

A STUDY ON DISABLED PEOPLE PERCEPTIONS ON SERVICE QUALITY PROVIDED BY THE INDUSTRIAL TRAINING CENTER AND REHABILITATION (PLPP)

Salmah Binti Salman, Siti Nazira Binti Mohd Nazir, Siti Nur Raidah Binti Md Yusuf; &
Jasmine Binti Ahmad

Universiti Teknologi MARA Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia
jasmi661@salam.uitm.edu.my

ABSTRACT

Service is an act or performance and an activity or a series of activities which take place in interactions with a contact person or a physical machine and which provides customer satisfaction. This study identifies the disabled people (students in PLPP) perceptions on the service quality provided by the Rehabilitation and Industrial Training Centre (PLPP) in Bangi, Selangor. Disabled person or generally referred to as 'disabled' are those with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. This study focuses on the level of awareness towards the type of services provided to the disabled students such as educational and training programmes, facilities as well as services. In addition, the study identifies the satisfaction level on services provided by PLPP through self-administered questionnaire. The findings of this study contribute to the understanding of crucial factors in rendering services for the disabled students.

Keywords: *Disabled people, service quality, customer perception, satisfaction*

INTRODUCTION

People with disabilities are deprived of many fundamental rights such as freedom of movement, education, employment, enjoying social life and even voting. These factors cause the disabled people to be further marginalised apart from the perception by society that they are fully dependent on the general society in order to carry on with their daily routines.

In Malaysia, the overall statistics shows that there are an estimated 2.7 million people that are categorized as disable. This does not include the number of senior citizens who became disabled through old age and illnesses. A total of 197,519 disabled people are registered with the Department of Social Welfare Malaysia (DSW) by the end of 2006 and most of the physically disabled has a chance to gain knowledge and working skills in the Industrial Training Center and Rehabilitation (PLPP) in Bangi Selangor (Tan & Naziaty Yaacob, 2008). PLPP has been in operation since 1992 and until now an estimated 1440 disable students has completed their vocational training. In 2010, 128 students registered in PLPP to undergo the training programmes. Malaysian government has allocated a sum of RM 20,552,300 under the Seventh Malaysia Plan (RMKe-9) for the disabled.

In every organization, the customers are the main focus in providing quality services and products. The organization has to take note on the customer's perception and expectation

in order to enhance the service quality. In the service industry, customer's perceptions and satisfactions are extremely important as the main objective is to provide customers with the best possible services. Under the Social Welfare Department, Rehabilitation and Industrial Training Centre is an institution that provides services to the disabled through Vocational Training, Pre-vocational Training and Medical Rehabilitation. In order to provide high quality services, survey should be conducted to gain customer's feedback on the quality of services provided. Through the gathered information PLPP could improve the quality of services effectively.

There is always an issue about not enough facilities provided for the disable people such as provision of special class or training, toilet, library and special sport and recreational facilities. Accessibility to the facilities provided for the disabled people all over Malaysia was also one of the major issues debated by the government in parliament. These include walkways without functional ramps for wheelchair users and some walkways have uncovered manholes. Oftentimes, by building ramps and placing the wheelchair logos to the doors of toilets are not disabled-friendly.

There are standards for such facilities. The Standards & Industrial Research Institute of Malaysia (SIRIM) has published the Malaysian Standard 1184 (MS 1184) and Malaysian Standard 1331 (MS 1331) specifically for this purpose. MS 1184 pertains to access for disabled persons to public buildings while MS 1331 is on access outside buildings. The code of practice for these two standards is often ignored. Builders are often left to do their own interpretation of such facilities. Interpretations of such facilities from the viewpoint of non-disabled persons or persons who have no understanding of disability most times render such facilities unusable.

The purpose of this study is to focus on the level of service quality provided by PLPP to the students. The specific objectives are:

- 1.1 To study the level of awareness among the students on the services and facilities provided by PLPP.
- 1.2 To identify the level of satisfaction towards the services and facilities provided to the students by PLPP.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The importance of customers' satisfaction has been highlighted by many researchers and academicians. Zairi (2000) said "Customers are the purpose of what we do and rather than them depending on us, we very much depend on them. The customer is not the source of problem, we shouldn't perhaps make a wish that customers 'should go away' because our future and our security will be put in jeopardy". That is the main reason why organisations today are focusing on customer's satisfaction. Parasuraman et al., (1985) looks at perceived quality of service as the difference between customers' expectation and their perceptions of the actual service received. Other researchers look at perceived service quality as an attitude.

Many researchers have looked into the importance of customer satisfaction. Kotler (2000) defined satisfaction as: "a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product are perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his or her expectations". Hoyer and Mac Innis (2001) said that satisfaction can be associated with feelings of acceptance, happiness, relief, excitement, and delight. There are many factors that

affect customer satisfaction. According to Hokanson (1995), these factors include friendly employees, courteous employees, knowledgeable employees, helpful employees, accuracy of billing, billing timeliness, competitive pricing, service quality, good value, billing clarity and quick service.

Disabled person or generally referred to as 'disabled' are those with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. The general perception is that disability includes physical, visual, auditory and learning impairments (Tan & Naziaty Yaacob, 2008). However, those impairments are not the reason why people are disabled. The Social Model of Disability states that people are disabled by social prejudices and environmental barriers, either purposely or inadvertently (National Organization on Disability, 2004). People become disabled when society fails to accommodate and include them in all processes of social and infrastructural development.

According to the Census Bureau (2004), there were 39.23 million African Americans and 41.32 million Latinos in the United States. Most marketers are aware of the importance of these two ethnic groups and will consider targeting products and services to them. According to the National Organization on Disability (www.nod.org), about 54 million Americans have a disability. This number will continue to increase as the population ages; it is expected to double in the United States in about 15 years.

Researchers such as Darren Woodruff of the American Institute for Research (AIR) have identified a number of underlying reasons why disabled minority children typically do not receive the same services or produce the same outcomes as white children within the special needs population. The Public Agenda surveyed parents of special needs students to find out if they believe that their children are receiving the right services, given their disabilities. Conversely, prior to receiving special education services, the majority of the parents felt that obtaining information about the special education programs and services available was difficult. While parents agreed that their children were best served in a program that is inclusionary with the general education population, and that academic achievement be the focus, it was not the priority for the majority of the parents. At the end of the day, the most important goal for the special needs child's educational experience involved maintaining his/her dignity, limiting unnecessary frustration, and providing opportunities for the student to be successful. There is a large minority of parents who are dissatisfied with the special education services their children are receiving. In general, approximately one-third of the respondents are unhappy with the quality of teachers; the relationship with the schools/districts; processes/paperwork; school's ability to serve as a source of expertise about learning problems and disabilities; preparation for life after high school; facilitating the obtainment of appropriate services; and/or ability to provide their child the help they need.

METHODOLOGY

Data was gathered using a set of open and closed-ended questionnaires. The respondents selected were students from PLPP. A total of 60 questionnaires were distributed and only 50 were useable for analysis. The questionnaire was divided into three sections, Section A consists of background of respondents, Section B was related to the respondents' awareness on the services provided by PLPP and Section C was designed to measure the level of satisfaction of the services provided by PLPP. Questionnaires were developed using five

Likert Scale with five means, from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. Statistical Package for Science (SPSS) software was used to analyse the data set. A frequency distribution and mean was used to describe the sample and to analyse the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The sample of respondents consisted 72 percent males and 28 percent females. More than 50 percent of the respondents are in the age group of 21-30 years old. 76% of these respondents are physically disabled and 24% are under the category of learning disability. There are a total of 70 percent Malay respondents, 22 percent and 8 percent are Chinese and Indian respondents respectively. Most of them have PMR qualifications (72 percent) and the rest have SPM qualifications. The duration of occupancy in PLPP is 62 percent staying for 0-6 months, 22 percent for 13-18 months and 16 percent for 7-12 months. The profile of respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Background

Background Information	Description	Total
Gender	Male	36
	Female	14
Race	Malay	35
	Chinese	4
	Indian	11
	Others	16
Age	14-20 years	34
	21-30 years	27
	31-40 years	23
Academic qualification	PMR	36
	SPM	14
Types of disability	Physical disability	31
	Learning disability	8
Duration in PLPP	0-6 month	31
	7-12 month	8
	13-18 month	11
	19-24 month	0

Customers' Awareness on Services Provided by PLPP

There are four categories of services provided which are Medical Rehabilitation, Vocational Training, Pre-Vocational Training and Other Services. **Table 2** shows the percentage for overall customer awareness of the services provided by PLPP. Most of the students are aware of the services provided in PLPP. Their awareness on medical rehabilitation in PLPP is very high, which is 96 percent are aware about medical ward and 82 percent aware about physiotherapy.

In term of vocational training, it shows that students are strongly aware with the programme offered but for multimedia, only 44 percent of students are aware of such programme being conducted. Most of them also aware about pre-vocational training, except the computer training which only 54 percent.

Their awareness on the other services provided also very high, which is the counselling and study allowances both are 96 percent except for driving school training because 62 percent of them just register two weeks before this survey. From the findings, it can be concluded that the students are aware of the facilities and training provided by PLPP, which is in the average of 73 percent. It shows that the students are familiar with all the services provided and able to utilise them for their convenience. It is very important to ensure the effectiveness and efficiencies of the organization in providing quality services to students.

Table 2: Customer's Awareness on Services Provided by PLPP

Services	Description	Yes (%)	No (%)	
Medical Rehabilitation	Medical ward	96	4	
	Physiotherapy	82	18	
	Rehabilitation of work style	78	12	
Vocational Training	Administrative Assistant of Information Technology (MLVK)	53	47	
	Fashion Design and sewing	90	10	
	Electrical	94	6	
	Electronic	86	14	
	Prosthetic and Orthotic	62	38	
	Multimedia	44	56	
	Wheelchair Production	70	30	
	Pre-Vocational Training	Electronic	94	6
		Computer	54	46
Drawing		68	32	
Sewing		90	10	
Batik Craft		64	36	
Other Services	Counselling	96	4	
	Driving school training	40	60	
	Social and religious activities	74	32	

Study allowances	96	4
Average of awareness	73	27

Customers' Satisfaction on Services and Facilities Provided by PLPP

The purpose of analyzing customers' satisfaction in this study was to confirm the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction on the quality of services provided by PLPP. The respondents were asked to rank their feedback based on the level of satisfaction from 1 to 5, which number 1 is for very dissatisfied and 5 is very satisfied. Table 3 represents the mean of customer's satisfaction on services and facilities provided by PLPP.

The mean for educational and training program consist of training, vocational course and pre-vocational course was 4.66, 4.56 and 4.48 respectively. This indicates that the customers were highly satisfied with these programmes. In term of general services, the mean for counselling was 4.38, study allowance was 4.50, driving school training was 4.52, social religious activities and medical rehabilitation was 4.62. This shows the respondents also highly satisfied with the general services offered to them.

In addition, there are several services provided in the Facilities and Equipment section. The mean for the accommodation was 4.62, classroom was 4.68, library was 4.52, dining hall was 4.62, food services was 4.60, prayer hall was 4.70, medical treatment was 4.70, sport and recreational facilities was 4.60 and the restroom/toilet facilities was 4.16. There is a high satisfaction level on the services provided as a whole but for the restroom/toilet facilities the satisfaction level is the lowest among the other facilities and services. Bases on the open ended questionnaire, the students were commented on the maintenance aspects of the toilet in male hostels which has not been well taken care of and need to be repair.

Table 3: Customers' Satisfaction on Services and Facilities Provided by PLPP

Service	Description	Mean
Educational and Training Program	Training	4.66
	Vocational Course	4.56
	Pre-Vocational Course	4.48
General Services	Counselling	4.38
	Study allowances	4.50
	Driving school training	4.52
	Social and religious activities	4.62
	Medical rehabilitation	4.62
Facilities and Equipment	Accommodation	4.62
	Classroom	4.68
	Library	4.52
	Dining hall	4.62
	Food services	4.60
	Prayer hall	4.70
	Medical treatment	4.70
	Sport and recreational facilities	4.60
	Restroom/Toilets	4.16
PLPP Trainer and staff	Readiness to assist and helpfulness	4.66
	Fair treatment and without discrimination	4.64
	Response/feedback to queries	4.66
	Courtesy and friendliness	4.68

The second lowest of the services provided was the Library because the access to this facility was not disabled friendly. For the last categories of the level of satisfaction focuses on the PLPP trainer and staff. The mean for readiness to assist and helpfulness and responses or feedback to queries was 4.66. The mean for fair treatment without discrimination was 4.64 and courtesy and friendliness were 4.68. As a result, the level of satisfaction of the respondents towards the services provided by the trainer and staff at PLPP is extremely satisfying. Based on Table 3, it can be concluded that students of PLPP were highly satisfied with the overall services provided. However, in the findings showed the lowest mean value for the Restroom/Toilet and improvement should be made in future to endure better services. Based on the survey and feedback from the students, PLPP should also provide and maintain the services to ensure everything is functional and can be utilized to the fullest.

RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

Customers' perceptions are very important to endure that the students of PLPP are able to make full use of services and facilities provided for them. The Industrial Training Centre and Rehabilitation is a place where the disable are trained to be a skilled worker. We found that most of the student who did training in PLPP will have a chance to get a competitive job in the real world. In fact, there are numerous corporate bodies that have established a professional relationship with PLPP by offering jobs and placement to the students upon completion of their respective training programme.

Malaysian government is encouraging corporate bodies to employ the disabled. This is a crucial reason why PLPP should provide quality services to the disabled to ensure that they can meet the requirements needed in order to compete in the real world. The corporate bodies must understand that diversity goes beyond hiring them and to be truly diversified, firms have to be aware about the needs of the disabled. This includes those in wheelchairs, the deaf, the blind, and the mentally ill. True workforce diversity is vital for firms that desire to thrive well into the future. Those who were not born with a disability should bear in mind that they have a very strong chance of developing a handicap before retiring. Therefore, helping the disabled may be another way of helping one's self.

PLPP need to do access auditing to all the facilities provided to the students. Access auditing is important in identifying barriers in the infrastructure that needs to be rectified. This will ensure that everyone especially the disabled people has equitable use of public facilities. Malaysia still has a long way to go in this aspect. Most public buildings do not fulfil the requirements of the code of practice.

Finally, PLPP must ensure that the facilities provided to their students are disabled friendly and it must be well maintained and should meet SIRIM standard under code of practice for disable people (MS 1331, MS 1883 & MS 1884), which covers:

- i. Eliminating physical barriers and should provide free movement across the facilities and in this case PLPP should provide a user friendly access to the library for their students;
- ii. Facilities should be well maintained and in this case PLPP should repair the toilet in male hostel.

As a conclusion, this study can be served as a guideline to PLPP in order to determine and improve their service quality based on their students' perception and satisfaction.

REFERENCES

- Andy Field (2009), 'Discovering Statistics Using SPSS', 3rd Ed., Sage Publication.
- Beach, L. and Burns, L. (1995) 'The service quality improvement strategy', *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 6:5, 5-15.
- Economic Planning Unit (2006), 'Rancangan Malaysia Kesembilan, 2006-2010'.
- Hans Kasper, Piet Van Helsdingen & Mark Gabbott (2006), 'Services Marketing Management (A Strategik Perspektif)', 2nd ed., John Willey & Son LTD.
- Hoyer, W. D. & MacInnis, D. J. (2001), 'Consumer Behaviour' 2nd ed., Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Hokanson, S. (1995), 'The Deeper You Analyse, The More You Satisfy Customers', *Marketing News*, p.16.
- Kotler, P. (2000), 'Marketing Management', 10th ed., New Jersey, Prentice-Hall.
- Kraus, L., Stoddard, S., & Gilmartin, D. (1996), 'Chartbook on Disability in the United States, 1996. An InfoUse Report. Washington, DC: U.S. National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research' Retrieved from <http://www.infouse.com/disabilitydata/disability/>.
- McIlroy, A. and Barnett, S. (2000), 'Building Customer Relationships: Do Discount Cards

Work?, *Managing Service Quality*, 10 (6), pp. 347-355.

- National Organization on Disability (2004). 'Landmark disability survey finds pervasive disadvantages', from <http://www.nod.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.viewPage&pageID=1430&nodeD=1&FeatureID=1422&redirected=1&CFID=5012936&CFTOKEN=67432879>.
- SIRIM (1993), 'Malaysian Standard (MS 1184, MS 1331 and MS 1184) - Code of Practice on Access for Disabled Persons to Public Buildings'
- Tan & Naziaty Yaacob (2008), 'Memorandum to the Government of Selangor Darul Ehsan on Facilities for Disabled People', laman web @ blog- <http://www.petertan.com/blog/2008/04/08>.
- Taylor S. and Baker, T. (1994) 'An assessment of the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in the formation of consumers' purchase intentions', *Journal of Retailing*, 4:2, 163-178.
- Uma Sekaran and Roger Bougie (2010), 'Research Method for Business', 5th ed., A John Wiley and Sons, Ltd, Publication.
- Zeithaml, V. A., Parasuraman, A. and Berry, L. L. (1990), 'Delivering Quality Service: Balancing Customer Perceptions and Expectations', New York, The Free Press.
- Zairi, M. (2000), 'Managing Customer Dissatisfaction Through Effective Complaint Management Systems', *The TQM Magazine*, 12 (5), pp. 331-335.
- Zeithaml, V.A., Berry, L.L. and Parasuraman, A. (1996) 'The Behavioural Consequences of Service Quality', *Journal of Marketing*, 60(2), 31-46.
- Zeithaml, V.A. and Bitner, M. J. (2000) 'Services Marketing, New York, McGraw-Hill. --- 2000, Managing Customer Satisfaction: A Best Practice Perspective', *The TQM Magazine*, 12 (6), pp. 389-394.