

THE INFLUENCE OF PATIENT TRUST AND EXPERIENCE ON WILLINGNESS TO RECOMMEND MEDIATED BY SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

The increasing population of elderly people and the growing health-focused lifestyle have heightened global competition in the healthcare industry. Quality of service is a key element in enhancing hospital's reputations and generating positive word-of-mouth recommendations. This study aims to determine the influence of patient trust and experience on willingness to recommend, with satisfaction as a mediating variable. Data were collected through purposive sampling of 394 outpatients at TMC Hospital in May 2024. Analysis was performed using the PLS-SEM method with the SmartPLS™ application. The results showed that patient experience and satisfaction significantly influence willingness to recommend. Patient trust and experience significantly influence satisfaction. Satisfaction mediates the influence of patient trust and patient experience on willingness to recommend. However, patient trust does not significantly influence willingness to recommend. Hospital management can strive to enhance patient trust, provide positive experiences during treatment, and increase patient satisfaction to enhance the likelihood of recommendations.

Keyword: Hospital, Patient Experience, Patient Trust, Satisfaction, Willingness to Recommend.

INTRODUCTION

Healthcare demand is growing due to a health-focused lifestyle and an aging population. This trend intensifies global competition in healthcare, prompting patients to choose the best facilities. High-quality service retains existing customers, attracts new ones, reduces costs, enhances the company's image, and generates positive word-of-mouth, ultimately increasing profitability (Fatima et al., 2018; Heri et al., 2022). Patient experience, including communication with doctors and pain management, is crucial for assessing service quality. It shapes overall quality perceptions, leading to patients' willingness to recommend the hospital. A positive experience affects patient behavior, treatment adherence, and satisfaction. Patient satisfaction reflects expectations of healthcare, while patient experience is shaped by perceptions of interactions with service providers. Research at Korea found that patient experience significantly impacts satisfaction and willingness to recommend, with satisfaction indirectly influencing this relationship (Park et al., 2022). Patient trust arises from experiences of honesty, integrity, and reliability from healthcare providers. Higher trust and loyalty occur when patients are satisfied with their healthcare encounters, while

decreased trust reduces loyalty, willingness to return, and positive recommendations (Shie et al., 2022). This study aims to determine the relationship between patient trust, patient experience, satisfaction, and willingness to recommend. The study was conducted with outpatients at TMC Hospital in Tasikmalaya City, West Java Province, Indonesia. The research model can be seen in Figure 1. This study involved two independent variables, namely trust and patient experience, and one dependent variable, willingness to recommend. These independent and dependent variables were mediated by one mediating variable, satisfaction. There are seven hypotheses that will be analyzed in this research. five hypotheses to assess the direct influence between variables, while two hypotheses to assess the indirect influence between variables.

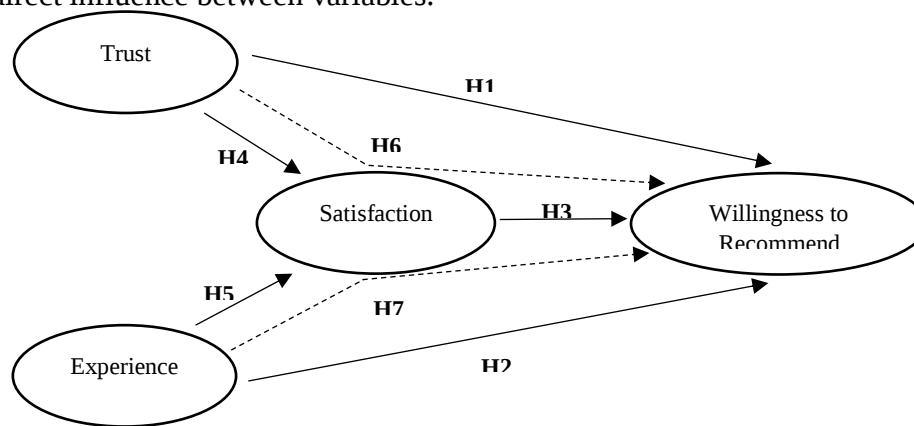


Figure 1. Model Analysis

METHOD

Data was collected at TMC Hospital in Tasikmalaya City, West Java Province, Indonesia, in May 2024. Sampling procedures were conducted using purposive sampling methods. The population in this study refers to all outpatient at the hospital who meet specific criteria to be included as respondents, including being 18 years of age or older, having visited the same hospital at least twice, and having a primary non-psychiatric diagnosis. The population size for this study was determined using the Slovin method, assuming the known average monthly outpatient population in 2023 was 9,317 patients. Based on calculations using the Slovin method with a tolerated margin of error of 5%, a sample size of 394 existing patients was obtained.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Explanation: n = The desired sample size; N = population size; e = tolerated margin of error (5%)

Data collection was conducted by distributing questionnaires consisted of 24 research questions. Six questions were related to the patient trust variable, six questions to the patient experience variable, nine questions to the patient satisfaction variable, and three questions to the willingness to recommend variable. These questions were answered using a Likert scale ranging from 1-5: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree), 5 (strongly agree).

Data analysis for this study used Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS™ version 4.1.0.3. In the outer model, the threshold values used were outer loading >0.708 , Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability >0.7 , average variance extracted (AVE) >0.5 , and heterotrait-monotrait (HT/MT) ratio <0.9 (Hair et al., 2019). In the inner model, the threshold values were Variance Inflated Factor (VIF) <5 , t-statistics >1.96 or p-value <0.05 , 95% confidence interval, low f-square 0.02, moderate f-square 0.15, and high f-square 0.35. The effect size of mediation was referred to as the upslon v statistic, obtained by squaring the mediation coefficient, with low upslon v 0.01, moderate upslon v 0.075, and high upslon v 0.175 (Lachowicz et al., 2018; Ogbeibu et al., 2021). Model fit was assessed involving coefficient of determination (R^2) values: high (0.75), moderate (0.5), and low (0.25).

RESULTS

Outer model

In the outer model analysis, variables T1 and T2 have outer loadings <0.708 . Therefore, to achieve better research results, items T1 and T2 were removed, and a re-analysis of the outer model was conducted. Figure 2 illustrates the research analysis model and the outer loading values of each variable item, ranging from 0.754 to 0.955. Higher outer loading values indicate that the indicator is performing well in the hospital.

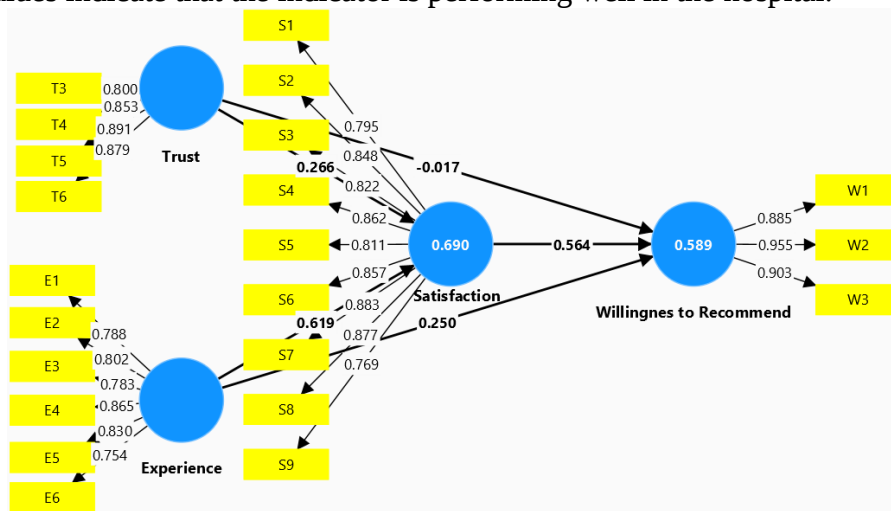


Figure 2. Outer Loading

Table 1 shows that the Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values for each variable are >0.7 , indicating that the four variables are reliable. The AVE values for each variable are >0.5 , indicating that the four variables are valid.

Tabel 1. Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and AVE

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Trust	0.878	0.917	0.734
Experience	0.891	0.917	0.647
Satisfaction	0.946	0.955	0.700

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Willingness to Recommend	0.902	0.939	0.837
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Source: Author's compilation

Table 2 shows that the HT/MT values from the test results are below 0.90 for the variable pairs, achieving discriminant validity. The variables share the variance of the measurement items more strongly with the items that measure them than with items of other variables.

Tabel 2. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HT/MT)

	Experience	Satisfaction	Trust	Willingness to Recommend
Experience				
Satisfaction	0.878			
Trust	0.810	0.776		
Willingness to Recommend	0.768	0.813	0.630	

Source: Author's compilation

Inner Model

Table 3 shows that the inner VIF values are <5, indicating a low level of multicollinearity between variables. This result strengthens the parameter estimation results in SEM PLS as robust (unbiased).

Tabel 3. Variance Inflated Factor (VIF)

	Experience	Satisfaction	Trust	Willingness to Recommend
Experience		2.047		3.284
Satisfaction				3.225
Trust		2.047		2.274
Willingness to Recommend				

Source: Author's compilation

Hypothesis testing in Table 4 shows that the first hypothesis (H1) is rejected, indicating no significant effect of patient trust on willingness to recommend, with a path coefficient of -0.017, t-statistics of 0.240 (<1.96), and a p-value of 0.811 (>0.05). Therefore, changes in patient trust do not contribute to an increase in willingness to recommend. Conversely, the second hypothesis (H2) is supported, demonstrating a significant effect of patient experience on willingness to recommend. This is reflected by a path coefficient of 0.250, t-statistics of 3.446 (greater than 1.96), and a p-value of 0.001 (less than 0.05). Nonetheless, the effect of patient experience at the structural level is minimal, with an f-square value of 0.046. The third hypothesis (H3) is also supported, showing a significant effect of patient satisfaction on willingness to recommend, with a path coefficient of 0.564, t-statistics of 7.779 (greater than 1.96), and a p-value of 0.000 (less than 0.05). However,

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patient satisfaction has a moderate impact at the structural level, indicated by an f-square value of 0.240. Furthermore, the fourth hypothesis (H4) is validated, indicating a significant effect of patient trust on patient satisfaction. This is shown by a path coefficient of 0.266, t-statistics of 5.715 (greater than 1.96), and a p-value of 0.000 (less than 0.05). Yet, the structural impact of patient trust remains low, with an f-square value of 0.111. The fifth hypothesis (H5) is confirmed, revealing a significant effect of patient experience on patient satisfaction, as indicated by a path coefficient of 0.619, t-statistics of 14.201 (greater than 1.96), and a p-value of 0.000 (less than 0.05). The structural impact of patient experience is high, demonstrated by an f-square value of 0.605. In terms of indirect effects, Table 5 shows that the sixth hypothesis (H6) is accepted. Satisfaction significantly mediates the indirect relationship between patient trust and willingness to recommend, with a mediation path coefficient of 0.150, t-statistics of 4.580, and a p-value of 0.000 (less than 0.05). However, the mediation effect of satisfaction at the structural level is low, as shown by an upslon v value of 0.023 (Ogbeibu et al., 2021). Similarly, the seventh hypothesis (H7) is accepted, indicating that satisfaction significantly mediates the indirect relationship between patient experience and willingness to recommend. This is supported by a mediation path coefficient of 0.349, t-statistics of 7.025, and a p-value of 0.000 (less than 0.05). Nevertheless, the mediation effect of satisfaction at the structural level is moderate, with an upslon v value of 0.122 (Ogbeibu et al., 2021).

Tabel 4. Direct Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	p-value	t-statistics	95% Confidence interval Path Coefficient		f-square
				Lower Limit	Upper Limit	
H1. Patient trust → Willingness to recommend	-0.017	0.811	0.240	-0.159	0.120	0.000
H2. Patient experience → Willingness to recommend	0.250	0.001	3.446	0.110	0.396	0.046
H3. Patient satisfaction → Willingness to recommend	0.564	0.000	7.779	0.413	0.694	0.240
H4. Patient trust → Patient Satisfaction	0.266	0.000	5.715	0.173	0.357	0.111
H5. Patient experience → Patient satisfaction	0.619	0.000	14.201	0.534	0.705	0.605

Source: Author's compilation

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Tabel 5. Indirect Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	p-value	t-statistics	95% Confidence Interval Path Coefficient		Upsilon-V
				Lower Limit	Upper Limit	
H6. Patient trust → Patient Satisfaction → Willingness to recommend	0.150	0.000	4.580	0.089	0.219	0.023
H7. Patient experience → Patient satisfaction → Willingness to recommend	0.349	0.000	7.025	0.253	0.449	0.122

Source: Author's compilation

The combined influence of trust and experience on satisfaction yields an R^2 value of 69%, indicating a moderate impact. This implies that 69% of the variation in satisfaction can be explained by these two factors, while the remaining 31% is due to other variables not included in this research model. Equally, the combined influence of trust, experience, and satisfaction on the willingness to recommend results in an R^2 value of 58.9%, also suggesting a moderate effect. Thus, 58.9% of the variability in willingness to recommend is accounted for by these three factors, with the remaining 41.1% attributed to other variables outside the scope of this study.

DISCUSSION

Patient Trust Negatively Affects Willingness to Recommend

This study found no significant effect of patient trust on willingness to recommend. Despite the lack of support for hypothesis H1, trust is still important in the hospital context. Unmeasured factors or complexities in the relationship between trust and willingness to recommend might exist. This finding is consistent with some previous studies (Liu & Chaipoopirutana, 2020), which suggest trust enhances customer satisfaction and motivates repeat transactions. Satisfied patients are more likely to recommend the hospital. However, this study contrasts with research showing a significant relationship between trust and willingness to recommend (Al-Ansi et al., 2019; Viorentina, 2023). Trust is crucial for long-term relationships, and its decline can reduce adherence to medical advice, patient loyalty, repeat visits, positive word-of-mouth, and recommendations.

Patient Experience Positively Affects Willingness to Recommend

The study shows a significant impact of patient experience on willingness to recommend. Providing a positive patient experience during treatment is crucial for hospitals to ensure satisfaction and willingness to recommend. This finding is consistent with research in Korea (Park et al., 2022). Factors such as doctor and nurse care, staff performance,

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cleanliness, and a quiet environment are predictors of willingness to recommend. Positive patient experiences encourage sharing and recommendations. Research in Iran highlights that experiences with medical therapy services and hospital destinations positively affect patient benefits and values, leading to recommendations (Taheri et al., 2021). Word-of-mouth recommendations are essential for reaching potential patients.

Patient Satisfaction Positively Affects Willingness to Recommend

This study found a significant impact of patient satisfaction on willingness to recommend. Patient satisfaction enhances the desire to recommend the hospital. This result aligns with research in Malaysian clinics (Ai et al., 2022) and Indian studies, showing that satisfaction affects trust, loyalty, and word-of-mouth recommendations, and mediates the influence of service quality (Coutinho et al., 2020). Other literature also demonstrates a positive relationship between satisfaction and word-of-mouth recommendations in Spanish hotels (Moise et al., 2019). Hospitals need a deep understanding of patient issues and should provide quick and effective care to resolve health problems efficiently, leading to high satisfaction and subsequent positive recommendations.

Patient Trust Positively Affects Patient Satisfaction

The study found a significant impact of patient trust on patient satisfaction. This result is consistent with other research (Ai et al., 2022; Liu & Chaipoopirutana, 2020), showing that trust significantly affects satisfaction. Trust forms when customers believe the service provider is reliable and demonstrates high integrity, creating a strong foundation for sustainable relationships. Customers who trust the provider's integrity and capabilities indicate excellent service and a positive image, leading to higher satisfaction. Consequently, these customers are likely to maintain interactions, cooperation, and recommend the service provider to others (Tirtayasa et al., 2021).

Patient Experience Positively Affects Patient Satisfaction

The study found a significant positive impact of patient experience on patient satisfaction, consistent with various research findings. Studies in Korea show a direct link between inpatient experiences and patient satisfaction (Park et al., 2022). Research indicates that perceived quality of service is closely tied to higher levels of patient satisfaction (Chen et al., 2021). Specific aspects of patient experience, such as waiting times, doctor communication, professionalism, and access to therapy information, are directly correlated with satisfaction (Ren et al., 2021). Hospitals should enhance patient experience by prioritizing service quality, fair treatment, easy complaint processes, patient involvement in decision-making, and maintaining confidentiality. Environmental factors like room color, lighting, noise levels, and cleanliness reduce patient stress and positively influence satisfaction. Patients often use the hospital environment as a measure of overall service quality (Alkazemi et al., 2020).

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Patient Satisfaction Mediates the Positive Impact of Patient Trust on Willingness to Recommend

The study revealed that patient satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between patient trust and willingness to recommend. This finding aligns with other research showing satisfaction mediates the effect of trust on the likelihood of recommending an application (Viorentina, 2023). Trust enhances satisfaction, increasing the desire for repeat transactions and online recommendations (Ginting et al., 2023).

Patient Satisfaction Mediates the Positive Impact of Patient Experience on Willingness to Recommend

The study found that patient satisfaction mediates the relationship between patient experience and willingness to recommend. This is supported by research in Korean hospitals, which found that satisfaction mediates the influence of inpatient experience on willingness to recommend. Positive patient experiences significantly affect satisfaction, determining the decision to recommend the hospital (Park et al., 2022). Research in Malaysian clinics shows that satisfaction mediates the effect of clinic environment (ambiance, interior design, cleanliness, and service delivery) on willingness to recommend, but not the impact of exterior design (Ai et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study establishes a clear link between patient trust, experience, and the willingness to recommend a hospital, with satisfaction serving as a mediating factor. Management should prioritize patient trust and experience to enhance patient satisfaction, which can also elevate the likelihood of recommending the hospital. The study focused solely on outpatient patients, where interactions with the hospital are less intensive compared to inpatients. Future research could include inpatient subjects to compare and validate the results. Additionally, future studies could broaden this research by examining other variables related to the willingness to recommend, to identify factors that influence these relationships. The study's sample was drawn from only one hospital, limiting the generalizability of the findings. The researchers also did not explore the potential effects of patient characteristics such as gender, age, and education level on the study variables. The managerial implications of this study indicate that hospital service management should aim to improve patient experience standards by enhancing service quality and facilities. Furthermore, management should work on building patient trust by providing a sense of security through positive, repeated interactions. These actions are essential for boosting patient satisfaction, encouraging future use of the services, and increasing the likelihood of patient recommendations.

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