

Determinants of Patient Loyalty in Inpatient Care Services in Mothers and Children's Hospital

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Received: October 31, 2023

Revised: November 30, 2023

Accepted: December 25, 2023

Published: December 31, 2023

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DOI: [10.29303/jppipa.v9iSpecialIssue.7020](https://doi.org/10.29303/jppipa.v9iSpecialIssue.7020)

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Abstract: The decrease in the number of patient visits indicates low satisfaction and loyalty. RSIA BUNDA Semarang has experienced a decline in inpatient visits in recent years. The research objective is to analyze the influence of customer value, relationship marketing, and customer experience on their satisfaction and loyalty. This is quantitative research with a cross-sectional approach. Data were collected by interviews using questionnaires with 244 respondents. Data analysis uses the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) test to test the influence between variables. The research results show that patient loyalty is not influenced by satisfaction, but is directly influenced by relationship marketing and customer experience variables, while satisfaction is influenced by customer value and customer experience. Patient satisfaction is not proven to be a mediator between customer value, relationship marketing, and customer experience in influencing patient loyalty. Mapping patient characteristics is an important step in understanding patient needs so that they can provide a positive experience for the services they receive, including building good customer relationships to create perceptions of positive value and trust.

Keywords: Hospital; Inpatient Services; Patient Loyalty

Introduction

In this increasingly dynamic health era, maternal and child hospitals play an important role in providing high-quality specialized services. To Minister of Health Regulation, Number 3 of 2020 concerning Hospital Classification and Licensing, maternal and child hospital services focus on the specific needs of female and child patients by offering more integrated and personalized services. This special quality service cannot be separated from the issue of quality which is currently still controversial among hospital managers because it is one of the factors that ensures the sustainability of the hospital (Meesala & Paul, 2018).

Various studies have proven that the quality of service perceived by patients is a determining factor in patient loyalty. Mahyardiani's research shows that all indicators of customer satisfaction have a positive effect

on patient loyalty in hospitals (Mahyardiani et al., 2020). Research in Jordan shows that service quality has a positive effect on patient satisfaction and loyalty. This research also recommends that health service providers initiate continuous quality improvement programs and monitor the quality of health care to obtain patient satisfaction and loyalty (Aladwan et al., 2021). Patient satisfaction is considered a main indicator of health service quality (Ng & Luk, 2019). Studies in Malaysia prove that patient satisfaction strongly influences loyalty, and service quality directly influences satisfaction and loyalty (Asnawi et al., 2019). Several other studies also concluded that quality has a direct and indirect influence on patient loyalty (Chen et al., 2022).

Patient loyalty is critical to ensuring a hospital's success and profitability. The concept of customer loyalty is the core of marketing, which in marketing health services is seen from patient loyalty because the

How to Cite:

Hapsari, K., Sriatmi, A., & Kartini, A. (2023). Determinants of Patient Loyalty in Inpatient Care Services in Mothers and Children's Hospital. *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan IPA*, 9(SpecialIssue), 1023–1031. <https://doi.org/10.29303/jppipa.v9iSpecialIssue.7020>

treatment of patients is a process of exchanging work values between health service providers so that patients are included as customers (Liu et al., 2021). Loyalty is defined as a desire to recommend, readiness to revisit, and constructive word of mouth (WOM). Loyalty is usually assessed based on the willingness to reuse an item. Patient loyalty is a commitment to buying and using products from the same service provider and not considering other service providers, as well as recommending the hospital's services to other prospective patients (Asnawi et al., 2019). An effective approach is needed to maintain patient loyalty by identifying the driving factors that influence patients' desire to return by providing better services (Setyawan et al., 2020). Loyal patients provide high economic value and become an invaluable asset for hospitals because they demonstrate loyalty by continuously repurchasing goods and services, recommending the hospital to others, and not switching to other hospitals (Kim et al., 2017).

Patient loyalty can only be obtained if the hospital meets the needs and trust of its patients, so the hospital must provide high-quality and satisfying services. For hospitals, patient loyalty apart from playing a role in sustainability, is also an important indicator of the impact of service quality and patient satisfaction itself (Griffin, 2022). Satisfaction is a combination of expectations and perceptions of actions or results from an activity. Patient satisfaction reflects the patient's perception and needs regarding the use of health services (Griffin, 2022). Consumer satisfaction enables the growth of loyal customers (Wulur et al., 2020). Many factors influence patient satisfaction seen from service provider dimensions such as hospital characteristics, physical environment, technical aspects of services, service quality, interpersonal aspects, accessibility, waiting time, and communication, as well as patient dimensions such as age, gender, education, income, socioeconomic status, medical history, results of care received and patient experience (Akthar et al., 2023). Facility cleanliness, privacy settings, and interpersonal skills are the strongest predictors of patient satisfaction in Bangladesh (Adhikary et al., 2018) Perceptions of patient satisfaction are related to expectations, demographics, personality, and marketing competition (Ng & Luk, 2019).

RSIA BUNDA Semarang is a hospital that specifically serves maternal and child health with 25 TTs, founded in 1983 with the motto "Family First Choice" and is one of the preferred maternal and child hospitals. Based on initial observations it is known that there is a fluctuation in the decline in the number of inpatient visits in recent years. Inpatient visits in 2017 were 884 patients, which is a decrease of 16.4% from visits in 2016 (1,057 patients). In 2018, the number of visits again fell to 809 people (down 8.5% from 2017),

and again fell by 3.3% to 782 visits in 2019. When the COVID-19 phenomenon occurred in 2020, the number of inpatient visits at this hospital increased significantly to 1,184 (an increase of 51.4%), but in 2021 it will again decrease by 5.5% to 1,119 visits, and in 2022 it fell again to 811 patients (down 27.5%). It must be admitted that in the 2020-2021 period, RSIA BUNDA Semarang received an "overflow" of patients who were about to give birth but did not want to go to the hospital. general hospital or COVID-19 referral hospital. Several efforts have been made to increase patient visits, including health promotion and collaboration with insurance, as well as improving human resources and medical facilities, although this has not been effective enough to increase the number of inpatients.

It must be acknowledged that the competition factor is one of the challenges faced by RSIA BUNDA Semarang because it is one of 5 RSIA's in Semarang City. Apart from that, there are 24 public and private hospitals which also provide reproductive health and delivery services. However, RSIA BUNDA Semarang has a great opportunity to increase the number of patients because it is known as a prestigious hospital and has a high value in society. If managed well, this can increase patient satisfaction which theoretically strengthens their loyalty. The public's perception of this hospital as a special birthing facility also opens up opportunities to increase visibility, including in competing with similar hospitals. The decline in visits that have occurred so far indicates that there are problems related to satisfaction and loyalty. This research aims to analyze the determining factors of patient loyalty in inpatient services which include customer value, relationship marketing, and customer experience, and understand how these elements contribute to patient satisfaction and loyalty.

Method

This type of research is confirmatory quantitative with a cross-sectional approach. The research locus was the BUNDA Mother and Child Hospital (RSIA) Semarang. The research population is a total of 811 inpatient visits in 2022. The sample used in this research was selected using the Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) technique to obtain 244 people. Respondents were mothers who had given birth and received services at RSIA BUNDA Semarang.

The research's independent variables are customer value, relationship marketing, and customer experience, while the dependent variables are patient satisfaction and loyalty. Data collection was carried out through interviews using a questionnaire based on instruments that had been tested for validity and reliability. The results of the validity and reliability tests for each research variable were declared valid with factor loading values exceeding 0.5 and declared reliable with

AVE values greater than 0.5, as well as Cronbach's Alpha and Construct Reliability greater than 0.7. The collected data was processed using the Structural Equation Model (SEM) AMOS version 24 technique because it can test the relationship between variables and determine causality between variables. This research has received Ethical Approval Information from the Health Research Ethics Committee, Faculty of Public Health, Diponegoro University through certificate Number 440/EA/KEPK-FKM/2023.

Result and Discussion

The majority of respondents (66.4%) were aged between 26 and 35 years, with a Bachelor's (S1) educational background of 75.4%. Although there are variations in the choice of service class, the majority choose high-maintenance classes such as VIP, Deluxe, and Class I. This also shows that respondents generally

have middle to upper socioeconomic status and income. More than half of the respondents (52.5%) admitted that they had previously been treated once at this hospital.

All construct validity tests have been fulfilled. Of the 5 variables studied, there were 48 indicators. With a factor loading value greater than 0.50 in the validity test an Average Variance Extract (AVE) value > 0.50 and a Construct Reliability value > 0.70 for the reliability test, it can be stated that these indicators are worthy of representing the research construct. and can be trusted to measure the construct.

Goodness of Fit Testing

Figure 1 shows the results of the goodness of fit test analysis using chi-square recorded at 10637.772, the probability at 0.000, GFI at 0.401, AGFI at 0.341, TLI at 0.600, CFI at 0.621, and RMSEA at 0.192. These results indicate that the applied model is acceptable and meets the previously determined suitability criteria

Table 1. Instrument Test Results

Variable	Construct Reliability	CR Provisions	AVE	AVE Provisions	Description
Customer Value (X1)	0.948	≥ 0.70	0.644	≥ 0.50	Reliable
Relationship Marketing (X2)	0.961		0.728		Reliable
Customer Experience (X3)	0.978		0.761		Reliable
Patient Satisfaction (Y1)	0.956		0.786		Reliable
Patient Loyalty (Y2)	0.953		0.772		Reliable

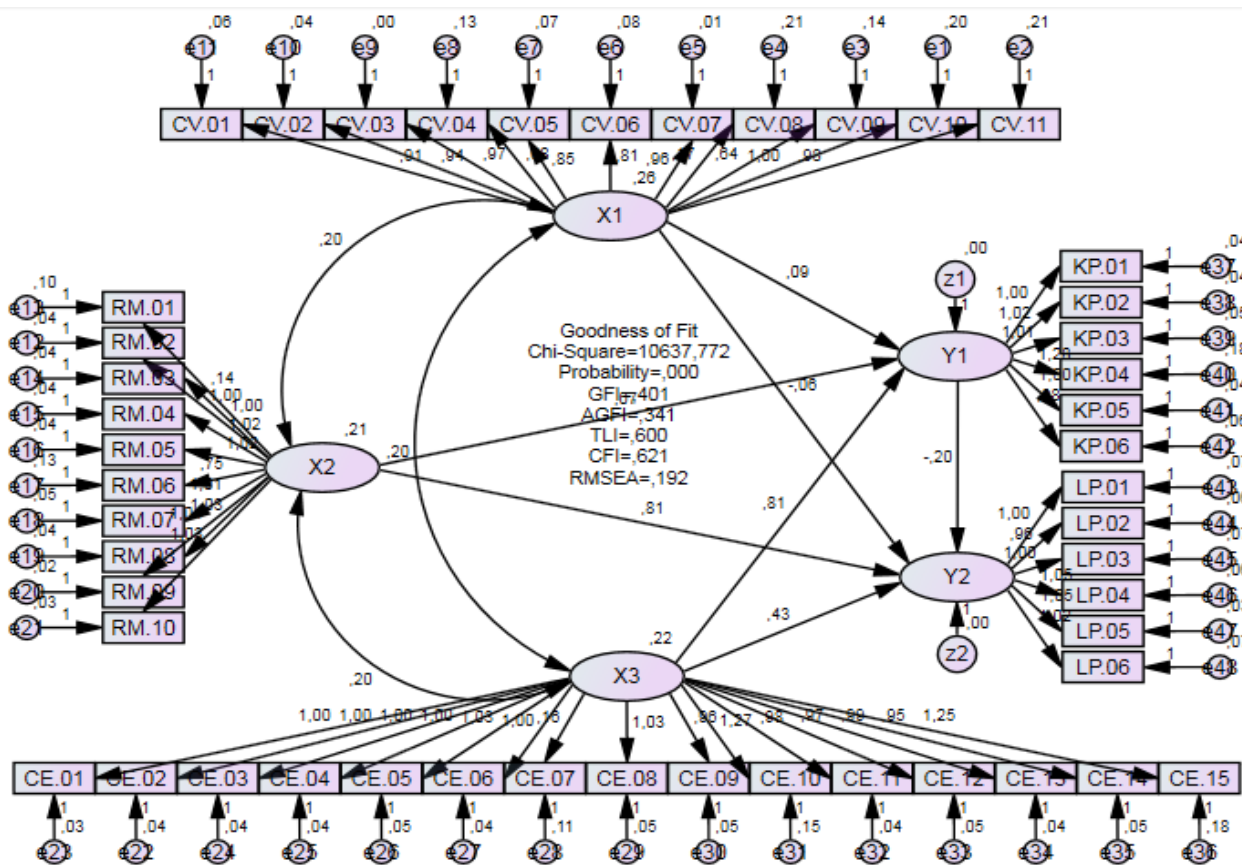


Figure 1. Goodness of Fit Test

In the model feasibility testing method, a model can be considered adequate if it meets at least one of the test methods. In empirical research, there is no absolute obligation for researchers to comply with all goodness of fit criteria when using Structural Equation Models (SEM). These criteria serve as guidelines for evaluating the suitability of the statistical model and the data obtained. Researchers have the freedom to use their judgment in selecting the criteria that best suit their research needs.

Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis testing is carried out to answer research objectives and analyze the structural model

relationships that occur. Hypothetical data analysis can be seen from the standardized regression weight values which show the coefficient of influence between variables as seen in Table 2. It is proven that the variables customer value (X1) and customer experience (X2) directly influence patient satisfaction ($p < 0.05$), while the variables relationship marketing has no effect ($p > 0.05$). Patient loyalty is directly influenced by relationship marketing and customer experience variables ($p < 0.05$), but not by customer value variables. This research also proves that satisfaction does not affect patient loyalty ($p = 0.388$).

Table 2. Hypothesis Test Results

Variable Relationships	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P-Value	Information
Customer Value (X1) → Patient Satisfaction (Y1)	0.095	0.031	3.054	0.002	Have a real impact
Relationship Marketing (X2) → Patient Satisfaction (Y1)	0.068	0.071	0.962	0.336	There's no impact
Customer Experience (X3) → Patient Satisfaction (Y1)	0.811	0.069	11.736	0.000	Have a real impact
Customer Value (X1) → Patient Loyalty (Y2)	-0.062	0.034	-1.807	0.071	There's no impact
Relationship Marketing (X2) → Loyalty (Y2)	0.812	0.074	10.988	0.000	Have a real impact
Customer Experience (X3) → Loyalty (Y2)	0.433	0.199	2.178	0.029	Have a real impact
Patient Satisfaction (Y1) → Loyalty (Y2)	-0.198	0.229	-0.863	0.388	There's no impact

Mediation Testing

A mediation test is a test to find out whether a variable mediates the relationship with other independent variables on the dependent variable. The

results of the mediation test have proven that patient satisfaction is not a mediator of loyalty from the customer value, relationship marketing, and customer experience variables.

Table 3. Mediation Test Results

Variable Relationships	t-count	t-table	Information
Customer Value (X1) → Patient Satisfaction (Y1) → Patient Loyalty (Y2)	-0.832	1.969	There's no impact
Relationship Marketing (X2) → Patient Satisfaction (Y1) → Patient Loyalty (Y2)	-0.641	1.969	There's no impact
Customer Experience (X3) → Patient Satisfaction (Y1) → Patient Loyalty (Y2)	-0.862	1.969	There's no impact

The Influence of Customer Value on Patient Satisfaction

The research results show that customer value has a positive and significant effect on patient satisfaction. Low customer value for hospitals contributes to low levels of patient satisfaction. These results are in line with research in China which proves that patient value dimensions which include economic value, health value, fairness value, and added value have a significant influence on satisfaction and loyalty (Miao et al., 2020). Customer value can also be seen through indicators of functional value, emotional value, social value, conditional value, and epistemic value, most of which provide positive results. These values are formed after the patient receives the service and the value felt by the patient will become a belief and indicator of how the customer assesses the service. Therefore, companies (including health facilities) can increase customer value by focusing on benefits and positive customer experiences and reducing sacrifices made by customers (Suryadi et al., 2022). Understanding the value of patients as customers is a key mechanism for overcoming current healthcare challenges, as well as for

building a patient-centered healthcare system (Agarwal et al., 2020; Levine & Drossman, 2022).

Although patients generally express satisfaction with the services they receive at RSIA BUNDA Semarang, there are still several aspects that can reduce patient satisfaction from the value dimension. Many patients answered in the affirmative to the statement "paying a higher cost of care compared to the cost estimate given previously" shows that there is a negative perception of patient value towards unclear and non-transparent cost dimensions, even though it is ultimately considered reasonable because it is an unexpected cost component. The presence of patient statements indicating doubts regarding the experience, ability, and competence of nurses in handling obstetric patients as well as other practical nursing knowledge also illustrates that the patient's perception of value is not optimal and tends to be negative. Akob et al.'s study in the city of Makasar through a combination of testing models involving several variables shows that patient loyalty can be formed if patient satisfaction has been realized

High perceived value, differentiation from competitors, personalization, and customer satisfaction will create a positive customer experience. This experience will strengthen the emotional bond between the customer and the company, trigger positive recommendations, and influence the customer's tendency to remain loyal and committed to a long-term relationship. High customer value is the patient's expectation of the value they obtain from the offerings provided by the hospital. If the consumer value provided by the hospital is in line with the patient's expectations, this can indicate the satisfaction felt by the patient (Akob et al., 2021). Satisfaction can be realized if customer value has been felt by the patient, especially when it concerns the emotional side, such as when the patient feels valued and appreciated (Akob et al., 2021).

In this research, it is proven that customer value does not affect patient loyalty. High customer value does not guarantee high loyalty, and vice versa. The results of this research shows that customer value has a positive and significant influence on the tendency to repurchase interest. The higher the customer value given, the greater the customer's interest in using the same product/service on the next occasion. The absence of influence of customer value on inpatient loyalty at RSIA BUNDA Semarang can be understood because of the existence of variables mediators namely price, accessibility, types of services available, and policies. So far, RSIA BUNDA Semarang has been portrayed as a special maternity hospital with a target segment for the middle to upper class, so it is often considered expensive and classy because not all elements of society have access to the hospital. Limitations on the types of services available, namely pregnancy and delivery checks, as well as policies related to family planning programs which limit the number of children in each family also indirectly contribute to the decline in visits.

The concepts of customer value and customer loyalty are closely related. Customers want high value which is limited by information search costs, knowledge, mobility, and limited income. Customers form expectations of value and act on those expectations. The higher the customer's perceived value, the higher the tendency for customer loyalty (Kotler & Keller, 2016). One strategy to create positive customer value is to build a good image of the hospital. The image of the hospital must be directly proportional to the quality of service because it is the reason that shapes consumer value perceptions in increasing rationalization and solid customer (patient) decision-making (Akob et al., 2021).

The Influence of Relationship Marketing on Patient Satisfaction and Loyalty

Relationship marketing is a marketing strategy based on strong long-term customer relationships through two-way communication to create trust and

commitment. Theoretically, relationship marketing can build stronger and more personal relationships with customers and increase customer loyalty and satisfaction. This research proves that relationship marketing does not affect patient satisfaction, but significantly influences loyalty. This is in line with research which shows that relationship marketing cannot be directly linked to customer satisfaction. In the hospital context, although relationship marketing is important for building relationships for business continuity, hospitals need to implement a management system that allows hospitals to get to know each customer more personally through collecting and analyzing customer data (Suryadi et al., 2022). These results are in line with Tran et al's study that the quality of the relationship is determined by the hospital's ability to increase the experience value of the services received by patients, whether they are perceived as quality or not (Tran, 2020).

Patient loyalty is directly influenced by relationship marketing, especially those related to communication to create trust and commitment (Rahayu, 2023). These results are in line with Ngoma et al's study which shows a positive relationship between relationship marketing components, namely communication, commitment, and customer loyalty. There is also a significant positive relationship between relationship marketing components, namely communication and commitment, with word-of-mouth promotion and a significant positive relationship between word-of-mouth (WoM) promotion and customer loyalty (Ngoma & Ntale, 2019). The easier it is for customers to get information about the services provided, the interaction between customers and companies will also increase (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Indrayani et al's research also proves that marketing relationships significantly influence customer loyalty. Well-built interactions and personal relationships with businesses will make customers feel comfortable with the service (Indrayani & Indrayani, 2016). Pratiwi et al.'s study also shows that relationship marketing influences customer loyalty (Pratiwi et al., 2019).

Hospitals need relationship marketing to establish long-term relationships with their patients so that hospitals can know their wants and needs, and retain their patients (loyal patients). The quality of the relationship that occurs is determined by how the patient values the experience and how he perceives the quality of the service (Tran, 2020). Establishing relationships with patients is considered more cost-effective than looking for new patients or getting old patients who have lost their relationships. Implementing good relationship marketing can create a sustainable competitive advantage in a hospital's image compared to other hospitals while providing satisfaction to patients (Ronitawati et al., 2021). Apart from that, relationship marketing can also help build more

personal interactions, increase trust and commitment, and encourage two-way communication between hospitals and patients. Hospitals can develop a marketing relationship model in a structured and planned manner because apart from being able to increase patient loyalty, it also provides additional benefits related to trust. Patients who are involved in relationship marketing tend to have stronger emotional ties to the hospital and can help attract new patients to become loyal to the hospital (Astuti & Nagase, 2014; Kotler & Keller, 2016; Tjiptono & Diana, 2022).

The Influence of Customer Experience on Patient Satisfaction and Loyalty

Statistically, this research shows that customer experience has a positive and significant effect on patient satisfaction and loyalty. Satisfaction is the gap between expectations and experience. Expectations are formed from perceptions (Ng & Luk, 2019). When the service experience received is higher than expectations, the customer feels satisfied (Akthar et al., 2023). Customers who are satisfied with the service experience they receive become an important asset for the hospital because they tend to reuse the service and recommend it to the local community. Experience gives rise to the tendency and desire to share that experience with others. When experiences, hopes, and needs are combined, satisfaction will emerge if the results show positive value (Ng & Luk, 2019).

Strong and heart-touching experiences, as well as emotional experiences from customers, can help differentiate one product and service from other products and services and form loyalty (Harjadi & Arraniri, 2021). Customer experiences that evoke positive emotions such as joy, satisfaction, or a sense of connection with a brand or company can create an emotional bond between the customer and the company. This emotional bond can influence customer behavior, including the tendency to remain loyal and committed to long-term relationships (Srivastava & Kaul, 2014). Akthar et al further explained that the interaction between provider-customer (patient) very strongly influences satisfaction in addition to the affordability aspect (Akthar et al., 2023).

The results of this research are in line with Hijjah's research which proves that good customer experience will influence satisfaction and loyalty. Customers will reuse and provide positive recommendations to others to use the product (Hijjah et al., 2015). Tran et al.'s study also prove that service quality influences experience value, relationship quality, and purchase intention (Tran, 2020). A systematic review study conducted by Akthar et al also shows that patient experience is one of the determinants of satisfaction from the patient's perspective (Akthar et al., 2023). Patient loyalty can be formed if patient satisfaction has been realized.

Satisfaction can be realized if customer value is felt by the patient (Akob et al., 2021), where experience is one of the factors forming customer value. It was further explained that patient value (customer value) is a factor that forms loyalty, and patient value itself is formed from the quality of service and the image of the hospital (Akob et al., 2021).

This description is by the conditions at RSIA BUNDA Semarang where there appears to be a tendency for patients to have less experience, resulting in dissatisfaction and less loyalty. It must be acknowledged that the majority of patients so far have been women of mature age, namely between 26-45 years, with a high education (Bachelor's degree), upper middle class with an established income, and socio-economic strata. The characteristics of this group tend to assess the services they receive based on class preferences. This experience will form a different perception of quality than other groups. These perceptions and experiences become the basis for decision-making for subsequent purchases (Akob et al., 2021) Patients with these characteristics can be very loyal due to emotional factors, and social status and are very concerned about the quality of service. If a hospital can consistently maintain the quality of its services, this will maintain its loyalty. This is in line with the Consumer Learning Theory, which states the characteristics of women who are reluctant to switch to another product if they have had a good experience with a product. They will remain loyal to the old product and it will be difficult for other products to match the quality perception that has been formed (Hsu & Cheng, 2018).

The Influence of Patient Satisfaction on Patient Loyalty

Based on univariate analysis, it is known that the proportion of respondents who feel less satisfied is greater than those who are satisfied, and the same goes for patient loyalty. There seems to be a tendency that satisfaction is related to loyalty. However, the results of statistical tests prove that patient satisfaction does not affect patient loyalty. Although this is different from the results of many other studies that prove the influence of satisfaction on loyalty, this phenomenon often occurs in the context of assessing consumer behavior and marketing research. These results are also in line with Liu et al's study in China which proves that patient satisfaction is not directly related to loyalty, but through patient trust as a mediator variable (Liu et al., 2021). Janet et al further explained that patient satisfaction will emerge when experiences, expectations, and perceived needs are combined (Ng & Luk, 2019).

Satisfaction is a very important aspect because it concerns a person's perception. If a customer is very satisfied with the service provided, the customer will likely return to using the product or service. When a customer is satisfied, he or she is not easily persuaded by competitors to switch; is more willing to pay

premium prices (higher prices); is more tolerant of mistakes made by the company, and so on. However, this does not mean that satisfaction and loyalty are substitutes for each other. It is possible that a customer is loyal but does not feel very satisfied, and it is also possible that a customer feels satisfied but is not loyal (Tjiptono & Diana, 2022).

Several factors can explain why satisfaction does not have a direct effect on loyalty, especially in the health context. It must be acknowledged that patient needs and demands are often urgent, so patients may choose health facilities with easy/close accessibility rather than health facilities that provide satisfaction. Limited choices due to payment/insurance coverage or limited health services available can also support the transition of previously satisfied patients to other hospitals. Perception of risk is also a further consideration because patients may feel satisfied with the services they receive but perceive a higher risk if they rely on one health service provider (Astuti & Nagase, 2014). Although customer loyalty is associated with repeat purchase intentions and behavior, this does not guarantee success when customers are faced with access and affordability obstacles (Akthar et al., 2023).

Conclusion

Most patients are women aged 26-45 years with a high socio-economic background because they tend to choose VIP, Deluxe, and Class I service facilities. Customer value and customer experience significantly influence the level of patient satisfaction. Relationship marketing and customer experience have a significant effect on patient loyalty. Patient satisfaction is not proven to influence and cannot be a mediator between customer value, relationship marketing, and customer experience on patient loyalty. Trust is an important factor in determining patient loyalty and is also a mediator between satisfaction and loyalty. Practical implications for health service providers in increasing loyalty to not only focus on the quality of medical services but also learn from marketing theory to build good customer relationships to create positive value perceptions and trust through appropriate marketing methods and strategies. To increase patient satisfaction and loyalty, hospitals need to focus on efforts to increase understanding of patient demographic and socio-economic characteristics, service class preferences according to patient characteristics in special hospitals, as well as optimizing things that can improve customer experience. This can be a strategic basis for improving service quality and long-term relationships with patients.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to all those who have helped with the research and preparation of this research report. Hopefully, this research is useful.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, K.H., A. S., methodology, K.H.; validation, A. S., and A.P.; formal analysis, K.H.; investigation, K.H.; resources, K.H., data curation, K.H.; writing— original draft preparation, K.H.; writing—review and editing, K.H., visualization, K.H. and A.S.; Supervision, A.S. and A.P.; project administration, K.H.; funding acquisition, K.H., A. S. and A.P. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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