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QUALITY, PERFORMANCE, EXCELLENCE: THE HARMONIOUS ORGANIZATIONAL TRIAD

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Abstract. *The main purpose of this paper is to introduce a conceptual model of the triad Quality - Performance - Excellence (QPE); call it the Harmonious Organizational Triad. The method is qualitative, based on literature survey (secondary research), analyzing the interdependencies between these pairs of concepts (quality-performance, quality-excellence, and performance-excellence) within organizations. In this regard, an analysis of the existing literature on the concepts of quality, performance and excellence was carried out, highlighting relevant theories, models, and approaches to studying these concepts. Several studies exploring the interactions between quality and performance, quality and excellence, and performance and excellence were identified. The objective was to identify how each two concepts (i.e., quality and performance; quality and excellence; performance and excellence) are interconnected in an organizational context. Based on the literature analysis and the relationships identified between the concepts, a conceptual triadic model (QPE Triad) was developed. The QPE Triad illustrates the connections between the three concepts and their interdependencies. The implications are important for both scholars and practitioners – managers of organizations active in various industries – either goods manufacturing or service providers.*

Keywords: Organizational quality, Organizational performance, Organizational excellence, Triple S holistic approach, Harmonious organizational QPE triad

Introduction

A triad is a huge denominator that is employed in many fields, ranging from science to general knowledge. As a symbolic model, the triad consists of three interconnected elements that are mental constructs rather than mere sets of three items. Triad-type models must be synthetic and emphasize the fundamental qualities of each component as well as any pertinent linkages between them. They are systemic since the three components of the triad are components of the same system. In addition, a triadic model ought to be synergistic—that is, it ought to highlight the greater worth of the examined triad's elements and their combined qualities and potential than the three isolated elements alone, or even as three distinct pairs of two-by-two elements.

By performing a two-by-two analysis, the triad analysis seeks to better grasp a more complicated notion that is based on three lead-concepts or elements (typically defined by better-known relationships, ideally quantitative, cause-effect types). According to Scarlat (2017), the triple S holistic approach gives the triadic models a great deal of investigative potential. As such, they serve as superior research instruments for theorists as well as decision-making assistance for managers, business owners, and legislators (Scarlat, 2021). In contrast to formal triadic models, which do not conform, the author proposes referring to triadic models that meet the triple S criterion

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as essential triadic models. Such examples of ‘essential triadic models’ are the product management-marketing triad (Scarlat, 2017), the technopreneurship and technowledgepreneurship triads (Scarlat, 2014; 2021, 37–38).

Thus, this research examines the connections among quality, performance, and excellence (QPE), primarily conceptually and from an organizational perspective, examining two-by-two interrelationships using a triple S holistic approach. The authors agree to refer to it as the QPE harmonic triad at this stage of the study for reasons that will be elaborated upon later.

Literature review

The concept of excellence-oriented leadership is often associated with the idea that leaders must provide a clear vision and define high standards for performance and quality within the organization. This type of leadership focuses on encouraging and guiding teams to achieve levels of excellence in a consistent and sustainable manner, even during complex or difficult times.

Authors such as Jim Collins (2009) and Stephen Covey (2020) emphasize the importance of strong leadership in achieving excellence. Collins (2009) points out that excellence-oriented leaders are those who are not satisfied with just good performance, but constantly seek to achieve outstanding results, and for this, they promote a culture of excellence throughout the organization. In difficult or complex situations, excellence-oriented leaders remain the team's anchors. They manage to inspire and mobilize team members to achieve goals despite challenges. Assumes responsibility for identifying growth opportunities and facilitating an environment that supports the professional and personal growth of a team member. These leaders promote trust, open communication, and assurances that organizational values are shared and lived by every team member. They support efforts for innovation and encourage critical and creative thinking to find solutions in uncertain times. By adopting this leadership style, leaders can help teams overcome difficulties and focus on achieving excellence in performance and quality, turning challenges into opportunities to grow and move forward.

When it comes to ***quality***, this concept is often described as a relative concept (Khalfan et al., 2020). The Routledge Dictionary of Business Management (Statt, 2004) presents the term quality as “how good or bad a product is at performing its function and meeting the needs of its users”. According to ISO 9000:2015(en) Quality management systems — Fundamentals and Vocabula (International Organisation of Standardization, 2015), quality is the extent to which an object's intrinsic qualities satisfy requirements. Oxford Business English Dictionary for learners of English (Parkinson, 2005) presents the term of quality like “the standard of something when it is compared to other things like it; how good or bad something is” or “a high standard”. Quality is the "characteristic or standard measure of excellence," according to the Dictionary of Business and Economic Terms (Friedman, 2012). It is also "a measure of the degree to which thing meets a standard." According to the needs and expectations of the client, quality is defined by what the recipient (or customer) deems acceptable. Quality, according to Reeves & Bednar (1994), is characterized by anticipating the demands of the client, offering the necessary instrument for excellence and priority, and adhering to characteristics.

However, according to Statt (2004) in the Routledge Dictionary of Business Management, performance is defined as "the way a job or task is done by an individual, a group, or an organization." The Oxford Business English Dictionary for Learners of English (Parkinson, 2005) defines high performance as "someone or something that can go very fast or do complicated things," while "performance" is defined as "how far a company or an investment makes a profit; how well or badly someone does something."

Excellence is the state of being exceptionally good, according to the Oxford Business English Dictionary for Learners of English (Parkinson, 2005). To consistently provide customers with a high degree of value, organizational excellence is predicated on reaching the greatest levels of performance, quality, and continuous improvement (Goetsch & Davis, 2016). Organizational excellence, according to Attafar et al. (2012), is a strategy that aids businesses in achieving excellence by boosting growth and their ability to draw in and keep customers. The value that businesses offer to clients and other stakeholders is referred to as an indicator of organizational effectiveness. On the other hand, according to Moullin (2007), organizational excellence is defined as exhibiting model behavior when managing groups and delivering benefits to customers and other stakeholders. Moreover, organizational excellence is defined by the 1999 EFQM guidelines (EFQM, 1999) as the organization's exceptional practice in achieving nine key concepts: result orientation, leadership and consistency of purpose, people development and involvement, innovation and improvement, management by process and facts, continuous learning, partnership development and social responsibility, and customer focus.

In academic areas, describing a research gap frequently requires a nuanced approach, particularly when examining related topics like excellence, performance, and quality. Even though these terms have been studied separately or in pairs in several studies, the conclusions that emerge vary according to the particular focus of the investigation. A thorough and definitive summary of the correlations between these variables is still lacking in the body of current knowledge.

Having identified this gap, the current paper explores the triad of these three essential ideas to close it. Through combining these interactions, this research aims to provide a cohesive model that captures their complex interactions and their dependencies. This approach seeks to bridge the existing knowledge divide and contribute to a more holistic understanding of the dynamics between excellence, performance, and quality.

Methodology

This study aims to contribute to a larger-scale research project that is currently underway with the goal of creating and putting out a conceptual model that revolves around the QPE triad (Quality, Performance, and Excellence). Quality-performance, quality-excellence, and performance-excellence are the three pairs of concepts that this study seeks to examine the relationships between. It also evaluates how closely the QPE triadic model complies with the triple S method, establishing it as a crucial triadic model.

This study uses qualitative methodology and mostly relies on secondary research techniques, especially primary literature surveys. The organizational viewpoint serves as the main framework for the conceptual model. The study starts with a thorough examination of the body of literature that has already been written about excellence, performance, and quality. It looks at relevant theories, models, and methods related to these concepts. Additionally, the analysis points to other studies that examined the relationships between excellence and performance, performance and excellence, and quality and performance in various organizational situations. The authors examine these combinations to find connections between the triad's components and examine how they behave inside different organizational structures. This study concludes with the creation of a harmonious triadic model: Quality, Performance, and Excellence (QPE), which is based on the relationships between these concepts and the literature review. It should be noted that this study is only a small part of a larger research project that aims to clarify the functions and importance of the QPE triad in organizational dynamics.

Results and discussions

Performance – Quality relationship

While quantitative financial metrics were once the primary means of assessing organizational performance, qualitative aspects of performance measurement have gradually gained more attention in recent times (Glavan & Bosilj Vukšić, 2017). The concept of total quality management (TQM), which is employed by many businesses to enhance their operations, procedures, or even performance to increase both internal and external efficiency, has started to be linked to a company's performance. Furthermore, Japanese businesses that prioritize performance management are acknowledged for their exceptional productivity and accomplishments in quality standards (Star, et al., 2016). These kinds of outcomes could be explained by the fact that when a business adopts quality procedures, it engages its staff members in the growth of the company. As a result, employees can actively contribute to raising organizational performance (Dawabsheh et al, 2019).

Khalfan et al. (2020) assert that using quality management principles is an essential tactic for improving performance. Many companies are using the TQM strategy and quality efforts to gain a sustainable competitive advantage (Alneyadi, 2023) and enhanced corporate performance (Talib et al., 2010). Deming's theories state that improving process management can raise a project's performance and improve quality (Shieh & Wu, 2002). Thus, Figure 1 might be used to illustrate the two concepts if a graphic depiction was needed.

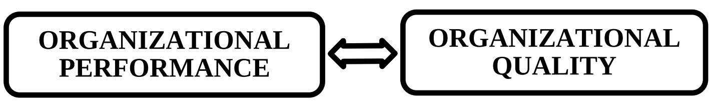

Figure 1. Organizational performance – Organizational quality relationship

Source: Authors' own research

Performance and quality share the goal of providing goods and services that satisfy the requirements and expectations of their respective clientele. The two ideas are very distinct from one another, though, with performance stressing how well a good or service fulfills its intended purpose and quality emphasizing adherence to laws and regulations. Furthermore, quality is concerned with assessing the inherent attributes of the good or service (such as its lack of flaws), whereas organizational performance is about how well an organization operates in a certain situation or setting. Consequently, the literature review indicates that organizational performance and quality are distinct ideas, with performance pertaining more to job completion and goal achievement than quality does to following guidelines and directives. The two concepts can be shown to have a cause-and-effect relationship, whereby high performance contributes to improved quality. The two ideas are related, but they are not always covariates because good performance can be achieved at a quality that is acceptable.

Quality – Excellence relationship

Several studies published in the past few decades have demonstrated the close relationship between organizational excellence and quality. For instance, quality practices are important to manufacturing organizations' success, according to Sharma and Kodali (2008), particularly when quality helps them gain a competitive advantage (ul Hassan et al, 2012).

Porter and Tanner (2004) point out that attaining and upholding the highest performance standards and guaranteeing quality at the highest level are prerequisites for organizational excellence, with customer perception of quality being directly linked to profitability and superior financial performance. Organizational excellence can be attained by businesses that emphasize the quality of their services, goods, and procedures while also making sure that total quality is continuously improved. According to Goetsch and Davis (2016), quality plays an important role in providing customers with a superior value, which in turn guarantees the attainment of a higher degree of long-term performance.

Thus, it may be concluded that both excellence and quality entail an ongoing quest for better ways to deliver goods and services, with the goal of outperforming conventions or benchmarks. While excellence surpasses these requirements and standards by innovating and reaching greater levels in every aspect, quality aims to meet or exceed demands and standards. Excellence may require higher standards of quality, but it may also require constant innovation and progress to surpass them. Figure 2 can be used to illustrate the relationship between organizational excellence and quality.

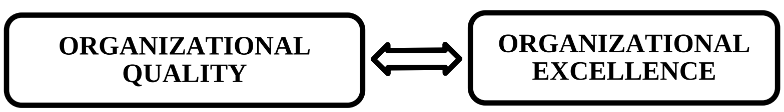

Figure 2. Organizational quality – Organizational excellence relationship

Source: Authors' own research

Quality can serve as the foundation for excellence, but quality alone is not enough for excellence. If products or services don't follow laws and regulations, achieving excellence could be difficult or even impossible. Excellence isn't always achievable with perfect quality, though. To attain excellence, it might be required to be inventive, innovative, and prepared to go above and beyond the call of duty. Quality and excellence are closely related ideas since excellence usually refers to greater quality. Therefore, attaining organizational excellence can be facilitated by exceptional quality. If the products or services are of exceptional quality, the business might have a competitive advantage. However, as excellence can also include other important concepts (such added value and innovation), the two principles are not always related. While some studies contend that establishing excellence can start with high quality, others emphasize that excellence goes beyond established norms and takes the form of innovation and creativity. This seeming contradiction reveals the depth and complexity of the connections between the two ideas and invites further research and viewpoints in the area.

Performance- Excellence relationship

Antony and Bhattacharyya (2010) concluded that there is a significant and important association between organizational excellence and performance. They demonstrate how managers may more effectively assess their companies to ensure their long-term viability and potential thanks to organizational excellence. Furthermore, Ooncharoen and Ussahawanitchakit (2008) discovered that performance is positively and significantly impacted by organizational excellence.

By increasing performance, organizations can reach the highest level of excellence and win accolades for excellence. Conversely, organizational excellence can help companies increase productivity, gain a competitive edge, and streamline their operations (Al-Dhaafri et al., 2016). According to Al-Dhaafri et al. (2014), organizational performance is positively and significantly impacted by organizational excellence.

At the international level, achieving a higher level of performance is rewarded by public recognition, which comes with the awarding of awards that certify the excellence obtained by companies. Models of business excellence are the performance evaluation criteria that must be met for these awards to be presented (Crişan, 2013). As a result, Figure 3 can be used to illustrate the relationship between organizational excellence and performance.

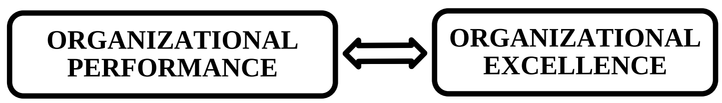

Figure 3. Organizational performance – Organizational excellence relationship

Source: Authors' own research

Considering this, the two concepts can be compared as follows: performance and excellence both refer to rising to higher positions within the company, and both can be evaluated using specific excellence and performance indicators. While performance refers to reaching objectives, excellence entails going above and beyond current standards and attaining higher levels in a variety of areas, including performance. A solid and consistent performance could help establish a reputable brand in the industry. But excellence is more than just good work. To provide value, it innovates and deviates from accepted practices. Thus, performance can be a solid foundation for excellence. The two ideas aren't always related, though, as attaining excellence can come from a variety of factors, not only performance. Exceeding expectations in multiple domains, such as performance, is vital for excellence and may necessitate a distinct and innovative methodology.

Quality – Performance - Excellence relationship (QPE triad)

Companies must not only perform effectively but also learn to adapt to all environmental changes and take care to satisfy all stakeholders to thrive in a competitive, ever-changing market (Kanji, 1998). To ensure organizational excellence, a company must not only guarantee the high level of services or goods it offers, but also guarantee the high level of all internal operations, organizational culture, and leadership style that prioritizes innovation, creativity, quality, customers, and results (EFQM, 2019).

Organizational excellence, according to Colurcio and Mele (2006), is attained by businesses that strive for organizational performance and distinguish themselves from direct competitors in the market with exceptional outcomes. Although procedures based on organizational excellence or quality can assist a company achieve organizational performance (Fonseca, 2022), quality is a

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factor that can help a firm achieve organizational excellence (Dawabsheh et al., 2019). Also, organizational excellence can be a significant mediator of the relationships between quality management practices (QMP) and sustainability (Akanmu et al., 2023). Furthermore, Dawabsheh et al.'s (2019) research examines how quality, excellence, and performance relate to one another at the American Arab University in Palestine. The study's findings show that quality practices have a big impact on both organizational excellence and performance. Furthermore, a statistically significant association was seen between performance and organizational excellence, indicating that organizational excellence functions as a mediator in the relationship between quality and organizational performance.

Thus, the authors present a conceptual model of the organizational Quality, Performance, and Excellence triad (QPE triad), which illustrates the interdependence between the three concepts, based on an analysis of all three interactions (Figure 4).

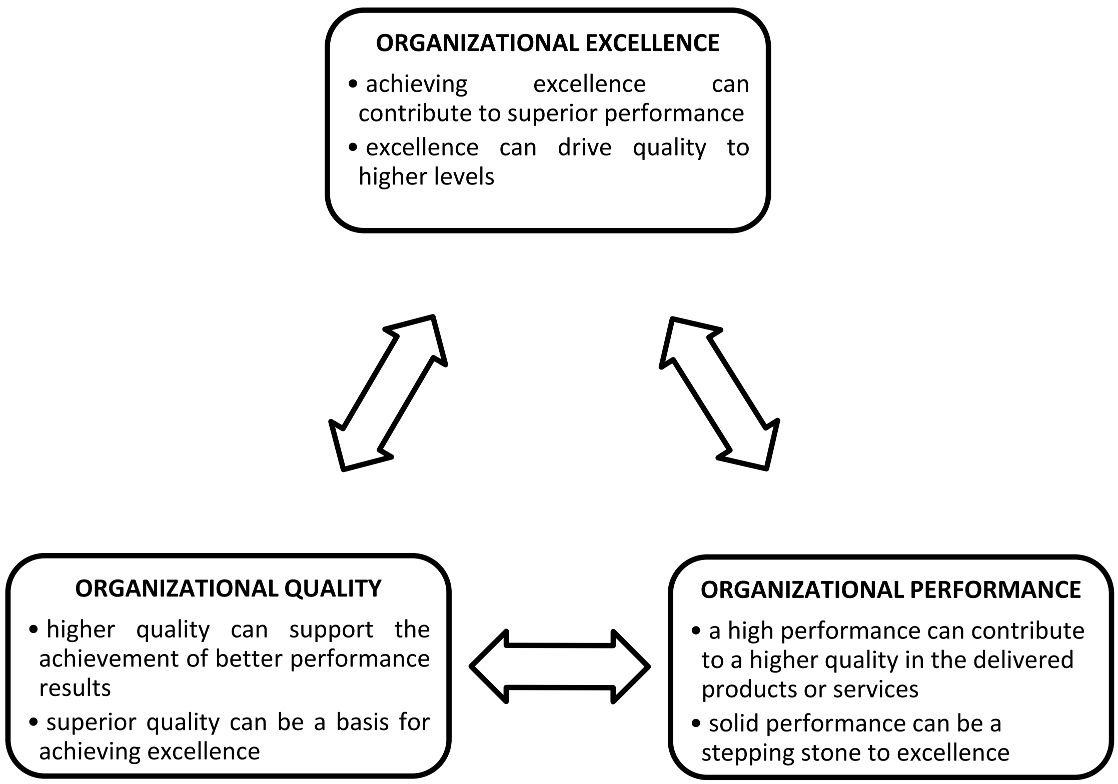

Figure 4. Quality – Performance – Excellence triad (QPE triad), and their two-by-two relationships: A base for a conceptual model

Source: Authors' own research

This proposal is made within a framework where, despite the literature's presentation of the connection between business excellence and organizational performance (Moullin, 2007), some authors contend that the two concepts have no particularly clear relationship, a claim bolstered by the findings of multiple regression and correlation studies. These findings demonstrate that while high-performing businesses tend to be exceptional, the opposite is not always true, with excellence being attained when a notable level of numerous performance indicators is attained. Accordingly, companies need to be concerned with more than just attaining performance to be considered exceptional. Excellence is not always the ultimate stage of performance (Antony et al., 2010).

This is corroborated by numerous studies that emphasize that firms aiming to attain excellence should prioritize both quality and performance improvement (Porter and Tanner, 2004). Outstanding businesses on the market differ from one another in several ways, including meeting performance goals, using resources effectively, creating added value through achieving quality, and other areas.

Conclusion

Thus, regarding the Quality - Performance - Excellence triad, quality and performance serve as the cornerstones for achieving excellence. ***Organizational performance*** is an important component that strives to accomplish the goals of the organization in an effective and efficient manner, ultimately leading to improved quality and paving the path for excellence. However, poor organizational performance can have an impact on quality and obstruct the attainment of organizational excellence. It follows that excellence and quality are influenced by performance.

Regarding ***quality***, it places a strong emphasis on delivering goods or services that are free from significant flaws, operate correctly, and satisfy set standards. The performance of a product or service can be affected by its quality, which is the fulfillment of requirements and standards. If there are issues or mistakes, even quick and effective performance may not be worthwhile if it is of low quality. Furthermore, as excellence is founded upon strong quality, reaching better quality can also serve as its foundation. Thus, it is possible to argue that excellence and performance are influenced by quality.

The goal of ***organizational excellence*** is higher and involves adding value and going above and beyond regulations or standards. Solid quality and strong performance create the foundation of organizational excellence within the triad. Innovation that surpasses expectations and adds value is facilitated by performance and quality. Exceeding current standards, quality adds originality, inventiveness, and a resolute dedication to delivering beyond expectations. Thus, it can be said that excellence implies superior performance and quality.

After examining the QPE Triad, it is possible to conclude that these three concepts are interdependent in that they impact one another and cooperate to provide better outcomes. These concepts also help organizations succeed by striking a balance between reaching objectives, offering superior goods and services, and striving to go above and beyond the status quo.

In the context of rethinking leadership in challenging times, the QPE Triad approach offers substantial managerial implications across diverse industries. This model offers an integrated perspective on the relationship between excellence, performance, and quality as well as a road map for effectively managing these components for improved organizational outcomes. Managers can create plans to achieve overall excellence in their firms by adopting the QPE Triad.

Pursuing greatness becomes essential when things are chaotic. The QPE Triad emphasizes that combining efforts to improve both quality and performance can lead to excellence. Putting this strategy into practice creates a culture that values greatness in addition to encouraging it. It is the responsibility of managers to cultivate values and conduct that motivate employees to strive for excellence, productivity, and going above and beyond. Promoting an atmosphere that fosters creativity is essential. Managers can foster the development of innovative products and services by utilizing the interdependence of quality, performance, and excellence. By taking a proactive stance, the company not only becomes more competitive but also gains a strategic advantage in the marketplace. Finding creative opportunities in the interaction of excellence, performance, and quality becomes essential. This proactive approach further stimulates the development of innovative goods and services, increasing the company's competitiveness in the ever-changing market.

Acknowledging the limitations of this study is important. Potential subjectivities in the choice of sources and the concepts under consideration can affect the results, even though the research methodology based on the analysis of the literature allowed for the acquisition of a thorough viewpoint on the concepts. Despite the possible applications of the QPE Triad model in a variety of indutries, the study's dependence on a literature review instead of empirical data may also restrict the findings' generalizability. Furthermore, it's important to acknowledge ongoing efforts to address these limitations. Currently, as part of our continued research endeavors, the authors are actively engaged in crafting another article centered specifically on the QPE triad. This upcoming work incorporates a substantially larger pool of bibliographic resources, intending to offer a more expansive and in-depth analysis of the interrelationships between excellence, quality, and performance.

To increase comprehension and practicality of the paradigm, the authors want to examine in the future the effects of applying the QPE Triad model on organizational performance and excellence in real-world settings using empirical data and case studies. This will enhance the information in this research and increase the QPE Triad model's relevance and practicality in both research and practice.

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