



# The Role of Trust as a Medic in Enhancing Employee Interpersonal Relationships and Service Quality to Patient Satisfaction in a Hospital Context— Conceptual Analysis

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**Abstract.** This study aims to explore the conceptual framework of the mediating role of patient trust in the relationship between employee interpersonal communication, service quality, and patient satisfaction, by adopting Planned Behavior Theory (TPB). The methodology used is a structured conceptual framework that synthesizes literature from various previous studies relevant to the development and analysis of conceptual models. The results of the analysis show that although employee interpersonal communication and service quality have a direct influence on patient satisfaction, the presence of empirical inconsistencies indicates the need for previously unidentified mediation variables. It is hoped that the presence of patient trust can bridge the gap in previous research. The originality of this research lies in its emphasis on the role of patient trust as a mediator, which has never been comprehensively explored in this context before. The practical implications of this study are the importance of designing better communication strategies and improving service quality to build patient trust, which in turn can improve patient satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Interpersonal Communication, Service Quality, Patient Trust, Patient Satisfaction, Conceptual Analysis.

## 1 Background

Patient satisfaction is the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction felt by the patient after receiving services from the hospital [1]. This describes the extent to which the services provided are in accordance with the patient's expectations and needs. Aspects assessed

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in patient satisfaction include the quality of medical care, the comfort of the hospital environment, and interaction with medical personnel and hospital staff [2], [3], [4].

Patient satisfaction is the main indicator in assessing the effectiveness of the hospital which plays an important role in building a positive image of the hospital. Patient Satisfaction determines the level of patient loyalty to return to the same service in the future [5]. Consumer satisfaction can also be influenced by employee interpersonal communication [6].

Interpersonal communication in hospitals is an interaction that occurs between medical personnel, hospital administrative staff, and patients that involves the exchange of information both verbally and non-verbally [7], [8]. This communication aims to provide a clear explanation of health conditions, treatment procedures, and build empathic relationships that pay attention to the patient's feelings. Effective and empathetic communication can reduce patient anxiety, increase trust, and create comfort, while poor communication can lead to confusion, mistrust, and lead to patient dissatisfaction [9].

In addition to interpersonal communication, the quality of service can affect patient satisfaction [10]. The quality of service in hospitals is all elements that affect the patient experience, ranging from the speed of service, the skills of medical personnel, adequate facilities, to the friendly and professional attitude of the staff [3], [11]. Quality of service also involves the physical comfort of the patient during treatment, the cleanliness of the hospital environment, as well as efficiency in the management of time and resources [12]. High quality of service can increase patient satisfaction and create a positive experience, while poor service quality has the potential to lower patient satisfaction, damage the reputation of the nursing home, and affect patient loyalty levels [11].

Several studies have shown that interpersonal communication has an effect on increased patient satisfaction [13], [14], [15]. However, there are several studies that show that interpersonal communication has no effect on improving patient satisfaction [16], [17], [18].

Several other studies have shown that the quality of service also has an effect on increased patient satisfaction [19], [20], [21]. However, there are several studies that show that the quality of service has no effect on improving patient satisfaction [22], [23]. This suggests the need for further studies to understand other factors that may play a role in mediating or strengthening the relationship between the two variables.

Based on gap research and the phenomenon found, this study adds the patient trust variable as a mediating variable that affects the relationship between interpersonal communication and service quality to patient satisfaction. Patient trust includes belief in the integrity, competence, and goodwill of medical personnel, which play an important role in shaping positive patient experiences and satisfaction with the services received by patients [24], [25], [26].

This study aims to analyze the influence of interpersonal communication and service quality on patient satisfaction at dr. Tjitrowardojo Purworejo Hospital with patient trust as a mediator that strengthens the relationship. This research is expected to provide practical recommendations to improve the quality of communication and services, as well as strengthen patient trust. Academically, this research is expected to contribute to the development of science.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Planned Behavior Theory**

The Theory of Planned Behavior developed by Ajzen explains that an individual's intention to behave in a certain way is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control [27]. In the context of healthcare, patient trust in medical personnel and hospital service quality plays a central role in mediating the relationship between interpersonal communication, service quality, and patient satisfaction [28], [29]. Recent research shows that trust built through effective communication can strengthen positive attitudes and increase patients' intention to interact in healthcare [28], [30].

Patient behavior is affected by subjective norms derived from family, friends, and other people's experiences in using health services. Positive social support, such as favorable recommendations and testimonials, can increase patients' confidence in the reliability of services, thereby increasing compliance intent and engagement in the treatment process. In a study by Bwachele et al [31], it appears that strong subjective norms contribute significantly to patient satisfaction, through the intermediary of trust built from positive experiences.

Recent research confirms the role of trust as a mediator in the relationship between service quality and patient satisfaction. In their studies, Al-Hilou and Suifan [28], found that patient trust not only mediates the effect of service quality on satisfaction, but is also a key factor in maintaining long-term relationships with patients. By providing responsive and empathetic services, service providers can increase patient trust, which has a direct impact on patient satisfaction and their loyalty to the hospital [32].

Thus, TPB provides a solid conceptual framework for understanding how interpersonal communication and service quality affect patient satisfaction through trust as a mediator [33]. This research shows that communication and service quality improvement strategies that focus on building patient trust can encourage more active interaction in care and improve overall health outcomes [34], [35].

### **2.2 Patient Satisfaction**

Patient satisfaction can be defined as a result of a comparison between a patient's expectations before receiving services and their perception of the quality of service

actually received [19], [20], [36], [37]. If the service provided is better than expected, the patient is satisfied, while if the service does not meet expectations, the patient will feel dissatisfied. In this context, patient satisfaction is greatly influenced by how well the healthcare provider can meet or exceed the patient's expectations in terms of the quality of medical services, communication, and comfort of the facilities provided, which in turn contributes to the loyalty and trust of patients towards the healthcare institution [38]. Patient satisfaction indicators include three main aspects. First, Overall Happiness with the Service, which measures the general level of satisfaction of patients with the services received, includes medical quality and facility comfort. Second, Willingness to Recommend the Service, which assesses the extent to which patients are willing to recommend the hospital to others, reflects the patient's loyalty to the quality of service. Third, Satisfaction with the Decision to Choose the Hospital, which measures patients' satisfaction with their decision to choose the hospital, based on their experience with the quality of services provided [13].

### **2.3 Employee Interpersonal Communication**

Employee Interpersonal Communication refers to physical, social, and psychological conditions [14], [39], [40]. Interpersonal communication in medical services refers to the interaction between patients and medical personnel, both doctors, nurses, and hospital administrative staff, which involves the exchange of verbal and non-verbal information [41], [42], [43]. Effective communication includes clarity in explaining medical conditions, treatment procedures, and creating an empathetic relationship with the patient [44], [45]. In this case, interpersonal communication greatly influences patients' perception of the quality of service and the level of satisfaction they feel. Some indicators of interpersonal communication in the context of medical services include interaction with professionals, general administrative staff, and the physical environment of the hospital (Chang et al., 2013).

### **2.4 Quality of Service**

Quality of Service refers to the extent to which the services provided by a healthcare institution meet or exceed the expectations of its patients [20], [36], [46]. This concept has many aspects that cover various dimensions, such as responsiveness, service reliability, and assurances provided to patients. Responsiveness refers to how quickly and effectively staff can meet patient needs, while reliability reflects the hospital's ability to consistently deliver accurate and reliable care [36].

Assurance is the extent to which healthcare providers can make patients feel safe, confident, and cared for during their treatment. High-quality service is essential for patient satisfaction, as it not only improves the overall patient experience but also helps build long-term trust and loyalty [20].

When patients receive high-quality care, they are likely to return to the same institution for future medical needs and recommend the hospital to others. Conversely, poor service quality can lead to patient dissatisfaction, erode trust, and damage the institution's reputation. This, in turn, can affect patient retention, stifle growth, and lead to a decline in overall healthcare provider performance[37].

High quality of service is essential for healthcare institutions to maintain a competitive advantage, patient loyalty, and positive public relations. Indicators of service quality [13] are as follows: Indicators of hospital service quality include Responsiveness (the ability of staff to meet patient needs quickly and effectively), Reliability (the ability of the hospital to provide consistent and reliable services), and Assurances (the ability of the hospital to provide a sense of security and confidence to patients through professionalism and a supportive environment).

## **2.5 Patient trust**

Patient trust is a psychological state that reflects the patient's feelings regarding the experience and services they receive from a hospital or health facility [46], [47], [48]. This trust depends on the extent to which the services provided are in accordance with the patient's expectations which include medical, communication, comfort, and hospital environment aspects [21], [46], [48]. A patient's level of trust can influence their decision to return to the health service and recommend it to others. Indicators of the Patient Trust variables include Honesty, Commitment, Support, Assessment, and Dependency

## **3 Methodology**

This study uses a conceptual approach to clarify theoretical constructions and develop new interpretations based on existing literature [49]. This research uses a conceptual approach to develop a theoretical understanding of the role of interpersonal communication, service quality, and patient trust in influencing patient satisfaction [50]. This approach aims to clarify the relationships between key concepts that have been identified through a review of relevant literature, as well as explore the potential mediating role of patient trust. Conceptual reviews help formulate a solid theoretical framework for future empirical research, as well as identify gaps in existing research [50]. Through this approach, it is hoped that a more comprehensive conceptual framework can be developed to answer the research questions that have been formulated. This study proposes to examine five important relationships between different variables, which are described as follows: 1) Does employee interpersonal communication have a significant positive effect on patient satisfaction? 2) Does the quality of service have a significant positive effect on patient satisfaction? 3) Does employee interpersonal communication have a significant positive effect on patient

trust? 4) Does the quality of service have a significant positive effect on patient trust?

5) Does patient trust have a significant positive effect on patient satisfaction?

## **4 Results & Discussion**

### **4.1 The Effect of Interpersonal Communication on Patient Satisfaction**

Employee Interpersonal Communication refers to the interaction or exchange of information between employees (be it medical personnel or administrative staff) and patients or between employees in an organization [14]. This communication can be verbal or non-verbal communication that aims to build positive relationships, clarify information, and facilitate collaboration in the workplace [51]. In hospital connectivity, interpersonal communication involves interaction between doctors, nurses, administrative staff, and patients, which is critical in creating an environment that supports patient comfort and satisfaction [39].

The interpersonal communication of hospital employees has a huge role in improving patient satisfaction [41]. Effective interaction between hospital employees and patients will create mutual trust and empathy, which in turn can reduce patient anxiety and improve their experience during treatment. Good communication allows patients to better understand their medical condition, know the procedures to be performed, and feel more involved in the treatment process [42]. Additionally, staff who communicate in a friendly, clear, and attentive manner can increase patients' sense of security, make them feel valued, and ensure they get the information they need to make decisions regarding their health [14].

Previous research has shown that good interpersonal communication can strengthen the relationship between patients and healthcare providers, contributing to positive patient experiences [14], [51], [52]. When interpersonal communication is effective, patients tend to feel more satisfied with the services they receive, both in terms of medical quality, facility comfort, and relationship with hospital staff [39]. Employee interpersonal communication plays an important role in creating a positive experience for patients and contributes to higher levels of satisfaction.

### **4.2 The Influence of Service Quality on Patient Satisfaction**

Quality of Service refers to the extent to which the services provided by a hospital or healthcare facility meet or exceed the patient's expectations [20]. The quality of service includes various dimensions, such as the speed of responding to patient needs, the reliability of the service, the professionalism of the medical personnel, and the comfort of the facilities provided [19]. Quality services include not only good medical care, but also non-medical aspects such as staff-friendly attitude, facility cleanliness, and efficiency in time management [36].

Quality of service plays a key role in improving patient satisfaction in hospitals [38]. When dr. Tjitrowardojo Purworejo Hospital can provide fast, reliable, and meet patient expectations, then patients feel valued and prioritized [37]. Timeliness in delivering medical care, accuracy in diagnosis, and clear communication regarding treatment procedures can create a sense of security and trust in patients [43]. A good quality of service also includes a more holistic patient experience, from the physical comfort in the treatment room to a friendly and professional atmosphere.

Previous research has shown that the quality of service has a positive effect on patient satisfaction [19], [36], [38]. Patients who receive services quickly and efficiently, and feel cared for and valued, tend to feel satisfied and have a tendency to return to those services in the future.

### **4.3 The Influence of Employee Interpersonal Communication on Patient Trust**

Employee Interpersonal Communication refers to the process of interaction and exchange of information between employees in hospitals, both medical personnel such as doctors and nurses, as well as administrative staff, with patients or between fellow employees [47]. This communication includes not only verbal conversations, but also non-verbal interactions that play a role in building trusting, empathetic, and effective relationships [13]. In the context of hospital services, good interpersonal communication has a profound effect on patient comfort which can influence their decision to trust healthcare providers [45].

Patient Trust is the patient's confidence in medical personnel and staff in terms of their competence, integrity, and goodwill to provide the best care [47]. This trust is formed based on the patient's experience during the treatment process, including their interaction with medical staff and the communication received [47].

Employee interpersonal communication has a significant influence on patient trust, as effective and empathetic interactions can build a sense of security and ensure that patients feel valued and prioritized in their treatment process [53]. When medical personnel and administrative staff are able to communicate clearly, honestly, and responsive to patient needs, patients' trust in them tends to increase. Conversely, poor or unempathetic communication can cause patients to feel neglected, which can reduce their level of trust in the sick and medical staff [45].

Previous research has also supported the relationship between interpersonal communication and patient trust. Interpersonal communication of health workers has a positive influence on the level of patient trust at the Bandar Senembah Health Center, Binjai City [47]. Other research has also stated that interpersonal behavior has a positive effect on the quality of service and patient trust, which in turn increases patient satisfaction [13]. This shows that good interpersonal communication can increase patient trust, which is an important factor in creating a positive treatment experience and increasing patient satisfaction levels.

#### **4.4 The Effect of Service Quality on Patient Trust**

Quality of Service refers to the extent to which the services provided by a hospital or healthcare provider meet or exceed the patient's expectations [54]. The quality of service includes various aspects, including speed of service, reliability, professionalism of medical personnel, comfort of facilities, and efficiency in time and resource management [54]. High quality of service not only increases patient satisfaction but can also build patient trust and loyalty to hospitals or healthcare providers [46].

Patient trust is the patient's belief in the ability, integrity, and goodwill of medical personnel and hospital staff [55]. This trust is formed from the patient's experience during the treatment process, including interaction with medical personnel, communication received, and consistency in the services provided. Patient trust is critical because it can influence their decision to follow treatment procedures, return to hospital services, and recommend those services to others [48].

The quality of service has a huge influence on building patient trust in hospitals [48]. When hospitals can provide services that are fast, reliable, and meet patient expectations, patients will feel valued and prioritized, which increases their trust in service providers. Good quality of service, such as reliability in providing timely care, the ability of medical staff to provide clear and accurate information, and the comfort of the facilities provided, can create a sense of security and comfort in patients [56].

Previous research has shown that high quality of service is positively associated with patient trust. Setianingsih and Susanti [36] In their research on the quality of health services in hospitals, it is shown that the quality of service has a positive influence on patient trust. Rahayu et al. [55] It was also found that good quality of service had a significant effect on patient trust, which in turn increased patient satisfaction. This indicates that when patients are satisfied with the quality of service they receive, they are more likely to trust medical personnel and hospitals, which can strengthen the patient's relationship with the service provider.

#### **4.5 The Influence of Patient Trust on Patient Satisfaction**

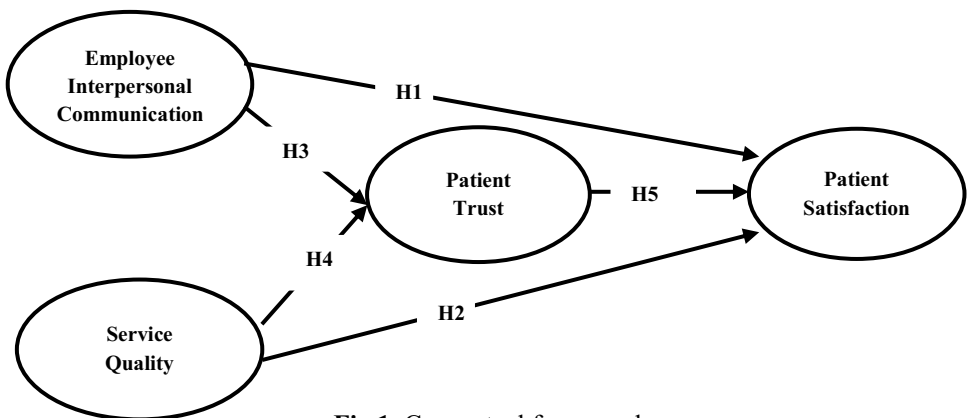
Patient Trust refers to the patient's belief in the integrity, competence, and goodwill of medical personnel and hospital staff in providing care [56]. This trust develops from the patient's experience during receiving medical services, both through communication with medical personnel, the quality of care received, and the extent to which the patient feels valued and protected during treatment. Patients' trust greatly influences their decision to follow medical recommendations, return to the hospital, and recommend services to others.

Patient Satisfaction is a patient's subjective feeling or evaluation of how well the medical services they receive are in line with their expectations. This satisfaction includes various aspects of service, such as the quality of medical care, the attitude and

communication of medical personnel, the comfort of facilities, and the clarity of information regarding medical procedures. Patient satisfaction is an important indicator of the effectiveness of the services of dr. Tjitrowardojo Purworejo Hospital, which affects patient loyalty and the reputation of dr. Tjitrowardojo Purworejo Hospital.

Patient trust plays an important role in improving patient satisfaction, because when patients feel confident in the abilities and integrity of medical personnel, they tend to have a more positive experience during the treatment process [55]. This trust influences how patients rate the quality of services received. Patients who feel confident in the medical staff and dr. Tjitrowardojo Purworejo Hospital are more likely to receive treatment more openly, leading to increased their satisfaction with the overall treatment experience.

Previous research supports a positive relationship between patient trust and patient satisfaction [56]. In the study, they also found that patient trust has a significant effect on patient satisfaction, showing that the higher the level of patient trust, the more likely they are to feel satisfied with the services provided [55]. High patient trust contributes to increased patient satisfaction, because patients who feel valued and trusted by medical personnel will have a positive perception of the quality of service received [13].



**Fig 1.** Conceptual framework

Fig 1. Conceptual framework This conceptual framework is obtained from previous research discussions and integrations. This conceptual research proposes that Employee Interpersonal Communication and Service Quality have a positive influence on Patient Satisfaction, either directly or indirectly through the mediation of Patient Trust. This is in line with the Theory of Planned Behavior in explaining how communication and service quality affect patient outcomes. Communication plays an important role as a mediator; Effective interpersonal communication between staff and patients builds trust, reduces misunderstandings, and strengthens relationships, which ultimately improves patient satisfaction. Similarly, the quality of service, including

responsiveness, reliability, and assurance, which is well communicated, will build patients' trust and increase their satisfaction with the healthcare services received.

## 5 Conclusion

This conceptual research comprehensively outlines the relationship between employee interpersonal communication, service quality, patient trust, and patient satisfaction. Through the lens of Planned Behavior Theory (TPB), we propose a conceptual framework that highlights the important role of patient trust as a mediator. Conceptual findings show that effective interpersonal communication and good service quality not only directly contribute to patient satisfaction, but also significantly increase patient trust. Patient trust, in turn, becomes an important bridge that facilitates increased patient satisfaction through stronger relationships between patients and medical personnel. This framework provides an in-depth understanding of the complex dynamics that shape patient satisfaction, by placing interpersonal communication and quality of service as central elements that strengthen patient trust. This research makes a theoretical contribution by expanding the understanding of patient satisfaction through the role of trust as a mediator between interpersonal communication, service quality, and patient satisfaction. In practical terms, these findings provide insights for hospital managers and policymakers to design strategies that improve the quality of communication, improve service quality, and build patient trust to improve patient satisfaction. The next step is to test this conceptual framework empirically through a quantitative study using PLS-SEM tools at dr. Tjitrowardojo Purworejo Hospital.

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