

STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT ON SERVICE QUALITY

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ABSTRACT

Increasing the quality of services both within private organizations and public institutions was and remains one of the top objectives in most fields of activity due to the major impact it has on income. The purpose of this research paper is to expand the knowledge regarding the effects of human resource management and risk management on service quality, considered a priority for the quality of life. Regarding the methodology, the present study structures, synthesizes and analyzes relevant information from the literature in the field of risk management and human resources management, and the possible effects between it and service quality. This article discusses the significance of human resource management and risk management in the context of service quality for private and public organizations. This study aims to contribute to the development of the literature on this topic and in conclusion highlights how a variety of managerial practices can be used in order to maximize the quality of services as well as the impact they can have on the final consumer.

KEYWORDS : *service quality, human resources management, risk.*

DOI: 10.24818/IMC/2024/04.06

1. INTRODUCTION

Quality of management is an old theoretical concept studied for a long time in managerial practice that first developed in the manufacturing industry and later in other fields. Over time, attention has turned to the quality of services, in its complexity, and has benefited from an increased focus, especially in service industries such as the public sector, but also in private organizations. One of the most relevant service providing sectors with a high importance on the quality of the services provided is the public health sector, due to the major role that quality of life has for each of us.

The purpose of this study is to identify management-based methods through which we can maximize the likely effects of human resources management and risk management on the quality of services provided to clients. The emphasis is on human resources management, because the services are provided by the human factor, and on risk management, because identifying and keeping the risks under control can increase the chances of obtaining a better-quality services.

The importance of an integrated human resource - risk - quality management system was highlighted in numerous studies from the specialized literature, the highlighting being on how the effects of human resources management and risk management can facilitate decision-making in a much better documented and deep way in order to improve service quality.

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In accordance with the proposed purpose this article is dedicated to the presentation and explanation of the basic concepts used in study, according to the literature and then it contains the basic idea of the study, the probable effects of human resources and risk management on service quality.

The approach is also identifying alternative solutions to amplify the effects of human resources management and risk management in order to improve service quality. This study aims to contribute to the development of literature on this topic and in conclusion, highlights how the human resource management and risk management can capitalize on its potential effects on the service quality.

2. MANUSCRIPT

2.1 Layout Service quality through the lens of human resources management

Management can be defined as a function that has the role of ensuring an efficient handling of activities in order to obtain the best results through the optimal use of resources. Management is a very vast topic and addresses complex problems, including decision-making, organizational and informational components (Deac et al., 2020).

Human resources management is the branch of management that deals with providing the necessary human resources, job analysis and evaluation, the reward management system, employee motivation and job satisfaction, employee performance evaluation, human resources training, and health and safety at work (Lefter et al., 2012).

The fact that human resources management plays a key role in improving the quality of services has been demonstrated over time in numerous specialized studies such as Costigan (1995), Juran (1989), Dawson and Webb (1989), Hill and Wilkinson (1995), Viney and Tuson (1997), etc. The essence of these studies refers to the fact that human resource management demonstrates its care for the quality of services through the work of employees and through specific human resource management practices and strategies (Redman & Mathews, 1998).

The quality of services has been defined in the specialized literature in various ways, being a very vast field of study. We can say that the quality of services refers to the ability of a service provider to provide satisfaction to his client in an efficient manner, so as to help the provider improve his business performance. In other words, service quality is a continuous effort to fulfill the needs and wishes of the client (Ramya et al., 2018).

To measure quality there is an international standard called ISO 9001 (Hoyle, 2017), more precisely the standard for quality management, whose role is to support organizations and institutions regardless of sector, size or location to improve performance and also be a reference for ensuring quality (ISO, 2017). Numerous specialized studies have been conducted to compare the quality of services from the customer's perspective, while also tracking the degree of customer satisfaction (Akroush et al., 2019). An integrated human resource - risk - quality management system allows organizations and institutions to approach a complex management system that handles strategies, processes, performance, risk, human resources and quality as interdependent elements, allowing their management in a unified, systematic manner in order to optimize results and achieve objectives (Yang, 2006; Ţoc et al., 2021).

We can identify a series of benefits resulting from using this management system:

- alignment of human resource management and risk management practices with the strategy of the organization or institution where they are implemented, by integrating the administration components into a coherent system.
- improving the process in a holistic way, which leads to the addition of risk management and quality assurance to performance optimization.
- the involvement of human resources in achieving objectives related to performance, risk, and quality.

An integrated human resource - risk - quality management system can facilitate decision-making in a much better documented and deep way. It can also provide predictability regarding the organization's ability to manage possible risks as well as human resources (Williams et al., 1998).

2.2 The effects of risk management on service quality

In a world characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA), the entity management from the field of service provisioning, both public and private, is facing a new reality, which imposes a rapid pace of adaptation to the current coordinates of economic environment. Decision-making flexibility and the manner of approaching risk have become basic skills for the efficient management of challenges and constraints that appear in the field of activity (Prândurel, 2023). Risk, as a concept, has known different delimitations over time, there being no generally accepted definition, but, viewed from the aspect of uncertainty, either with a negative connotation (threat, danger, disadvantage, vulnerability) or with a positive connotation (chance, opportunity), either approached in a neutral manner, including both options, it includes several clearly demarcated elements: the cause, the probability of occurrence, the condition and the consequences (Stoica, 2022).

ISO 31000:2018 defines risk as being the effect of uncertainty on objectives, specifying that "an effect is a deviation from the expected value" (ISO, 2018).

In Romania, the most comprehensive definition of risk, a neutral one, was formulated by the General Secretariat of the Government through Order no. 600/2018 regarding the approval of the Code of internal managerial control of the public entities. According to this order, risk can be defined as a situation, an event that has not occurred yet, but may occur in the future, in which case achieving prefixed results is a threatened or enhanced; thus, the risk can represent either a threat or an opportunity and has to be approached as being a combination between probability and impact (SGG, 2018a).

Just as the responsibility of achieving the objectives, including customer satisfaction, rests with the management of the organization (Drucker, 2010), risk management manifests its attitude towards the potential risks that influence the determining factors of the quality of the services provided (Kaplan & Norton, 2008).

Risk management, as a complex process of managing situations characterized by uncertainty, represents the coordinated activities to guide and control the organization regarding risks (ISO 31000:2018) and consists of four main stages: risk identification; their assessments; risk management and, monitoring and review.

Risk identification involves discovering possible sources of risk and documenting them. In the specialized literature, this topic was addressed by specialists in the field, under the aspect of research and the development of various methods and techniques applicable to identifying risks and ensuring the quality of services.

Risks interfere at all levels of the organisation if it is not managed correctly, it is shown in a study whose purpose was to highlight the importance of risk management for the effectiveness of public institutions. The conclusion was that the public sector should carry out more in-depth inclusion of risk management through a culture change (Castellini et al., 2024).

An important analysis regarding the risk in services was made by Kaoru Ishikawa (1986) - a key figure through the innovations brought in the sphere of quality management, who developed the Fishbone Diagram (Cause-Effect Diagram) - an essential work for specialists involved in performing causal and prevention analyzes of the risks in services.

Another reference author, Robert C. Camp (2006), laid the foundations of the notion of benchmarking and developed the characteristics of this process that supports the identification of risks with the aim of optimizing the quality of services.

In a study made in laboratories regarding the safety of workers, the protection of the environment, an important role in decision-making was the one of risk management. The conclusion showed the importance to comply with the international requirements regarding risk and risk management as ISO

31000, and to use techniques of risk management process in daily routine in order to accomplish the organisation purpose (Tziakou et al, 2023).

As previously mentioned, the quality of services refers to the ability of a service provider to ensure satisfaction to the client, and to improve their own performance. In this context, to ensure an optimal level of satisfaction, compliance with ethical principles and professional demands cannot be avoided (Solomon, 1993).

Therefore, the identification of risk factors must consider the impact areas related to customer perceptions, without losing sight of the economic-financial influence on the entity's results and the way professional standards and the legislative framework are respected. Another important analysis was made by Douglas Hubbard highlighting the idea that effective risk management is based on a correct assessment of risk factors, also he was promoting the use of statistical and analytical methods for their identification and evaluation (Hubbard, 2009).

In order to analyze the risks, there is a multidimensional research tool, designed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, the SERVQUAL model. The purpose of this model is to capture consumer expectations and perceptions of a service.

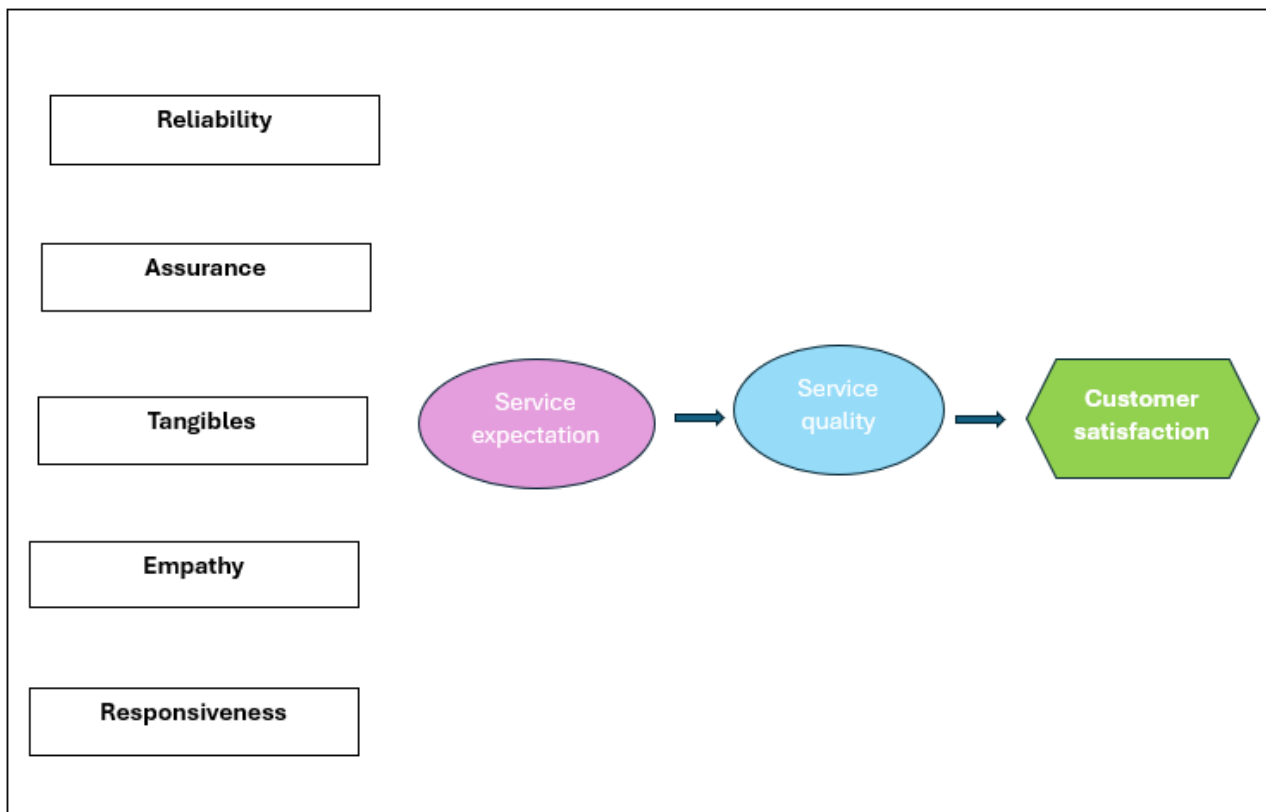


Figure: SERVQUAL model, contribution to service quality

Source: adapted from SGG (2018b)

Among the most relevant methods for identifying risks that impact the quality of services, it is appreciated to be:

- SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), the service offered to the market is analyzed from the perspective of its strengths and weaknesses, but also through the lens of opportunities and threats generated by the external environment. This classic method can help management better understand the risks that could impact the quality of the service provided;

- Pareto Analysis – highlights the critical aspects with major impact on the decrease of service quality. Through this analysis, the elements and conditions that determine the quality of the service can be identified, providing a list of the critical problems that require an approach focused on finding solutions;
- Brainstorming - used especially in the field of banking services to generate ideas in a relatively short time and to stimulate creative thinking. One of the advantages of the method is the escape from cliché thinking, the team work being used to identify the causal context of a problem, while also looking for solutions;
- Feedback from customers, a method for identifying potential risks, by carrying out interviews and surveys. The purpose is to get information that are perceived as problematic or defective by the users of the services;
- Analysis of the 5 "Why?". This is a simple but effective technique that can be used by direct management for the root cause of a problem. In the context of risks that can affect the level of quality of services, this method is useful in providing a better understanding of the causality of some deficiencies;
- Fishbone Diagram (Ishikawa Method) – used to identify the factors that could generate risks and problems related to the quality of services (SGG, 2018b).



Figure: Methods for identifying risks that impact the quality of services

Source: adapted from SGG (2018a)

Risk assessment, the stage following risk effects, is carried out considering the type of risk response, based on prioritization. The evaluation itself consists in estimating the probability of the materialization of the risks effect and the impact on the quality of the service. If the risk materializes, resulting the risk exposure, a combination of probability and impact occurs (SGG, 2018a).

The hierarchization of risks, respectively the classification into categories called critical, major, moderate and minor, allows establishing an order of priorities for solving risks, for allocating resources to the most significant problems. Based on the results obtained, the organizations have the ability to anticipate and reduce the risks associated with the services provided, managing to ensure an appropriate quality of services and an optimal level of satisfaction among customers (SGG, 2018a).

Risk control consists in establishing and implementing the type of response to the risk. At the same time, in this stage, the level of risk tolerance can be defined, respectively the amount of risk that an entity can tolerate (Hubbard, 2009).

An important study was made by Boateng in order to examine how the quality of medical services was influenced by risk management practices. The study consists of a comparative analysis between private and public hospitals in Accra. During the study, questionnaires were addressed to the staff and patients regarding risk management practices, respectively with questionnaires regarding the expectations and experience of services. The results of the research revealed that effective risk management was not applied in public hospitals, the impact on service quality performance being negative. On the other hand, private hospitals implemented several practices specific to risk management, and obtained a positive impact on the quality level of their services. The study shows that management's attitude is essential, and for the effective implementation of some service quality improvement initiatives, it is necessary to employ consistent organizational resources (Boateng & Arthur, 2014).

Another study carried out to investigate the relationship between risk management practices and service quality in the ambulatory departments of public hospitals in Gauteng. Hospital staff were surveyed about risk management practices, while other sets of questionnaires were distributed to patients that surveyed their perceptions of interacting with ambulatory services. The study revealed that public hospital ambulatory departments in Gauteng performed well, with high patient satisfaction scores. The level of service quality was positively influenced by aspects such as caring and knowledgeable staff and good patient information records. At the same time, it was concluded that, significantly, the quality of services was positively impacted by the risk management practices, such as the commitment and support of the management, the lack of continuous training of the staff (Mnyani, 2009).

The results of another study showed the effect of the risk reduction instruments and strategies which can be used in third-party logistics companies (3PL) to increase service quality. A 3PL service provider is an external company hired to manage the supply chain or part of another company's logistics operations. The study aimed to analyze the most important risks for the road transport industry, their implications and mitigation strategies. The results showed that in this industry there are important risks that the managers did not manage effectively. The main risks in 3PL companies are related to lack of coordination, lack of visibility from the human resources management point of view, and poor service quality. This study highlights the impact of risks on the overall processes of a company and examines how the quality of transport services can be improved through a good strategy of human resources management (Ersoy & Tanyeri, 2021).

Risk management was analyzed in another research paper in order to study the effects of the most difficult task during the provision of health services. The purpose of this study was to review the specialized literature associated with the critical contribution of risk management theory in the evaluation of the quality of dental services. The results reinforce the point that the application of risk management theory in dental practices can continuously improve service quality, while reducing the incidence and severity of accidents that could lead to medical malpractice or even professional liability lawsuits (Mirandani & Setijanto, 2022).

A study was made based on mathematical models, in order to develop strategies for customer compensation and price adaptation for profit maximization. The result of the study showed the importance of service providers' attitude towards risk in decision-making. Also it was established a list of factor that impacts the consumer's perception of service quality, following that the effect of these factors will be continuously researched. (Chen et al., 2022).

The importance of the effects of risk management was highlighted in a research paper, having 205 respondents. The purpose of the study was to improve that in the trade of frozen products it is very important to manage the risks of the supply chain in order to ensure the quality of services (Buntak et al., 2023).

Based on the specialised literature, there are possible methodes in which the effect of risk management can help healthcare organizations achieve improvements in service quality:

- Early detection of potential risks - collecting and analyzing data from incident reports, patterns and trends can be identified, so that by proactively identifying potential risks, corrective measures can be taken promptly to prevent adverse events that may affect patient safety;
- Prevention of adverse events - investigating incidents in detail, understanding the causes that led to adverse events or accidents, organizations can implement measures to prevent similar incidents in the future;
- Process standardization. This ensures good visibility on identified risks, transparency and accountability throughout the organization. This way all staff members follow the same protocols to effectively and consistently address risks and maintain patient safety;
- Data-driven decision-making process. This approach, based on data collected and analyzed in advance, provides essential information about the most common risks and their favorable context, based on which the management can make correct decisions for the efficient and effective allocation of resources, for the application of well-directed strategies risk reduction, thus obtaining improved results for patients;
- Compliance with healthcare regulations and industry standards – critical to ensuring patient safety and quality of care. By monitoring their compliance, healthcare organizations can avoid situations with negative legal and financial impact, managing to maintain patient care at high standards.
- Real-time online reporting and tracking of incidents, thus facilitating the identification of trends, potential risks and timely resolution. Ensuring anonymity encourages employees to report incidents without fear of retaliation;
- Monitoring with the help of software solutions the effectiveness of interventions and process improvement initiatives;
- Document management for risk management activities, namely the management of documents related to risk management, policies and procedures; simplifying the process of obtaining approvals; ensuring an appropriate audit trail;
- Standardized staff training through the use of specific employee training modules, capable of monitoring their progress and generating reports on compliance with mandatory training requirements;
- Corrective and preventive action management, respectively the identification and implementation of corrective actions for already existing problems and the establishment of effective preventive actions to mitigate potential risks. A platform that allows communication and collaboration between the factors responsible for solving incidents, allows the implementation of solutions on time.
- Tracking and reporting based on software functionalities that allow the analysis of risk trends, the evaluation of the effectiveness of the adopted strategies and compliance with the procedural and legislative framework, so that management will make data-based decisions, identify areas for improvement and track progress over time (Ratcliffe, 2024).

2.3 The study of the relationship between the quality of health services and the degree of patient satisfaction

Health institutions are some of the most representative institution providing services, and the quality of these services is the most important factor given the fact that we are talking about the health of each of us. Quality services and customer satisfaction have become increasingly important phrases nowadays, and management has developed so that it can meet these requirements they incur. However, important shortcomings regarding customer satisfaction are still present and one of the branches of management that can help fill the gaps is human resources management. That is why the aim of this chapter is to

study the importance of service quality by analyzing the relationship between service quality in hospitals and the degree of patient satisfaction.

The importance of the patient – healthcare provider relationship is also highlighted by a study conducted in China (Shan et al., 2016). The Hospital Management Association was experiencing a significant increase in medical litigation arising from medical malpractice cases. This study revealed the close relationship between patient satisfaction and the quality of health services based on the relationship between the patient and the medical specialist. In a questionnaire, the answers given by the respondents showed that 24% of them are dissatisfied with hospital services. In general, older people, those from rural areas, or those who paid less for health services, were more likely to be satisfied with medical services. Also, those who had a positive experience answered that they are happy with the attitude of the medical staff in hospitals.

The conclusion of that study is that patient dissatisfaction is generated by the lack of trust that citizens show towards the quality of health services. However, it is not enough to focus only on the doctor-patient relationship, because there are other factors that influence patient satisfaction, factors such as the additional costs paid, the poor quality of patient care services, and the differences between benefits included in healthcare plans (Shan et al., 2016).

The study can be considered a wake-up call for China, given the implications and importance of health services, outlining the need for reforms in the health system, reforms that include new policies, providing appropriate resources to meet the needs of the (healthcare) system, both in terms of human resources and equipment, as well as a review of the health insurance mechanisms; all this in order to improve the overall health of citizens.

Following scientific research, it has been observed how patient expectations can generate different patient satisfaction and different patient perceptions and behaviors. One factor that captured attention was trust: the trust between the patient and the specialist. Over time, various conceptual models have been outlined to measure the quality of medical services and patient satisfaction, in order to provide support to hospital management in the sphere of control mechanisms as well as improving the performance of specialists.

A model was outlined to highlight the relationship between the quality of health services and patients/professionals. Patients influence the quality of health services by correctly describing their symptoms and by following the prescribed treatment. Patient loyalty results from the good quality of the medical services, with patients having more confidence when they go to a doctor that was recommended by somebody they knew.

Several factors were identified as determinants of patient satisfaction: access to health services, the medical care received, communication, etc. Hospital conditions also influence patient satisfaction.

As it can be seen in Figure no. 1, a theoretical model was outlined by Aditi Naidu regarding the factors that influence patient satisfaction, as well as the close relationship between it and the quality of services provided by hospitals (Naidu, 2009).

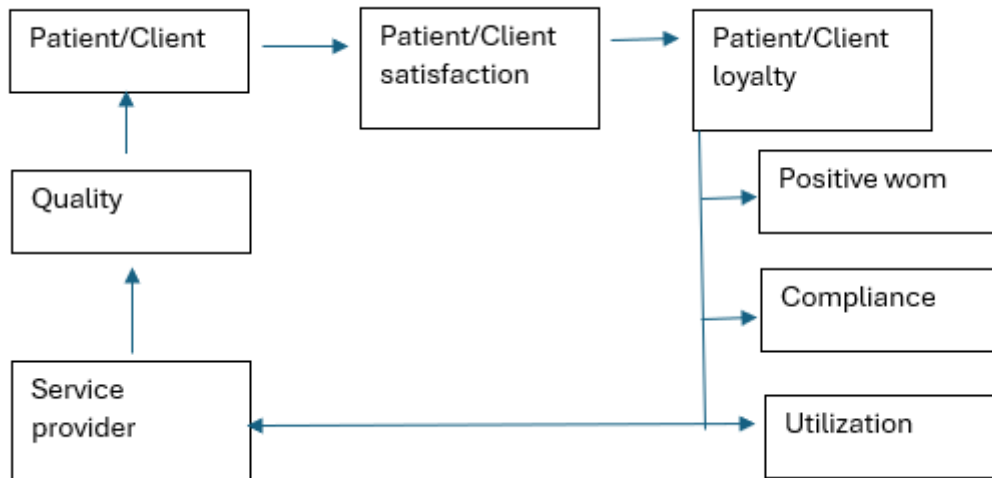


Figure 1. The relation between health service quality and patients
Source: adapted from Naidu (2009, p.378)

One of the most widely used standardized multidimensional instruments for measuring the quality of health services is SERVQUAL. It operates by analyzing the expectations and perceptions of patients with the help of a questionnaire that includes sets of 22 questions targeting five dimensions, such as: empathy, response time, reliability, friendliness of employees and their ability to inspire confidence, as well as the quality of used equipment (Silvestro, 2005).

In order to better understand how patients can increase the level of satisfaction with the medical services offered by the healthcare system, a study was carried out in the UK. The aim of the study was to support hospital management in prioritizing actions dealing with internal difficulties in hospitals, in order to obtain the highest possible level of patient satisfaction.

The study's conclusion identifies a climate in the UK's National Health Service that is constrained by ever-increasing patient expectations and identifies a major need for management to channel their decisions around patient priorities. This study also showed that it is necessary to apply the SERVQUAL method to analyze the issues of the healthcare service, to identify the differences between the way patients and hospital management perceive different issues (Silvestro, 2005).

Focusing attention on the quality of healthcare services is a major objective for European Union (EU) member countries that have tried in recent years to improve this aspect of healthcare systems, in order to obtain a high level of patient satisfaction. These efforts have been supplemented by EU support in establishing measures to assess patient satisfaction and monitor the progress of individual performance of medical professionals, for example, through regular surveys of patients aimed at determining their level of satisfaction with the medical services (Fujisawa & Klazinga, 2017).

Based on the information obtained from the literature, the analysis of the health system and the news on human resources management, I set some priority actions to enhance the effects of human resources management on patient satisfaction and quality of health services:

- the implementation of an AI tool for measuring customer satisfaction by applying a questionnaire sent by e-mail and centralizing them on a platform;
- the implementation of a methodology regarding the attitude that the hospital staff must have towards the patients;
- the involvement of medical specialists in new projects or by involvement in dealing with complex cases, to help increase the motivation of employees and retain specialists;
- the digitalization of specific medical documentation such as medical prescriptions, medical certificates, analysis results, etc.

- the implementation of a tool to count the free, anonymous opinions of the hospital staff towards the climate within the hospitals and the satisfaction at the workplace.

2.4 Methodology

This article is based on an analysis of specialized literature and documentation specific to the chosen subject, found in various publications and scientific articles. The purpose of this article is to illustrate the potential contributions of human resources management and risk management in order to improve the quality of services within private organizations or public institutions.

Therefore, we summarized numerous sources of secondary data, such as articles, reports and books from the following areas: the study of service quality, the influence of human resources management on the quality of services in hospitals, and the influence of risk management on the quality of services. In this study we have analyzed over 36 articles, books and online resources, of which more than 20% were sources indexed in Web of Science, capturing the effects of the human resources management and risk management on service quality.

In order to analyze and assess the direct or indirect effects of the application of risk management on service quality, a review of the specialized literature was carried out, by accessing databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Researchgate, PubMed, Academia, EDU, BRILL, Wiley Online Library.

Regarding the selection criteria it was used the key words risk management, service quality, customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, risk prevention.

The methods used in this research were descriptive, given the fact that the quality of services is a very vast and long-analyzed subject.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this article underline the importance of the effects of human resources management as well as risk management on the quality of services, through the lens of specific management factors such as employee attitude, employee motivation, use of risk management, or customer satisfaction.

This article proposes a series of practical recommendations that can be considered relevant to human resources management, for improving the quality of services such as:

- the use of artificial intelligence to provide employees with specific training platforms so that they can maintain a high level of performance;
- improving communication at the level of employees by providing some tools that have the role of facilitating communication and encouraging interaction between colleagues, the aim being to improve the working climate so that the quality of services offered by employees is as high as possible;
- facilitating communication between employee and client through digital platforms that give clients access to service providers in order to provide feedback on the services received and increase client satisfaction with them. Improving efficiency by digitizing the documentation specific to the healthcare system.

Regarding the risk management, we propose some practical recommendations to improve the quality of services:

- Clear procedure of activities / standardization of operations to ensure the appropriate provision of the service;
- Non-conformity detection measures by introducing additional verification systems/methods/principles;
- The introduction of tools for obtaining Feedback regularly from customers;
- The use of IT technology for the automation of repetitive tasks with the potential for human error or chronofage;

- Establishing qualitative Key Performance Indicators (KPI) to evaluate non-quantifiable variables, scaling them: degree of satisfaction, opinions, appreciations, availability for recommendations;
- The permanent training of the staff and the introduction of measures to motivate them by offering an improved salary package or by introducing a transparent advancement system;
- The introduction of compensations to customers who declare themselves dissatisfied or affected (vouchers, discounts, bonuses);
- The use of risk management platforms, developed by software solution providers specialized in the field of activity;
- Risk control and the monitoring of the implementation of the measures adopted are a critical component of the applied risk management in order to maintain and improve the quality of services - an essential, defining aspect for the management's success in facing the challenges of the economic environment.

Risk management has not always been a priority of company management, which in general have not focused on planning strategies for efficient management of potential crises. The current economic and business environment demonstrates that the competitive advantage of companies, including those in the field of services, appears as a direct effect of the way in which managers realize that the fulfillment of objectives is closely related to the attitude towards risk in the decision-making process. This article highlighted the very wide range of tools available to management when it comes to complex items such as service quality. It would be interesting to study in future specialized research if this difficulty given by the complexity of quality could be diminished by quality management practices. This article is a preliminary study for a scientific research paper that focuses on the analysis of maximizing the quality of services through the lens of human resources management and through the influence of risk management. We intend to continue the analysis with in-depth research on the shortcomings currently existing in risk management and human resources management that can influence service quality.

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