

Literature Review: The Role of Service Quality in Improving Patient Satisfaction in Hospitals

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Abstract

Hospitals, as healthcare providers, play a crucial role in improving public health status and are required to deliver high-quality services oriented toward patient satisfaction. Patient satisfaction is a fundamental indicator of service quality and is evaluated using the service quality framework across five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. This research aims to analyze the role of service quality in enhancing patient satisfaction in hospitals through a literature review. The method employed is a narrative literature review, analyzing 10 empirical research articles published in the Google Scholar database between 2020 and 2025. The results indicate that service quality consistently exerts a positive and significant influence on patient satisfaction across various healthcare facilities in Indonesia. The assurance and responsiveness dimensions were identified as the most dominant factors, while primary challenges include queue management, administrative efficiency, and limited human resources. The study concludes that service digitalization strategies and staff competency training are essential for optimizing sustainable patient satisfaction.

Keywords: service quality; patient satisfaction; hospitals; healthcare facilities; *Indonesia*, digitalization,.

INTRODUCTION

Hospitals play a crucial role as healthcare service providers that aim to improve public health. Amid increasingly intense competition in the healthcare industry, hospitals are required to deliver professional, patient-centered services. Patient satisfaction is a fundamental indicator in evaluating service effectiveness, as it reflects users' direct perceptions of the quality they receive. In addition, patient satisfaction plays an important role in building loyalty and ensuring continuity of visits, considering that people are now much more selective in choosing the best healthcare facilities (Murniati & Syafira, 2023).

One of the most commonly used instruments to measure satisfaction levels is the concept of service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1988). This model breaks down service quality into five main dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. These five pillars serve as a framework for various health studies in Indonesia to identify areas that need improvement and to formulate more effective operational strategies (Faeni, 2023).

The urgency of this research is increasingly relevant in the context of rapid transformation in healthcare services, including the growing demand for service digitalization, rising patient

expectations, and pressure on hospitals to maintain service quality amid resource constraints. Inefficiencies such as long queues, administrative delays, and uneven service quality across healthcare facilities may negatively impact patient satisfaction and trust if not properly addressed. Without a comprehensive understanding of the most critical service quality dimensions and existing challenges, hospitals may struggle to design effective and sustainable service improvement strategies. Therefore, a literature-based synthesis is urgently needed to provide evidence-based insights that can guide decision-making in improving healthcare service quality.

Various empirical studies in Indonesia confirm a positive and significant correlation between service quality and patient satisfaction (Kamalo et al., 2024). Prompt, accurate, and empathetic services consistently increase patient satisfaction and loyalty to healthcare institutions (Mahary et al., 2022). Conversely, the inability to meet patient expectations can damage a hospital's reputation and credibility (Azwarjaya et al., 2025). However, findings regarding the influence of each dimension of SERVQUAL often vary depending on hospital characteristics, methodology, and regional context (Irawan et al., 2020). Therefore, a systematic literature review is needed to map trends in findings, identify gaps in existing research, and determine which service dimensions are most crucial in influencing patient satisfaction.

Based on this gap, this study offers novelty by providing a narrative literature review that synthesizes recent empirical findings on service quality and patient satisfaction in Indonesian hospitals, focusing on identifying dominant dimensions, recurring challenges, and strategic areas for improvement. This integrative approach is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding compared to previous studies that often analyze individual dimensions separately.

Therefore, this research aims to analyze and synthesize the role of service quality in improving patient satisfaction in hospitals based on empirical studies published between 2020 and 2025, as well as to identify the most influential service quality dimensions and key challenges faced by healthcare institutions. The findings of this study are expected to contribute theoretically by enriching the literature on service quality and patient satisfaction in the healthcare sector, and practically by providing strategic insights for hospital management to improve service performance, enhance patient satisfaction, and support sustainable healthcare service development.

METHOD

This study used a narrative literature review method by examining empirical research articles on the influence of service quality on patient satisfaction in healthcare institutions (Anwary, 2020; Kamalo et al., 2024). A comprehensive literature search was conducted through the Google Scholar database within the 2020–2025 range using a combination of the keywords “service quality,” “SERVQUAL,” “patient satisfaction,” and “hospital” (Akmal et al., 2023; Irawan et al., 2021).

The purpose of this study was to synthesize the latest findings regarding the effectiveness of the five dimensions of service quality in the context of healthcare services in Indonesia (Aninda, 2023; Putri & Cokki, 2024). The selected articles were required to meet the inclusion criteria, namely: being primary research articles (not literature reviews); being published between 2020

and 2025; focusing on hospital service quality in Indonesia; and being available in full text (Sari et al., 2023). Articles that did not specifically address the dimensions of SERVQUAL were excluded from this review to ensure the depth of analysis of the aspects of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Irawan et al., 2021). The literature search process was carried out through an initial identification stage followed by selection based on the relevance of the titles and abstracts to provide an accurate contextual representation (Guspianto et al., 2022).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

An analysis of the empirical literature shows a strong consensus on the relationship between service excellence and patient satisfaction levels at various levels of health facilities in Indonesia (Kamalo et al., 2024). The ten articles selected in this study provide a comprehensive overview of the application of the five dimensions of service quality in responding to increasingly dynamic public expectations, both in government and private hospitals (Mabini et al., 2024). Through the mapping of findings from 2020 to 2025, it can be identified the pattern of success of interpersonal interactions among medical personnel as well as operational challenges that are still faced in health service quality management (Guspianto et al., 2022).

Here is a table of 10 empirical research articles (2020–2025) that have been filtered:

Table 1. Synthesis of Empirical Literature Findings: The Relationship between Service Quality and Patient Satisfaction in Indonesia (2020–2025)

No.	Year	Author	Method	Key Findings
1	2020	Irawan & Sitanggang (Irawan et al., 2020)	SERVQUAL	Patient satisfaction levels and there are <i>negative gaps</i> in the <i>responsiveness dimension</i> that require immediate improvement.
2	2020	Anwary (Anwary, 2020)	Quantitative	There is a significant relationship between the five dimensions of SERVQUAL and patient satisfaction in healthcare facilities.
3	2021	Yanuarti et al. (Yanuarti et al., 2021)	Quantitative	Service quality remains the main determinant of patient satisfaction even during the Covid-19 pandemic.
4	2022	Guspianto et al. (Guspianto et al., 2022)	Quantitative	The quality of service positively affects patient value, satisfaction, and revisit <i>intention</i> .
5	2023	Fanny (Faeni, 2023)	PLS-SEM	There is a negative gap in all dimensions for BPJS users; the service is still below patient expectations.
6	2023	Setyaningsih & Widagdo (Setyaningsih & Widagdo, 2023)	SERVPERF & IPA	The performance of services in private hospitals has a significant effect on satisfaction, with the main focus on improving physical facilities
7	2024	Hasanah et al. (Hasanah et al., 2024)	Quantitative	Inpatient satisfaction at Hospital X was recorded at 75%, this figure is still below the Minimum Service Standard (90%).
8	2024	Mabini et al. (Mabini et al., 2024)	Quantitative	The quality of service has a positive and significant effect on patient satisfaction in the Jampang Kulon Hospital area.

9	2025	Sumarta et al. <u>(Sumarta et al., 2025)</u>	Quantitative	Operational competence and quality culture simultaneously drive continuous improvement in patient satisfaction.
10	2025	Rahmatia et al. <u>(Rahmatia et al., 2025)</u>	SERVQUAL	The quality of inpatient services crucially shapes the public's positive perception of the hospital's overall performance.

Source: Author's synthesis based on 10 empirical studies (2020–2025)

The results of the review of the 10 articles show that service quality is consistently the main predictor of patient satisfaction. Although most of the dimensions show a positive correlation, several recent studies (2023-2024) highlight negative gaps in responsiveness and reliability, especially related to queues and administrative procedures (Faeni, 2023; Hasanah et al., 2024). In contrast, the dimensions of empathy and reassurance are often the main strengths of healthcare facilities in building patient trust (Murniati, & Syafira, 2023).

Based on the results of a review of 10 empirical studies published in the period from 2020 to 2025, it was found that service quality is consistently the main instrument in measuring patient satisfaction levels in various health facilities in Indonesia. The majority of studies use the SERVQUAL approach which measures five main dimensions: tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Berry et al., 1991).

The results of the analysis show variations in satisfaction levels based on the context of the time and type of service. The research at the beginning of this period by Irawan and Sitanggang recorded a patient satisfaction rate of 53.06%, with the discovery of a negative gap in the responsiveness dimension (-0.08) which indicates the need for improvement in service speed (Murniati, & Syafira, 2023). Anwary's research in the Puskesmas environment also found the same thing, which aims to find out the relationship between the dimension of service quality and patient satisfaction (Anwary, 2020).

Entering 2021-2022, several studies show positive trends but still highlight crucial areas. On the other hand, Yunningsih emphasized that the tangibles and assurance aspects can contribute positively to inpatient satisfaction (Yunningsih, 2022).

However, significant challenges arise in recent research (2023–2025) related to health insurance services and bureaucratic efficiency. Faeni found gaps in the five dimensions of services for BPJS users, where patient perceptions were below their expectations (Faeni, 2023). This is reinforced by findings that identify serious problems in terms of reliability and responsiveness due to long queues and slow administrative processes (Nilam et al., 2025). Hasanah et al. also noted low satisfaction in their latest study, where patient satisfaction rate was reported to be only 75%, a figure that is still significantly below the Minimum Service Standards indicator of 90%. (Hasanah et al., 2024).

Despite operational constraints, service quality remains the dominant factor determining loyalty (Sitepu & Kosasih, 2024). Rahmatia et al. show that service quality significantly shapes the perception of hospital performance in the eyes of the public (Rahmatia et al., 2025).

Overall, the synthesis of these 10 articles confirms that the dimensions of assurance and responsiveness are the most dominant factors in determining patient satisfaction. Chronic

problems found include service speed, queue management (Pratiwi, 2025), and limited human resources (Sudiby, 2021). Therefore, recommended improvement strategies include digitizing the registration system to cut waiting times (Primadhani et al., 2023), therapeutic communication training to increase empathy (Edwards et al., 2025), and periodic evaluations of the performance of medical personnel to maintain patient trust on an ongoing basis (Rismayanti et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

Based on a systematic analysis of studies published between 2020 and 2025, service quality was consistently found to have a positive and significant influence on patient satisfaction in Indonesian hospitals, with assurance and responsiveness emerging as the most dominant dimensions due to their close association with medical personnel competence and the prompt handling of patient needs and complaints. Nevertheless, persistent systemic barriers were identified, particularly in reliability and responsiveness, often linked to high workloads, inefficient queue management, and complex administrative procedures, while external factors such as service costs and the availability of supporting facilities also shaped patients' overall perceptions of service quality. Accordingly, hospitals were encouraged to enhance service efficiency through digitalization, optimize queue and administrative systems, and strengthen staff competency and resource allocation to deliver more responsive and reliable care. For future research, it is recommended to explore longitudinal and mixed-method approaches to better understand causal relationships and to examine the role of emerging factors such as health technology adoption and patient experience across different regional and hospital classifications.

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