

SCHOOL SERVICE QUALITY AND SATISFACTION
AMONG SECONDARY LEVEL STUDENTS
OF ARAB SCHOOLS IN KUALA
LUMPUR-MALAYSIA

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SCHOOL SERVICE QUALITY AND SATISFACTION AMONG SECONDARY LEVEL
STUDENTS OF ARAB SCHOOLS IN KUALA LUMPUR-MALAYSIA

ABEER MOHAMED NAGEIB

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the school service quality and satisfaction among secondary level students of Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur-Malaysia and to identify the contribution and significant influence of service quality on students' satisfaction. This study has focused on five dimensions of service quality based on the SERVQUAL scale which was proposed by Parasuraman et al. in 1985. These five dimensions are tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data and the sample consists of 191 secondary level students selected randomly from Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. This study has used correlation and regression for data analysis. The findings revealed that there are positive relationships between four dimensions of service quality i.e. tangibles ($r=.253$, $p<.000$), reliability ($r=.432$, $p<.000$), responsiveness ($r=.336$, $p<.000$), assurance ($r=.490$, $p<.000$). The results also showed that there is no significant relationship between empathy ($r=.129$, $p>.076$) dimension and student satisfaction. The regression analysis revealed that $R^2=.324$, $p<.000$. This means that 32.4% of the independent variables explained the variance in the dependent variable. As a conclusion, assurance is the most significant contributor to student satisfaction followed by reliability and responsiveness. In addition, the findings suggest the need for Arab schools to work on improving the quality of all their service dimensions and provide special attention to assurance, reliability and responsiveness.



KUALITI DAN KEPUASAN PERKHIDMATAN DALAM PELAJAR SEKOLAH MENENGAH DI SEKOLAH ARAB DI KUALA LUMPUR-MALAYSIA

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti hubungan antara lima dimensi perkhidmatan berkualiti dan kepuasan dalam kalangan pelajar sekolah menengah, dan juga mengenal pasti sumbangan dan pengaruh perkhidmatan yang signifikan terhadap kepuasan pelajar di sekolah Arab di Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Lima dimensi tersebut adalah kemudahan, kompetensi, pentadbiran, kesihatan & keselamatan, dan kesedaran budaya. Soal selidik berstruktur digunakan untuk pengumpul data dan sampel terdiri daripada 191 pelajar sekolah menengah dari sekolah-sekolah Arab di Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Dapatan menunjukkan terdapat hubungan positif yang kuat antara empat dimensi perkhidmatan berkualiti (iaitu kemudahan ($r=.253$), kompetensi ($r=.432$), pentadbiran ($r=.336$) dan kesihatan & keselamatan ($r=.490$) dan kepuasan pelajar di sekolah-sekolah Arab yang ditinjau. Dapatan juga menunjukkan bahawa tidak ada hubungan signifikan antara dimensi kesedaran budaya ($r=.129$) dan kepuasan pelajar. Analisis regresi menunjukkan $R^2 = .324$ yang bermakna pembolehubah bebas berjaya menerangkan 32.4% daripada varians di dalam kepuasan pelajar. Tambahan lagi, dapatan menunjukkan bahawa kesihatan dan keselamatan merupakan penyumbang paling penting kepada kepuasan pelajar diikuti oleh kompetensi dan pentadbiran. Sebagai kesimpulan, dapatan kajian ini penting kepada sekolah dan lain-lain institusi pendidikan kerana dapatan membantu mereka fokus kepada apa yang penting kepada pelajar dan kebanyakannya boleh mempengaruhi kepuasan mereka. Tambahan lagi, dapatan mencadangkan perlunya kajian perbandingan dibuat untuk menyelidik sama ada terdapat perbezaan dalam perkhidmatan berkualiti dan kepuasan pelajar antara sekolah-sekolah dan institusi pendidikan yang lain yang beroperasi setempat dan secara global, dan untuk menguji persepsi pelajar mengenai perkhidmatan yang ditawarkan kepada mereka untuk perkhidmatan yang lebih baik di masa hadapan.



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a brief explanation of the study. It includes the background of the study, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, and research hypothesis. Also, it explains the conceptual framework, the significance of the study, the scope of the study, operational definition and summary.

1.2 Background of Study

Abili, Narenji, and Mokhtarian (2011) has explained one of the determinants of the educational institutions' success which is how the students (customers) perceived the service quality; the service of the school is good if perceptions meet or exceed the students'



expectations and problematic if perceptions fall below their expectations. So, filling the gaps between students' perceptions and expectations about the service received is vital for their satisfaction (Abili et al., 2011). Also, Kajenthiran and Karunanithy (2015) stated that the quality of school services has to be enhanced continually in order to remain competitive because potential students have several opportunities available to them. Thus, schools have to identify ways on how to attract and keep existing students and how to develop stronger relationships with them (Kajenthiran & Karunanithy, 2015).

Moreover, maintaining current customers and acquiring new customers have always been considered as two main approaches in service organizations. Moreover, the quality of service has been studied within the business management discipline for years due to the increasingly competitive market. Additionally, marketing management has transferred its concentration from internal performance to external interests, such as customer satisfaction and the customer's perception of service quality (Akhlaghi, Amini, & Akhlaghi, 2012).

Recently, the increasing globalization in the education sector has led to a growing demand for education services (Leonnard, 2018). Globalization has influenced education in complex and diverse ways from the revolution of information technology, which is why education significantly causes a rapid change in society. The current trend in education of schools as "business institutions" is to provide high-quality services to meet the needs and demands of students seen as clients or customers. Also, Petruzzellis, D'uggento, and Romanazzi (2006) explained that the globalized competition has stressed the strategic importance of the quality of educational institutions and satisfaction of students in the battle for winning customer (student) preferences and maintaining sustainable competitive advantages (Petruzzellis et al., 2006).





As the intense and aggressive competitive business world of education increases, service quality has become one of the most important determinants of student satisfaction. Schools which want to achieve competitive benefits have to consider student satisfaction as the key source of their competitive advantage. According to Saleem, Moosa, Imam, and Ahmed (2017), the service quality of educational institutions has been a topic of interest by many researchers in the past two decades. However, it is difficult to be measured because of its intangible nature. Although it was suggested by (Parasuraman et al. in 1988) that 'SERVQUAL', which measures service quality, is based on five dimensions, which are tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, but researchers are of the view that the dimensions used by SERVQUAL require more generalization (Saleem et al., 2017).

In addition, Ntabathia (2013) stated that it is difficult to define the concept of quality because the quality is perceived differently by people, i.e. the way one customer will experience a product or service is not the same way another will experience it. The quality of a product or service cannot be defined but can be recognized by the customer if his needs are met. A product/service that does not address the customers' needs is said to be of lower quality (Ntabathia, 2013).

Also, Onditi and Wechuli (2017) pointed out that student satisfaction is viewed as a good indicator of the quality of teaching at the learning institutions and is also an outcome measure of the education process. However, measuring students' satisfaction is not an easy task and authors differ on which indicators should be used to measure student satisfaction (Onditi & Wechuli, 2017). The question that exists among many researchers is whether customer's satisfaction is an antecedent to service quality or whether it is service quality that leads to customer satisfaction (Onditi & Wechuli, 2017). The current research examines if



perceived service quality has a significant influence on student satisfaction in some Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

According to LV Overseas (2019), Malaysia is one of the hotspot destinations for travellers. Recently, it is becoming a very attractive destination for students as well as travellers. The average ratio that Malaysia has obtained is 1:10 between local versus international students. In addition, it has attracted 18.5% of its foreign student population in the year 2015. Furthermore, it has already become a country which accommodates students from about 160 different nations. Recent statistics show that students from Pakistan, Bangladesh, China, Nigeria, Indonesia, Sudan, Yemen, Libya, India, and Kazakhstan have contributed in large numbers to the total population of foreign students of Malaysia. In addition, “Malaysia is currently ranked as the world’s 11th most preferred study destination

The current study examines how students of Arab secondary schools perceive school service quality and measures their level of satisfaction of the Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia through a modified version of the SERVQUAL questionnaire.

1.3 Problem Statement

Higher education institutions pay more attention to the quality of their educational services which reflects the importance of service quality in the education sector. Also, the quality of services provided by the education sector is reflected in the performance of fresh graduates



in the labor market which will definitely have a great impact on the perception of the society and the employers in the educational institution and its outputs (Onditi & Wechuli, 2017).

In addition, Saleem et al. (2017) highlighted that educational services are one of the most widespread and important services around the world. However, studies and research that discuss the quality of educational services are few compared to most other services. With the growing interest in the quality of educational services both in universities and schools, educational institutions, as well as countries, are competing to provide better educational services. Therefore, it is necessary for these institutions to adopt marketing concepts, especially the concept of 'quality', when planning for excellence or to remain competitive in the marketplace (Saleem et al., 2017).



Assessing quality in schools' services has been an unexplored territory, and where most educational service quality research studies have mainly focused on assessing quality from a student's perspective in higher education, this confirms that there is a need to conduct more studies on school service quality and secondary school students' satisfaction. To illustrate, the literature indicates that there are very few published studies about school service quality and student satisfaction. Although there are many studies conducted in the service quality and student satisfaction in higher education institutions (HEIs), it very seldom focuses on the contribution of service quality dimensions on student satisfaction and is mostly aimed at the HEIs services, not schools. It is therefore not clear from the literature whether the same principles and relationship between service aspects that exist in the HEIs will also be applicable to the schools' service quality, and whether schools can get the same benefits from such studies by providing better and more efficient services to its students.





This problem has created a big gap because schools play a vital and significant role in educating children and adolescents and provide them with essential skills in the future as well as building their personalities to prepare them to universities and therefore, the school service quality has to be high and efficient as well (Wu et al., 2014). The literature review revealed that there is a significant and positive relationship between service quality and student satisfaction. However, most studies focused on the relationship between the variables and not the contribution of service quality to student satisfaction. Therefore, the current study will contribute more to the literature by investigating the contribution of service quality dimensions on student satisfaction.

With reference to the annual reports of Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur- Malaysia in years 2016 and 2017, many complaints by parents and students were reported regarding the different school services provided. Also, the number of students is declining, some students have withdrawn their files from Arab schools and moved to other schools and the number of new students coming has also decreased. This indicated that the school service quality is declining. Therefore, the current study has focused on Arab schools.

Furthermore, few previous studies have studied higher education service quality and student satisfaction in Malaysian universities between years 2008 to 2014 which are old and insufficient studies and none have studied service quality in Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur and secondary school students' satisfaction. Based on the rapid change in education, technology, and globalization, there is always a need to conduct new studies on service quality in educational institutions to respond to all these changes that greatly influence service quality in the education sector.



Hence, not many research and studies focused on schools' service quality in Kuala Lumpur, its contribution toward student satisfaction and the importance of improving the current service quality of schools in an intensely competitive world of education. In view of the urgent need for studies in this field and the sense that educational services in general and schools in particular still need further studies, this study aims to examine the perceived quality of Arab school services by secondary school students and to check the students' satisfaction of their schools' service quality among Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Identifying views and perceptions of students' on school service quality help to provide information to schools' decision makers about the strengths of school services to support them and address shortcomings in their appearance. Therefore, the results and recommendations of the current study would help schools' management of schools in what needs to be modified or changed regarding their current service quality.

1.4 Research Objectives

This study aims to examine the relationship between service quality and satisfaction of secondary students and to identify the significant impact of service quality on students' satisfaction in Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

From the aims of the study mentioned, seven main objectives can be identified, which are:

1. To determine the relationship between Tangibles (Facilities) and student satisfaction in Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
2. To determine the relationship between Reliability (Competency) and student satisfaction in Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

3. To determine the relationship between Responsiveness (Administration) and student satisfaction in Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
4. To determine the relationship between Assurance (Health and safety) and student satisfaction in Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
5. To determine the relationship between Empathy (Cultural awareness) and student satisfaction in Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
6. To determine the contribution of service quality to student satisfaction in Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

1.5 Research Questions

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This study will investigate the following questions:

1. Is there any significant relationship between Tangibles (Facilities) and student satisfaction in Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia?
2. Is there any significant relationship between Reliability (Competency) and student satisfaction in Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia?
3. Is there any significant relationship between Responsiveness (Administration) and student satisfaction in Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia?
4. Is there any significant relationship between Assurance (Health and safety) and student satisfaction in Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia?
5. Is there any significant relationship between Empathy (Cultural awareness) and student satisfaction in Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia?
6. Is there any contribution of service quality towards student satisfaction in Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia?

1.6 Hypothesis of The Study

H1: There is a significant relationship between Tangibles (Facilities) and students' satisfaction in Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

H2: There is a significant relationship between Reliability (Competency) and the students' satisfaction in Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

H3: There is a significant relationship between Responsiveness (Administration) and students' satisfaction in Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

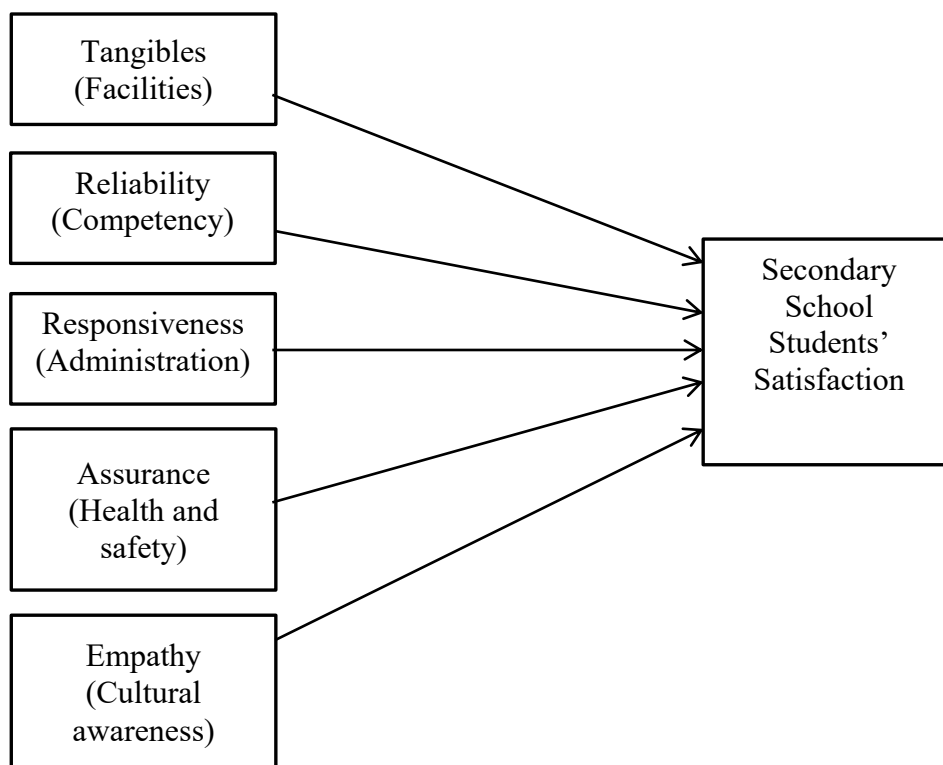
H4: There is a significant relationship between Assurance (Health and safety) and students' satisfaction in Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

H5: There is a significant relationship between Empathy (Cultural awareness) and students' satisfaction in Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

H6: There is a contribution of service quality towards students' satisfaction in Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

1.7 Conceptual Framework

This framework shows the relationship between the study variables which the current study will investigate. The left side shows the five dimensions of service quality (IV) and the right side shows the students' satisfaction (DV). The current study aims to check the contribution of school service quality to students' satisfaction.



1.8 Significance of The Study

Generally, the findings of this study will help educators and management of educational institutions in general and schools in particular to highlight the important dimensions of service quality that contribute to students' satisfaction. Moreover, this study will contribute to further knowledge and future references for researchers through the findings and data of this study that will help other researchers to understand the relationship between service quality and students' satisfaction. Furthermore, this study may bring new evidence in student satisfaction due to the instrument adopted and modified to check the influence of service quality in Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Furthermore, this study provides



valuable knowledge and information on service quality and student satisfaction, with reference to previous studies. In the meantime, it is clear that there have been inadequate studies on schools in Malaysia in general and Arab schools in particular that examine the contribution of service quality toward student satisfaction. Hence, this study aims at filling the gap by examining the relationship between school service quality and student satisfaction and checking the contribution of service quality toward student satisfaction.

Moreover, the number of Arab migrants to Malaysia is increasing every year. Due to this significant increase in the number of Arab migrants to Malaysia, who are mostly families with children and the parents usually travel to Malaysia either to study further degrees in universities or to find jobs, in both cases, there is a need to register their children in schools, the first choice and preference to them is mostly Arab schools because Arab families like to maintain and improve the Arabic language and culture in their children. Thus, Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia should ensure that high-quality services are offered to the students, where the quality of education is considered essential in all countries since schools prepare the new generation to universities (Alhabeeb, 2015). Hence, it is important to examine how students perceive the quality of Arab schools and measure their level of satisfaction with the perceived quality of their schools.

In addition, the schools' management would benefit from the findings and results of this study by knowing which gap of each school being studied should receive the most attention and constitute areas that require improvement to enable the school to perform at its maximum best and to fully satisfy its students as well as to gain competitive advantage. Improved service quality will help them to face the competition between other schools in





Malaysia. In addition, good service quality results in an increase in customer satisfaction and lead to long-term profitability and many benefits in the education market.

1.9 Scope of The Study

The current study is determined by the following variables:

The effect of school service quality (IV) and the student satisfaction (DV), and is also determined by the nature of the sample used in the study, which is Secondary students in Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Moreover, the identification of the level of secondary students' satisfaction on the service quality offered to them in the Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and determining the gap between the students' level of satisfaction and the perceived quality of service offered using a modified version of SERVAQUAL scale.

Furthermore, the study was limited to three Arab schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The study was conducted during the first semester of the academic year 2019 and is expected to be completed by the middle of the year.

1.10 Operational Definition

The current research studies two main concepts, namely service quality, and student satisfaction. There are five dimensions of service quality. Therefore, the study will include seven operational definitions as follows:



1. **Service quality:** It is the degree to which a delivered service in a school matches its design specification, whereas student perceived service quality is the degree to which the service matches the student's expectations or requirements. In other words, it is an assessment of how well a delivered service in a school conforms to the student's expectations.
2. **Facilities:** The physical facilities, equipment, communication materials, and technology available in Arab schools in KL.
3. **Competency:** It includes the features of school teachers, i.e. teaching experience, classroom management, and positive attitudes based on students' perceptions.
4. **Administration:** The attitude and promptness in dealing with the students' requests, questions, complaints, and problems based on students' perceptions.
5. **Health and Safety:** It can be defined as employee's knowledge, courtesy and the ability of the school to inspire trust and confidence in their students through safety and medical care.
6. **Cultural awareness:** It means the caring, individualized attention provides to the students by their schools.
7. **Student satisfaction:** The perceived ability of the school to fulfill students' needs and expectations. It is the short term attitude that results from the evaluation of students' experience with the school service received.



1.11 Summary

The first chapter of this thesis presents an introduction to this study and its significance. Then, the second chapter presents a detailed literature review of the concepts of this study in addition to previous studies related to the topic being studied i.e. service quality and student satisfaction. After that, the third chapter presents the research methodology, the sample of the study and the instrument used for data collection as well as the procedure of data analysis. Then, the fourth chapter provides the findings of data analysis, followed by the fifth chapter which discusses the findings of data analysis and presents recommendations for schools' management and future research.

