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The Role of Soft Skills in Enhancing Service Satisfaction in Psychiatric Hospitals: A Quantitative Analysis (A mental hospital that has been the scene of the most significant protracted conflict and tsunami in the history of the world)

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Abstract

Background: The quality of services in psychiatric hospitals, especially in areas with psychosocial trauma due to prolonged conflicts and natural disasters such as in Aceh, is strongly influenced by the social skills (*soft skills*) of health workers. Effective interpersonal interaction is essential for patient recovery and satisfaction, but the quantitative impact of *these soft skills* is still under-researched in such a challenging context.

Objective: This study aims to quantitatively analyze the influence of *soft skills* of health workers which include the dimensions of communication, teamwork, leadership, ethics, and information on the level of patient service satisfaction in a psychiatric hospital in Aceh, Indonesia.

Methods: This study used a quantitative design with a survey method. A sample of 303 patients who received outpatient treatment was selected using *convenience sampling techniques*. Data were collected through a questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale and analyzed using *Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling* (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0 software.

Results: The results of the analysis showed that teamwork had the most dominant influence on patient satisfaction (coefficient of 0.601; t-statistic of 5.558), followed by communication (coefficient of 0.265; t-statistic of 3.345). In contrast, the dimensions of leadership (coefficient -0.051) and ethics (coefficient of 0.064) did not show a significant influence in this study.

Conclusions: *Soft skills* of health workers, particularly teamwork and communication, significantly improve patient satisfaction in psychiatric hospitals in post-conflict and post-disaster contexts. These findings underscore the importance of integrating *soft skills* training into professional development programs for healthcare workers to improve the quality of service and patient experience.

Keywords: Soft skills; Service satisfaction; Leadership; Communication; Teamwork; Quantitative analysis

1. Introduction

For people with behavioral disorders, mental health procedures are crucial for successful recovery [1], [2]. This result is especially true in psychiatric hospitals, where patients often face severe trauma due to various factors, whether caused by psychosocial conditions, natural disasters, or prolonged social conflicts [3], [4]. Among the various factors that influence the quality of care, the social skills (soft skills) of health workers play a very important role in creating a

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supportive environment for patient recovery [5]. Skills such as empathy, interpersonal communication, and emotional management are crucial in interactions with patients who may have traumatic experiences [6], especially in psychiatric hospitals located in areas that have been hit by major conflicts and tsunamis [7], [8], [9]. Aceh, which faced a prolonged conflict for over 54 years after Indonesia's independence, and the region's suffering was compounded by the world's largest tsunami in 2004. Even today, the trauma from both the conflict and the disaster has not fully healed. The psychiatric hospital that was the subject of this study is one of the mental health institutions operating in an area with a history of major natural disasters [10] and long-standing conflict [9], providing it a complicated and tough environment for mental health services [11]. In this context, the social skills of health personnel in psychiatric hospitals not only have a role in increasing the quality of daily interactions with patients but also have a direct impact on patient satisfaction levels [12]. Patient satisfaction in a psychiatric hospital is closely related to the success of therapy and recovery [13], where a good relationship between patients and healthcare workers can speed up the healing process [13]. Thus, it is critical to comprehend how health professionals' soft skills enhance patient satisfaction and service quality in mental facilities [14], particularly in areas full of challenges due to psychosocial trauma, as demonstrated by the psychiatric hospitals that are the emphasis of this research. This study seeks to investigate the impact of soft skills on enhancing patient satisfaction through quantitative analysis that provides new insights into mental health service practices, it is anticipated to encourage the creation of regulations and instruction in this area.

1.1. Problem Statement

The quality of services in psychiatric hospitals is often influenced by various complex factors, one of which is the social skills (soft skills) possessed by health workers [15]. Although medical technical factors, such as medication and therapy, play an important role in a patient's recovery, effective interpersonal interaction between patients and healthcare workers has a profound impact on the healing process [16]. Psychiatric hospitals located in areas hit by major conflicts and tsunamis have a much greater challenge in providing optimal mental health services. Patients who come to these hospitals are not only dealing with mental disorders caused by medical conditions, but also the psychological impact of trauma due to natural disasters and long-lasting conflicts [17]. In this context, the soft skills of health workers that are derived from the ability to communicate[12], teamwork [18], leadership[19], ethics [14] and information[20], are very vital to create an environment that supports the psychological recovery of patients [5], [21].

However, although such social skills are recognized as an important aspect of the quality of service [21], there is still little research that explicitly measures their impact on patient satisfaction in psychiatric hospitals, particularly in extreme situations such as those experienced by psychiatric hospitals that are the subject of this study. Furthermore, although previous research has identified the importance of soft skills in mental health services [22], significant knowledge gaps still exist regarding how these skills affect the patient experience [12] in psychiatric hospitals operating in post-conflict and post-disaster areas. Therefore, the problem statement in this study is to explore the extent to which the soft skills of health workers affect patient satisfaction in psychiatric hospitals operating in the context of a long history of conflict and tsunami (Aceh, Indonesia) as well as how these factors are interrelated in improving the quality of services provided.

Research Objectives

This study seeks to assess the impact of health workers' social abilities (soft skills) on patient satisfaction in psychiatric hospitals located in areas that have been hit by long conflicts and large tsunamis. The primary aim of this research is to assess the point to which leadership, communication, teamwork, ethics and information can improve the quality of interaction between health workers and patients, as well as their impact on patient satisfaction in the context of psychosocially challenging mental hospitals. Through a quantitative approach [23], it is anticipated that this study will offer an increased understanding of the significance of soft skills in enhancing the quality of mental health care, particularly in environments affected by trauma due to disasters and conflicts, as well as provide a solid foundation for future policy development and training of health workers.

1.2. Gap Analysis

Although research on soft skills in the context of mental health services has grown [24], [25], there are still significant gaps in the literature that examine in depth the role of social skills of health workers in improving patient satisfaction in mental hospitals, particularly in areas affected by major natural disasters and prolonged conflicts. Most of the existing research focuses more on the technical and medical aspects of health care, while very few have investigated how the interpersonal skills of health workers interact with the psychological factors of traumatized patients. What's more, research in post-conflict and post-disaster areas, such as those found in psychiatric hospitals that is the focus of this study, is still very limited. This study attempts to close this gap by offering new viewpoints on the connection between soft skills and patient satisfaction in the context of psychiatric hospitals operating in extreme environments.

1.3. Novelty and Research Justification

By emphasizing the importance of health professionals' soft skills in enhancing patient satisfaction in psychiatric institutions located in regions impacted by major conflicts and tsunamis (Aceh, Indonesia), this study provides a noteworthy innovation within the domain of mental health care. The novelty of this research employs a quantitative methodology that integrates psychosocial factors due to disaster trauma and conflict with the interpersonal skills of health workers, which has not been widely explored within the framework of post-conflict psychiatric institutions. This research is important because it can contribute to the development of more effective training and policies for healthcare workers in improving the quality of patient interactions, especially in challenging environments. Consequently, the findings of this investigation are anticipated, but also to offer practical solutions to improve the patient experience in mental health services.

1.4. Research Design and Methodologies

This study evaluates the effects of medical staff soft skills on service satisfaction in psychiatric institutions using a quantitative design [23] and survey methodology [26]. This study is designed to measure soft skills variables (such as communication, empathy, leadership, ethics and information) as well as patient satisfaction through valid and reliable measurement instruments. This design was chosen to provide measurable empirical evidence of the relationship between the soft skills of medical personnel and the patient experience in mental hospitals.

2. Population and Sample

The study's population consists of all patients who visit mental hospitals and receive medical care within a month. From this population, 303 samples were selected within one month. The sample of this study consisted of patients who visited during the study period and met the predetermined inclusion criteria [27]. Patients who can vocally converse with medical staff, have had medical treatment or consultation in a psychiatric institution, and have consented to participate in the study are all eligible to be included. Patients who satisfied the requirements and were willing to participate were chosen as respondents in a convenience sampling method that combined non-probability sampling. To guarantee that the study's findings are accurate and representative, the sample size is established using statistical procedures.

2.1. Research Procedure

This research was carried out through data collection carried out within a period [28] of one month in selected mental hospitals. The research process begins with obtaining permission from the hospital and explaining the purpose and procedures of the research to the patients involved. Furthermore, respondents were invited to fill out a questionnaire [29] that focused on measuring the soft skills of medical personnel and their level of satisfaction with the services provided. This questionnaire consists of two main parts: (1) measurement of soft skills of medical personnel which includes the dimensions of communication, leadership, information, teamwork, and etics, and (2) measurement of patient satisfaction which includes aspects of reliability, responsiveness, physical evidence, assurance, empathy in medical personnel. All respondents were given sufficient time to fill out the questionnaire, and each respondent was given clear information regarding the confidentiality of the data to be provided.

2.2. Data Collection Techniques

Data was collected through the deployment of questionnaires specifically designed [30] to measure medical personnel's soft skills and patient satisfaction. The questionnaire was compiled based on the latest theory and literature on soft skills in health services and patient satisfaction models. To measure soft skills, questionnaire items include questions that measure verbal and non-verbal communication, empathy, and listening skills of medical personnel. Meanwhile, factors such as reliability, quality of service, and feeling appreciated by medical staff are all included in patient satisfaction metrics. A 5-point Likert scale was used for the measurement, allowing respondents to indicate how much they agreed with each statement.

2.3. Data Analysis

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to analyze the collected data utilizing SmartPLS software version 4.0. Because PLS-SEM can evaluate the intricate associations between latent variables and solve the issue of unnormally distributed data [31], [32], which frequently arises in social and behavioral research, it was selected. In this analysis stage, measurement models and structural models are tested to identify the influence of soft skills of medical personnel on patient satisfaction. The primary phase in the analysis process is confirmation of the model of measurement, which involves evaluating the construct's validity and reliability using metrics like Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability, and Cronbach's alpha [33], [34] Furthermore, structural model

analysis was carried out to test the hypothesis that had been proposed, using path coefficients and *t-statistical values* to assess the significance of the interrelationship among variables [32]. The model is tested using R^2 values to determine the degree to which independent factors account for variability in dependent variables (patient satisfaction).

3. Result

This study analyzes the influence of soft skills of health workers on service satisfaction in psychiatric hospitals in areas affected by major disasters. Based on analysis using SmartPLS version 4.0, it was found that several dimensions of soft skills have a significant effect on patient service satisfaction. With a coefficient of 0.265 and a tcal value of 3.345, healthcare personnel' communication abilities shown a strong positive impact on service satisfaction. Indicating that effective communication can improve the patient's experience in receiving services [35]. Teamwork was the most influential soft skills dimension with a coefficient of 0.601 and a calculation of 5.558, showing that cooperation between health workers is very important in increasing patient satisfaction in mental hospitals [36]. In contrast, the delivery of information carried out by health workers had a weaker influence on service satisfaction, with a coefficient of 0.153 and a calculation of 0.092, although it remained important in the context of communication. Another interesting finding was that leadership (coefficient -0.051, tcal 0.067) had no significant effect on patient satisfaction, even showing a negative association, suggesting that low or ineffective leadership quality can adversely affect the patient experience [37]. The ethics variable exhibited a low coefficient of 0.064 and a calculation of 0.056, indicating that while it is important, ethics in mental health services did not significantly impact patient satisfaction within the scope of this study. The findings offer significant insights for psychiatric hospitals aimed at enhancing service quality by developing health workers' soft skills, particularly in communication and teamwork. Additionally, the importance of leadership and ethics in fostering an environment conducive to patient well-being is emphasized.

3.1. Interpretation of Results

The research results of this study offer profound insights into the significance of health workers' soft skills in enhancing service satisfaction in mental hospitals, particularly in regions affected by significant disasters. The SmartPLS analysis indicated that the communication dimension of health workers exerted a substantial positive effect on service satisfaction, with a coefficient of 0.265 and a t-value of 3.345. This is in line with communication theory in the context of healthcare which states that effective communication between healthcare workers and patients can build a relationship of mutual trust, which in turn increases patient satisfaction [38]. The ability to convey clear information and listen to patient complaints is essential in creating a safe and comfortable environment for patients [39], thus influencing their perception of the quality of services provided.

In addition, *teamwork* or cooperation between health workers has a more dominant influence on patient satisfaction, with a coefficient of 0.601 and a calculation of 5.558. These findings support the theory that good collaboration between healthcare professionals improves efficiency in the service process, reduces medical errors, and ensures that each patient's needs can be met comprehensively [40]. Solid cooperation not only speeds up the diagnosis and treatment process but also affects the patient's experience of receiving treatment, which ultimately increases their satisfaction with the services received.

Although the results of the analysis showed a significant influence of *communication* and *teamwork*, the *information* dimension did not show a strong influence on service satisfaction. The low coefficient (0.153) and the smaller calculation (0.092) indicate that although information is important in providing good service, its role in improving patient satisfaction in mental hospitals is more limited than communication and cooperation. These findings open up space for further research into other factors that may influence patients' perceptions of the quality of information they receive in the context of mental health services [41].

3.2. Impact on Theory and Practice

This study has significant implications for both theory and practice in mental health services, particularly regarding the impact of health workers' soft skills on patient satisfaction. Theoretically, it reinforces the importance of effective communication and teamwork in healthcare, showing that these interpersonal skills can significantly affect outcomes and patient perceptions [42], [43]. The findings contribute empirical evidence on the relevance of soft skills in psychiatric hospitals, where past research often focused more on technical competencies.

In practice, the study suggests that psychiatric hospitals should prioritize the development of soft skills, particularly communication and teamwork, in their training and recruitment processes. Training programs should focus on active listening, empathy, and clear communication to improve patient experiences [44]. Strengthening teamwork can enhance coordination, speed up diagnoses, and reduce treatment errors, thereby improving patient satisfaction.

Additionally, the study highlights the role of information sharing and leadership, suggesting that psychiatric hospitals should refine their approaches to both to support service quality further.

3.3. Research Limitations

This study provides significant insights into the impact of health personnel's soft skills on service satisfaction in psychiatric facilities, but it has several limitations. First, it is based on a single psychiatric hospital in a disaster-affected region, restricting the applicability of the results to other hospitals. Second, the cross-sectional design only captures a snapshot of the relationship between variables, preventing the identification of changes in patient satisfaction over time. Longitudinal researchers are advised to investigate the enduring impacts. Lastly, while various soft skill dimensions were measured, external factors like socio-economic and psychological aspects of patients were not explored, warranting further research on their interaction with soft skills.

3.4. Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should address several key areas that are informed by the study's limitations. First, longitudinal studies are recommended to monitor how health workers' soft skills influence service satisfaction over time, clarifying causal relationships. Second, expanding the sample to include multiple psychiatric hospitals across different regions could enhance the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, external factors like patients' socio-economic conditions should be examined for their potential impact on service satisfaction. Third, exploring the role of leadership styles and healthcare workers' professional ethics in shaping service quality could provide valuable insights into improving patient satisfaction in psychiatric hospitals.

3.5. Social and Ethical Implications

This research highlights the social and ethical importance of improving service quality in psychiatric hospitals through the development of healthcare workers' soft skills, such as communication and teamwork. Socially, it emphasizes the need for prioritizing soft skill training to provide more compassionate and responsive care to patients. Ethically, it is crucial that soft skill training be inclusive, considering patient diversity and sensitivity to psychological conditions. Inadequate or biased training could negatively impact patient experiences, particularly those with trauma. Therefore, mental hospitals should create training programs that combine technical skills with empathy, cultural sensitivity, and ethical awareness to improve service quality and patient well-being.

4. Conclusion

This study suggests that the soft skills of health workers, particularly communication and teamwork, significantly enhance service satisfaction in psychiatric hospitals, with the largest coefficient found in the teamwork variable. Although some other soft skills, such as ethics and leadership, show a lower influence, the findings highlight the significance of cultivating interpersonal competencies to enhance the quality of the patient experience. Overall, these results reinforce the need to integrate soft skills training in health worker professional development programs, especially within the framework of psychiatric institutions functioning in post-conflict and post-disaster settings.

4.1. Suggestion

Based on the findings of this study, Future research should investigate the impact of additional soft skills, including empathy and stress management on service satisfaction, as well as using a qualitative approach to understand patient perceptions. Practice in the field needs to prioritize intensive and continuous training in communication, teamwork and ethics for medical staff, in order to improve relationships with patients and create an environment that supports recovery. In addition, hospitals should include soft skills assessment in performance evaluations to improve

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that they do not have any professional relationships with entities involved in the research, or the results of this study could influence that. This article has not been published elsewhere and is not being considered for publication in any other journal.

Statement of ethical approval

This study was excluded from formal ethics review by the ethics committee because it complies with institutional and national ethical guidelines and the current research does not contain any research conducted on animal/human subjects by any of the authors.

Statement of informed consent

Consent is obtained after verbal explanations from all participants prior to the interview. The procedure for obtaining this verbal consent has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Medicine, Syiah Kuala University.

Statement of Author's Agreement

By signing this agreement, the authors confirm that all authors have reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript. This manuscript is not being reviewed elsewhere or published in other journals. The authors are responsible for the accuracy and integrity of the content presented in this article.

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