

Service Quality and Stakeholder Satisfaction in HEMAM Inclusive Education Centers: An Abu Dhabi Case Study

Ameena Al Hammadi

University of Teknologi MARA (UITM)

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ABSTRACT

In an increasingly competitive educational landscape, understanding and enhancing service quality is paramount for institutions seeking to meet and exceed stakeholder expectations. This study investigates how service quality and stakeholder satisfaction works within the context of HEMAM centers in Abu Dhabi. With a quantitative study and SPSS for data analysis, the research examines the service quality and satisfaction of teachers and parents regarding the given services. The analysis brings to light that high-quality services correlate with a high level of satisfaction for both stakeholders. Communication, empathy, and responsiveness were deemed as key factors that could improve service quality. This study contributes to the understanding of different stakeholders' views on providing inclusive education services at HEMAM centers and provides practical recommendations for their improvement.

Keywords: Service Quality, Inclusive Education, HEMAM Centers, SOD, Teacher Satisfaction, Parent Satisfaction, Program Effectiveness, UAE Education System

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is a vital aspect of lifelong learning that aims to transform educational environments to welcome all students—boys and girls, individuals of various racial and linguistic backgrounds, rural populations, and children with disabilities (Imaniah & Fitria, 2018). The growth of inclusive schools has not come without debate, particularly regarding the inclusion of students with learning disabilities. While theoretical frameworks support inclusion as a means of achieving social justice, empirical evidence reveals mixed results related to academic success in these settings (Ford, 2013).

The concept of inclusive education has gained international momentum, defined as a reform that enriches diversity among all learners (UNESCO, 2009). It enhances overall educational quality by fostering diverse curricula and instructional strategies aimed at developing a wide range of skills and competencies. The Florida Inclusion Network (2011) describes inclusive education as the practice of educating all students together, irrespective of their ability levels, allowing children with disabilities access to the general curriculum and typical school activities without segregated support settings. Specifically, in an inclusive classroom environment, the number of students with disabilities should not exceed forty-nine percent (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2012).

For effective inclusion, children with disabilities are required to attend their nearest school and learn alongside their peers (Hassanein et al., 2021; Lozano et al., 2022). Schools that embrace inclusive practices do so by maintaining balanced systems and programs designed to accommodate all learners in a unified classroom setting (Heemskerk et al., 2012). The essence of inclusive education is rooted in the belief that every student possesses the right to high-quality education without discrimination or exclusion (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). Central to this educational philosophy is the creation of a nurturing environment where diversity is celebrated and where each student's unique strengths and needs are acknowledged (Waitoller & Annamma, 2017).

In recent years, inclusive practices have been widely promoted, resulting in an increasing number of children with disabilities being educated alongside their peers, particularly those with learning disabilities (Shady et al., 2013). Scholars such as Boyle et al. (2020), Lindacher (2020), and Jennifer et al. (2018) outline key tenets fundamental to inclusive education such as accessibility, collaboration, respect for diversity, and participation all towards enriching the learning experience and enhancing motivation and self-esteem. Additionally, the role of teacher satisfaction is crucial in implementing effective inclusive practices. Teachers' readiness to accept students with special educational needs, as well as the support provided during the pre-enrollment stage in specialized centers, are determinants of successful inclusion (Lindacher, 2020; Zalizan, 2006).

The path toward a fully inclusive educational system is complex and multifaceted, requiring ongoing commitment from all stakeholders. Continued dialogue among educators, policymakers, parents, and disability advocacy organizations is vital for developing effective strategies and responding to the evolving needs of all students. By embracing inclusion not merely as a policy directive but as a core value, educational systems can better reflect the rich diversity of student populations and support the success of every learner. Through these concerted efforts, we can work toward a future where inclusive education is the norm, and where every child's right to a quality education is realized.

To further advance the implementation of inclusive education, it is crucial to focus on professional development for educators. Continuous training programs must equip teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to adapt their teaching methods and create supportive classroom environments. This support should encompass understanding diverse learning needs, employing differentiated instructional strategies, and utilizing assistive technologies effectively. Furthermore, teachers should be trained in recognizing and addressing potential biases, fostering an inclusive mindset that appreciates diversity in the classroom (Boyle et al., 2020).

Many studies, including those by Pratama et al. (2021) and Yada et al. (2021), have examined inclusion and pupils interactions but have often underestimated the crucial role of teachers in this educational process. While teachers play a critical role in creating inclusive classrooms, the education system must also support teachers by providing adequate services, responsive leadership, and sound policy. There is a need for specialist centres which take the responsibility for helping disable pupils, monitor, and evaluate their progress, and finally make sure they are ready for inclusion education.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has adopted the term "People of Determination" (POD) to replace "People with Disabilities" (PWDs). This change was announced during a visit by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE, to the Ministry of Community Development. He launched a National Strategy for Empowering People with Disabilities (Khaleej Times, 2017).

Recognizing the importance of POD, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, inaugurated a comprehensive strategy in collaboration with over 28 relevant local and federal government agencies. Under the leadership of the Department of Community Development in Abu Dhabi, this initiative aims to make the emirate an inclusive, accessible, and empowered city for POD from 2020 to 2024 (Emirates News Agency, 12th September).

The UAE government has taken significant measures to ensure inclusion in all aspects of life for POD. Several initiatives, laws, and policies have been established to create a supportive environment for empowerment and integration. The UAE National Strategy for Empowering POD provides a comprehensive framework for their inclusion in education, employment, healthcare, and social services (The United Arab Emirates Government, n.d).

The 2018 UAE Ministry of Community Development document unifies the national classification of disabilities using sources such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, DSM-5, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), and the United Arab Emirates Federal Law

No. 29 of 2006 (Amendment: 2009). By definition, the classification incorporates categories of disability as follows: neurodevelopmental disorders (intellectual impairment, communication disorders, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder, Specific Learning Disabilities), sensory disabilities (sight, hearing, and deafness), orthopedic disability, mental-emotional problems, and several other disabilities. Each category has definitions, diagnosis requirements, supporting documents, and potential interventions (medical, therapeutic, educational, and work-related). The intention is to bring uniformity to how disabilities are defined and how services are delivered in the UAE, enhancing interaction among the organizations involved and addressing the reporters needs instead of merely restating them (Ministry of Community Development, 2018).

Inclusive Education in the United Arab Emirates (UAE)

The UAE has made concrete efforts to integrate Students of Determination (SOD) into its educational system. The Ministry of Education has adopted a strategy to adapt public schools to provide educational opportunities for POD. Since 2008, there has been a dedicated Department for People with Determination that works to promote and secure their rights, ensuring they have access to the same educational opportunities as their non-disabled peers, and to provide specialized teachers for their care.

The UAE government prioritizes education and has implemented significant measures to advance inclusive education, thereby guaranteeing that all pupils, including those with special needs, are well protected and supported within the educational system (E-MoE, 2010). According to Law No 29 of 2006, the rights of persons with disabilities in the UAE are well defined. His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum stated, “A person’s disability is his lack of progress, his staying in his place and his inability to achieve achievements. What people of determination have achieved across various fields is evidence that determination and will can overcome challenges, driving individuals to reach their goals.”

HEMAM Centers in Abu Dhabi

HEMAM Centers are specialized institutions established to enhance educational opportunities for children with disabilities by integrating learners of varying abilities into the regular education system (Davis, 2018). Since 2019, the Ministry of Education has initiated the establishment of support centers, such as HEMAM, in Abu Dhabi to monitor and evaluate the progress of students with disabilities before and after their integration into mainstream schooling. The HEMAM centers for inclusive education in Abu Dhabi offer a comprehensive range of services tailored for children with special needs. These services include thorough assessments that cover developmental, academic, and psychological evaluations; forecasting and securing essential resources, such as facilities, materials, personnel, and equipment; coordinating school enrollment for voluntary students; specialized training for educators and students alike; generating detailed reports for relevant authorities; conducting community awareness initiatives regarding inclusion and available resources; collaborating with parents and schools to ensure ongoing support; maintaining accurate records of students served and resource utilization; and providing additional support services such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy as required. The Ministry of Education may also assign other pertinent responsibilities. To gain deeper insights into potential strategies for enhancing the quality of services offered by these centers and to address the research gap concerning the UAE context, this study focused on HEMAM centers aims to answer the following questions:

Research Questions:

1. What is the level of satisfaction among teachers regarding the service quality of HEMAM inclusive education centers?
2. What is the level of satisfaction among parents regarding the service quality of HEMAM inclusive education centers?
3. How does the service quality of HEMAM centers affect teacher satisfaction?
4. How does the service quality of HEMAM centers affect parent satisfaction?

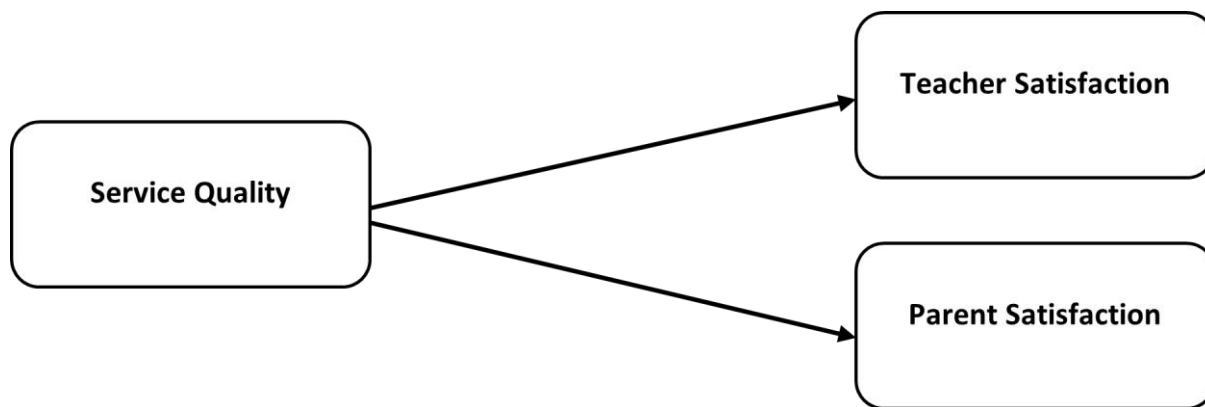


Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative method utilizing a survey approach to gather data on service quality satisfaction among parents and teachers at the HEMAM inclusive education centre in Abu Dhabi. Quantitative research collects data from a sample of respondents through structured questionnaires. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), survey research is a quantitative method that aids researchers in collecting information regarding the perspectives, opinions, behaviors, or distinct characteristics of a group or sample of individuals.

The research was conducted within the context of HEMAM inclusive education centers, with data sourced from questionnaires administered to both teachers and parents. The sampling method utilized probability sampling, specifically simple random sampling, to ensure every individual in the population had an equal chance of being selected. This method fosters generalizability of the findings (Sekaran & Roger, 2003). The target population consisted of 250 teachers and 400 parents associated with the four HEMAM centres, totaling 650 respondents.

Table 1: Conceptual Definition of Research Variables and Instrument Items

Variable	Conceptual Definition	Indicator	Number of Instrument Items
Service Quality (X1)	Actions taken to provide satisfactory educational experiences.	Reliability	10
		Responsiveness	6
		Assurance	6
		Empathy	8
Parent Satisfaction (X2)	Parents' perceptions of the adequacy of support and services for their children.	Communication	6
		Support Services	6
Teacher Satisfaction (Y)	Teachers' satisfaction with the support provided by educational institutions.	Professional Development	6
		Resources	5

Data collection involved administering the questionnaire directly to participants to enhance response rates and data integrity. By personally delivering questionnaires, the researcher ensured clarity in understanding the questions, which improved the quality of responses. This approach also helped achieve a higher response rate, as personal interaction tends to encourage participant engagement, particularly within the context of the UAE, where there is a supportive attitude toward research initiatives. The operational definitions for the study's variables were adapted from previous research and are essential for assessing the effectiveness of the

HEMAM inclusive education center. Measurements for parent satisfaction captured their perceptions of service quality and emotional support provided to their children, while teacher satisfaction reflected their views on the adequacy of support and resources available for teaching students of determination. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). This software was utilized for various stages of data management, including data encoding, cleaning, and reliability testing. The SPSS method enables thorough statistical examination and hypothesis testing, providing insights into relationships among the study variables. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha, ensuring that the measurements were consistent and valid for analysis (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). This robust approach in data analysis underpins the study’s findings and offers reliable conclusions regarding service quality satisfaction and its impact on both parent and teacher satisfaction within the HEMAM inclusive education centers.

FINDINGS

The quantitative analysis involved data collected from participants in a survey conducted at inclusive education schools organized by the four HEMAM centers in Abu Dhabi. Respondents included teachers and parents of pupils. Statistical methods were utilized to analyze the relationships between the independent variable—service quality of inclusive education centers (HEMAM)—and the dependent variables (teacher satisfaction and parent satisfaction). Following the survey, the data were entered into SPSS for analysis. During the survey phase in June 2023, 250 teacher questionnaires were distributed, yielding 226 valid responses and a response rate of 90.40% (Table 2). For parents, 400 questionnaires resulted in 368 valid responses, achieving a 92.00% response rate. The remaining invalid questionnaires had missing or blank data. These response rates are satisfactory for generalizing study results, as a response rate below 50% poses challenges for drawing valid conclusions (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Stedman et al., 2019). Descriptive and regression analyses were employed to address the research questions. The mean value for teacher satisfaction was 3.40 (Table 3), indicating moderate agreement on service quality dimensions. The skewness of -0.45 suggests a slight preference for agreement, influenced by factors such as professional backgrounds and administrative support. For parent satisfaction, the mean score was 3.62 (Table 4), reflecting moderate agreement on service quality, with skewness at -0.47 indicating symmetry.

Regression analysis (Table 5) revealed a significant relationship between service quality and teacher satisfaction ($p = 0.00$), explaining 22.70% of the variance with a beta value of 0.476. For parent satisfaction, similar significance was found ($p = 0.00$), explaining 16.66% of the variance with a beta value of 0.408 (Table 6).

Demographic analyses (Table 7) indicated that most teachers are under 40 and have advanced degrees, while most parents are below 30 and express satisfaction with HEMAM center services, emphasizing inclusivity. Correlation analysis showed a strong connection between service quality and satisfaction, with coefficients of 0.476 for teachers and 0.408 for parents. Overall, findings underscore the crucial role of service quality in enhancing both teacher and parent satisfaction at HEMAM inclusive education centers, highlighting the importance of continuous improvement in service delivery to support students of determination effectively.

Table 2: The response rate for teachers and parents

Teachers’ response		
Questionnaire response	Frequency	Rate
Number of questionnaires distributed	250	100.00%
Valid questionnaires	226	90.40%
Incomplete/Blank questionnaires	24	9.60%
Parent response		
Questionnaire response	Frequency	Rate

Number of questionnaires distributed	400	100.00%
Valid questionnaires	368	92.00%
Incomplete/Blank questionnaires	32	8.00%

Descriptive and regression data analyses were utilized to address the research questions. The descriptive analysis revealed the satisfaction levels of teachers and parents regarding the service quality of HEMAM inclusive centers. The central tendency of the dataset indicated that a mean value greater than 3.0 revealed agreement with the statements related to service quality, while skewness measurements assessed the symmetry of the dataset, with values between -0.5 and 0.5 indicating fair symmetry (Blanca et al., 2013).

RQ1: Teacher Satisfaction on Service Quality

Table 4.2 indicates that the mean value for teacher satisfaction is 3.40, reflecting moderate agreement regarding dimensions of service quality, such as tangibility and responsiveness. The skewness of -0.45 suggests a slight preference for agreement. Satisfaction levels may be influenced by various factors, including professional backgrounds and the level of support from administrators.

Table 3: Descriptive analysis of teacher satisfaction

Variable	N	Min.	Max	Mean	St. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Teacher Satisfaction	226	1.38	4.75	3.40	0.65	-0.45	0.16

RQ2: Parent Satisfaction on Service Quality

According to Table 4.3, the mean parent satisfaction score is 3.62, suggesting moderate agreement regarding the service quality at the HEMAM centers. The skewness of the data is -0.47, indicating symmetry. Understanding the specific criteria that parents use to evaluate service quality, such as curriculum and individualized support, is crucial.

Table 4: Descriptive analysis of parents satisfaction

Variable	N	Min.	Max	Mean	St. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Parents Satisfaction	368	1.00	5.00	3.62	0.68	-0.47	0.33

RQ3: Effect of Service Quality on Teacher Satisfaction

Regression analysis for RQ3 presented in Table 4.4 indicates a significant relationship between service quality and teacher satisfaction ($p = 0.00$). The model explains 22.70% of the variance in teacher satisfaction, with a beta value of 0.476, indicating that high service quality significantly enhances teacher satisfaction.

Table 5: Model summary of simple linear regression between teacher satisfaction and HEMAM service quality.

Hypotheses	ANOVA	R ²	Regression coefficient	Beta	p-value	Result
H1: Service quality of inclusive education centers has a significant effect on teacher satisfaction	65.66	0.227	0.571	0.476	0.00	Accepted

Reading the output in Table 4.4 reveals that the service quality of inclusive education centers significantly affects teacher satisfaction ($p = 0.00 \leq 0.05$). The analysis indicates that approximately 22.70% of the variance in teacher satisfaction can be attributed to the influence of service quality in inclusive education

centers. A beta value of 0.476 reflects a moderate strength of association between these variables, highlighting the critical role that service quality plays in enhancing teacher satisfaction.

RQ4: Effect of Service Quality on Parent Satisfaction

For research question 4, the results in Table 4.5 demonstrate a significant effect of service quality on parent satisfaction ($p = 0.00$). The model explains 16.66% of the variance, with a beta value of 0.408, indicating that higher service quality is associated with greater parent satisfaction.

Table 6: Model summary of simple linear regression between teacher satisfaction and HEMAM service quality.

Hypotheses	ANOVA	R ²	Regression coefficient	Beta	p-value	Result
H1: Service quality of inclusive education centers has a significant effect on teacher satisfaction	65.66	0.227	0.571	0.476	0.00	Accepted

These findings point to the importance of various service quality elements, such as responsiveness and assurance, in fostering higher levels of satisfaction among parents. When inclusive education centers prioritize the quality of their services, they significantly enhance parental satisfaction, which is vital for the overall effectiveness of inclusive education programs.

Table 7: The demographic analysis of the parent of pupils in Abu Dhabi inclusive schools

Description	Frequency	Percent %
Age		
Below 30	171	46.47%
31-40	139	37.77%
41-50	52	14.13%
Above 50	6	1.63%
Rate the service quality received from HEMAM centres		
Poor	21	5.71%
Fair	41	11.14%
Good	128	34.78%
Very good	111	30.16%
Excellent	67	18.21%

DISCUSSION

These findings strongly confirm the hypotheses, showing that service quality significantly affects the satisfaction of both teachers and parents in HEMAM centers. Key dimensions of service quality, such as communication, empathy, and responsiveness, emerge as strong predictors of satisfaction, in concert with prior findings. The enabling and welcoming learning environment promoted through the HEMAM centers, together with the resources and support given, contributed much to overall satisfaction. Further, in the light of UAE's emphasis on inclusive education, service quality, staff training, collaboration, and communication with parents have to be considered if any inclusive education effort is to work properly in this country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study identifies that addressing various factors that influence the service quality at inclusive schools in Abu Dhabi can help improve teachers' and parents' satisfaction levels. It identifies that adequate resources

should be provided to teachers while ensuring continuous professional development since their satisfaction is linked to the quality of education. Inclusive education centers should also offer a communication line through which parents can be informed about the problems or needs of their children to make necessary decisions by taking their opinions to enhance experience and satisfaction. Continuous feedback from parents and teachers might allow deciding on specific areas that need further improvement. In the case of future research, the sample should be extended to other regions in the UAE to understand better the country's overall satisfaction level on inclusive education.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the current study's findings indicated that service quality was related to teacher and parent satisfaction with the inclusive education centers in HEMAM. The results highlighted the need for continuous efforts regarding the improvement of services to raise the students' determination in their studies. Hence, the needs and concerns of teachers and parents can be met, thus yielding a more significant positive educational outcome and a contribution towards the sustainability and effectiveness of the programs of the inclusive education center. More than this, the commitment of staff in HEMAM Centers helps ensure support for every student to shine through academically and socially someday. This would go a long way in establishing an accommodating and supportive atmosphere for students, thus developing an educational collaboration setting. In the end, dedication to high-quality service would serve all customers of the inclusive education process better and enhance the livelihoods of the students with diverse learning needs through positive impacts on creating an equitable educational system.

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