

THE EFFECT OF RELIABILITY AND EMPATHY ON PATIENT SATISFACTION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON PATIENT TRUST (Study at Melati Hospital, Sungai Penuh City, Jambi Province)

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Abstract

Service quality is an important factor in increasing patient satisfaction and building trust in healthcare institutions. This study aims to analyze the influence of reliability and empathy on patient satisfaction and their implications for patient trust at Melati Hospital in Sungai Penuh City, Jambi Province. The research method used is a quantitative approach with a survey method. The study sample consisted of 92 inpatient respondents selected using a probability sampling technique with the Slovin formula. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using path analysis. The results showed that reliability and empathy have a positive and significant effect on patient satisfaction. Patient satisfaction was also proven to have a significant effect on patient trust. In addition, reliability and empathy have a direct effect on patient trust. The results of the Sobel test indicate that patient satisfaction is able to mediate the influence of reliability and empathy on patient trust. The research model shows a coefficient of determination value of 0.811, meaning that 81.1% of the variation in patient trust can be explained by the variables of reliability, empathy, and patient satisfaction. These findings confirm that improving service quality through the dimensions of reliability and empathy can increase satisfaction and strengthen patient trust in hospitals.

Keywords: *reliability, empathy, patient satisfaction, patient trust.*

INTRODUCTION

Healthcare is a basic human need that must be optimally met by healthcare institutions, particularly hospitals. Hospitals are required not only to provide quality medical care but also to provide a positive patient experience. Good service quality can increase patient satisfaction and build patient trust in healthcare institutions. Patient satisfaction is a crucial indicator in assessing the quality of healthcare services. Patient satisfaction occurs when the service received meets or even exceeds expectations. High levels of satisfaction foster long-term relationships between patients and healthcare institutions, fostering trust. Patient trust is the patient's belief in the competence, integrity, and goodwill of healthcare providers in providing optimal care. This trust is a crucial factor in building patient loyalty and enhancing the healthcare institution's image in the community. From a service quality perspective, reliability and empathy are two important dimensions that influence the patient's experience. Reliability relates to the hospital's ability to provide services consistently, accurately, and as promised. Empathy, on the other hand, relates to the healthcare provider's attention, concern, and ability to understand the patient's condition and needs.

Several previous studies have shown that service quality influences patient satisfaction and trust. However, most studies still place service quality as a single variable without analyzing the structural relationship between certain dimensions and patient trust through patient satisfaction as a mediating variable. Furthermore, empirical conditions at Melati Hospital in Sungai Penuh City indicate an unstable level of service utilization, reflected in the Bed Occupancy Rate (BOR), which remains below ideal hospital standards. Data show a BOR of 18% in 2024 and increasing to 30% in 2025, but this figure is still far from the national standard of 60–80%. This condition indicates potential problems in service quality that can affect patient satisfaction and trust. Therefore, research is needed that analyzes more deeply the relationship between reliability and empathy on patient satisfaction and their implications for patient trust.

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RESEARCH GAP AND STATE OF THE ART

Extensive research has been conducted on service quality and patient satisfaction in various healthcare institutions. Most of these studies use the SERVQUAL approach, analyzing the influence of service quality dimensions on patient satisfaction. However, several research gaps remain that require further exploration. First, some studies only analyze the influence of service quality on patient satisfaction without examining its subsequent relationship to patient trust as a long-term outcome. Second, several studies place patient satisfaction as a dependent variable without testing its role as a mediating variable in the relationship between service quality and patient trust. Third, research on the relationship between reliability, empathy, patient satisfaction, and patient trust in the context of private hospitals in the regions is still relatively limited, especially at Melati Hospital in Sungai Penuh City. Thus, this study develops a research model that integrates the dimensions of service quality (reliability and empathy) with patient satisfaction and patient trust in a structural analysis framework.

RESEARCH NOVELTY

The novelty of this research lies in the development of a relationship model between reliability and empathy as dimensions of service quality with patient satisfaction and its implications for patient trust through a path analysis approach. This study not only analyzes the direct influence between service quality variables on patient satisfaction, but also tests the indirect relationship through patient satisfaction as a mediating variable on patient trust. In addition, this study provides an empirical contribution in the context of health services at private hospitals in the region, especially Melati Hospital in Sungai Penuh City, which is still limited in previous academic studies.

METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with a survey method. The study was conducted at Melati Hospital in Sungai Penuh City, Jambi Province, a private general hospital that provides a variety of healthcare services, both outpatient and inpatient. The study population was all inpatients receiving services at Melati Hospital. The study sample consisted of 92 respondents selected using probability sampling techniques.

Research variables include:

X1 : Reliability

X2 : Empathy

Y : Patient Satisfaction

Z : Patient Trust

Data collection was conducted using a questionnaire with a Likert scale. Data analysis used: validity testing, reliability testing, descriptive analysis, path analysis, hypothesis testing, and the Sobel test for mediation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 92 inpatients from Melati Hospital in Sungai Penuh City as the primary data source. Respondent characteristics were analyzed based on gender, age, highest level of education, and occupation. Based on the distribution of respondents' occupations, the majority of respondents were private sector employees (35 people) (38.0%), followed by other categories (23 people) (25.0%), civil servants (19 people) (20.7%), and self-employed (15 people) (16.3%). This composition indicates that the majority of respondents came from the formal workforce, who have relatively high expectations for the quality of healthcare services. The dominance of respondents from formal workers reflects the characteristics of private hospital patients who generally have better access to health facilities and higher demands for service quality.

Data Quality Test

Validity Test

Validity testing results indicated that all questions in the research questionnaire were valid. The Cronbach's Alpha value for each item ranged from 0.764 to 0.905, indicating that all indicators accurately represented the research variables. Thus, all indicators in the variables of reliability, empathy, patient satisfaction, and patient trust can be used in further analysis.

Reliability Test

The results of the reliability test indicate that all research variables have a Cronbach's Alpha value greater than 0.6, thus being declared reliable. The reliability values for each variable are as follows:

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No	Variables	Cronbach's Alpha Value	Minimum Limit	Conclusion
1	Reliability	0.804	0.60	Reliable
2	Empathy	0.849	0.60	Reliable
3	Patient Satisfaction	0.836	0.60	Reliable
4	Patient Trust	0.836	0.60	Reliable

This value indicates that the research instrument has high internal consistency so that it can be trusted in measuring the research construct.

Normality Test

Normality testing was performed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test on the residuals of the regression model. The test results showed an Asymp. Sig. value of 0.146, which is greater than 0.05. This indicates that the residual data is normally distributed, thus meeting the assumptions of regression analysis and path analysis. Once the normality assumption is met, further analysis can be carried out using parametric statistical methods.

Descriptive Analysis of Research Variables

The descriptive analysis results showed that respondents' perceptions of the reliability variable were in the strong category, with an average score of 342.6, or 77% of the maximum score. This value indicates that the majority of respondents assessed that hospital services were delivered consistently, accurately, and timely. The highest-scoring indicator was the administration and accuracy of service billing, with a score of 81% (very strong). This indicates that Melati Hospital's administrative system has performed quite well in ensuring cost transparency and accurate service procedures. However, there are still indicators with relatively lower scores, namely the service waiting time aspect, which scored 75% (strong category). This indicates that some patients still experience relatively long wait times, although not at a critical level. This finding is in line with various previous studies which show that waiting time for service is one of the main factors influencing the perception of reliability in health services.

The Influence of Reliability on Patient Satisfaction

The results of the hypothesis testing indicate that reliability has a positive and significant effect on patient satisfaction. This is evidenced by a significance value of 0.000, with a calculated t-value greater than the t-table, thus accepting the research hypothesis. Reliability in the context of health services reflects the hospital's ability to provide services that are consistent, timely, and in accordance with the procedures promised to patients. When patients experience accurate and consistent service, their level of satisfaction will increase because they feel they are receiving professional and reliable service. Reliability is the ability of a healthcare provider to deliver accurate, consistent, and dependable services in accordance with promises made to patients. In the context of hospital services, reliability is reflected in the accuracy of diagnoses, the timeliness of services, and the consistency of service procedures provided to patients. Reliable service will increase patients' positive perceptions of the quality of care they receive. When services are provided accurately and consistently, patients will feel their health needs are being met, thereby increasing patient satisfaction. Several previous studies have shown that reliability has a significant influence on patient satisfaction in health services.

H1: Reliability has a positive effect on patient satisfaction

The Influence of Empathy on Patient Satisfaction

The analysis also showed that empathy had a positive and significant influence on patient satisfaction with a significance level of 0.000. Empathy in healthcare relates to the ability of healthcare workers to understand the patient's condition, provide personalized attention, and demonstrate concern for the patient's needs. Empathy demonstrated by medical personnel can create a more humane service experience, allowing patients to feel valued and cared for individually. Empathy is the ability of healthcare workers to provide personalized attention, understand the patient's condition, and demonstrate concern for their needs. This dimension emphasizes the interpersonal interaction between healthcare workers and patients. Empathy is a crucial factor in healthcare because patients require not only medical care but also emotional support and attention from healthcare professionals. When patients feel understood and cared for, their satisfaction with hospital services increases. Several previous studies have shown that empathy has a positive effect on patient satisfaction.

H2: Empathy has a positive effect on patient satisfaction

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The Influence of Reliability and Empathy on Patient Satisfaction

Simultaneous testing results show that reliability and empathy together significantly influence patient satisfaction. The combination of service reliability and interpersonal attention creates a holistic service experience. Reliability provides the technical foundation in the form of procedural accuracy and service accuracy, while empathy provides the emotional dimension in the form of attention and interpersonal communication. The synergy of these two dimensions has been proven to significantly increase patient satisfaction. Patient satisfaction is the patient's evaluation of the service experience compared to their prior expectations. Patients who are satisfied with hospital services tend to have positive perceptions of service quality and greater confidence in the hospital's ability to provide healthcare. Therefore, patient satisfaction is a crucial factor in building patient trust in healthcare institutions.

H5: Patient satisfaction has a positive effect on patient trust.

The Influence of Patient Satisfaction on Patient Trust

The analysis results show that patient satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on patient trust, with a t-value of 14.199 and a significance level of 0.000. These results indicate that patients who are satisfied with hospital services will have a higher level of trust in the competence and integrity of healthcare providers. From a relationship marketing perspective, patient satisfaction is an important factor in building long-term relationships between patients and healthcare institutions.

The Influence of Reliability on Patient Trust

The results of the hypothesis testing showed that reliability had a positive and significant effect on patient trust, with a t-value of 2.621 and a significance level of 0.010. This indicates that service consistency, diagnostic accuracy, and transparency of service procedures can increase patient confidence in the hospital. Patient trust is the patient's belief in the competence, integrity, and ability of the health service provider to provide the best service.

Reliability is a crucial factor in building patient trust because consistent service increases patients' confidence in the hospital's ability to address their healthcare needs. When patients experience accurate and reliable service, their trust in the hospital increases.

H3: Reliability has a positive effect on patient trust.

The Influence of Empathy on Patient Trust

The analysis results show that empathy has a positive and significant effect on patient trust with a t-value of 5.039 and a significance level of 0.000. Empathy creates an emotional connection between patients and healthcare professionals through personal attention, good communication, and a caring attitude towards the patient's condition. Good interpersonal relationships between healthcare workers and patients can increase patients' sense of security and confidence in hospital services. Empathy in healthcare reflects healthcare workers' personal concern for the patient's condition. Healthcare workers who demonstrate empathy are able to build positive emotional relationships with patients. Good interpersonal relationships between patients and health workers will increase patients' sense of security and confidence in hospital services.

Thus, the higher the level of empathy of health workers, the higher the level of patient trust in the hospital.

H4: Empathy has a positive effect on patient trust.

The Mediating Role of Patient Satisfaction

The results of testing using the Sobel Test show that patient satisfaction is able to mediate the influence of reliability and empathy on patient trust. The Sobel statistical value for the empathy path is 3.870 (> 1.661) with a probability of 0.000, so the mediation effect is declared significant. In addition, the results of the simultaneous test show a calculated F value of 126.003 with a significance of 0.000, which means that reliability and empathy together have a significant effect on patient trust through patient satisfaction. The research model also shows an R Square value of 0.811, which means that 81.1% of the variation in patient trust can be explained by the variables of reliability, empathy, and patient satisfaction, while the remaining 18.9% is influenced by other variables such as responsiveness, assurance, and tangibles. This high coefficient of determination value indicates that the research model has excellent predictive ability in explaining patient trust in hospital services.

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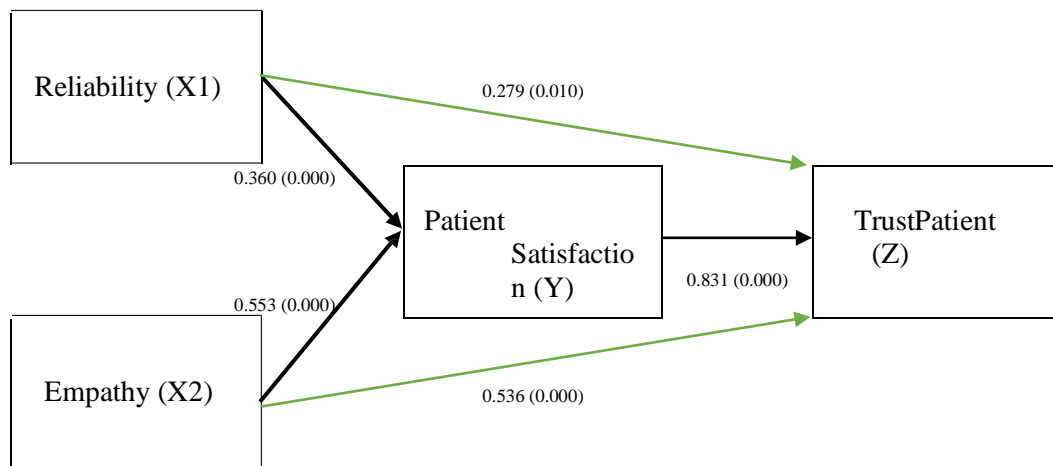
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Conceptual Research Model

The conceptual model of this study describes the relationship between reliability and empathy as independent variables on patient satisfaction as an intervening variable and patient trust as a dependent variable.

Conceptually, the relationship between variables can be described as follows:



This model shows that:

- Reliability affects patient satisfaction
- Empathy influences patient satisfaction
- Reliability affects patient trust
- Empathy influences patient trust
- Patient satisfaction affects patient trust
- In addition, patient satisfaction also plays a role as a mediating variable in the relationship between service quality and patient trust.

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