

## PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

### THE ROLE OF BABYSITTER PRACTICES IN CHILDCARE SAFETY PERFORMANCE: A PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

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**Aidanazima Abashah, Che Azlan Taib. The Role of Babysitter Practices in Childcare Safety Performance: A Proposed Framework-- Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 18 (3), 403-410 Issn 1567-214x**

**Keywords: Childcare Business Ecology, Babysitter, Personal Trait, Self-discipline, Safety Performance**

#### **ABSTRACT**

This article aims to propose a framework on a causal relationship between babysitter's role in safety performance in childcare centers. Generally, the childcare business ecology that involved four parties will explain the role and commitment of such authority bodies, childcare providers, parents, and babysitter. Specifically, the babysitter's roles of their practices that consist of personal traits and self-discipline are highlighted as the fundamental cause of high safety performance in childcare while performing their daily tasks. Thus, the conceptual framework is proposed in this article by using a literature search's content analysis. Consequently, the proposed conceptual framework will give a significant theoretical contribution to the body of knowledge and lead to an empirical research study in the future.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The childcare business or industry is essential nowadays. This childcare industry has been recognized as the primary supportive industry towards national economic development. In the third quarter of 2020, a total number of 3.7 million persons were engaged in services sectors, significantly about 281,584 persons in the education, health, and entertainment cluster. The data also showed that the same cluster was contributed about RM 13.9 billion in revenue to the nation (Department of Statistic Malaysia, 2020).

Moreover, parents serving the workforce send their children to childcare centers to commit to their daily routine workdays. From parent's perspectives, they want the best for their child. Thus, with a certain amount of fees they paid, they expect nursery to be safe and offer good quality to promote sound development in their children as the foundation for their future success (Lungka, 2015).

In Malaysia, there are four categories of childcare centers: home-based, community-based, institution-based, and workplace-based childcare centers, which are all required to register and monitored by "Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat" frequently. Based on **Table 1**. Registered Babysitters and Childcare in Malaysia, the data is retrieved from the data revealed by "Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat," which showed that the total number is significantly increased from 4,143 to 4,770 in 2017 and 2019 respectively to the demand.

**Table 1.** Registered Babysitters and Childcare in Malaysia.

Registered Babysitters	Registered Childcare		
	2016	2017	2019
17,915	Home-Based	736	878
	Community-Based	39	40
	Institution-Based	3,129	3,555
	Workplace-Based	239	297
<b>17,915</b>		<b>4,143</b>	<b>4,770</b>

**Source:** "Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat".

Based on the same table in **Table 1**, the data in 2016 from "Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat," the current total number of babysitters registered is 17,915 to serve a number of 77115 children up to four years old children in childcare (Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat, 2016).

Besides, there is a requirement for babysitters and childcare providers to attend and pass the KAP training ("Kursus Asuhan dan Didikan Awal Kanak-Kanak PERMATA") (Norulhuda Sarnon, 2017; Standard Program : Pendidikan Awal Kanak-Kanak, 2014; Zaida et al., 2017), which includes theory and practical as the requirement for them to register. Also, in terms of safety and health, the other agencies such as "Bomba" and "Jabatan Kesihatan" have frequent scheduling monitoring at each of these registered childcare centers (Zaida et al., 2017).

Also, towards a safer environment in childcare centers for children, provided by childcare providers such as management commitment, frequent safety training, workers involvement, safety communication and feedback, safety rules and procedures, and safety promotion policies (Vinodkumar & Bhasi, 2010) are not enough if the babysitters or staff in childcare do not take it seriously in their daily work routine. Besides, Provan et al. (2020) also agreed on the same idea where it is a big challenge to guide and facilitate employees to handle the complexities of their work tasks.

Moreover, recently reported cases of accidents, injuries, and death (Nurul Izzah Izzati Hashim, Wafaa Yusof, 2019) on newspapers, media social, and television news show that most of the reported cases are due to babysitters itself. It showed that there are still lacking in babysitter's practices, especially on how they work and manage and perform their tasks and deal with children. Thus, there is a need to pay serious attention to their personal trait and self-discipline in performing the tasks while serving the children.

In the childcare center, business nature is dealing with fragile and innocent human life. Therefore, childcare centers' safety elements are crucial (Norulhuda Sarnon, 2017) and need to be taken seriously by childcare providers to monitor and train their staff, especially the teachers or babysitters who are frontline in dealing with children every day.

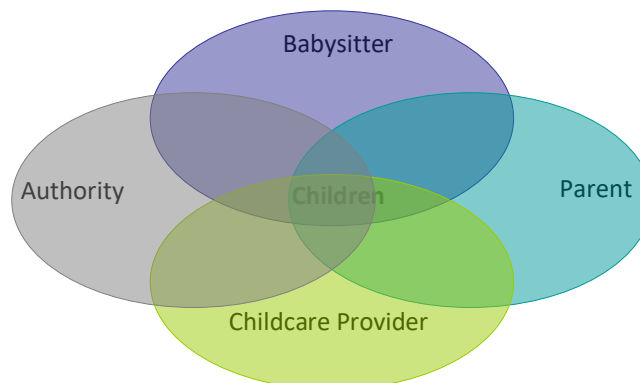
### LITERATURE REVIEW

In the childcare business, the childcare ecologies are complex where it involved the responsibility from different parties of childcare provider as a business owner (Zaida et al., 2017); the authority includes the "Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat," "Bomba," "Jabatan Kesihatan" as well as Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development" in providing a policy and guidelines, enforcement and monitoring the business conduct (Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia, 2012). It also involved babysitters who are childcare employees that serve children as frontline (Haziq et al., 2020) and parents who belong to their children that need childcare services to serve the workforce (Norulhuda Sarnon, 2017). Thus, these four different parties' commitment to playing their roles is essential in proving the safest environment, specifically towards excellent children's wellbeing at this early age stage development. The childcare business ecology is presented in **Figure 1**. Childcare Business Ecology.

As for the authority, the policy, guidelines, and monitoring enforcement is needed. A childcare provider should have perfect safety management practices, including the elements of commitment, training, a requirement of workers involvement, communication and feedback, rules and procedures, and promotion policies (Vinodkumar & Bhasi, 2010) in operating their business conduct. As parents, this is their commitment to choosing the best childcare for their children, including the requirement to determine only registered childcare and qualified babysitter. As the role babysitter, they are the first person to deal with children every day in childcare, where they are the second parents for children (Norulhuda Sarnon, 2017). Besides, childcare services' quality depends on the babysitter's quality (Haziq et al., 2020). Therefore, there is a need for them to have professional certification and qualified. However, their skill is not enough without a very high patience level that will lead their practices that should come together with personal traits and self-discipline.

The idea behind this proposed childcare business ecology to stress four different roles, commitment, and responsibility from authorities, childcare providers, parents, and a babysitter is hopefully will give safety priority towards children's wellbeing. Thus, this provides convincing evidence that having each party's

commitment and responsibility, maintaining, and improving safety performance in childcare can give children the best service care in a safer environment.



**Figure 1.** Childcare Business Ecology.

**Source:** Proposed by the author.

### **SAFETY PERFORMANCE**

An organization's safety performance refers to the condition where an organization can minimize accidents and manage its resistance systematically (Razali, 2018). Meanwhile, with global competition pressure and domestic rivals, organizational measurement performance becomes crucial to remain in the same industry. Besides, the performance had been applied as an indicator to assess how well an organization succeeds in its objectives. Like these, the terms of safety performance also bring a similar meaning to someone's action and behavior in performing any activities influenced by safety manner for the benefits of themselves, colleagues, customers, and society (Burke et al., 2002). Towards the higher demand for childcare services from the parents, with the increasing number of childcare in the market and frequent childcare accident reported cases, safety performance is one of the competitive issues nowadays. Hence, improving safety performance is crucial in becoming a world-class competitor (Unnikrishnan et al., 2015) to improve the quality of services given to children in a childcare center by improving the quality of babysitters as well (Haziq et al., 2020).

### **BABYSITTERS PRACTICES**

Naturally, kids need someone to take care of them, while at home, parents and sibling are their dependents. But, on childcare premises, babysitters are the most important person for them to depend on. Besides, babysitter's experience and personal traits will also make children feel safe; thus, children feeling safe made them feel protected (Meheux, 2009) in the childcare environment.

A Babysitter's function in a childcare center is essential for their infant development at these early age stages. Therefore, in developing a safer

environment towards achieving safety performance in a childcare center, babysitter's first need to have a reliable safety practice by adopting the best safety practices (Unnikrishnan et al., 2015) towards safety, including their safety attitude, behavior, and values. Besides, as someone full of high responsibility, they will adapt to the safety system to achieve shared safety goals (Provan et al., 2020). Also, someone's practices are influenced by personal traits, and self-discipline called personal forces, without any organization's formal reward system (Du & Zhao, 2011; Laurent et al., 2020; Umar, 2019; Ghavifekr & Adewale (2019).

The staff's personality is reflected in their display of practices and behavior. Similarly, this personality, also known as discretionary practices, that may drive someone's safety value (Umar, 2019) that comes from their self-discipline and personal traits (Du & Zhao, 2011; Laurent et al., 2020; Umar, 2019; Ghavifekr & Adewale (2019). Thus, it may influence someone's practice and action during their work period. Besides, the babysitter's quality is a more dominant element in measuring childcare services quality (Haziq et al., 2020). Thus, it is believed that their practices mold by their personality trait and self-discipline. It is in-born and not forced by any other external elements.

### **PERSONAL TRAIT**

The personal trait is individual staff's personal forces to have a personality that will influence their display and practices in doing something (Ghavifekr & Adewale, 2019). A babysitters personal trait in a childcare services center is essential to serve children properly to work in childcare centers (Meheux, 2009). Besides, babysitter's personal traits may improve safety performance in childcare (Al-Shehri, 2014). Thus, the accidents, injuries, and death among children that happened in childcare centers might be prevented if every individual, especially the babysitters, has an excellent personal trait.

### **SELF-DISCIPLINE**

A babysitter is believed to display practices due to their self-discipline (Ghavifekr & Adewale, 2019). Besides, disciplined persons can occupy disciplined judgments and, therefore, will lead them to take disciplined practices and actions (Lungka, 2015) while working.

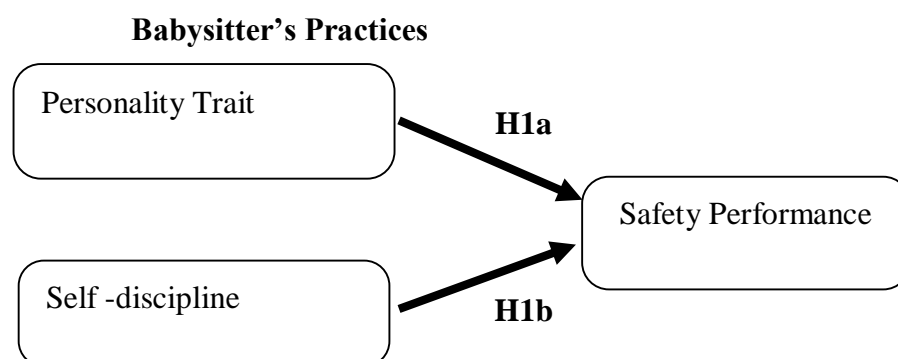
Thus, being a babysitter, self-discipline is vital, and they should believe it is one of their responsibility in giving excellent services to children. Therefore, by having positive self-discipline, babysitters will provide excellent services to improve childcare centers' safety performance.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The proposition hypothesis and the conceptual framework are derived from the literature search's content analysis from the secondary data in published research articles and published government documents on the relevant topic. These published research articles and published government documents used are from various sources, with a total of 20 papers.

### **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Based on the previous discussion in literature review specifically on childcare business ecology, safety performance, and babysitters' practices consist of personal traits and self-discipline, the proposed research framework is illustrated as in **Figure 2**. Conceptual Framework.



**Figure 2.** Conceptual Framework

Therefore, generally, the

**H1: There is a significant impact between babysitter's practices and safety performance.**

Thus,

**H1a: There is a significant impact between babysitter's personality trait and safety performance.**

**H1b: There is a significant impact between babysitter's self-discipline and safety performance.**

## CONCLUSION

Over the past recent years, the study on safety performance has made a significant theoretical contribution to the body of knowledge from different fields and perspectives. This current conceptual research article aims to propose a conceptual research framework on the relationship between personality traits and self-discipline, as babysitter's practices towards safety performance in childcare business centers. Thus, this proposed framework will hopefully provide a comprehensive understanding of its relationship in understanding the best services to ensure the children have received the best protection and positive wellbeing for their future development. Hopefully, in the future, it will also influence an empirical research study to understand the real phenomena of safety in childcare with regards to the role of babysitters.

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