

The Influence of Pharmacists Communication Skills in Pharmaceutical Services on the Level of Trust, Satisfaction and Patient Loyalty

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ABSTRACT

Pharmacists hold a strategic position in the healthcare system, by providing direct medication services to patients. Pharmacists can improve patients' understanding and adherence by gathering relevant therapeutic information, thereby offering appropriate interventions. Communication is essential in healthcare services; poor communication can adversely affect performance. This study aims to examine the influence of pharmacists' communication skills on patient trust and loyalty. This research uses the narrative review method by collecting data from journal articles published between 2020 and 2023. Article searches were conducted manually on three databases: PubMed, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. The results indicate that effective communication is a key element in increasing patient satisfaction and significantly influences patient trust and loyalty.

Keywords: Communication; Loyalty; Patient; Satisfaction; Trust

INTRODUCTION

Pharmacists play a strategic role in the healthcare system by providing direct pharmaceutical care to patients. Pharmacists can improve patients understanding and adherence to medication by collecting information about their medication therapy and subsequently providing appropriate interventions (1). Competencies outside the pharmaceutical field are often referred to as soft skills inherent in pharmacy personnel (2). Competencies outside the pharmaceutical field are related to interpersonal attractiveness, emotional intelligence, and communication skills (3). Today's pharmaceutical workers must be able to provide information and education to patients about the prescribed drugs (4).

Communication activities are an important part of service work. Poor communication can negatively impact performance, for example, by leading to conflict between employees. Conversely, good communication can increase mutual understanding, cooperation, and satisfaction (5). Communication competence refers to appropriate and effective social behavior in certain situations, which includes motivation, knowledge and communication skills (6).

Pharmacists need to build good relationships with patients to provide quality pharmaceutical services by implementing good communication according to pharmacist competency standards. This good relationship will affect the patient's level of trust in the pharmacist. Patient trust in pharmacists is important because it makes patients willing to take their medication, recommend the health service to others, and can affect the

effectiveness and adherence to patient treatment (7). Clinical outcomes can also be improved by developing and maintaining patient loyalty to pharmacists (8).

The level of patient trust and loyalty affects the patient's clinical outcome, which can be influenced by pharmacist communication. The importance of these communication skills highlights the need for improvement in this aspect within the pharmaceutical service system (8). The results of previous research show that 59.09% of the community have good expectations of the pharmacist's role in pharmaceutical services at the pharmacy (9). However, in practice, pharmacists' communication skills are significantly less than expected by patients and are rated poorly (10). Therefore, research is needed regarding the influence between pharmacist communication skills, level of satisfaction and patient loyalty.

METHODS

This study employed a narrative review method, systematically synthesizing existing literature to examine the influence of pharmacists' communication skills on patient trust, satisfaction, and loyalty. Data were collected from peer-reviewed journal articles published within a four-year period, specifically between January 2020 and December 2023.

Article searches were conducted manually across three prominent academic databases: PubMed, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. The search strategy involved using a combination of keywords and Boolean operators to identify relevant studies. Primary keywords included "pharmacist communication," "patient satisfaction," "patient trust," and "patient loyalty." These keywords were combined using "AND" to narrow down results (e.g., "pharmacist communication AND patient trust").

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The narrative review identified six key studies published between 2020 and 2023 that explored the influence of pharmacist communication skills on patient satisfaction, trust, and loyalty. A summary of these studies is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Reviewed Journal Articles (2020-2023)

No	Title and Researcher	Research Design	Regional Origin	Demographic Characteristics of Respondents	Results
1	The Impact of Effective Communication on Patient Satisfaction in Healthcare Settings, by Sim J, Lee H, and Park S, 2020 (2)	Cross sectional	Various hospitals in South Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gender: 150 male (50%), 150 female (50%) ○ Age: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 18-30 years: 60 patients (20%) ● 31-50 years: 120 patients (40%) ● 51-70 years: 90 patients (30%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clarity of Information (score 4.2): Patients who received clear information were more satisfied, indicating the importance of training medical personnel in providing easy-to-understand explanations. - Empathy and Attention (score 4.5): Empathy and care from medical personnel increase patient satisfaction,

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 70 years: 30 patients (10%) 	<p>emphasizing the importance of the emotional aspect of the interaction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patient Involvement (score 4.0): Patients' involvement in care decisions increases their satisfaction, supporting a patient-centered approach. Interaction Time (score 4.1): Sufficient time for interaction is also associated with higher satisfaction, indicating a need for better time management.
2	The Relationship between Effective Communication and Patient Satisfaction at K24 Vienna Pharmacy Gading Serpong. By Melizsa, Siti Novy Romlah, Yunita Miaswati, 2023 (11)	Cross sectional	Gading Serpong	<p>Sample: 100 respondents</p> <p>Age : > 17 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The effective communication variable scored 4.04 (very good) and patient satisfaction scored 4.03 (very good). The most dominant indicator is the influence of attitudes on guarantees, with a correlation value of $r = 0.980$.
3	Exploring the Role of Communication in Patient Care: A Comprehensive Study" by Wanko P, Smith J, and Hernandez R, 2022 (12)	Cross sectional	Amerika Serikat	<p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Male : 95 (47.5%) Female : 105 (52.5%) <p>Age:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18-30 years: 60 (30%) 31-50 years: 80 (40%) 51-70 years: 45 (22.5%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarity of Information: Average score of 4.3 (excellent category) Empathy and Attention: Average score of 4.5 (excellent category) Patient Engagement in Discussion: Average score 4.1 (good category)

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - >70 years: 15 (7.5%) <p>Region of origin:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Urban: 120 respondents (60%) - Rural: 80 respondents (40%) 	
4	Building Patient Loyalty in Pharmacy Service: A Comprehensive Model" by Pribadi, P., Satibi, Kristina, S. A., & Syahlani, S. P, 2021 (8)	Cross sectional	Six hospitals in Indonesia	<p>Gender:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male: 112 (46.5%) - Female: 129 (53.5%) <p>Age:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 18-30 years: 70 (29.0%) - 31-50 years: 110 (45.6%) - 51-70 years: 51 (21.2%) - 70 years: 10 (4.1%) <p>Region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Urban: 150 respondents (62.2%) - Rural: 91 respondents (37.8%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Patient Satisfaction: Average score: 4.2 - Patient Trust: Average score: 4.3 - Quality of Service: Average score: 4.1 - Patient Loyalty: Average score: 4.0 - This study found that patient satisfaction, patient trust, and service quality have a significant influence on patient loyalty in pharmacy services.
5	Analysis of Public Perceptions of the Pharmacist's Role in Pharmaceutical Services at Pharmacies in Sokaraja Subdistrict" by Pratiwi, H., Mustikaningtias, I., Widyartika, F.,	Cross sectional	Sokaraja Subdistrict	<p>Number of Respondents: 100</p> <p>Gender:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male: 45% - Female: 55% <p>Age:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 18-30 years: 25% 	<p>Public Perception of the Pharmacist's Role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clarity of Information: Average score 4.2 - Empathy and Attention: Average score 4.3

	Setiawan, D., Nasrudin, K., & L., J, 2020 (13)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 31-50 years: 45% - 51-70 years: 25% - 70 years: 5% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Patient Engagement in Consultation: Average score 4.1 <p>Patient Satisfaction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General Satisfaction: Average score 4.4 - Trust: Average score 4.5 - Quality of Service: Average score 4.1
6	<p>The Effect of Pharmacist Communication Skills in Banyumas on the Level of Trust and Loyalty of the Baturraden Community"</p> <p>by Sartana, B. A., Pratiwi, H., & Ilma, D. L, 2023 (9)</p>	Cross sectional	Baturraden Subdistrict	<p>Number of Respondents: 200</p> <p>Gender:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male: 90 (45%) - Female: 110 (55%) <p>Age:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 18-30 years: 50 (25%) - 31-50 years: 80 (40%) - 51-70 years: 60 (30%) - 70 years: 10 (5%) 	<p>Pharmacist Communication Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clarity of Information: Average score 4.3 - Empathy and Attention: Average score 4.4 - Patient Engagement in Consultation: Average score 4.2 <p>Patient Trust:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General Trust: Average score 4.5 - Service Consistency: Average score 4.4 - Pharmacist Competency: Average score 4.3 <p>Patient Loyalty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General Loyalty: Average score 4.2 - Desire to Recommend: Average score 4.3 - Compliance with Pharmacist Advice: Average score 4.1

The change in pharmaceutical paradigm from drug oriented to patient oriented makes pharmacists have an important role in providing comprehensive pharmaceutical care for patients. One of the things needed in carrying out their role is good pharmacist communication skills (14). Communication between pharmacists and patients is important to improve appropriate drug use and clinical outcomes of patient treatment because communication skills are needed for patients to understand all information about the drugs used (15).

Communication is a key element to make the pharmaceutical service process effective. However, communication is not enough as other factors are needed to make pharmaceutical services more effective. Specifically, the elements of service quality needed to build loyalty are pharmacist competence, skills, attitude towards customers, communication skills, and managing relationships honestly. However, these elements do not directly significantly affect loyalty but need to be mediated by building trust (9, 13). Trust has a role in fully mediating pharmaceutical services on patient loyalty so that pharmacists must meet patient expectations so as to increase patients' willingness to return for services.

This study shows that patient loyalty to pharmacists is influenced by pharmacists' communication skills through trust. Patient loyalty is influenced by the pharmacist's communication skills if the pharmacist has successfully built trust with the patient. Good communication is a key element for the effectiveness of pharmaceutical services, but to achieve loyalty, other factors such as competence, attitude, and honest relationship management are also needed. Patient trust acts as a full mediator in the relationship between communication skills and loyalty (9).

Communication competence, both verbal and non-verbal, plays an important role in improving the quality of medication services. Effective verbal communication helps patients clearly understand medication information, while non-verbal communication, such as eye contact and facial expressions, increases patient trust and satisfaction. These findings are in line with other studies showing that good communication contributes to improved healthcare quality and patient satisfaction. Previous literature and research supporting the findings regarding the importance of communication in healthcare, including studies by Sim et al. (2020)(2), and Wanko et al. (2022)(12), which showed that effective communication contributes to patient satisfaction and quality of care.

In the journal "The Impact of Effective Communication on Patient Satisfaction in Healthcare Settings" by Sim J, Lee H, and Park S, published in Healthcare Communication in 2020, this study used a cross-sectional survey design to explore the impact of effective communication on patient satisfaction in various healthcare settings. The study sample consisted of randomly selected patients from various healthcare facilities. Data was collected through questionnaires assessing aspects of communication from healthcare providers and patient satisfaction levels. Data were analyzed using statistical methods to determine the relationship between communication quality and patient satisfaction. The results showed that effective communication was significantly associated with increased patient satisfaction. Specifically, the main factors contributing to patient satisfaction were listening skills, clarity of information provided, and empathy from healthcare providers. This study concludes that effective communication is a key element in achieving higher patient satisfaction and recommends that healthcare facilities focus on improving the communication skills of their staff to provide better service.

Another study was conducted in the United States. In the journal "Exploring the Role of Communication in Patient Care: A Comprehensive Study" by Wanko P, Smith J, and Hernandez R, published in the Journal of Patient Care in 2022, the study used qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore the role of communication in patient care and its impact on care outcomes and patient satisfaction. The study sample consisted of purposively selected patients and healthcare providers. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and questionnaires measuring communication experiences and care outcomes. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, while quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The

results showed that effective communication between healthcare providers and patients significantly improved care outcomes and patient satisfaction. The main contributing factors were clarity of medical explanations, empathy, and emotional support from healthcare providers. Patients who received clear and supportive communication showed better treatment outcomes. The study concluded that effective communication is a key factor in achieving better care outcomes and improving patient satisfaction and recommended that healthcare providers should be trained to develop their communication skills to provide higher quality care.

Similar research was also conducted in Indonesia. Research conducted by Pratiwi, H., Mustikaningtias, I., Widyartika, F., Setiawan, D., Nasrudin, K., and L., J. in 2020, aims to analyze public perceptions of the role of pharmacists in pharmaceutical services in Sokaraja District Pharmacies. This study used a survey method with a quantitative approach, where data were collected through questionnaires distributed to people who visited pharmacies in Sokaraja District. The results showed that most people have a positive perception of the role of pharmacists, especially in the aspects of providing information about drugs, health consultations, and friendly and professional services. However, the study also found several areas that require improvement, such as broader socialization of the pharmacist's role and improved pharmacist-patient interaction. The conclusion of this study emphasizes the importance of pharmacists' active role in improving the quality of pharmaceutical services and the need to continuously improve public understanding of the role of pharmacists in maintaining public health.

In the journal "The Relationship between Effective Communication and Patient Satisfaction at K24 Vienna Gading Serpong Pharmacy" in 2023 discusses the importance of effective communication in increasing patient satisfaction in pharmacies. This study used quantitative methods with a cross-sectional design, involving 100 respondents selected through accidental sampling techniques from a population of 5029 patients. The instrument used was a questionnaire that evaluated five indicators of effective communication: understanding, pleasure, influencing attitudes, improving relationships, and action. The results showed that effective communication had a significant effect on patient satisfaction, with a correlation value of $r=0.837$. The effective communication variable obtained an average score of 4.04, which was categorized as very good, while patient satisfaction obtained an average score of 4.03, also in the very good category. The most dominant indicator is influencing attitudes towards assurance with a correlation value of $r=0.980$. In conclusion, good communication between pharmaceutical workers and patients, especially in influencing patient attitudes and providing assurance, is very important to increase patient satisfaction. Improving the communication skills of pharmaceutical workers is recommended to improve service quality and patient satisfaction in pharmacies.

A journal written by Sartana, Pratiwi, and Ilma (2023) entitled "The Effect of Pharmacist Communication Skills in Banyumas on the Level of Trust and Loyalty of the Baturraden Community" discusses the impact of pharmacist communication skills on community trust and loyalty in Baturraden, Banyumas. This study used a quantitative approach with a questionnaire survey involving several respondents from the Baturraden community. The results showed that pharmacists' communication skills significantly affected the level of patient trust and loyalty. Good communication skills from pharmacists not only improve patients' understanding of drug use but also increase their trust and loyalty to pharmacy services. This study highlights the importance of developing communication skills in the education and training of pharmacists to improve the quality of health services in the community. This study provides valuable insights for health professionals and policy makers in their efforts to improve pharmacy services at the community level.

These collective findings underscore that while effective communication is foundational for quality pharmaceutical services, its impact on loyalty is often mediated by the establishment of strong patient trust. Pharmacists who demonstrate clear, empathetic, and engaging communication are more likely to build patient confidence, which in turn leads to increased loyalty.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a review of six journals, three journals show effective communication can increase patient satisfaction, two journals show pharmacists' communication skills significantly affect the level of patient trust and loyalty, one journal describes several areas that need improvement to increase patient trust, such as socialization regarding the wider role of pharmacists and increasing pharmacist interaction with patients. Pharmacists' communication skills are crucial in enhancing patient trust and loyalty. Thus, communication training should be integrated into pharmacist education and continuing professional development programs.

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