



Reimagining Healthcare Service Quality: A SERVQUAL-Based Analysis of Patient Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

Delivering patient-centered healthcare services requires continuous innovation in service quality management, particularly in primary healthcare institutions facing increasing service demand and resource constraints. This study aims to reimagine healthcare service quality by examining how the five SERVQUAL dimensions contribute to patient satisfaction at the Tembilahan City Community Health Center, Indragiri Hilir Regency. A qualitative field research design was employed using direct observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis to capture the perspectives of healthcare providers and patients. The findings reveal that the health center demonstrates satisfactory performance across the dimensions of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, indicating a generally positive level of patient satisfaction. Nevertheless, several structural and operational challenges remain, including inadequate facilities, high patient volumes, shortages of human resources, and inefficiencies in administrative services, which limit the delivery of fully patient-centered care. The study contributes by providing a SERVQUAL-based qualitative evaluation that identifies priority areas for service innovation in primary healthcare. These findings offer practical insights for healthcare managers and policymakers in designing strategies to strengthen service quality and improve patient satisfaction in community health centers.

Keywords: *Healthcare Service Quality, Patient Satisfaction, SERVQUAL, Primary Healthcare, Patient-Centered Care.*

1. Introduction

Improving healthcare service quality has become a strategic priority for healthcare organizations worldwide as patient-centered care increasingly serves as a benchmark for evaluating healthcare performance. Beyond providing effective medical treatment, healthcare institutions are expected to deliver accessible, reliable, responsive, and patient-oriented services that enhance patient satisfaction and strengthen public trust. Numerous studies have demonstrated that service quality is one of the strongest determinants of patient satisfaction, patient trust, treatment adherence, and long-term loyalty toward healthcare providers (Naidu, 2009; Dagger et al., 2007; Ferreira et al., 2023). In primary healthcare settings, the SERVQUAL dimensions—tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—remain widely adopted for evaluating healthcare service quality because they comprehensively capture patients' perceptions of the services received (Hosseinzadeh et al., 2024). Recent studies further confirm that improvements in these dimensions significantly enhance patient satisfaction across various healthcare settings (Alhajri et al., 2023; Rahmatia et al., 2025).

Patient satisfaction has therefore become an essential indicator of healthcare quality because it reflects the extent to which healthcare services meet patients' expectations. Previous studies have consistently shown that higher service quality leads to greater patient satisfaction, trust, and loyalty (Liu et al., 2021; Aladwan et al., 2021; Sertan et al., 2023; AlOmari & Hamid, 2022). However, healthcare service quality is influenced not only by healthcare professionals' competence but also by organizational factors, including the adequacy of facilities, administrative efficiency, responsiveness, and the availability of human resources (Ali et al., 2024; Mosadeghrad, 2014). These findings indicate that continuous evaluation of healthcare services is necessary to identify service gaps and support evidence-based improvements.

In Indonesia, healthcare services constitute an essential component of public services that must ensure equitable, accessible, and high-quality healthcare for all citizens. Community Health Centers (Puskesmas) function as the frontline of the national healthcare system by providing promotive, preventive, curative, and rehabilitative services directly to the community (Dwimawanti, 2020; Ratna Ekasari et al., 2022). As public service institutions, Puskesmas are expected to deliver services that meet community expectations and improve patient satisfaction (Fari et al., 2021; Azan et al., 2021). Nevertheless, several studies conducted in Indonesian primary healthcare facilities continue to report challenges related to service effectiveness, healthcare personnel, administrative processes, and healthcare facilities that influence patient satisfaction (Anggit & Setyorini, 2022; Ramadhan et al., 2021; Jayanti & Abidin, 2023; Gumolong, 2023; Rusti et al., 2024).

The Tembilahan Kota Community Health Center is one of the largest primary healthcare facilities in Indragiri Hilir Regency, serving approximately 44,736 residents distributed across five administrative areas. The large population served directly increases the number of patient visits and consequently the workload of healthcare providers. However, this growing demand is not fully supported by proportional healthcare personnel and adequate service facilities. Based on administrative data, the health center employs 120 personnel consisting of 70 civil servants and 52 non-civil servants, yet the increasing patient volume continues to place substantial pressure on healthcare delivery. Furthermore, several supporting facilities remain inadequate, including limited waiting areas, damaged health posts, a non-functional ambulance, unstable administrative infrastructure, and insufficient supporting equipment. These conditions potentially reduce service efficiency, prolong waiting times, and ultimately affect patient satisfaction.

Although previous studies have extensively examined the relationship between healthcare service quality and patient satisfaction, most have employed quantitative approaches and primarily focused on hospitals or general healthcare institutions (Alhajri et al., 2023; Hosseinzadeh et al., 2024; KS et al., 2023). Limited research has explored service quality within Indonesian community health centers using a qualitative approach that comprehensively examines the five SERVQUAL dimensions while simultaneously considering organizational constraints such as human resources, service workload, and healthcare facilities. This gap indicates the need for an in-depth investigation capable of explaining not only the level of service quality but also the contextual factors affecting patient satisfaction in primary healthcare settings.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze healthcare service quality in building patient satisfaction at the Tembilahan Kota Community Health Center using the SERVQUAL framework. The novelty of this research lies in providing a qualitative and context-specific evaluation that integrates the five SERVQUAL dimensions with organizational factors, including human resources, service workload, and healthcare infrastructure, to identify practical strategies for improving patient-centered healthcare services in Indonesian community health centers. The findings are expected to contribute to the literature on primary healthcare service quality while providing practical recommendations for healthcare managers and policymakers to strengthen service quality and enhance patient satisfaction.

2. Literature Review

Public Services

Public services refer to a series of activities provided by government institutions to fulfill the needs of citizens through the delivery of goods, services, and administrative functions. The

effectiveness of public services reflects the government's commitment to ensuring citizens' welfare and implementing good governance principles (Dwimawanti, 2020; Azan et al., 2021; Gumolong, 2023). Within the healthcare sector, public service quality is increasingly recognized as a strategic factor that shapes public trust, organizational performance, and community well-being. Modern public service delivery emphasizes not only administrative efficiency but also responsiveness, transparency, accountability, and citizen satisfaction.

Healthcare services constitute one of the most essential forms of public service because they directly affect the quality of human life. Consequently, healthcare providers are expected to deliver accessible, equitable, timely, and patient-centered services that satisfy community expectations (Fari et al., 2021; Ferreira et al., 2023). The quality of public healthcare services has therefore become an important indicator for evaluating government performance, particularly in primary healthcare institutions responsible for delivering basic health services to the community (Ali et al., 2024).

Health Services

Health services encompass promotive, preventive, curative, and rehabilitative activities designed to improve community health and ensure equitable access to healthcare. Effective healthcare services require competent healthcare professionals, adequate facilities, efficient administrative systems, and effective communication between healthcare providers and patients (Ramadhan et al., 2021; Jayanti & Abidin, 2023). These elements collectively influence patients' perceptions of healthcare quality and ultimately determine their level of satisfaction.

Recent international studies indicate that healthcare quality is multidimensional and depends not only on clinical outcomes but also on patients' experiences throughout the service process. Factors such as responsiveness, accessibility, reliability, communication, and empathy significantly influence patients' evaluations of healthcare services (Alhajri et al., 2023; Hosseinzadeh et al., 2024). Ferreira et al. (2023) further demonstrated through a systematic review that organizational readiness, service effectiveness, and patient-centered care consistently emerge as major determinants of healthcare quality across different healthcare systems. Therefore, continuous evaluation of healthcare services is necessary to identify weaknesses and improve service performance.

Patient Satisfaction

Patient satisfaction represents patients' overall evaluation of healthcare services after comparing their expectations with the actual services received. It has become one of the most widely used indicators for assessing healthcare quality because satisfied patients are more likely to trust healthcare providers, adhere to medical recommendations, and continue utilizing healthcare services (Naidu, 2009; Liu et al., 2021).

Previous studies consistently demonstrate a strong relationship between healthcare service quality and patient satisfaction. Aladwan et al. (2021) found that higher service quality significantly increases patient satisfaction, which subsequently strengthens patient loyalty. Similarly, Sertan et al. (2023) reported that patient trust and satisfaction are essential mechanisms through which healthcare quality influences long-term patient relationships. AlOmari and Hamid (2022) also emphasized that satisfied patients exhibit greater treatment adherence and stronger loyalty toward healthcare institutions. These findings suggest that patient satisfaction should not merely be considered an outcome of healthcare services but also a strategic objective that contributes to organizational sustainability.

Healthcare Service Quality

Healthcare service quality refers to the ability of healthcare organizations to consistently provide services that meet or exceed patient expectations. Among various measurement models, SERVQUAL remains the most widely adopted framework because it evaluates healthcare services through five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Dagger et al., 2007).

The tangible dimension reflects the adequacy of physical facilities, equipment, and healthcare infrastructure. Reliability concerns the ability of healthcare providers to deliver

accurate and dependable services consistently. Responsiveness measures the willingness of healthcare personnel to provide prompt assistance and timely services. Assurance refers to the competence, professionalism, and credibility of healthcare staff in creating patients' confidence, whereas empathy reflects individualized attention and compassionate care provided to patients (Mosadeghrad, 2014).

Recent empirical studies consistently confirm the positive relationship between SERVQUAL dimensions and patient satisfaction. Nguyen et al. (2021), KS et al. (2023), and Hosseinzadeh et al. (2024) found that improvements in reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangible facilities significantly enhance patient satisfaction across different healthcare settings. Likewise, Rahmatia et al. (2025) reported that healthcare organizations achieving higher SERVQUAL scores tend to demonstrate higher patient satisfaction and better organizational performance. These findings reinforce the SERVQUAL model as an effective framework for evaluating healthcare service quality.

Community Health Centers (Puskesmas)

Community Health Centers (Puskesmas) are primary healthcare institutions responsible for delivering comprehensive healthcare services to local communities. Besides providing curative care, Puskesmas also perform promotive, preventive, rehabilitative, and community empowerment functions that support national public health programs (Dwimawanti, 2020; Ratna Ekasari et al., 2022).

Despite their strategic role, many Puskesmas continue to face challenges related to healthcare personnel, administrative systems, infrastructure, and increasing patient demand. Previous studies conducted in Indonesia have reported that limitations in human resources, healthcare facilities, and service management often reduce service effectiveness and patient satisfaction (Anggit & Setyorini, 2022; Fari et al., 2021; Ramadhan et al., 2021; Rusti et al., 2024). Consequently, evaluating healthcare service quality in Puskesmas using the SERVQUAL framework is essential to identify service deficiencies and formulate evidence-based strategies for improving patient-centered healthcare services.

3. Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative field research design to explore the research phenomenon through direct engagement with the research setting. The study was conducted at the Tembilahan Kota Community Health Center (Puskesmas Tembilahan Kota) in Tembilahan City and was carried out throughout 2026 until its completion. A qualitative approach was chosen to obtain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the observed practices by utilizing interactive research methods, particularly direct observation and interviews. The analysis and interpretation of the findings were presented comprehensively by referring to relevant legal provisions, regulations, and applicable laws to ensure that the discussion was grounded in the appropriate legal framework.

The study utilized two main sources of data, namely primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from the field through interviews with selected participants who possessed relevant knowledge and experience related to the research topic. Secondary data were collected to complement and support the primary findings, including books, scientific articles, official documents, government regulations, and other legal references relevant to the research objectives.

Data were collected using three complementary techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted systematically to examine the actual conditions and activities occurring within the research setting, allowing the researcher to record relevant events and behaviors directly. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach, enabling respondents to express their opinions, experiences, and perspectives openly while allowing the researcher to explore emerging issues in greater depth. This flexible interview technique facilitated a richer understanding of the implementation of the observed activities (Sugiyono, 2008). In addition, documentation was employed to support and validate the findings by collecting and analyzing relevant materials such as institutional documents, photographs, official records, books, and scientific publications related to the research topic. The integration of these three data

collection techniques enabled data triangulation, thereby enhancing the credibility, validity, and trustworthiness of the research findings.

4. Results and Discussion

Analysis of Service Quality

This study discusses the quality of services at Tembilahan City Community Health Center in building patient satisfaction, to determine this role the main focus of this research is to analyze the extent to which services provided by the health center are able to meet patient expectations and needs, so that they can create an optimal level of satisfaction.

In this study, the author refers to the concept of service quality which includes several dimensions, such as tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. These five dimensions are used as a basis for seeing how services are provided by health workers and the Health Center as a whole.

Service quality is one of the important factors in improving patient satisfaction. Good service is not only seen from the treatment results, but also from how the service process is provided, starting from patient admission, service punctuality, attitude of health workers, to facilities available at the health center.

However, to obtain a deeper picture of service quality at Tembilahan City Health Center, the author collected data through interviews with several informants, namely the Head of the Health Center, health workers, doctors, nurses, administrative officers, and patients. This interview aims to find out directly how patients respond to the service. Furthermore, the results of the interviews were analyzed based on the five dimensions of service quality, namely tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, so that it can provide a more comprehensive picture of the level of patient satisfaction.

Based on the interview results that have been conducted, differences in views were found between service providers and patients regarding the quality of services provided. This shows that service evaluation needs to be seen from various perspectives in order to obtain more objective results.

1. Tangible (Physical Evidence)

Tangible is an aspect related to facilities, infrastructure, and the appearance of health workers in providing services to patients. Based on the research results, the facilities available at the Health Center are quite adequate, such as waiting rooms, service rooms, and medical equipment used in the service process.

However, there are still shortcomings, especially in the comfort of the waiting room and limited other supporting facilities. This is one of the factors affecting patient comfort while waiting for services. Thus, the tangible aspect still needs to be improved in order to provide better comfort to patients. Based on the interview results above, it can be seen that the condition of tangible at Tembilahan City Health Center is generally quite adequate in supporting health services, both in terms of availability of facilities and medical equipment. However, there are still shortcomings, especially in the comfort aspect of the waiting room which feels less spacious when the number of patients increases, causing some patients to have to wait while standing. In addition, limited supporting facilities also affect the level of patient comfort. Therefore, it is necessary to improve and develop the waiting room, so that it can provide more optimal comfort for patients while receiving services.

2. Reliability

Reliability relates to the ability of health workers to provide services in a precise, accurate, and procedure-based manner. This aspect reflects the extent to which the service provided can be trusted by patients, both in terms of timeliness, diagnosis accuracy, and suitability of actions with applicable operational standards. In health services, reliability is very important because it is directly related to patient safety and satisfaction.

Reliable services are indicated by the existence of clear Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), implementation of services in accordance with provisions, and the ability of health workers to provide professional services. In addition, reliability can also be seen from the

consistency of services provided to every patient without discriminating background, as well as the ability of staff to minimize errors in every service process.

With good reliability, patients will feel more confident in the services provided by Tembilahan City Health Center, Indragiri Hilir Regency. Conversely, if service reliability is low, this can lead to patient dissatisfaction and reduce public trust in health service quality. Based on the interview results, both with the head of the health center, doctors, administrative staff, nurses, and patients, it can be seen that Tembilahan City Health Center already has Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) used as guidelines in the implementation of health services. These SOPs are applied at every stage of service, starting from registration, patient examination, to laboratory and pharmacy services. The existence of these SOPs shows that the Health Center has made efforts to provide structured, appropriate, and standard-based health services.

However, in its implementation, the reliability aspect of service is not yet fully optimal. This can be seen from patient complaints regarding long waiting times, especially when patient numbers increase. This condition shows that services are not yet fully consistent in providing fast and timely services to patients.

In addition, the high number of patients arriving every day also affects the smoothness of the service process at Tembilahan City Health Center. The large number of patients causes the service process to take longer, especially in registration and examination sections. This situation results in some patients having to wait quite a long time before receiving health services.

Limited human resources and increasing service workload are also factors affecting service reliability at Tembilahan City Health Center. Although health workers have tried to provide services according to established procedures, in busy conditions services cannot yet be carried out optimally and on time to all patients.

According to the theory of Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry in Hardiansyah (2011:46), reliability is the ability of service providers to deliver promised services accurately, precisely, and reliably. In the context of this study, services at Tembilahan City Health Center have shown efforts to apply reliability through SOP implementation and procedural-based services. However, aspects of timeliness and service consistency still need to be improved so that service quality can be more optimal and increase patient satisfaction.

3. Responsiveness

Responsiveness is the ability of health workers to provide fast, appropriate, and responsive services to patient needs. This aspect is related to the willingness of staff to help patients, provide clear information, and respond to complaints or needs quickly. Services with good responsiveness will provide comfort and increase patient satisfaction. From the interview results above, it can be seen that responsiveness of staff in providing services at Tembilahan City Health Center, Indragiri Hilir Regency is generally quite good, this can be seen from the existence of a clear complaint handling system, such as providing special officers and easy access for patients to submit complaints either directly or through communication media. In addition, health workers also try to respond with empathy, identify patient complaints, and provide solutions or referrals according to patient needs.

However, in its implementation there are still several obstacles, especially in busy service conditions. This can be seen from patient complaints regarding staff responses which are considered slow, less responsive, and seem rushed so that the explanations given are not fully clear and detailed. In addition, technical obstacles such as the use of online-based systems are also one of the factors affecting service speed, especially for elderly patients who do not understand technology use.

Therefore, staff responsiveness still needs to be improved, especially in maintaining consistency of response speed, accuracy in providing explanations, and improving communication quality to patients so that services can be more optimal and increase patient satisfaction.

4. Assurance

Assurance is an aspect related to the ability of service providers to build patient trust and confidence in the services provided. In health services, assurance includes not only competence

and professional attitude of health workers, but also transparency in information delivery, especially related to service costs, as well as conformity of services with established standards. Cost transparency is important so that patients clearly understand the costs to be incurred without ambiguity, so as to avoid misunderstandings. In addition, services provided in accordance with Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) will give patients certainty that the actions received meet applicable requirements.

Based on interviews conducted, it can be seen that the assurance aspect of services at Tembilahan City Health Center is basically running according to established standards. This is shown by SOP implementation in every service action, compliance with medical standards, and support from the BPJS financing system which provides cost certainty for most patients. In addition, transparency efforts are also carried out through open cost information and direct explanations by officers to patients.

However, in deeper review, there is still a gap between information delivered by service providers and understanding received by patients. Some patients stated that explanations regarding procedures and cost details are not explained in detail and consistently, causing confusion, especially for first-time patients or those not using BPJS. This condition shows that the assurance aspect is not yet fully optimal, especially in communication effectiveness between staff and patients.

Thus, although structurally assurance has been fulfilled, in implementation it still needs improvement, especially in delivering clearer, more systematic, and easier-to-understand information for all patients.

5. Empathy

Empathy is the ability of health workers to provide sincere attention and understand patient needs and conditions individually. This aspect includes caring attitude, friendliness, patience, and good communication skills with patients. Services based on empathy make patients feel respected, cared for, and not treated generally without considering individual conditions.

Based on interviews conducted by the researcher with the Head of the Health Center, doctors, nurses, administrative staff, and several patients, it can be seen that empathy in services at Tembilahan City Health Center has been quite well implemented by health workers. This is seen from friendly attitudes, politeness, attention to patients, listening to patient complaints patiently, providing explanations about patient conditions, and maintaining patient privacy during the service process. The Health Center also continues to supervise and guide staff to continue providing good service to patients.

However, based on interviews, it is also known that the services provided are not yet fully consistent in every condition. The high number of patients coming every day causes health workers to sometimes provide services more quickly, so communication and attention to patients are felt to be less optimal by some patients. Limited consultation time is also one of the obstacles in providing more in-depth services to all patients, especially during busy service conditions.

In addition, there are differences of opinion from patients regarding empathy provided by health workers. Some patients feel staff are attentive enough, provide good explanations, and show care during service, making patients feel comfortable and valued. However, there are also patients who feel the attention given is still general and not fully in-depth, especially when patients want to submit additional complaints. This shows that empathy in services is quite good but still needs improvement so that services can be more optimal and consistent for all patients.

Factors Affecting Service Quality

Service quality is not a standalone element but is influenced by various interrelated factors in service delivery. In the context of health center services, service quality is not only determined by how health workers provide services to patients, but also influenced by supporting conditions that directly or indirectly affect service effectiveness and smoothness.

These factors need attention because successful health services in meeting patient expectations depend on how well the health center manages its resources. If these factors are not managed optimally, service may not run effectively, leading to decreased patient satisfaction.

In health service implementation, key factors influencing service quality include availability and competence of human resources, condition of facilities and infrastructure, and high service workload. These three factors are closely related, where deficiencies in one factor can affect overall service performance.

For example, limited number of health workers can reduce service effectiveness when patient numbers are high. This leads to longer waiting times and reduced accuracy in service. Poor facilities and infrastructure can also hinder service processes, both in terms of patient comfort and staff performance. High patient visits also pose challenges for maintaining service quality.

Thus, service quality at Tembilahan City Health Center is influenced not only by direct interaction between staff and patients but also by supporting factors that must be managed effectively. Therefore, analysis of these factors is important to identify constraints and serve as a basis for improving service quality and patient satisfaction.

1. Human Resources

Human resources are a very important element in health service delivery. They include not only the number of available health workers but also their skills, attitudes, discipline, and responsibility. In this study, it was found that human resources at Tembilahan City Health Center still face several constraints in supporting optimal health services. Limited number of health workers causes unequal task distribution. Some staff must take multiple roles when staffing is incomplete. This shows that available human resources are not yet sufficient for increasing daily service demands.

In addition, high patient numbers increase workload for health workers. Staff must handle multiple tasks simultaneously, affecting service effectiveness, especially in terms of time, communication, attention, and consistency. Limited service time means staff cannot always provide maximum service. However, health workers still try to provide the best possible service. They remain responsible and committed, serving patients politely, providing explanations about patient conditions, and following procedures despite heavy workload. Thus, human resources are a key factor influencing service quality at Tembilahan City Health Center. Better management, including increasing staff numbers and balancing task distribution, is needed so that services can be more effective, fast, and optimal.

2. Facilities and Infrastructure

Facilities and infrastructure are important factors supporting health service quality. Adequate facilities help health workers provide effective, fast, and comfortable services. These include buildings, waiting rooms, medical equipment, administrative systems, and other supporting facilities. Facilities and infrastructure play an important role because they directly affect patient comfort and service flow. Adequate facilities can accelerate services and improve safety and comfort. Conversely, inadequate facilities can hinder service processes and reduce patient satisfaction.

The condition of facilities also reflects service quality. Good facilities support effective and organized services, while poor facilities reduce patient comfort and service perception. Based on interviews, facilities at Tembilahan City Health Center are generally helpful in supporting services, but there are still problems. The building is relatively old, some parts are less comfortable, and waiting space is limited, causing overcrowding during peak patient visits.

This condition shows that physical facilities still need improvement. According to Parasuraman's service quality theory, this relates to the tangible dimension, which includes physical appearance of facilities and infrastructure affecting service perception. In addition, there are also issues with network systems and administrative applications. National server disruptions and unstable internet slow down administrative processes, causing patients to wait longer. Staff still try to continue services manually to maintain service flow. This shows that supporting technology and information systems are not yet optimal. These issues affect service effectiveness, especially administrative processes. Overall, facilities and infrastructure are adequate but still need improvement in buildings, waiting rooms, and system reliability to improve service quality and patient satisfaction.

3. Service Load

Service load is one of the factors influencing health service quality. High patient numbers require health workers to work faster and more intensively. This condition affects service effectiveness, especially in terms of speed, timeliness, and patient comfort. Limited health workers compared to patient volume also leads to queues and delays. If service load is too high, service quality may decline. Therefore, service load must be carefully managed.

Based on interviews, high patient numbers affect service time, making it shorter. Health workers must adjust service time so all patients can still be served. According to doctors, increased patient numbers reduce service time availability. According to nurses, high workload also reduces attention and increases risk of errors. To address this, the health center divides staff based on service categories such as adult, elderly, children, and maternal care, from registration to screening, to improve efficiency. Overall, service load remains a challenge. However, the health center continues to improve service through task division and staff adjustment to maintain service effectiveness.

Patient Satisfaction

Patient satisfaction is a key indicator in evaluating the quality of healthcare services provided by the Tembilahan Kota Community Health Center (Puskesmas Tembilahan Kota). It reflects patients' perceptions of various service dimensions, including the responsiveness of healthcare personnel, staff professionalism and friendliness, the comfort of healthcare facilities, the accuracy of medical services, and the efficiency of service delivery. In general, higher service quality is associated with greater patient satisfaction, as patients tend to value healthcare services that are timely, reliable, empathetic, and patient-centered. Factors such as staff attitudes, waiting time, quality of communication, individual attention, and the speed of service delivery play significant roles in shaping patients' overall experiences. While courteous and responsive healthcare personnel contribute positively to patient satisfaction, prolonged waiting times and overcrowded service areas may reduce patients' perceptions of service quality.

Based on the interview findings, the Tembilahan Kota Community Health Center continuously strives to provide optimal healthcare services to ensure that patients feel comfortable, respected, and satisfied throughout the service process. Most participants expressed positive perceptions of the healthcare services, particularly regarding the friendliness of medical staff and the clarity of the information and explanations provided during consultations. Nevertheless, several respondents highlighted operational challenges associated with the increasing number of patients. Mrs. Rahma Nisa Safitri explained that although she was generally satisfied with the services received, waiting times were occasionally lengthy, and consultations sometimes felt rushed because healthcare providers had to accommodate a large volume of patients. Similarly, Mrs. Jamilah stated that the services were well delivered and the information provided was easy to understand; however, long queues and crowded waiting areas reduced her overall comfort. Mrs. Wike Ardila also acknowledged that the healthcare personnel were friendly and professional, yet the service process often became slower during peak hours as staff were required to manage a substantial patient workload.

The interview findings indicate that patient satisfaction at the Tembilahan Kota Community Health Center is primarily influenced by the friendliness and professionalism of healthcare personnel, the clarity of communication, and the overall comfort experienced during service delivery. At the same time, operational factors, particularly prolonged waiting times and overcrowded facilities during periods of high patient attendance, remain significant challenges affecting patient satisfaction. Overall, patients perceive the quality of healthcare services at the health center as satisfactory. However, continuous improvements are needed to enhance service efficiency, reduce waiting times, optimize patient flow management, and maintain high-quality healthcare delivery, particularly during periods of increased patient demand.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the quality of healthcare services at the Tembilahan Kota Community Health Center generally meets patients' expectations, although several aspects still require improvement. Based on the interviews, patients expressed satisfaction

with the friendliness of healthcare personnel, the clarity of explanations provided during consultations, and the professional attitudes demonstrated by medical staff. Nevertheless, respondents consistently identified prolonged waiting times, overcrowded waiting areas, and the high workload of healthcare personnel as major challenges affecting their overall service experience. These findings suggest that patient satisfaction is determined not only by clinical outcomes but also by the quality of interpersonal interactions and the efficiency of healthcare service delivery.

These findings are consistent with the conceptual framework proposed by Ali et al. (2024), which emphasizes that patient satisfaction is the outcome of multiple dimensions of healthcare service quality, including responsiveness, reliability, empathy, assurance, and tangible facilities. According to their framework, healthcare organizations achieve higher patient satisfaction when service delivery consistently meets patients' expectations regarding professionalism, communication, accessibility, and efficiency. Similarly, Ferreira et al. (2023), through a systematic review, concluded that waiting time, communication quality, staff competence, and healthcare infrastructure are among the strongest determinants influencing patient satisfaction across various healthcare settings. The experiences reported by patients in this study closely reflect these determinants, indicating that both technical and functional aspects of healthcare services contribute significantly to patient perceptions.

The results also demonstrate that healthcare personnel play a central role in shaping patient satisfaction. Most respondents acknowledged that doctors, nurses, and administrative staff were friendly, respectful, and willing to provide clear explanations regarding treatment procedures. This finding supports the argument of Mosadeghrad (2014), who identified human resources as the most influential component of healthcare service quality because professional competence, communication skills, empathy, and staff commitment directly affect patients' evaluations of healthcare services. Likewise, Naidu (2009) emphasized that respectful treatment, effective communication, and personalized attention are fundamental determinants of patient satisfaction regardless of the healthcare system. Therefore, the positive attitudes demonstrated by healthcare personnel at the Tembilahan Kota Community Health Center represent an important organizational strength that contributes to maintaining patient trust and satisfaction.

Another important finding concerns the impact of waiting time on patient satisfaction. Although patients generally appreciated the quality of medical care received, long queues and delays in service delivery frequently reduced their overall satisfaction. Similar findings have been reported by Andaleeb (2001), who found that waiting time is one of the most influential predictors of patient satisfaction in developing countries because patients evaluate healthcare quality based not only on treatment outcomes but also on the efficiency of service delivery. This finding is reinforced by Nguyen et al. (2021), who reported that service responsiveness and timeliness significantly influence patient satisfaction in public healthcare institutions. The present study demonstrates that increasing patient attendance without proportional increases in healthcare personnel has resulted in longer waiting times, thereby reducing patients' perceptions of service efficiency despite their positive assessment of staff professionalism.

The findings related to the five SERVQUAL dimensions further strengthen the interpretation of service quality. Patients generally perceived empathy and assurance positively because healthcare personnel treated them politely, respected their privacy, and attempted to provide understandable explanations during consultations. These findings support the hierarchical healthcare service quality model developed by Dagger et al. (2007), which argues that interpersonal quality—including empathy, communication, and professionalism—is a fundamental component of patients' overall evaluation of healthcare services. Similarly, Rahmatia et al. (2025) demonstrated that empathy, responsiveness, and assurance significantly improve patient satisfaction within healthcare institutions implementing the SERVQUAL framework. Consequently, the positive interpersonal relationships identified in this study represent an important competitive advantage for the Tembilahan Kota Community Health Center.

However, the tangible dimension remains one of the primary challenges identified in this study. Patients frequently reported overcrowded waiting rooms, limited seating capacity, and inadequate physical space during periods of high patient attendance. These findings are consistent with Alhajri et al. (2023), who found that the quality of physical facilities, cleanliness,

accessibility, and environmental comfort substantially influence patient satisfaction in primary healthcare centers. Likewise, Hosseinzadeh et al. (2024) reported that tangible facilities remain one of the lowest-performing SERVQUAL dimensions in many public healthcare organizations despite improvements in other aspects of service quality. Therefore, improving physical infrastructure should become one of the strategic priorities for enhancing patient experiences at the health center.

The interviews also revealed that the increasing number of patients has substantially increased the workload of healthcare personnel. As patient volume rises, healthcare workers have less time for individual consultations, making services appear rushed despite their commitment to maintaining professional standards. This finding supports KS et al. (2023), who demonstrated through structural equation modeling that healthcare service quality significantly influences patient satisfaction, while workload and resource limitations reduce healthcare performance and care outcomes. Similarly, Mosadeghrad (2014) argued that insufficient human resources and organizational capacity are major barriers to maintaining consistent healthcare service quality. Therefore, the operational challenges identified in this study are not primarily related to healthcare personnel competence but rather to organizational resource constraints.

The overall findings also confirm the strong relationship between service quality and patient satisfaction reported in numerous previous studies. Aladwan et al. (2021) found that healthcare service quality positively influences patient satisfaction, which subsequently increases patient loyalty toward healthcare institutions. Likewise, AlOmari and Hamid (2022) demonstrated that patient satisfaction functions as a mediating factor between healthcare service quality and long-term patient loyalty. Furthermore, Liu et al. (2021) showed that patient satisfaction strengthens patient trust, ultimately encouraging continued utilization of healthcare services. These studies suggest that maintaining high-quality healthcare services not only improves immediate patient satisfaction but also contributes to long-term organizational sustainability by strengthening public confidence in healthcare institutions.

From the perspective of public service management, the findings indicate that improving healthcare quality is closely associated with achieving effective public governance. Azan et al. (2021) argue that high-quality public services are fundamental to realizing good governance because they enhance transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and public trust. Likewise, Dwimawanti (2020) emphasizes that service quality serves as one of the primary indicators of successful public administration and regional autonomy. Within the context of primary healthcare services, continuous improvements in operational efficiency, infrastructure, human resources, and patient-centered communication are therefore essential not only for increasing patient satisfaction but also for strengthening the overall performance and credibility of public healthcare institutions.

5. Conclusion

Based on the research results on the analysis of service quality in building patient satisfaction at the Tembilahan City Community Health Center, Indragiri Hilir Regency, it can be concluded that the service quality provided by the health center is generally good, but it is still not fully optimal in meeting patient expectations and satisfaction. This assessment is based on five dimensions of service quality, namely tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.

In the tangible dimension (physical evidence), the facilities available at the Tembilahan City Health Center are basically sufficient to support health services, such as service rooms, medical equipment, administrative computers, and patient waiting rooms. However, there are still several shortcomings, especially in the comfort of the waiting room, which becomes cramped when the number of patients increases, causing some patients to wait while standing. In addition, several supporting facilities still need to be improved so that patient comfort can be better ensured.

In the reliability dimension, services at the Tembilahan City Health Center are carried out based on applicable Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in each service unit. Health workers and administrative staff have attempted to provide services accurately and according to procedures. However, in practice, there are still obstacles, especially in the patient registration process, which sometimes takes a long time due to the high number of patients and the fact that

some patients have not used the online registration system, so administrative services are still done manually.

In the responsiveness dimension, health workers are considered quite responsive in providing services and responding to patient needs. Staff have also tried to provide clear information regarding the health services received by patients. However, in certain conditions, especially when patient numbers increase, service speed is not yet fully optimal, causing patients to wait longer to receive services.

In the assurance dimension, health workers provide services with a friendly and polite attitude and try to create a sense of safety for patients during the service process. In addition, clarity regarding service procedures and treatment costs through BPJS or general services also gives patients confidence in the services provided by the Tembilahan City Health Center. Meanwhile, in the empathy dimension, health workers show care and attention to patients by giving them the opportunity to express complaints and providing services without discrimination based on patient status. Friendly attitudes and good communication from staff are among the factors that create comfort for patients during health services.

Overall, the quality of services at the Tembilahan City Health Center is quite good in building patient satisfaction. However, there are still several obstacles that affect service optimization, such as high patient numbers, limited service facilities, and less optimal administrative service systems.

Therefore, improvements are needed in facilities and infrastructure, strengthening human resources, and increasing service effectiveness so that the quality of health services at the Tembilahan City Health Center can improve further and provide more optimal satisfaction to the community.

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