

From Complaint to Satisfaction: The Role of Complaint Management System in Patient Satisfaction

Ni Wayan Pratita^{1*}, Gede Sri Darma²

Universitas Pendidikan Nasional, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: pratita.wipra@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

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This study aims to analyze the effect of the Complaint Management System (CMS) on patient satisfaction with trust as a mediating variable at Tanguwisia Regional Hospital and Giri Emas Regional Hospital, both Class D government hospitals in Buleleng Regency, Bali. The issue addressed in this study is the suboptimal implementation of the CMS, which has the potential to reduce patient trust and satisfaction with hospital services. This study examines: (1) the direct effect of CMS on patient satisfaction, (2) the effect of CMS on patient trust, (3) the effect of trust on patient satisfaction, and (4) the mediating role of trust in the relationship between CMS and patient satisfaction. The study used a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design on 150 inpatients selected through a purposive sampling technique. Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the SmartPLS 4 application. The results showed that CMS had a positive and significant effect on both patient satisfaction and patient trust. Trust also had a significant effect on patient satisfaction and was proven to partially mediate the relationship between CMS and patient satisfaction. These findings demonstrate that a responsive, transparent, and solution-oriented complaint management system not only directly improves patient satisfaction but also strengthens patient trust, ultimately enhancing overall satisfaction. Academically, this study adds to the literature by confirming the role of trust as a crucial mediating variable in the context of Class D government hospitals in Indonesia.



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Introduction

Improving the quality of healthcare services is a top government priority in realizing a healthcare system focused on quality and patient safety. According to the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia (2023), the primary goal of strengthening healthcare service quality is to ensure the fulfillment of patients' rights to quality services, increase patient satisfaction, and ensure transparency and accountability in every service process. As public awareness of patient rights increases, healthcare facilities are required to adapt more responsively and professionally to meet public expectations regarding service quality and trust in healthcare institutions. Research conducted at Sijunjung Regional General Hospital, West Sumatra, shows that complaint handling is a crucial strategy for improving healthcare service quality. Through effective complaint management, healthcare facilities can identify service areas requiring improvement, thereby encouraging comprehensive and sustainable service quality improvement (Isnati et al., 2021). These findings confirm that patient complaint management serves not only to resolve individual problems but also as an integral part of the hospital's quality management system. Essentially, complaint management plays a crucial role in the hospital's quality management system because it can uncover the root causes of service problems and encourage continuous improvement. Other research also shows that patient complaints often contain information unknown to hospital management and therefore can be used as strategic input in developing and improving healthcare services (Waine et al., 2020). Thus, patient

complaints are not merely emotional responses to service experiences but also valuable sources of information for improving the quality and innovation of hospital services. However, various studies reveal that in many hospitals in developing countries, including Indonesia, patient complaint management systems are still viewed as an administrative formality and have not been optimally integrated into continuous quality improvement systems (Hastuti et al., 2022). As a result, many patient complaints are poorly documented, not systematically analyzed, and follow-up tends to be individual and reactive, rather than part of service system improvements.

As the paradigm of public service based on governance and accountability develops, the need for a structured, transparent, and information technology-based complaint management system, known as the Complaint Management System (CMS), has emerged. The Complaint Management System is expected to function not only as a complaint reporting channel but also as a managerial tool to identify service weaknesses, monitor follow-up complaint resolution, and support data-driven decision-making. Research by Ismail et al. (2022) shows that complaint handling has a positive effect on patient satisfaction, and this relationship becomes stronger as patient trust in the hospital increases. This is reinforced by Han et al. (2023) who emphasized that trust is a crucial determinant in shaping patient satisfaction and loyalty, especially when patients face service failure.

Various studies have also shown that effective patient complaint management has a significant impact on patient satisfaction because it provides an opportunity for hospitals to correct service errors and rebuild patient trust (Li et al., 2024). Friele et al. (2008) found that fair and transparent complaint handling not only resolves conflicts between patients and service providers but also plays a role in restoring trust in healthcare institutions. In line with these findings, Alrubaiee and Alkaa'ida (2011) stated that trust plays a crucial mediator in the relationship between service quality and patient satisfaction, ultimately strengthening patient loyalty to the hospital. In Indonesia, the implementation of Complaint Management Systems in government hospitals has begun to be strengthened since the enactment of Minister of Health Regulation No. 11 of 2017 concerning Hospital Patient Safety, which emphasizes the importance of patient reporting and feedback systems. However, empirical studies show that the implementation of Complaint Management Systems in government hospitals is still suboptimal. Research by Hastuti et al. (2022) revealed that patient complaint management mechanisms in government hospitals are still dominated by conventional systems and have not fully utilized digital technology.

In the context of healthcare, patient satisfaction is not solely determined by the technical quality of service or the effectiveness of the administrative system but is also strongly influenced by the patient's level of trust in the hospital institution. Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) emphasized that trust is formed through perceptions of the service provider's competence (ability), integrity, and benevolence, all three of which are highly relevant in patient-hospital interactions. Several recent studies have shown that a Complaint Management System (CMS) does not always have a direct impact on satisfaction but rather works through the prior formation of trust. Han et al. (2023) and Al-Hilou & Suifan (2023) demonstrated that trust significantly mediates the relationship between complaint handling and patient satisfaction, particularly in situations of service failure. This means that a good complaints system will only increase satisfaction if patients believe that their complaints are processed fairly, transparently, and are effectively followed up.

In recent years, public complaints about hospital services in Indonesia have shown an increasing trend. Data from the Ministry of Health and national complaint reports through SP4N-LAPOR! show that the healthcare sector consistently ranks among the top five agencies with the highest number of complaints. The most frequently reported complaints include long waiting times for services, staff attitudes, lack of medical information, and unclear complaint handling mechanisms. Hospital classification is based on the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, as stipulated in Ministerial Regulation Number 3 of 2020 concerning Hospital Classification and Licensing. Based on this regulation, hospitals in Indonesia are classified into Class A, B, C, and D hospitals, which are distinguished by bed capacity, completeness of specialist and subspecialist medical services, and the availability of human resources and infrastructure. Several national referral hospitals have even used complaint data as a key performance indicator (KPI) in evaluating service quality. This situation demonstrates that a mature complaint management system not only functions to resolve problems but also plays a strategic role in building trust and continuously improving patient satisfaction. This situation is also reflected in the empirical situation at Tangguwisia Regional Hospital and Giriemas Regional Hospital, Buleleng Regency, as class D government hospitals in

Buleleng Regency with minimal Organizational Structure and Work Procedures (SOTK) and Human Resources (HR). Based on internal complaint reporting data from the first semester of 2025, the patient complaint mechanism at both hospitals shows several limitations. Patient complaints are not fully recorded in a single integrated system, are not consistently classified, and follow-up actions are not systematically documented. This indicates that the Complaint Management System is not functioning optimally as a managerial instrument that supports improving service quality based on patient complaints.

This condition indicates weak patient trust in the hospital complaint system, which has the potential to reduce patient satisfaction even though clinical services are provided according to standards. Therefore, complaint data in class D government hospitals is relevant and contextual empirical evidence to examine the role of the Complaint Management System on patient satisfaction with trust mediation. The ineffectiveness of the Complaint Management System has implications for the formation of patient trust in hospitals. This is reflected in the still low public perception of the quality of hospital services, as reflected in Google Reviews, where negative reviews still predominate regarding service waiting times, staff communication, and responses to patient complaints. Furthermore, patients and their families still frequently submit complaints through external parties, such as members of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), village heads, and other community leaders. This pattern indicates that the hospital's internal complaint management mechanism is not yet fully trusted as a responsive and transparent means of resolving problems.

Low levels of patient trust in the complaint management system have the potential to lower their assessment of overall service quality, even if the clinical aspects have been provided according to professional standards (Li et al., 2024). Patients who lack trust in the complaint management system tend to rate the overall service experience as less than satisfactory, even if the clinical aspects of the service have been provided according to standards. Therefore, a suboptimal Complaint Management System not only impacts the effectiveness of complaint handling but also influences patient trust, which acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between the Complaint Management System and Patient Satisfaction. In the context of Class D government hospitals, this issue is further complicated by limited human resources, facilities, and information technology infrastructure. Class D government hospitals play a strategic role as primary referral hospitals at the district/city level but limited digital systems and high workloads can potentially hinder the effective management of patient complaints. This can undermine patient trust and impact overall patient satisfaction.

Literature Review

The Influence of *Complaint Management System* on *Patient Satisfaction*

A *Complaint Management System* (CMS) is a managerial system for systematically and continuously receiving, recording, following up, and evaluating patient complaints (Ismail et al., 2022; Zarei et al., 2021). From the perspective of *Service Recovery Theory*, complaint handling is part of service recovery that can improve negative patient experiences; when complaints are responded to quickly and fairly, patient satisfaction tends to increase (Tax et al., 1998). This aligns with the findings of Li et al. (2024), which showed that a complaint management system has a direct and positive effect on patient satisfaction in primary hospitals. Other findings also confirm that complaint handling is crucial for improving service quality and is related to patient satisfaction (Isnati et al., 2021). In other words, an effective CMS, for example, with clear procedures, easy access, rapid response, clear communication of solutions, fair processes, and follow-up on improvements, will logically increase *patient satisfaction*.

In contrast to these results, studies in the context of government hospitals show that CMS implementation is often conventional and reactive (e.g., predominantly using suggestion boxes/manual forms), and has not been integrated into systemic quality management (Hastuti et al., 2022). Furthermore, Sari and Widodo (2021) found that many regional hospitals lack a satisfaction evaluation mechanism integrated with the complaints system, even though this integration is crucial for continuous improvement. These differences in context and implementation quality lead to **inconsistent** results, necessitating further testing in Class D government hospitals.

H1: *Complaint Management System* has a positive effect on *Patient Satisfaction*.

The Influence of *Complaint Management System* on Patient *Trust*

Patient trust is the belief that a hospital provides consistent, honest, fair, and patient-centered services; trust can be understood through the dimensions of *ability, integrity, and benevolence* (Mayer et al., 1995). The relationship between CMS and trust can be explained through *Justice Theory*, which emphasizes that trust arises when patients perceive the complaint handling process to be fair and respectful of patient dignity (Adams, 1965). Furthermore, *Service Recovery Theory* emphasizes that effective service recovery after a service failure can revitalize trust (Tax et al., 1998). Empirically, Han et al. (2023) proved that trust significantly mediates the relationship between *complaint performance and customer satisfaction. Handling with Patient Satisfaction*; that is, trust is an important reinforcement formed from the experience of handling complaints. Ismail et al. (2022) also found that the effectiveness of a complaint management system influences satisfaction through the formation of trust in the institution. This strengthens the argument that a transparent, responsive, and empathetic CMS has the potential to build trust because patients feel heard, valued, and protected. However, in the context of local government hospitals, CMSs are often administrative and suboptimal due to limited human resources/IT infrastructure; this condition has the potential to actually reduce patient trust (Hastuti et al., 2022). Furthermore, the findings of Lestari and Widodo (2024) emphasize that trust in local hospitals remains a challenge when communication and complaint handling are not optimal. Because there are variations in implementation practices and institutional contexts, the influence of CMS on trust needs to be re-examined in Class D Government Hospitals.

H2: *Complaint Management System* has a positive effect on patient *trust*.

The Influence of Patient *Trust* on Patient *Satisfaction*

Patient satisfaction is the emotional state a patient experiences after comparing their expectations with the service they receive (Oliver, 1980). In healthcare, trust is seen as a "psychological bridge" that makes patients feel safe and confident in the institution's integrity; as a result, service evaluations tend to be more positive, leading to increased satisfaction (Han et al., 2023; Wu & Wang, 2023). Similarly, Hendhana and Darma (2017) stated that hospital service quality strengthens patient trust, which in turn contributes to increased satisfaction and loyalty. Furthermore, Alrubaiee and Alkaa'ida (2011) also emphasized the role of trust as an important mediator between service quality and patient satisfaction. This means that the higher a patient's trust in a hospital, the greater the patient's likelihood of being satisfied with the service they receive. In contrast to studies that examine satisfaction as the primary outcome, some studies still place trust more in the context of revisit/loyalty intentions, and not overall patient satisfaction (Anna Medika Hospital, 2022; Ozdemir & Yildiz, 2023). Furthermore, the different contexts (private/foreign hospitals vs. Class D government hospitals) allow for different levels of influence between trust and satisfaction. Therefore, the relationship between trust and patient satisfaction still needs to be proven in the context of Class D government hospitals.

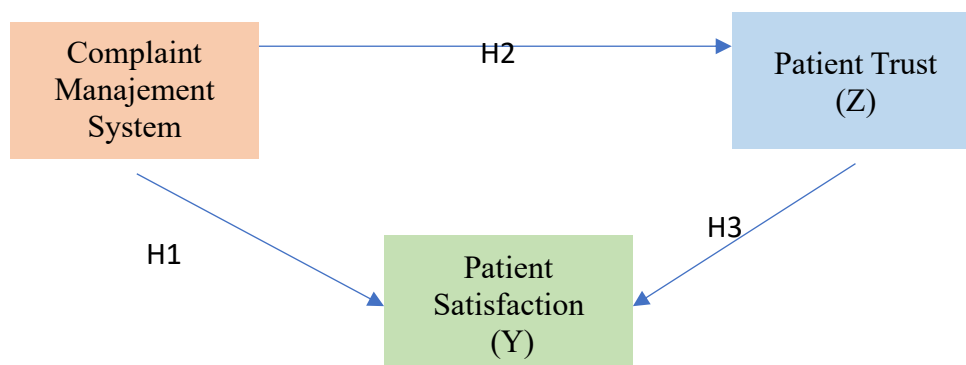
H3: Patient *trust* has a positive effect on *patient satisfaction*.

The Mediating Role of *Trust* in the Influence of CMS on Patient *Satisfaction*

Conceptually, CMS can increase satisfaction directly (complaint resolution) and indirectly through trust. In Justice Theory, the perception of fairness of the complaint handling process shapes trust (Adams, 1965); then, in the Service Recovery framework, trust helps restore patient perceptions after service failure and strengthens satisfaction (Tax et al., 1998). Empirically, Han et al. (2023) showed that trust mediates the relationship between complaint and service failure, handling performance on Patient Satisfaction, while Ismail et al. (2022) also emphasized that the effectiveness of complaint management influences satisfaction through the formation of trust. This argument is consistent with the explanation that an effective CMS increases perceptions of openness/fairness, builds trust, and trust then strengthens its impact on satisfaction. However, research incorporating trust as a mediator is still limited and is more often used for outcomes such as loyalty or revisit intention, rather than specifically patient satisfaction; this indicates a mediation gap (Anna Medika Hospital, 2022; Ozdemir & Yildiz, 2023). Furthermore, the CMS model through trust on patient satisfaction in Class D government hospitals in Indonesia is still rarely studied. Therefore, testing the mediation of trust is relevant to determine the pathway of CMS influence on satisfaction in the context of Class D government hospitals.

H4: *Complaint Management System* has a positive effect on *Patient Satisfaction* through the mediation of patient *Trust*.

Conceptual Framework of the Research



Thus, this study aims to empirically test how much influence the complaint handling system has on patient satisfaction levels, as well as to formulate strategic recommendations that can be implemented in Class D Government Hospitals.

Method

Data collection was conducted through the distribution of structured questionnaires to inpatient respondents at 2 (two) Class D Government Hospitals in Buleleng Regency, namely Tanguwisia Regional Hospital and Giri Emas Regional Hospital. Both hospitals were chosen as the research locus because they are local government-owned health service facilities that have similar characteristics, both in terms of hospital class and the type of services provided to the community. In addition, both hospitals have an existing patient complaint management system, although with different levels of digitalization and effectiveness, making it relevant to the research focus related to the Complaint Management System. This research is located in Buleleng Regency, Bali Province, with the unit of analysis being inpatients at both hospitals. Data collection was carried out over the last 1 year, adjusting to the research activity schedule and the availability of respondents at each hospital.

This research is quantitative with a cross-sectional survey design that aims to examine the relationship between latent constructs: Complaint Management System (CMS) as an independent variable, Patient Trust as a mediator, and Patient Satisfaction as a dependent variable. Data analysis was performed using PLS-SEM (Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling) with the SmartPLS 4 application and initial data cleaning and descriptive analysis were performed using Excel. The selection of PLS-SEM was based on several methodological considerations and research characteristics. First, PLS-SEM is suitable for use in predictive and exploratory research, especially to examine the causal relationship between latent constructions and the role of mediating variables, as the main objective of this study. Second, PLS-SEM does not require the assumption of multivariate normal data distribution and is relatively more tolerant of moderate sample sizes, making it suitable for research conditions in class D government hospitals that have limited number of respondents. Third, this research model is complex because it involves several latent constructs as well as the mediation relationship of trust between the Complaint Management System and patient satisfaction, which is methodologically more appropriate to be analyzed using PLS-SEM than covariance-based SEM. In addition, PLS-SEM allows simultaneous model evaluation between the Outer Model (measurement model) and the inner model (structural model) with a focus on predictive power, making it relevant to produce practical implications for improving the quality of hospital services. The population in this study were all inpatients who received services at class D government hospitals in Buleleng Regency during the study period. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling or convenience (accidental) sampling, namely the selection of respondents who met the research criteria and were met directly at the service location until the required sample size was achieved. To determine the sample size in the PLS-SEM analysis, the 10-times rule of thumb was used (Hair et al., 2019), which is a minimum of 10 times the number of indicators in the most numerous latent construct. In this study, the most populous construction is the Complaint Management System (CMS) which consists of 15 indicators (3 items for each of the 5 dimensions). Thus, the minimum sample size was calculated: $10 \times 15 = 150$ respondents. To increase the stability of estimates and bootstrap capabilities in mediation testing, researchers recommend drawing samples of up to 170–200 respondents if possible; however, for the needs of the initial proposal, $N = 150$ was used as the minimum sample size.

Results and Discussion

Evaluation of the measurement model (*Outer Model*) was conducted to test the validity and reliability of the research constructs, namely *the Complaint Management System (CMS)*, *Trust*, and *Patient Satisfaction* using the SEM-PLS approach. *Outer Model testing* includes convergent validity tests (*outer loading* and AVE), discriminant validity tests (HTMT), and reliability tests (*Composite Reliability* and *Cronbach's Alpha*).

Convergent Validity Test Loading Factor

Convergent validity testing was conducted to ensure each indicator accurately represented the latent construction being measured. The criterion used was *an outer loading* of ≥ 0.70 .

Table 1. Loading Factor Test Results

Variables	Loading Factor	Information
Variable X	0.995	Valid
Variable Z	0.922	Valid
Variable Y	0.975	Valid

Based on Table 1, most indicators have *outer loading values* above 0.70 so they are declared valid.

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Construct Reliability

Convergent validity was also evaluated through the AVE value with the criteria of $AVE \geq 0.50$. In addition, construct reliability was assessed through *Composite Reliability* ≥ 0.70 and *Cronbach's Alpha* ≥ 0.60 .

Table 2. AVE Values and Construct Reliability

Variables	AVE	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
<i>Complaint Management System (CMS)</i>	0.965	0.995	0.995
<i>Trust</i>	0.935	0.977	0.965
<i>Patient Satisfaction</i>	0.671	0.948	0.940

Based on Table 2, all constructs have an AVE value greater than 0.50 and *Composite Reliability* and *Cronbach's Alpha values* above the threshold, so it can be concluded that the research constructs are convergently valid and reliable.

Discriminant Validity Test (HTMT)

Discriminant validity testing was conducted using the *Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)* approach. The general criterion used is $HTMT < 0.85$, but for conceptually close constructs, a limit of <0.90 can be used and can be strengthened with *HTMT inference*.

Table 3. HTMT Test Results

Construct	CMS	Trust	Satisfaction
CMS		0.908	0.551
Trust	0.908		0.464
Satisfaction	0.551	0.464	

The HTMT value between CMS and *Trust* of 0.908 is slightly above 0.85, but still acceptable at the 0.90 limit for adjacent constructs. To strengthen the conclusion, *HTMT inference was performed*.

Table 4. HTMT Inference (CI 95%)

Construct Pair	HTML	CI 2.5%	CI 97.5%
CMS – <i>Trust</i>	0.908	0.847	0.959
CMS – Satisfaction	0.551	0.415	0.679
Trust – Satisfaction	0.464	0.314	0.619

Since the upper limit of the 97.5% CI for all pairs of constructs does not exceed the value of 1, the discriminant validity can be stated as adequate.

Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

R-Square (R²) Test

The R² value is used to assess the ability of exogenous variables to explain the variance of endogenous variables.

Table 5. R-Square Values

Endogenous Variables	R ²	Category
<i>Trust</i>	0.795	Moderate–Strong
<i>Patient Satisfaction</i>	0.330	Currently

Based on Table 5, the R² value for *Trust* of 0.795 indicates that variations in *Trust* can be strongly explained by CMS. Meanwhile, the R² value for Satisfaction of 0.330 indicates that CMS and *Trust* are able to explain patient satisfaction at a moderate level.

Hypothesis Testing (Bootstrapping 5,000)

Hypothesis testing was conducted using *bootstrapping* with 5,000 *resampling* . The significance criteria used were t-statistic > 1.96 and *p-value* < 0.05 (*two-tailed*).

Table 6. Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis	Track	Coefficient	t-statistic	p-value	Decision
H1	CMS - <i>Patient Satisfaction</i>	0.680	3,673	0.001	Accepted
H2	CMS - <i>Trust</i>	0.891	22,261	0,000	Accepted
H3	<i>Trust</i> - <i>Patient Satisfaction</i>	0.108	1,993	0.012	Accepted

Based on Table 6 , CMS has a positive and significant effect on *Trust* (H2 and H3 are accepted) and has a positive and significant effect on patient satisfaction (H1 is accepted).

Test of the Mediation Effect of *Trust* (Indirect Effect)

The mediation effect was tested through the indirect influence of CMS on patient satisfaction through *Trust* . Mediation was declared significant if the t-statistic > 1.96 and p-value < 0.05.

Table 7. Mediation Test Results (Indirect Effect)

Mediation Path	Coefficient	t-statistic	p-value	Decision
CMS - <i>Trust</i> - Satisfaction	0.108	1,993	0.012	significant

Based on Table 7, the indirect effect of CMS on patient satisfaction through *Trust* is significant. Thus, *Trust* acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between CMS and *Patient Satisfaction*.

The Influence of *Complaint Management System* on Patient Satisfaction

Hypothesis testing results indicate that *the Complaint Management System* (CMS) has a positive and significant impact on inpatient satisfaction at Tangguwisia Regional Hospital and Giri Emas Regional Hospital. This finding indicates that the better the complaint management system implemented by the hospital, the higher the level of patient satisfaction with the services received. The direct influence of CMS on patient satisfaction reflects that patients assess service quality not only from a purely medical perspective, but also from how the hospital responds to, handles, and follows up on complaints. Easily accessible complaint mechanisms, rapid responses, and clear and transparent complaint resolutions convey a sense of respect to patients as users of public services. This directly impacts the formation of positive perceptions of the hospital, which are then reflected in patient satisfaction levels. This study's findings align with the

concept of *service recovery*, which emphasizes that effective complaint handling can improve and even enhance customer perceptions after a service failure. Research by Rather and Sharma (2021) found that a prompt and fair organizational response to customer complaints significantly impacts satisfaction and positive service evaluations.

In the hospital context, *service recovery* becomes even more crucial because patients are physically and psychologically vulnerable. Empirical research in the healthcare sector also supports these findings. A study by Aladwan et al. (2024) showed that hospital service systems, including complaint handling mechanisms, positively influence patient satisfaction. When hospitals demonstrate seriousness in responding to complaints, patients perceive the hospital as committed to quality service and patient safety. Furthermore, Greene and Samuel-Jakubos (2021) emphasized that patients' experiences interacting with hospital systems, including when submitting complaints, significantly influence their perceptions of service quality and satisfaction. Unresponsive complaint handling can decrease patient satisfaction, while a good complaint management system actually strengthens patients' positive assessments of the hospital. In the context of public services, this study confirms that regional hospitals play a role not only as healthcare providers but also as public institutions responsible for addressing public aspirations and complaints. An effectively operating Complaint Management System reflects a participatory, transparent, and humane public service orientation. Therefore, improving the quality of the Complaint Management System (CMS) is a crucial strategy for Tanguwisia Regional Hospital and Giri Emas Regional Hospital to continuously improve inpatient satisfaction and the quality of healthcare services.

The Influence of *Complaint Management System* on Patient Trust

The research results show that *the Complaint Management System* has a positive and significant impact on patient *trust*. This finding indicates that effective complaint management can build patient trust in hospitals as public healthcare institutions. Patient trust is built when a hospital demonstrates a commitment to listening to complaints, providing fair responses, and taking concrete action on patient issues. When patients feel that their complaints are not ignored and are treated seriously, they develop a belief that the hospital possesses integrity, competence, and a concern for their well-being. In this context, *the Complaint Management System* serves as a two-way communication tool between hospitals and patients. A transparent and consistent system reflects the accountability of public organizations, which is a crucial element in building *trust*. This finding aligns with research by Sari and Handayani (2021), who found that a responsive and transparent complaint handling system significantly impacts patient trust in government hospitals. The study confirmed that patients will have greater trust in hospitals when complaints are handled promptly and accompanied by clear follow-up. Furthermore, research by Putri, Wahyuni, and Kurniawan (2022) showed that patient complaint management positively impacts patient trust by increasing perceptions of hospital accountability and responsibility. The study confirmed that a CMS serves as a two-way communication tool between patients and hospitals, enabling dialogue, clarification, and continuous service improvement.

This finding is further supported by research by Rahmawati and Nugroho (2023), which states that patient trust in regional hospitals is significantly influenced by the effectiveness of the complaints system and the responsiveness of hospital management in addressing patient complaints. When patients perceive a hospital as open to criticism and willing to improve services, their trust levels increase. Conceptually, the results of this study align with the principle of service recovery, where effective complaint handling can restore and even strengthen patient trust after a service failure (Rather & Sharma, 2021). From a public service perspective, a transparent and consistent CMS reflects accountability and democratic values such as openness and fairness, which are essential foundations for building public trust in public institutions.

The Influence of *Trust* on Patient Satisfaction

The study results showed that *trust* significantly influenced inpatient satisfaction. This finding suggests that patients' level of trust in healthcare professionals and hospitals is a crucial factor in shaping their assessment of the care they received during their treatment. Patient trust reflects the belief that the hospital and its medical staff possess the competence, integrity, and commitment to providing safe and quality care. In the context of high-risk inpatient care, *trust* serves as a psychological foundation that makes patients feel safe and comfortable, thereby increasing overall satisfaction with the service. This aligns with research by Greene and Samuel-Jakubos (2021), which states that patient trust in hospitals is shaped by the behavior of

healthcare staff, such as professional competence, caring, and effective communication, which directly contribute to patient satisfaction.

This research finding is also supported by an empirical study conducted by Wang et al. (2024), which found that *trust* in physicians has a positive and significant effect on inpatient satisfaction. The study explained that patients who have high trust in their physicians tend to be more involved in medical decision-making and exhibit more positive perceptions of care, resulting in increased patient satisfaction. Furthermore, research conducted by Aladwan et al. (2024) in public hospitals showed that patient *trust* is a key determinant of patient satisfaction, alongside service quality and hospital reputation. Patients who trust a hospital will evaluate the service process more positively, even when faced with limited facilities or service times. Based on the research findings and the literature, it can be concluded that *trust* plays a strategic role in improving inpatient satisfaction. Therefore, hospitals need to consistently build and maintain patient trust through improving the competence of medical personnel, transparent and empathetic communication, and services that prioritize patient safety and needs.

The Role of Trust as a Mediating Variable

The results of the mediation test showed that *trust* mediated the effect of the *Complaint Management System* on patient satisfaction. This finding indicates that the complaint management system not only has a direct impact on patient satisfaction but also builds patient trust first, which subsequently increases inpatient satisfaction. A *Complaint Management System* (CMS) is a crucial mechanism in healthcare for handling patient complaints systematically, responsively, and fairly. When patient complaints are handled promptly, transparently, and with solutions, patients perceive the hospital as committed to quality care and patient safety. This perception plays a role in shaping patient *trust* in the hospital, which in turn influences their evaluation of overall service satisfaction. The role of *trust* as a mediating variable aligns with research by Greene and Samuel-Jakubos (2021), which states that patient trust in hospitals is formed through their experiences interacting with organizational systems and behaviors, including how the hospital responds to patient problems and complaints. A positive response to complaints increases patient confidence in the hospital's caring and responsible nature, thereby enhancing patient trust.

Furthermore, research by Aladwan et al. (2024) shows that patient *trust* plays a crucial role in bridging the quality of hospital service systems with patient satisfaction. The study confirms that hospital systems and policies, including complaint handling, will be more effective in increasing satisfaction if they are able to first foster patient trust. This finding is also supported by research by Wang et al. (2024) who found that *trust* plays a mediating role in the relationship between service factors and inpatient satisfaction. The study explains that patient trust increases patient engagement and improves perceptions of service, resulting in significantly increased patient satisfaction. This indicates that *trust* functions as an important psychological mechanism in linking the service process with patient satisfaction outcomes. Thus, the results of this study confirm that *trust* is a crucial mediating variable in the relationship between the *Complaint Management System* and patient satisfaction. An effective complaint management system will optimally improve patient satisfaction if it is able to build and strengthen patient trust in the hospital. Therefore, hospitals need to ensure that the CMS is implemented in a responsive, transparent, and solution-oriented manner to strengthen *trust* and improve inpatient satisfaction.

Conclusion

Based on the results of data analysis and discussions that have been conducted regarding the influence of the *Complaint Management System* on inpatient satisfaction with *trust* as a mediating variable at Tangguwisia Regional Hospital and Giri Emas Regional Hospital, several conclusions can be drawn as follows:

1. *The Complaint Management System* has a positive and significant effect on inpatient satisfaction. Research results show that an effective, responsive, and transparent complaint management system can directly improve patient satisfaction. Patients feel more satisfied when their complaints are handled effectively, given a clear response, and accompanied by concrete follow-up by the hospital.
2. *The Complaint Management System* has a positive and significant impact on patient *trust*.

These findings indicate that the implementation of a good *Complaint Management System* can build patient trust in hospitals as public healthcare institutions. Trust is formed through patient experiences interacting with a fair, accountable, and patient-centered complaint mechanism.

3. *Trust* has a significant influence on inpatient satisfaction. These findings indicate that the level of patient trust in health workers and hospitals is an important factor in shaping patient assessments of the service experience they receive during treatment.
4. *Trust* mediates the influence of *Complaint Management System* on patient satisfaction. *The Complaint Management System's* influence on patient satisfaction occurs directly through the mediating role of *trust*. These findings indicate that the complaint management system not only directly impacts patient satisfaction but also builds patient trust first, which subsequently improves inpatient satisfaction.

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