

Do Childcare Centres Understand Parents? Looking From the Perspective of Parent Behavioural Intention

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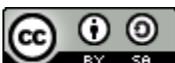
Abstract

This study examines the determinants of parents' behavioural intention concerning childcare services. The constructs, namely service quality, perceived trust, emotional satisfaction, and behavioural intention were tested. Based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response Theory (SOR) and Expectancy Confirmation Theory (ECT), a mediational model was proposed in this study, which linked service quality with customer behavioural intention via perceived trust and emotional satisfaction. Upon employing a purposive sampling method, this study used survey questionnaires for data collection involving a total of 364 valid questionnaires. Data for this study were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 23) and Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) Version 3.2.9 to examine the posited research hypotheses. The results reveal that generally all the relationships tested in this study are supported. This study's results contribute to the consumer behaviour theory and expand the understanding of how childcare providers can sustain in the market. The paper ends with a discussion, implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Keywords: service quality, childcare centre, behavioural intention, perceived trust, emotional satisfaction

1.0 Introduction

Nowadays, childcare plays a significant role in the development of family institutions in Malaysia (Foong, Veloo, Dhamotharan, & Loh, 2018). Childcare has become a central component of community life in the country, making an immense contribution as parents rely heavily on childcare centres to help them train and educate their children. Under the 2019 Malaysia Budget announcement, the Ministry of



Women, Family and Community Development (MWFCD) allocated ten million ringgit (RM 10,000,000) for establishing workplace childcare in government buildings to reduce parents' concerns regarding child safety. In general, the educational programmes provided by childcare centres cater to newborns up to the age of four. Given that Malaysia now has 3.2 million children under the age of four who require childcare services, the MWFCD anticipated that 13,200 childcare centres would be in Malaysia by 2020 (Shagar, 2016). This situation is also experienced in other countries. For example, the number of children enrolled in childcare centres has increased in Singapore (Teo, Yan, & Ong, 2017). New and larger centres are being set up in public residential areas to cater to mothers returning to work after maternity. As shown in Figure 1, the number of childcare centres in Malaysia has also been increasing steadily in the preceding years.

Over the past few decades, many countries have seen a dramatic increase in the number of women who have entered the labour force, due to the increasing cost of living, increased access to higher education for women, and the rise of the service sector (Lim, 2018). Women need to balance their family responsibilities at home and the demands of their workplace commitments (Mahpul & Abdullah, 2011). Today, dual income has become a necessity to maintain people's socio-economic status (Dallakyan & Bakhtavoryan, 2012), as evidenced by the increasing number of women joining the workforce. In Malaysia, the government has provided opportunities for women to occupy corporate decision-making positions to encourage active women's engagement in the workplace. Many initiatives have been introduced by employers to ease women in fulfilling their personal and work responsibilities, such as flexible working hours, childcare arrangements, and paid parental leaves (Mahpul & Abdullah, 2011).



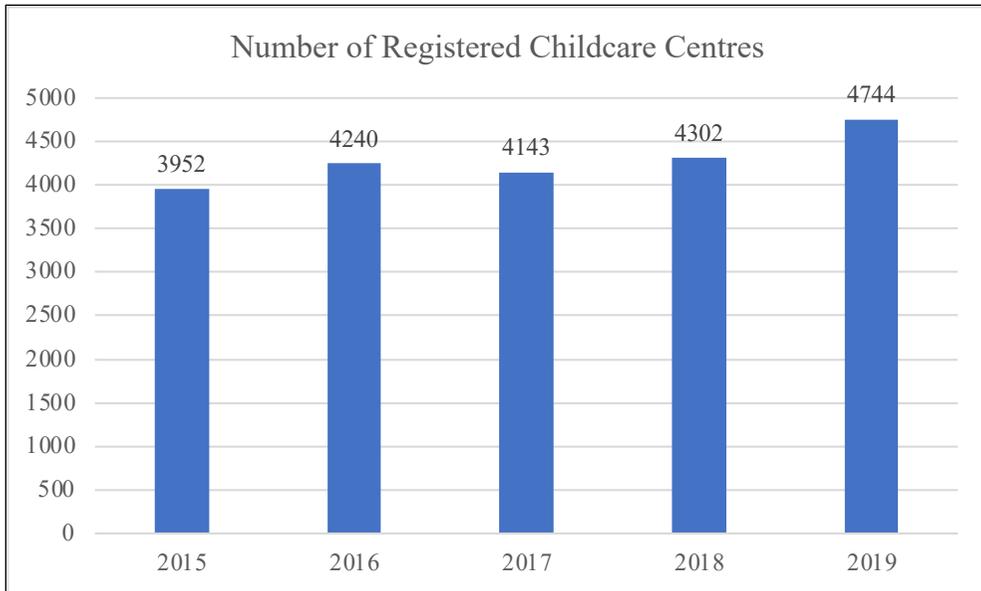


Figure 1 : Number of Registered Childcare in Malaysia

Sources: Malaysia Department of Social Welfare (MDSW) (2018), Malaysia Ministry of Women Family and Community Development (MWFCD) (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019)

The increasing number of childcare centres has intensified competition in the market. This escalation number has caused problems in terms of delivering the services offered by childcare centres especially since service providers often appear pessimistic concerning the issue of service quality. They want to be profitable in providing childcare services to parents. The increasing awareness of the importance of quality childcare that promotes proper caring, development, and guidance to facilitate the growth of the young generation receives serious concern from customers. Currently, customers are willing to pay more for better quality childcare. Choosing the best quality of childcare is crucial and does not represent a short-term consumer decision, but a long-term investment in the wellbeing of the child. The government, however, is seriously concerned with the quality standards in some childcare centres. The rapid expansion of the number of childcare centres that are of a high quality, offer a diverse set of amenities, and provide services that are beneficial to the growth and development of children is the primary focus of the objectives set forth by the government (Dahari & Ya, 2011).

Service providers can gain parents' satisfaction and trust by improving their competitiveness through excellent service quality



performance, which will ultimately translate into better profitability. Superior service quality provides a major competitive advantage to childcare centres, helping them to earn more profits. The study fills the gaps as the childcare service industry is an expanding market for which the government has gone the extra mile to ensure monitoring and regulation. This, therefore, presents an opportunity for childcare providers to tap the market and deliver a promising service.

The interrelationship between service quality, perceived trust, emotional satisfaction, and behavioural intention, has been identified as the key factor for potential competitive advantage. Despite this, only a few attempts has been made to model customer behavioural intentions in the childcare service perspective and other scholars have, however, focused on various industries (Aliman & Mohamad, 2016; Omar, Abu, Sapuan, Aziz, & Nazri, 2010; Ryu, Lee, & Kim, 2012; Sharma & Nayak, 2018; Wu, Cheng, & Ai, 2016). In this study, Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) and Expectancy Confirmation Theory (ECT) were selected to assist in explaining the relationships between the various variables within the research framework. The psychologist Robert Session Woodworth, the pioneer who founded the Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) Theory in 1921, presented three stages in forming the SOR, namely stimulus, organism, and response (Hergenhahn, 2008). Stimulus refers to factors that have an impact on individual internal states of the referred to organisms, which intermediates the behavioural response. In other words, the relationship between stimulation and responsive behaviour is mediated by the intervention of the internal responses of the organism to the occurrent stimuli. This theory is commonly used to explain the effects of the environment on consumer behaviour. Bagozzi (1986), cited in Chang, Eckman, and Yan (2011) describes that in a situation where consumer behaviour follows a sequence of SOR systems, the stimulus factors are external to the individual, and marketing mixes elements such as product, price, place, and promotion set, are part of the stimulus factors.

Expectancy Confirmation Theory (ECT) is a favoured approach for consumer behaviour studies (Hossain & Quaddus, 2012; Oliver, 1980; Rahi & Ghani, 2019). ECT was developed based on Cognitive Dissonance Theory (CDT) by Leon Festinger (Elkhaini & Bakri, 2012). Initially, ECT was developed by Oliver (1980) to explain customers' pre-purchase behaviours (expectations), and their post-purchase behaviour (perceived performance). The difference between



expectation and perceived performance is known as disconfirmation (Bhattacharjee & Premkumar, 2004; Oliver, 1980; Spreng & Page, 2003). ECT is widely used to demonstrate intention in many products or services to understand customer's expectations and requirements (Polites, Williams, Karahanna, & Seligman, 2012; Sapari, Shuib, & Ramachandran, 2013; Shahijan, Rezaei, & Amin, 2015). With its competencies and judgements, ECT can fulfil the needs of the study in measuring satisfaction (Hassan, 2014). Emotional aspects coexist with cognitive systems to generate satisfaction (Ladhari, Souiden, & Dufour, 2017). From an ECT perspective, emotional satisfaction is a concern as it is a customer's judgement outcome from the product or service performance to the expected performance (Oliver, 1980). Thus, this study aims to determine the significance of service quality, perceived trust, and emotional satisfaction on behavioural intention towards childcare centres in Malaysia.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Behavioural Intention

A comprehensive and multidimensional framework of behavioural intention in service, as proposed by Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996), consists of four dimensions: word of mouth (WOM), loyalty, price sensitivity, and complaining behaviour. Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) pioneering study on behavioural intentions acknowledge that customers' objective to execute certain behaviour is not directly related to any specific action. The idea of behavioural intention attracts scholars to apply it in diverse fields, including hospitality (Ryu et al., 2012), human resources (Long & Perumal, 2014), medical (Aliman & Mohamad, 2016), and tourism (Sharma & Nayak, 2018). In most social science studies thereafter, behavioural intention has been structured as a dependent variable (Aggarwal & Rahul, 2017; Alsaggaf, Lu, & Li, 2019; Hendellyn & Bernarto, 2019; Mokhtar, Othman, & Ariffin, 2018) and is recognised as a factor in measuring consumer behaviour (Choi, Lee, & Ok, 2013).

2.2 Service Quality

Previous studies have extensively explored service quality to determine the trends of customer needs and demands. Researchers have introduced several acronyms for service quality according to industries, such as SERVQUAL for banking, telecommunication, and



insurance (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988), DINESERV for food and beverages (Hansen, 2014), EDUSERV for school education (Munhurrun & Nundall, 2013), and AIRQUAL for aviation (Farooq, Salam, Fayolle, & Jaafar, 2018). SERVQUAL is widely used to determine the quality of service. Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml (1991) propose that if the integrity scales are well maintained, the SERVQUAL dimensions are not rigid, and therefore can be adapted or modified as appropriate according to the specific service culture or background. The overall customer service quality stems from the gap between expectation and perception. The assessment of service quality is valuable as it enables service providers to determine customers' opinions to prevail against their competitors and preserve customer value.

Extensive studies on service quality by service providers have received a response from scholars to fulfil customer needs and expectations over time, adapting them to current demands. Mittal and Gera (2012) ascertain that SERVQUAL is more popular than other instruments for service quality and that it has been extensively practised for evaluating service quality (Aliman & Mohamad, 2016; Halim, Hasan, Marzuki, & Jais, 2014; Tan, Ojo, Cheah, & Ramayah, 2019). The components that represent the five dimensions of SERVQUAL applied in this study are tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

2.3 Perceived Trust

Among the components of relationship marketing, trust has been widely studied for many years (Bilgihan & Bujisic, 2015; Dahlstrom, Nygaard, Kimasheva, & Ulvnes, 2014; Phan & Ghantous, 2013). Trust is defined differently across various disciplines. In banking, trust is concerned with the privacy and security of customer information (Chiu, Bool, & Chiu, 2017) which is necessary to establish a positive and safe environment (Chen & Chang, 2013). In relationship marketing, trust is deemed as the reliance between a seller and a buyer (Dahlstrom et al., 2014; Shpetim, 2012). In the public interest, trust is critical and complex (Roberts, 2011), particularly in maintaining the continuity of relationship and engaging in future intentions (Sultan & Wong, 2014). The widely accepted definition of trust is the 'willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence' (Moorman, Deshpande, & Zaltman, 1993). Satisfaction, behavioural intention, and profitability are derived from the trust factor between



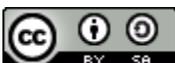
customers and service providers (Adiwijaya, Kaihatu, Nugroho, & Kartika, 2017). The literature on trust in service industries suggests a foundation of the relationship between seller, buyer, employees, supplier, investors, partnership, government, and competitors (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Jin, Line, and Merkebu (2016) note that customers' choice to put their confidence in service impacts their willingness to engage with the service. This then leads to the establishment of a trust-based relationship with the service provider based on the post-consumption evaluation. This proves that trust is the exchange of relationships, leading to success for the business (Abu Bakar & Ilkan, 2016; Fang et al., 2014; Kundu & Datta, 2015).

It has been empirically proven that trust is necessary in quality relationships (Shpetim, 2012). Customers will repurchase products or services from reliable companies that they trust. In the competitive service market, customers make a purchase decision based on their perceptions (Fang et al., 2014; Lee & Song, 2013; Saleem et al., 2017) and the trust service providers have gained (Saleem, Zahra, & Yaseen, 2017). Therefore it is essential to perceive trust as a mediator for the relationship between service quality and behavioural intention.

2.4 Emotional Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is the key factor for business success and competitiveness, as studied by Minh and Huu (2016). It also leads to loyalty (Ismail and Yunan, 2016) and future intentions (Nghah, et al., 2019). Satisfaction is rooted in either an affective factor (such as emotional feelings) or a cognitive factor (known as customer evaluation) (Babin & Griffin, 1998; Bagozzi, 1991). Westbrook and Oliver (1991) contend that satisfaction is an emotional reaction and a core component that includes surprise, pleasure, contentment, or relief. Emotion is known to affect behaviour. In a general sense, customers will act on their positive emotions (such as happiness) and avoid negative emotions (including sadness) (Cham, Lim, Aik, & Tay, 2016; Sharma & Nayak, 2018). Positive emotions will result in higher satisfaction and purchase intention (Oliver, Rust, & Varki, 1997). As a result, business providers must understand the variables determining customer satisfaction to retain their existing customers and entice potential customers (Skallerud, 2011; B. W. Yap, Ramayah, & Shahidan, 2012).

As part of an outcome-oriented approach, satisfaction is viewed as an affective state, with positive feelings resulting from an evaluation



of overall consumption (Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000). According to the satisfaction literature, the concept of consumption emotion refers to a set of emotional responses elicited specifically during consumption experiences (Oliver et al., 1997). It is necessary for businesses to understand the factors that drive customer satisfaction, through retaining existing customers, and welcoming new prospective customers (Skallerud, 2011; Yap, Leong, & Wee, 2012). Satisfaction and retention are significantly based upon the compilation of customers' past experiences (Parawansa, 2018). In light of this, the word usage of 'customer' or 'parent' describe the recipient of childcare services (Omar et al., 2010; Scopelliti & Musatti, 2013). Omar et al. (2010) note that parental evaluation of high-quality service will impact parent positive satisfaction, and brings the promise of establishing a long-term relationship with the childcare service. Scopelliti and Musatti (2013) similarly report that childcare characteristics rely on how parents value, evaluate, and have an overall sense of satisfaction. Therefore, it is suggested in the current study that emotional satisfaction is a mediator to measure the relationship between service quality and behavioural intention.

3.0 Hypothesis Development

3.1 Service Quality and Perceived Trust

One of the most important determinants of consumer decisions is service quality. Among the studies that have found a significant relationship between service quality and trust are Sultan and Wong (2014), Shpetim (2012), and Chen and Chang (2013). Ryu et al. (2012) report that service quality has a strong influence on trust. In service-centred industries such as banking and healthcare, customers put a high priority on service delivery and trust, as these elements involve confidence and expertise (Lien, Wu, Chen, & Wang, 2014). Based on these prior studies, service quality has a significant influence on customers' perceived trust. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Service quality has a significant relationship with perceived trust.

3.2 Service Quality and Emotional Satisfaction

One of the most challenging tasks faced by service industries is to provide an outstanding service quality that will lead to customer satisfaction. Previous studies show that in today's environment, the



true measurement of an organisation's success lies in its ability to continually and consistently satisfy customers' needs (Minh & Huu, 2016). It is generally accepted that the interrelationship between service quality and emotional satisfaction influences behaviour (Nimako, 2012). Some previous studies have contemplated the relationship between emotion and satisfaction (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999; Riadh Ladhari, Nizar Souiden, & Beatrice Dufour, 2017; Oliver, 2015; Spiridon, Gheorghe, Gheorghe, & Purcarea, 2018). The studies by Ladhari, Souiden, and Ladhari (2011) and Walsh, et al. (2011) found a positive relationship between emotional and satisfaction. Thus, the hypothesis below is proposed:

H2: Service quality has a significant relationship with emotional satisfaction.

3.3 Service Quality and Behavioural Intention

Several studies have examined the role of service quality as the precedent to behavioural intention in various industries (Aliman & Mohamad, 2013; Ryu et al., 2012; Tzetzis, Alexandris, & Kapsampeli, 2014). It is assumed that good service quality will lead to favourable behavioural intention. Brady, Cronin, and Brand (2002) found a connection between service quality and behavioural intention. According to a recent study by Alsauidi (2016) parents are now more interested in the quality of private education and want the best for their children.. In a similar vein, a high-quality childcare centre can help nurture children's social skills and intelligence and cultivate parents' commitment to their children's development. When customers' perception of service quality is high, the behavioural intention would become favourable and the relationship between customers and the service provider would be strengthened. Hence, the next hypothesis of this study is as follows:

H3: Service quality has a significant relationship with behavioural intention.

3.4 The Mediation Effect of Perceived Trust On The Relationship Between Service Quality and Behavioural Intention

In today's competitive market, service quality, intention, and trust reflect the sustainability of businesses (Aliman & Mohamad, 2016; Ryu et al., 2012). Trust represents truthfulness and honesty in



providing service, and it affects consumption behaviour (Lertwannawit & Gulid, 2011). Many scholars have examined the impact of service quality on behavioural intention with perceived trust as the mediator (Coelho & Henseler, 2012; Rasheed & Abadi, 2014). Thus, perceived trust is put forth as a mediator in understanding the link between service delivery and customer intention in this study. Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

H4: Perceived trust mediates the relationship between service quality and behavioural intention.

3.5 The Mediation Effect of Emotional Satisfaction on the Relationship Between Service Quality and Behavioural Intention

In the marketing literature, the relationships between service quality, emotional satisfaction, and behavioural intention have gained considerable attention (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Zeithaml et al., 1996). Lai and Chen (2011) propose that organisations must deliver good quality services to achieve customer satisfaction, which will influence customers' behavioural intentions. Ladhari, Brun, and Morales (2008) provide a deep insight into the effect of service quality and emotional satisfaction on behavioural intention. Thus, emotional satisfaction is proposed to be a mediator in the relationship between service quality and behavioural intention (Aliman & Mohamad, 2013; S.-J. Li, Huang, & Yang, 2011). Based on the above, the hypothesis proposed is:

H5: Emotional satisfaction mediates the relationship between service quality and behavioural intention.



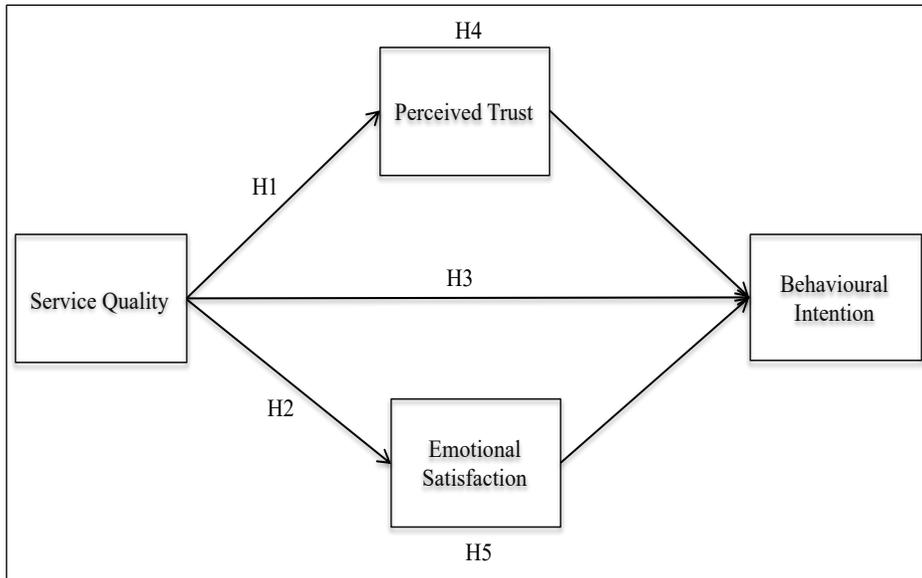


Figure 2 : Research Framework

Figure 2 demonstrates the research framework that is used to examine the hypotheses presented.

4.0 Methodology

The non-probability purposive sampling method was applied due to the unavailability of the sampling frame. Applying the non-probability sampling method was also appropriate considering the nature of the study relates to the theoretical effect within the research framework (Hulland, Baumgartner, & Smith, 2017). This technique was employed to distribute self-administered questionnaires to the respondents and to ensure that the subject could represent the necessary elements based on the criteria needed such as the objective of the study. Taking this into account, the study included parents who sent their children to childcare centres during non-availability in four regions in Peninsular Malaysia, and thus it is feasible to conduct a non-probability sampling, especially when the population was large and could not be determined. To protect respondents' confidentiality and achieve the aim of the study, a brief explanation of the study was provided to the respondents before distributing the questionnaires.

The questionnaire asked the respondents about their understanding of childcare services. For service quality, this study adapted twenty-two items constituting five dimensions of SERVQUAL

(SQ) from Eunjung Kim (2014). Perceived trust and emotional satisfaction consisted of four items each were adapted from Price and Arnould (1999) and Ladhari (2009), respectively. Finally, behavioural intention items were adapted from Zeithaml et al. (1996). Section A of the questionnaire covered the demographic information of the respondents, while Section B inquired about the variables involved. Each item was measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. A five-point scale was used as it was considered appropriate, based on the literature and comparison with similar studies, including those applying the same constructs previously discussed (Zikmund & Babin, 2010). Many researchers indicate that a five-point scale is just as good as any other (Malhotra, 2006; Parasuraman, Grewal, & Krishnan, 2007; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Babakus and Mangold (1992) assert that a five-point scale appears less confusing, and so encourages a high response rate. Revilla, Saris, and Krosnick (2013) agree that the scale gives better quality and reliable data.

A total of 750 questionnaires were distributed to childcare centres and office premises. Out of the 750 questionnaires, 554 were returned. Of this, 190 were found to be non-usable as 36 questionnaires were incomplete, and another 84 were excluded because the respondents were non-childcare users from office premises, who were not suitable since the focus of the study was on customers of childcare services. Having dropped 70 cases, a total of 364 were valid for subsequent analysis, which yielded a response rate of 73.87 per cent Babbie (2008, p. 289) advises that for most market studies, a response rate of at least 50 per cent is adequate for analysis and reporting, while 60 per cent is good, and 70 per cent or more is better. Overall there seems to be evidence that the distribution methods, type of respondents targeted, and the industry applied in the study, were justifiable (Ali, et. al., 2020). Data in the study were analysed using SPSS 23 and Smart PLS 3.2.9 PLS due to its capability to offer better reliability and validity of the results (Chin, 2010).

5.0 Analysis and Results

The terms 'respondents' and 'customers' refer to parents and are used interchangeably in this study. The names of the respondents are kept confidential and anonymous. Table 1 shows a summary of the respondents' demographic information, where most of the respondents were women (67.6 %) and the rest were men (32.4 %). Regarding the



respondents' education level, 41.8 per cent were degree holders, 27.5 per cent studied up to the diploma level, and the remaining possessed an SPM/STPM certificate (13.7 %), and a master's degree (10.7 %) or a doctoral degree (1.4 %). The majority of the respondents (52.5 %) were in the age group of 30–39 years old, 26.4 per cent were in the 40–49 years old age group, and 18.4 per cent were 21–29 years old, while the rest belonged to other age groups. Malays made up most of the participants with 62.4 per cent. Most of the respondents worked in the private sector (58.0 %), followed by government servants (24.5 %). In terms of monthly household income, the RM2001–3999 group represented the largest number of respondents (34.9 %) while the RM8000–9999 group had the fewest number of respondents (7.7 %). Those who sent only one child to the childcare centre reported the largest percentage (59.9 %) while the lowest percentage was attained by respondents who sent more than two children to the childcare centre (8.5 %).

Table 1 : Respondents' Profiles

Construct	Categories	Frequency (n=364)	Percentage %
Gender	Male	118	32.4
	Female	246	67.6
Education Level	SPM	50	13.7
	STPM	18	4.9
	Certificate/Diploma	100	27.5
	Bachelor's degree	152	41.8
	Master	39	10.7
	PhD	5	1.4
Age	<20 years	2	0.5
	21-29 years	67	18.4
	30-39 years	191	52.5
	40-49 years	96	26.4
	>50 years	8	2.2
Race	Malay	227	62.4
	Chinese	71	19.5
	Indian	57	15.7
	Others	9	2.5
Household Income	<RM2000	22	6.0
	RM2001-RM3999	127	34.9
	RM4000-RM5999	100	27.5



Construct	Categories	Frequency (n=364)	Percentage %
	RM6000-RM7999	47	12.9
	RM8000-RM9999	28	7.7
	More than RM10000	40	11.0
	Employment	Government Sector	89
	Private Sector	211	58.0
	Self Employed	48	13.2
	Statutory Body	16	4.4
Number of Children in Childcare Centers	1	218	59.9
	2	115	31.6
	More than 2	31	8.5

5.1 Measurements

The questionnaire had two major sections. The first section concentrated on the demographic factors, while the second section addressed items relating to service quality (SQ), behavioural intention (BI), emotional satisfaction (ES) and perceived trust (PT), which played vital roles in assessing the perceptions of respondents. The study adopted a five-point Likert scale. All of the scales were adjusted from the measurements previously used. Table 2 demonstrates the factors utilised in this study as well as their sources and the number of items utilised.

Table 2 : Measurement Items for Constructs

Construct	Source	No. of Items
Service quality	Kim (2014)	22
Behavioural intention	Zeithaml et al. (1996)	14
Emotional satisfaction	Ladhari (2009)	4
Perceived trust	Price and Arnould (1999)	4

The multivariate skewness and kurtosis were evaluated using the WebPower online software. The study tested multivariate normality by looking at the *p*-value, skewness, and kurtosis using the software available at https://webpower.psychstat.org/models/kurtosis/results.php?url=47cad7eaf3c2b850471bb8b739790221_as as suggested by Hair, et. al. (2017) and Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson (2014). The results of this analysis showed that the research data were not normal



with Mardia's multivariate skewness of $\beta = 5.707$ ($p < 0.01$) and Mardia's multivariate kurtosis of $\beta = 35.321$ ($p < 0.01$), thus supporting the decision to use Smart PLS as it is appropriate for non-parametric analysis.

5.2 Measurement Model

In the measurement model, the reliability test was done using factor loading and composite reliability (CR). The rule of thumb for acceptable factor loading items is between 0.50 and 0.70, while CR should exceed 0.70 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014). For validity, the two methods used were convergent validity and discriminant validity. In this study, convergent validity was accomplished as all the factor loadings were above 0.50 and the average variance extracted (AVE) was 0.50 and above (Hair, Black, et al., 2014). Even though AVE should be higher than the minimum threshold of 0.50, Fornell and Larcker (1981) state that even with an AVE of less than 0.50, the convergent validity of a construct is still adequate, provided that the CR is higher than 0.6. Thus, based on the results, this study could proceed with the structural analysis. Table 3 shows that internal consistency, reliability, and convergent validity were all within the required thresholds (Hair et al., 2017). There were 7 items namely BI2, BI8, BI10, BI11, BI12 and BI13 deleted. These items did not meet the minimum criteria of the acceptable factor loading, which should range between 0.50 and 0.7 (Hair, Hult, et al., 2014).



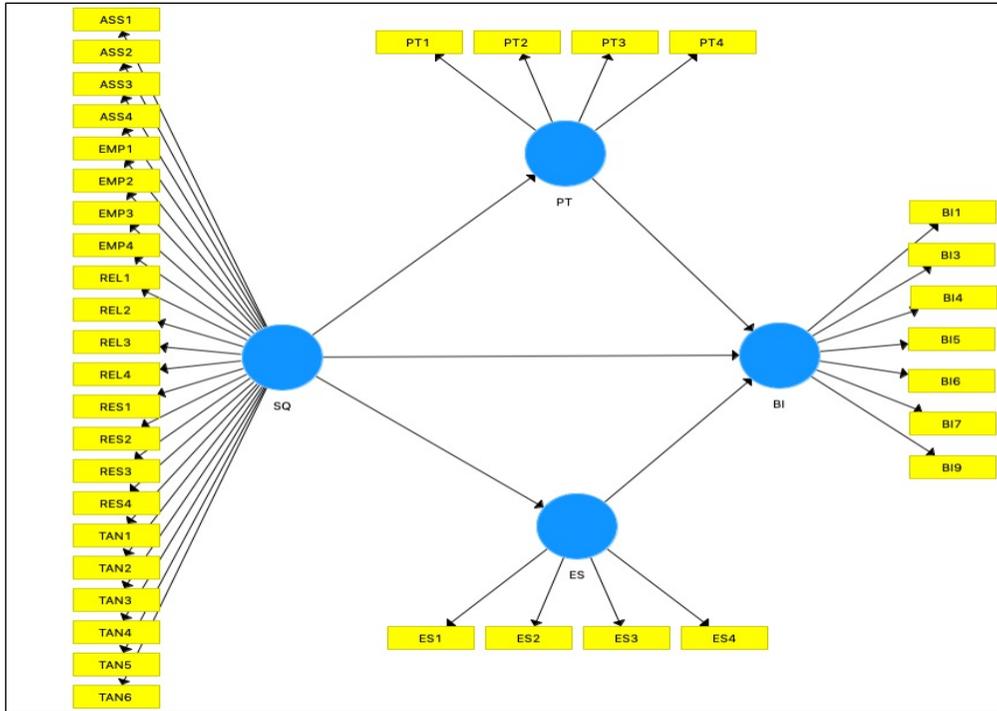


Figure 3 : The Measurement Model

Table 3 : Convergent Validity

Constructs	Item	Loading	CR	AVE			
Behavioural Intention	BI1	0.729	0.893	0.550			
	BI3	0.714					
	BI4	0.819					
	BI5	0.869					
	BI6	0.830					
	BI7	0.660					
	BI9	0.512					
	Emotional Satisfaction	ES1			0.847	0.939	0.793
		ES2			0.894		
ES3		0.915					
ES4		0.905					
Perceived Trust	PT1	0.846	0.854	0.895			
	PT2	0.876					
	PT3	0.762					
	PT4	0.810					
Service Quality	REL1	0.633	0.956	0.500			
	REL2	0.626					



Constructs	Item	Loading	CR	AVE
	REL3	0.631		
	REL4	0.732		
	RES1	0.699		
	RES2	0.747		
	RES3	0.786		
	RES4	0.737		
	TAN1	0.663		
	TAN2	0.622		
	TAN3	0.527		
	TAN4	0.707		
	TAN5	0.738		
	TAN6	0.658		
	ASS1	0.729		
	ASS2	0.740		
	ASS3	0.780		
	ASS4	0.739		
	EMP1	0.749		
	EMP2	0.770		
	EMP3	0.716		
	EMP4	0.761		

Deleted items; BI2, BI8, BI10, BI11, BI12, BI13, BI14

Discriminant validity tests the extent to which different constructs diverge from one another. All constructs met this condition, implying that the items had a greater variance with their constructs than with other constructs. In this research, discriminant validity was tested using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio, which is recognised as superior to the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). An HTMT value greater than 0.85 indicates a problem with discriminant validity (Kline, 2011). All of the HTMT values for constructs were less than 0.85, as indicated in Table 4. In conclusion, these tests indicated that discriminant validity did not pose a significant threat to the current research.

Table 4 : Discriminant Validity (HTMT ratios)

Constructs	BI	ES	PT	SQ
BI				
ES	0.667			
PT	0.696	0.582		
SQ	0.641	0.506	0.789	



5.3 Structural Model

The analysis of the structural model is the stage in which the hypotheses proposed for the research are tested. The hypotheses may be accepted if the beta values correspond to t-values in the direction of the hypotheses and P value. These are also based on the confidence interval where lower level (LL) and upper level (UL) values should not cross a zero between (LL) and (UL). The research must, however, establish that collinearity is not an issue factor before testing a structural model (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019). The structural model was assessed via bootstrapping analysis (Hair, Hult, et al., 2014), where 5000 subsamples were generated through bootstrapping to obtain the t-values, p-values, and bootstrapped confidence intervals (Hair et al., 2017). The study tested 5 hypotheses; all of them were supported. The results are demonstrated in Table 5.

Table 5 : Hypothesis Testing

	Beta	t-values	p-values	LL	UL	Decision	F ²	Effect size
H1: SQ -> PT	0.717	21.165	0.001	0.642	0.775	Supported	1.030	Large
H2: SQ -> ES	0.481	10.036	0.001	0.380	0.570	Supported	0.032	Small
H3: SQ -> BI	0.245	3.867	0.001	0.117	0.367	Supported	0.052	Small

It appears that the study discovered that SQ was positively impacting PT ($\beta = 0.717$, $t = 21.165$ and $p = .001$). Thus, H1 was supported. SQ also had a positive effect on ES ($\beta = 0.481$, $t = 10.036$ and $p = .001$); thus, H2 was supported. The results show that SQ was positively related to BI ($\beta = 0.245$, $t = 3.867$ and $p = .001$), hence confirming the findings in which H3 was supported. The R² values for this research were 0.515 for PT, 0.231 for ES, and 0.504 for BI, showing that factors in this study predicted 51.5 per cent, 23.1 per cent, and 50.4 per cent differences in the degree of coherence, respectively. Meanwhile, researchers should additionally indicate the effect size of the factors in addition to whether or not the correlation between the variables is significant. According to Cohen, the criteria of the effect size indicate the small, medium, and large effects of exogenous latent variables of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, respectively (Cohen, 1988). The study found that SQ was the most important construct that explained PT. The effect size is shown in Table 5.



Table 6 : Mediation Analysis (Indirect Effects)

	Beta	t values	p values	LL	UL	Support
H4: SQ -> PT -> BI	0.176	4.028	0.001	0.094	0.265	Yes
H5: SQ -> ES -> BI	0.170	5.907	0.001	0.119	0.231	Yes

The study generated a completely mediated model and examined its fitness as well as the relevance of each path, as suggested by Hair and others, in using the guidelines published by Preacher and Hayes for bootstrapping the indirect impact (Hair et al., 2017; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The study revealed that PT positively mediated the relationship between SQ and BI ($\beta = 0.176$, $t = 4.028$ and $p = .001$), hence confirming the findings to support H4. Alongside, H5 posited indirect effects of SQ to BI through ES which was significant ($\beta = 0.170$, $t = 5.907$ and $p = .001$), confirming the findings to support H5. The indirect results are shown in Table 6. According to Kerdpitak, the predictive relevance of the model was assessed through the blindfolding approach (Kerdpitak, 2020). The Q^2 value must be greater than 0 for predictive relevance consideration (Fornell & Cha, 1994). In this respect, the Q^2 for PT was 0.319, ES was 0.211, and BI was 0.252; hence, the study can confirm that the model has predictive relevance.

6.0 Discussion, Implication, Limitation and Future Research

6.1 Discussion

This study aimed to test parents' behavioural intention towards enrolling their children at childcare centres by examining the relationships between service quality, perceived trust, emotional satisfaction, and consumer behavioural intention. This study established significant relationships in the conceptualisation of consumer behavioural intention from the constructs, namely service quality, perceived trust, and emotional satisfaction.

The significant relationship between service quality and perceived trust is similar to the findings of studies on fostering confidence (Jin et al., 2016; Rahim & Rahman, 2013). The element of trust must be emphasised in the context of childcare service to gain parents' positivism and assurance, thus refraining from the feeling of conflicts between the parties involved. Thus, H1 is supported, indicating that service quality is linked with emotional satisfaction. This study's findings also supported H2. Organisations must understand customers' needs if they want to increase their profits. Businesses



should strategise to be competitive and win customers regardless of the industry (Riadh Ladhari et al., 2017; Meidute-Kavaliauskiene, Aranskis, & Litvinenko, 2014; Minh & Huu, 2016). For H3, the results demonstrated a significant relationship between service quality and behavioural intention. Superior quality of service delivery will induce customers' behavioural intention and other positive responses such as word of mouth, loyalty, and enhanced company image. Parents have intentions to engage in the services of childcare centres to develop their children's motor skills, as such centres have experienced staff to provide service in this aspect (Hussin, Mokhlis, Salleh, & Aziz, 2019). This finding is in line with the results of previous studies by Aliman and Mohamad (2013), Gil and Jacob (2018) and Ismail, Rose, and Foboy (2016).

This study's results also show that perceived trust mediates the relationship between service quality and behavioural intention; thus, H4 is supported. Hence, childcare centres need to gain parents' perceived trust by improving their service quality to maintain parents' intention to send their children to childcare centres (Alsaggaf et al., 2019; Ramli, Aziz, Wahid, Ahmad, & Hamzah, 2016). For H5, this study's findings show that emotional satisfaction plays an important mediating role in the link between service quality and behavioural intention. Satisfaction is relevant to understand customers' experiences, attitudes, perceptions, and preferences. Satisfaction will also lead customers to make better or repetitive decisions if the service fulfils their expectations. This finding is in line with the studies by Aliman and Mohamad (2013) and Riadh Ladhari et al. (2017).

6.2 Theoretical and Practical Implications

The analysis of this study significantly contributes to substantial theories and practices for academicians and practitioners. From theoretical perspectives, the SOR and ECT theories are applied as an underpinning research framework to induce individual internal states or feelings as reactionary outcomes. They refer to external factors, including service quality, dimensions within individual organisms, which are perceived trust, and perceived risk, and factors that drive individual internal responses, also known as behavioural intention. ECT relates to service quality, emotional satisfaction, and behavioural intention. Therefore the formulation of the five hypotheses from the research framework provides an empirical basis from which to evaluate the contributions of academic principles.



This study also contributes to existing behavioural intention research. This study is built upon integration between SOR theory and ECT. The theoretical underpinnings are encapsulated in the present study to elucidate customer expectations as outcomes of a multi-alignment of service quality, perceived trust, and emotional satisfaction on behavioural intentions. Previous studies rely solely on one theory, and this has led many scholars to focus in-depth on the SOR theory (Aggarwal & Rahul, 2017; Alsaggaf et al., 2019; Hendellyn & Bernarto, 2019; Villiers, Visnena, & Phiri, 2018). Meanwhile, scholars interested in ECT have again focused solely on this theory, such as Abu Seman, Rashid, Ramin, and Ahmad (2019), Kumar, Israel, and Malik (2018), Shahijan et al. (2015) and Lin, Wu, Hsu, and Chou (2012). Li et al. (2020) explore a combination of SOR theory and ECT in the shopping trends among Chinese women, but with no focus on childcare services. Hence, the presented model in this study claims a contribution to further developing the concept of the behavioural intention for the antecedents of childcare service usage by expanding the research framework from customer perspective.

For practical implications, the study has proved that the dimensions of service quality are equivalent in assessing consumer behaviour. This supports previous literature by Aliman and Mohamad (2016) who concur that service quality is interrelated and equally important in service industries. Kitapci, Akdogan, and Dortyol (2014) recommend that service providers improve their services by providing sufficient and dependable services to achieve preferential ranking by their customers. Also, childcare service providers need to identify the needs of customers to tailor their service accordingly, and in line with the guidelines provided by the MWFCO. Delivering high-quality service standards will add extra benefit to businesses for sustaining a competitive market position.

6.3 Limitations

This study has shed light on several important subjects. However, there are several limitations anticipated and a need for improvement in some places. The limitation of the study is the insufficient information gathered about different childcare centres. Upon distributing the questionnaires, the researcher was not permitted to approach customers directly. It was therefore impossible to collect customers' details from the childcare centres because of personal confidentiality concerns raised by MDSW. The data was collected



based on non-probability sampling and the questionnaires relied on heavy assistance from the childcare centres.

6.4 Future Research

Adding more constructs, such as actual and post-usage behaviour could help to better understand consumer characteristics and identify more diverse factors. Integrating other aspects, such as social factors, would yield a different understanding of customer needs more holistically. A study into electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) as a tool to be harnessed by childcare service providers for marketing purposes would greatly add to the literature. Future research could also look at other consumer behaviour theories alongside SOR theory and ECT, particularly those which take into account modern digital marketing approaches.

7.0 Conclusion

Today's world is signified by a competitive market landscape. As a result, it is crucial to understand how satisfaction and trust affect parents' behavioural intention towards engaging in childcare services. Parents that are occupied with work commitments send their children to childcare centres from an early age before the children reach the compulsory schooling age of seven years old. During their children's early years, parents need to bear the fees in acquiring the service of a childcare centre. They tend to prefer a childcare centre that emphasises social skills, communication, and self-esteem within the children's circle. Children need to develop these abilities to ensure that they will be ready to enrol in a primary school at the age of seven. Some childcare centres provide additional values by offering basic reading and writing skills to prepare children for formal education. Parents expect their children to develop well in academic and discipline aspects, given the fees that they have to pay to the childcare centres. Since Malaysia is gearing up towards educational excellence to produce a sustainable and competitive generation, parents' reliance on early education at childcare centres and kindergartens needs to be prioritised. High-quality services are important in fostering trust and satisfaction, which will affect parents' intention, and lead to favourable outcomes. In sum, this study has achieved its research objectives.



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