

The Influence of Complaint Response Quality, Hospital Image, and Perceived Value on Referral Intention

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Abstract Patient referral intention is an important indicator of hospital sustainability and competitiveness. This study aimed to analyze the influence of complaint response quality, hospital image, and perceived value on referral intention at a Type C public hospital in Jakarta. A quantitative cross-sectional design was employed using a survey of patients who had received healthcare services at the hospital. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results showed that complaint response quality had a significant positive effect on both hospital image and perceived value. Patients who perceived complaint handling as responsive, fair, and effective tended to develop a more favorable image of the hospital and higher perceived value. Furthermore, hospital image and perceived value significantly influenced referral intention. Among the variables examined, hospital image demonstrated the strongest effect on patients' willingness to revisit and recommend the hospital to others. The findings also indicated that perceived value partially mediated the relationship between complaint response quality and referral intention. These results suggest that improving complaint management, strengthening a positive hospital image, and enhancing patient value perceptions are essential strategies for increasing referral intention. Hospital managers should prioritize responsive complaint handling and continuous service quality improvement to build patient trust and loyalty. This study contributes to healthcare management literature by providing empirical evidence on factors affecting referral intention in public hospital services.

Keywords: Complaint Response; FKTP; Hospital Image; Perceived Value; Referral Intention.

Received: Februari 28, 2026

Revised: March 30, 2026

Accepted: May 31, 2026

Published: May 31, 2026

Curr. Ver.: May 31, 2026



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1. Introduction

The quality of healthcare services has become a major concern for hospitals in maintaining competitiveness and ensuring patient satisfaction. In today's increasingly competitive healthcare environment, hospitals are required not only to provide effective clinical services but also to deliver responsive and patient-centered care. One important aspect of service quality is the hospital's ability to respond effectively to patient complaints. Complaint handling reflects the hospital's commitment to service recovery and continuous quality improvement. Patients who receive prompt and satisfactory responses to their complaints tend to develop greater trust in the healthcare institution. Consequently, complaint response quality may influence patients' future healthcare decisions, including their intention to return or seek referral services from the same hospital. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021), patient-centered healthcare services significantly contribute to healthcare utilization and long-term patient loyalty.

Hospital image is another important factor influencing patient behavior and healthcare decision-making. A positive hospital image is formed through consistent service quality, professional healthcare personnel, modern facilities, and positive patient experiences. Hospital image represents the overall perception and reputation of a healthcare institution in the minds of patients and the public. A favorable image can strengthen patient confidence and reduce

uncertainty when choosing healthcare services. Previous studies have shown that hospital image positively influences patient satisfaction, trust, and behavioral intentions. Patients who perceive a hospital as reputable and reliable are more likely to revisit the hospital and recommend it to others. Therefore, maintaining a positive hospital image is essential for sustaining patient retention and organizational growth (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Perceived value is defined as the overall assessment of the benefits received compared with the costs incurred by patients when obtaining healthcare services. In healthcare settings, perceived value encompasses not only financial considerations but also service quality, convenience, treatment outcomes, and emotional benefits. Patients tend to evaluate whether the healthcare services received are worth the time, effort, and money spent. Higher perceived value encourages positive attitudes toward healthcare providers and increases the likelihood of continued utilization. According to Zeithaml (1988), perceived value is one of the strongest predictors of customer behavioral intentions because it directly influences satisfaction and loyalty. In hospital services, perceived value may therefore become a critical determinant of patients' intention to seek future treatment or referrals.

The intention to refer patients back represents a patient's willingness to return to the same hospital or recommend it for future healthcare needs. Behavioral intention has been widely recognized as a significant predictor of actual behavior in various service industries, including healthcare. Patients who intend to revisit or refer healthcare services generally have favorable evaluations regarding their previous experiences. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior proposed by Ajzen (1991), intention is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In hospital settings, intention to refer patients back may reflect trust, satisfaction, and confidence in the healthcare services received. Therefore, understanding factors influencing referral intention is important for healthcare managers seeking to improve patient retention strategies.

Several previous studies have demonstrated the importance of complaint response quality in shaping patient perceptions and future behavioral intentions. Effective complaint management not only resolves service failures but also strengthens patient relationships and trust. Research conducted by Tax et al. (1998) indicated that customers who experience successful service recovery often exhibit stronger loyalty than those who never encountered service problems. Similarly, healthcare studies have shown that patients who perceive complaint handling as fair, timely, and empathetic are more likely to continue utilizing healthcare services. These findings suggest that complaint response quality may directly influence patients' intention to revisit or recommend healthcare providers.

Hospital image has also been identified as a key determinant of patient loyalty and referral behavior. A positive image creates confidence regarding service quality and reduces perceived risks associated with healthcare decisions. Research by Nguyen & Leblanc (2001) found that organizational image significantly affects customer loyalty through trust and satisfaction mechanisms. In healthcare organizations, hospital image contributes to patients' perceptions of service credibility and professionalism. Patients who perceive a hospital positively are generally more willing to maintain long-term relationships with the institution. Consequently, hospital image may play an important role in encouraging patients to seek future healthcare services from the same hospital.

Perceived value has consistently been reported as an influential predictor of behavioral intentions across various service sectors. Patients who perceive that they receive substantial benefits relative to the costs incurred tend to express stronger intentions to continue using healthcare services. Research conducted by Cronin et al. (2000) demonstrated that perceived value significantly influences customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Within hospital settings, perceived value may be shaped by clinical outcomes, service efficiency, communication quality, and overall patient experiences. Therefore, increasing perceived value can potentially strengthen patients' intentions to revisit and recommend healthcare services to others.

A Type C public hospital in Jakarta faces increasing challenges in maintaining patient retention and referral continuity amid growing competition among healthcare providers. Although the hospital has implemented various service improvement initiatives, patient feedback indicates concerns regarding complaint handling responsiveness, organizational image, and perceived value of services received. Understanding how these factors influence patients' intention to refer back to the hospital is essential for developing effective quality improvement

strategies. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of complaint response quality, hospital image, and perceived value on the intention to refer patients back to a Type C public hospital in Jakarta.

2. Literature Review

Referral intention refers to the willingness of primary healthcare facilities (FKTP) to continue referring patients to the same hospital based on previous experiences and evaluations. According to Ajzen (1991), intention reflects an individual's readiness to perform a particular behavior and is influenced by attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In healthcare services, referral intention indicates confidence in the hospital's ability to provide quality care and satisfactory patient outcomes. Strong referral intention reflects loyalty and commitment to maintaining long-term cooperation with the hospital. Behavioral intention is also closely associated with customer loyalty and future behavioral decisions (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Previous studies have demonstrated that favorable service experiences significantly increase revisit and referral intentions (Abubakar et al., 2017; Saha & Theingi, 2009).

Behavioral intention has been widely recognized as a key predictor of actual behavior. According to Zeithaml et al. (1996), intention is influenced by perceptions of service quality and perceived value. Similarly, Philip Kotler & Keller (2016) argued that repeat behavioral intentions are closely associated with customer loyalty. In the context of hospital services, referral intention demonstrates a healthcare provider's commitment to maintaining cooperation with a hospital. When healthcare facilities perceive that a hospital consistently delivers quality services and favorable outcomes, they are more likely to continue referring patients to that institution. Consequently, referral intention serves as an important measure of long-term organizational relationships.

Complaint response quality refers to stakeholders' evaluations of how effectively a hospital handles complaints and service failures. Effective complaint management can restore trust, improve satisfaction, and strengthen loyalty toward healthcare organizations. According to Parasuraman et al. (1988), service quality is determined by the gap between customer expectations and perceived performance. Moreover, Andreassen (2001) emphasized that successful complaint handling can transform dissatisfied customers into loyal customers. The SERVQUAL dimensions of responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy, and tangibles are critical determinants of perceived complaint response quality (Ladhari, 2009; Parasuraman et al., 1988). Effective complaint responses contribute positively to future behavioral intentions and long-term service relationships (Boulding et al., 1993; Caruana, 2002).

Hospital image refers to the overall perception, reputation, and beliefs held by stakeholders regarding a healthcare institution. A strong hospital image is developed through consistent service quality, professional healthcare staff, advanced facilities, and positive patient experiences. Kotler & Keller (2016) explain that organizational image consists of associations stored in customers' minds that influence decision-making processes. Previous studies have shown that a positive hospital image significantly affects trust, satisfaction, loyalty, and service utilization decisions (Javalgi et al., 1992; Nguyen & Leblanc, 2001). Furthermore, hospital image has been identified as a major determinant of patient loyalty and referral behavior (Kim et al., 2008; Wu, 2011).

Perceived value is defined as the overall assessment of benefits received relative to the costs incurred. Zeithaml (1988) proposed that customers evaluate value based on the comparison between perceived benefits and sacrifices. In healthcare settings, benefits may include treatment outcomes, service quality, convenience, and emotional satisfaction, whereas sacrifices may involve financial costs, waiting time, and effort. Research has consistently demonstrated that perceived value positively influences satisfaction, loyalty, and behavioral intentions (Cronin et al., 2000; Petrick, 2002). Patients who perceive greater value from healthcare services are more likely to continue using and recommending those services (Han & Ryu, 2009; Zeithaml et al., 2018).

Zeithaml (1988) proposed three main components of perceived value: benefits, sacrifices, and trade-offs. Benefits refer to the functional, emotional, and social advantages gained from a service. Sacrifices include both monetary and non-monetary costs incurred during service consumption. Trade-off represents the comparison between perceived benefits

and sacrifices. When customers believe that benefits outweigh costs, they perceive the service as valuable. In hospital services, high perceived value may strengthen confidence in healthcare providers and increase willingness to continue using the same institution. Therefore, perceived value serves as an important mechanism linking service experiences to future behavioral intentions.

The relationship among complaint response quality, hospital image, perceived value, and referral intention can be explained through service quality and consumer behavior theories. High-quality complaint handling demonstrates organizational responsiveness and commitment to customer satisfaction. A positive hospital image strengthens trust and confidence among healthcare stakeholders. Meanwhile, perceived value enhances customers' evaluations of healthcare services by emphasizing the balance between benefits and costs. Together, these factors contribute to stronger referral intentions and long-term loyalty. Healthcare facilities are more likely to continue referring patients to hospitals that effectively address complaints, maintain a positive reputation, and deliver superior value. Therefore, improving these factors is essential for increasing referral intention and sustaining organizational performance in healthcare services.

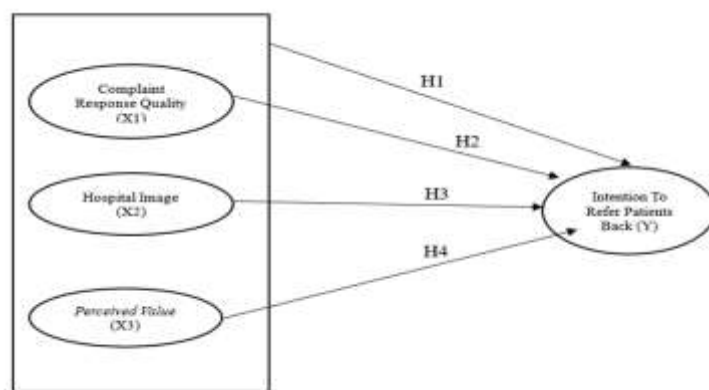


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

3. Proposed Method

This study employed a quantitative survey design to analyze the influence of Complaint Response Quality, Hospital Image, and Perceived Value on the Intention to Refer Patients Again to a Type C Public Hospital in Jakarta. The population consisted of primary healthcare facilities (FKTP) that had previously referred patients to the hospital, with 75 respondents selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected through a structured online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms and measured using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). The research instrument comprised variables adapted from established theories, including the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988), Hospital Image (Kotler & Keller, 2016), and Perceived Value (Zeithaml, 1988). Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software. Descriptive analysis employed the Three Box Method (Ferdinand, 2014), while validity and reliability were assessed using Pearson Correlation and Cronbach's Alpha. Classical assumption tests included normality and multicollinearity testing. Hypothesis testing was performed using multiple linear regression analysis, including the F-test, t-test, and coefficient of determination (R^2), to examine both simultaneous and partial effects of the independent variables on the intention to refer patients again.

4. Results and Discussion

Respondent Characteristics

From a total of 75 respondents surveyed, the majority were female, comprising 53 individuals (70.7%). Most respondents were within the age groups of 31–40 years (40%) and 20–30 years (38.7%). The most common occupation among respondents was physician, accounting for 49.3%. In terms of work experience at Primary Healthcare Facilities (FKTP), 40% had worked for 1–5 years, 33.3% for 6–10 years, and 21.3% for more than 10 years.

Validity Test and reliability tes

Validity and reliability testing was conducted on the survey data. Based on the validity test results, each item in the research instrument showed a correlation coefficient greater than

0.3, indicating that all items are valid. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha yielded values greater than 0.7, suggesting that the instrument is reliable and would produce consistent results if applied at different times and in different populations.

Regression Equation

Based on the results of the multiple linear regression analysis shown in Table 5, the regression equation is as follows:

$$Y = 1,647 + 0,193X_1 + 0,324X_2 + 0,143X_3$$

Explanation:

Y: Intention to Refer Again

X₁: Complaint Response Quality

X₂: Hospital Image

X₃: Perceived Value

The regression equation above indicates that if all independent variables (X₁, X₂, and X₃) are equal to zero, the value of Referral Intention (Y) will be 1.647. An increase of one unit in the Complaint Response Quality variable (X₁) will increase Referral Intention by 0.193 units. An increase of one unit in the Hospital Image variable (X₂) will increase Referral Intention by 0.324 units. An increase of one unit in the Perceived Value variable (X₃) will increase Referral Intention by 0.143 units, assuming all other variables remain constant.

Based on the results of the statistical tests, it can be concluded that each hypothesis proposed in this study is accepted and supports the existing theoretical framework.

Hypothesis Test

Simultaneous Test (F Test)

This test is conducted to assess whether all independent variables simultaneously influence the dependent variable. The following are the test results.

Tabel 1. Simultaneous Test (F Test)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Interpretasi
Regression	2160.590	3	720.197	86.686	.000 ^b	Accepted
Residual	780.961	94	8.308			
Total	2941.551	97				

Based on the table above, the F value is 86.686 with a significance value of 0.000, which is <0.05. From these results, it can be concluded that Complaint Response Quality, Hospital Image, and Perceived Value together have a significant effect on Re-Referral Intention

Partial Test (t-Test)

The t-test is used to determine the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable partially. The following are the results of the test that was carried out.

Tabel 2. Partial Test (t-Test)

Hypothesis	Coefficient	Sig.	Interpretation
H1	86,686	0,000	Accepted
H2	0,193	0,003	Accepted
H3	0,324	0,033	Accepted
H4	0,143	0,009	Accepted

Based on the results of the t-test, it was found that the significance value of each variable was <0.05 (Sig. Complaint Response Quality variable: 0.03; Sig. Hospital Image variable: 0.033; Sig. Perceived Value variable: 0.009). Since all significance values were <0.05, it can be concluded that each independent variable has a significant effect on the dependent variable partially.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that Complaint Response Quality has a positive and significant effect on the intention of Primary Healthcare Facilities (FKTP) to refer patients back to the hospital. Effective complaint handling demonstrates the hospital's commitment to service quality, professionalism, and stakeholder satisfaction. When complaints are addressed promptly, politely, and effectively, FKTPs perceive that the hospital values their feedback and is committed to continuous service improvement. This positive experience strengthens trust and encourages future referral decisions. Conversely, poor complaint management may lead to dissatisfaction and reduce the willingness of FKTPs to continue referring patients. These findings are consistent with the SERVQUAL theory, which

emphasizes responsiveness as a key determinant of service quality and customer loyalty (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Hospital Image was found to be the most influential factor affecting the intention to refer patients again. A positive hospital image reflects a strong reputation, professionalism, reliability, and high-quality healthcare services. FKTPs not only evaluate administrative procedures when selecting referral destinations but also consider public perceptions and patient experiences associated with the hospital. A hospital that is perceived as competent, trustworthy, and patient-centered is more likely to receive continuous referrals from healthcare providers. Although respondents generally rated the hospital image positively, opportunities for improvement remain, particularly in creating memorable service experiences that strengthen long-term relationships with referral partners. These findings support the view that a strong organizational image significantly influences stakeholder loyalty and referral behavior (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

The study also revealed that Perceived Value has a positive and significant effect on referral intention. Perceived value represents the balance between the benefits received and the sacrifices made during the referral process. FKTPs are more likely to continue referring patients when they believe that the hospital provides substantial benefits, such as efficient services, clear communication, high-quality treatment, and positive patient outcomes. The findings suggest that while respondents perceived the referral process as relatively convenient, the benefits received did not always meet their expectations. Therefore, hospitals should focus on enhancing service outcomes and strengthening collaborative relationships with referral partners to increase perceived value. These findings are consistent with the value-based perspective proposed by Zeithaml (1988), which highlights the importance of maximizing benefits to improve customer loyalty.

Furthermore, complaint response quality contributes significantly to the development of perceived value among FKTPs. When complaints are handled efficiently and transparently, referral partners experience greater satisfaction and perceive higher value from their collaboration with the hospital. Effective complaint management not only resolves immediate concerns but also demonstrates organizational accountability and commitment to service excellence. As a result, FKTPs are more likely to view the hospital as a reliable partner capable of supporting patient care needs. This enhanced perception of value strengthens referral relationships and increases the likelihood of future referrals. Therefore, complaint management should be considered an essential component of value creation in healthcare services (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Zeithaml, 1988).

In addition, complaint response quality plays an important role in shaping the hospital's image. Every interaction between referral partners and the hospital contributes to the overall perception of organizational credibility and service quality. Effective complaint handling demonstrates professionalism, responsiveness, and a willingness to address stakeholder concerns. Such experiences reinforce a positive image and build confidence among healthcare providers. Conversely, unresolved complaints or poor communication can damage the hospital's reputation and weaken referral relationships. Therefore, complaint management should not only be viewed as a problem-solving mechanism but also as a strategic tool for strengthening organizational image and stakeholder trust (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Among the variables examined, Hospital Image emerged as the strongest predictor of referral intention. This finding suggests that reputation and public perception remain critical considerations for FKTPs when deciding where to refer patients. A positive image provides assurance that patients will receive safe, effective, and professional healthcare services. It also reflects the hospital's ability to consistently meet the expectations of patients and healthcare partners. Consequently, hospitals should continuously invest in quality improvement initiatives, professional development, and patient-centered care to maintain and strengthen their image. Building a strong reputation is essential for sustaining referral networks and achieving long-term organizational success (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

The simultaneous analysis demonstrated that Complaint Response Quality, Hospital Image, and Perceived Value collectively have a significant influence on referral intention. Together, these variables explain a substantial proportion of the variance in FKTPs' willingness to refer patients back to the hospital. This finding indicates that referral decisions are multifaceted and influenced by a combination of service experiences, organizational

reputation, and perceived benefits. Hospitals that excel in complaint management, maintain a positive image, and deliver superior value are more likely to secure long-term referral partnerships. Therefore, an integrated approach to service quality improvement is essential for strengthening referral relationships and enhancing organizational competitiveness (Ajzen, 1991).

From a theoretical perspective, the findings support the Theory of Planned Behavior, which suggests that perceptions, evaluations, and experiences influence behavioral intentions. In the context of healthcare referrals, complaint response quality, hospital image, and perceived value shape FKTPs' intentions to continue referring patients. Practically, the results highlight the importance of developing effective complaint management systems, enhancing hospital reputation, and increasing the value delivered to referral partners. By focusing on these strategic areas, hospitals can improve stakeholder satisfaction, strengthen referral loyalty, and sustain collaborative relationships within the healthcare system. Ultimately, these efforts contribute to improved service quality, increased patient referrals, and better organizational performance (Ajzen, 1991; Kotler & Keller, 2016; Zeithaml, 1988).

Comparison

The results of this study indicate that complaint response quality, hospital image, and perceived value have a positive and significant influence on referral intention. These findings differ from several previous studies that reported service quality and responsiveness did not significantly affect revisit intention. This difference may be attributed to variations in research settings, respondent characteristics, and the specific variables examined. In the present study, complaint response quality was assessed more specifically as the hospital's ability to respond to, manage, and resolve complaints submitted by primary healthcare facilities. Furthermore, this study found that hospital image was the most influential factor affecting referral intention, highlighting that a positive perception of the hospital plays a crucial role in maintaining trust and long-term collaboration between healthcare providers.

On the other hand, the findings are consistent with previous studies suggesting that effective complaint handling can enhance customer loyalty and increase the likelihood of repeated service utilization. The results also support the view that a higher perceived value leads to a stronger intention to reuse services, as users tend to continue utilizing services when the perceived benefits outweigh the sacrifices involved. However, this study provides additional contributions by integrating complaint response quality, hospital image, and perceived value into a single research model to explain referral intention. This approach offers a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing referral decisions by primary healthcare facilities and enriches the literature on relationship marketing and healthcare service management within hospital settings.

5. Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that Complaint Response Quality, Hospital Image, and Perceived Value each have a positive and significant effect on the Intention to Refer Patients Back to a Type C Public Hospital in Jakarta. This indicates that improving the quality of complaint handling, strengthening the hospital's image, and enhancing the perceived value of services can increase the willingness of referring healthcare facilities to continue referring patients to the hospital. Furthermore, the results demonstrate that Complaint Response Quality, Hospital Image, and Perceived Value simultaneously exert a positive and significant influence on Intention to Refer Again, suggesting that these three factors collectively play an important role in shaping referral decisions and maintaining sustainable referral relationships within the healthcare system.

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