

Analysis of the Assessment Results of Institutional Excellence in Jordan

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Abstract

Objectives: This research aims to analyze the results of the assessment of excellence in Jordan, including the assessment of institutional excellence conducted by the assessors of excellence, customer satisfaction, and mystery shopping.

Methods: Through statistical analysis of assessment results, the 104 participating institutions were grouped into three categories: "above average," "average," and "below average." An institution is labeled "above average" if its assessment result surpasses the overall average by more than one standard deviation; it's considered "average" if its assessment result deviates from the overall average by up to one standard deviation; and it's deemed "below average" if its assessment result falls short of the overall average by more than one standard deviation.

Results: The results of institutional excellence are significantly lower than those of customer satisfaction and mystery shopping. Around 70% of institutions rated "average" in the three tools of excellence assessment. It was found that there are statistically significant differences between the assessment results of institutional excellence, customer satisfaction and mystery shopping. Results of correlation analysis indicate there is no correlation between the results of institutional excellence and customer satisfaction, and between the results of customer satisfaction and mystery shopping. Whereas, there is a statistically significant correlation between the results of institutional excellence and mystery shopping.

Conclusions: The study recommended that assessment approaches and processes should focus on reliable metrics and indicators to distinguish between different levels of performance. An understanding of the key business factors of institutions by excellence assessors is essential to the quality of assessment.

Keywords: Institutional excellence, excellence assessment, customer satisfaction, mystery shopping, Jordan.

تحليل نتائج تقييم التميز المؤسسي في الأردن

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ملخص

الأهداف: يهدف هذا البحث إلى تحليل نتائج تقييم التميز بما في ذلك تقييم التميز المؤسسي في الأردن الذي أجراه مقيمو التميز ورضا المتعاملين والمتسوق السري.

المنهجية: من خلال التحليل الإحصائي لنتائج التقييم، تم تصنيف المؤسسات المشاركة البالغ عددها 104 إلى ثلاث مجموعات: "فوق المتوسط" و"متوسطة" و"أقل من المتوسط". لكل مؤسسة، إذا كانت نتيجة تقييمها أكبر من متوسط نتائج تقييم جميع المؤسسات المشاركة بأكثر من انحراف معياري واحد، فإن تلك المؤسسة تعتبر "فوق المتوسط". وإذا كانت نتيجة تقييمها أكبر/أصغر من متوسط نتائج تقييم جميع المؤسسات المشاركة بانحراف معياري واحد على الأكثر، فإن تلك المؤسسة تعتبر "متوسطة". أما إذا كانت نتيجة تقييمها أقل من متوسط نتائج تقييم جميع المؤسسات المشاركة بأكثر من انحراف معياري واحد، فإن تلك المؤسسة تعتبر "أقل من المتوسط".

النتائج: كانت نتائج التميز المؤسسي أقل بكثير من نتائج رضا المتعاملين والمتسوق السري. ما يقارب 70٪ من المؤسسات صنفت "متوسطة" في أدوات تقييم التميز الثلاثة. وتؤيد النتائج وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين نتائج تقييم التميز المؤسسي ورضا المتعاملين والمتسوق السري. كما تشير نتائج تحليل الارتباط إلى عدم وجود علاقة ارتباط بين نتائج التميز المؤسسي ورضا المتعاملين وبين نتائج رضا المتعاملين والمتسوق السري، في حين توجد علاقة ذات دلالة إحصائية بين نتائج التميز المؤسسي والمتسوق السري.

الخلاصة: أوصت الدراسة بأن تركز أساليب وعمليات تقييم التميز على مقاييس ومؤشرات موثوقة للتمييز بين مستويات الأداء المختلفة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، فإن فهم عوامل العمل الرئيسية للمؤسسات من قبل مقيمي التميز أمر ضروري لجودة التقييم.

الكلمات الدالة: التميز المؤسسي، تقييم التميز، رضا المتعاملين، المتسوق السري، الأردن.



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Introduction

Several countries in the Middle East region including Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Egypt have launched organizational excellence programs in different sectors to assist the development and growth of their key economic sectors. These countries have established centers or assigned institutions to undertake the tasks of promoting and managing excellence activities such as: building the knowledge and capabilities related to excellence; facilitating and supporting excellence initiatives; managing the assessment processes of excellence; and recognizing the winners of excellence awards (See Table 1).

Table 1. Middle Eastern Organizational Excellence Programs Considered in this Research

Excellence Program	Program Aim	Launched Year
Dubai Government Excellence Program DGEP	To achieve global leading position for Dubai government through excellence and innovation. The program empowers Dubai government entities to develop performance, results and services to reach a global leading position (see https://dgep.gov.ae).	1997
The King Abdul Aziz Quality Award KAQA	To stimulate the productive and service sectors to implement the principles and techniques of total quality in order to raise the quality of performance (see https://kaqa.org.sa).	1999
The King Abdullah II Center for Excellence KACE	To promote a culture of excellence in Jordan through developing excellence frameworks and assessment criteria based on international best practices, and promoting excellence to public sector, private sector, not-for-profit and non-governmental organizations (see http://www.kace.jo).	2006
The Sheikh Khalifa Government Excellence Program SKGEP	To empower the UAE government sector to excel in its performance, regulations, services and outcomes (see https://www.skgep.gov.ae).	2006
Egyptian Government Excellence Award EGEA	To achieve an efficient and effective government administrative body and applies the concepts of governance to contribute in the development Egyptian government performance, which leads to the increase in citizen satisfaction for the objectives of “Egypt Vision 2030” (see http://egea.gov.eg).	2018

Organizational excellence programs (herein abbreviated to “excellence programs”) have provided generic models that incorporate guidelines and best practices to enhance the way of doing business and thereby executing strategies and delivering services and missions. Excellence programs also introduced the mechanisms and tools related to the management of functions, strategies, resources and processes (Davidson *et al.*, 2011; Ashraf, 2016; Suci, 2017; Jankalová and Jankal, 2020). Furthermore, excellence programs have promoted models and tool kits in the field of performance management as well as measuring customer and employee satisfaction.

The main objective of launching excellence programs and awards is to improve the performance of public sector institutions or private sector companies (Mann *et al.*, 2011; Suci, 2017; Lasrado and Uzbeck, 2017). The launch of the excellence awards was specifically aimed to create a culture of excellence in the institutions and companies participating in the excellence awards competition.

King Abdullah II Center for Excellence administers the King Abdullah II Awards for Excellence, which is the most prestigious award for excellence at the national level in all sectors. The King Abdullah II Center for Excellence aims to spread the culture of institutional excellence and innovation in Jordan and the region by developing excellence models/frameworks and assessment criteria based on international best practices, assessing the performance of institutions, and running King

Abdullah II Awards for Excellence to promote the culture of institutional excellence in all sectors. The King Abdullah II Center for Excellence aims at promoting a culture of institutional excellence and innovation in Jordan and the region through (see <http://www.kace.jo>):

- Developing excellence and innovation frameworks and assessment criteria based on international best practices.
- Managing King Abdullah II awards for excellence, assessing institutions' performance and honoring the distinguished performers.
- Promoting the culture of excellence and innovation among individuals and institutions and supporting improvement and development efforts to achieve superior performance.
- Empowering and developing capabilities and specialized skills in excellence and innovation.

It is worth analyzing the excellence assessment results of one of these excellence programs and awards mentioned in Table 1 above. This research aimed to analyze the results of excellence assessment in Jordan including the institutional excellence assessment conducted by excellence assessors, customer satisfaction and mystery shopping. Thus, the research aimed to analyze the excellence assessment results of ministries, departments and institutions that participated in excellence programs and awards. More specifically, the study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the overall level of institutional excellence assessment results?
2. What is the overall level of customer satisfaction results?
3. What is the overall level of mystery shopping results?

Moreover, the study investigated the differences and relationships between the results of the assessment of institutional excellence, customer satisfaction, and mystery shopping. Therefore, a set of hypotheses was developed and tested using appropriate statistical methods.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The following sections provide a brief overview of the extensive literature related to the concepts of organizational quality and excellence, the international awards for quality and excellence, and institutional excellence.

Concepts of Quality and Excellence

Over the last 50 years or so, global organizations have taken important quality initiatives by introducing more effective systems, new tools and technologies such as ISO 9000 certification and implementing total quality management (TQM) to improve and sustain performance (Agrawal, 1999). Coordinated systematic application of TQM principles supports innovative processes and business excellence development (Mele and Colurcio, 2006).

Chourides *et al.* (2003) highlighted the implications of knowledge management in Organizational innovation and competitiveness, while Ashraf (2016) concluded that total quality management and knowledge management can be implemented in synchronization and their combined implementation leads to higher performance excellence.

Thawani (2004) indicated the role of strategic deployment of six sigma in changing the culture of organization through inculcating process control discipline applied in manufacturing and non-manufacturing businesses. Brown (2013) suggested leadership support, drive and consistency throughout the company and communicating strategy and making it meaningful for people at all organizational level. Fok-Yew and Ahmad (2014) found significant positive relationships between the style of transformation leadership and operational excellence, while Rusev and Saloniitis (2016) mentioned that operational excellence is a consequence of practices related to continuous process improvement, culture, alignment and results.

The transformations occurring because of globalization and new technologies have created a discontinuous landscape that challenges traditional ways of managing small and medium-sized businesses (Rowland-Jones, 2013). Zain *et al.* (2005) showed that the use of technology had the strongest direct effect on organizational agility to respond to the impact of changes in environmental factors.

Agarwal (2007) revealed agility supports in providing the right product at the right time to the consumer, while Gligor and Holcomb (2012) mentioned that supply chain agility is explored through the focus on manufacturing flexibility, supply chain

speed and lean manufacturing. Chan *et al.* (2017) revealed that strategic and manufacturing flexibility positively affect supply chain agility, which mediate the impact of strategic and manufacturing flexibility on company performance. Conboy (2009) highlighted the rapid growth of the use of agile methods among the community of information systems development in recent years. Sony (2019) found that agility and organizational culture play a major role in sustainable organizational excellence. Larkin *et al.* (2015) identified differences in approaches to resilience and common ground upon which federal agencies can use to support programs that are more effective.

Lin *et al.* (2006) indicated that companies have to align with suppliers and customers to streamline processes and work together to achieve a competitive edge in the rapidly changing business environment. Tzvetana and Ivaylo (2017) mentioned that employee commitment contributes to the expected standard of employee performance. Wirtz and Zeithaml (2018) highlighted the importance of cost effective service excellence and enabling culture. Wirtz (2019) indicated that administrative and operational wastes are prevalent and there is a need for more focus on service quality in many healthcare institutions.

Donoso-Morales *et al.* (2017) indicated that coaches noted the crucial elements that led to sustained excellence in their programs, which are hard work and daily attention to detail, effective emotional management of themselves and their athletes, and continuous self-assessment (self-reflection and seeking mentors). Jankalová and Jankal (2020) found that there is a relationship between business excellence dimensions and sustainability dimensions.

Many previous studies have shown that, in seeking higher levels of quality and business excellence, organizations have adopted many different but interrelated management approaches and concepts such as: total quality management (Agrawal, 1999; Mele and Colurcio, 2006; Ashraf, 2016); knowledge and technology management (Chourides *et al.*, 2003; Ashraf, 2016; Rowland-Jones, 2013); and leadership (Brown, 2013; Fok-Yew and Ahmad, 2014, Chan *et al.*, 2017).

A review of these previous studies identified the most recent knowledge and practices of institutional excellence. Most importantly, previous studies indicated that quality systems and concepts have formed the historical basis of the quality and excellence awards.

International Awards for Quality and Excellence

The Deming prize, the oldest organizational excellence award in the world, was established in Japan 1951 to honour Dr. W. Edwards Deming who contributed greatly to Japan's proliferation of statistical quality control after the World War II (JUSE, 2004). In 1987, the National Institute of Standards and Technology in USA administered the start of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Improvement act to enhance competitiveness of U.S. businesses. The award promoted an understanding of quality excellence, increased awareness of quality as a critical competitive component and aimed to play an important leadership role in enhancing the competitiveness of the United States (Frank and Chapman, 1995). Garvin (1991) concluded that the Baldrige Award is positioned exactly where it should be - as an agent for transforming US business.

In 1988, The European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) was established demonstrating the importance of total quality management in advancing performance and quality assurance. The EFQM Excellence Model is the most widely used strategic tool in Europe (EFQM 2010). This Business Excellence Model is commonly used as a framework for achieving excellence in strategy and planning for innovation management (Martensen and Dahlgard, 1999).

The Australian Excellence Awards consist of two main lines: the business award and the product award (ABA, 2010). The Singapore Quality Award framework is built on a combination of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, the Australian Business Excellence Award and the European Quality Award. The Singapore Award merged the principles of the three mentioned models and creates one solid framework (BEACON: Business Excellence Assessment for Continuous Improvement) that is characterized by eight criteria and a number of sub-criteria fall under each (SPRING, 2010). Hendricks and Singhal (1997) mentioned that companies that gained some types of quality awards have better sales performance.

The quality and excellence programs and awards in the Middle East region (e.g. KACE, SKGEP, DGEP, KAQA and EGEA) were based on the concepts and criteria of the international awards for quality and excellence. Awards for quality and excellence generally share the same management concepts to improve performance. By looking at the national excellence models and criteria in the Middle East, it is clear that they followed and adopted the latest improvements and best practices of

the international excellence awards. Thus, the implications of this study may help institutions and companies in the Middle East applying for international awards for excellence.

Institutional Excellence

Mann *et al.* (2011) showed that winning business excellence awards is a key objective for many companies. They also highlighted the key barriers to long-term commitment to business excellence, which are the lack of development of a business excellence culture, the lack of resources and the failure to provide an adequate education for the majority of staff in business excellence. Sinha and Arora (2012) revealed that both excellence and organizational culture could be conceptualized in the same way, while Rezaeia *et al.* (2015) indicated that culture of excellence is a recommendable management system to effectively support the organizational competitiveness.

Lasrado and Uzbeck (2017) showed that the Dubai Quality Award facilitates the excellence journey of aspiring companies to win a quality award and to strengthen their quality initiative through an informative assessment report. They also mentioned that the Dubai Quality Award model perceived by companies as a useful approach to quality improvement.

Kassem *et al.* (2018) found that organizational culture types (mission culture, adaptability culture, involvement culture and consistency culture) have a significant positive impact on achieving excellent customer-related results. Competitive market, knowledge sharing and culture of excellence are the key factors for companies to thrive in the ever-expanding global market-economy (Rezaei *et al.*, 2016). Suciu (2017) suggested a shift from a perspective that focuses on the so-called “hero of excellence” towards promoting the culture of excellence among the entire company in such changing and challenging business environment.

Institute for Excellence & Ethics developed an approach of culture of excellence and ethics incorporates the principles of the excellence framework and the rationale for how the approach achieves sustainability and lasting impact in the development of character, leadership and culture (Davidson *et al.*, 2011).

For instance, Shaddix and Searby (2008) revealed that the system of Mountain Brook school has committed to qualify teacher leaders in a culture of excellence. Mintrom (2014) indicated the positive and sustained impact of promoting a culture of excellence among education course participants on their individual practices. Gourlay and Stevenson (2017) highlighted that the challenge facing higher education is to value teaching, enhance student learning and maintain core values of excellence.

Previous studies indicated that the main objective of promoting quality and excellence awards is to create and maintain a culture of excellence. Some of them highlighted challenges and obstacles related to a long-term commitment to excellence, such as the lack of developing a culture of business excellence, lack of resources and failure to provide sufficient distinct knowledge and skills.

In summary, most previous studies on the impact of excellence awards have adopted a survey approach, collecting and analyzing the perceptions of senior managers in a sample of companies or institutions to understand the implementation of excellence principles and measure their impact on institutional performance. No previous studies analyzed the results of excellence assessment conducted by excellence programs and awards in Middle East region. This research aimed to statistically analyze the results of assessment processes related to institutional excellence, customer satisfaction and mystery shopping in Jordan. This study relied on the results of the last assessment cycle of institutional excellence for the year 2018 that was conducted in Jordan by excellence assessors at The King Abdullah II Center for Excellence, in addition to the outcomes of customer satisfaction surveys and mystery shopping reports.

Study Hypotheses and Methodology

A range of hypotheses were developed and tested to examine the differences and relationships between the results of the assessment of institutional excellence, customer satisfaction and mystery shopping. The first three hypotheses tested differences in the means of assessment results for institutional excellence, customer satisfaction and mystery shopping (the first, second and third hypotheses). The other three hypotheses tested the relationships between assessment results for institutional excellence, customer satisfaction and mystery shopping (the fourth, fifth and sixth hypotheses). Logically and at

least between customer satisfaction and mystery shopping, no significant differences are expected but significant correlations are expected. Institutions that achieve a level of excellence in customer satisfaction are expected to achieve the same level in mystery shopping.

The first hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences between the results of assessment of institutional excellence and customer satisfaction.

The second hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences between the results of assessment of institutional excellence and mystery shopping.

The third hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences between the results of customer satisfaction and mystery shopping.

The fourth hypothesis: There is no statistically significant relationship between the results of assessment of institutional excellence and customer satisfaction.

The fifth hypothesis: There is no statistically significant relationship between the results of assessment of institutional excellence and mystery shopping.

The sixth hypothesis: There is no statistically significant relationship between the results of customer satisfaction and mystery shopping.

An assessment team conducted the assessment process of each institution. The assessment team prepared a consensus assessment report indicating the strengths, areas for improvement and scores. Customer (citizen, investor, institutions) satisfaction study measured the customer perceptions about the services provided by institutions through a survey questionnaire. The Mystery shopping aimed to carry out objective, periodic, continuous and confidential assessment of the services, procedures and level of performance of the employees of all institutions participating in the award. It included the details of the face-to-face assessment, evaluation of communication channels and evaluation of the website. The mystery shopper performed frequent and continuous confidential visits covering all administrative and functional levels throughout the year, and visits to specific and selected sites. Assessors used mystery shopper reports as a means of audit and assessment to ascertain the accuracy and correctness of the responses received from the participating institutions.

Through statistical analysis of assessment results, the 104 participating institutions in Jordan were classified into three groups: "above average", "average" and "below average". For example, the institutions were classified into these groups as follows:

- Calculate the average (mean) value and standard deviation value for results of assessment of institutional excellence for all participating institutions.
- For each institution:
 - a) If the assessment result for the institution is larger than the average (mean) value for results of assessment of institutional excellence for all participating institutions by more than one standard deviation, that institution is considered "above average".
 - b) If the assessment result for the institution is larger/smaller than the average (mean) value for results of assessment of institutional excellence for all participating institutions by at most one standard deviation, that institution is considered "average".
 - c) If the assessment result for the institution is smaller than the average (mean) value for results of assessment of institutional excellence for all participating institutions by more than one standard deviation, that institution is considered "below average".

In the same way, institutions were classified according to the results of customer satisfaction and mystery shopping.

This study focused on analyzing the results of all 104 Jordanian institutions participated in the last assessment cycle of 2018 for one of the government excellence awards. These results included the assessment of institutional excellence, customer satisfaction and mystery shopping. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics including means and standard deviation. Hypotheses were tested using t test and correlation.

Discussion of Results

The descriptive statistics results for institutional excellence, customer satisfaction and mystery shopping shown in Table 2. The results indicates that there are significant differences between institutional excellence and each customer satisfaction and mystery shopping. The results of institutional excellence are significantly lower than those of customer satisfaction and mystery shopping. These differences can be explained by the fact that the assessment of institutional excellence conducted by assessors and included several criteria such as leadership, strategy, human resources, financial management, process and service management and overall performance measures and indicators. While customer satisfaction results based on surveys distributed to customers to have their perceptions regarding the services delivered by institutions. The same thing with mystery shopping results but the mystery shoppers are people who played the role of customers and assessed the service journey based on their experience and perceptions. Standard deviation and the range for mystery shopping results are large compared with those for institutional excellence and customer satisfaction. This indicates that mystery shoppers noticed a large variation in the level of services provided by participating institutions.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics Results

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Institutional Excellence	104	17.87	47.49	28.8558	6.16711
Customer Satisfaction	104	52.01	78.52	67.5565	4.68883
Mystery Shopping	104	37.00	91.00	71.0000	12.82670
Valid N (listwise)	104				

Institutions classification according to institutional excellence results shown in Table 3. As shown in Table 3, over 70% of institutions were assessed and classified within the average level. This indicates either no significant differences in performance between the majority of institutions or the assessment processes and outcomes affected by the central tendency concept.

Table 3. Institutions Classification according to Institutional Excellence Results

Institutional Excellence - Institutions Classification					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below Average	17	16.3	16.3	16.3
	Average	73	70.2	70.2	86.5
	Above Average	14	13.5	13.5	100.0
	Total	104	100.0	100.0	

Institutions classification according to customer satisfaction results shown in Table 4. The frequencies almost show no significant differences within the groups rating institutions according to institutional excellence and customer satisfaction.

Table 4. Institutions Classification according to Customer Satisfaction Results

Customer Satisfaction - Institutions Classification					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below Average	19	18.3	18.3	18.3
	Average	72	69.2	69.2	87.5
	Above Average	13	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	104	100.0	100.0	

Institutions classification according to mystery shopping results shown in Table 5. In general, there are no statistically significant differences in the ratios of the three groups in the ratings of institutions. These indicators support that around 70% of institutions rated “average” in the three tools of assessment.

Table 5. Institutions Classification according to Mystery Shopping Results

Mystery Shopping - Institutions Classification					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below Average	17	16.3	16.3	16.3
	Average	72	69.2	69.2	85.6
	Above Average	15	14.4	14.4	100.0
	Total	104	100.0	100.0	

Outputs of paired sample t test shown in Table 6. As shown in Table 6, there are statistically significant differences between the assessment results of institutional excellence, customer satisfaction and mystery shopping. These results support the rejection of the first three hypotheses. Such findings are unexpected but can be explained because of the scope of the assessment of institutional excellence is different from that of customer satisfaction and mystery shopping. The scope of institutional excellence includes criteria other than service delivery. Also, the assessment of institutional excellence conducted by different assessment teams. Customer satisfaction scores were based on customer feedback, while the mystery shoppers played the role of the customer and rated the services accordingly.

Table 6. Outputs of Paired Sample T-Test

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Institutional Excellence - Customer Satisfaction	-38.70077	7.61023	.74624	-40.18077	-37.22077	-51.861	103	0.000
Pair 2	Institutional Excellence - Mystery Shopping	-42.14423	10.98121	1.07680	-44.27980	-40.00866	-39.139	103	0.000
Pair 3	Customer Satisfaction - Mystery Shopping	-3.44346	14.07175	1.37985	-6.18007	-0.70686	-2.496	103	0.014

Results of correlation test shown in Table 7. There is no correlation between the results of institutional excellence and the results of customer satisfaction. In addition, there is no correlation between the results of customer satisfaction and the results of mystery shopping. Whereas, there is a statistically significant correlation between the results of institutional excellence and the results of mystery shopping. These results support the acceptance of the fourth and sixth hypotheses and the rejection of the fourth hypothesis. The lack of a relationship between customer satisfaction and mystery shopping outcomes is unexpected, because they measured the same function that was customer service. The significant correlation between institutional excellence scores and mystery shopping outcomes may be because assessors used reports of mystery shopping and may have been influenced by them in their assessments.

Table 7. Results of Correlation Test

Correlations				
		Institutional Excellence	Customer Satisfaction	Mystery Shopping
Institutional Excellence	Pearson Correlation	1	0.036	.518**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.714	0.000
	N	104	104	104
Customer Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	0.036	1	-0.096
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.714		0.334
	N	104	104	104
Mystery Shopping	Pearson Correlation	.518**	-0.096	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.334	
	N	104	104	104

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Conclusion and implications

This research concluded that there are statistically significant differences between the results of excellence level using different excellence assessment tools, contrary to what is expected. The results do not support the role of institutional excellence in ensuring excellence in service delivery. The goal of institutional excellence is to create and maintain a culture of excellence and thus sustain service excellence.

These results are due to the difference in assessment criteria, assessors, and assessment process and time frames for the three assessment approaches. In addition, how organizations deal with assessment tasks in terms of objectivity, showing the real situation, and trying to take advantage of assessment reports in the continual improvement of the way of doing things. Furthermore, assessors’ capabilities and their understanding of the core business and related functions of institutions is an important factor in providing valuable assessment reports. Customer satisfaction and mystery shopping is performed by one company for all the participating institutions while the institutional excellence assessment is conducted by different teams of assessors for different institutions.

Several recommendations derived from the study results. The criteria of excellence adopted by programs and awards must be reviewed and improved to properly measure the level of excellence. The assessors of excellence must be well-selected and trained to reach a unified understanding and consensus among team members. The assessment approach, process and duration must radically change to enable assessor to access evidences and make judgments. Very qualified and professional companies should carry out customer satisfaction survey and mystery shopping mission. An understanding of the key business factors of institutions by excellence assessors is essential to the quality of assessment.

Standardization of standards, concepts, applications and practices in customer satisfaction surveys, mystery shopping and the service aspect of institutional excellence. Consolidation of the assessment rubric and matrix in the three assessment tools of excellence. Excellence assessment approaches and processes should focus on reliable metrics and indicators to distinguish between different levels of performance. Avoiding conflicts of interest in appointing excellence assessors and research companies. In addition to appointing assessors of excellence who have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the business of the institution.

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