

The Impact of Service Quality and Trust in Early Childhood Education: Why Parents Stay – or Walk Away?

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Abstract. Improving service quality is one of the marketing strategies that emphasizes the fulfillment of customer desires. Good service quality will increase customer satisfaction. Thus, parents will trust the school if they are satisfied with the quality of its services. The more parents trust the school, the higher their satisfaction level will be. This study aims to identify the factors influencing parent satisfaction at RA Nurul Hikmah Binjai Timur. Service quality and trust are hypothesized to influence parent satisfaction. This study employs a quantitative method. Data collection techniques include questionnaires and interviews. The sampling method in this study uses random sampling with the Slovin formula at a 5% level, resulting in a sample size of 45 respondents. Data analysis in this study uses multiple linear regression analysis with the assistance of SPSS 25 software. The results of this study indicate that service quality and trust have a positive and significant influence on the satisfaction of parents of students at RA Nurul Hikmah Binjai Timur.

Keywords: *Service Quality, Trust, Early Childhood Education, Parent Satisfaction*

Abstrak. Peningkatan kualitas layanan merupakan salah satu strategi pemasaran yang ditekankan pada pemenuhan keinginan pelanggan. Kualitas pelayanan yang baik akan menaikkan tingkat kepuasan pelanggan. Kepercayaan orang tua akan timbul jika merasa puas dengan kualitas layanan sekolah. Orang tua semakin percaya dengan sekolah maka tingkat kepuasan akan meningkat pula. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi kepuasan orang tua siswa RA Nurul Hikmah Binjai Timur. Kualitas layanan dan kepercayaan dihipotesiskan untuk mempengaruhi kepuasan orang tua siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kuantitatif. Teknik pengumpulan data menggunakan kuesioner dan wawancara. Metode pengambilan sampel dalam penelitian ini menggunakan teknik *random sampling* dengan menggunakan rumus slovin dengan tingkat 5% sehingga mendapatkan sampel sebanyak 45 responden. Data analisis penelitian ini menggunakan uji regresi linier berganda dengan bantuan alat analisis SPSS 25. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa kualitas layanan dan kepercayaan berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap kepuasan orang tua siswa RA Nurul Hikmah Binjai Timur.

Kata Kunci: *Kualitas Layanan, Kepercayaan, Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Kepuasan Orang Tua*



Introduction

Early childhood is a golden age of growth and development that requires stimulation from the environment. Early childhood is a period of rapid growth and development, even referred to as a developmental leap (Hasibuan et al., 2021). Thus, early childhood education plays a very important and decisive role in the future development of children, as it forms the foundation for their personality (Veryawan et al., 2020).

In a broad sense, the development of early childhood education in Indonesia is growing rapidly. However, there are many issues that accompany this development. Some of the issues arising in early childhood education institutions in Indonesia, as highlighted in Suryani's research (in Saputri, 2013:6) include the unfulfilled demand for early childhood education institutions, insufficient quality and quantity of teachers or caregivers, low public interest or parental awareness of the urgency of early childhood education, inadequate government policies, and the poor quality of institutional services, such as inadequate facilities and infrastructure, an unbalanced teacher-to-student ratio, insufficient funding, and low community participation in the implementation of early childhood education (Daulay, 2018; Iqbal et al., 2023; Suwanto & Rahman, 2022).

Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System (Law No. 20/2003 on Sisdiknas) Article 7, Paragraph 1 on parental involvement in child care states, "Parents have the right to participate in choosing educational institutions and obtaining information about their children's development." Direct parental involvement is also crucial in school activities; there must be continuity between education at school and at home to enhance the quality of family-based education (Veryawan et al., 2021). Parents inherently have objectives in their children's education, namely to educate, guide, nurture, and mentor their children to become mature individuals who can achieve happiness both in this world and the hereafter (Ilham et al., 2024; Rahman et al., 2023). As a result, parents will be happy and even proud when their children achieve something. Therefore, parental involvement in the education and development of children, especially during their transformative phase, is extremely essential (Ningsih et al., 2022).

In the field of academic development, it is fundamental to measure the level of satisfaction of parents and students with educational services in order to determine how well the school is performing (Basith & Tathahira, 2023). Since education is a cyclical, interactive, and continuous process, schools, as providers of educational services, must strive to enhance customer satisfaction. Educational institutions constantly face uncertainties due to historical and technological developments. These uncertainties make the operational mechanisms of educational institutions technically unstable, as inputs and environmental conditions are never the same. Stakeholders do not only purchase the school's physical products but also consider the benefits and value of the school's products (Nurlaela, 2022).

One strategy for educational institutions to maintain their existence is by improving service quality (Rahmiaty et al., 2025). Service quality improvement is one of the marketing strategies focused on fulfilling customer desires (Aryani & Rosinta, 2010). Schools need to be aware of the importance of the quality of educational services in line with what students expect. The services that schools should provide to their students include learning facilities that support student activities at school, such as infrastructure, curriculum, organized school administration, and clear administrative services for students, competent teaching staff in their fields, and teaching materials, methods, and media that are supportive and appropriate for students (Cabero-Almenara et al., 2022; Fadhli et al., 2024; Fazilla et al., 2025). The quality of services is supported by a safe school environment, time management, and the provision of organizations and extracurricular activities that are beneficial to students (Yunita & Putri, 2021).

Improving the quality of education not only impacts the teaching and learning process but also directly influences the overall experience of students and parents. When schools focus on improving the quality of education, such as by enhancing the curriculum, teaching methodologies, and facilities, students can gain a better and more satisfying learning experience. Parents who see that their children are receiving a quality education and having positive experiences at school tend to feel more satisfied with their decision to choose that school. High parental satisfaction can strengthen the relationship between the school and the family, creating a well-regarded reputation that spreads through recommendations and direct experiences (Ibrohim et al., 2024).

According Parasuraman (1990), good service quality will increase customer satisfaction levels, and satisfied customers likewise assess the quality of service provided to determine whether it meets their expectations. The five methods developed by

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (Parasuraman, 1990) are: 1) Tangible (physical evidence), 2) Reliability, 3) Responsiveness, 4) Assurance, 5) Empathy (Sinollah & Masruro, 2019). There are two factors that influence service quality, namely expected service and perceived service (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, dan Berry (Setyaningriani & Suryoko, 2017). Once customers feel that the service they receive is in line with their expectations, then the quality of that service can be perceived as top-notch and satisfying.

According to Engel et al. (1990) in Tjiptono (2000) customer satisfaction is a post-purchase evaluation in which the chosen alternative is at least equal to or exceeds expectations, while dissatisfaction arises when the results do not meet customer expectations (Setyaningriani & Suryoko, 2017). Customer satisfaction indicators according to Al-Ghamdi dan Badawi (2019) are as follows: a) Feeling satisfied, b) Always purchasing products/services, c) Fulfillment of consumer expectations after purchasing a product or service (Zalzalalah et al., 2023). Meanwhile, according to Mayer Mayer, Davis, dan Schoorman (1995) another factor that can influence customer satisfaction is trust. Trust is an individual's desire for others to behave in a certain way, with the expectation that the other party will take specific actions toward the person who trusts them (Zalzalalah et al., 2023). If parents trust the school, they will recommend it to their close friends and family to enrol their children (Marisa et al., 2022). Thus, parental trust will arise if they are satisfied with the quality of the school's services. If parents increasingly trust the school, their level of satisfaction will increase (Semuel & Wijaya, 2017).

Based on previous research, trust has an influence on consumer satisfaction. Research by (Yuslih et al., 2021) shows that there is a positive and significant influence between service quality and school image on student satisfaction, there is a positive and significant influence between service quality and student satisfaction, and there is a positive and significant influence between school image and student satisfaction. Another study conducted by (Triwijayanti et al., 2022) shows that school service quality, school culture, and school image have a positive effect on parent satisfaction. Additionally, research conducted by (Hardani & Anggraeni, 2021) shows that parental satisfaction with educators in accompanying children, parental satisfaction with facilities, infrastructure, and school management, and parental satisfaction with the level of children's developmental achievements. Based on the above description, this study aims to examine the quality of service and trust in early childhood education units on parent satisfaction at RA Nurul Hikmah Binjai Timur.

Method

This research was conducted from February to April 2025 at RA Nurul Hikmah Binjai Timur. According to Sekaran dan Bougie (2017:109) research design is a plan used for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data required based on research questions. The research design in this study is quantitative research to determine the influence of service quality and trust on parent satisfaction.

Data collection in this study uses primary data sources. Primary data is obtained through direct observation of the research object, questionnaires, and direct interviews with respondents. There are five instruments for each variable in this study, namely service quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, dan Berry, 1988) (Sarjono & Natalia, 2014); trust has four instruments (Parves Sultan dan Ho Yin Wong, 2018) (Prasetyo et al., 2023); there are three instruments for parental satisfaction (Parves Sultan dan Ho Yin Wong, 2018) (Prasetyo et al., 2023). To measure responses to each item in the instrument, a Likert scale was used, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Thus, each response to each variable will be given a value as follows: a) 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), b) 2 = Disagree (D), c) 3 = Neutral (N), d) 4 = Agree (A), e) 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). This study uses the SPSS model to process the data.

The data collection technique in this study uses a survey method with a questionnaire containing a list of statements and distributed to respondents to provide answers. In this study, to test the questionnaire, an instrument test is required through validity and reliability tests. The research used a quantitative method, analyzing the relationship between each variable, using SPSS to analyze the data obtained, and questionnaires using a Likert scale to determine the attitudes and opinions of individuals or groups towards social events. This study uses two independent variables, so the data analysis technique used is multiple linear regression analysis and hypothesis testing to determine the influence of independent variables on dependent variables. Hypothesis testing in this study includes t-tests, f-tests, and the coefficient of determination (R^2).

According to Ghozali (2018:95) multiple linear regression analysis is used to determine whether there is an influence between independent variables and dependent variables. The t-test or partial test is used to determine the influence of independent variables individually in explaining dependent variables (Ardiansyah & Mahargiono, 2021). If the significance value is < 0.05 and the calculated t is $> t$ table, then there is a

significant influence between the independent variables and the dependent variable. If the significance value is > 0.05 and the calculated t is $< t$ table, then there is no significant influence between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The F statistical test is used to show whether all independent variables have a combined effect on the dependent variable. If the significance value is < 0.05 and the calculated F value is $>$ the table F value, then all independent variables have an effect on the dependent variable. If the significance value is > 0.05 and the calculated F value is $<$ the table F value, then all independent variables do not have an effect on the dependent variable.

Result and Discussion

The number of respondents in this study was 45. Based on a questionnaire distributed via Google Forms to 35 parents of students and direct interviews with 10 parents of students, information was obtained about the demographic data of the respondents who were sampled in this study. The demographic data in this study included gender, age, education, and occupation. Based on gender and age data from the 45 respondents, it was found that the majority of respondents were female, with 37 respondents or 82.2%, while the remaining 8 respondents or 17.8% were male. All respondents were over 25 years of age. The characteristics of the respondents based on education obtained from the 45 respondents show that based on their highest level of education, the majority of respondents had completed high school, with 37 respondents or 82.2%. The characteristics of the respondents based on occupation obtained from the 45 respondents show that the majority of respondents were housewives, with 22 respondents or 48.9% of the respondents.

A validity test is a test used to measure the validity of a questionnaire, and a questionnaire is considered valid if the statements or questions in the questionnaire can reveal what is being measured (Sanaky, 2021). The variables in this study were measured using 12 statements for 45 respondents, namely the parents of students at RA Nurul Hikmah Binjai Timur, with the condition that if each statement item has a significance value < 0.05 and r value $>$ r table, then the statement item is declared valid. If the significance value is > 0.05 and the r -value $<$ r table, then the statement item is deemed invalid. The following is a summary of the validity test results, with all instruments in the questionnaire deemed valid.

Table 1. Validity Test

Variable	Item	Sig.	R Value	R Table	Validation
The Quality Service	A01	0,000	0,828	0,294	Valid
	A02	0,000	0,716	0,294	Valid
	A03	0,000	0,719	0,294	Valid
	A04	0,000	0,823	0,294	Valid
	A05	0,000	0,819	0,294	Valid
Trust	B01	0,000	0,719	0,294	Valid
	B02	0,000	0,813	0,294	Valid
	B03	0,000	0,826	0,294	Valid
	B04	0,000	0,763	0,294	Valid
Parents' Satisfaction	C01	0,000	0,818	0,294	Valid
	C02	0,000	0,658	0,294	Valid
	C03	0,000	0,735	0,294	Valid

Source: The data was analyzed using SPSS 25.

Reliability testing is used to demonstrate consistent measurement results (Sugiono et al., 2020). Consistent measurement results are obtained when the same object is measured several times, yielding relatively similar results. The reliability test in this study uses Cronbach's Alpha statistical test. According to Ghazali (2018:45) an instrument is considered reliable if Cronbach's Alpha > 0.6.

Table 2. Reliability Test

Variable	Cronbach Alpha Value	Ketentuan	Validation
Quality of Service (X1)	0,813	0,6	Reliable
trust (X2)	0,754	0,6	Reliable
Parents' Satisfaction (Y)	0,675	0,6	Reliable

Source: The data was analyzed using SPSS 25.

The table above shows that the reliability test results indicate that the variables of service quality (X1), trust (X2), and student parents' satisfaction (Y) have Cronbach's alpha values greater than 0.6, meaning that the items in each statement in the questionnaire are reliable and can be used for further research.

This study uses multiple linear regression analysis because it consists of two independent variables. Multiple linear regression analysis is used to determine whether there is an influence between the independent variables and the dependent variable (Astriawati, 2016). The summary of the results of the multiple linear regression analysis using SPSS 25 is as follows:

Table 3. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Testing

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		T	Sig.	Conclusion
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	1,353	1,275	1,052	0,297	
X1	0,274	0,082	2,903	0,006	Significant

X2	0,362	0,118	2,875	0,006	Significant
Adjusted R Square	: 0,673				
Standar Error of Estimate	: 0,69551				
F	: 47,132				
Sig	: 0,000				
N	: 45				

The results of the analysis show that the constant value (a) is 1.353, indicating that if the service quality variable (X1) and trust variable (X2) have a value of 0 (zero), then parent satisfaction is 1.353. The coefficient value b1 for the service quality variable (X1) is 0.274, which means that if the service quality variable increases, parent satisfaction will increase by 0.274. The coefficient value b2 for the trust variable (X2) is 0.362. This result indicates that if the trust variable increases, parent satisfaction will increase by 0.362.

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the service quality variable (X1) shows a t-value greater than the critical t-value, i.e., $t\text{-value} = 2.903 > \text{critical } t\text{-value} = 2.018$, and the significance level is less than 0.05, i.e., 0.006. Therefore, it can be concluded that the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted. A positive t-value indicates that service quality is directly related to parent satisfaction. Thus, it can be concluded that service quality has a positive and significant effect. Therefore, Hypothesis 1, which states that service quality (X1) has a positive and significant effect on parent satisfaction, is accepted. This is in line with the research conducted by (Adestyani et al., 2024; Hasanah & Ed, n.d.; Wulandari, 2024) with the following research results: 1) there is a direct and significant influence between service quality and parent satisfaction, so that the higher the service quality, the higher the level of parent satisfaction, 2) there is a direct and significant influence between trust and satisfaction, so that the higher the level of trust obtained by the school, the higher the level of satisfaction perceived by parents, 3) there is a direct and significant influence between service quality and parental decisions, so that the higher or lower the quality of service, the greater the influence on parental decisions; 4) there is a direct and significant influence between trust and parental decisions, so that the higher or lower the level of trust, the greater the influence on parental decisions. Therefore, based on the results of the analysis and previous research, it can be said that the higher the quality of service provided to parents, the more it will influence parent satisfaction (Amanda & Aprinnisa, 2024).

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the trust variable (X2) shows a calculated t-value greater than the table t-value, i.e., calculated t-value = 2.875 > table t-value = 2.018, and a significance value less than 0.05, i.e., equal to 0.006. Therefore, it can be said that H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted. A positive t-value indicates that trust has a direct relationship with parent satisfaction. Thus, it can be concluded that trust has a positive and significant effect. Therefore, it can be concluded that trust has a positive and significant effect. Thus, hypothesis 2, which states that trust (X2) has a positive and significant effect on parent satisfaction, can be accepted. The results of this study are supported by previous research conducted by (Semuel & Wijaya, 2017) which states that: (1) trust has a positive effect on motivation and likewise has a positive effect on parental satisfaction; (2) motivation has a positive effect on parental satisfaction. Motivation has been proven to mediate between trust and parental satisfaction, thereby strengthening the overall influence of trust on satisfaction. Based on the results of the analysis and previous research, it can be said that the higher the level of parental trust in the school, the greater the influence on parental satisfaction.

Conclusion

Based on the results of data analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that service quality and trust have a positive and significant effect on the satisfaction of parents of students at RA Nurul Hikmah Binjai Timur. This conclusion is supported by the results of the t-test (partial) and F-test (simultaneous), which indicate that both variables – service quality and trust – individually and collectively contribute significantly to the level of parent satisfaction.

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