

**UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA**

**IDENTIFYING KINDERGARTEN  
SERVICE QUALITY DIMENSIONS:  
THE RELATIONSHIP WITH  
PARENTS' SATISFACTION  
AND LOYALTY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Kindergarten is an introduction to a formal schooling system, where children learn the foundation skills of education to prepare themselves for future school success in the future. Basically, it caters for children aged 3 to 6 years old. Different kindergartens provide different types of programs with their unique ways of delivering and teaching. Apart from that, kindergarten educates children to learn physical, social, and emotional experiences within a conducive learning environment. The main purpose of kindergarten is to provide an atmosphere in which children can play and explore depending on the requirement of the country's educational philosophy. Due to the increasing awareness among the public on the importance of early childhood education, the community see it as an important vehicle for children, which capable of providing service quality in a kindergarten that would be an essential component for future survival. Therefore, this study identifies the dimensions of service quality towards a kindergarten setting, namely, educational services, empathy, reliability, assurance, and tangibility. In addition, these dimensions which had been identified were ranked in terms of their importance. Furthermore, the data were analyzed to determine the relationships between kindergarten service quality dimensions, parent satisfaction, and loyalty. This research was based on the data obtained from parents from a carefully selected samples and it was set to propose measurement instruments of service quality that were specifically measured at private kindergartens in Sarawak.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Kindergarten is an introduction to formal schooling, where children learn the foundation skills of education in order to prepare themselves for future school success. Basically, it caters for children aged 3 to 6 years old. Different kindergartens provide different types of programmes, in which their approaches of delivering and teaching may be diverse. According to Vecchiotti (2003), many educators would agree that education in kindergarten is a foundation for a solid academic base for children; this is an important aspect for children to achieve in any stages of education. Apart from that, kindergarten educates and provides children aged 4 to 6 years old to learn physical, social, and emotional experiences within a construct learning environment, and the main purpose of kindergarten is to provide an atmosphere in which children could play and explore (Leseman *et al.*, 2001) depending on the country concerned (Frobel, 1837).

In Malaysia, from 1981 until 1995, preschool education with children aged 4 to 6 years old had shown an increase of 24.5 percent, i.e. from 17 percent to 41.5 percent. Compared to the broad coverage of primary school education, preschool education in Malaysia is still in need for further improvements (Abdullah and Abdullah, 2011). In addition, preschool education had been made as part of the national education system under the Education Act 1996. Therefore, more children nowadays should have preschool education as a foundation for future school success. Even parents who come from poor or low-income ethnic groups should not be worried regarding the fees charged because the government has given a helping hand by charging affordable fees to these particular ethnic minority groups.

Preschool education is mainly conducted by government agencies, followed by non-government organizations and private social organizations. In 1995, a total of 81.6 percent of the preschool programmes were represented by the government. Out of this total, 61.8 percent of the preschool programmes were from the Community Development