
ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERVICE QUALITY, PATIENT SATISFACTION, PATIENT TRUST, AND PATIENT LOYALTY AT PRIMARY HEALTH CENTRE



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Abstract

This study aims to empirically examine the influence of service quality on patient loyalty, with patient satisfaction and patient trust acting as mediating variables. The research was conducted at Sawah Pulo Health Centre in Surabaya, Indonesia. A total of 224 respondents participated in this study through purposive sampling. The data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results show that service quality significantly influences patient satisfaction and trust. Furthermore, trust emerged as the strongest predictor of loyalty, and both satisfaction and trust mediate the relationship between service quality and loyalty. These findings imply that enhancing service quality, alongside building patient satisfaction and trust, is essential for fostering long-term patient loyalty in primary healthcare settings.

Keywords: Patient Loyalty, Patient Satisfaction, Patient Trust, Service Quality, Primary Healthcare

INTRODUCTION

Healthcare is a fundamental right of every individual and a key indicator of national development (Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 17 of 2023 on Health, 2023). In Indonesia, community health centers (locally known as Puskesmas) serve as the frontline of primary healthcare, playing a strategic role in improving public health outcomes (World Health Organization (WHO), 2019). Sawah Pulo Health Centre, located in a densely populated area of Surabaya, has experienced a significant increase in patient visits in recent years. This rise reflects growing public demand for accessible healthcare services and heightened health awareness. However, despite its critical role, the facility faces challenges in maintaining service quality amid rising patient volumes.

As a government-owned facility, Sawah Pulo Health Centre routinely conducts patient satisfaction surveys. While results show annual improvements in satisfaction, operational issues such as long waiting times (exceeding two hours during peak periods) and suboptimal patient-staff interactions persist. For example, unclear communication about treatment procedures often leads to patient frustration. These challenges are critical to address, as prior studies confirm that patient trust in healthcare providers significantly influences satisfaction and loyalty (Kim & Kim, 2022). Thus, optimizing service quality at primary healthcare facilities requires a deeper understanding of these dynamics.

Previous studies demonstrate that service quality directly impacts patient satisfaction, trust, and loyalty (Elizar et al., 2020; Hashem et al., 2019; Purba et al., 2021). However, research focusing on primary healthcare centers—especially in Indonesia—remains limited, despite their distinct operational context compared to hospitals. This study examines the interrelationships between service quality, patient satisfaction, trust, and loyalty at Sawah Pulo Health Centre. The findings are expected to provide actionable strategies for improving service quality and strengthening patient-provider relationships. Additionally, this study enriches the literature on healthcare management in Indonesia by addressing gaps in primary healthcare research.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Service Quality

Amid the rising public expectations for public service delivery, service quality has become a strategic focus in enhancing patient trust and loyalty. It refers to the overall perception of reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, and tangible aspects of healthcare services (Jaber-Chehayeb, 2023). In community health centers, it reflects staff professionalism, communication effectiveness, and infrastructure readiness. High service quality has been shown to improve satisfaction and repeat service use (Purba et al., 2021). Therefore, ensuring consistent service performance is essential for building long-term patient relationships in public health facilities.

Previous studies have shown that service quality positively influences patient satisfaction and loyalty (Hashem et al., 2019; Purba et al., 2021). These findings have largely emerged from research conducted in hospitals and private healthcare institutions, which operate under different conditions than public facilities. Limited attention has been given to health centres, particularly those serving as frontline providers in the primary healthcare system. Understanding whether these relationships hold true in community-based settings is

essential, given the distinct challenges in accessibility, resources, and service delivery. This study addresses that gap by exploring the consistency of these effects in the context of a public primary healthcare facility.

H1: There is a significant effect of service quality on patient satisfaction at Sawah Pulo Health Centre.

H2: There is a significant effect of service quality on patient trust at Sawah Pulo Health Centre.

H3: There is a significant effect of service quality on patient loyalty at Sawah Pulo Health Centre.

Patient Satisfaction

Patient satisfaction is one of the key indicators for assessing the effectiveness and success of healthcare services. Satisfaction is defined as the comparison between patients' expectations of the service they receive and their perceptions of the actual service delivered (Novitasari et al., 2022). When healthcare services meet or surpass patient expectations, this positive disconfirmation typically results in higher satisfaction levels and increased likelihood of service reuse (Kim & Kim, 2022). In primary healthcare settings, satisfaction is particularly influenced by factors such as waiting times, staff communication quality, and facility cleanliness (Purba et al., 2021). These satisfaction determinants often differ significantly from those in hospital settings, highlighting the need for context-specific research in community health centers.

Studies by Elizar et al. (2020) and (Awalinda et al., 2019) indicate that patient satisfaction significantly influences loyalty in healthcare. However, the role of satisfaction as a mediator between quality and loyalty in the health centre setting has rarely been studied, despite the fact that primary healthcare services differ significantly from hospital services. The mediating role of satisfaction between service quality and loyalty remains particularly understudied in community health centers, despite their distinct operational characteristics (Sertan et al., 2023). This research gap is noteworthy because primary healthcare services typically involve different patient-provider dynamics and service expectations compared to hospitals. Therefore, this study aims to specifically analyze satisfaction's mediating role in Indonesia's public primary healthcare context, where accessibility and continuity of care are prioritized over technological sophistication.

H4: There is a significant effect of patient satisfaction on patient loyalty at Sawah Pulo Health Centre.

Patient Trust

In healthcare services, trust is the foundation for establishing long-term relationships between patients and healthcare providers. Trust is defined as the belief that service providers will act reliably, honestly, and responsibly (Abbasi et al., 2023). This trust develops progressively through repeated positive clinical interactions, transparent communication about treatments, and consistent quality of care across visits (Suryana, 2025). In community health centers like Sawah Pulo, trust becomes especially crucial as patients often rely on the same providers for longitudinal care (Kim & Kim, 2022). The establishment of strong trust can significantly reduce patient anxiety and improve health service utilization rates in public healthcare systems.

Previous studies show that patient trust serves as a key determinant of loyalty in healthcare organizations (Liu et al., 2021; Sertan et al., 2023). However, the majority of these

studies have focused narrowly on digital health platforms and private hospital settings, leaving important gaps in our understanding. Research examining trust dynamics in public primary care institutions, particularly community health centers, remains disproportionately scarce relative to their societal importance. This research gap persists despite trust being recognized as a critical factor influencing patients' decisions to continue utilizing health services (Purba et al., 2021).

H5: There is a significant effect of patient trust on patient loyalty at Sawah Pulo Health Centre.

Patient Loyalty

Patient loyalty represents the ultimate goal of patient-centered healthcare systems, reflecting patients' commitment to consistently use and recommend healthcare services (Liu et al., 2021). This loyalty is shaped by multiple factors, including service quality, patient satisfaction, and trust in healthcare providers (Hashem et al., 2019). Research shows loyal patients demonstrate better health outcomes due to consistent care continuity and treatment adherence (Purba et al., 2021). While extensively studied in private healthcare, loyalty dynamics in public primary care facilities remain under-researched (Sertan et al., 2023). A clear understanding of patient loyalty drivers is important for community health centres to enhance service quality, build trust, and maintain long-term patient engagement.

Previous research has established that patient loyalty is significantly influenced by satisfaction levels and perceived service quality (Elizar et al., 2020; Hashem et al., 2019). However, the majority of these studies have concentrated exclusively on private healthcare institutions, creating a knowledge gap. In contrast, empirical investigations into loyalty formation within public primary healthcare facilities, particularly community health centers, remain scarce (Kim & Kim, 2022). This research gap is noteworthy given the critical role these public facilities play in delivering essential healthcare services to underserved populations. Consequently, this study aims to advance our understanding of patient loyalty within the unique context of public primary healthcare systems.

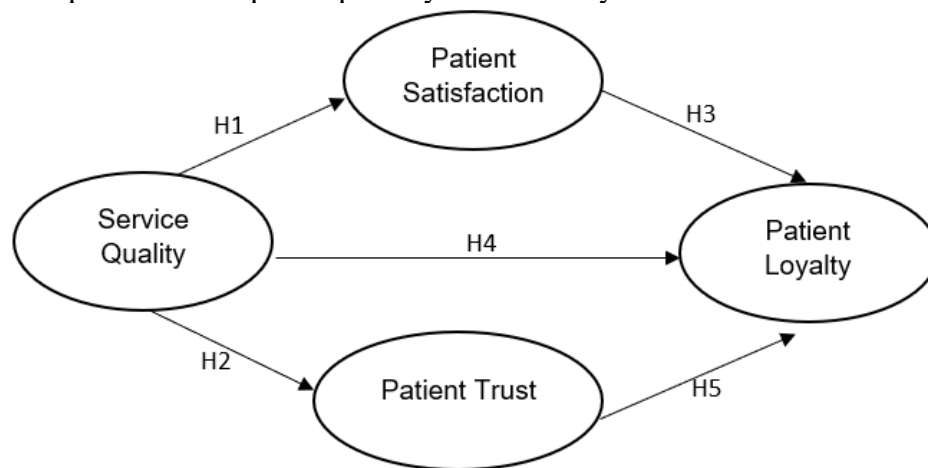


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach with a causal design to examine the influence of service quality, patient satisfaction, patient trust, and patient loyalty. The

conceptual model is grounded in relevant theories and prior empirical studies that have demonstrated the interrelationships among these constructs. The research population includes all patients who have received healthcare services at Sawah Pulo Health Centre in Surabaya. A total of 224 respondents were selected using purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire comprising 23 indicators, each measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” The complete list of questionnaire items is presented in Table 1.

Once the data were collected, analysis was conducted using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of respondents. To test the hypothesized relationships among variables, the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach was employed. The analytical process included evaluation of the measurement model (assessing convergent and discriminant validity, reliability), followed by the structural model (examining path coefficients and testing hypotheses through bootstrapping procedures). This study also investigates the potential mediating roles of satisfaction and trust in the relationship between service quality and patient loyalty.

Table 1.

Variable and Questionnaire Items	
Variable	Items
Service Quality (Hoang et al., 2022)	The services at the health center run well and without errors. The health center staff respond quickly when I raise a complaint. My data and information are kept confidential. The services at the health center are fast and reliable. The services provided by the health center are as promised. Overall, the quality of services provided by the health center is very good.
Patient Satisfaction (Maqsood et al., 2017)	The services at the health center are satisfying. The health center understands my problems. The health center accepts my feedback. The doctor I need is available. The doctor uses up-to-date treatments.
Patient Loyalty (Leninkumar, 2017)	I speak positively about Puskesmas Sawah Pulo to others. I recommend Puskesmas Sawah Pulo to others. I encourage my friends or relatives to use the services of the health center I choose Puskesmas Sawah Pulo as my primary healthcare provider. I am willing to return to Puskesmas Sawah Pulo.
Patient Trust (Wu et al., 2022)	The staff always prioritizes my medical needs. The staff examined me thoroughly and carefully.

I fully trust the treatment decisions made by the staff.
 The staff explains all treatment options honestly.
 The staff listen to me attentively.
 I feel safe entrusting my health to the staff.
 I have complete trust in the staff.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Validity and Reliability Testing

The validity of the measurement model was first assessed through convergent validity using indicator loadings. All indicators met the required threshold, with factor loadings exceeding 0.7, ensuring the validity of the measurement model. This is particularly evident in constructs like Service Quality and Patient Satisfaction, where indicators like KL1 (0.809), KP1 (0.884), and LP1 (0.774) demonstrate the robustness of the model. Additionally, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each variable were above the threshold of 0.5, further affirming the construct validity. For instance, Service Quality had an AVE of 0.610, Patient Satisfaction had an AVE of 0.701, and Trust had an AVE of 0.681, all of which suggest that the items accurately measure the intended constructs.

The discriminant validity of the model was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), with all HTMT values below the threshold of 0.90. This result confirms that the constructs in this study are sufficiently distinct from one another, ensuring that each construct measures a unique concept. For example, the HTMT value between Service Quality and Trust was 0.706, indicating that these constructs do not overlap significantly, supporting the robustness of the model. These findings confirm the validity of the measurement model, making it suitable for further analysis.

Table 2. Validity Test

No	Variable	Indicator	Loading Factor	AVE	Description
1	Service Quality	KL1	0.809	0.610	Valid
		KL2	0.822		Valid
		KL3	0.855		Valid
		KL4	0.712		Valid
		KL5	0.746		Valid
		KL6	0.733		Valid
2	Patient Satisfaction	KP1	0.884	0.701	Valid
		KP2	0.799		Valid
		KP3	0.783		Valid
		KP4	0.820		Valid
		KP5	0.893		Valid
3	Patient Loyalty	LP1	0.774	0.666	Valid
		LP2	0.801		Valid
		LP3	0.892		Valid
		LP4	0.813		Valid
		LP5	0.795		Valid
4	Patient Trust	PT1	0.827	0.681	Valid

		PT2	0.878		Valid
		PT3	0.742		Valid
		PT4	0.834		Valid
		PT5	0.839		Valid
		PT6	0.864		Valid
		PT7	0.782		Valid

Reliability Analysis

The reliability of the constructs was tested using both Composite Reliability and Cronbach’s Alpha, with results showing that all constructs exceeded the acceptable thresholds. Composite Reliability values ranged from 0.862 for Patient Satisfaction to 0.937 for Trust, indicating high internal consistency across all variables. Similarly, Cronbach’s Alpha values, all exceeding 0.7, confirmed the reliability of the scales used in this study. For instance, Service Quality had a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.872, indicating that the instrument used to measure service quality was reliable. This analysis confirms that all constructs are highly reliable and consistent.

Table 3. Reliability Testing

No	Variable	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	Description
1	Service Quality	0.872	0.903	Reliable
2	Patient Satisfaction	0.893	0.921	Reliable
3	Patient Loyalty	0.874	0.909	Reliable
4	Patient Trust	0.921	0.937	Reliable

Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis testing was performed using PLS-SEM. The results show that all hypotheses were supported, with significant path coefficients (β) and p-values below the threshold of 0.05. Service Quality had a significant positive impact on Patient Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.667$, $p < 0.001$), Trust ($\beta = 0.642$, $p < 0.001$), and Loyalty ($\beta = 0.176$, $p < 0.05$). PatientSatisfaction also positively impacted Patient Loyalty ($\beta = 0.227$, $p < 0.01$), further reinforcing the role of Service Quality in influencing Loyalty. These findings validate the overall model and highlight the strength of indirect effects through satisfaction and trust.

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Beta Coefficient	T Statistics	p-value	Conclusion
H1: Service Quality → Patient Satisfaction	0.667	9.677	0.000	Accepted
H2: Service Quality → Patient Trust	0.642	9.837	0.000	Accepted
H3: Patient Satisfaction → Patient Loyalty	0.227	2.547	0.011	Accepted
H4: Service Quality → Patient Loyalty	0.176	2.126	0.034	Accepted
H5: Patient Trust → Patient Loyalty	0.464	5.261	0.000	Accepted

The Role of Service Quality on Patient Satisfaction

The findings of this study indicate that Service Quality has a significant positive effect on Patient Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.667$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that higher service quality enhances patient experiences. Key aspects such as staff professionalism, cleanliness, and clear communication are critical in shaping this perception (Sertan et al., 2023). High-quality service delivery contributes to comfort, trust, and a sense of value during healthcare interactions. Similar patterns have been observed in recent studies conducted in primary care settings (Purba et al., 2021). These results reinforce the importance of service quality as a foundational element of patient satisfaction.

The study revealed that patients who rated the service quality of Puskesmas Sawah Pulo highly were more likely to report satisfaction. This is consistent with findings by (Elizar et al., 2020), which showed a strong correlation between perceived service quality and satisfaction levels. Modern patients increasingly evaluate healthcare experiences based on responsiveness, respect, and personalized attention (Jaber-Chehayeb, 2023). As a result, improvements in these areas are essential for strengthening satisfaction in public health services. Investing in these quality dimensions can lead to better emotional engagement and increased patient loyalty (Liu et al., 2021).

The Role of Service Quality on Patient Trust

Service Quality also significantly impacts Patient Trust ($\beta = 0.642$, $p < 0.001$). This finding highlights the importance of consistent, responsive, and professional service in building patient confidence. Trust plays a central role in healthcare interactions, influencing how patients perceive provider integrity and competence (Liu et al., 2021). When patients experience reliable care, their sense of security and belief in the healthcare system strengthen (Abbasi et al., 2023). As a result, improved service quality directly contributes to enhanced trust in primary care settings.

The role of Service Quality in enhancing trust has been reaffirmed in recent studies, which show that repeated positive interactions are key to establishing long-term patient confidence (Sertan et al., 2023). High-quality care signals credibility and commitment, encouraging patients to return and comply with medical advice. Abbasi et al. (2023) found that provider transparency and responsiveness significantly shape trust in public healthcare. Trust, in turn, increases service utilization and continuity of care (Kim & Kim, 2022). These findings confirm that trust is not incidental but a direct outcome of sustained service excellence.

The Role of Patient Satisfaction on Patient Loyalty

The study further found that Patient Satisfaction positively affects Patient Loyalty ($\beta = 0.227$, $p < 0.01$). This result is consistent with Oliver's (1999) theory on customer loyalty, which suggests that satisfied customers are more likely to exhibit loyalty to service providers. In the context of healthcare, Patient Satisfaction represents the alignment of patient expectations with the services provided. When patients are satisfied, they are more likely to return for future care and recommend the service to others.

However, the effect size was moderate, indicating that while satisfaction is an important driver of loyalty, other factors also contribute to long-term patient retention. This finding supports the research by Elizar et al. (2020), which showed that while satisfaction is crucial, it must be supported by trust and positive past experiences to effectively drive loyalty.

The Role of Service Quality on Patient Loyalty

The study further found that Patient Satisfaction positively affects Patient Loyalty ($\beta = 0.227$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that satisfied patients are more likely to return for services and recommend them to others (Liu et al., 2021). In healthcare, satisfaction reflects how well services align with patient expectations across dimensions like communication, wait time, and treatment accuracy. When expectations are met or exceeded, patients form stronger emotional bonds with providers. As a result, satisfaction becomes a foundational driver of loyalty in primary care settings (Kim & Kim, 2022).

The effect size of satisfaction on loyalty was moderate, indicating the presence of additional influencing factors. Loyalty is not solely based on satisfaction but also shaped by trust, perceived fairness, and consistency of care (Elizar et al., 2020). Patients may be satisfied yet still hesitate to return if relational or systemic concerns exist. Thus, satisfaction must be complemented by other positive experiences to ensure strong retention. These findings highlight the need for a more holistic approach in fostering long-term patient loyalty (Sertan et al., 2023).

The Role of Patient Trust on Patient Loyalty

Patient Trust emerged as the strongest predictor of Patient Loyalty ($\beta = 0.464$, $p < 0.001$). Trust reflects a patient's belief in the provider's reliability, honesty, and competence throughout the care process (Abbasi et al., 2023). A strong sense of trust encourages patients to return, follow medical advice, and recommend services to others. Studies confirm that trust contributes more to long-term commitment than satisfaction alone (Liu et al., 2021). Trust serves as a core foundation for sustaining relationships between patients and healthcare providers (Sertan et al., 2023). The data showed that Trust played a central role in encouraging patients to consistently choose Puskesmas Sawah Pulo. This result aligns with findings by Elizar et al. (2020), who reported that trust significantly improves loyalty and repeat visits in primary care. Building trust involves transparent communication, empathy, and clinical reliability across all interactions (Kim & Kim, 2022). A credible and respectful provider-patient relationship enhances emotional security and service continuity. These factors are essential to maintain long-term engagement and improve patient compliance with care plans (Liu et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the relationships between service quality, patient satisfaction, trust, and loyalty at Sawah Pulo Health Centre in Surabaya, Indonesia. The findings demonstrate that service quality significantly enhances both patient satisfaction ($\beta = 0.667$, $p < 0.001$) and trust ($\beta = 0.642$, $p < 0.001$), reinforcing the critical role of reliable and professional healthcare services. While patient satisfaction positively influences loyalty ($\beta = 0.227$, $p < 0.01$), its moderate effect suggests that satisfaction alone is insufficient to ensure long-term patient retention. Interestingly, trust emerged as the strongest predictor of loyalty ($\beta = 0.464$, $p < 0.001$), aligning with established theories that position trust as the foundation of enduring patient-provider relationships. These results highlight the interconnected nature of service quality, satisfaction, and trust in fostering patient loyalty within primary healthcare settings.

The study contributes to healthcare management literature by validating the service quality-satisfaction-trust-loyalty framework in a primary healthcare context, where such relationships remain underexplored. It confirms that while service quality directly impacts loyalty, its influence is amplified through patient satisfaction and trust. For healthcare practitioners, these findings emphasize the need to prioritize not only service excellence but also relationship-building strategies to cultivate patient trust. Implementing transparent communication, consistent care, and patient feedback mechanisms can enhance both satisfaction and trust. Additionally, investing in staff training and facility improvements will further strengthen service quality, creating a positive cycle that reinforces patient loyalty.

This study has limitations, including its focus on a single health centre, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research could expand to multiple primary healthcare facilities across different regions to validate these relationships in diverse contexts. Longitudinal studies would also provide deeper insights into how these dynamics evolve over time. Exploring additional factors, such as patient demographics or cultural influences, could further enrich the understanding of loyalty drivers in healthcare. Addressing these gaps would offer a more comprehensive perspective on patient retention strategies.

In conclusion, this study underscores that service quality, patient satisfaction, and trust are pivotal in shaping loyalty in primary healthcare. By addressing these dimensions holistically, healthcare providers can foster stronger patient engagement and sustainable service delivery. The findings offer actionable insights for Sawah Pulo Health Centre and similar institutions seeking to improve patient experiences and outcomes. Future research should continue to explore these relationships in varied healthcare environments to refine and adapt strategies for enhancing patient loyalty. Ultimately, a patient-centered approach that balances service excellence with trust-building will be key to achieving long-term success in primary healthcare.

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