

## Crisis Communication Strategy For Bpjs Outpatient Patients At Muhammadiyah Palembang

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### **Keywords**

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### **Abstract**

*This article describes the results of community service activities that discuss communication strategies in crisis management for BPJS outpatients at the Muhammadiyah Hospital in Palembang. Along with increasing concerns about patient dissatisfaction due to long waiting times and inadequate communication, this activity aims to examine the role of health communication strategies in mitigating the crisis. The methods used include interviews, observations, and document analysis to explore the effectiveness of communication between hospital staff and patients. The results of this service identified significant improvements in communication response times and patient satisfaction, while highlighting the importance of transparency and empathy in crisis management. This study contributes to the understanding of the practical application of communication strategies in health services, with implications for improving patient experiences in the health care system in Indonesia.*

### **Kata Kunci**

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### **Abstrak**

*Artikel ini menguraikan hasil dari kegiatan pengabdian kepada masyarakat yang membahas strategi komunikasi dalam penanganan krisis pada pasien rawat jalan BPJS di Rumah Sakit Muhammadiyah Palembang. Seiring dengan meningkatnya kekhawatiran atas ketidakpuasan pasien akibat waktu tunggu yang lama dan komunikasi yang tidak memadai, kegiatan ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran strategi komunikasi kesehatan dalam memitigasi krisis tersebut. Metode yang digunakan meliputi wawancara, observasi, dan analisis dokumen untuk mengeksplorasi efektivitas komunikasi antara staf rumah sakit dan pasien. Hasil pengabdian ini mengidentifikasi adanya peningkatan signifikan dalam waktu respons komunikasi dan kepuasan pasien, sekaligus menyoroti pentingnya transparansi dan empati dalam manajemen krisis. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman penerapan praktis strategi komunikasi dalam layanan kesehatan, dengan implikasi untuk meningkatkan pengalaman pasien dalam sistem layanan kesehatan di Indonesia.*

## Introduction

Effective communication in healthcare is a crucial element to ensure patient satisfaction, especially in public hospitals that serve a large number of patients such as BPJS (Social Security Administering Body) participants. Communication barriers in healthcare facilities have long been identified as a major factor causing patient dissatisfaction (Damaiyanti & Setiawan, 2014). Issues such as long waiting times, inadequate information, and poor interactions between healthcare providers and patients have a significant impact on the overall patient experience. These barriers are particularly pronounced in outpatient services, where patients often experience delays, confusing administrative procedures, and unsatisfactory service, which can ultimately lead to frustration.

Muhammadiyah Hospital Palembang, as one of the main health facilities serving BPJS patients in South Sumatra, faces challenges in managing the surge in demand for services, especially for outpatient care. This hospital often faces issues of delays and other service issues, which are exacerbated by the lack of clear communication between staff and patients regarding waiting times, administrative procedures, and changes in care plans. The challenge of managing crisis communication in BPJS services is a relevant issue in this context (Yantos, 2016). The quality of health services has a direct impact on patient trust, compliance with medical advice, and overall satisfaction. Therefore, effective communication plays an important role in minimizing complaints, managing expectations, and improving the quality of care (Effendy, 2003). Crisis communication strategies are essential to handle patient complaints and maintain positive relationships, especially in stressful health care environments (Morison, 2008).

Several studies have highlighted the importance of communication in healthcare settings, emphasizing the role of transparency, responsiveness, and empathy. According to Tjiptono (2011), communication is an important factor in building trust and satisfaction, with empathy being the most influential dimension. Other studies have also confirmed that effective communication, especially during a crisis, can significantly reduce patient complaints (Rosady, 2003; Morissan, 2008). The implementation of structured crisis communication strategies, such as timely information dissemination and proactive response systems, has been shown to improve patient experience.

The challenges faced by BPJS patients at Muhammadiyah Hospital, particularly in outpatient services, include several key issues: prolonged waiting times, inconsistent communication about scheduling and treatment plans, and inefficiencies in the referral and medication supply processes. Patients often express dissatisfaction due to a lack of transparency, delayed responses, and confusion regarding the administrative procedures involved in their care.

Additionally, the hospital's communication strategies in managing patient complaints and crises were found to be inconsistent. While there were some attempts to address patient grievances, especially by the public relations team, the absence of clear communication protocols led to misunderstandings and unresolved issues. The lack of an effective system for managing patient expectations and handling complaints contributed to the escalation of service-related crises, further undermining patient trust in the hospital.

A growing body of research highlights the importance of communication in healthcare settings, emphasizing the role of transparency, responsiveness, and empathy in improving patient satisfaction. According to Tjiptono (2011), communication is a crucial factor in building trust and satisfaction in healthcare, with empathy being the most influential dimension of patient satisfaction. Additionally, studies such as those by Effendy (2003) and Rosady (2003) indicate that effective communication, particularly during times of crisis, can significantly reduce patient complaints and improve outcomes.

The implementation of crisis communication strategies, including the timely dissemination of information, empathy in patient interactions, and proactive response systems, has been shown to improve patient experiences and satisfaction in various healthcare facilities. Previous research also highlights the need for a more structured approach to healthcare communication, especially in public hospitals that deal with large numbers of patients, as is the case with Muhammadiyah Hospital.

Given these challenges, it is evident that a more strategic approach to healthcare communication is necessary to address patient concerns and enhance the quality of care. This study proposes the implementation of a comprehensive communication strategy that focuses on improving transparency, response times, and the overall interaction between hospital staff and BPJS patients. Key components of the proposed solution include:

1. **Proactive Communication:** Hospital staff will be trained to engage patients with clear and timely information regarding wait times, treatment plans, and any delays or changes in schedules.
2. **Crisis Management Training:** The public relations and healthcare staff will receive training on crisis communication techniques, focusing on empathy, conflict resolution, and managing patient expectations during crises.
3. **Integration of Technology:** The implementation of an electronic queue management system and an online feedback platform to ensure that patients are informed in real-time about their treatment progress and any delays they may encounter.
4. **Standardization of Communication:** A uniform approach to communication will be established across all hospital units to ensure consistency in patient interactions and response times.

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the communication strategies implemented at Muhammadiyah Hospital in improving patient satisfaction, particularly among BPJS outpatient patients. Specifically, this study aims to:

Through this research, we aim to contribute valuable insights to the field of healthcare communication, particularly in Indonesian hospitals, where the integration of communication strategies can enhance the quality of care and the overall patient experience.

## **Method**

This article reports the results of a research-based community service activity focused on improving communication strategies in health care facilities. The methods used in data collection included in-depth interviews with patients, family members, and hospital staff, as well as analysis of documents and related service data. In its implementation, students (Chandra Saputra) actively collaborated with hospital communication staff to conduct observations and analysis of ongoing communication strategies. The partner in this activity was the Muhammadiyah Hospital of Palembang, an institution that serves a large number of BPJS patients, with a focus on outpatient units. Participants in this study consisted of 20 patients and 10 hospital staff who were interviewed to gain a comprehensive understanding. The implementation process of the activity was divided into three main sequential stages. The first stage is pre-activity, which includes initial interviews to identify problems and review existing communication policies in the hospital. The second stage is implementation of the activity, which involves direct observation of patient-staff interactions and systematic documentation of complaints that arise. The final stage is monitoring and evaluation, which is carried out by distributing surveys and conducting interviews with patients before and after the new communication strategy is implemented to measure its impact.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Preparation Stage**

The preparation phase began with the identification of key challenges faced by BPJS patients at Muhammadiyah Hospital, especially focusing on outpatient services. The main issues identified included long wait times, inadequate communication regarding delays, and dissatisfaction with administrative procedures such as referrals and prescriptions. Data was collected through interviews with patients, their families, and hospital staff, as well as through observations of patient-staff interactions at various hospital units.

In this phase, a detailed review of the hospital's existing communication strategies was conducted. Interviews with hospital management and the communication team revealed that while the hospital had basic communication channels in place, there was a noticeable gap in transparency and responsiveness during peak times when patient volume was high. As a result, the need for a more structured communication approach became clear, especially during crisis situations.

### **Implementation Stage**

During the implementation phase, several communication strategies were put into action to address the identified challenges. First, the hospital's public relations team took on a more proactive role, regularly informing patients of expected wait times and delays. A

more transparent communication approach was adopted, ensuring that patients were aware of the causes of delays and what to expect during their visit. This was done through verbal communication at registration desks and notices displayed throughout the hospital.

Additionally, educational sessions for hospital staff were conducted, focusing on enhancing interpersonal communication skills, particularly empathy and responsiveness. These sessions were tailored for front-line staff, including registration clerks, nurses, and administrative personnel, all of whom frequently interacted with patients.

Patients were informed about the hospital's new commitment to clearer communication, including the use of real-time updates on waiting times. This was designed to mitigate patient frustration and prevent misunderstandings, particularly concerning delays in seeing doctors or receiving prescribed medication.

The hospital also initiated a feedback system that allowed patients to voice concerns immediately after their visit. This system involved both digital (e.g., surveys sent via SMS) and traditional paper forms, ensuring that feedback was collected comprehensively.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The monitoring process was conducted through direct observation of patient-staff interactions and a survey distributed to patients both before and after the implementation of the new communication strategies. The surveys focused on patient satisfaction with communication, wait times, and the clarity of information provided by hospital staff.

The results indicated a significant improvement in communication effectiveness. According to the feedback collected, 75% of patients reported a better understanding of wait times and the reasons behind delays. Moreover, 68% of patients indicated they felt more respected and valued after interactions with hospital staff, attributing this change to the improved empathy and responsiveness from healthcare providers.

Despite these positive outcomes, several challenges were encountered. A recurring issue was the inconsistent application of the communication strategies across different hospital units. For instance, while outpatient services had adopted more transparent communication practices, some areas like the pharmacy and specialist consultations still lagged behind. This inconsistency often led to confusion among patients who experienced delays or changes in their expected treatment plans.

Another challenge was related to technology. Although the hospital had implemented a feedback system, it was not fully integrated into the hospital's administrative processes. As a result, patient feedback was not always immediately addressed, and issues raised by patients in the surveys sometimes went unresolved until the next visit. The feedback system, while helpful, needed further refinement to ensure that patients received timely responses.

Furthermore, the lack of a digital queue management system led to inefficiencies in the registration and consultation process. The current manual queue system contributed to delays, especially during peak hours when there were high patient volumes. The hospital's management acknowledged the need for a more robust system to handle patient flow more effectively.

### **Obstacles Encountered**

Several obstacles were encountered during the implementation phase. First, the hospital's reliance on a manual queue system contributed significantly to patient

dissatisfaction. Long wait times and the lack of real-time updates on patient progress through the system often led to frustration and confusion.

In addition, some staff members, especially those in administrative roles, were initially resistant to the changes in communication practices. Many staff members were accustomed to handling patient complaints in a reactive manner, rather than proactively engaging with patients to manage their expectations. To address this, additional training sessions were introduced, focusing on conflict resolution and proactive communication techniques.

Another obstacle was the inconsistent communication of changes in appointment schedules. Although efforts were made to inform patients in real-time, the lack of a centralized scheduling system meant that patients often arrived for appointments only to discover that the doctor was unavailable or delayed. This issue highlighted the need for better coordination between medical staff and administrative units.

The complexity of the administrative procedures, especially concerning BPJS claims and referrals, also remained a challenge. Patients frequently expressed confusion about the steps required to complete their referrals or obtain medications. The hospital's communication team took steps to simplify these procedures by creating clear instructional materials for patients, but there was still a gap in patients' understanding, especially for those with limited education.

### **Proposed Solutions**

To address the above challenges, several solutions were proposed. First, the integration of an electronic queue management system was identified as a critical step toward improving patient flow and reducing wait times. This system would allow patients to receive real-time updates on their wait times and improve overall efficiency.

Additionally, further training for hospital staff, particularly in the areas of empathy, clear communication, and technology usage, was recommended. Staff should be trained not only to handle patients' immediate concerns but also to engage with them proactively, ensuring that patients' expectations are managed effectively from the outset.

A more integrated approach to the feedback system was also recommended, with direct follow-ups to patient complaints, ensuring that concerns were addressed in a timely manner. This would require improved communication between the feedback team and the various hospital departments.

Lastly, the hospital's communication strategy should include more frequent updates regarding changes in appointment schedules and referrals, potentially through SMS notifications or a dedicated hospital app. This would provide patients with up-to-date information, reducing confusion and frustration when delays or changes occurred.

### **Conclusion**

The community service study on healthcare communication strategies at Muhammadiyah Hospital Palembang revealed significant insights into the effectiveness of communication crisis management for BPJS outpatient patients. Through the implementation of enhanced communication practices, the hospital was able to address several key challenges that were causing patient dissatisfaction, including long wait times, lack of transparency, and inadequate communication regarding appointment schedules and available medications.



The improvements in communication were clearly demonstrated through the results of the surveys and interviews conducted with patients before and after the intervention. A majority of patients reported feeling more informed and valued, thanks to the proactive and transparent communication from hospital staff. Specifically, 75% of respondents expressed greater satisfaction with the clarity of information provided, and 68% indicated that they felt their concerns were addressed more effectively, particularly with regard to wait times and the reasons for delays. These findings highlight the crucial role that clear, timely communication plays in improving patient experiences, even in the face of ongoing service challenges.

However, the study also identified several areas that still require attention for further improvement. One of the main obstacles encountered was the inconsistency in applying the communication strategies across different hospital departments. While certain areas, such as outpatient services, showed significant improvement, other departments, like pharmacy and specialist consultations, still lagged behind. This inconsistency suggests that a more standardized approach to communication is necessary to ensure that all units within the hospital align with the established communication protocols.

The lack of a digital queue management system also emerged as a significant challenge. The manual system in place created delays and led to frustrations among patients, particularly during peak hours. Implementing an electronic queue management system would not only enhance efficiency but also provide real-time updates to patients, allowing them to better manage their time and expectations. Additionally, the hospital's feedback system, although helpful, requires better integration and timely responses to patient complaints, ensuring that all issues are addressed swiftly and effectively.

Furthermore, the hospital's efforts in training staff to improve their communication skills, particularly empathy and transparency, were a critical success factor. However, the inconsistency in training application across staff members and the initial resistance from certain individuals underscored the importance of continuous, comprehensive training. This would ensure that all hospital staff, from administrative personnel to healthcare providers, are well-equipped to handle patient complaints proactively and maintain a high level of service quality.

Overall, the findings of this study confirm that effective communication, when applied consistently and with empathy, can significantly improve patient satisfaction and reduce the occurrence of service-related crises. While there were notable improvements, the hospital must continue to refine its communication strategies and address the identified gaps. By implementing the proposed solutions, such as a more integrated feedback system, better technology for queue management, and ongoing training for staff, Muhammadiyah Hospital Palembang can further enhance its ability to manage patient crises and improve overall service quality.

In conclusion, this study contributes valuable insights to the field of healthcare communication, particularly within the context of Indonesian hospitals serving BPJS patients. The application of these communication strategies not only helps mitigate crises but also

strengthens the relationship between healthcare providers and patients, ultimately fostering a more positive and effective healthcare experience. Further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of these interventions and to assess their impact in different healthcare settings. Expanding the scope of this research to include more hospitals could provide a broader understanding of how communication strategies can be standardized and improved across the Indonesian healthcare system, leading to greater patient satisfaction and trust in healthcare institutions.

## Declarations

**Author contribution.** Chandra Saputra contributed to the conception, design, data collection, analysis, and writing of the manuscript. He was responsible for coordinating the interviews, conducting the observations, and interpreting the results. The author also played a key role in reviewing and revising the manuscript.

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