



Employee Perception of Service Quality at a Selected Automobile Company: A Servqual Approach

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Citation: Suja, S., & Devi, K. (2026). Employee Perception of Service Quality at a Selected Automobile Company: A Servqual Approach. International Journal of Academic Excellence and Research, 02(02), 14–24. <https://doi.org/10.62823/IJAER/02.02.200>

Abstract: The purpose of this research is to explore the perceptions of employees about the quality of the internal services provided by the selected automobile company and the impact that the quality of the internal services provided by the organization has on the satisfaction levels of the employees and the overall organizational performance. The five aspects of the services provided by the organization that this researcher focused on were the services provided by the human resource department, the payroll services provided by the organization, the IT services and support provided by the organization, the training provided by the organization to the employees, and the workplace facilities provided by the organization. The researcher was also interested in identifying the gap that existed in the perceptions of the employees regarding the way in which the organization provided the key services to the employees and the way in which the organization provided the key services to the employees. The researcher was also interested in evaluating the five aspects of the service quality provided by the organization to the employees. The data was collected with the help of the structured questionnaire that was sent to the employees of the organization via the use of Google Forms. The researcher collected the data from 109 employees. The results of this research showed that the overall perception of the employees regarding the quality of the internal services provided by the organization was rated quite positively. The average score for the internal quality services provided to the employees was 37.22. This showed that most of the services provided to the employees were either at par with the expectations of the employees or were even better. The employees rated the way in which the organization provided the services to the employees quite positively. However, the employees showed low confidence in the leadership of the organization and in the overall internal systems of the organization. This showed that the organization needs to improve the overall service dimension of the organization's assurance. According to the results of this research, the organization can improve the confidence levels of the employees in the quality of the services provided by the organization by improving the overall communication with the employees and the overall effectiveness of the leadership and organizational development.

Article History:

Received: 05 April, 2026

Revised: 18 April, 2026

Accepted: 24 April, 2026

Published Online: 01 May, 2026

Keywords:

SERVQUAL, Internal Service Quality, Employee Perception, Gap Analysis, Human Resource Services.

Introduction

Internal service quality is increasingly at the forefront of attention for companies in today's fast-paced, competitive environment. Giving employees a good quality of work life leads to an increased level

of satisfaction, which in turn leads to an increase in effectiveness and productivity for the company. An employee's perception about internal service has a significant impact on how effectively they perform their job, how engaged they are with their job, and how productive they are in performing their work-related duties.

The selected Automobile Company, who operates primarily in the automobile industry, provides several different forms of internal service to their employees. Examples of these internal services include Human resources (HR) management, payroll processing, information technology (IT) support, training programs and workplace infrastructure. The quality and efficiency of these internal services are extremely important for the selected Automobile Company's ability to function as a cohesive whole, and for the well-being of their employees.

Although many companies have put significant resources into improving their internal processes, many organizations struggle to meet employees' expectations. Where there is a gap between what employees were expecting vs. what they received from their employer, there will be lower satisfaction levels leading to lower productivity levels. One of the main tools for measuring the quality of the service provided by a company is the SERVQUAL model. The SERVQUAL model determines how well the service delivered by a company matches what the employee expected to receive from the employer for the five dimensions of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibility.

Incorporating the SERVQUAL model into a company's quality assurance program can help identify gaps between the company and the employee's expectations and identify opportunities for improvement within the organization to increase overall productivity through improvement of employee satisfaction.

Selected Automobile Company could use the SERVQUAL model to evaluate whether it is providing suitable internal services from its employees. Selected Automobile Company could assess the level of employee satisfaction through one of three methods: (1) conducting interviews with employees; (2) conducting surveys of employees and receiving feedback on their service expectations; or (3) determining the types of evidence employees offer regarding the services received from Selected Automobile Company. These methods will allow Selected Automobile Company to develop guidelines for implementing service enhancements based on the evidence collected.

Statement of Problem

The automobile company wants to learn about its employee's impressions of the internal service quality within the company. They aim to identify the gap between the employee's expectations of service versus their actual experience of service. The focus of this study will be on three areas, namely: responsiveness of support functions, effectiveness of leadership, and adequacy of training/development initiatives. The understanding of these differences is hugely important because if an employee's expectation about the service they will receive do not match what they received, it can negatively impact employee satisfaction/confidence/performance overall. Identifying these areas of difference will allow the organization to identify opportunities for improvement and provide them with a basis for taking appropriate actions to improve quality of internal services and employee experience.

Objectives of the Study

- To identify key internal services provided to employees
- To examine employee perceptions across SERVQUAL dimensions
- To evaluate HR-related processes and internal support services
- To assess overall employee satisfaction.

Literature Review

Key Theories and Concepts

In general, researchers have identified and used various models of service quality, including one of the best known models developed by Parasuraman and his associates in 1988 called the SERVQUAL model, which provides a framework for understanding the nature of service quality by measuring and assessing the difference between individuals' pre-expectation of receiving a service and the actual experience post-service delivery. Service quality has become an important issue for researchers looking at organizations because it influences performance, efficiency, and customer satisfaction.

The SERVQUAL model has five essential aspects. The reliability aspect of this model determines how frequently and accurately a service meets the expectations of its users. The second dimension, known as the "responsiveness" dimension, consists of how quickly and willingly a support service will respond to a customer's needs or inquiries. The dimensions of "assurance" determine how confident an employee feels about performing their job/work with an organisation (e.g. faith in policies, programs and leadership). The "empathy" dimension of SERVQUAL refers to how much attention and care the employee receives. Finally, the "tangible" dimension is a measurement of all tangible aspects associated with the organisation's facilities, equipment and physical work setting.

An important part of how we view and understand service quality was laid out by Grönroos (1984), who separated out "technical quality" from "functional quality." Technical Quality is the actual outcome (the result) of a service and Functional Quality is the way in which you receive the service. This is very important as an employee evaluates both the outcome and their feelings about it at the same time.

Another major belief about service quality comes from Zeithaml and her colleagues (1990); they state that an entire "perception of quality" is established by comparing our expectations of a service to how we received it. That is, if we expected the level of service to be "high" and got a level of a "low" then we were disappointed and would be dissatisfied with that level of service. If we received a level of service that either met or exceeded our expectations, then we could reasonably expect that we would be satisfied with that level of service.

Berry (1981) introduced the notion of internal marketing; this states that all employees should be treated as "internal customers." The idea behind this approach is that if we (the organization) meet the needs of our employees, we can then provide a level of service above that of our competition. Echoing this ground-breaking idea, Heskett et al. (1994) created the service-profit chain to define the relationship between employee satisfaction, service quality, customer satisfaction, and organizational success.

Previous Empirical Studies

Many researchers have used services quality models to help understand both employee perceptions and levels of satisfaction within different organizations. One such model was developed by Cronin and Taylor (1992). Using the SERVPERF model, they provided an alternative to the more traditional SERVQUAL service quality model. SERVPERF was designed to measure service quality based on performance alone rather than on the difference between an employee's expectations versus actual performance (the gap). This makes it easier to evaluate service quality but does not allow for consideration of any gap between expectations and perceptions regarding service quality.

Caruana and Pitt (1997) examined the relationship between internal service quality and employee commitment and loyalty to an organization. Their results indicated that when employees view the internal services provided by their own organization positively, they tend to be more engaged and productive.

Frost & Kumar (2000) adapted the SERVQUAL model to assess an organization's quality of service as both customer and employee (as employees are also consumers) services. As such, they showed that any gaps between the expected and actual levels of service (by both employees and customers) create a level of dissatisfaction in employees.

Kang et al. (2002) found two key areas (reliability and responsiveness) of quality service to improve employee satisfaction therefore if employees are satisfied with the service received, they are likely to view their employer positively.

Lings (2004) expanded on the idea of market orientation, specifically for the internal organization. He relayed the need for organizations to understand what their employees' needs are, and provide the required services to meet those needs to achieve higher levels of employee satisfaction and employee performance for the overall organization performance.

Jun and Cai (2010) found out from their research on the Internal quality of service within IT environments, that two of the most significant parts which shape employee's perceptions of internal Service quality is the timely communication of Information and the response time to Service Requests. They also found that the delay in responses to Service Requests and the lack of communication were two major contributors to employee dissatisfaction with their organisation.

In research conducted by Tsai and Wu (2011) they found out that through the Implementation of Internal Marketing, employees were more satisfied with their employment relationship to the Organisation. Their findings indicated that organisations which place high importance on the Employees needs, will provide high levels of Internal Service quality.

Kuei (1999) has stated that Internal Service quality is a key part of Total Quality Management (TQM), as it allows for the smooth operation of the internal processes of an Organisation and therefore has a positive impact on overall organisational effectiveness. Schneider and Bowen (1993) have also corresponded that there is a direct relationship between the Employee perceptions of Internal Service quality and the outcomes of the Service provided and ultimately the success of the Organisation.

Research Gap

There has been little investigation of internal service quality by examining employee experiences in regard to key dimensions of service quality using the SERVQUAL model. Currently, there is limited research conducted on the internal service quality for manufacturing industries, namely the automotive industry. The research that has been performed has not delved into the perceptions of employees on the services provided to them from a human resource, payroll and training and development perspective, nor do they include their views on workplace environment.

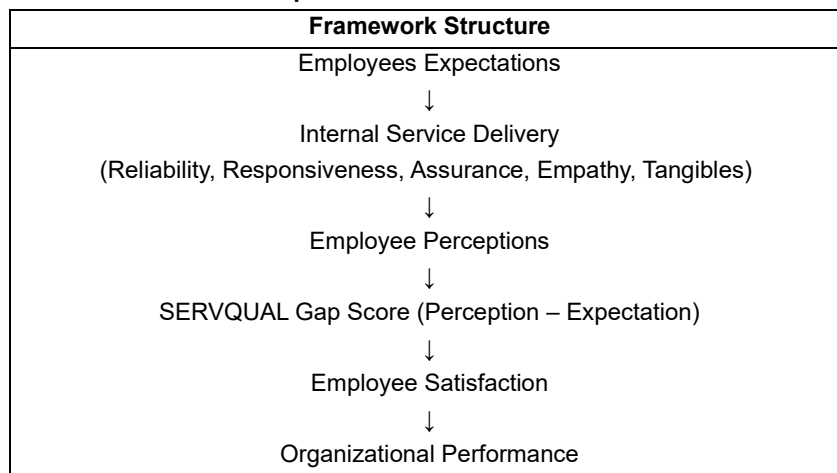
The current study will explore the internal quality of services within the Selected Automobile Company by assessing employee perceptions of the major elements of service quality. This will assist researchers in evaluating how internal service quality can impact employee job satisfaction and ultimately improve an organization’s success.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is developed based on the SERVQUAL model, which evaluates internal service quality by examining the difference between employee expectations and their actual experiences.

The framework illustrates the process through which internal service delivery influences employee satisfaction and overall organizational performance.

Conceptual Model of the Research



This framework highlights the relationship between internal service quality and employee outcomes, demonstrating how improvements in service delivery can positively impact organizational effectiveness.

Research Methodology

This study examines employee perceptions of internal service quality in the selected automobile company using SERVQUAL. Primary data was collected by means of a survey composed of 33 items on a 7-point Likert scale from 109 valid employees selected through a convenience sampling technique. Data was collected through Google forms. The 5 dimensions of internal service quality included reliability,

responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles associated with the SERVQUAL model were used to examine service quality gaps for each of the dimensions using the difference between employee expectations and actual experiences as a measure. Responses were analyzed according to a weighted average technique to provide an overall employee perception of service quality. The use of a standardised data collection tool and the SERVQUAL model provided validity and reliability to the internal service quality study.

Research Design

The study employs a quantitative research approach in the assessment of the perceptions of the internal service quality by the employees. This is conducted using a structured questionnaire based on the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman et al. This model measures the service quality by assessing the gap between perceptions and expectations of the service quality provided on five dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles.

Population and Sample

- Target Population: Employees of Selected Automobile Company
- Sample Size: 109
- Sampling Technique: Convenience sampling

Data Collection

Primary data were gathered through an online survey conducted using Google Forms. The questionnaire was designed based on the SERVQUAL model and included 33 items.

Instruments Used

- SERVQUAL model

Measurement of Variables

- Gap Score = Perception – Expectation

Data Analysis Techniques

- Weighted Average Method

Results and Discussion

Reliability

Reliability is a dimension that reflects the accuracy and consistency of internal service delivery. Typical areas of internal service delivery covered under the dimension of reliability are payroll, leave management, and general HR services. An overall score of 59.14 indicates that employees perceive overall service delivery to be better than anticipated; however, this is not the case for every service provided. The statement regarding the delivery of HR services without any errors was one statement that received a negative score, indicating that there are some employees who have expressed concerns regarding errors and inconsistencies in some HR related services.

On the contrary, payroll processing, leave administration, and policy administration received very positive ratings indicating that these services are being delivered effectively and in a timely fashion. Employees were also very satisfied with defined work processes and the method by which HR communicates policies and procedures. Grievance resolution received the highest score of all services provided by HR with entrants stating that their grievances were resolved in a fair and equitable manner.

In general, reliability is rated positively; however, HR services can strengthen employees' confidence in the delivery of services by improving the accuracy of those services.

Reliability Dimension Summary

S. No.	Reliability Questions	Weighted Average	Interpretation
1	HR services are provided accurately and without errors.	-57	Accuracy and error-free delivery of HR services need improvement
2	Payroll and salary processes are handled correctly and on time.	43	Payroll processes are handled efficiently and exceed expectations
3	Leave requests are processed as per policy.	77	Leave processing is well-managed and exceeds expectations

4	Policies are applied consistently to all employees.	67	Policy application is consistent and exceeds expectations
5	Work processes are well-defined and dependable.	77	Work processes are clearly defined and highly dependable
6	HR policies are clearly communicated to employees.	76	HR policies are effectively communicated and exceed expectations
7	Employee grievances are handled fairly and systematically.	131	Grievance handling is very strong, fair, and exceeds expectations
Total		414	

Interpretation

Overall Reliability perception

Dimension	Overall Weighted Average	Interpretation
Reliability	59.14	Service performance exceeds employee expectations. Most HR-related processes such as payroll, leave management, and grievance handling are perceived positively. However, improvements are required in ensuring accuracy and error-free HR service delivery.

Responsiveness

The responsiveness category assesses the timeliness and efficiency of internal services aiding with employees. The average overall weighted score of 57.8 indicates that services provided exceed employee expectations. Although most areas show positive scores, HR responses to employees' inquiries had a negative score, indicating delays and needing to become more responsive. Similarly, facilities support, communications, emergency response handling, and approachability of supervisors all receive excellent scores, showing that most employees are satisfied with service delivery time frames. Overall, it appears that employees are relatively satisfied with responsiveness; however, by improving the speed and accessibility of HR services, both service levels and employee experiences can be improved.

Responsiveness Dimension Summary

S. No.	Responsiveness Questions	Weighted Average	Interpretation
8	HR responds promptly to employee queries and concerns.	-51	HR response time to employee queries needs improvement
9	Facilities and maintenance requests are handled quickly.	84	Facilities and maintenance requests are handled efficiently and exceed expectations
10	Employees receive timely updates regarding their service requests.	85	Communication and updates to employees are timely and exceed expectations
11	Emergency issues are addressed without unnecessary delay.	81	Emergency issues are handled promptly and exceed expectations
12	Supervisors are approachable when employees need assistance.	90	Supervisors are highly approachable and exceed expectations
Total		289	

Interpretation

Overall Responsiveness perception

Dimension	Overall Weighted Average	Interpretation
Responsiveness	57.8	The results indicate that service performance exceeds employee expectations. Employees are generally satisfied with prompt service delivery, communication, and support from supervisors. However, delays in HR response to employee queries highlight an area that requires improvement.

Assurance

The assurance dimension measures the extent of employee trust in internal services including how trustworthy HR staff, leaders, and organisational systems are perceived to be by employees. The mean weighted average score of -44.6 is low, indicating that the level of employee expectations is not achieved. Most components were recorded as having a negative score which represented employee concerns with problem-solving ability, leader's effectiveness, and internal service competency. The employees reported having little confidence in the management or the organisational systems which demonstrates a lack of trust and communication. Negative scores for supervisory support indicate that employees are concerned about the leaders' capabilities to lead. Overall, the findings indicate that there are weaknesses in competency and employee engagement with the assurance dimension being the weakest dimension and requiring improvement immediately to build trust and confidence.

Assurance Dimension Summary

S. No.	Assurance Questions	Weighted Average	Interpretation
13	HR staff are knowledgeable about company policies and procedures.	23	HR staff knowledge of policies is adequate and exceeds expectations
14	Internal departments handle issues competently.	-39	Competency in handling internal issues needs improvement
15	The organization inspires confidence through its internal services.	-79	Internal services are not building sufficient confidence and need improvement
16	I feel confident in the leadership and management of the company.	-57	Confidence in leadership and management needs improvement
17	Supervisors are knowledgeable and guide employees effectively.	-71	Supervisor guidance and knowledge need improvement
	Total	-223	

Interpretation

Overall Assurance Perception

Dimension	Overall Weighted Average	Interpretation
Assurance	-44.6	The results indicate that service quality in the assurance dimension does not meet employee expectations. Employees show low confidence in internal departments, leadership, and supervisory support, highlighting issues related to trust, competence, and communication.

Empathy

The dimension of empathy indicates the organization's level of care, attention, and support for its employees in terms of meeting the needs of their employees, providing a work-life balance, and caring for their employee's wellness. The overall weighted average score of 71.75 indicates that the service performance of the organization is well above the expectations of its employees. Most of the measures of the empathy dimension indicated received positive results. Some employees reported that they felt respected from the internal departments, and their concerns were addressed in a timely manner; most employees feel valued by the organization and have confidence in their management team because of the organization's concern for their well-being. Overall, management is perceived positively regarding their understanding of employees' needs, however; there are opportunities for improvement in some areas. Employees reported that they do not have sufficient resources in the HR department relative to how HR policy impacts their needs, as well as reported gaps in the training and development opportunities provided by the organization. Overall, the level of development of the empathy dimension is greater than all other dimensions, and thus, requires an investment in improving employee satisfaction through a commitment to continuing to develop HR and employee development opportunities.

Empathy Dimension Summary

S. No.	Empathy Questions	Weighted Average	Interpretation
18	Management understands employees work-related challenges.	54	Management shows good understanding of employee challenges and exceeds expectations

19	HR considers employee needs while implementing policies.	-58	HR is not adequately considering employee needs and needs improvement
20	Leave and welfare policies support work-life balance.	0	Leave and welfare policies meet expectations
21	Employees are treated with respect by internal departments.	176	Employees are treated with high respect, significantly exceeding expectations
22	Individual employee concerns receive proper attention.	205	Employee concerns are addressed very effectively, far exceeding expectations
23	Training and development opportunities meet employee needs.	-100	Training and development programs do not meet employee needs and require improvement
24	Employees feel valued by the organization.	136	Employees feel highly valued by the organization, exceeding expectations
25	Management shows genuine concern for employee well-being.	161	Management demonstrates strong concern for employee well-being, exceeding expectations
	Total	574	

Interpretation

Overall Empathy perception

Dimension	Overall Weighted Average	Interpretation
Empathy	71.75	The results indicate that service performance in the empathy dimension significantly exceeds employee expectations. Employees feel respected, valued, and supported by the organization. However, improvements are required in HR policy implementation and training and development to better address employee needs.

Tangibles

The tangibles dimension of the workplace encompasses the physical aspects of the workplace, such as infrastructure, equipment, technology and the overall working environment. The overall weighted average score (42) demonstrates that service performance is greater than what the employee expected. Most of the elements are rated positively, with the majority of employees reporting satisfaction with tool and technology availability, cafeteria facilities and common areas. The organization has created an environment that is safe and provides a positive general work experience, demonstrating to employees that they are working in a functional and supportive physical environment. On the other hand, there are some areas where improvement is needed. Two areas; office infrastructure and office equipment/technology were rated negatively by employees indicating that some employees believe that the office infrastructure or office equipment or both do not meet their needs (i.e., are not sufficient for the work they do). Similarly, restroom facilities are also an area of concern about maintenance and cleanliness. In conclusion, while the tangibles dimension performed satisfactorily, improvements to infrastructure and facility maintenance are essential to the overall comfort, efficiency and experience in the workplace.

Tangible Dimension Summary

S. No.	Tangibles Questions	Weighted Average	Interpretation
26	Office infrastructure and equipment are adequate for my job.	-10	Office infrastructure and equipment adequacy needs improvement
27	Necessary tools, systems, and technology are available for my work.	76	Tools, systems, and technology availability is strong and exceeds expectations
28	The physical working environment supports productivity.	21	Work environment supports productivity and exceeds expectations
29	Safety measures and workplace arrangements are satisfactory.	47	Workplace safety and arrangements are satisfactory and exceed expectations

30	Restroom facilities are hygienic and properly maintained.	-9	Restroom hygiene and maintenance need improvement
31	Cafeteria and food facilities meet employee needs.	89	Cafeteria and food services meet employee needs effectively and exceed expectations
32	Common areas (meeting rooms, waiting areas, etc.) are comfortable and usable.	80	Common areas are comfortable and highly usable, exceeding expectations
	Total	294	

Interpretation

Overall Tangible perception

Dimension	Overall Weighted Average	Interpretation
Tangibles	42	The results indicate that service performance in the tangibles dimension exceeds employee expectations. Employees are generally satisfied with workplace facilities, technology, and resources. However, improvements are required in infrastructure adequacy and maintenance of certain facilities.

Overall Dimensions Results

The Selected Automobile Company achieved a SERVQUAL rating of 37.22 for all internal service quality metrics. The data reflects positive results with respect to employee satisfaction with the received internal service quality level and conformity of service to their expectations at the overall level. The majority of employees expressed satisfaction with their internal service level and rated their internal service providers as providing service quality within or exceeding their service expectations on average in all three service quality dimensions of empathy, reliability and responsiveness.

While overall service quality metrics were rated lower than expected, service assurance ratings were low indicating an area with potential for improvement. Service assurance ratings reflect employee leadership confidence and the employee's confidence in established internal systems and/or individual employees who provide effective internal services to employees. Lack of direct and open communication between employees and their leaders is a substantial factor between the two, and therefore this area needs improvement.

Overall, the Selected Automobile Company has an ability to provide effective internal services to employees, but the organization must focus on targeted enhancements in leadership efficiency, employee trust and communication in order to equalize the level of internal service delivery among all employees.

Interpretation

Overall Dimensions Perception

Overall Weighted Average	Interpretation
37.22	The positive overall score indicates that internal service performance exceeds employee expectations. However, the negative score in the assurance dimension highlights the need to improve leadership effectiveness, trust, and communication within the organization.

Key Findings

Research performed on employees of the Selected Automobile Company was validated through an examination using the SERVQUAL scoring method. Using SERVQUAL there was an overall positive score representing that employees were receiving quality service from their employer's internal operations. The SERVQUAL measured five dimensions of employees opinion, Empathy dimension received the highest rating by employees. The organization was rated positively in both Reliability and Responsiveness therefore proving that the organizations Human Resource Processes are efficient and provide timely services to employees via effective supervision and leadership

Conversely, there was employee's dissatisfaction with their confidence in the employer's leadership, their internal systems, and the knowledge displayed by those providing them services. The dissatisfaction was shown with the negative score in the ASSURANCE dimension. The Tangibles were generally satisfactory, but there were areas (Infrastructure, Maintenance) that require improvement. Therefore, while the research shows that employees at the Selected Automobile Company do receive quality services, many areas need improvement, including communication, leadership, and training, to further improve employee productivity.

Suggestions

The study produces a number of recommendations for improving the internal service quality of a selected company. First, an emphasis will be placed on creating increased assurance through better leadership habits, creating employee trust and addressing the management / employee communication gap through regular leadership training and open communication. Second, a more efficient human resource response is required, quicker responses to employee questions and issues. Third, the company will improve its training and development programme to assist with developing employees and providing career advancement opportunities. Also, the company requires improvements in the workplace infrastructure and maintenance of the workplace; equipment and hygiene facilities to ensure employee comfort and productivity. Finally, the company should continue to demonstrate a high standard of performance in empathy by creating a work environment that fosters support and adds value to employees in order to maintain employee satisfaction and productivity.

Conclusion

Employee's perceptions toward the internal quality in selected automobile company has been through an investigation using the SERVQUAL model, which seeks to identify the differences between employee expectations and perceptions of quality within a specific company over the five dimensions (reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles). The findings from this study indicate that employees of selected automobile company perceive their quality of internal services as being above expectations based on an overall SERVQUAL score of above average performance. In particular, the dimension that received the highest score from employees was empathy. This indicates that employees feel that they are valued, respected, and being supports by the organization. Reliability and responsiveness received above average performance scores by employees as well, which indicates that employees perceive that the human resources processes within the business are efficient and reliable, they receive timely services from their supervisor, and they receive sufficient support from their supervisor.

On the other hand, the only dimension of service quality that employees did not perceive to be of high quality was assurance; As such, employees have very little confidence in their leaders ability to provide quality internal service at selected automobile company, therefore, the leaders in this organization need to make improvements in the way that they develop trust and communicate with employees. In addition, there will need to be additional focus on training and development of employees, as well as addressing to the various needs of the organization's infrastructure.

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