



Service Quality as a Strategic Driver of External Customer Satisfaction: Evidence from a Semi-International School in Indonesia

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Abstract

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This research aims at disclosing deeply and describing things that are enable the customers to feel satisfied with the education services provided by Sekolah Highscope Indonesia. In analyzing the data, three main theories were chosen, namely Service Dominant Logic, Total Quality Management, and Factors of Customer Satisfaction. The research methodology chosen was Qualitative, in which interviews, participatory observation, and document study were done. The important findings of this research are: (1) the English language competence of Sekolah Highscope Indonesia graduates, (2) the modern and unique education concept, (3) the graduates (alumni) who are competitive globally, (4) the responsiveness of the school management and teachers when there is complaint or concern, (5) the core values (respect, responsibility, excellence, and integrity) developed and internalized for the students, (6) parents regarded as partners, and (7) the teachers' high competence. Based on these study results, practical recommendations can be given to SHI, i.e. these very good things should be maintained and implemented consistently. As for social science recommendations, if possible the research in the future should use quantitative methodology, so that the results will probably reflect customer's satisfaction better since quantitative research use more research population sampling.

Keywords: service quality, customer, satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary business environment is characterized by rapid and continuous transformation, primarily driven by technological advancement and digital innovation. The integration of technology has fundamentally reshaped how organizations operate, compete, and deliver value to customers. As emphasized in recent studies, organizations across sectors are required to adopt adaptive strategies to remain relevant and sustainable in an increasingly dynamic marketplace (Saefullah et al., 2025). The inability to respond effectively to these changes may lead to organizational stagnation or even failure. Therefore, continuous learning, innovation, and technological adoption have become essential components of modern organizational strategy (Anggraini & Saefullah, 2025).

This transformation is not limited to manufacturing or product-based industries but also significantly affects service-oriented organizations, including the education sector. Educational institutions, particularly private and semi-international schools, are increasingly required to shift from traditional operational models toward more innovative and customer-oriented approaches. In this context, schools are no longer viewed solely as educational providers but also as service organizations that must deliver value and ensure customer satisfaction. The concept of “customers” in education has evolved, where parents especially in private schooling systems—play a critical role as primary stakeholders and decision-makers.

One such institution is Sekolah HighScope Indonesia (SHI), a semi-international school operating in Jakarta under a franchise model from HighScope America. SHI has positioned itself as an institution that emphasizes value creation through innovative learning systems, character development, and continuous improvement in educational services. This positioning reflects a broader shift in the education sector, where schools are required to integrate pedagogical excellence with service quality to meet the expectations of increasingly discerning stakeholders.

From a theoretical perspective, customer satisfaction has long been a central topic in marketing and service management literature. Numerous studies have explored the determinants of customer satisfaction and its implications for customer loyalty across various industries. For instance, prior research has examined customer satisfaction in hospitality (AY Suhartanto, 2018), tourist destination (Carlsson & Md. Hussain, 2010), logistics services (Polyorat & Sophonsiri, 2010), restaurants (Ponnam & Balaji, 2014), and education management systems (M. Firdaus & Mayasari, 2022). These studies generally highlight the importance of service quality, perceived value, and customer experience in shaping satisfaction and loyalty.

However, despite the extensive body of literature, there remains a notable gap in studies focusing specifically on customer satisfaction within semi-international school contexts. Most existing research tends to generalize findings from commercial or public service sectors, which

may not fully capture the unique characteristics of educational services. Unlike other service industries, education involves long-term engagement, emotional investment, and multidimensional value creation, particularly in shaping students' cognitive, social, and personal development. Therefore, understanding customer satisfaction in educational settings requires a more nuanced and context-specific approach.

The concept of value creation provides a useful framework for analyzing customer satisfaction in this context. According to (Ferdinand, 2014), value creation can be viewed from three interrelated perspectives: (1) value creation for customers through products and services, (2) value creation for suppliers through customer equity, and (3) value creation through the integration of sellers and buyers within marketing networks. In the context of educational institutions, these perspectives translate into the ability of schools to deliver high-quality educational services, build strong relationships with stakeholders, and create sustainable value through continuous innovation.

From the customers' perspective, value creation is achieved when an organization successfully fulfills customer needs and meets or exceeds their expectations. In educational settings, this implies that schools must not only provide academic excellence but also ensure a holistic learning experience that satisfies both students and their parents. When expectations are met, customers—particularly parents—are more likely to perceive the institution as valuable, leading to higher satisfaction and long-term engagement. In the case of SHI, parents expect not only quality education but also a supportive learning environment, effective communication, and measurable learning outcomes.

In addition to service quality, the organizational environment plays a crucial role in shaping customer satisfaction. A conducive organizational environment reflects how internal values, culture, and management practices influence service delivery. As highlighted by (Iswahyudi et al., 2023), the ability to design, manage, and market services effectively is essential for both public and private sector organizations. In educational institutions, this includes creating a positive school climate, fostering innovation, and ensuring that all stakeholders are aligned with the institution's vision and mission.

Despite the recognized importance of service quality and organizational environment, limited research has explored how these factors interact within semi-international schools to influence customer satisfaction. This gap is particularly relevant in the Indonesian context, where the demand for high-quality private education continues to grow alongside increasing competition among educational institutions. Consequently, there is a need for empirical research that provides

deeper insights into how service quality and organizational environment contribute to customer satisfaction in such settings.

This study aims to address this gap by examining Sekolah HighScope Indonesia as a case study. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on integrating service quality and organizational environment within the context of a semi-international school, as well as its emphasis on understanding customer satisfaction from the perspective of parents as external customers. Furthermore, this study introduces a contextualized approach to value creation in education, highlighting how innovative learning systems and organizational practices contribute to customer satisfaction.

Based on this background, the research objectives are formulated as follows: (1) to analyze the service quality of Sekolah HighScope Indonesia in creating customer satisfaction among parents, and (2) to examine the role of organizational environment in influencing customer satisfaction. To achieve these objectives, this study addresses two key research questions: (1) how does service quality at SHI contribute to customer satisfaction among parents, and (2) how does the organizational environment of SHI support the creation of customer satisfaction?

Ultimately, this research is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. From a theoretical perspective, it enriches the literature on customer satisfaction by providing insights into the education sector, particularly semi-international schools. From a practical perspective, the findings can serve as a reference for educational institutions in designing strategies to improve service quality and organizational effectiveness. Moreover, this study highlights the importance of adopting a value-driven and customer-oriented approach in education to ensure long-term sustainability and competitiveness.

METHODS

This study is situated within the field of Social Sciences; therefore, a qualitative research approach was employed, as suggested by (A. Firdaus et al., 2023). The study aims to explore in depth how service quality and organizational environment contribute to external customer satisfaction, particularly among parents at Sekolah Highscope Indonesia. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it allows for a comprehensive understanding of social phenomena, behaviors, and perceptions within their natural context.

In qualitative research, the rigor of the study is largely determined by the robustness of the research process (A. Firdaus, 2019). Accordingly, this study adopts a descriptive analytical design, which enables the researcher to present a holistic and systematic depiction of the research focus. All information collected from the field is documented and analyzed comprehensively to capture

the complexity of the phenomenon under investigation. Given the qualitative nature of this study, no statistical hypotheses were formulated, and hypothesis testing was not conducted, as is common in quantitative research.

Data Collection

Data collection in this study relied primarily on in-depth interviews and was supported by the researcher as the main research instrument. The researcher, a senior teacher at Sekolah Highscope Indonesia TB Simatupang and a graduate student in the Master of Management program at STIE Ganesha, played an active role in gathering and interpreting the data. The researcher's academic exposure to leading scholars in business and management—such as Augusty Ferdinand, Armin Trost, Michael Porter, Philip Kotler, and Soegiono—provided a strong conceptual foundation for conducting this study.

The use of the researcher as the primary instrument is consistent with qualitative research traditions, where the researcher's sensitivity, experience, and interpretive ability are critical in capturing meaningful insights from participants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, allowing flexibility to explore emerging themes while maintaining alignment with the research objectives

Informant

From approximately 30 potential informants, six participants were purposively selected based on their relevance to the research objectives. The selected informants represent diverse perspectives, including organizational management, alumni experience, and customer (parent) viewpoints. Specifically, the informants consisted of:

- Three middle-level managers within the organization
- One alumna of Sekolah Highscope Indonesia who recently completed postgraduate studies at the University of Exeter
- Two parents of students, representing external customers

This selection ensures a multi-perspective understanding of service quality and organizational environment in shaping customer satisfaction.

Tabel 1. Demographic Data of the Informant

No.	Code	Gender	Age	Education	Occupation	Remark
1.	Inf-1	L	57	Magister, MBA	President Director	PT SANTI YOGA
2.	Inf-2	P	53	S1, in AS, Finance	Finance	PT SANTI YOGA
3.	Inf-3	L	25	S1 University of Exeter and S2, Warwick University	Consultant	
4.	Inf-4	P	54	S2 Universitas Indonesia	Head of Service, Quality Monitoring & Improvement	SHI
5.	Inf-5	P	48	S2	School Principal , Sekolah	SHI
6.	Inf-6	L	46	S1, Trisakti University	Deputy Manager of School Support	SHI

Data Analysis

After each interview was conducted, the recorded data were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and completeness. Following transcription, the study employed descriptive and content analysis techniques.

The analysis process involved several stages:

1. Data Reduction – identifying and selecting relevant information from the transcripts.
2. Coding and Categorization – grouping key statements, phrases, and ideas related to the research questions.

3. Interpretation – analyzing patterns and relationships among themes to generate meaningful insights.

Key ideas expressed by informants were extracted and used as the basis for answering the research questions. This process ensured that the findings were grounded in empirical data while maintaining analytical rigor. Through systematic reduction and interpretation, the study was able to identify core themes related to service quality and organizational environment in influencing customer satisfaction.

Overall, this methodological approach ensures that the findings are contextually rich, analytically robust, and reflective of real-world conditions, thereby enhancing the credibility and relevance of the research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study reveals that service quality and organizational environment are the two principal determinants of external customer satisfaction at Sekolah Highscope Indonesia (SHI). The findings indicate that customer satisfaction is not solely influenced by service delivery, but also by the broader organizational context in which the service is embedded. Both dimensions interact to create a comprehensive educational experience that meets and exceeds parents' expectations.

Empirically, the results show that service quality at SHI is reflected in several key aspects. First, the strong English competence of SHI graduates becomes a significant value proposition, particularly in the context of globalized education. Second, the school's unique educational concept, which emphasizes student-centered learning and character development, distinguishes SHI from conventional educational institutions. Third, management responsiveness to complaints and concerns demonstrates a high level of service reliability and assurance, which are critical dimensions in service quality theory (A. Firdaus, 2023).

Furthermore, the development of core values among students contributes to long-term value creation, aligning with the perspective that education is not only about academic achievement but also character building. Parents are also positioned as strategic partners, which strengthens relational value and enhances trust. In addition, SHI graduates are perceived to have a competitive advantage, indicating that the service outcomes are aligned with customer expectations. Lastly, teacher competence plays a crucial role in delivering high-quality educational services, supporting previous findings that human resources are central to service excellence.

In terms of organizational environment, the findings highlight two main components. First, the availability of adequate and high-quality facilities supports the learning process and enhances customer satisfaction. Second, a warm and safe organizational climate, fostered by effective management practices, creates a positive environment for both students and parents. This aligns with service management theory, which emphasizes that the service environment (servicescape) significantly influences customer perceptions and satisfaction.

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The data were collected through in-depth interviews with six informants, consisting of three internal management members and three external customers (parents and alumni), as well as direct observation. This approach is consistent with qualitative research principles, where depth of information is prioritized over the number of respondents. The triangulation of data sources strengthens the validity of the findings.

The analytical process involved transcription, data classification, and content analysis to identify key themes and patterns. The main ideas extracted from interview data were interpreted as indicators of service quality and organizational environment. These findings were then linked to the research questions to provide comprehensive answers.

When compared with previous studies, the results of this research are consistent with the concept of value creation proposed by Ferdinand (2014) (Saefullah et al., 2023), which emphasizes the importance of aligning organizational offerings with customer expectations. Moreover, the findings support prior research in service management, which states that service quality dimensions—such as responsiveness, assurance, and reliability—are critical in shaping customer satisfaction. However, this study contributes additional insight by highlighting the role of organizational environment as an equally important factor, particularly in the context of educational institutions.

In contrast to studies focusing on traditional service industries such as hospitality or transportation, this research demonstrates that in the education sector, customer satisfaction is influenced not only by service delivery but also by long-term outcomes, such as graduate

competence and character development. This reinforces the argument that education services require a more holistic evaluation framework.

Overall, the findings suggest that Sekolah Highscope Indonesia has successfully integrated high-quality service delivery with a supportive organizational environment, resulting in a strong level of customer satisfaction. This integration represents a strategic advantage and provides a model for other educational institutions seeking to enhance their service quality and organizational effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research, it can be concluded that the service quality of Sekolah Highscope TB. Simatupang that can create external customers' satisfaction are: (1) the English competence of the students who have graduated from the school, (2) the unique concept of education implemented by Sekolah Highscope Indonesia, (3) the responsiveness of the school when there is a complaint or concern, (4) the core values developed through education in Highscope Indonesia, (5) strong home school collaboration, (6) the competitiveness of Highscope alumni, (7) excellent teachers' competence and (8) there is differentiated learning and instruction. With respect to the organizational environment, the environment that can create customer satisfaction are mainly two conditions: (1) a great physical environment and (2) safe as well as comfortable school environment. The findings above clearly answer the research questions. Apparently the high quality of the Sekolah Highscope Indonesia service to its customers has resulted in the satisfaction of the external customer particularly the parents who send their child or children to SHI. This also includes the organizational environment developed by the school, which is safe and warm.

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