The Effect of Satisfaction With The Physical Environment of The Hospital, Service Quality and Hospital Image on Patient Loyalty and Intention To Recommend (A Study of Private and Government Hospitals In Kendari City)

Kasmar[1]*, Alida Palilati [2], Adius Kusnan [3], Hayat Yusuf[4]

[1]Student, Program Doctoral in Management Science, Halu Oleo University, Indonesia.

[2,3,4]Lecturer, Program Doctoral in Management Science, Halu Oleo University, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author:

Kasmar

Student, Program Doctoral in Management Science, Halu Oleo University, Indonesia

Email ID: kasmar@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the effect of patient satisfaction, service quality, and hospital image on patient loyalty and their interest in recommending the hospital. This study also explores the differences in the measurement results of exogenous and endogenous variables between private and government hospitals in Kendari City, involving Kendari City Hospital, Bahteramas Hospital, Southeast Sulawesi Province, Santa Anna Hospital, Kendari Hospital, Aliah 2 Hospital, Aliah 3 Hospital, and Dewi Sartika Hospital. The study used the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method with PLS software, involving 640 samples consisting of 320 private hospital patients and 320 government hospital patients. The results of the study showed several main findings. First, satisfaction with the physical environment of the hospital has a positive and significant effect on patient loyalty and interest in recommending, both in government and private hospitals. A clean, comfortable, and aesthetic physical environment and good lighting play an important role. Second, service quality has a significant effect on patient loyalty and interest in recommending. Responsive, professional, and empathetic service aspects create a positive impression that strengthens patient trust. Third, hospital image has a positive effect on patient loyalty and hospital image has a significant effect on recommendation intention in government hospitals. Fourth, patient loyalty mediates the relationship between satisfaction with the physical environment, service quality, and hospital image with recommendation intention. Strong loyalty encourages patients to promote hospital services to others. This study confirms the importance of the role of the physical environment, service quality, and hospital image in building patient loyalty and encouraging recommendation intention. Patient loyalty has been proven to be the main key in creating effective promotion effects, both in government and private hospitals. These findings provide strategic implications for hospital managers to improve service quality and maintain and improve the physical environment and hospital image to strengthen patient loyalty and recommendations.

Keyword: *Physical Environment Satisfaction, Service Quality, Hospital Image, Loyalty, Recommendation Intention.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian Health Law number 17 of 2023 states that Health is a healthy state of a person, both physically, mentally, and socially and not merely free from disease to enable him/her to live productively, and Health Services are all forms of activities and/or a series of service activities provided directly to individuals or communities to maintain and improve the level of Public Health. Health services are very important services and are used globally, in most parts of the world, the health care industry is experiencing tremendous growth due to changes in cost structures, changes in health care laws, and the entry of private practices as an alternative to the health care market. As a consequence, health care providers are experiencing increased competitive pressure. This gives consumers many choices and makes consumers active decision makers and more selective in choosing Health services (Teika, et al 2019). Health Services are a form of public service that organizes promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative health efforts which are organized by hospitals. Hospitals are labor-intensive and capital-intensive organizations that provide medical and non-medical services twenty-four hours a day, with types of services that cannot be ascertained from the start (uncertain) and involve a person's life and death. In addition, the challenges in the health industry are increasing and diverse, marked by the emergence of various new health service organizations or the closure of health services due to their inability to compete (Ayuningtyas, 2020). The service industry is

currently growing very rapidly, the competition that is currently occurring is very competitive in this industry. The services provided between one service provider and another service provider are very varied according to the needs and desires of their consumers. One of the service industries that is growing very rapidly in Indonesia is the hospital service industry, both government-owned and private hospitals and even foreign-owned (Arafah, 2004 in Purwanto, Bimo Tejomukti, et.al2022). According to the Regulation of the Minister of Health Number 3 of 2020, a Hospital is a health service institution that provides comprehensive individual health services that provide inpatient, outpatient, and emergency services. Which can be established by the Central Government, Regional Government or the private sector. Hospitals established by the Central Government and Regional Government must be in the form of a Technical Implementation Unit of an Agency tasked with health, or a certain Agency with the management of a Public Service Agency or Regional Public Service Agency in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations. While private hospitals must be in the form of a non-profit legal entity; and a legal entity with a profit objective in the form of a limited liability company or Persero.

Hospital organization is a business organization or business unit, meaning that it aims to gain profit or achieve surplus to 1) maintain the survival of the hospital, 2) develop resources and 3) provide benefits to stakeholders (owners, employees). Hospital organizations can be distinguished into profit-oriented hospitals (Profit making) and not-for-profit hospitals. The goal of a profit-making organization is to gain profit from its operations, while a not-for-profit hospital is to carry out the main tasks of the hospital and achieve surplus from operations, where the surplus is used to improve the quality of service (Supriyanto, et.al. 2023). The key to the profitability of a healthcare organization is to retain and attract patients, namely loyalty and brand image are the dominant paths to profitability. Therefore, from a managerial perspective, understanding and encouraging brand image, loyalty, service quality and patient satisfaction is very important (Vimla and Udita Taneja, 2020). Corporate image is a factor that is considered important which will later be used to overcome the gap that appears in the relationship between perceived service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Liat, Mansori, and Huei, 2014 in Nafisa, Jihan and I Made Sukresna 2018). Patient satisfaction can partially mediate service quality on patient loyalty and service quality affects patient loyalty both directly and patient satisfaction as a mediator, when service quality increases, patient loyalty will increase both directly and mediated by patient satisfaction (Sholihat, et.al, 2023).

According to Tjiptono (2006) in Pakpahan, Arnoldus, et.al. (2019) customer satisfaction has become a central concept in marketing theory and practice and is one of the essential goals for business activities. Customer satisfaction can provide several benefits, the relationship between the company and its customers becomes harmonious, provides a basis for repeat purchases and creates customer loyalty, and forms a word of mouth recommendation that is beneficial for the company. The interest in recommending by word of mouth is still considered effective and influential on a person's decision to buy a product or service. A person's influence in Word of Mouth (WoM) can be very strong because the information provided is relatively trusted and reliable, besides it can reduce the risk in purchasing decisions (Agness, ella. 2022) and according to the results of Lancap's research, Jean Paola and Kevin James Alfonso (2022) concluded that patient loyalty has a positive and significant effect on the interest in recommending. The physical environment or Servicescape gives customers a first impression of a service, which of course has a significant impact on their evaluation of the service as a whole (An, Sohyun, et.al. 2023). Many studies consistently provide empirical evidence on how service landscapes affect customer perceptions and behavioral responses. In a study conducted by Sagitha Dani et.al. (2024) concluded that good and complete physical facilities cause patients and hospital visitors to be more motivated to recommend to others. Even in the study, physical facilities were the dominant factor in the occurrence of Word of Mouth (WoM). Likewise, research conducted by George, Ajimon. (2023) revealed that physical infrastructure is real evidence that plays an important role in shaping the patient service experience, patient satisfaction levels and loyalty development.

However, there are also previous studies that conclude that the relationship between patient satisfaction and patient loyalty is indirect, such as those conducted by Liu, Sha, et.al. (2021), and Lubis.et.al. (2019) concluded that service quality does not have a significant effect on loyalty, Hasan and Aditya Halim (2018) concluded that Hospital Image does not have a significant effect on loyalty, Nur (2015) concluded that the brand image variable does not have a partial effect on loyalty. Facilities do not affect word of mouth, but if facilities affect word of mouth if they are reinforced by the sense of satisfaction that is formed. Prabowo, Heri (2023). Pakpahan, et.al. (2019) concluded that Service Quality does not have a positive and significant effect on the interest in referring. Likewise, research conducted at star-rated hotels in the city of Semarang found that service quality does not affect word of mouth, but service quality affects word of mouth if it is reinforced by the sense of satisfaction that is formed (Prabowo, Heri. 2023), the same thing in research conducted by Agnes (2022) revealed that Hospital Brand Image was not proven to have a direct effect on the willingness to recommend.

Bahteramas Regional General Hospital (RSUD) is a hospital owned by the Southeast Sulawesi Provincial Government which has a bed capacity of 350 beds. while Kendari City Regional General Hospital (RSUD) is a hospital owned by the Kendari City government which has a bed capacity of 201. Santa Anna General Hospital is a general hospital owned by a social organization with a bed capacity of 101 beds, Aliah 2 Kendari Hospital is a privately owned general hospital with a bed capacity of 52 beds, Aliah 3 Kendari Hospital is a privately owned general hospital with a bed capacity of 49 beds, Dewi Sartika Kendari Hospital is a privately owned general hospital with a bed capacity of 49 beds. From the description above

related to the consumer-oriented hospital development strategy which plays a very important role in increasing loyalty and interest in recommending in order to increase profitability but on the other hand there are differences in research results related to the influence of service quality, hospital image and patient satisfaction on loyalty and interest in recommending or positive WoM related to the time and place of the research and there are differences in public perception about the quality of services in private and government hospitals and referring to future researchers from Lancap, Jean Paola and Kevin James Alfonso, (2022) in their study entitled The Mediating Role of Patient Loyalty on the Relationship Between Satisfaction on Physical Environment and Intention to Recommend, to examine other variables that may affect patient loyalty and intention to recommend, such as dimensions of health service quality and post-treatment services in hospitals and comparative studies of private and government hospitals and based on the results of interviews with several patients who are being hospitalized in several private hospitals in Kendari city, they generally expressed that they trust private hospitals more because the service is good and fast compared to when they seek treatment at government hospitals which they think are slow. By Therefore, this study wants to re-describe and develop the research model which includes aspects of satisfaction with the physical environment of the hospital and service quality, its influence on loyalty and willingness to recommend and add the variable hospital image which is the variable that is the reason why patients want to choose a private hospital in the initial survey of this study, after that a comparison will be made to what extent the differences between government-owned and private hospitals in Kendari City are related to patient perceptions of these variables regarding the relationship between exogenous and endogenous variables.

2. LITERATUR REVIEW

The main theory used as the basis for this study is the theory of Planned Behavior, this theory is the best way to predict and explain a person's behavior through the person's behavioral intentions. This theory of planned behavior is developed from the theory of reasoned action by including additionally building a theory of perceived control. This theory assumes that people are more likely to behave well rationally and systematically using available information when deciding to act, considering the implications before deciding to act or not to act. The theory of planned behavior has been used extensively to predict and explain actual behavioral intentions in social psychology. Using the theory of planned behavior to predict the belief factors that influence behavior in various knowledge groups in professional groups (Ajzen and Fishbein 1991).

The Concept of Satisfaction in the Physical Environment

Satisfaction can be interpreted as a feeling of satisfaction, pleasure and relief from someone due to consuming a product or service. The level of satisfaction is a function of the difference between perceived performance and expectations. Consumer satisfaction is the level of a person's feelings after comparing the performance of the product he feels with his expectations, (Indrasari, 2019). Customer satisfaction according to Oliver (1990), in Rifa'i, (2023) is an evaluation of the perceived discrepancy between prior expectation and the actual performance of the product. Maintaining customer satisfaction is the key to retaining them and increasing profitability. According to Zeithaml and Bitner (2003), in Rifa'i, (2023).

Concept of Service Quality

Quality is defined as the totality of characteristics of a product that supports its ability to satisfy specified or established needs (Indrasari, 2019). Service quality is centered on efforts to fulfill customer needs/desires and the determination of its delivery to match customer expectations, Sulistiyowati (2018). service quality is the level of expected excellence and control over that level of excellence to meet customer desires. In other words, there are two main factors that influence service quality, namely expected service and perceived service (Parasuraman, et al., 1985 in Sulistiyowati, 2018). According to Tjiptono (2011), in Indrasari (2019) service quality is a dynamic state that is closely related to products, services, human resources, and processes and environments that can at least meet or even exceed the expected service quality. According to Tjiptono, the definition of service quality is an effort to fulfill needs that are accompanied by consumer desires and the accuracy of the delivery method in order to meet customer expectations and satisfaction, it is said that service quality is the fulfillment of customer needs and desires and the accuracy of its delivery to balance customer expectations. Nasution (2001) in Indrasari (2019).

Hospital Image

According to Rifa'i, Khamdan (2023) Image is a reflection or reproduction of the identity of an individual, object or organization. For companies, image can also be interpreted as public perception of the company. Public perception of the company is based on what they know or what they estimate about the company concerned, Corporate Image is very important for a company because it is related to consumer motivation in viewing the company, In addition to image being a function of accumulated consumption or purchases over time, most organizations also present a large and complex informational environment to attract new consumers and retain existing consumers. According to Indrasari (2019) Image is related to the reputation of a brand or company. Image is the consumer's perception of the quality associated with the brand or company. Corporate image is defined as the perception of an organization that is reflected in the customer's memory. Image is a

perception that is relatively consistent in the long term (enduring perception). So it is not easy to form an image, so that once it is formed it will be difficult to change it.

The Concept of Loyalty

Kotler and Keller (2012) in , Arlina Nurbaity et.al. (2019) stated that customer loyalty is the main key to achieving long-term business growth and sustainability. The cost of acquiring new customers is generally five times more expensive than retaining existing customers. Moreover, loyal customers will invite new potential customers at no additional cost. This has the potential to generate profits for the company in the long term. The profits obtained can be used as an investment to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of services which have an impact on even better value. According to Kotler and Armstong (2007) in Hermanto (2019) loyalty comes from fulfilling consumer expectations or hopes, while expectations themselves come from previous purchasing experiences by consumers, opinions from friends and relatives, promises or information from marketers or competitors. Thus, the measurement of patient loyalty variables is adopted from Lacap Jean Paola, and Kevin James Alfonso (2022).

Concept of Interest Recommendation

Recommendation intention, as a behavioral intention construct, refers to positive consumer behaviors such as saying encouraging things about a product or service (word of mouth) and favorable recommendations (Hosany et.al. 2017). In a study, Pi and Huang (2011) concluded that the willingness to recommend a product or service to the public and provide praise are secondary behaviors resulting from and categories of customer loyalty measurement. This is further emphasized in Dhandabani's (2010) study, which states that one of the loyal customer behaviors is to recommend products and services to others, which is known as word of mouth. Word-of-mouth (WOM).

Constructive WOM has been shown to be the most powerful indicator in shaping future behavior and attitudes (Buttle, 2011). Furthermore, the literature on healthcare services shows that service quality can also act as an indicator of patients' willingness to recommend a service provider to their friends and relatives (Hanzaee & Shojaei, 2011). Word of Mouth (WOM) is an effort to introduce and recommend products or services that have been consumed after getting satisfaction from using the goods or services, so that they can provide information to others about the advantages, functions and prices offered (Mahaputra M. Ridho and Farhan Saputra, 2021), Likewise in health services, WOM occurs even in the waiting room when they are waiting in line and other activities, fellow patients review their experiences using the service (Endang Ruswanti et. al. 2019), WOM is considered to have a high level of reliability and credibility because of the information conveyed by family and friends (Alcocer, Nuria Huete, 2017), So in this research design, the measurement of the variable of interest in recommending was adopted from the research of Lacap Jean Paola, and Kevin James Alfonso (2022).
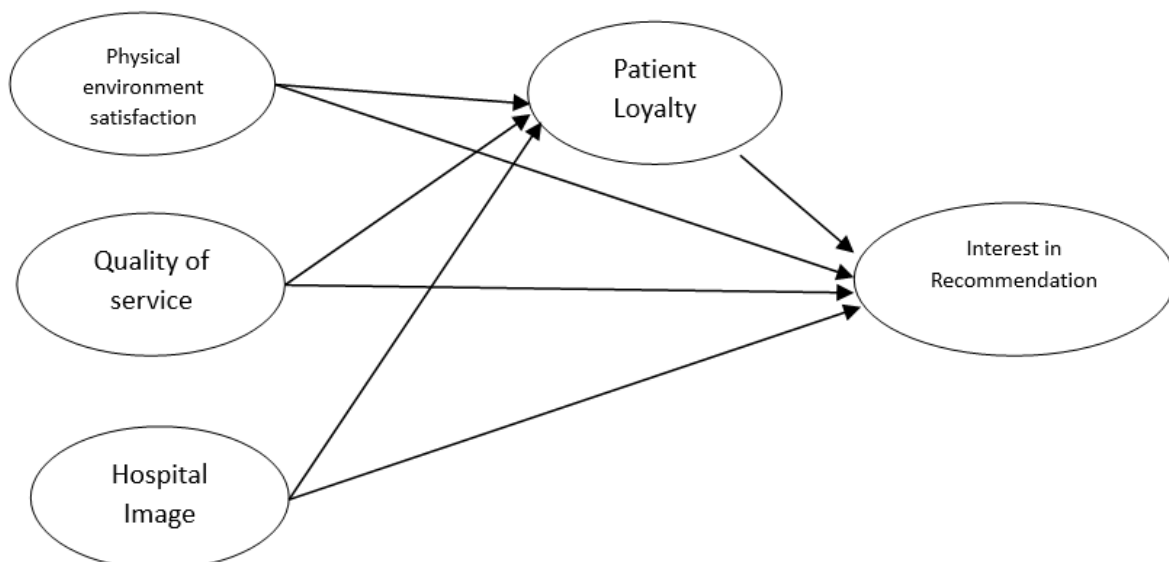

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Hypothesis

H1: Satisfaction with the Hospital's Physical Environment has a positive and significant effect on patient loyalty.

H2: Satisfaction with the Hospital's Physical Environment has a positive and significant effect on the intention to recommend

H3: Service Quality has a positive and significant effect on Patient Loyalty.

H4: Service Quality has a positive and significant effect on the intention to recommend.

H5: Hospital Image has a positive and significant effect on Patient Loyalty.

H6: Hospital Image has a positive and significant effect on the intention to recommend.

H7: Patient Loyalty has a positive and significant effect on the intention to recommend.

H8:Satisfaction with the Physical Environment has a positive and significant effect on the Intention to Recommend which is mediated by Patient Loyalty

H9: Service Quality has a positive and significant effect on the Intention to Recommend which is mediated by Patient Loyalty.

H10: Hospital Image has a positive and significant effect on the Intention to Recommend which is mediated by Patient Loyalty.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The population in this study were patients who used the health services of General Hospitals, both government hospitals (Bahteramas Hospital and Kendari City Hospital) and private hospitals (Santa Ana Hospital, Dewi Sartika Hospital, Aliyah 2 Hospital and Aliyah 3 Hospital) which were the locations of the study. Patients who would be used as samples/respondents were taken from patients who were being treated in inpatient installations or being treated in outpatient installations, in connection with the population size not yet known with certainty (infinite), the determination of the sample size refers to Hair et.al. in Ferdinan (2005), where the number of samples is determined by referring to the number of indicators multiplied by 5 - 10. The number of indicators in this study was 24 indicators, and then multiplied by 5. Thus the number of samples in this study was 320 samples (each for government and private hospitals), the determination of the number of samples for each hospital was carried out proportionally based on the number/capacity of beds owned.

4. RESEARCH RESULT

Q-Square Value

Testing on the structural model is evaluated by considering the percentage of explained variance, namely by looking at the R2 value for the dependent latent variable. The closer the value is to 1, the better the model. Likewise, if it is below 0 (zero), it indicates that the model has less predictive relevance. The results of the analysis are presented in the following table:

Tabel 1 R-*Squared* dan Q-*Squared*

Variable	Private		Government	
	R^2	Q^2	R^2	Q^2
Patient Loyalty	0,342	0,317	0,326	0,299
Interest Recommendations	0,534	0,497	0,518	0,485

Source: Data processing results via Smart PLS 4.0, 2025

In the Patient Loyalty variable, the model shows moderate ability in explaining variance based on the R-Squared (R^2) value. For private hospitals, the R^2 value of 0.342 indicates that 34.2% of the variance in patient loyalty can be explained by the independent variables (X1. Physical Environment Satisfaction, X2. Service Quality, and X3. Hospital Image). In addition, the Q-Squared (Q^2) value of 0.317 indicates that the model has good predictive relevance for patient loyalty in private hospitals because $Q^2> 0$. Meanwhile, for government hospitals, the R^2 value of 0.326 indicates that 32.6% of the variance in patient loyalty can be explained by the independent variables. The Q^2 value of 0.299 indicates that the model also has good predictive relevance in the context of government hospitals. In the Recommendation Interest variable, the model shows better strength than patient loyalty. For private hospitals, the R^2 value of 0.534 indicates that 53.4% of the variance in patient recommendation interest can be explained by the independent variables. The Q^2 value of 0.497 indicates that the model has very good predictive relevance for this variable. On the other hand, in government hospitals, the R^2 value of 0.518 indicates

that 51.8% of the variance in patient recommendation interest can be explained by the independent variables. With a Q² value of 0.485, the model also has good predictive relevance for government hospitals $Q^2 > 0$.

5. DIRECT EFFECT HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Based on the results of the bootstrapping process, the value of the direct path coefficient (direct effect) in this research model is obtained. A summary of the results of the path analysis calculations in this study can be presented through the table below

Direct Influence Path	*path coefficient*	Significance (p)	Criteria
Physical Environment Satisfaction -> Patient Loyalty	0,239	0,000	Significant
Physical Environment Satisfaction -> Intention to Recommend	0,339	0,000	Significant
Service Quality -> Patient Loyalty	0,234	0,000	Significant
Service Quality -> Intention to Recommend	0,314	0,000	Significant
Hospital Image -> Patient Loyalty	0,234	0,000	Significant
Hospital Image -> Intention to Recommend	0,095	0,013	Significant
Patient Loyalty -> Intention to Recommend	0,155	0,000	Significant

Source: Data processing results via Smart PLS 4.0, 2025

Table 3. Direct Hypothesis Testing of Government Hospitals

Direct Influence Path	Original Sampel	Significance (p)	Criteria
Physical Environment Satisfaction -> Patient Loyalty	0,268	0,000	Significant
Physical Environment Satisfaction -> Intention to Recommend	0,328	0,000	Significant
Service Quality -> Patient Loyalty	0,234	0,000	Significant
Service Quality -> Intention to Recommend	0,327	0,000	Significant
Hospital Image -> Patient Loyalty	0,186	0,001	Significant
Hospital Image -> Intention to Recommend	0,109	0,007	Significant
Patient Loyalty -> Intention to Recommend	0,118	0,004	Significant

Source: Data processing results via Smart PLS 4.0, 2025

Indirect Effect Hypothesis Testing

This study, in addition to analyzing the direct influence of exogenous variables on endogenous variables, also analyzes the indirect influence through the role of mediation. Table 5 below will describe the indirect influence between research variables, to prove that the indirect influence or mediation has a role or not, the results of the analysis can be seen in the SmartPLS 4.1 output results in the following Indirect Effects table: The results of the mediation role path analysis can be presented in the following table:

Indirect Influence Path	Original Sampel	Significance (p)	Criteria	Classification of Mediation
Physical Environment Satisfaction -> Patient Loyalty -> Intention to Recommend	0,032	0,023	Significant	Partial
Service Quality -> Patient Loyalty -> Intention to Recommend	0,028	0,037	Significant	Partial
Hospital Image -> Patient Loyalty -> Intention to Recommend	0,022	0,028	Significant	Partial

Source: Data processing results via Smart PLS 4.0, 2025

6. DISCUSSION

Hospital Physical Environment Satisfaction on Patient Loyalty

Satisfaction with the physical environment of the hospital has a significant influence on patient loyalty. The results of a study on hospitals in Kendari City showed that in government hospitals, this relationship is stronger than in private hospitals. Elements such as cleanliness, comfort, lighting, and complete physical facilities play a major role in building patient trust. This proves that the positive experience generated by an adequate physical environment is an important factor in building patient loyalty. When associated with the frequency of patient visits, it becomes an important indicator in assessing loyalty to the hospital, where patient experience of services, facilities, and the physical environment contributes directly to their decision to return. In this study, the majority of patients in both government and private hospitals were recorded as having visited 2-3 times. This phenomenon reveals that the services that are perceived as satisfactory, both in terms of quality of care and the physical environment, encourage patient confidence in using the same hospital. This factor is an indicator that

a positive experience during the first visit has a direct impact on the decision to choose the hospital in the future, thus creating a cycle of loyalty. In private hospitals, although the impact is also significant, the intensity of the influence is lower. Private patients have higher expectations of the services they pay for, so hospitals must pay extra attention to their physical environment. Previous studies also confirmed that physical infrastructure is an important factor in forming patient loyalty (George, 2023; Lacap & Alfonso, 2022) Thus, investment in quality physical environment management is an effective strategy to strengthen patient loyalty, both in government and private hospitals. Research by George (2023) and Putri et.al. (2024) found that the physical environment of the hospital has a significant effect on patient loyalty. They emphasized that physical infrastructure, such as beauty, easy access and cleanliness as well as patient and visitor safety, provides a sense of security and comfort to patients, which contributes to the formation of loyalty. This finding is also relevant to the theory of customer satisfaction which states that positive experiences during the service process create an emotional attachment to service institutions, including hospitals. Thus, creating an adequate physical environment not only supports hospital operations but also becomes a strategic tool to maintain and expand the loyal patient base.

Satisfaction with Hospital Physical Environment on Recommendation Intention

Satisfaction with the physical environment of the hospital has been shown to have a significant influence on patient interest in recommending the hospital. Research in private and government hospitals in Kendari City shows that private hospitals have a stronger relationship than government hospitals. Patients tend to share their positive experiences with family or friends when the physical environment of the hospital provides comfort, cleanliness, and adequate facilities. Satisfaction with the physical environment of the hospital plays an important role in building patient interest in recommending the facility. Research in private and government hospitals in Kendari City shows that a clean, comfortable, and adequately equipped physical environment encourages patients to share positive experiences with family and friends. Research by Lacap and Alfonso (2022) confirms that a comfortable physical environment encourages patients to recommend hospital services to others. This is relevant to the theory of consumer behavior which states that positive customer experiences are the main driver of word of mouth. In addition, research by Sagitha et.al. (2024) shows that adequate physical facilities have a major impact on patient interest in spreading recommendations. The theory of customer value is also relevant here, where customers will tend to recommend services if they feel they get benefits that exceed their expectations. A clean, comfortable, and safe physical environment provides added value that is the main reason for patients to promote hospitals. Thus, improving the physical quality of hospitals is not only a step to meet operational standards, but also a strategic investment to expand the network of service users through recommendations.

Quality of Service towards Patient Loyalty

Service quality has a significant influence on patient loyalty in hospitals, both private and government. Research in Kendari City shows that professional, friendly, and responsive services build positive experiences that increase patient loyalty. Patients who feel valued and prioritized in services tend to return to use services at the same hospital. In this line, private hospitals show a greater influence than government hospitals, which may be related to higher patient expectations of services in the private sector. Good service quality is one of the main reasons patients choose a hospital, especially in private hospitals in Kendari City. Patients prioritize the friendliness, speed, and attention given by the staff, which form their positive experience. In contrast, in government hospitals, although service quality remains important, the main reason patients choose is more likely to be the completeness of the facilities. This shows that in private hospitals, the quality of service interactions is key to building loyalty, while in government hospitals, adequate facilities are the main attraction. The combination of these positive experiences encourages patients to continue using the service and provide recommendations to others.

This finding is in line with previous research by Armita et.al. (2023) which emphasized that good service quality increases patient satisfaction and loyalty. Another study by Nafisa and Sukresna (2018) also supports this finding, stating that service quality dimensions, such as speed and accuracy of medical services, contribute significantly to the formation of customer loyalty. Research by Badruddin et.al. (2022) shows that service quality has a direct impact on patient loyalty at Awal Bros Hospital Tangerang. This finding supports the SERVQUAL theory, which states that service quality dimensions such as reliability, assurance, and empathy play an important role in forming customer loyalty. Service quality not only meets patient expectations but also builds trust that is the foundation of their loyalty.

Quality of Service to Interest in Recommendation

Hospital service quality has a significant influence on patients' intention to recommend the service. Research in private and government hospitals in Kendari City shows that friendly, professional, fast, and responsive services encourage patients to share positive experiences with their family or friends. In this path, private hospitals show a greater influence than government hospitals. This can be attributed to private patients' higher expectations of service quality, so that positive experiences in this sector motivate recommendation behavior more quickly. The frequency of patient visits is one indicator of how service quality affects their intention to recommend a hospital. In Kendari City, patients who visit frequently show a greater tendency to share positive experiences related to friendly, professional, fast, and responsive services. Private hospitals recorded a stronger influence than government hospitals, because experiences that meet or exceed patient expectations in the

private sector motivate them to recommend the service. Thus, the frequency of visits reflects how positive repeated experiences can strengthen patients' intention to recommend. Patients' choice of hospitals also underscores the importance of service quality in shaping their intention to recommend. Patients in private hospitals are more likely to choose a facility because of friendly and responsive services, which give them a satisfying experience. In contrast, in government hospitals, the main reason is still focused on the completeness of facilities, although service quality remains an important factor. This finding confirms that in the private sector, the quality of service interactions plays a greater role in encouraging patients to recommend a hospital to others, while in the government sector, positive experiences with services and facilities as a whole have a greater influence on such behavior.

Good service creates a sense of confidence in patients to recommend the hospital to others. This finding is supported by research by Sagitha et.al. (2024), which found that service quality is positively correlated with word of mouth. Research by Rahman et.al. (2023) also shows that the better the quality of service, the stronger the patient's intention to provide recommendations. This finding is in line with consumer behavior theory, which states that satisfaction with the service received is the main factor in encouraging word of mouth. Research by Rahman et.al. (2023) and Sholihat (2023) show that dimensions of service quality, such as responsiveness and reliability, contribute directly to the interest in recommending a hospital.

Hospital Image towards Patient Loyalty

Hospital image has a significant influence on patient loyalty, as found in research in government and private hospitals in Kendari City. In government hospitals, the influence is more dominant than in private hospitals. A positive image, including public trust in professionalism, transparency, and comfort of services, creates a sense of security and emotional attachment to patients. Patient loyalty built from this hospital image is an important asset in maintaining long-term relationships. In government hospitals, a strong image related to public trust in professionalism and completeness of services creates a higher sense of attachment than in the private sector. This reflects that repeated experiences that are consistent with a positive image strengthen patient loyalty, which ultimately encourages them to continue using the hospital's services. In government hospitals, the image formed from the completeness of facilities and public trust is the main factor, while in private hospitals, friendliness and speed of service are more prominent. In both cases, a positive image creates a sense of security and a deep emotional connection with patients, so that they are more loyal to the hospital. This loyalty shows how a good image not only attracts patients but also maintains long-term relationships through experiences that are consistent with their expectations. Previous research also supports this finding. Palilati (2021) showed that corporate image plays an important role in creating patient loyalty. Similar results were found by Marin et.al. (2009), who emphasized that corporate image has a direct and significant impact on customer loyalty. Thus, building a strong image is not only a promotional effort, but also a fundamental strategy in retaining patients.

Hospital Image on Intention to Recommend

In this finding, Hospital image towards patient interest in recommending hospital services has no difference regarding the acceptance of the hypothesis, in private hospitals and government hospitals. A good hospital reputation, which includes public trust in service quality, transparency, and commitment to patient comfort, encourages patients to share their positive experiences with others. A strong image creates the perception that the hospital is able to provide satisfactory services, so that patients feel confident recommending it to family and friends. Hospital image in private hospitals has a stronger influence on recommendation interest, therefore, maintaining the hospital image as a reliable and trusted institution is a strategic step to increase patient interest in recommending hospital services to their network. Private hospitals, a positive image related to service quality, transparency, and comfort is proven to increase patient interest in recommending the hospital to others as well as in government hospitals. This finding indicates that a strong image in the hospital plays a bigger role in encouraging patients to share positive experiences with family or friends, especially after several satisfying visits. A good image, which includes reputation, professionalism, and service quality, is a strong reason for patients to choose and continue using the service. Patients who are satisfied with the service tend to feel confident in recommending the hospital to others. Therefore, hospitals have the advantage of using a positive image to encourage recommendations, hospitals must further improve their image to maintain patient loyalty and recommendations. Previous research supports the finding that hospital image has a significant influence on patient interest in recommending services. Research by Akob et. al. (2021) found that hospital image positively and significantly affects patient satisfaction, which ultimately impacts loyalty and word of mouth. In addition, Fitriana and Djoko Wijono (2023) emphasized that hospital image not only plays an important role in building patient satisfaction but is also a major factor in increasing customer loyalty. This shows that hospitals with a good image are better able to encourage patients to recommend their services to family and friends.

Patient Loyalty to Intention to Recommend

Patient loyalty has a significant influence on their interest in recommending hospital services. Research in government and private hospitals in Kendari City shows that loyal patients, namely those who have emotional attachment and trust in the hospital, tend to be more confident in recommending services to family, friends, or colleagues. In private hospitals, the

influence of loyalty on recommendation interest is stronger compared to government hospitals. This can be attributed to the higher expectations of private hospital patients, so that their loyalty reflects deep satisfaction. The frequency of patient visits shows that patient loyalty is greatly influenced by positive repeated experiences, which in turn increases their interest in recommending the hospital. Patients who visit frequently, especially those who visit more than twice, are more likely to develop loyalty to the hospital. In private hospitals, this loyalty is more visible because of the higher patient expectations for service quality, so they tend to feel more satisfied and have a strong emotional attachment. These loyal patients are more confident in recommending the hospital to their family or friends, thanks to consistent and satisfying experiences. Research by Handayani et.al. (2021) and Lacap & Alfonso (2022) support this finding, asserting that patient loyalty plays an important role in motivating word-of-mouth (WOM) promotion. Loyal patients not only return to use hospital services but also act as ambassadors who promote the hospital based on their positive experiences. In addition, the concept of relationship marketing supports the importance of loyalty as a strategic asset. Loyal patients have a strong emotional connection with the hospital, which motivates them to promote the service voluntarily. Thus, creating a memorable experience for patients not only impacts their retention but also expands the network of service users through trust-based recommendations.

Hospital Physical Environment Satisfaction on Recommendation Intention Mediated by Patient Loyalty

Satisfaction with the physical environment of a hospital has a significant influence on patient interest in recommending a hospital, both directly and through mediation of patient loyalty. Research in private and government hospitals in Kendari City shows that a clean, comfortable physical environment supported by adequate facilities increases positive patient experiences, which in turn drives their loyalty. This patient loyalty plays a role as a mediator that strengthens the relationship between satisfaction with the physical environment and recommendation interest. Patient visits show a close relationship with their perceptions of service quality, satisfaction with the physical environment, and hospital image. Patients who visit frequently, especially in the category of 2-3 visits, are the dominant group in providing reviews related to their experiences. This finding is consistent in both government and private hospitals in Kendari City. Consistent repeated experiences give patients confidence to assess and recommend a hospital. The frequency of visits also reflects the level of patient engagement, which can be used as an indicator of their loyalty. In government hospitals, complete facilities are the main attraction, while in private hospitals, friendliness and speed of service are dominant factors. This finding indicates that satisfaction with service interactions (such as friendliness) has a greater influence on patient decisions in private hospitals, while in government hospitals, completeness of facilities is a top priority. Both of these reasons, both facilities and friendliness, contribute to shaping patient satisfaction, their loyalty, and their willingness to recommend the hospital to others. Consumer behavior theory explains that positive customer experiences are the basis for forming loyalty, which then drives word of mouth. Research by Lacap and Alfonso (2022) found that patient loyalty mediates the relationship between satisfaction with the physical environment of the hospital and intention to recommend. Loyal patients have greater trust in the hospital, so they are more motivated to recommend it.

Service Quality towards Recommendation Interest Mediated by Patient Loyalty

The results of the study indicate that the quality of service in hospitals, both private and government in Kendari City, has a significant influence on patient interest in recommending hospital services, with patient loyalty as a mediator. Superior service quality, such as responsiveness, friendliness, and professionalism, creates a positive experience that increases patient loyalty. This loyalty, in turn, strengthens patient interest in recommending the hospital. Patient loyalty plays an important role as a mediator in this relationship. Patients who are satisfied with the service tend to develop trust in the hospital, which then encourages them to share positive experiences with family or friends. The frequency of patient visits shows how good service quality can build loyalty and influence their interest in recommending the hospital. This loyalty is a reinforcing factor that connects patient experience with their decision to recommend the hospital to others. In private hospitals, this effect is more pronounced because of higher patient expectations of service quality, so that satisfying repeat visits play an important role in strengthening loyalty and recommendations. In private hospitals, the friendliness and professionalism of the staff are the main reasons that attract patients, while in government hospitals, complete facilities are more dominant. Nevertheless, in both types of hospitals, adequate service quality creates patient loyalty, which serves as a mediator in encouraging them to recommend the service. With loyalty formed, patients feel confident in sharing positive experiences, both because of service interactions and adequate facilities. Sholihat (2023) and Rahman et.al. (2023) support this finding, stating that patient loyalty strengthens the relationship between service quality and word of mouth (WOM). Empirically, good service quality is a major factor in creating patient loyalty. This loyalty mediates patients' interest in recommending the hospital to others. In the context of patient rights, they have the right to receive services that are fast, efficient, and in accordance with professional standards. When these rights are fulfilled, patients feel valued and have higher trust in the hospital.

Hospital Image Towards Recommendation Intention Through Patient Loyalty Mediation

Hospital image has a significant influence on patient interest in recommending services, both directly and through patient loyalty mediation. Research in private and government hospitals in Kendari City shows that a positive hospital image, such as trust in the quality of services and the professionalism of medical personnel, encourages patients to share positive

experiences. Patient loyalty has been shown to be a mediator that strengthens this relationship, especially in private hospitals, where the influence of image is more dominant compared to government hospitals. Research by Rahman et.al. (2023) supports this finding, stating that patient loyalty plays an important role in linking hospital image to word of mouth (WOM). When patients feel loyal to a hospital that has a good image, they are more confident in recommending it to family or friends. Empirical phenomena show that a good hospital image affects patient loyalty, which in turn encourages their interest in recommending hospital services. In the context of patient rights, a positive hospital image reflects the institution's commitment to honest, quality services that focus on patient comfort. When these rights are respected, patients feel more confident in sharing their positive experiences with others. The SERVQUAL model supports this finding by highlighting that the assurance and empathy dimensions of service reflect a positive hospital image. Loyalty formed through trust in these dimensions creates a strong foundation for WOM. Thus, building a good hospital image is not just about promotion, but also a long-term strategy to strengthen patient loyalty and encourage them to become effective promotion agents.

Differences in respondents' perceptions on each indicator between government-owned hospitals and private hospitals in Kendari City

Based on the results of statistical tests, it shows that there is an influence of Physical Environment Satisfaction, Service Quality and Hospital Image both directly and indirectly on Patient Loyalty and Recommendation Intention in both private and government hospitals, statistically this finding is relevant to Surati et.al. (2018), which revealed that there is no significant difference in patient satisfaction using health coverage in government hospitals compared to private hospitals. The study analyzed several dimensions of patient satisfaction, namely tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The results of the study showed that these dimensions did not show any striking differences between government hospitals and private hospitals. Based on the findings of Bustan (2012), in general the results of the study through the descriptive Importance Performance Analysis method showed that there was no difference in the level of patient satisfaction between Government Hospitals and Private Hospitals in Palembang City. The results of data analysis using this method showed that patient satisfaction (expectations) in both types of hospitals were not met. This can be seen from the average total grand mean which has a negative value, which indicates that the service performance expected by patients has not been in accordance with their expectations, both in government hospitals and private hospitals. From the description above, there are differences in marketing strategies based on service quality indicators and the main reasons for choosing a hospital where government hospitals prioritize patient sensitivity and interests and the availability of medical facilities while private hospitals prioritize service quality related to speed of service and friendliness of officers which are the main things in maintaining and increasing loyalty and interest in recommending patients, this condition can be seen from the mission of private hospitals, especially RS Aliya Dua and Tiga, which make friendliness, politeness, friendly and family to improve service quality and increase patient visits which ultimately increase hospital income.

7. CONCLUSION

Satisfaction with the physical environment of the hospital has a positive and significant influence on patient loyalty, both in private and government hospitals in Kendari City. This finding suggests that hospitals that are able to provide an adequate physical environment are more likely to maintain patient loyalty.

Satisfaction with the physical environment of the hospital also has a significant effect on patient interest in recommending the service. A clean, comfortable, well-organized and well-lit environment encourages patients to share positive experiences with family, friends, or colleagues in both private and government hospitals.

Patient loyalty mediates the relationship between physical environment satisfaction and recommendation intention, both in public and private hospitals. When patients are satisfied with the hospital environment, they tend to be loyal. This loyalty in turn strengthens their intention to recommend the hospital to others.

Service quality has a positive and significant influence on patient loyalty. Friendly, responsive, professional service that provides attention to patients creates a sense of trust and emotional attachment to the hospital, this occurs in both government and private hospitals.

Patients who are satisfied with the quality of service are more likely to recommend the hospital to others. Responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy as well as the ability of hospital personnel to carry out their assigned functions, will create a positive impression that encourages interest in recommending by patients to both government and private hospitals.

Patient loyalty plays an important role as a mediator between service quality and recommendation intention. Good service quality builds patient loyalty, which then strengthens their intention to share positive experiences with others. This relationship shows the importance of ensuring service consistency as a strategy to create sustainable recommendation intention in both public and private hospitals.

Hospital image has a positive and significant influence on patient loyalty. Patients who have a positive perception of the hospital's reputation, staff professionalism, and the hospital's commitment to their comfort are more likely to remain loyal.

The image of the hospital also has a significant impact on the interest in recommending private and government hospitals. A positive perception will be a driver for patients to recommend the hospital to others.

Patient loyalty mediates the relationship between hospital image and recommendation intention. A strong image encourages patients to be loyal to the hospital, and this loyalty strengthens their willingness to recommend the service to others. This mediation effect applies to both public and private hospitals.

Patient loyalty has a positive and significant influence on their intention to recommend a hospital. Loyal patients, those who have emotional attachment and trust in the hospital, tend to promote hospital services through WOM. This finding suggests that loyalty not only creates patient retention but also becomes a tool to increase effective promotion.

Based on the analysis of loading factors, private hospitals are superior in the physical environment satisfaction variable on the indicators of facility aesthetics and functional layout, as well as in service quality on the indicators of physical evidence and empathy. On the other hand, government hospitals are superior in the Service Quality variable on the indicators of reliability and assurance, as well as in the hospital image variable with the indicators of having a positive image and offering reliable medical services. Private hospitals are also higher in loyalty and interest in recommending on the indicators of being loyal to this hospital and encouraging friends and relatives to choose this hospital. Both types of hospitals have their own advantages, which shows that differences in indicators have an effect on patient loyalty and interest in recommending.

For further research, it is important to explore other factors that may influence recommendation intentions, such as patient experience. Further research could explore specific service comparisons (e.g., emergency, inpatient, or surgical service categories) to see if there are more pronounced variations in patient experience. In addition, research could focus on patient perceptions of cost and accessibility of services, which are often differentiating factors between private and public hospitals.

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