



**CUSTOMER SERVICE IN KINDERGARTENS IN
KOTA KINABALU, SABAH**

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, kindergartens in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah have been sprouting like mushrooms after the rain. This is due to the increasing number of double income single child nuclear families and working parents who demand for kindergarten service, and increase in awareness on quality early childhood education as a foundation before they enroll to a much more formal education. Parents nowadays are becoming more demanding on the quality of service provided by the kindergartens and their expectations and perceptions vary from one another. So, kindergarten operators are finding it difficult to meet these expectations and also to know what the parents' perceptions toward the service provided are.

The aim of this project paper is to examine the level of service quality as a determinant of parents' satisfaction toward the services provided in kindergartens in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. This research was only conducted in kindergartens operating in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

The findings have shown that the overall mean values were ranging between 3.138 to 4.514 which indicated that the respondents are almost satisfied and satisfied with the service quality that are being offered by the kindegartens in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. From the results of the Linear Regression analysis, it also shown that there is a significant relationship between the service quality and the parents' satisfaction. Here most of the respondents for this research are working in the private sector and followed closely by those who are working in the public sector.

1. INTRODUCTION

Private and public kindergartens both play a vital role to the public society in providing early childhood education for young children in Malaysia. Increase awareness in quality early childhood education amongst parents have made the kindergarten business become more competitive. The service quality in particular, especially in early childhood industry has become more important than ever in increasing parents' satisfaction. Research has shown that good service quality leads to the extension of existing customers and attraction of new ones, reduced costs, and enhanced corporate image, positive word of mouth recommendation, and, ultimately, enhanced profitability (Berry *et al.*, 1989; Reichheld and Sasser, 1990; Rust and Zahorik, 1993; Cronin *et al.*, 2000; Kang and James, 2004; Yoon and Suh, 2004). Most kindergarten owners agree that customer service is one of the most important factors in attaining and maintaining customers. Parents' complaint on poor service delivery, lack of physical facilities and equipment, may affect the image, credibility and hence profitability of kindergartens in the long run. However, measuring service quality seems to pose difficulties for service providers because of the unique characteristics of service: intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability, and perishability (Bateson, 1995). This chapter will explain on the background and scope of the study, problem statement, research question, objectives of study and significance of study including definition of terms and limitations in conducting this research.