

The Effects of Servicescape and Educational Service Quality on Parents' Satisfaction and Loyalty in the Context of Youth Soccer Clubs

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine how the quality of educational programs and the service environment (i.e., servicescape) influence parents' loyalty to youth soccer clubs. The present study targeted parents of youth soccer club members in the province of Gyeongnam in South Korea as a research population, and 350 online surveys were distributed via a convenience sampling method. After deleting 44 cases with incomplete responses, 306 cases were utilized in the final analysis. A confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling were conducted to test the research hypotheses. The results showed that educational service quality and servicescape positively influenced parent satisfaction. Additionally, there was no difference between the effects of educational service quality and servicescape on parent satisfaction. Lastly, the results revealed that parent satisfaction had a positive effect on their loyalty to youth soccer clubs. This study offers a holistic framework for understanding the pivotal factors for parents' satisfaction and loyalty in the context of youth soccer clubs and provides practical implications for developing management strategies in this context.

Keywords: youth soccer club, educational service quality, servicescape, satisfaction, loyalty

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Soccer holds a prominent position as one of the most popular sports globally, and in South Korea, it has been designated as the national sport since the 2002 Korea/Japan World Cup. Following the success of Korean soccer players entering major European leagues after the 2002 World Cup, there was a natural increase in public interest in the elevated level of competition in European soccer. Accordingly, professional soccer teams in the K-league sought to emulate the practices of renowned European clubs, leading to the establishment of mandatory youth soccer clubs. This led to an increase in the number of youth soccer clubs, and currently, there are a total of 759 youth soccer clubs in South Korea (KoreaFootballAssociation[KFA],2022).

However, such an exponential increase in the number of youth soccer clubs has led to various issues, including poor educational programs, inexperienced coaching staff, poor management, and outdated facilities and equipment, among others (Han & Kim, 2022, 2021; Kim, 2010). As a result, parents of youth soccer players actively seek out youth soccer clubs that offer superior educational programs and a favorable environment. In general, educational institutions, including youth soccer clubs, offer a diverse array of services to gain a competitive edge in the intense competition to attract students. In this context, the quality of educational services and the overall service environment play a pivotal role in achieving this objective (Han & Kim, 2022, 2021; Kim, 2014; Roh & Lee, 2019; Shin, 2023).

Youth soccer clubs are no exception, often prioritizing short-term strategies aimed at boosting the number of registered students rather than focusing on delivering high-quality services that cater to the needs of both students and parents (Han&Kim,2022). In order for youth soccer clubs to survive in this fiercely competitive market, they must enhance their re-registration rates by offering differentiated services to their target consumers. While the youth themselves directly experience the services offered by these clubs, it is crucial to understand the key factors that influence parents' decision-making process, as they are the primary decision-makers when choosing a youth soccer club for their children (Leeetal.,2010).

One of the main service factors affecting parents' decision-making is the quality of the educational program offered. Previous studies have reported that the quality of educational programs has a positive impact on parents' satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Han & Kim, 2022; Kang & Kim, 2020; Lee & Hwang, 2011; Lee et al., 2010). In addition to educational programs being a core service, the service environment, as a peripheral service, also plays a crucial role in parents' decision-making. In line with this, scholars have utilized the concept of "servicescape" (Bitner, 1992) and investigated its effects on consumer satisfaction and loyalty. The concept of "servicescape" as the physical service

environment is a significant factor for understanding consumer behavior in sports, as it affects consumers' first impressions of service providers and their overall service experiences.

It is imperative to understand how educational programs and the service environment simultaneously influence consumer behavior within the context of youth soccer clubs; however, there is a lack of research on this specific issue. Furthermore, although the existing literature on sports services offers meaningful insight into the effects of educational programs or the service environment on consumer satisfaction and loyalty, it only focuses on educational programs or the service environment separately, without a holistic point of view. Therefore, in response to the need for a systematic investigation into this issue, the current study aims to examine how the quality of educational programs and the service environment (i.e., servicescape) enhance parents' loyalty to youth soccer clubs. The results of this study are expected to offer a holistic framework for understanding the critical factors influencing parents' satisfaction and loyalty in the context of youth soccer clubs. Additionally, the results will offer practical implications for developing effective management strategies in this context.

Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

Educational Service Quality of Youth Soccer Clubs

Service quality refers to the subjective evaluation of performed services by customers, and such evaluation is continuously performed in the process of service experiences. While the concept of service quality is well-defined in various service sectors, it has not been clearly defined in the context of educational services (Abdul-Hamid et al., 2022). Furthermore, educational service quality in the context of youth soccer clubs has received limited attention due to the principle of educational freedom (Lagrosen et al., 2004). Scholars argue that there is no unified definition of educational service quality (see Table 1), and it is appropriate to define it based on the criteria utilized by stakeholders (Abdul-Hamid et al., 2022). In the context of youth soccer clubs, parents serve as the main stakeholders, as they are primarily responsible for selecting a particular club for their children. Previous studies on educational service have suggested that parents typically evaluate the quality of education based on factors such as educational content, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy demonstrated by the educators (Kang & Kim, 2020; Kim & Shin, 2023). Considering these factors, the present study defines the educational service quality of youth soccer clubs as parents' overall evaluation of services delivered by managers and coaches. Furthermore, the current study operationalizes the educational service quality of youth soccer clubs by incorporating the most common factors identified in the educational service sector, including educational content, reliability, responsiveness, assurance,

and empathy, which have been highlighted in previous studies on educational service quality (Cho & Kim, 2023; Jin et al., 2023; Kim & Shin, 2023; Lee et al., 2023; Lee & Min, 2023; Park & Kang, 2023; Yoon, 2023).

Table 1. Conceptualization of Servicescape across Service Sectors

Researcher	Context	Factors of Servicescape
Baker(1987)	Commercial Facility	Ambient Factors: Temperature, Color, Music, Illumination, Scent Design Factors: Architectural Aesthetics, Color, Layout, Stability Social Factors: Customers and Employers' Behavior
Bitner(1992)	Commercial Facility	Ambient Factors: Temperature, Color, Music, Illumination, Scent Spatial Layout and Function: Equipment, Furniture Sign, Symbol, and Artifact
Yoo(2007)	Hotel	Safety, Function, Aesthetics, Convenience
Lee & Ryu (2007)	Theme Park	Aesthetics, Accessibility, Convenience, Availability
Lee(2010)	Public Facility	Aesthetics, Cleanliness, Stability, Interior, Accessibility, Openness, Comfortability
Kim(2014)	Airline	Comfortability, Cleanliness, Visibility, Convenience, Flight Attendant
Kim(2016)	Soccer Club	Cleanliness, Aesthetics, Ambient Condition, Accessibility
Koo & Ahn (2018)	Traditional Market	Experiential Interest, Spatial Clarity, Spatial Symbolism, Visual Aesthetics
Bok(2019)	Cafe	Seat Comfortability, Air Condition, Aesthetics, Cleanliness, Convenience
Jeonetal.(2021)	Fitness Center	Ambient Condition, Spatial Arrangement, Aesthetics, Convenience, Safety

Specifically, educational content refers to services related to the curriculum and customized classes for children. In this study, it is operationalized as parents' perceptions of the quality and relevance of the curriculum and the extent to which classes are tailored to their children's needs. Next, reliability refers to the service provider's ability to deliver the promised services accurately and dependably. It is operationalized as the parents' perception of the extent to which coaches consistently deliver the scheduled classes as promised. Third, responsiveness denotes the service provider's ability to proactively and promptly respond to customer requests and their overall attitude toward assisting them. Fourth, assurance is defined as a consumer's assessment of the service provider's knowledge, professionalism, and overall sense of trust and confidence in the service. Lastly, empathy relates to the service provider's individual consideration and interest in customers, as well as their communication style and ability to understand and connect with them.

Servicescape of Youth Soccer Clubs

The concept of “servicescape” is derived from the combination of “service” and “scape,” which refers to scenery and sight (Oh et al., 2018). It is generally defined as the psychological and artificial landscape where a service is organized, offered by service providers, and experienced by customers (Dedeoğlu et al., 2015). Bitner (1992) introduced the concept of “servicescape” as a distinct concept from natural and social environments, focusing on the physical environment intentionally designed by service providers. Servicescape encompasses the tangible elements and environmental factors that influence customers’ perceptions of a service brand and their decision-making process. Given that services are intangible in nature and consumers cannot experience them before making a purchase, they often rely on tangible cues to assess the quality of the service. In this context, servicescape plays a crucial role in customers’ information processing and inference regarding the anticipated service quality they will encounter (Kim et al., 2016).

Despite the fact that the concept of servicescape has been conceptually acknowledged and empirically tested, scholars have presented different conceptualizations of its components across various service contexts. For instance, Kotler (1973) proposed that the service environment consists of auditory, haptic, olfactory, and visual factors, whereas Baker (1987) conceptualized the service environment with ambient, design, and social factors, which have a significant impact on consumers’ decision-making processes. Bitner (1992) suggested that the servicescape is comprised of the ambient environment, space/function, and symbolic artifacts. Similarly, Hightower (2003) operationalized servicescape using ambient, design, and social factors. A systematic review of the concept of servicescape implies that its conceptualization and operationalization vary depending on certain service contexts (see Table 2).

Table 2. Definitions of Educational Service Quality

Researcher	Definition
Kotler(1994)	Comprehensive executions that provide physical and psychological satisfaction by delivering tangible and intangible service to students in order to achieve educational goals
Park(2017)	The degree to which students perceive the quality of diverse activities provided by a school
Choi (2005)	The overall evaluation of tangible and intangible services to achieve education goals for students and schools
Hwang (2005)	The overall assessment or perception of students regarding services provided by an educational institution
Shim (2009)	The evaluation of students about educational services based on their information and experiences provided by a school
Kim (2012)	The assessment of administrative services and educational activities provided employees and schools to achieve students’ educational goals
Yang & Park (2018)	The evaluation of overall activities to psychologically and physically satisfy students by providing tangible and intangible services for achieving high quality of education

Meanwhile, scholars in the field of sports services commonly focus on the tangible aspects of the servicescape and have conceptualized it with specific dimensions such as aesthetics, ambient conditions, cleanness, convenience, safety, and spatial layout (García-Fernández et al., 2020; Jeon et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2016; Ong & Yap, 2017; Siguaw et al., 2019). Based on previous studies on servicescape in sports services and considering the discriminant validity between its components, the present study conceptualizes the servicescape of youth soccer clubs with the dimensions of ambient conditions, cleanness, convenience, and safety. First, aesthetics refers to the architectural design, interior design, and décor that enhance the attractiveness of the service environment (Lee et al., 2015). Next, the ambient condition is defined as the background attributes of the service environment that affect the five senses of customers, including proper temperature, air conditioning, illumination, ambient noise, and other sensory elements (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994). Third, cleanness denotes the level of hygiene and cleanliness in the service environment, including factors such as the cleanliness of consultation rooms, exercise spaces, sidewalks, and the attire of employees (Ai et al., 2022). Fourth, convenience refers to the ease with which customers can utilize the equipment and space within the service environment (Miles et al., 2012). Lastly, safety indicates the perceived level of risk associated with using the equipment and space in the service environment (Siguaw et al., 2019). Together, these components of the servicescape are crucial in shaping consumer experiences within the context of youth soccer clubs.

The Role of Educational Service and Servicescape Quality in Parents' Satisfaction

In general, consumer satisfaction is defined as the evaluation made by comparing the expectations held prior to experiencing a service with the actual performance and outcomes of that service (Oliver, 1997). When it comes to services targeting youths, it is crucial for service providers to understand the specific needs of both the youths and their parents and offer customized services that can meet those needs effectively. In particular, parents' satisfaction holds significant importance, as they are the ones who ultimately make decisions regarding youth sports services and actively engage in positive or negative word-of-mouth communication. Parents tend to evaluate youth sports services based on a wide range of factors, and the concept of educational service quality is one of the most salient factors for such evaluation.

Previous research has consistently demonstrated the significant and positive impact of service quality on customer satisfaction across various service sectors. For example, Olorunniwo et al. (2006) conducted a study in the hotel industry and found that service quality, operationalized as a second-order construct comprising tangibles, responsiveness, knowledge, and recovery, significantly enhances customer satisfaction. Neupane and Devkota (2017) conducted a study in the hospital industry and

revealed that not only individual dimensions of service quality but also overall service quality have a positive impact on patient satisfaction. In the context of financial services, Msosa and Govender (2015) reported that all five dimensions of service quality, as well as overall service quality, are positively related to customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The concept of service quality is also important in the sports industry. Lee et al. (2010) conducted a study on a Taekwondo gym targeting youths and found that educational service quality positively influences parents' satisfaction and word-of-mouth intention. Similarly, Lee and Hwang (2011) conducted a study on youth sports clubs and found that the educational service quality of these clubs positively influences customer value, satisfaction, and loyalty. Considering these findings collectively, it can be assumed that parents' perception of the educational service quality in youth soccer clubs plays a pivotal role in shaping their satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed:

H1: The educational service quality of youth soccer clubs positively influences parents' satisfaction.

Meanwhile, services are generally categorized into core services and peripheral services (Hume, 2008; Mullin et al., 2014). In the case of youth soccer clubs, the educational service can be regarded as the core service, while the physical environment can be considered the peripheral service (Foroughi et al., 2019; Ma & Kaplanidou, 2020). In particular, the peripheral service is mostly related to elements such as the interaction between staff and customers, supporting services (e.g., parking and concessions), and the physical environment of the facility (Theodorakis et al., 2013). Based on this understanding, the present study assumes that servicescape, as a peripheral service, plays a crucial role in influencing parents' satisfaction within the context of youth soccer clubs.

The existing literature on peripheral services and servicescape suggests that they are equally important factors in shaping consumer experiences alongside core services. For instance, Foroughi et al. (2019) revealed that peripheral services, such as entertainment, facilities, electronic devices, and stadium announcers, significantly enhance sports spectators' emotional experiences, thereby positively influencing behavioral intentions. Jeon et al. (2021) examined servicescape as a second-order factor comprising ambient conditions, spatial layout, convenience, aesthetics, and safety and demonstrated its positive impact on consumer experiences, satisfaction, and loyalty in the context of sports fitness centers. In line with this notion, the concept of servicescape was found to play an important role in parents' satisfaction, repurchase intention, and positive word-of-mouth in the context of youth soccer clubs (Kim, 2016). Therefore, it can be assumed that servicescape is a determinant of parents'

satisfaction with youth soccer clubs. As a result, the following hypothesis was developed:

*H2:*The servicescape of youth soccer clubs positively influences parents' satisfaction.

Although both educational service quality (i.e., core service) and servicescape (i.e., peripheral service) are essential factors for consumer satisfaction, their relative effects may vary depending on service sectors or consumer characteristics. For instance, Park et al. (2013) found that the core service quality of IT services plays a more prominent role in shaping perceived value compared to peripheral service quality. In contrast, Hume (2008) revealed that the positive effect of peripheral service quality on perceived value, customer satisfaction, and repurchase intention is relatively greater than the effect of core service quality in the context of performing arts. Interestingly, Kim et al. (2022) reported that the effect of peripheral service on revisit intention through team identification is relatively greater than the effect of core service in major league sports games; however, this effect is reversed in minor league sports games. Based on these findings, the present study assumes a difference between the effect of educational service quality and the effect of servicescape on parents' satisfaction. Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed:

*H3:*There is a difference between the effect of educational service quality and the effect of servicescape on parents' satisfaction with youth soccer clubs.

Ultimately, the main goal of a service provider is to increase consumer loyalty by fulfilling their needs and desires, as maintaining existing customers is more cost-efficient than securing new customers. Consumer satisfaction is widely recognized as the most crucial determinant of consumer loyalty (Jeon et al., 2021). Consumer loyalty is typically defined as the commitment of consumers to continue patronizing a particular service provider and their inclination to engage in positive word-of-mouth (e.g., Brunner et al., 2008; Gronholdt et al., 2000; Zins, 2001). Following this notion, the present study measures parents' loyalty as their intention to continue patronizing the youth soccer club and their intention to engage in positive word-of-mouth. Numerous studies have suggested that consumer satisfaction significantly enhances consumer loyalty across various service contexts (Baena-Arroyo et al., 2020; Brunner et al., 2008; García-Fernández et al., 2020; Gronholdt et al., 2000; Hur et al., 2011; Pedragosa & Correia, 2009), including the realm of youth soccer clubs. Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed:

H4: Parents' satisfaction with youth soccer clubs positively influences loyalty.

Additionally, a research model was developed based on the research hypotheses (see Figure 1).

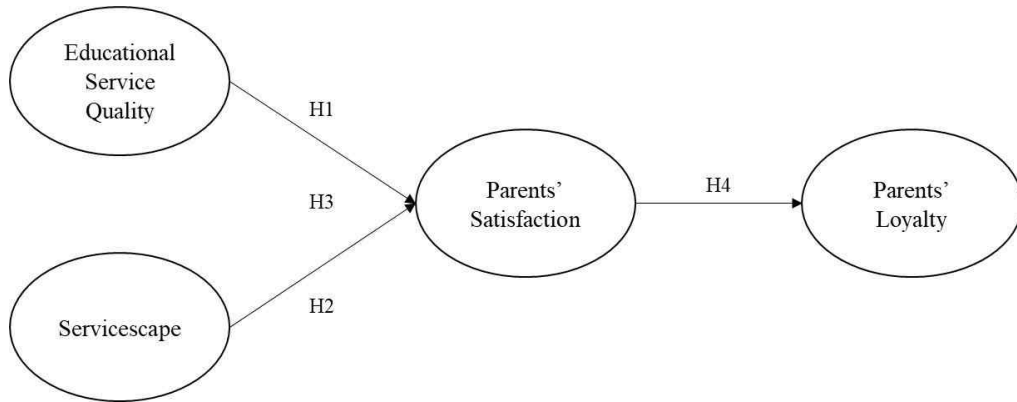


Figure 1. Research Hypotheses and Research Model

Methods

Research Participants

The current study focused on the parents of youth soccer club players in the South Korean province of Gyeongnam as a research population. The sample size of this study was determined based on rules-of-thumb including 1) 5 to 10 cases per estimated parameter (Bentler & Chou, 1987), 2) 10 observations per variable (Nunnally, 1994), and 3) a minimum sample size of 100 or 200 (MacCallum et al., 1999). Considering the number of variables in this study, it is required to collect 300 or above of observations. A total of 350 online surveys were distributed using the convenience sampling method due to the potential data attrition. After excluding 44 cases with incomplete responses, 306 cases were utilized in the final analysis. The results of descriptive statistics revealed that 65.4% of the participants were female, and the average age was 38.29 (SD = 4.7). The detailed information about the participants is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Demographic Information about the Research Participants

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Proportion (%)
Gender	Male	106	34.6
	Female	200	65.4
Age	20s	4	1.3
	30s	197	64.3
	40s	96	31.3
	50s	9	2.9
Education	High School Diploma	27	8.8
	College Diploma	67	21.9
	Bachelor Degree	303	66
	Graduate School Degree	10	3.3
Monthly Income	Below \$2,000	8	2.6
	\$2,001-\$3,000	67	21.9
	\$3,001-\$4,000	132	43.1
	\$4,001-\$5,000	72	23.5
	Above \$5,001	27	8.8
Age of Kids	Below 7	86	28.1
	8-9	104	34
	10-11	67	21.9
	12-13	49	16
Period of Registration	Below 6 months	74	24.2
	7-12 months	97	31.7
	13-24 months	82	26.8
	25-36 months	34	11.1
	Above 37months	19	6.2
Total		306	100

Measures

All of the constructs in the research model were assessed using multiple survey items that were adapted from previous studies in the literature. These items were modified to suit the specific context of the current study. Each item was designed to measure its corresponding construct and was rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). The final questionnaire encompassed items related to demographic information, educational service quality, servicescape, satisfaction, and loyalty.

The educational service quality was measured using 15 items, which were adopted from previous research on educational services (Kim, 2017; Kwon, 2014; Lee, 2013; Lim, 2016). Servicescape was measured using 15 items adopted from the literature on servicescape in diverse service sectors (Bitner, 1992; Jeon et al., 2021; Kim & Kim, 2014; Lee & Lee, 2010; Um, 2010). Parent satisfaction was measured using three items adopted from studies by Lee and Chae (2006) and Yi and La (2002). Lastly, parent loyalty was assessed with three items adopted from studies by Jeon et al. (2021) and Oliver (1999). The specific measurement items are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Measures, factor loadings, reliability coefficients, and average variance extracted.

Factors and items	λ	C.R.	AVE
Educational Service Quality		.88	.60
(Content)The soccer club provides a curriculum that students need	.74	.91	.78
(Content)The soccer club provides a curriculum customized for the level of students	.79		
(Content)The soccer club develops an appropriate curriculum with recent trends	.72		
(Reliability) The soccer club provides educational programs within the promised time.	.72	.90	.75
(Reliability) The soccer club solves problems with products or services precisely in the case of problem occurrence.	.70		
(Reliability) The coaching staffs are factual for their classes.	.64		
(Responsiveness)The soccer club responds immediately to customer needs.	.73	.92	.79
(Responsiveness)The soccer club provides enough information about our questions.	.80		
(Responsiveness)The soccer club provides prompt services for us.	.77		
(Assurance)The soccer club gives me a sense of confidence in the service.	.81	.92	.79
(Assurance)The soccer club has the expertise to answer my questions.	.77		
(Assurance)The instructors of the soccer club have the skills and knowledge.	.73		
(Empathy)The staff of the soccer club takes care of each of us.	.72	.90	.75
(Empathy)The soccer club sincerely cares about the interests of its customers.	.69		
(Empathy)The staff of the soccer club clearly understands our needs.	.67		
Servicescape		.88	.60
(Ambience)The temperature in the soccer club is appropriate	.80	.92	.79
(Ambience)The air conditioning in the soccer club is appropriate	.74		
(Ambience)The illumination in the soccer club appropriate	.73		
(Convenience)Using the parking lots in the soccer club is convenient	.65	.90	.75
(Convenience)The soccer club provides us with convenient rest areas	.74		
(Convenience) It is easy to access the soccer club.	.65		
(Aesthetics) The outdoor design of the soccer club is attractive.	.70	.91	.77
(Aesthetics)The interior design of the soccer club is differentiated from other soccer club.	.74		
(Aesthetics) The interior decor of the soccer club is attractive.	.75		
(Cleanliness) The hallway and gates are clean.	.75	.90	.76
(Cleanliness) The restroom of the soccer club is clean.	.68		

Factors and items	λ	C.R.	AVE
(Cleanliness) The soccer field is clean.	.66		
(Safety) The material of the floor in the soccer club is safe.	.72	.71	.77
(Safety) There are no hazardous factors in the soccer club.	.75		
(Safety) The fire prevention system of the soccer club is well equipped.	.72		
Consumer Satisfaction		.92	.79
Overall, I am satisfied with the soccer club.	.80		
I like the soccer club.	.78		
the soccer club fulfills my expectations.	.79		
Consumer Loyalty		.92	.79
I will continue to register the current soccer club.	.73		
I am likely to register the soccer club than other soccer clubs.	.79		
I will recommend the soccer club to other people.	.81		

Note: C.R. = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted Value

Data Analysis

Data analysis involved the identification and removal of outliers and incomplete responses. A descriptive statistical analysis was performed using SPSS 27.0 to gain an overall understanding of the variable patterns in the collected data. Subsequently, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using Mplus 8 to investigate the validity and reliability of the measurement model. Finally, the research hypotheses were tested using structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis with Mplus 8. Additionally, the Wald test was conducted to assess the difference between the path coefficient from educational service quality to parent satisfaction and the one from servicescape to parent satisfaction.

Results

A Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted to test the normality assumption of the variables in the research model. The results revealed that the normality assumption was violated; therefore, the measurement model and structural model were estimated using the Satorra-Bentler scaling method (Satorra & Bentler, 1994). The results of the CFA demonstrated an acceptable fit between the theorized measurement model and the data: $\chi^2/df = 902.676/578 = 1.56$, CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.04, and SRMR = 0.06 (Hair et al., 2006). All factor loadings were found to be significant and greater than 0.60. The results also showed that the average variance-extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.60

(servicescape) to 0.80 (parent satisfaction). Additionally, the AVE values were found to be similar to or greater than the squared correlations between the latent factors in the measurement model (see Tables 4 and 5). Lastly, all reliability coefficients for the latent factors were greater than 0.80. In summary, it can be concluded that the measurement model demonstrated adequate reliability as well as convergent and discriminant validity (Fornell&Larcker,1981;Hair^{et al.},2006).

Table 5. Results of Correlation Analysis

	1	2	3	4
1. ESQ	.601			
2. SS	.810***	.604		
3. CS	.798***	.802***	.799	
4. LY	.824**	.795***	.912***	.786

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Note: ESQ=educational servicequality,SS=servicescape,CS=consumersatisfaction,LY=loyalty

For hypothesis testing, a structural model was estimated using the Satorra–Bentler scaling method (Satorra & Bentler, 1994).The results demonstrated an acceptable fit between the hypothesized structural model and the data: $S-B\chi^2/df = 906.404/580 = 1.56$, CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.04, and SRMR = 0.06 (Hair^{et al.},2006). The findings revealed that educational service quality had a positive effect on parent satisfaction ($\beta = 0.44$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1. Similarly, the servicescape was found to have a positive influence on parent satisfaction ($\beta = 0.48$, $p < 0.001$), providing support for H2. Furthermore, the result of the Wald test revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between the path coefficient from educational service quality to parent satisfaction and the one from servicescape to parent satisfaction (Wald test statistic = 0.02, $df = 1$, $p = 0.96$), suggesting that H3 was not supported. Lastly, the path coefficient from parent satisfaction to parent loyalty was found to be statistically significant ($\beta = 0.94$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H4. The results of the hypothesis testing are visualized in Figure 2.

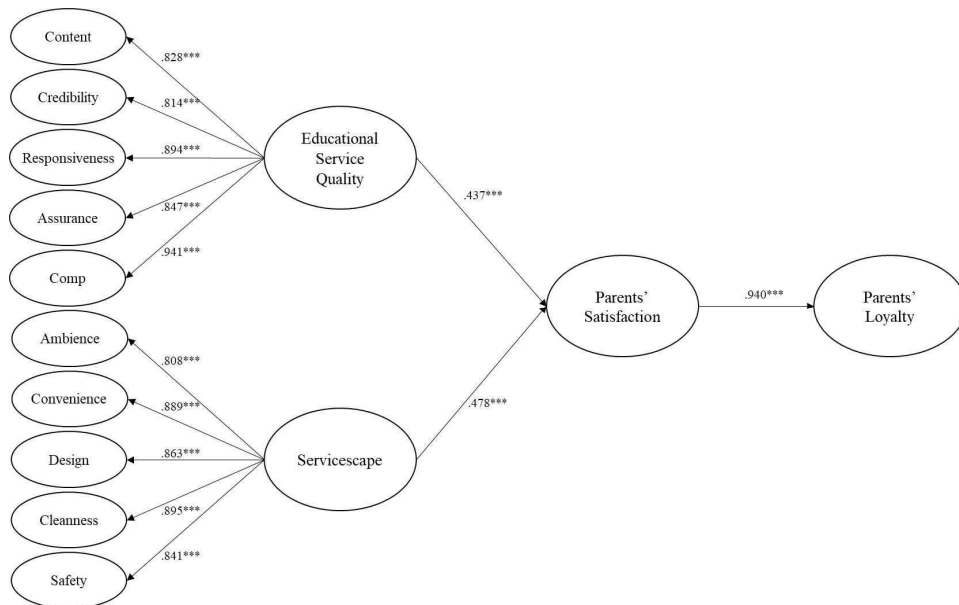


Figure 2. Summary of the Results; *** $p < .001$

Discussion

The current study examined the structural relationships among educational service quality, servicescape, parent satisfaction, and loyalty within the context of youth soccer clubs. First, educational service quality was found to have a positive impact on parent satisfaction (H1). This finding suggests that when parents perceive higher levels of content quality, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy from the service provider in their youth soccer clubs, they tend to be more satisfied with the overall experience. However, it is worth noting that Jeon et al. (2020) reported a different result, indicating that educational programs had little impact on parent satisfaction in youth Taekwondo gyms and youth swimming clubs. This inconsistent finding implies that the role of educational service quality in parent satisfaction may depend on service contexts. Despite the exceptional finding of a null effect of educational service quality on parent satisfaction (Jeon et al., 2020), the majority of studies highlight the role of educational service quality in parent satisfaction and loyalty within the context of youth sports clubs (Han & Kim, 2022; Kang & Kim, 2020; Lee & Hwang, 2011; Lee et al., 2010), supporting the findings of this study.

Second, the results of the present study revealed a significant positive relationship between the servicescape of youth soccer clubs and parent satisfaction (H2). This finding suggests that factors such

as ambient conditions, convenience, design, cleanliness, and safety of youth soccer clubs play a crucial role in influencing parent satisfaction. Furthermore, the study found no significant difference between the effects of servicescape and educational service quality on parent satisfaction in the context of youth soccer clubs (H3). This implies that both servicescape and educational service quality are equally important in shaping parent satisfaction. Interestingly, Chang et al. (2015) reported that the physical environment of youth soccer clubs is the least important factor for parents in selecting a youth soccer club, whereas the educational program is considered the most important factor. This inconsistency may be attributed to the different conceptualizations of the service environment. The present study focused on the broader concept of service environment (i.e., servicescape), while the previous study had a narrower focus on the physical facility. In support of this speculation, Lee et al. (2019) found that the comprehensive service environment, including ambient, design, and social factors, significantly influences parent satisfaction and loyalty in the context of youth sports clubs. Therefore, it can be concluded that the comprehensive service environment is as important as educational service quality in the context of youth soccer clubs.

Lastly, the results suggest that parent satisfaction positively affects their loyalty to youth soccer clubs (H4). This finding aligns with numerous studies that have reported a link between higher levels of parent satisfaction and increased engagement in re-registration and positive word-of-mouth behaviors (Chang et al., 2015; Han & Kim, 2022; Jeon et al., 2020; Kang & Kim, 2020; Kim, 2016; Lee & Hwang, 2011; Lee et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2010). In particular, the strong impact of parent satisfaction on loyalty holds theoretical and practical significance, as the primary goal of business strategies for youth soccer clubs is to enhance parent loyalty, which directly translates into financial benefits through post-purchase and promotional behaviors.

The present study contributes to the existing literature on youth sports clubs by examining the combined influence of educational service quality and servicescape on parent satisfaction and loyalty. Unlike previous research that often focuses on either educational service quality or servicescape separately, this study provides a comprehensive structural model that considers both factors simultaneously. The findings of this study have practical implications for youth soccer club managers. It suggests that to maximize parent satisfaction and enhance their loyalty, club managers should develop business strategies that strike a balance between educational service quality and servicescape. Moreover, youth soccer club managers should prioritize aspects such as empathy and responsiveness in educational service quality, as these factors have shown the highest factor loadings on their respective latent factors. Additionally, cleanliness and convenience of the servicescape are also important considerations for managers to address.

Despite the theoretical and practical implications of the current study, it is important to acknowledge

and discuss its limitations, which can guide future research directions. First, the current study focused on the context of youth soccer clubs and relied on convenience sampling, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings. Future research should aim to replicate the study in different youth sports settings to examine how the effects of educational service quality and servicescape on parent satisfaction and loyalty may vary across contexts. Second, although the study incorporated both core service factors (educational service quality) and peripheral service factors (servicescape) in its comprehensive research model, it is important to recognize that the effects of these factors on parent satisfaction and loyalty may differ based on the characteristics of the parents themselves. Therefore, future research should consider parents as heterogeneous groups by categorizing them based on registration motivations or other relevant characteristics. This approach would provide meaningful insights into the factors that are more salient for parents' decision-making depending on their unique characteristics. Additionally, it would facilitate the development of practical strategies tailored to specific parent segments. Third, the present study collected data from parents who are not actual customers of youth soccer clubs rather than their kids. Due to the fact that kids directly experience the educational service and servicescape, future research needs to examine how actual service customers (i.e., kids) affect their parents' decision-making. Lastly, the present study tried to offer a holistic framework to explain how parents' decision-making is simultaneously affected by educational service quality and servicescape. However, other potential service factors such as service toping (Kim et al., 2022) deserve attention as determinants of parents' decision-making in the context of youth soccer clubs. Accordingly, future research should explore how such determinants affect parents' decision-making in the context of youth soccer clubs to provide practical and theoretical implications to the relevant industry.

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