



The Role of Social Responsibility in Building the Quality Image of Preschool Institutions

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Received: February 3, 2025
Accepted: September 15, 2025
Published: November 3, 2025

Keywords:

Image;
Preschool institutions;
Social responsibility;
Quality



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Abstract: *Preschools must actively support social responsibility, environmental preservation, and the community in addition to offering high-quality services in the social and educational context of today. This essay explores the key elements of social responsibility that contribute to the formation of a positive perception of preschools and how this perception can be strategically used to attract parents, finance staff development, and adhere to regulations. Preschool institutions' success is impacted by factors other than the quality of childcare and instruction, though. Transparency in business, social inclusion, and environmental responsibility are becoming more and more important. This paper examines specific instances of community-building and image-building projects that preschools have undertaken, such as those about equality, family support, and environmental conservation. Institutions that successfully incorporate social responsibility into their strategies not only improve their reputation but also reap long-term benefits in the form of increased employee, parent, and child satisfaction and trust, especially in light of the growing competition and societal demands for ethical business practices. The principals of 352 preschools in the Republic of Croatia were surveyed to examine how they view and implement social responsibility in the process of enhancing their reputation for excellence.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's social and educational context, preschools are faced with the challenge of not only providing high-quality education and care for children, but also actively contributing to social responsibility, environmental protection and community. To be relevant and sustainable in an increasingly demanding social environment, these preschools must understand the importance of their role in a broader social context, which includes caring for the environment, promoting equality, social inclusion, and supporting families and the community. This paper explores key aspects of social responsibility, which not only contribute to a positive perception of preschools but also enable them to strategically position themselves in the educational services market. Following the above, social responsibility is becoming an important element in strengthening the image and trust among various stakeholders – from parents and children to employees and the wider community. Preschool institutions that implement sustainable, transparent and socially responsible practices can improve the quality of the services they provide, attract new users, secure better financial support for the development of their programs and staff, and adhere to legal and ethical guidelines. In addition to the quality of education and care, it is increasingly recognized that business transparency, environmental responsibility and active social inclusion are becoming

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key factors in assessing the success and reputation of a preschool institution. This paper places special emphasis on examples of successful initiatives and projects aimed at building a community and strengthening the image of institutions, among which those focused on equality, supporting families and preserving the environment stand out. The implementation of projects such as ecological initiatives, developing social awareness in children, organizing educational activities for parents, or implementing social inclusion programs not only contribute to better integration of preschool institutions into the local community but also creates added value for all participants in the educational process. This makes preschool institutions the center of the community, a place that not only educates but also actively contributes to social development and sustainability.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Early childhood and preschool education institutions are places where people live, learn, practice social skills and play. Došen–Dobud (2004) states that early childhood education institutions are one of the first environments for children. Moss and Pence (1994, p. 2) state that early childhood education institutions should become “comprehensive, integrated and coherent services that offer equal access to all children from birth to six years of age and their parents through their flexible, multifunctional and high-quality services” (Moss & Pence, 1994, p. 2). According to Hendrick (1997, p. 11), the organization of the institution has been unjustifiably neglected for a long time, and it needs to be reformed, restored as a “necessary, dynamic and constructive element”. The Reggio pedagogical concept considers the entire organization of the context of the institution and subordinates it to the quality of the environment. They believe that the quality of learning, especially in a group, is closely related to the quality of the opportunities we create for the child to participate with others in the daily life of the institution (Edwards et al., 1998; Giudici & Rinaldi, 2002). Education is a key component in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, as it provides a deeper understanding of problems, their causes and consequences, and possible solutions. As literacy increases, so does the motivation to change not only oneself, but also the wider community. The skills acquired through education lay the foundation for making responsible decisions, necessary for sustainable development. Responsible education for the future focuses on the development of critical thinking, awareness of environmental, social and economic issues, and encourages civic responsibility, thus enabling individuals to become active participants in creating a sustainable and just society. This form of education not only prepares people to make ethical and responsible decisions, but also empowers them to shape positive changes in the world that will inherit us and begins in early preschool age.

Despite the growing interest in the concept of sustainability at the international, national and local levels, research on education for sustainable development is still very limited (Davis, 2010). A relatively well-developed area is the collection of children's opinions on various phenomena in the environment. Longitudinal research from Great Britain shows that children as young as four years old are aware of their environment and demonstrate an understanding of the effects of environmental change and its impact on different habitats and people (Palmer & Suggate, 2004). Today's children are far from the romantic notion of childhood as a time of carefree play that places children in a context of safety and a happy life, untouched by the events around them. Since values, attitudes, patterns of behaviour, and skills are acquired already during early childhood, this is the period when education for sustainable development must begin (Pramling Samuelsson & Kaga, 2008). Today's children are faced with changes in society, with new challenges and opportunities. Environmental issues have been part of educational programs for the past four decades, initially under the name of environmental education. Sustainable development as a concept is understood more broadly as a form of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising

the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland, 1987). Over the past decades, the concept of education for sustainable development has influenced educational policies at all levels – international, national and local. In an attempt to transform education for sustainable development into educational goals, Hägglund and Pramling–Samuelsson (2009) emphasized the intertwining of environmental, social and economic dimensions, but also added a value dimension. They highlighted the similarities between education for sustainable development and education for peace, democracy and citizenship.

Education for sustainable development is a challenging but crucial concept in today's society. Modern education systems are increasingly linked to global economic trends, and these trends shape education as a product that is influenced by the ideology of the global market. However, there is a need to redefine such a one-dimensional model of education, because the global economy does not recognize national and cultural boundaries. Instead of education being a path to employment, in many countries it becomes a mechanism that leads to unemployment, poverty and exclusion, because schooling is not in line with local needs and the specificities of the labor market. Therefore, it is necessary to harmonize domestic and international knowledge systems, based on traditional life skills, entrepreneurship, adaptability and risk-taking, with the active involvement of young people as a key resource for the future (Mbebeb, 2009). The third millennium, in which we live, should educate children in their culture, but at the same time provide competences that are needed at the global level. This phenomenon, known as glocalization, means finding the local in a global context. Formal education, therefore, must play a significant role in shaping practices that will promote a more sustainable approach to social challenges. Education for sustainable development should empower children and the community, providing them with the fundamental values and skills that are essential for the sustainability of our society. In order for education for sustainable development to be effective, it must be implemented in the real environment of children, teaching them through practical, life situations that encourage responsibility towards the environment, society and the community. This concept necessarily includes the implementation of socially responsible educational strategies from an early age, because children who acquire the values of sustainability, responsibility and togetherness from the earliest years become agents of change. Such an educational approach not only contributes to the development of awareness of environmental and social issues, but also directly affects the reputation and quality of services of preschool institutions from the perspective of parents. Namely, parents who recognize the importance of education that promotes social responsibility and sustainability are increasingly looking for institutions that adhere to these values, because they believe that such an educational approach contributes to a healthier, more responsible and more aware development of their children. Thus, preschools that successfully implement social responsibility strategies, while preserving the environment and promoting shared values, create the foundation for building a positive reputation, which is crucial for attracting parents, ensuring community trust and maintaining high-quality education. In this way, education for sustainable development not only affects the development of the child but also the competitiveness and success of educational institutions, as it also shapes the image of an institution that cares for the well-being of society and the environment, which has become increasingly important in the eyes of parents.

3. THE ROLE OF EDUCATORS IN THE REPUTATION AND IMAGE OF PRESCHOOL INSTITUTIONS

Educational institutions fall into the category of non-profit organizations, in which educators are a significant and the most numerous and fundamental part of the preschool community and the entire context related to the preschool institution. All segments are important for the image of an

educational institution: the basic culture of the institution, the personnel and administrative structure, verbal and visual elements, as well as the overall behavior and atmosphere of the institution itself (Vujičić, 2008). Vujičić (2008) notes that the culture of an educational institution is shaped by its history, context and the people in it. It is also influenced by external political and economic forces and changes in state or local educational policy. Recently, strategies have often been mentioned with the aim of long-term guidance and development of the institution. An extremely important element in the development of strategies is the determination of the mission and vision of the organization. In this regard, the image is extremely important because it symbolizes the mission of the institution in a way. The way it works and how the institution acts affects the way the public will perceive it. In order to harmonize the public's perception of the institution, the image of the institution should be carefully designed, correctly directed, and constantly managed. Most kindergartens in the Republic of Croatia operate on the basis of certain administrative and financial provisions. Parents pay a certain monthly subsidy for the kindergarten service, and in this respect, preschool institutions can be perceived as institutions with service activities.

In this respect, educators are the most visible representatives of the institution, who balance between two roles: the interests of the profession and the institution and the wishes and expectations of the children's parents. Educators are in daily contact with the children's parents, and are constantly in the position of presenting the service of care, nurturing, upbringing and education. If the teaching profession were placed in the context of marketing, teachers are in a position to perform "personal selling" on a daily basis. This term refers to "the process of informing and persuading consumers to purchase products through personal communication in an exchange situation." (Dibb et al., 1995).

The professional role of educators is crucially linked to the overall image of employees, and the way they present the institution through communication with parents largely depends on various characteristics, such as physical appearance, expertise, emotional intelligence, motivation, ethical values, and cultural approaches. In order for cooperation between educators and parents, as well as cooperation with the wider society, to be successful, it is important to understand that the identity of educators directly affects the way they communicate. Namely, the way educators communicate with the environment depends on their professional identity, and this communication, in turn, shapes the image of the institution and the profession. Preschool educators, through their attitude, professionalism, and communication skills, actively shape their personal image, but also the image of the institution itself, and the image of the educational profession as a whole. Their ability to foster a positive atmosphere, build trust with parents and the community, and provide professional support to children is crucial for improving the quality of services provided by the institution. Through such activities, educators also support the development of key competencies in children, which include skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning. Using theoretical guidelines and the latest research in the field of preschool education helps educators to monitor standards and improve their work, promoting innovation in education, respect for diversity and social responsibility. In this way, they strengthen their professional status and contribution to the profession, which indirectly affects the strengthening of the reputation and image of the educational profession. The goal of successful communication between educators and parents should be focused on a clear and professional presentation of work with children, according to the principles of the pedagogical approach and taking into account the preschool education curriculum. One of the challenges that educators face is expressing their practical work in contact with parents, as many of them have difficulty articulating their observations about children's development and progress. Therefore, it is important for educators to develop communication skills in order to improve their professional presentation and thereby raise their reputation in the community. Although preschool institutions are not profit-making organizations, improving their image and

reputation directly affects the interest of parents in enrolling their children in such institutions. The financial stability of these institutions also depends on the participation of parents, which allows for further investment in improving services. Therefore, educators, by developing their communication skills and professional responsibility, not only raise their own image, but also contribute to the sustainability and quality of preschool institutions, which is crucial for their successful work and long-term development.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A survey conducted among the directors of 352 preschool institutions in the Republic of Croatia provided insight into current practices and approaches to social responsibility in the context of strengthening the reputation of excellence. The data from this survey indicate various challenges that institutions face in implementing socially responsible strategies, as well as the recognized benefits that arise from their inclusion in everyday work. Different approaches to managing social responsibility show that institutions that successfully integrate these principles into their strategies are able to create long-term value – not only for children and parents, but also for their employees, which contributes to greater satisfaction, trust and engagement of all stakeholders. Increased competition in the preschool sector, as well as growing societal demands for ethical business practices, further underline the importance of a proactive approach to social responsibility. Preschool institutions that focus on building a positive social image, while ensuring high quality education and care, have the opportunity to position themselves as leaders in the sector in the long term, attract a larger user base, and ensure sustainability and stability in their business. The problem of this research concerns how preschool institutions in the Republic of Croatia integrate social responsibility into their daily activities and how this affects their reputation, quality of services and competitiveness in the education market. Although providing high-quality services for children is the basic function of preschool institutions, this paper explores the broader framework in which these institutions operate, emphasizing the importance of responsibility towards the environment, community and society. Within this framework, it is important to understand how social responsibility can positively affect the perception of preschool institutions by parents, employees and the wider community, as well as long-term benefits, such as increased trust, better financial development and adherence to legal and ethical norms.

The subject of this paper is the examination of specific initiatives and strategies of social responsibility implemented by preschool institutions in Croatia, as well as the analysis of their effects on the reputation and success of these institutions. Special attention will be paid to the roles of principals in the implementation of these strategies, and how their experience and leadership of institutions are reflected in the implementation of responsible business, environmental protection, and community building.

The problem of this research concerns how preschool institutions in the Republic of Croatia integrate social responsibility into their daily activities and how this affects their reputation, quality of services, and competitiveness in the education market. Although providing high-quality services for children is the basic function of preschool institutions, this paper explores the broader framework in which these institutions operate, emphasizing the importance of responsibility towards the environment, community and society. Within this framework, it is important to understand how social responsibility can positively affect the perception of preschool institutions by parents, employees and the wider community, as well as long-term benefits, such as increased trust, better financial development and compliance with legal and ethical norms. The subject of this paper is the examination of specific initiatives and strategies of social responsibility implemented by

preschool institutions in Croatia, as well as the analysis of their effects on the reputation and success of these institutions. Special attention will be paid to the roles of principals in the implementation of these strategies, and how their experience and management of institutions are reflected in the implementation of responsible business, environmental protection and community building. In accordance with the above, the following objectives were set in the research:

- To investigate how preschool institutions in Croatia implement social responsibility in their strategies, with an emphasis on environmental protection, social inclusion, and responsibility towards the community.
- To analyze the impact of social responsibility on the reputation of preschool institutions, especially in the context of attracting parents, ensuring quality staff, and adhering to legal regulations.
- To study how the experience of principals and their long-term practice influence the successful management of social responsibility initiatives within preschool institutions.

Hypotheses:

- Hypothesis H1: Preschool institutions that actively implement social responsibility strategies (such as environmental initiatives, equality, family and community support) record a better perception among parents and employees, which contributes to increasing their competitiveness and success in the educational services market.
- Hypothesis H2: There is a positive correlation between the experience of principals in managing preschool institutions and the successful implementation of social responsibility within these institutions.
- Hypothesis H3: Business transparency, social responsibility, and environmental initiatives have a positive impact on the financial stability and development of a preschool institution, as they enable better attraction of financial resources and community support.

The socio-demographic structure of the 352 preschool principals in the Republic of Croatia who participated in the survey provides a detailed insight into the characteristics and experiences of preschool leaders in different parts of the country. The survey covered principals from different cities and regions, and the largest number of responses was collected from urban areas, with an emphasis on the largest Croatian cities. The largest number of respondents comes from the city of Zagreb, which is the political, cultural and educational center of the country. This is expected given the high concentration of preschool institutions in Zagreb (89 principals, accounting for 25.28% of respondents), as well as the specific social and economic context of the capital. In Zagreb, preschool principals face challenges specific to the urban environment, including greater competition among institutions, the need for greater engagement in sustainability and ecology, and often greater social diversification of children and families. After Zagreb, a significant number of respondents come from the city of Rijeka, which is the second largest city in Croatia, located on the Adriatic coast. Rijeka, as an important economic and cultural central destination, also has a significant concentration of preschool institutions, although the number of principals is somewhat lower than in Zagreb. In Rijeka, principals (55 principals, accounting for 15.63% of the sample) often face challenges specific to the coast, such as a stronger focus on environmental projects, promoting social inclusion and supporting families facing economic difficulties. The third largest city in terms of respondents is Split, the largest city on the southern coast of Croatia, which also has specific needs and challenges in the area of education and childcare. Split is a city with a large number of preschool institutions that have to adapt to the growing population and

tourist conditions, which requires principals to balance the educational and social functions of these institutions (14.48%). In addition to these larger cities, responses were also collected from other, smaller cities and rural areas of Croatia. Although the number of respondents from smaller areas was not so large, these answers still provided important information about the specific challenges faced by principals in less urbanized areas, such as less availability of resources, challenges in hiring professional staff, and ensuring the quality of education in conditions of a reduced number of children. When it comes to the principal's work experience, the research showed that the majority of respondents hold the position of preschool principal for an average of four years. This indicates relative stability in the management of preschool institutions, but also the potential need for continuous professional development and adaptation to new challenges and changes in the educational system. The balance between experience and new approaches is essential for the successful management of institutions, as it enables principals to make informed decisions regarding innovations in education and work organization, while at the same time maintaining long-term stability and continuity. This socio-demographic structure of respondents also suggests that directors of preschool institutions in Croatia come from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, which contributes to the diversity of approaches, perspectives and experiences in managing preschool institutions. Different challenges and priorities in urban and rural environments are also reflected in the strategies that principals implement in their institutions, creating a complex picture of the educational reality in Croatia.

Table 1. The implementation of social responsibility in preschool institutions and its impact on the reputation and quality of the service

Reliability Statistics			
Cronbach's Alpha	Part 1	Value	,876
		N of Items	2 ^a
	Part 2	Value	,678
		N of Items	2 ^b
	Total N of Items		
Correlation Between Forms			,723
Spearman-Brown Coefficient	Equal Length		,839
	Unequal Length		,839
Guttman Split-Half Coefficient			,829
a. The items are: V35, V36.			
b. The items are: V37, V40.			

Source: Own research

Listed and shown in Table 1, it includes specific initiatives of preschool institutions in relation to ecological approaches (recycling, energy efficiency, ecological education for children), social inclusion (equality, social integration of children from vulnerable groups) and responsibility towards the community (activities in the local community, support for families, cooperation with local institutions). As dependent variables the following are defined: (i) the reputation of the preschool institution, which measures the perception and general opinion of the institution among the wider society, including the local community, employees and other key stakeholders, and (ii) the quality of service, which measures the quality of education, childcare and engagement in the community, which is indirectly related to the implementation of social responsibility. The results of the instrument reliability study indicate high internal consistency, which is crucial for assessing the quality of measurement. Instrument reliability measures how consistent and stable the results are, which is important for ensuring accuracy in the research process. Various statistical methods were used to assess this reliability, including Cronbach's alpha, correlation between items, Spearman-Brown coefficient, and Guttman's Split-Half coefficient. First, the Cronbach's alpha for the first part of

the scale, which includes items V35 and V36, is 0.876, which shows extremely high internal consistency. This suggests that the items in this part of the scale measure very similar concepts and are related in a way that allows for accurate measurement. Given that Cronbach's alpha values greater than 0.7 indicate good reliability, this result confirms that the first part of the instrument can reliably measure the desired variable. For the second part of the scale, which includes items V37 and V40, Cronbach's alpha is 0.678. This value, although lower than the first, is still within acceptable limits of reliability. Although this part of the instrument is not as consistent as the first, it still provides useful information and can be used in the context of further research. The correlation between the two parts of the scale is 0.723, indicating a moderate relationship between them. This correlation shows that both parts of the instrument measure similar aspects, although with certain differences in internal consistency. This result confirms that the instrument as a whole can be effective in assessing.

In today's social and educational context, preschool institutions face challenges that require responsible and strategic management, not only in terms of the quality of education, but also in the context of social responsibility. The implementation of socially responsible strategies is becoming an increasingly important element in the business of preschool institutions, as it has a direct impact on many aspects of their work, including the perception of parents, the reputation of the institution, the quality of services and the image of the preschool institution. Principals, as key decision-makers in preschool institutions, play a key role in leading these initiatives and ensuring that they are incorporated into the day-to-day practices of the institution. Understanding the views of principals regarding the implementation of socially responsible strategies is important for insight into how these strategies shape institutional identity, the quality of the educational process, and relations with parents and wider communities. Principals are the ones who shape the guidelines and policies of the institution, and their approach to social responsibility can significantly affect the institution's reputation in the eyes of parents and the community. In addition, the way in which these strategies are communicated and implemented can have long-term effects on the quality of services, creating conditions for attracting and retaining parents, as well as for strengthening the institution's image as a responsible and transparent institution. In the context of these changes, it is crucial to understand how preschool principals perceive and apply socially responsible strategies in their practice, and how these strategies affect the wider perception of their institution. Researching the attitudes of principals can provide valuable information about how social responsibility is integrated into educational policies, which strategies they consider most effective, and how they see the impact of these approaches on the reputation and quality of their institution's services.

The table used in this study provides insight into various aspects of social responsibility in preschools through the responses of the principals. The results show that principals believe that their institution actively promotes environmental initiatives such as recycling and energy efficiency, with an average score of 3.98, indicating a positive attitude of the majority of respondents towards these initiatives. Although there is less variability among the responses, with a standard deviation of 0.965, the results show that principals recognize the importance of these initiatives, although the possibility that there are also differences in the way these initiatives are implemented in different institutions cannot be ignored. When asked whether preschools provide children with the necessary competencies to understand global social challenges, such as sustainability and social responsibility, principals gave an average score of 4.12, suggesting that most institutions implement educational activities that enable children to understand important global challenges. The smaller standard deviation (0.871) indicates less variability in the responses, which may mean that principals have a very similar perception of what is necessary for the development of these competencies. Principals also expressed a positive opinion about the perception of parents towards their commitment

to social responsibility and sustainable development, with an average score of 3.82. Although the score is close to 4, there is a more significant variability in the responses, as seen in the standard deviation of 1.018. The question about the institution's reputation among parents based on social responsibility also received a high score of 4.28, which shows that principals believe that their commitment to sustainable development positively affects the institution's reputation. Given the lower variability among the responses (standard deviation of 0.896), it can be assumed that there is a greater consensus among principals when it comes to the institution's reputation.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and Kolgomor's test on the implementation of a socially responsible strategy in preschool education institutions

Results	N	Min.	Max.	Average	Standard deviation	Coefficient of variation	Statistics	P value
Our preschool actively promotes environmental initiatives, such as recycling and energy efficiency.	352	1.00	5.00	3.98	.965	1.107	0.161	0.000
Our institution provides children with the necessary competencies to understand global social challenges, such as sustainability and social responsibility.	352	1.00	5.00	4.12	.871	.976	0.125	0.002
The parents of our institution recognize our commitment to social responsibility and sustainable development.	352	1.00	5.00	3.82	1.018	1.336	0.211	0.002
Our institution's reputation among parents is based on our commitment to sustainable development and social responsibility.	352	1.00	5.00	4.28	.896	.954	0.179	0.000
The quality of education at our institution is based on high standards of social responsibility and sustainable development.	352	1.00	5.00	4.02	1.129	1.211	0.179	0.000
Our institution has a positive image in the community due to its commitment to sustainability and social responsibility.	352	1.00	5.00	3.99	1.009	1.116	0.241	0.001

Source: Own research

The quality of education was also rated highly, with an average score of 4.02, highlighting the importance of social responsibility and sustainable development in educational practices. Principals believe that high standards of social responsibility are key to ensuring the quality of education, although there is greater variability in perceptions, as reflected in a standard deviation of 1.129. When asked about the institution's image in the community, principals also gave high scores (3.99), indicating that a commitment to sustainability and social responsibility positively shapes the public perception and image of institutions. Based on these results, it can be concluded that preschool institutions in Croatia recognize the importance of social responsibility and sustainability in their educational process, but there is a need for further improvement in the implementation and communication of these initiatives in order to achieve a consistent and uniform perception among parents and wider communities.

The implementation of sustainability strategies in preschools is increasingly becoming a key factor in shaping parents' perceptions, the institution's reputation, and the quality of services it provides. In today's educational context, preschools that actively implement environmental initiatives, social responsibility towards the community, and other sustainable practices not only contribute

to environmental protection and social well-being but can also significantly influence parents' opinions and the overall perception of the institution. Based on the analysis of correlations between different items, we can better understand how the implementation of sustainability strategies in preschools links independent variables, such as environmental and social initiatives, with dependent variables, including parents' perceptions, the institution's reputation, and the quality of services.

Table 3. Inter-Item Correlation Matrix of Social Responsibility Strategy Implementation in Relation to Parental Perception, Reputation, and Service Quality

	V35	V36	V37	V40
V35	1,000	,779	,751	,232
V36	,779	1,000	,823	,332
V37	,751	,823	1,000	,318
V40	,232	,332	,318	1,000

Source: Own research

The first link that emerges from the analysis concerns the high correlation between items V35 (implementation of environmental initiatives) and V36 (social responsibility towards the community), which is 0.779. This high correlation suggests that environmental initiatives and social responsibility towards the community often go hand in hand. Preschools that focus their efforts on environmental projects, such as recycling, energy efficiency, and environmental education for children, also tend to implement initiatives that include community support and social integration. These two components of sustainability have the potential to significantly influence parents' perceptions, as parents increasingly value institutions that are actively working towards environmental conservation and social responsibility. Ultimately, these strategies can have a positive impact on the institution's reputation, as demonstrating responsibility towards the environment and society contributes to creating a favorable image. Another important link in the analysis is the correlation between V35 (environmental initiatives) and V37 (quality of education and care), which is 0.751. This correlation suggests that preschools that integrate environmental initiatives may also have a better quality of education and care for children. Given that environmental strategies in educational institutions are often associated with innovative approaches to learning and upbringing, they can improve the educational process and provide children with a richer, more holistic approach to upbringing. Such an approach can positively affect the quality of service, which is crucial for parental satisfaction. Parents who see that their children are educated within sustainable, ecological practices may have greater confidence in the quality of the service provided by the institution. The third link in the analysis refers to the correlation between V36 (social responsibility towards the community) and V40 (reputation of the institution), which is 0.332. Although the correlation is lower than the previous ones, it shows that social responsibility can affect the reputation of the institution. Preschools that actively participate in projects that support the community, such as activities for the social integration of children from vulnerable groups or cooperation with local institutions, can improve their image in the eyes of parents and the wider community. This can result in greater trust and a stronger bond between the institution and parents, which is crucial for the long-term stability and success of the institution. In conclusion, the implementation of sustainability strategies in preschools has a significant impact on the perception of parents, the reputation of the institution and the quality of services. The high correlations between environmental initiatives, social responsibility and the quality of education suggest that sustainability is not only beneficial for the environment and society, but also for the educational institutions that implement these strategies. Preschools that successfully integrate sustainability into their daily practices can expect to improve their image, attract more parents who value environmental and social values, and improve the overall quality of services they provide to children.

5. CONCLUSION

The implementation of socially responsible strategies in preschools is an important step in shaping responsibility and awareness of social issues among children from an early age. By implementing various activities and initiatives that promote environmental responsibility, social justice, equality and solidarity, preschools create the foundation for the development of positive values in children. In addition, such strategies not only improve relationships within the preschool community, but also strengthen cooperation with parents and the wider society. Social responsibility in preschools can include various aspects – from environmental initiatives such as recycling and energy saving, to teaching children the importance of mutual respect and inclusion of all members of the community, to implementing approaches that provide equal access to educational opportunities for all children, regardless of their socio-economic background. In conclusion, socially responsible strategies in preschools not only contribute to the creation of a positive educational environment, but also prepare children to become responsible, empathetic and aware citizens, who understand their role in the wider social context and the importance of preserving shared values.

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