



Poster
ID: 1524

An Exploratory Research on the Attitudes of Parents-Workers in Sending their Children to Childcare/Pre-Education Centres



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ABSTRACT:

Modern parents-workers today contribute to the survival and maintenance of their households. However, work-life-balance is always their perennial issue. This research explores the attitudes of parents-workers in handling the childcare/pre-education centres issues. Do they feel indifferent in their decision and action as long as there are people or bodies that able to mind their children while they are away at work? Or do they find in-house domestic helpers sufficiently adequate to do so? The research is a quantitative research project using questionnaire to 558 working parents-workers who work in Cheras, Gombak and Shah Alam areas. It is concluded that parents-workers incline to have a convenient attitude in sending their children to childcare/pre-education centres as long as they are cared while they are away at work. The result is definitely distressing. The research consequently recommends to induce in communitarian commitment of parents-workers and employers, with the help of the Government, by setting an integrated childcare/pre-education centres within the community that may reduce their dependency on in-house domestic helpers, if any.

KEYWORDS: *Malaysia, Parents-Workers, Social attitudes, Questionnaire, Childcare, pre-education centre, In-house domestic helpers, Integrated childcare/pre-education centres*

RESEARCH PROBLEM:

Previous studies in Malaysia discussed parenting styles and their effect on children's development which heavily involved psychological inputs. Clearly, there is a gap between parents-workers' attitudes on parenting and childcaring and children's development and parents' well-being. However, little is known about the current attitudes of parents-workers in sending their children to childcare/pre-education centres.

HYPOTHESES:

- H₁: Parents-workers incline to have a convenient attitude in sending their children to childcare/pre-education centres as long as they are cared while they are away at work.
H₂: But at the same time, they feel happy to accept an integrated childcare/pre-education centres rather than to have an in-house helpers to manage their children while they are away from homes working.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

1. To explore parents-workers' attitudes in sending their children to childcare/pre-education centres.
2. To identify factors behind their decision and action in sending their children to childcare/pre-education centres.
3. To recommend policy measures and strategies by setting an integrated childcare/pre-education centres within the community to assist parents-workers particularly mothers in coping with the demands of the two life spheres – personally and professionally.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. Do parents-workers concern about the welfare of their children in sending them to childcare/pre-education centres?
2. What are the social factors that lead to their decision and action in sending their children to childcare/pre-education centres?
3. Will an integrated childcare/pre-education centres assist parents-workers particularly mothers in coping with the demands of the two life spheres – personally and professionally?

RESEARCH SAMPLING, METHODS AND METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES:

It is a quantitative research project by means of purposive sampling. A two-page questionnaire items were distributed to 800 samples to parents-workers or guardians to a child of the age between 0-18 years old. They are found at various childcare/pre-education and tuition centres around Cheras, Gombak and Shah Alam areas. The sampling frame was conveniently obtained from site-searching and the internet. The research received 558 respondents, with a return rate of 69.75 percent.

RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE:

This research provides groundwork to understand macro societal issues such as the contemporary parenting styles adopts by parents-workers today as well as their dependence on in-house helpers in Malaysia. Consequently, an integrated childcare/pre-education centres may be the solution that is suitable to parents-workers and their children.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

- The current findings provide an indication that when childcaring issues concern with internal and controllable factors like distance and cost/fee, respondents show a convenient attitude.
- Majority of the respondents put a trust on childcare/pre-education centres than in-house helpers in taking care of their children while at work. Additionally, many of them believed that parents' dependence on in-house helpers is more to take care of their children rather than to do domestic chores. They feel in-house helpers bring in more troubles to employers' home rather than take those troubles away.
- The respondents overwhelmingly accept the noble idea to have integrated childcare/pre-education centres that provides 24-7 services, including weekends and public holidays (whenever necessary) so that they do not have to rely on in-house helpers, relatives and others to take care and educate their children while working.
- Many of them feel happy to have an integrated centre that serves for their welfare as well as for the benefits of their children while they are working outside homes.
- Most respondents wish a concerted effort between parents-workers, employers and government to establish integrated childcare/pre-education centres as they believed that the care of children is not only their responsibility but also employers and government, as well. Furthermore, they accepted the idea of employers' subsidisation scheme, so that they benefit from reduced cost/fee and 24-7 time scheduling services.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION:

Respondents' selection of the childcare/pre-education centres is conveniently based on short-distance and low cost/fee. Apparently, these are internal variables that are controllable. When they provide a high agreement level towards both variables, this indicates that they have a convenient attitude in sending their children to childcare/pre-education centres. As far as the research has found, their convenient attitudes are more based on their personal interest rather than for their children's welfare. Even though they do not like the idea of having in-house helpers, they seem do not have much choices as their children need to be taken care of while they are away working.

The respondents also feel happy to have integrated childcare/pre-education centres. It is suggested that these centres should be a concerted effort among parents-workers, employers and government, so that parents-workers may get the benefits of low cost/fee and 24-7 services.

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