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Predicting Parents' Satisfaction with Child Care Centers in Johor Bahru, Malaysia during the Pandemic

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Abstract

The objectives of this paper is to use SERVQUAL dimensions to investigate client satisfaction in Johor Bahru's child care centres. This study was conducted with the participation of parents in Johor Bahru. A total of 400 individuals responded to the questionnaire, all of whom are residents with children of Johor Bahru. The information was gathered through an online survey, and it was analysed using SPSS, where hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis. Our findings revealed that each of the independent variables has a significant impact on consumer satisfaction. In order for Child Care Centers to improve their customer satisfaction in the education industry, this research provides some ideas for the industry to move forward amid the challenges faced due to Covid-19.

Keywords: Customer Satisfaction, Child Care Centre, SERVQUAL, Johor Bahru.

Introduction

Since customer satisfaction is so crucial to organisations nowadays, our study will concentrate on it. The fundamental cause for the increase or decrease in the price of a child's education over time has been the customer's satisfaction with the quality of education. Customer satisfaction is a word that has a significant impact on a company. Customer satisfaction is influenced by a variety of elements including customer feedback, service quality, business image, and reputation. As a result, the educational industry has been dealing with a consumer satisfaction problem for years. In a nutshell, the purpose of this research is to learn more about the position of Johor Bahru's customers. This study will provide some outside insights, different opinions, and a better understanding of the customer satisfaction towards child care centres in Johor Bahru. Child care center often extend to be the tuition center for the same children.

Problem Statement

In the midst of the widespread COVID-19 outbreak, schools and education sectors in Johor Bahru are being temporarily closed by order of the government. A shift away from the traditional classroom has occurred. Online education becomes the government's default setting until the COVID-19 issue is resolved. The purpose of this study is to ascertain students'

satisfaction with online and traditional classroom learning in Johor Bahru. Student satisfaction is critical because it reflects their performance and engagement in the educational package (Ponto and Nurlaily, 2020).

Many parents and students are uncomfortable with online learning or find it unacceptable, as online learning entails responsibility for teacher education as well as parent and student education. This type of challenge also had a significant impact on the customer and their level of satisfaction with the education. Some parents may oppose online learning lessons in comparison to offline lessons because they are more challenging for both parents and students. Students always struggle to focus on their studies when using a device to learn. It will also be a significant challenge for the education centre to normalise this mode of instruction and ensure that it is accepted by all. Due to the limited study on the factors that affect satisfaction in child care centers in the time of pandemic, this research was aimed to fulfil this gap.

Research Question

The major objective of this research paper is to investigate the factors that influence customer satisfaction towards child care centres in Johor Bahru. In line with the research objectives (ROs), this research has developed the following research questions:

- 1. Is there any significant relationship between the customer satisfaction and tangibles of child care centres?
- 2. Is there any significant relationship between the customer satisfaction and empathy of child care centres?
- 3. Is there any significant relationship between the customer satisfaction and reliability of child care centres?
- 4. Is there any significant relationship between the customer satisfaction and responsiveness of child care centres?
- 5. Is there any significant relationship between the customer satisfaction and assurance of child care centres?

Literature Review

Customer Satisfaction

For companies to have and sustain a competitive edge, customer satisfaction and measurement problems are critical. Businesses that form components of the marketing mix by recognising the desires of their customers are rewarded with consumer satisfaction and benefit. Customer satisfaction, according to Leninkumar (2017), is an attitude formed after consumers buy goods or use services. Jamaluddin and Ruswanti (2017) discovered that providing adequate service quality increases customer satisfaction. That means that a consumer would hold a product or service for which they met or surpassed their expectations.

Reorganization of factors influencing customer satisfaction is essential to other sectors, according to Nguyen and Phan (2018), since it can attract more customers or retain customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction may be used to gauge a customer's sensitivity to the quality of a product or service (Milner & Furnham, 2017). Some experts advise businesses to "concentrate on a target that's more closely related to consumer equity" to prevent issues resulting from the kaleidoscope of customer preferences and differences.

Rather than worrying whether consumers are happy, they urge businesses to find out how customers keep them accountable (Wreden, 2020). The definition for the variables for this study are as follows:

1. Tangibles - Equipment, physical facilities, and staff appearance are all sufficient.
2. Empathy - involves giving each client individual attention and care.
3. Reliability - refers to a service's ability to perform consistently and precisely.
4. Responsiveness - refers to a company's ability to respect its clients and be willing to represent them.
5. Assurance - service providers are professional and courteous, and they instil faith and confidence in their customers.

Tangibles

It can be described, for example, as a reduction in the visibility of resources required to provide service to customers. Modern and trendy looks, as well as sophisticated equipment, can influence customer satisfaction in education centers. The colour and design of the box or centre, for example, are distinctive. A visually pleasing or attractive environment is also a factor. According to Felix (2017), effective word of mouth contact is when a customer interacts with others to learn about the services rendered. Customers may converse with a friend, acquaintance, or family member, for example.

Customers' evaluations of a company's operation are often focused on the facts that accompany the service. The research paper's hypotheses test shows that tangibility and consumer satisfaction are positively associated. Since consumers are still searching for concrete measures of service quality. Customers also agree to review the education centre's facilities or the appearance of the education centre's employees. As a result, tangibility is a critical factor in ensuring customer satisfaction (Hossain, 2019).

Empathy

Empathy can be described as a company's desire to care for its customers and provide personalised assistance, referring to the ability to display concern and personal attention. Sensitivity, accessibility, and an attempt to consider the needs of users are all examples of empathy. It's also a connection between customer access, communication, and comprehension.

Communication is a way employees connect and communicate with their customers in a language or form they understand and pay individual attention to them. Access can be described as the approachability and ease of interaction with customers; communication is a way employees interact and communicate with their customers in a language or form they understand and pay individual attention to them. Employees make every effort to get to know their clients and their specific needs.

According to Selvakumar (2015), customer satisfaction and empathy have a major relationship. While the writers Asogwa et al (2014) iscovered that consumer satisfaction toward empathy could be less important or non-existent.

Reliability

The ability to deliver a service that is error-free or consistent in performance is also known as reliability. According to Selvakumar (2015), coping with whatever issues customers have, correctly performing required services, and ensuring that their service is error-free and on time are only a few examples of service quality efficiency, and they can have a huge effect on customer satisfaction. The degree to which the service is delivered to the planned and promised specifications, or what they believe they have paid for, is referred to as reliability.

According to Vanishree Pabalkar et al (2016), the consumer finds reliability to be one of the most critical aspects of service quality. One of the dimensions that make up service quality is reliability. According to Dhanda and Bala (2016), reliability has a significant impact on overall customer satisfaction. Milner (2017) also reported that the data they obtained was used to assess the validity and reliability of their results. This demonstrates that the reliability component is an important factor that influences customer satisfaction.

Responsiveness

There are five dimensions to service quality, and responsiveness is one of those dimensions. According to Felix (2017), responsiveness is characterised as employees who are happy to assist customers when they need assistance. In the twenty-first century, there are many competitors; if consumers are dissatisfied with the service provided by employees, they will switch to another competitor; customers will still prefer the best. Understanding the customer's desires and needs, employee attention, and vigilance toward the customer's concerns are all examples of responsiveness in service quality (Khadka, 2017).

Furthermore, according to Selvakumar (2015), the expected level of customer satisfaction is determined by the difference between the service of responsiveness and the expected level of customer satisfaction. Customers will be dissatisfied with the service level if the instructor fails to assist or is unable to assist the customer in solving the issue. Customer satisfaction is highly influenced by responsiveness, and when workers pay attention to or give attention to the issues that customers face, the customers are more likely to be satisfied (Selvakumar, 2015).

Assurance

One of the dimensions in the SERVQUAL model is assurance or protection. According to Fragoso and Espinoza (2017), assurance or protection is widely used to evaluate employees' comprehension and politeness, as well as their ability to achieve accreditation. According to Fragoso and Espinoza (2017)'s study, customers prefer protection or guarantee.

Furthermore, according to Felix (2017), assurance is described as the employees' understanding and demeanour, as well as their ability to obtain accreditation and faith. Ability, good manners, credibility, and protection are some of the components that must be met to provide assurance. Although ability refers to the staff's knowledge and abilities, good manners refer to the staff's friendliness, reverence, and tolerance for customers, integrity refers to the staff's honesty and ability to gain customers' confidence, and protection refers to the staff's freedom from danger and uncertainty.

According to Felix (2017)'s research, customer satisfaction has a significant impact on service efficiency, and assurance has a significant impact on customer loyalty. It means that as the service quality improves, the consumer will be more satisfied with the education service.

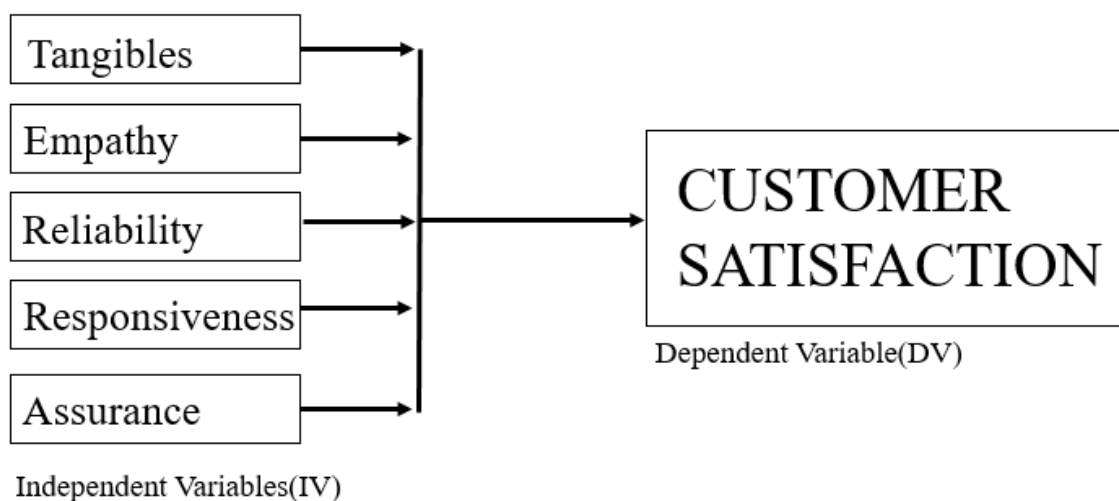


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Adapted from Parasuraman et al (1985)

Hypotheses of the Study

Independent variables which include tangibles, empathy, reliability, responsiveness and assurance are the variable that will affect customer satisfaction level regarding to children education services. These are the hypothesis of study:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant positive relationship between tangibles and customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant positive relationship between empathy and customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant positive relationship between reliability and customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant positive relationship between responsive and customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis 5: There is a significant positive relationship between assurance and customer satisfaction.

Methods

Our study's target demographic is those parents who had child are enrolled in child care centres and citizens of Johor Bahru. These centers often extend to be the tuition center for the same children. The research employs an online survey questionnaire to collect the data. Sample size refers to the number of people who will participate in a survey. The sample size for the research is 400 respondents, according to (Hossain, 2019). A larger sample size, according to the researcher, will uncover more information.

Results

Table 1

Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	.768a	.590	.585	.43071

Source: Developed for research

Table: 2

Multiple Regression

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.760	.139		5.450	.000
IV 1	.699	.034	.714	20.299	.000
IV 2	.680	.037	.683	18.613	.000
IV 3	.699	.035	.708	19.968	.000
IV 4	.655	.038	.658	17.401	.000
IV 5	.595	.042	.583	14.311	.000

Source: Developed for the research

From Table 1, the value of adjusted R-square is 0.585 which mean it indicates of 58.5% of the variations of the customer satisfaction of children education package in Johor Bahru can be explain by the tangibles, empathy, responsiveness, reliability and assurance. However, there is 42.5% of the variation cannot be explained in this research. Besides, the f-value is 0.000 lower than the significant level 0.05. Therefore, the model is significant and all of the five independent variables which are tangibles, empathy, responsiveness, reliability and assurance can use to explain the variation of the dependent variable.

Multiple Regression Equation

Customer Satisfaction = 0.760 + 0.699 (Tangibles) + 0.680 (Empathy) + 0.699 (Reliability) + 0.655 (Responsiveness) + 0.595 (Assurance)

Based on the Table 2, it shows that the independent variables are at the significant level of 0.05. H1,2,3,4 and 5, show there are significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The decision rule for the test is to reject null hypothesis when the p-value is less than 0.05, otherwise, do not reject null hypothesis. Therefore, according all the independent variables are significant as the p-value of them are 0.000, 0.000, 0.000, 0.000 and 0.000, which is all less than 0.05. Thus, all null hypothesis should be rejected and all the alternative hypotheses should be accepted(see Table 3).

Table 3
Summary of Findings

Hypothesis		Result
1	There is a significant positive relationship between tangibles and customer satisfaction	Accepted
2	There is a significant positive relationship between empathy and customer satisfaction	Accepted
3	There is a significant positive relationship between reliability and customer satisfaction	Accepted
4	There is a significant positive relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction	Accepted
5	There is a significant positive relationship between assurance and customer satisfaction	Accepted

Conclusion

This study had managed to fulfill all the research objectives set up earlier. A reputable tuition centre must deliver on its promises consistently and accurately. A few steps needed to be taken to demonstrate the tuition center's reliability: The timetable is designed to correspond to the syllabus in order to prevent students from falling behind in their studies, and it is not easily altered for any reason. Teachers do not frequently miss class or always bring a substitute teacher. A reputable tuition centre should prepare additional teaching materials, such as homework or small exams, to monitor the student's progress. They not only educate, but also ensure that students comprehend and learn. Additionally, the additional classes promised must be completed. It is a value-added item for the customer. Parents will undoubtedly be pleased.

Theoretically, this study reaffirm that Servqual antecedents can explain up to 59% of satisfaction from the antecedents like tangibles, empathy, reliability, responsiveness and assurance. The findings is also novel in the context of child care center and with the affect from the pandemic of which tangibles remained as the most important antecedent among the rest that tested in this study. We can conclude here that with or without COVID, people are still looking for tangibilities in order to satisfy them. In this case, a service provider of child care center in the southern of Malaysia.

As a result, this findings is useful for the tuition owners. If the tuition centre meets the aforementioned reliability requirements, client satisfaction will result. According to the research's beta value of 0.699, the most important factors are shared by tangibility and reliability. The more tangibles included in the education package, the more satisfied the buyer is. This means that customer-oriented employees are well-dressed, the interior and exterior of the tuition centre are spacious, the facilities are adequate, and the resources, such as book references and projectors, are visually appealing. As for the researcher, tangibility continue to play a vital role in determining satisfaction. Centers also need to to have the ability to perform consistently and precisely services to the parents even during pandemic time.

One of the research's limitations is that it focuses exclusively on the upper reaches of Johor's urban areas, such as Johor Bahru. Each housing estate is estimated to have a population of between 1 and 1.1 million people. Other areas, such as Senai and Kota Tinggi, were omitted. Because less than half of the people in Johor participated in this study, the results are skewed because the sample size does not represent the entire population.

For future research, research must include tangibles as it play a critical role in determining the service quality of tuition centres. Parents' first impression is formed by the signboard and front desk. The signboard should be visually appealing, easily memorable, and easy to read. Concerning the front desk, it should always be clean and tidy, the brochure, flyer, and name cards should be prominently displayed, and the receptionist should always smile nicely. Other factors such as brand trust could also be included in the study in enhancing the customer satisfaction among the users of tuition centers.

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