

THE EFFECT OF PARENTAL DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS ON PARENTS' PERCEPTION OF DAYCARE CENTER SERVICES QUALITY IN DUAL-INCOME FAMILY IN INDONESIA

PENGARUH KARAKTERISTIK DEMOGRAFIS ORANG TUA TERHADAP PERSEPSI KUALITAS LAYANAN PUSAT PENITIPAN ANAK PADA KELUARGA BERPENDAPATAN GANDA DI INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

As dual-income families become more common in Indonesia, working parents face increasing challenges in balancing work and caregiving responsibilities. This mixed-method study aims to analyze the extent to which parental demographic characteristics—specifically education level, family income, and marital status—affect parents' perception of daycare quality that they are using. The study combines a survey of 267 daycare users with in-depth interviews to enrich and contextualize findings. The results show that education level significantly influence parents evaluation of daycare Workforce Quality, Curriculum & Pedagogy, Monitoring & Evaluation, and Governance & Funding. Meanwhile family income and marital status did not show any significant effect. The result show that parents with higher education attainment tend to score the daycare quality lower, meaning they evaluate it more critically. While Access & Participation is the only dimension that did not show any correlation with education. According to the interview it show that Access & Participation is universal needs for parents regarding their characteristics of background.

Keywords: daycare quality, dual-earner family, daycare, parental demographics, education, marital status, Indonesia

ABSTRAK

Seiring semakin umumnya keluarga dengan dua pencari nafkah di Indonesia, para orang tua yang bekerja menghadapi tantangan yang semakin besar dalam menyeimbangkan tanggung jawab kerja dan pengasuhan anak. Studi campuran ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis sejauh mana karakteristik demografis orang tua—khususnya tingkat pendidikan, pendapatan keluarga, dan status pernikahan—mempengaruhi persepsi orang tua terhadap kualitas layanan daycare yang mereka gunakan. Penelitian ini menggabungkan survei terhadap 267 pengguna daycare dengan wawancara mendalam untuk memperkaya dan memberikan konteks terhadap temuan yang diperoleh. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tingkat pendidikan secara signifikan memengaruhi evaluasi orang tua terhadap kualitas tenaga kerja, kurikulum & pedagogi, pemantauan & evaluasi, serta tata kelola & pendanaan pada layanan daycare. Sementara itu, pendapatan keluarga dan status pernikahan tidak menunjukkan pengaruh yang signifikan. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa orang tua dengan tingkat pendidikan yang lebih tinggi cenderung memberikan penilaian yang lebih kritis terhadap kualitas daycare. Satu-satunya dimensi yang tidak menunjukkan korelasi dengan pendidikan adalah Akses & Partisipasi. Berdasarkan hasil wawancara, Akses & Partisipasi merupakan kebutuhan universal bagi semua orang tua, terlepas dari latar belakang demografis mereka. **Kata kunci:** kualitas daycare, keluarga dengan dua pencari nafkah, daycare, demografi orang tua, pendidikan, status pernikahan, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

The dual-earner family has now become a global phenomenon. The dual-earner family refers to a family which consists of a husband and wife, both of whom pursue their own career (2002). It is found in almost every part of the world, including Indonesia (Rustham, 2019). According to Badan Pusat Statistik (2024), 45.81% of the labor force comprises men. Meanwhile, 36.32% of the labor force consists of women and 12.30% of heads of household in urban areas are women. Even though there is no exact data on how many dual earners are

in Indonesia, the data from Badan Pusat Statistik shows that more women are participating in the workforce today, overcoming their traditional gender role as caregivers. This dual-earner family phenomenon might be happening due to the global economic recession that encourages families to earn more (Rustham, 2019) and high rates of women in education who want to pursue careers (Redmond et al., 2006).

In Indonesia, daycare has emerged as well. According to the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection (2024) there are 197.000

daycare in Indonesia. But unfortunately, most of the daycare in Indonesia is not officially licensed. Based on the research results done by KPAI, 44% of daycare have not yet acquired national legality. Additionally, many daycare centers are established by the community, which leads them to not register for legality with the Department of Education (Amaranggana, 2024). After interviewing two daycare owners in Jakarta (2024), they also find it difficult to get the legality of daycare and they do not feel there is any guidance that helps them much as they prefer to do daycare operation based on best practices and parents' demand. Even though The Child-Friendly Daycare Standard Guidelines/Taman Asuh Ceria (TARA), initiated by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (Kemen PPPA), has exist to serve as a reference for the implementation of daycare services in terms of service delivery, facilities, and the availability of infrastructure and amenities (Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection (2024).

Furthermore, since most of the daycare have not been licensed and the implementation has not been known. The quality and facility of daycare centers are also different in many places. It is unfortunate because if managed well, daycare can support a parent's work-life balance and have advantages above traditional parenting methods (for example caring for other family members or a nanny at home). Research suggests that daycare is more beneficial for a child's early development compared to being cared for by grandparents. Children who attend nurseries or daycare centers tend to be better prepared for school, as they gain structured learning experiences and socialization opportunities with peers (The Guardian, 2009).

According to Tech in Asia (2024), only 19.3% of families in Indonesia utilize early childhood education services (PAUD), including daycare. Many still rely on traditional parenting methods due to stigma and security concerns despite its benefit to support parent's work-life balance. In order to support parent's work-life balance through daycare center utilization, some research has been done that shows the availability of daycare centers' services has correlation to parent's satisfaction in achieving the balance between their professional career and childcare (Bulger et al., 2007; Steiber, 2009; Williams et al., 2013).

Dual-earner families contribute positively to the well-being of the family, the economy, and workforce diversity. However, they also face challenges in managing work and family responsibilities. Meanwhile, achieving a good state of work-life balance is beneficial not only for parents, but also for their families and organizations. In Indonesia, the increasing number of dual-earner families has raised the need for reliable childcare solutions, particularly childcare centers or daycare services. Research from other countries has shown

that utilizing daycare can help parents maintain their professional responsibilities while ensuring that their children receive proper care (Bulger et al., 2007; Steiber, 2009; Williams et al., 2013).

Even though the benefits and need for childcare service are there, only 19.3% of families in Indonesia are utilizing daycare services (Tech in Asia, 2024). This might happen due to cultural factors and only 56% of daycare having national legality. Additionally, many daycare centers are established by the community, which leads them to not register for legality with the Department of Education (Kompas, 2024). According to an interview with a Daycare owner in Jakarta (2024), the government has not established clear guidelines for daycare practitioners to operate. So, they run the daycare center by the best practices and demand of parents.

Despite the growing need for accessible childcare service, there is limited research that guides childcare service providers, organizations, or policymakers in understanding on how parents background evaluates daycare quality of daycare services despite their background, that can be strong foundation in creating support that parent's needs. Previous studies have shown that parents' demographic characteristics which are education level, family income, and marital status, can influence how they evaluate daycare quality. These factors reflect different levels of access, preferences, and constraints in childcare decision making process. For example, highly educated parents tend to be more critical and prioritize structured learning and child development, while lower-income families may focus more on affordability and availability. Marital status also plays a role, especially for single mothers who often rely more on external support due to the absence of a spouse. While these factors have been explored in international contexts, there is limited research in Indonesia, where cultural and systemic differences may lead to unique patterns. Furthermore, the indicators used to define daycare quality have not been consistently standardized, making quality improvement efforts harder to implement. Therefore, this study aims to close this gap by examining how parental demographics shape dual-income families' perceptions of daycare quality in Indonesia.

As the first study of its kind in Indonesia, it is expected to provide valuable insights for key stakeholders. The key stakeholders that will be benefited from this study are daycare service providers and policy makers. For childcare service providers can use the insights to improve daycare quality, create more impactful marketing strategies, design more relevant programs, and increase utilization by understanding what aspects matter most to different demographic groups of parents.

Importantly, this research provides valuable insights for policymakers by understanding how parents from different demographic backgrounds perceive daycare quality. Understanding these perception gaps from varied education levels, income groups, and marital status can help inform more targeted improvements in daycare standards and communication strategies. Rather than offering a one-size-fits-all solution, the findings emphasize the need to consider family diversity in shaping policies that aim to increase trust and satisfaction toward daycare services. This study can contribute to the wider effort to make early childcare services more responsive and inclusive, especially for dual-income families in Indonesia. Research objectives to analyze the extent to which parental demographic characteristics (parent's education level, family income, and marital status) affect their perception towards daycare services quality.

METHOD

This study utilizes a convergent mixed-method design that combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore the relationship between parental demographic background and daycare service quality among dual-income parents in Indonesia in parallel. Quantitative data are collected through structured questionnaires

distributed through online form. The questionnaire includes demographic factors and daycare quality dimensions adapted from OECD Starting strong (2017) framework, with items rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Sampling is done using non-probability methods, which is convenience and snowball sampling because no data available about the target population. The qualitative data are gathered through semi-structured interviews with three participants that has same criteria as the survey participants. The interviews aim to provide deeper context, validating, and enriching the quantitative results so that the finding will be more insightful as basis for intervention development ahead.

For data analysis, the quantitative data will be processed using SPSS, including descriptive analysis, questionnaire reliability and validity test, classical assumption tests (normality, multicollinearity, heteroskedasticity, and autocorrelation), and multiple linear regression to test this research hypothesis. The qualitative data will be analyzed using thematic analysis. The interview result will be identifying patterns and themes from participants to support and contextualize survey findings. This approach can give for a more thorough and holistic understanding of how parental demographics influence the perception on daycare quality service among working parents.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Background Analysis

Table 1

Participants demographic characteristics

Category	Sub Category	Total Number	Percentage
Gender	Men	52	17.94%
	Women	215	82.06%
Age Category	< 25 years old	7	2.67%
	25 - 34 years old	211	80.53%
	35 - 44 years old	44	16.79%
Latest Education Level	Low: elementary school (SD) and junior high school (SMP)	5	1.91%
	Medium: senior high school (SMA/SMK)	117	44.66%
	High: diploma (D1–D3), undergraduate (S1), and postgraduate (S2/S3)	140	53.44%
Marital Status	Married	260	97.38%
	Divorced or widow	7	2.62%
Participants Occupation	Government Employees	20	7.63%
	Private Sector Employees	110	41.98%
	Freelance Workers	55	20.99%
	Entrepreneurs	56	21.37%
	Professionals (doctor, lawyer, etc.)	17	6.49%
	Informal Workers	3	1.15%
Spouse Occupation	Government Employees	16	6.11%
	Private Sector Employees	110	41.98%
	Freelance Workers	20	7.63%
	Entrepreneurs	65	24.81%

	Professionals (doctor, lawyer, etc.)	15	5.73%
	Informal Workers	36	13.74%
Total Family Income	Less than Rp3 million	13	4.96%
	Rp3–10 million	140	53.44%
	Rp10–20 million	63	24.05%
	> Rp 20 million	46	17.56%
Residence Area	Rural Area (e.g., villages in regencies or subdistricts)	34	12.98%
	Urban Area – Jakarta (e.g., South Jakarta, West Jakarta, North Jakarta)	88	33.59%
	Urban Area – Outside Jakarta (e.g., Bandung, Yogyakarta, Surabaya)	61	23.28%
	Suburban Area – Outside Jakarta (e.g., Cimahi, Sleman, Sidoarjo)	26	9.92%
	Suburban Area – Greater Jakarta (e.g., Depok, Bekasi, Tangerang)	53	20.23%
Monthly Daycare Cost	Not paying for daycare (daycare free/subsidy)	4	1.53%
	Rp0 – Rp 499.999	32	12.21%
	Rp500.000 – Rp 999.999	72	27.48%
	Rp1.000.000 – Rp1.999.999	72	27.48%
	Rp2.000.000 – Rp2.999.999	52	19.85%
	Rp3.000.000 – Rp4.999.999	23	8.78%
	> Rp5.000.000	7	2.67%

The demographic data in the table above showed that most respondents are women aged 25 to 34 years old, with a relatively high level of education (went to college), and in marriage relationships. Most participants and their spouses are employed in the private sector, and more than a half of the total families income is between Rp3–10 million per month. Majority number of respondents live in urban areas both inside and outside Jakarta. These findings provide a foundational understanding of the participant's background, which is very important for analyzing the factors influencing work-life balance in the following sections.

Data Quality Analysis

Validity Test

An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted using Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation to assess the construct validity of daycare quality questionnaire. This test aimed to determine whether the items grouped into the intended dimensions which is daycare quality. Results showed that most daycare-related items had strong factor loadings (≥ 0.50), meaning that they are. However, two items, one from the access dimension and one from governance, did not meet the threshold so they were excluded from further analysis.

Reliability Test

Reliability testing is done to ensure that the daycare quality items have strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.960.

This indicates that the instrument is reliable and appropriate for the next statistical analysis.

Descriptive Analysis

Before conducting hypothesis testing, a descriptive analysis was performed to understand the overall trends in how parents perceive the daycare quality. The highest average scores were found in Monitoring and Evaluation ($M = 22.3$, $SD = 3.1$) and Governance and Funding ($M = 22.2$, $SD = 3.2$). This suggests that many parents feel good when using daycare service in terms of the safety procedures, structured evaluations, and transparent management systems of the daycare centers such as having emergency protocols, CCTV access, and frequent reports from daycare to parents. On the third position, Curriculum and Pedagogy ($M = 18.1$, $SD = 2.3$), showing that parents recognize the value of structured play, stimulation, and proper nutrition in their children's development even though this part can be enhanced to be better.

The bottom two scores are Access and Participation and Workforce Quality. Access and Participation ($M = 17.8$, $SD = 2.4$) this might reflect some gap in how easily parents could access nearby daycare facilities or feel involved in daycare-related activities. The lowest score was Workforce Quality ($M = 13.3$, $SD = 1.9$), this shows parents' perceptions of the qualifications of daycare staff. Through this descriptive data, even though parents generally trust the system in daycare center, they might be more cautious or uncertain when it comes to the people who are directly caring for their children. These

descriptive findings provide useful context for interpreting the regression results.

Classical Assumption Test

To examine the influence of parents' demographic characteristics which are education level, marital status, and family income, on their perception of daycare center quality across five dimensions which are workforce quality, curriculum and pedagogy, monitoring and evaluation, governance and funding, and access and participation, the regression analysis was conducted.

Before proceeding to regression analysis, the classical assumption tests (normality, multicollinearity, homoscedasticity, and autocorrelation) were done. The results confirmed that the data met the assumptions for linear regression analysis and can be continued for the next analysis.

Among all models that were tested, four out of five dimensions showed statistically significant relationships with demographic variables. Education level becomes the most consistent predictor, significantly influencing perceptions in workforce quality, curriculum & pedagogy, monitoring & evaluation, and governance & funding. Meanwhile, access and participation did not show any significant association.

Overall, the results suggest that parental education plays a key role in shaping more critical or informed evaluations of daycare quality. In contrast, marital status and family income showed no correlation.

Regression Analysis

Table 2. *Summary of T-Test Results: Influence of Demographic Variables on Daycare Quality*

Independent Variable	Access (Sig.)	Workforce (Sig.)	Curriculum (Sig.)	Monitoring (Sig.)	Governance (Sig.)
Education	0.058 (NS)	0.018* (Sig)	0.004* (Sig)	0.002* (Sig)	0.002* (Sig)
Marital Status	0.140 (NS)	0.133 (NS)	0.147 (NS)	0.105 (NS)	0.479 (NS)
Income	0.872 (NS)	0.523 (NS)	0.827 (NS)	0.149 (NS)	0.241 (NS)

Sig = Significant at $p < 0.05$; NS = Not Significant

The results show that education level significantly influences parents' perception of four out of five daycare quality dimensions which are workforce quality, curriculum & pedagogy, monitoring & evaluation, and governance & funding. These findings indicate that parents with higher education may evaluate these aspects more critically or with higher expectations compared to parents in lower education attainment group.

Marital status and income do not show significant effects across any dimension. This could indicate that perceptions of daycare quality tend to

Multiple linear regression was used to evaluate how parental demographic characteristics which are education level, marital status, and family income, influence each dimension of daycare quality.

F-Test and Model Significance

Among the five dimensions that were tested, four models were found statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating that demographic variables collectively can explain how parents assess various aspects of daycare quality. On the other hand, model for access and participation was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$), suggesting no meaningful difference in perception among different demographic groups.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The explanatory power of the regression models was modest in the models that were tested. Adjusted R^2 values ranged from 0.010 to 0.040 for the four significant models, with the highest being in the Workforce Quality dimension. These results highlight that while demographic characteristics, especially education, do influence parental perception, yet the variation is likely to be shaped by other contextual, experiential, or institutional factors other than just demographics characteristics.

T-Test Results

To assess the influence of each demographic variable individually, T-tests were conducted for each dimension of daycare qualities. The summary is presented in the table below:

be consistent or have no meaningful difference across different marital and income groups. Interestingly, access and participation is the only dimension that not significantly influenced by any demographic factor. This could indicate that access is a universal concern despite the difference in parental background.

In conclusion, the hypothesis that parental demographics affect perceptions of daycare quality is partially supported. Only education level shows a consistent and significant effect across most

dimensions, while marital status and income do not appear to play any key role.

Qualitative Analysis

Interview Result

All three interview participants have similar demographic backgrounds, all of them are women, have bachelor's degree, and have income around Rp10.00.000 – Rp20.000.000 and more than Rp20.000.0000. However, their perceptions of daycare quality show a notable difference based on individual life circumstances such as their marital status, parenting roles, and lifestyle. This indicate that more than demographics characteristic, contextual factors also influence how daycare quality is evaluated by parents.

The first respondent, S, a single mother with one child, prioritized accessibility and proximity of daycare to her home and office in her consideration because she had to take care of her child without external support while also have a full-time job. For her, convenience and safety were non-negotiable. While she acknowledged the importance of quality, her decision was primarily based on logistics easiness and reputation of the daycare. She also adds that she was willing to invest financially in daycare if it brought peace of mind so that she can continue focus on her work.

The second respondent, SF, supported by her spouse, have a more structured approach in her evaluation towards daycare quality. While access remained a key consideration for her family, she also emphasized the daycare's developmental value. She reviews aspects such as curriculum, hygiene practices, and teacher qualifications more critically. With shared parenting responsibilities, she had more bandwidth to assess quality critically and viewed daycare as a long-term developmental investment for her child.

The third respondent, F, also married, took a gradual approach that influenced by her background in psychology and experience of her first child. She emphasized transparency, strong monitoring, structured activities, and developmental alignment of her child development. She also shared that the lack of access to good quality daycare options once led her to resign from her job. Daycare accessibility, trust in the institution, communication practices, and curriculum was main consideration to her decision-making.

In conclusion, these findings alight the quantitative result at some point which education level influences the depth and criticality of daycare assessment. However, they also show that marital status, while not statistically significant in the regression, have a meaningful role in daily decision-making and daycare assessment. From the qualitative analysis, it showed that demographic variables alone do not fully capture how parents experience and evaluate daycare quality. Personal

values, support systems, and parenting contexts are equally important as well.

Discussion

The quantitative analysis shows that from the three demographic variables which are education level, marital status, and income, only education level shows a statistically significant influence on how parents evaluate daycare quality. Parents with higher education levels tend to rate dimensions of workforce quality, curriculum & pedagogy, monitoring & evaluation, and governance & funding lower or can be said, more critically. This suggests that higher educated parents may apply higher standards when evaluating daycare services. This might be because of more awareness of early childhood development principles and theories.

The finding from the survey also aligns with insights from the qualitative interviews. Since all three respondents share similar educational backgrounds, they showed a high level of awareness regarding what make a high-quality childcare, especially in terms of developmental curriculum, hygiene protocols, structured learning environments, and communication transparency. For example, SF, a highly engaged parent, deliberately evaluates hygiene standards, curriculum content, and caregiver-child ratio. Similarly, F transfer her child from informal to more structured daycare based on her background in psychology and experiential learning as a parent with two children. Even S, a single mother whose primary concern is accessibility, also emphasized the importance of trust and safety in her choice of daycare provider for her child.

Interestingly, while the access and participation dimension did not show statistically significant results in the quantitative analysis, qualitative findings show that accessibility is a consistent priority across all respondents, regardless of education, income, marital status, or even lifestyle. This suggests that access may be a universal concern among working parents. Reflecting the practical realities of daily scheduling and commuting especially in Indonesia. However, to validate this interpretation, future studies should consider including a more participants from different demographics in the qualitative phase.

To sum up, these findings indicate that education level is a useful predictor for how parents assess daycare quality. Yet, quantitative data only does not fully explain the complexities of parental evaluation and decision making in this issue. The qualitative result compliment it by illustrates that perceptions are not only shaped by educational background, but also by lived experience, caregiving responsibilities, and personal values. SF's thorough and structured approach reflects her expectations in her child development. F's decision-making evolved through personal experience and professional

knowledge. On the other hand, S's choices reflect the necessity to take care of her child with the demands of being a single working parent.

This supports the value of a mixed-methods approach, where quantitative data reveals wider trends within the population then qualitative insights provide context, depth, and understanding of the motivations behind those patterns further. In this case, numbers highlight statistically significant predictors, while narratives reveal how parents navigate the real-world complexities of choosing and evaluating daycare services as working parents in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study finds that among parental demographic characteristics, education level significantly influences how parents evaluate daycare quality in the aspects of workforce quality, curriculum & pedagogy, monitoring & evaluation, and governance & funding. Parents with higher education tend to assess these dimensions more critically. While income and marital status showed no significant statistical effect, qualitative findings reveal that personal circumstances of like being a single parent or shared caregiving roles also shape how daycare is perceived and chosen to support parent's life. Accessibility assumed to be a universal concern across respondents, even though it did not appear significant in the quantitative analysis.

These insights highlight that perceptions of daycare quality are shaped not only by demographics but also by lived experience and values of the parents. This emphasizes the value of a mixed-methods approach in capturing both patterns and context of this issue.

The implication of this research for daycare providers are there are need to balance convenience with quality offered by daycare. Daycare services need to ensure strategic location, transparent communication, structured programs, and caregiver professionalism. For policymakers, this study recommends expanding access to affordable and proximity from parent's home, setting clear national quality standards and monitoring, supporting awareness programs to help parents make informed childcare decisions, and give facilities for daycare provider to upgrade their services through trainings or subsidy programs. Strengthening daycare systems is essential to supporting working families, promoting gender equity, and improving early childhood development outcomes.

Limitation and Future Research

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged and used as improvement for future study. The use of self-reported survey data may be social desirability bias. The non-probability sampling method limits the generalizability of findings across backgrounds and location of

participants across Indonesia. Adding more participants from more diverse background can also enrich the findings. For future research it is encouraged to explore alternative research designs, such as sequential models that begin with in-depth interviews, followed by thematic coding and the development of context-specific survey instruments then analysis. This approach could lead to more grounded and comprehensive understandings of parent's perception in evaluation daycare in diverse settings.

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