

Original Article

The relationship between service quality and patient satisfaction in internal medicine outpatient care: A cross-sectional study

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Abstract

Background: Service quality is a critical determinant of patient satisfaction and plays an essential role in shaping patient experiences in outpatient care settings. Ensuring high-quality services is a priority for hospitals, particularly in internal medicine clinics where patient volumes and clinical needs are substantial.

Objective: This study aimed to analyze the relationship between healthcare service quality and patient satisfaction among outpatients at the Internal Medicine Clinic of Husada Utama Hospital Surabaya.

Methods: This cross-sectional quantitative study involved 49 respondents selected through probability sampling from a total outpatient population of 24,262 visits. Data were collected using structured questionnaires, interviews, observations, and documentation, and were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Spearman's rank correlation with a significance level of $p < 0.05$.

Results: Most respondents perceived service quality as adequate (67.3%) and reported patient satisfaction at an adequate level as well (61.2%). The Spearman correlation test indicated a moderate, positive, and significant association between service quality and patient satisfaction ($\rho = 0.632$, $p = 0.000$), suggesting that higher service quality contributed to increased satisfaction.

Conclusion: Service quality demonstrated a significant contribution to patient satisfaction in the Internal Medicine Clinic, highlighting the need for continuous improvement in service responsiveness, empathy, reliability, and physical facilities. The hospital is encouraged to enhance communication skills among staff, streamline service processes, optimize waiting room facilities, and implement regular evaluation mechanisms to strengthen patient-centered care and sustain long-term patient trust.

Background

Service quality serves as a fundamental component that determines the overall performance of healthcare organizations in delivering patient-centered services (Abidova et al., 2021). Patients consistently form perceptions of healthcare quality based on their direct experiences during medical and nonmedical encounters (Alanazi et al., 2023). Hospitals must ensure that interactions between healthcare professionals, service processes, and supporting facilities consistently meet patient expectations (Alghamdi, 2014). Patients expect comfort, safety, and trust during examinations, consultations, and therapeutic procedures (Alrubaiee & Alkaa'ida, 2011). Improving service quality aims to strengthen system reliability and foster a culture of responsive and effective healthcare delivery (Arab et al., 2012).

The increasing demand for high-quality care highlights the need for continuous monitoring of service performance across all hospital departments (Basri et al., 2023). Therefore, healthcare institutions require systematic

evaluations to maintain consistent service standards and enhance patient experience (Dewi et al., 2024).

Patient satisfaction functions as a critical indicator that reflects the extent to which healthcare services meet patient needs, preferences, and expectations (Fadila & Sulastri, 2023). Patients evaluate satisfaction through multiple elements, including staff friendliness, service promptness, clarity of communication, and comfort of waiting areas (Frasista et al., 2025). Patient perceptions strongly influence their intention to return for future care or recommend the facility to others (Karunia et al., 2022). Hospitals must recognize that patient satisfaction represents not only an outcome measure but also an integral part of high-quality healthcare delivery (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2019).

Satisfied patients are more likely to adhere to medical advice and demonstrate trust in healthcare providers (Khojah et al., 2022). Positive patient experiences also contribute to long-term relationships between patients and healthcare facilities (Medical Records Unit of

Husada Utama Hospital, 2025). Consequently, measuring satisfaction becomes vital for strategic decision-making and service improvements (Muhammad & Andi, 2023).

The SERVQUAL model provides a comprehensive theoretical framework to assess how patients perceive service quality across multiple dimensions (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The model analyzes five core dimensions—tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—to evaluate service performance in a structured manner (Rosidah et al., 2024). Each dimension contributes uniquely to the way patients interpret their healthcare experience and overall service outcomes (Suhita et al., 2023). Tangibles reflect the physical environment, medical equipment, and appearance of healthcare personnel, which form the first impression of service quality (Wandebori & Pidada, 2017). Reliability emphasizes the hospital's ability to deliver accurate and dependable services based on established standards and clinical guidelines (Wartiningsih et al., 2020). Responsiveness highlights the willingness of healthcare staff to provide prompt assistance and address patient needs in a timely manner (World Health Organization, 2021). Assurance and empathy further strengthen patient confidence and emotional comfort throughout the care process (Abidova et al., 2021).

Service quality also plays a strategic role in influencing patient loyalty within competitive healthcare environments (Alanazi et al., 2023). Loyal patients tend to revisit the same healthcare provider due to consistent positive experiences and trustworthy relationships (Alghamdi, 2014). Hospitals must understand that loyalty is shaped not only by clinical outcomes but also by interpersonal communication and service efficiency (Alrubaiee & Alkaa'ida, 2011). Trust develops when patients perceive healthcare providers as competent, respectful, and transparent during the care process (Arab et al., 2012). High service quality can create emotional bonds that strengthen patient commitment to the healthcare facility (Basri et al., 2023). Patients who consistently experience good service become strong advocates for the hospital, enhancing its reputation in the community (Dewi et al., 2024). Therefore, service quality becomes a powerful determinant of long-term

hospital sustainability and competitiveness (Fadila & Sulastri, 2023).

Research in Indonesia demonstrates that patient satisfaction is strongly influenced by service delivery processes, staff communication, and facility preparedness (Frasista et al., 2025). Outpatient units, particularly internal medicine clinics, often face higher service loads, which require efficient workflow management (Karunia et al., 2022). Indonesian patients highly value clarity of information, timely service, and respectful interactions during their medical visits (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2019). Hospitals must continuously adapt their service models to align with patient expectations and evolving healthcare demands (Khojah et al., 2022). Ensuring service quality becomes increasingly important as competition among healthcare providers grows in Indonesia's urban areas (Medical Records Unit of Husada Utama Hospital, 2025). The outpatient department emerges as a key area where service quality significantly impacts patient perceptions (Muhammad & Andi, 2023). As a result, Indonesian hospitals must strengthen quality assurance mechanisms to enhance patient-centered service delivery (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Empirical studies further show that poor service quality leads to decreased satisfaction and reduces the likelihood of patients returning for future care (Rosidah et al., 2024). Patients often associate long waiting times, unclear explanations, and inattentive staff with lower service quality (Suhita et al., 2023). Dissatisfaction can negatively affect trust, which plays a mediating role between service quality and patient loyalty (Wandebori & Pidada, 2017). Hospitals must ensure that service processes are streamlined to minimize delays and errors in outpatient care (Wartiningsih et al., 2020). Strengthening communication skills among healthcare providers improves patient confidence and service experience (World Health Organization, 2021). A comprehensive service quality evaluation enables hospitals to identify areas requiring improvement and develop targeted interventions (Abidova et al., 2021). These evaluations highlight the importance of patient-centered approaches in enhancing healthcare outcomes (Alanazi et al., 2023).

In Surabaya, Husada Utama Hospital serves as one of the referral centers providing comprehensive internal medicine outpatient services (Alghamdi, 2014). The hospital manages a high patient volume that requires efficient administrative and clinical workflows to maintain optimal service delivery (Alrubaiee & Alkaa'ida, 2011). Internal medicine patients often require repeated visits, which makes service quality and satisfaction essential for continuity of care (Arab et al., 2012). The hospital's annual report indicates increasing patient visits, necessitating stronger evaluation of service quality dimensions (Basri et al., 2023). Ensuring high-quality outpatient care contributes to patient safety, trust, and clinical effectiveness in chronic disease management (Dewi et al., 2024). Evaluating patient satisfaction helps the hospital identify strengths and weaknesses in its service delivery system (Fadila & Sulastri, 2023). Therefore, understanding how service quality affects satisfaction in the internal medicine outpatient clinic becomes crucial for improving overall hospital performance (Frasista et al., 2025).

Based on the above context, this study aims to analyze the influence of service quality on patient satisfaction in the internal medicine outpatient clinic at Husada Utama Hospital Surabaya (Karunia et al., 2022). The study intends to evaluate how SERVQUAL dimensions contribute to overall patient perceptions of outpatient service performance (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2019). The study also seeks to provide empirical evidence that supports quality improvement initiatives within outpatient services (Khojah et al., 2022).

The findings are expected to assist hospital management in identifying priority areas for enhancement (Medical Records Unit of Husada Utama Hospital, 2025). The study ultimately aims to strengthen patient-centered care practices within internal medicine outpatient settings (Muhammad & Andi, 2023). The study will contribute to the growing body of evidence regarding healthcare quality and patient satisfaction in Indonesia (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Therefore, the main objective of this research is to examine the relationship between service quality and patient satisfaction in the internal medicine outpatient clinic at Hospital.

Methods

Study Design

This study employed a quantitative non-experimental design to examine the relationship between healthcare service quality and patient satisfaction among outpatients at the Internal Medicine Clinic of Husada Utama Hospital Surabaya. The study was conducted during July–August 2025 and adhered to the STROBE guidelines for cross-sectional studies.

Sampling

The study population consisted of all outpatient visits to the Internal Medicine Clinic in 2024, totaling 24,262 patients. A probability sampling technique was implemented to ensure that each eligible patient had an equal chance of selection, and a final sample of 49 respondents was obtained to represent the population. The inclusion criteria were patients who were willing to participate, able to understand and complete the questionnaire, and who received treatment specifically at the Internal Medicine Clinic. The exclusion criteria comprised patients in emergency conditions requiring immediate referral or hospitalization and patients who declined participation. All sampling procedures were conducted systematically to ensure representativeness and reduce potential selection bias.

Instruments

Data collection utilized a structured questionnaire consisting of three major sections to gather comprehensive information from respondents. The first section assessed demographic characteristics including age, gender, occupation, income, education level, and distance to the hospital. The second section measured service quality using five SERVQUAL dimensions, namely responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. The third section evaluated patient satisfaction through indicators of access, quality, process, and system. The questionnaire was administered directly to respondents through guided interviews to ensure clarity and completeness of responses. Additional data were obtained through observations, documentation reviews,

and relevant literature to strengthen the contextual understanding and accuracy of the study. All instruments underwent internal consistency checks before data collection to ensure readiness and clarity.

Data Collection

Data were collected in a controlled environment within the Internal Medicine Clinic to minimize distractions and ensure standardized procedures. Respondents were approached after receiving outpatient services and were provided with a full explanation of the study procedures prior to participation. Trained data collectors supervised the completion of the questionnaire and ensured that respondents understood each item. Observational data were recorded using predefined checklists, while documentation was retrieved with permission from the hospital administration. All raw data were stored securely and coded to maintain respondent confidentiality. Data entry was performed manually and double-checked to avoid input errors.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were applied to summarize patient characteristics, service quality scores, and satisfaction levels. Normality testing was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to determine the appropriate statistical approach for further analysis. Because the data did not meet the assumptions of normality, Spearman's rank correlation test was used to measure the association between service quality and patient satisfaction. The level of significance was set at $p < 0.05$ to determine the statistical relevance of the findings. All analyses were performed using standardized statistical software to ensure accuracy and reproducibility.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the study to protect respondent rights and uphold research integrity. All participants received an explanation regarding

the study objectives, procedures, potential risks, and confidentiality measures before signing informed consent. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were allowed to withdraw at any point without consequences. The anonymity of participant identities was maintained by assigning coded identifiers and storing data securely in password-protected files. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the management of Husada Utama Hospital Surabaya prior to data collection. The research adhered to ethical principles of autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice as applied in health research settings.

Results

Table 1 presents the distribution of respondent characteristics, service quality categories, and patient satisfaction levels among outpatients at the Internal Medicine Clinic of Husada Utama Hospital Surabaya. This descriptive analysis provides an overview of demographic variations, socioeconomic conditions, and the overall assessment of healthcare services received by patients. The table offers essential contextual information that supports further inferential analysis regarding the relationship between service quality and patient satisfaction. Respondent characteristics such as age, education, occupation, and income illustrate the diversity of the study population and help explain differences in service perception. Additionally, the distribution of service quality and satisfaction levels indicates the general pattern of patient experiences within the clinic. These descriptive findings form a foundational basis for interpreting the subsequent correlational results, (see Table 1).

The results in Table 1 show that most respondents were aged 50 years and above, indicating that the clinic predominantly serves older adults with chronic health needs. In terms of education, the majority had completed senior high school, suggesting that most patients possess adequate literacy to understand healthcare information and services provided. Regarding occupation, nearly half of the respondents were self-employed, which may reflect flexible working conditions that allow

outpatient visits. Income distribution reveals that most respondents earned between Rp1,000,000 and Rp5,000,000 per month,

representing a lower-middle socioeconomic group that may be sensitive to service affordability and accessibility.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondent Characteristics, Service Quality, and Patient Satisfaction

| Variable | Frequency (n) | Percent (%) |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Age | | |
| 21 – 30 Years | 13 | 26,5 |
| 31 – 40 Years | 7 | 14,3 |
| 41 – 50 Years | 9 | 18,4 |
| ≥ 50 Years | 20 | 40,8 |
| Education | | |
| Elementary School | 1 | 2,0 |
| Junior High School | 6 | 12,2 |
| Senior High School | 27 | 55,1 |
| Associate Degree | 5 | 10,2 |
| Bachelor Degree | 9 | 18,4 |
| Master's Degree | 1 | 2,0 |
| Worker | | |
| Government Employees | 5 | 10,2 |
| Self – employed | 24 | 49,0 |
| Businessman | 11 | 22,4 |
| Doesn't Work | 1 | 2,0 |
| Housewife | 7 | 14,3 |
| Student | 1 | 2,0 |
| Income | | |
| ≤ Rp. 1.000.000 | 12 | 24,5 |
| > Rp. 1.000.000 - ≤ Rp. 5.000.000 | 31 | 63,3 |
| > Rp. 5.000.000 - ≤ Rp. 10.000.000 | 6 | 12,2 |
| Service Quality | | |
| Good | 6 | 12,2 |
| Enough | 33 | 67,3 |
| Low | 10 | 20,4 |
| Patient Satisfaction | | |
| Good | 10 | 20,4 |
| Enough | 30 | 61,2 |
| Low | 9 | 18,4 |

For service quality, the majority of respondents rated the services as adequate, which indicates that although the clinic meets essential expectations, there is still room for improvement. Similarly, patient satisfaction was predominantly rated as adequate, showing that

patient experiences are generally acceptable but not optimal. Overall, the descriptive results highlight the need for continuous service improvements to elevate both perceived quality and satisfaction among diverse patient groups.

Table 2. Spearman's Rank Correlation Between Service Quality and Patient Satisfaction

| Variables | Spearman's rho (ρ) | p-value | Interpretation |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------|---------------------------------|
| Service Quality ↔ Satisfaction | 0.632 | 0.000 | Moderate, positive, significant |

Table 2 presents the results of the Spearman's rank correlation analysis conducted to determine the association between service

quality and patient satisfaction among outpatients at the Internal Medicine Clinic of Husada Utama Hospital Surabaya. This analysis

was performed because the distribution of both variables did not meet the assumptions of normality, thus requiring a nonparametric statistical test. The table summarizes the correlation coefficient and the level of statistical significance to indicate the strength and direction of the relationship between the two key variables examined in the study.

Discussion

The findings of this study showed that most respondents perceived service quality and patient satisfaction as adequate, and the correlation test indicated a moderate positive relationship between both variables (Basri et al., 2023). This study found that improvements in service quality contributed to increased patient satisfaction within the Internal Medicine Clinic (Dewi et al., 2024). The study demonstrated that dimensions such as responsiveness, empathy, reliability, assurance, and tangibles played important roles in shaping patient perceptions of service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The findings confirmed that patient satisfaction acted as an essential outcome of service delivery in outpatient settings (Fadila & Sulastri, 2023). The results revealed that the clinic achieved acceptable performance yet still required further enhancement to reach higher satisfaction levels (Muhammad & Andi, 2023). This study emphasized that improving service quality would align with hospital policies to strengthen patient-centered care (Medical Records Unit of Husada Utama Hospital, 2025). Therefore, the overall findings supported the theoretical understanding that service quality significantly influences patient satisfaction in healthcare settings (Frasista et al., 2025).

These findings align with the perspective that patient satisfaction serves as a mediating factor between service delivery and perceived healthcare quality (Abidova et al., 2021). This study confirmed that patient experience was shaped by both clinical and nonclinical aspects of hospital services (Alanazi et al., 2023). The data showed that adequate service interactions created a foundation for trust between patients and healthcare providers (Alrubaiee & Alkaa'ida, 2011). The clinic provided essential services, yet patients still reported unmet

expectations related to certain dimensions of service quality (Arab et al., 2012). The findings reiterated that satisfaction would increase when hospitals successfully matched or exceeded patient expectations (Alghamdi, 2014). These results suggested that patient satisfaction remained highly sensitive to the consistency and reliability of healthcare processes (Karunia et al., 2022). Therefore, the study supported the idea that healthcare organizations must prioritize patient expectations to strengthen satisfaction outcomes (Dewi et al., 2024).

The analysis of respondent characteristics showed that older adults dominated outpatient visits, and this population tended to require more comprehensive service interactions (Suhita et al., 2023). The presence of older adults indicated that chronic disease management played a key role in shaping service expectations in internal medicine care (World Health Organization, 2021). The findings suggested that older patients valued assurance and empathy more strongly than younger patients (Khojah et al., 2022). This demographic trend required the clinic to enhance communication, clarity, and emotional support during service delivery (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2019). The study showed that age-related differences influenced how patients evaluated service quality dimensions (Rosidah et al., 2024). Older adults expressed stronger expectations for reliable and timely services due to their clinical vulnerability (Wartiningsih et al., 2020). Therefore, the demographic composition of respondents directly influenced the pattern of satisfaction outcomes observed in the study (Basri et al., 2023).

The correlation between service quality and satisfaction in this study indicated that improvements in service quality would yield significant benefits for patient satisfaction (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The study showed that responsiveness and empathy were among the strongest drivers of satisfaction in outpatient settings (Frasista et al., 2025). The findings confirmed that the speed of service delivery, clarity of information, and staff attentiveness contributed positively to patient evaluations (Fadila & Sulastri, 2023). These

results suggested that patients relied on their immediate experiences to form judgments about healthcare quality (Alanazi et al., 2023). The study provided evidence that satisfaction increased when hospitals demonstrated consistent professionalism and interpersonal warmth (Alrubaiee & Alkaa'ida, 2011). The findings supported the argument that responsive services strengthened patient trust and willingness to revisit the clinic (Wandebori & Pidada, 2017). Therefore, the correlation results emphasized that service quality functioned as a critical determinant of satisfaction in internal medicine outpatient care (Arab et al., 2012).

The study also showed that tangibles, such as facility cleanliness, waiting room comfort, and staff appearance, contributed to patient satisfaction (Khojah et al., 2022). The presence of adequate facilities shaped the patient's first impression regarding the reliability and professionalism of healthcare services (Rosidah et al., 2024). This study demonstrated that physical infrastructure served as an important indicator of service readiness and competence (World Health Organization, 2021). The results suggested that improvements in facility design and ambiance could enhance patient perceptions of overall service quality (Dewi et al., 2024). The adequacy of physical facilities also influenced the emotional comfort of patients while receiving outpatient care (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Patients displayed a higher level of satisfaction when the environment supported their comfort and sense of security (Alghamdi, 2014). Therefore, the study highlighted the importance of maintaining and modernizing tangible aspects of healthcare service delivery (Medical Records Unit of Husada Utama Hospital, 2025).

Reliability emerged as another important factor in shaping patient satisfaction in the internal medicine outpatient clinic (Karunia et al., 2022). This study showed that patients valued accurate and consistent services as indicators of professional competence (Fadila & Sulastri, 2023). The findings suggested that reliable service delivery strengthened patient trust and confidence in the healthcare system (Alrubaiee & Alkaa'ida, 2011). Patients expressed higher

satisfaction when procedures were carried out correctly and in accordance with clinical guidelines (Arab et al., 2012). Delays, inconsistencies, and unclear procedures were identified as barriers to achieving optimal satisfaction outcomes (Alanazi et al., 2023). The results indicated that reliability contributed to patient loyalty and long-term engagement with healthcare providers (Frasista et al., 2025). Therefore, the study emphasized the need for continuous evaluation of service accuracy and consistency in outpatient care (Wartiningasih et al., 2020).

Assurance and empathy further contributed significantly to the formation of patient satisfaction in this study (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Assurance influenced how patients judged the competence, courtesy, and credibility of healthcare staff (Khojah et al., 2022). The findings demonstrated that confident and respectful communication played a vital role in reducing patient anxiety (World Health Organization, 2021). Empathy also shaped patient expectations by emphasizing the importance of emotional support and individualized attention (Dewi et al., 2024). Patients expressed higher satisfaction when they perceived that healthcare workers genuinely cared about their concerns (Basri et al., 2023). Both assurance and empathy contributed to the psychological comfort that patients sought during their clinical interactions (Alghamdi, 2014). Therefore, strengthening these interpersonal dimensions became essential for improving satisfaction in outpatient care (Muhammad & Andi, 2023).

Overall, the findings of this study demonstrated that service quality played a decisive role in shaping patient satisfaction in internal medicine outpatient services (Fadila & Sulastri, 2023). The positive correlation indicated that enhancements in service delivery could produce meaningful improvements in patient experiences (Frasista et al., 2025). The results aligned with previous research emphasizing the importance of patient-centered quality improvement strategies in hospital settings (Alanazi et al., 2023). The study supported the recommendation that hospitals should strengthen communication, responsiveness,

and facility readiness to meet patient expectations (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2019). Continuous service evaluation and staff development emerged as crucial strategies for maintaining high performance in outpatient care (Wartingsih et al., 2020). The findings reinforced the need for systemic reforms aimed at enhancing reliability, empathy, and assurance in service delivery (Rosidah et al., 2024). Therefore, this study highlighted the importance of integrating quality improvement into routine outpatient operations to achieve consistently higher patient satisfaction (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Conclusion and Recommendation

The findings of this study indicate that most patients at the Internal Medicine Outpatient Clinic of Husada Utama Hospital Surabaya rated the service quality and their satisfaction level as “fair,” and a significant positive relationship of moderate strength was observed between service quality and patient satisfaction. This suggests that improvements in service quality directly contribute to increased patient satisfaction. Based on these findings, the hospital is advised to strengthen the most influential service dimensions—particularly responsiveness, empathy, reliability, and the physical aspects of care—through enhanced staff communication competencies, streamlined service flow, optimized waiting room facilities, and the implementation of routine evaluations based on patient feedback to ensure that service quality meets minimum service standards and continuously improves patient trust and loyalty..

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Declaration of conflict of interest

The authors declare no competing interests.

Declaration on the Use of AI

No AI tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript.

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