personnel management is one of the business functions that is affected by digital transformation the most. When the impact of digital transformation on human resources management is considered, it is seen that many different innovations such as the use of chatbots, mobile applications, online performance measurement, the use of QR codes in job applications, the use of artificial intelligence robots in interviews and the digitalization of personnel affairs have found significant application ground in businesses (Kırılmaz, 2020, p. 189). Therefore, prioritization of the wishes, expectations and needs of the employees in all business functions can positively affect employee performance while undergoing digital transformation.

Interactions Between Variables and Research Hypotheses

There are many studies addressing employee performance in the literature. Employee performance has been found to be affected by job commitment (Tims, Bakker & Derks, 2015), job insecurity (Zengin & Boran, 2019), transformational leadership (Kara & Kaya, 2020), workplace courtesy (Çiçek & Çiçek 2020), quality perception, psychological well-being, passion for work (Arıkan & Çankır, 2019; Çankır & Çelik, 2018), psychological comfort (Gençel et al., 2020), psychological climate (Güler & Taşlıyan, 2022), presenteeism and work stress (Gülina & Günay, 2020), organizational stress (Tonbul & Aykanat, 2019), authentic leadership (Dikbaş & Büyükbeşe, 2020), innovation (Turğut & Songur, 2022), human resource management practices (Bayır & Harmancı, 2021), burnout syndrome and organizational silence (Doğan & Kır, 2018), leader-member interaction (Tekin, 2018), management attitude and commitment (Almachi & Erdem, 2019).

When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are studies on the relationship between internal service quality and different variables such as internal psycho-social working environment (Edvardsson, Larsson & Setterlind, 1997), job satisfaction (Osahon & Kingsley, 2016), and internal customer satisfaction (Prakash & Srivastava, 2019). When the studies on the effect of internal service quality on employee performance are examined, Ajam, Bai and Seyedabad (2015) found that internal service quality has a positive effect on job satisfaction. According to the findings of Bellou and Andronikidis (2008), internal service quality increases the probability of employees to exhibit higher performance. Qin-Nan (2009) investigated the relationship between internal service quality, job satisfaction and employee performance in insurance companies in Taiwan and found that there is a significantly positive relationship between internal service quality and employee job satisfaction and performance. According to the findings of Singh's (2016) study on the effect of internal service quality on employee performance in police organizations, internal service quality has a significantly positive effect on employee performance. Similar to these findings, Seyhan (2021), in his study conducted in enterprises in the manufacturing sector, concluded that internal service quality has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. When the findings of the previous studies are considered, it is seen that internal service quality has positive effects not only on employee performance but also on different variables such as organizational

belonging, which may also have positive effects on employee performance. Based on these findings, the first hypothesis of the study was formed as H1 below.

H1: Internal service quality has a significant and positive effect on employee performance.

When research on digital transformation is considered, there are various studies examining the impact of digital transformation on variables such as digital HRM practices (Kırılmaz, 2020; Kanat & Ünnü, 2022), employee motivation (Demirel, 2021), brand value of institutions (Altuntaş, 2018), and organizational culture (Nalbantoğlu, 2021). Demirel (2021) revealed in his study that digital transformation has a significant and positive effect on employee motivation. Regarding digital transformation and employee performance, Biyan et al. (2022) determined that web-based software, one of the digital transformation tools, has a significantly positive effect on employee performance. Uz Kurt, Atan and Develi (2022), Alobidyeen, Al-Edainat, Al-Shabatat and Al-Shabatat (2022) and Ibrahim (2022) also found that digital transformation has a significantly positive effect on employee performance. Based on the input previous studies provide, the second and third hypotheses of the present study were formed as H2 and H3 below.

H2: Digital transformation has a significant and positive effect on employee performance.

H3: Digital transformation has a mediating role in the effect of internal service quality on employee performance.

The research model determined to test the validity of these hypotheses is shown in Figure 1.

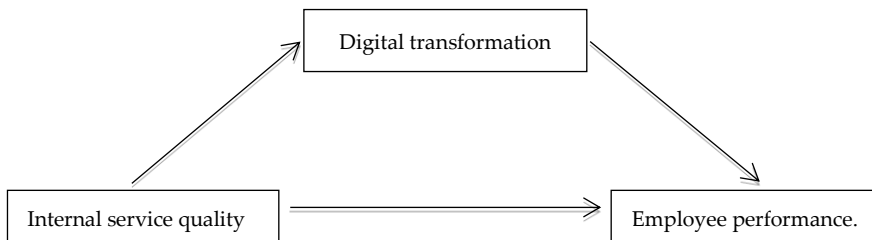


Figure 1: Research Model

Methodology

Sample and Data Collection

The population approached in data collection process of the present research consists of 180 people working in an international trade company whose main operations are import and export of goods and services. The company operates in a wide range of activities due to the fact that it is also a distributor of various brands. For these reasons, the sample surveyed in the company, where there are employees with different qualifications in different departments such as purchasing, marketing and logistics, could provide with the opportunity to appropriately analyze interactions between the interested variables.

It is often not possible to reach the entire population related to the research subject, and thus certain sampling methods are needed to appropriately extract the population information (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2018, p. 125). In this research, accidental sampling method, which is one of the non-probability sampling techniques, was used. In accidental sampling method, the researcher collects data from the participants he can reach the

easiest until he reaches the sufficient sample size (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2018, p. 132). Between 01.04.2023 and 15.05.2023, 133 of 180 employees completed the questionnaire. The formula in Gürbüz & Şahin's (2018, p. 129) study was used to determine whether the sample size represents the population. Accordingly, the sample group of 123 people is sufficient to represent the research population with a 95% confidence interval and 5% margin of error.

N: Size of the population

n: Sample size

t= Table z value corresponding to confidence level (1.96 for 0.05)

s= Estimated standard deviation for the population

d= Acceptable deviation tolerance

$$n_0 = \frac{t^2 \times s^2}{d^2} \quad n_0 = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5^2}{0.05^2} = 384.16$$

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1 + n_0/N} \quad n = \frac{384.16}{1 + 384.16/180} = 122.56$$

Scales

The first part of the survey consists of five questions that ask for the demographic characteristics of the participants. In the second part, the Employee Performance Scale consisting of sixteen items and two dimensions developed by Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison and Sowa (1986) and validity and reliability study conducted by Kurt (2013) were used to measure the performance of employees. To measure internal service quality, the one-dimensional Internal Service Quality Scale consisting of eight items developed by Umamaheswari (2014) and validity and reliability study conducted by Seyhan (2021) were used. To measure digital transformation, the Digital Transformation Scale consisting of twelve items and a single dimension developed by Nadeem, Abedin, Cerpa and Chew (2018) and validity and reliability study by Sağlam (2021) were used. All scales were 5-point Likert type (1=strongly disagree/5=strongly agree).

Results

Results of Reliability and Validity Analysis for the Scales

The reliability of the scales used in the research was evaluated by utilizing Cronbach's Alpha (α) value. This measurement is a method used to observe the reliability of internal consistency of the scales. The values related to the reliability tests are given in Table 1. According to the test results, the scales can be considered reliable (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2018, p. 157-158).

Table 1: Reliability Analysis Results of the Scales

Scales	Count of items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Internal service quality	8	0.893
Employee performance	16	0.943
Digital transformation	12	0.957

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied to test the construct validity of the scales. According to the CFA results, modifications were made between items 4 and 5 of the internal service quality scale, between items 1 and 2, and, 4 and 5 of the employee performance scale and between items 11 and 12 of the digital transformation scale. Item 15 of the employee performance scale and items 9 and 10 of the digital transformation scale were removed from the analysis due to high standardized residual covariance. Goodness of fit values obtained as a result of the modifications and acceptable and good fit values are given in Table 2. Accordingly, it is seen that the goodness of fit values of final models are at good fit or acceptable fit levels.

Table 2: Good / Acceptable Fit Values and Fit Values Obtained

Fit measure	Good Fit	Acceptable Fit	Fit Values Obtained		
			Internal service quality	Employee performance	Digital transformation
χ^2/sd	$\chi^2/df \leq 3$	$3 < \chi^2/df \leq 5$	1.393	1.873	1.770
RMSEA	$RMSEA \leq 0.05$	$0.05 < RMSEA \leq 0.08$	0.055	0.080	0.076
NFI	$0.95 \leq NFI < 1.00$	$0.90 \leq NFI < 0.95$	0.950	0.912	0.948
CFI	$0.97 \leq CFI < 1.00$	$0.95 \leq CFI < 0.97$	0.985	0.956	0.976
GFI	$0.90 \leq GFI < 1.00$	$0.85 \leq GFI < 0.90$	0.951	0.857	0.916

Source: Karagöz, 2019, p. 1043

Skewness and kurtosis values were used to examine whether the data were normally distributed. Accordingly, the skewness and kurtosis values of the data were calculated as -0.500 and 0.175 for internal service quality, -0.006 and 1.025 for employee performance, and -0.704 and 1.747 for digital transformation. It is seen that there are different views on acceptable skewness and kurtosis values in the literature (Kılıç & Bayraktar, 2021, p. 3036). According to George and Mallery (2010, p. 115), a skewness and kurtosis value between ± 2.0 is acceptable. Accordingly, it is assumed that the data obtained in the study are normally distributed.

Findings on Demographic Characteristics

The findings regarding the demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 3. Accordingly, most of the participants were married, university graduates and male. Nearly half of the participants were in the 26-35 year old age range and most of the participants belonged to the marketing department.

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Gender	n	%	Marital status	n	%
Female	16	12.0	Married	102	76.7
Male	117	88.0	Single	31	23.3
Total	133	100	Total	133	100
Education level	n	%	Age	n	%
Primary/middle school	6	4.5	18-25	6	4.5
High school	30	2.6	26-35	65	48.9
Vocational school/ Bachelor's degree	82	61.7	36-45	47	35.3
Master's degree	15	1.3	46-55	15	11.3
Total	133	100	Total	133	100
Department	n	%			
Support	17	12.8			

Logistics	19	14.3
Accounting/Finance	13	9.8
Marketing	54	40,6
Purchasing	13	9.8
Management	11	8.3
Other	5	4.5
Total	133	100.0

Results Related to Regression Analysis

To determine whether Digital Transformation (DT) has a mediating effect on the relationship between Internal Service Quality (ISQ) and Employee Performance (EP), Hayes Process plug-in of SPSS and Model 4 specified in Hayes (2018, p. 585) were used. Excluding DT from the model, the initial findings related to the effect of ISQ on EP are given in Table 5. According to the findings, ISQ has a significant effect on EP ($p=0.000$). The regression equation between the variables was determined as $EP = 2.376 + 0.479ISQ$. In other words, an increase of 1 point in ISQ leads to a significant increase of 0.479 in EP. Beta coefficient (β) was found as 0.577. This finding shows that there is a positive relationship between ISQ and EP. Furthermore, ISQ explains 33.3% ($\beta^2=0.3330$) of the variance in EP. According to this finding, the hypothesis "H1: internal service quality positively and significantly affects employee performance" is accepted.

Table 5: The Effect of ISQ on EP Before DT Variable is Included in the Model

OUTCOME VARIABLE:							
EP							
Model Summary							
	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
Model	0.5770	0.3330	0.2333	65.3904	1.0000	131.0000	0.0000
Model							
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
constant	2,3768	0,2218	10,7170	0,0000	1,938	2,8155	
ISQ	0.4795	0.0593	8.0864	0.0000	0.3622	0.5968	
Standardized coefficients							
	coeff						
ISQ	0.5770						

To analyze whether DT mediates the relationship between ISQ and EP, the findings related to the effect of ISQ on DT and the findings related to the effect of ISQ and DT on EP were analyzed. For the mediation effect to exist, when DT is included in the model, ISQ should have a significant effect on DT, DT should have a significant effect on EP, and the effect of ISQ on EP should disappear or decrease (Baron & Kenny, 1986, P. 1176).

When the findings presented in Table 6 are examined, the effect of ISQ on DT is significant ($p=0.0000$). The regression equation between the variables was determined as $DT=1.5260+0.6334ISQ$. An increase of 1 point in ISQ leads to an increase of 0.633 points in DT. Moreover, the Beta coefficient (β) is 0.6250. This finding indicates that there is a positive relationship between ISQ and DT. In addition, 39.06% ($\beta^2=0.3906$) of the variance in DT is explained by ISQ.

Another finding is that DT has a significant effect on EP ($p=0.0000$). The regression equation between the variables was found as $EP=1.7731+0.3955DT$. A 1-point increase in

DT leads to a significant increase of 0.3955 points in EP. The beta coefficient (β) was found as 0.4824. Accordingly, there is a positive relationship between DT and EP and DT explains 23.27% ($\beta^2=0.2327$) of the variance in EP.

When the findings that there is a significant relationship between ISQ and DT and between DT and EP are evaluated together, it can be said that the effect of ISQ on EP through DT is significant ($p<0.05$). On the other hand, to talk about the mediating role of DT in the relationship between ISQ and EP, the direct effect of ISQ on EP should disappear or decrease when DT is included in the model (Baron & Kenny, 1986, P. 1176). When the findings given in Table 6 are analyzed, it is seen that the effect of ISQ on EP is also significant after DT is included ($p=0.0009$). In this case, it is determined that DT is not a full mediator variable.

Table 6: Findings When DT is Included in the Model

OUTCOME VARIABLE: DT							
Model Summary							
	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
	0.6250	0.3906	0.3171	83.9755	1.0000	131.0000	0.0000
Model							
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
constant	1.5260	0.2585	5.9024	0.0000	1.0146	2.0375	
ISQ	0.6334	0.0691	9.1638	0.0000	0.4967	0.7702	
Standardized coefficients							
	coeff						
ISQ	0.6250						

OUTCOME VARIABLE: EP							
Model Summary							
	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
	0.6891	0.4748	0.1851	58.7605	2.0000	130.0000	0.0000
Model							
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
constant	1.7731	0.2223	7.9776	0.0000	1.3334	2.2129	
ISQ	0.2289	0.0677	3.3835	0.0009	0.0951	0.3628	
DT	0.3955	0.0668	5.9250	0.0000	0.2635	0.5276	
Standardized coefficients							
	coeff						
ISQ	0.2755						
DT	0.4824						

Table 7 demonstrates the findings on the total, direct and indirect effects of ISQ on EP. The Total Effect of ISQ on the EP before the DT variable is included in the model is presented in the first row of Table 7. Accordingly, the total effect of ISQ on EP is significant ($p=0.0000$) and the regression coefficient showing the strength of the effect is 0.4795. The Direct Effect of ISQ on EP after DT is included in the model is shown in the second row of Table 7. According to the results, the direct effect of ISQ on EP is again found to be significant ($p=0.0009$). The regression coefficient showing the strength of the effect is 0.2289. When DT is included in the model, the effect of ISQ on EP does not become insignificant, but the strength of the relationship decreases. The third row of Table 7 shows the Indirect Effect. The coefficient of 0.2506 indicates a decrease in the strength of

the effect of ISQ on EP with the inclusion of DT in the model. Considering these findings, it can be said that DT has a partial mediating role in the relationship between ISQ and EP.

Table 7: Findings on the Total, Direct and Indirect Effects of ISQ on EP

Total effect of ISQ on EP							
	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c_cs
	0.4795	0.0593	8.0864	0.0000	0.3622	0.5968	0.5770
Direct effect of ISQ on EP							
	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_cs
	0.2289	0.0677	3.3835	0.0009	0.0951	0.3628	0.2755
Indirect effect(s) of ISQ on EP:							
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI			
DT	0.2506	0.0916	0.0899	0.4436			
Completely standardized indirect effect(s) of ISQ on EP:							
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI			
DT	0.3015	0.0908	0.1356	0.4876			

Conclusion

Despite all technological developments, the human element still maintains its important place as one of the most vital production resources and as the most important part of all business functions and processes. For this reason, business success in an intensely competitive environment is only possible with the presence of employees who perform at high levels. Various factors affecting employee performance can be mentioned. To increase employee performance, organizations can make use of many tools such as rewards, bonuses and in-service training that increase employee motivation. In addition to such tools, increasing internal service quality can be considered as another effective tool in increasing employee performance. According to the internal service quality approach, employees are sometimes internal customers and sometimes internal suppliers depending on the task they perform. At this point, internal service quality can be defined as the quality of services provided by internal suppliers to the internal customers. Based on this understanding, the way to offer quality products to external customers is through maintaining quality service to internal customers. Furthermore, the rapid advancements in technology, especially in information and communication, brings fundamental, and sometimes inevitable, changes to enterprises. For these reasons, enterprises should be able to closely follow and adapt to these changes. This is because enterprises can gain various advantages that they will reflect on the competitive field by using information and communication technologies correctly and effectively in business processes. Thus, digital transformation should be considered as one of the most important issues that cannot be ignored by enterprises. Many innovations such as network technologies, mobile technologies, social media applications, big data, and data analytics, which can be handled within the concept of digital transformation, also create important opportunities to increase the performance of employees.

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of internal service quality and digital transformation on employee performance and whether digital transformation has a mediating role in the effect of internal service quality on employee performance. For this purpose, data were obtained from an import-export company operating in the field of international trade.

The first of the research findings is that internal service quality has a significant and positive effect on employee performance. Accordingly, internal service quality explains approximately one-third (33.3%) of the variance observed in employee performance. This finding is also supported by the related literature. Bellou and Andronikidis (2008), Qin-Nan (2009), Singh (2016), Seyhan (2021) and Fung, Sharma, Wu and Su (2017) similarly concluded that internal service quality has a significantly positive effect on employee performance. According to the internal service quality approach, each employee is a customer of other employees and units. In this respect, within the workflow processes, each internal customer should be provided with a level of service quality as high as possible by the predecessor employees and units. At this point, the company and unit managements are the most responsible authority for ensuring internal service quality with their positions at the top. All strategies, practices and activities that will improve the quality of the services that internal suppliers provide to their internal customers should be determined by the managers and it should be ensured that they are correctly understood and implemented by the employees. Improvement in employee understanding of high internal service quality, ensuring teamwork among employees and units, finding the necessary information and equipment support to provide better internal service, determining procedures and policies, and developing training programs can be counted among the important activities to improve internal service quality (Umamaheswari, 2014, p. 718).

Another finding of the study is that digital transformation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Accordingly, digital transformation explains 23.2% of the variance observed in employee performance among the surveyed respondents. When the related literature is considered, it is seen that there are studies that overlap with the present findings. While Biyan et al. (2022) determined that web-based software, which is one of the digital transformation tools, has a significant positive effect on employee performance in their study, Uzkurt et al. (2022), Alobidyeen et al. (2022) and Ibrahim (2022) revealed that digital transformation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Thus, the second finding obtained in the present research is also supported by the literature. The last finding of the study is that digital transformation has a limited mediating role in the effect of internal service quality on employee performance. There is no other study in the literature in which the three variables were considered together. In the direct effect of internal service quality on employee performance, it can be considered natural that digital transformation, which also has a positive effect on employee performance, has a positive mediating role. Digital transformation brings various innovations regarding employees as well as in all areas of enterprises (Altuntaş, 2018, p. 10). Through digital transformation, enterprises can collect information about their potential and existing employees in a wide range of aspects such as knowledge, skills and abilities, record, update and analyze them when necessary. In this way, it will be possible to increase the productivity and performance of employees through practices such as assigning the right employee to the right job as right personnel selection, employing employees in units suitable for them, protecting their personal rights, effective in-service training and job adaptation, fair rewarding with accurate performance measurement, and providing the chance for promotion (Calp & Doğan, 2019, p. 397; Bayarçelik, 2020, p. 66; Ertaş, 2022, p. 51). In addition, with the implementation of digital transformation in all processes of the enterprise, it can be ensured that the standard processes, procedures, and activities that support the business functions between internal

suppliers and internal customers are designed correctly. Also with improved coordination, the negativities that the internal customers experience can be eliminated and higher internal service quality and, therefore, higher employee performance can be achieved.

The fact that the surveyed participants consist of employees working in an enterprise operating in only one sector can be considered as the most important constraint of the present research. This makes it difficult to generalize the research findings for other sectors. For this reason, future studies that conduct research with employees of companies operating in different sectors will contribute to the literature.

The small size of the research population can possibly be regarded as another limitation as number of company employees were limited. For this reason, it can be suggested that future studies should be conducted with larger sample sizes.

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