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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERVICE QUALITY DIMENSIONS AND PARENTS' SATISFACTION IN KEMAS PRESCHOOL

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DISERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION (BUSINESS MANAGEMENT) (MASTER BY MIXED MODE RESEARCH)

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to identify the relationship between six dimensions of service quality with the parents' satisfaction in Community Development Department (KEMAS) preschool in Tanjong Malim district. The population of this study was the parents who send their children to the ten selected of KEMAS preschools. 125 parents as the respondent to answer the questionnaires regarding the service quality provided. The research design chosen SERVQUAL instrument and added one new dimension; Islamic values. All these six dimensions; tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and Islamic values being analysed to identify the level of service quality in KEMAS preschool and the relationship towards the customer satisfaction. Correlation analysis found that all dimensions except Islamic values have significant relationship with the overall service quality. The multiple regression analysis found only responsiveness and Islamic values have significant impact towards the overall service quality. The findings can be used to enhance the service quality of KEMAS preschool to compete with other private preschool and public preschool. The exposure of the importance of Islamic values being explained to give awareness towards parents, preschool managers and teachers about the benefits for children at the early age. Thus, recommendations to the parents, KEMAS preschool institutions and academicians to help the increasing service quality with the additional new dimension; Islamic values.

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HUBUNGAN ANTARA DIMENSI KUALITI PERKHIDMATAN DAN KEPUASAN IBU BAPA DI PRASEKOLAH KEMAS

ABSTRAK

Penyelidikan ini bertujuan menentukan hubungan antara enam dimensi kualiti perkhidmatan dengan kepuasan ibu bapa di prasekolah Jabatan Kemajuan Masyarakat (KEMAS) di sekitar Tanjong Malim, Perak. Populasi kajian ini ialah ibu bapa yang menghantar anak-anak di sepuluh buah prasekolah KEMAS terpilih. Terdapat 125 orang ibu bapa dipilih sebagai responden bagi menjawab soal selidik. Reka bentuk kajian ini menggunakan soal selidik SERVQUAL dan ditambah satu dimensi baru iaitu nilai-nilai Islam. Keenam-enam dimensi iaitu ketaraan, kebolehpercayaan, bertindakbalas, jaminan, empati dan nilai-nilai Islam ini digunakan untuk menentukan tahap kualiti perkhidmatan di prasekolah KEMAS dan hubungannya dengan kepuasan ibu bapa di prasekolah KEMAS tersebut. Analisis korelasi mendapati semua dimensi kualiti perkhidmatan kecuali dimensi nilai-nilai Islam mempunyai hubungan dengan keseluruhan kualiti perkhidmatan. Analisis regresi pelbagai mendapati hanya dua dimensi iaitu bertindakbalas dan nilai-nilai Islam memberi kesan terhadap perubahan dalam kualiti perkhidmatan. Implikasi kajian ini dapat meningkatkan kualiti prasekolah KEMAS agar dapat bersaing sihat dengan pelbagai prasekolah swasta dan prasekolah kerajaan yang lain. Pendedahan kepentingan nilai-nilai Islam dinyatakan agar memberi kesedaran kepada ibu bapa, pengusaha dan guru tentang kesan kebaikan terhadap kanak-kanak pada awal usia. Cadangan dikemukakan kepada ibu bapa, institusi prasekolah KEMAS dan ahli akademik bagi meningkatkan kualiti perkhidmatan dengan penambahan dimensi baru iaitu nilai-nilai Islam.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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1.1 Research Background

The characteristic 'Early Childhood Care and Education' (ECCE) may describe a diversification processes and mechanisms that sustain and support the holistic development of young children from birth to age 8 years (UNESCO, 2012).

ECCE programmes are divided into preschools institutions for children aged 4+ to 5+ years old and daycare centres for younger children in the range of after birth to 4 years old. Child's psychological and intellectual development may have effect when ECCE programmes applied in this both institutions. The Education Ministry is setting goals towards universal enrolment for 5+ year old children register in

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preschool that will help to provide each children with an equal preparation education through access to preschool (Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2013). In addition, it has been proved that ECCE can have positive effects towards child's holistic development in term of physical , intellectual and socio-emotional development (ARNEC, 2011b).

Nowadays, in the era of contemporary business childhood education, service quality plays important roles for parents to make right decisions regarding the best choice for their young children to learn and play in the preschool. Parents attempt to think rationally and choosing wisely have enabled children to receive a quality childhood education in the early stages. Some parents seemed not to understand the value of choosing the right preschool for their children.

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Preschool managers have a role in promoting the quality of early childhood education through examining the issues and challenges involved. The main concern is the responsibility of preschool managers following the quality of service specifications being provided by the government. A high quality preschool education system improves children's health and promotes their development and learning environment.

There are a lot of preschools operating in Malaysia such as preschool under Ministry of Education (MOE) which is located in the same area of primary school, preschool known as Kemajuan Masyarakat (KEMAS) which is under the supervision of Ministry of Rural Development, preschool under Department of National Unity and

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Integration known as PERPADUAN preschools (JPNIN), preschool organized by the State Islamic Religious Department(JAIN), ABIM preschool which known as Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) and private preschool institution managed by individual operators or some famous company name such as Genius Aulad, Smart Reader and others branded private preschool.

There are approximately 19,159 preschools serving 546,517 children every day in licensed settings across the state. From the given data 2012 by Department of Malaysian Statistics, Table 1.1 KEMAS preschool had established 53% number of preschools in Malaysia. The second ranking preschool established is private preschool with 34% which include all the branded company preschools and individual preschool managers.

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Next, PERPADUAN preschool with 9% number of preschools which monitoring under Jabatan Perpaduan Negeri Integrasi Nasional (JPNIN). JAIN preschool and ABIM preschool with small percentage, 3% and 1% number of preschool respectively. Thus, KEMAS had monopoly the number of preschools in Malaysia with 10,119 classes out of 19,159 registered preschools in Malaysia.

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Table 1.1

Number of Preschools in Malaysia, 2012

Preschools	**Number of Classes**	**Percentage(%)**
KEMAS	10,119	53
PRIVATE	6,505	34
JPNIN	1732	9
JAIN	562	3
ABIM	241	1
Total	**19,159**	**100**

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Source: Ministry of Education, Malaysia (2012).

The existence of many pre-schools in the education market has created a buyers' market; means students are now in the position to choose the pre-school they wish to study (Moss, 2009). Given the highly competitive education market, KEMAS pre-school institutes need to overcome two challenges in order to maintain their existence. The purpose of this study is to measure the service quality of KEMAS preschool from the parents' satisfaction.

This study is to help the government to make decision regarding the quality of preschool education institution. Although KEMAS preschool is facing a very though

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competition, the role of KEMAS preschool in developing early childhood education program must continuously remain relevant. Thus, the purpose of this study is to achieve a better understanding of the extent to which service quality permeates KEMAS preschool and what is the relationship between the service quality with customer satisfaction. Increased service quality means increased customer satisfaction.

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite the growth, KEMAS preschool institution is also facing obstacles and problems. According to Nordin (2014), quality achievement in every preschool is related to the practices and performance towards producing children capable to read, write and calculate. Nowadays, the LINUS (Literacy and Numeracy Screening) test performance of standard 1 student in a primary school become one of the preschool quality assessment. There exist a statement that private preschool is more quality compare to the other preschool institution since the performance of graduated private preschool children exceeded the performance of graduated Ministry of Education preschool children in the LINUS test (PADU, 2014).

This institution provides education services to the children age four until six years old. Every preschool institution should provide quality services towards the development of every children academic and attitude performance. However, every

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year, there are still numbers of children who failed to achieve the LINUS test in a primary school as shown in a Table 1.2.

These children will leave behind compare to the other student who success. Even worse, the children being left behind until they are secondary school. As shown for KEMAS preschool performance, the percentage of student can read is 69%, the percentage of student can write is 43% and the percentage of student can count is 50%. Unfortunately, KEMAS preschool performance is the lowest among the other preschool children.

Table 1.2

Comparison Among the Preschools Performance

KPI	**Target Performance**	**KPM**	**KEMAS**	**JPNIN**	**SWASTA**
Class size	15 students	21.4	19.7	22	12.8
% Students can read	100%	85	69	83	77
% Students can write	100%	63	43	56	61
% Students can count	100%	65	50	60	57
LINUS BM	87%	63.4	-	-	73.2
LINUS BI	87%	42.7	-	-	70
LINUS Numerasi	87%	73.7	-	-	85

Source : Ministry of Education Research Report (2014).

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Besides that, when comparing between the Figure 1.1 and the Figure 1.2, an issue about the number of KEMAS preschool and the number of students registered in KEMAS seemed not parallel. In terms of quantity of preschools in Malaysia, KEMAS is the highest number of preschools. However, in terms of quantity of students registered in preschool, KEMAS preschool turned into second ranking with number of students is 199,958 representing 100,891 male students and 99,067 female students. The highly chosen of preschools by parents in Malaysia is private preschool with the total number of students is 271,549 representing 138,933 male students and 132,616 female students.

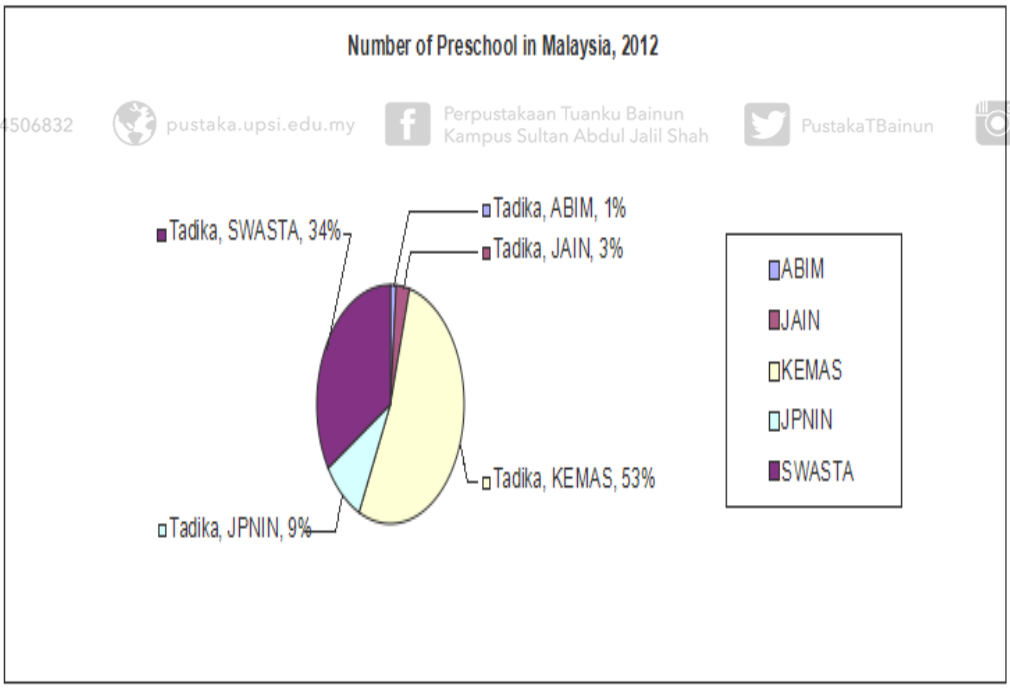

Figure 1.1. Number and type of Preschools in Malaysia, 2012

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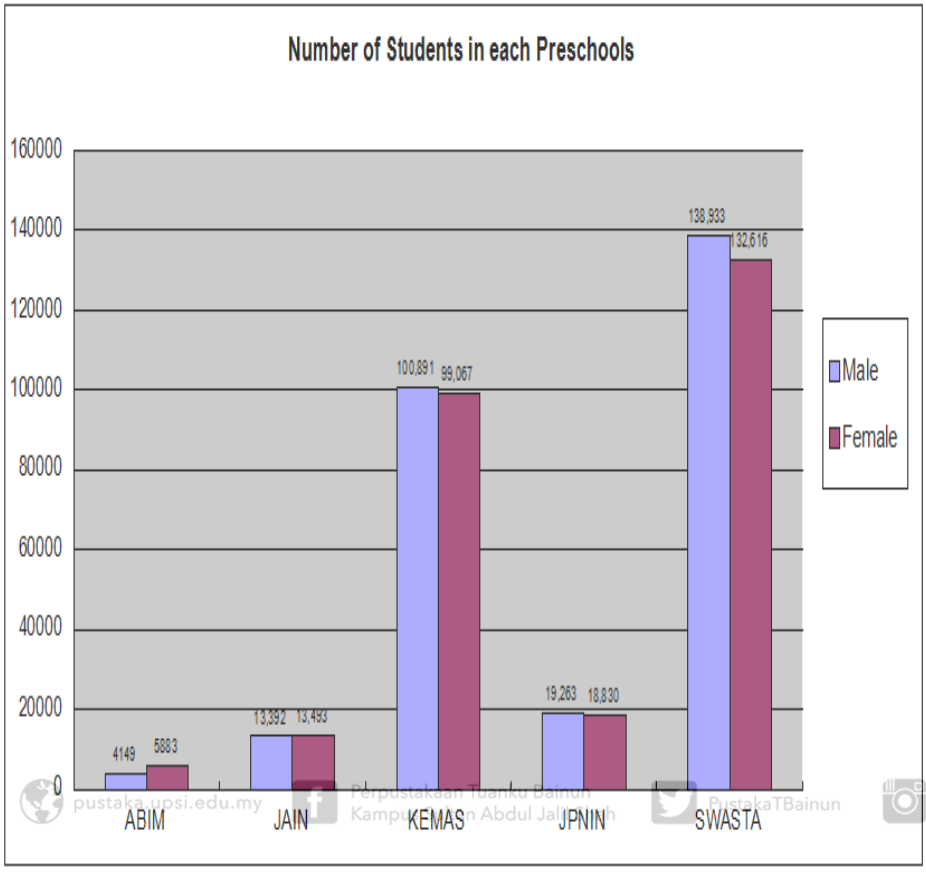

Figure 1.2. Number of children registered by type of preschool with Ministry of Education, Malaysia.

From the data provided, although KEMAS preschool highest number of classes in Malaysia but it is not necessarily KEMAS being the first choice for parents while registering their children for preschool education. Base on the growth of private preschool, KEMAS may emphasize the needs of Islamic values in the curriculum education program as it is one of the demand nowadays among parents (Dahari & Ya, 2012) .Thus, this study is to identify the service quality from parents perception. The parents' perception towards the overall service quality can be determine by analysing the six dimensions from independent variables such as tangibility, reliability,

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responsiveness, assurance, empathy and Islamic values. This result help to provide insight for people to understand the role of those variables to increase the quality of KEMAS preschool services.

Therefore, this study is conducted in order to identify the level of service quality towards KEMAS preschool institutions in Tanjong Malim district and to determine whether there are relationship between the overall of service quality dimensions and parents' satisfaction.

1.3 Research Questions

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Seven research questions are formed and shown as below:

1. What is the relationship between tangibility and overall quality towards KEMAS preschool services?

2. What is the relationship between reliability and overall quality towards KEMAS preschool services ?

3. What is the relationship between responsiveness and overall quality towards KEMAS preschool services?

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4. What is the relationship between assurance and overall quality towards KEMAS preschool services ?

5. What is the relationship between empathy and overall quality towards KEMAS preschool services?

6. What is the relationship between Islamic Values and overall quality towards KEMAS preschool services?

7. What is the relationship between overall quality and parents' satisfaction towards KEMAS preschool services?

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1.4 Research Objectives

The general objective of this research is to assess the quality of service that KEMAS preschool provides to parents and to evaluate their satisfaction level with the preschool's service delivery. Three specific objectives are formed and shown as below:

1. To identify the relationship between each dimensions of service quality ; tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy with the overall service quality of KEMAS preschool.

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2. To identify the relationship between Islamic values as the new dimension of service quality with the overall service quality of KEMAS preschool.

3. To identify the relationship between overall service quality of KEMAS preschool with parents' satisfaction.

1.5 Research Hypotheses

H1 : There is a significant relationship between tangibility and overall quality towards KEMAS preschool services.

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H2 : There is a significant relationship between reliability and overall quality towards KEMAS preschool services.

H3: There is a significant relationship between responsiveness and overall quality towards KEMAS preschool services.

H4: There is a significant relationship between assurance and overall quality towards KEMAS preschool services.

H5: There is asignificant relationship between empathy and overall quality towards KEMAS preschool services.

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