

## The Determinants of Customer Satisfaction towards Muslim-Friendly Healthcare Service Deliveries: A Conceptual Model

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**Abstract:** The global need for hospitals that adhere to Islamic principles and accommodate the specific needs of Muslim patients is increasing. Hence, in highly competitive landscape of the healthcare industry it's imperative for hospitals to be profitable while delivering sufficient and excellent healthcare services to the community, management must exhibit prudence in addressing this evolving attitude. This study intends to identify the appropriate determinants of customer satisfaction pertaining to the service deliveries offered by healthcare providers that are desired by Muslim patients, while adhering to Islamic medical ethics and Shariah requirements. A systematic literature review approach was utilized to examine the appropriate features of Muslim-friendly healthcare practices and their mechanisms. The thematic analysis of the reviewed papers revealed eight potential determinants of customer satisfaction which are Halal pharmaceuticals and medical equipment, Islamic facilities and amenities, proficient personnel, empathy and supportive staff, compliance and supportive hospital policy, welcoming Islamic settings, reasonable and suitable pricing, and Islamic work culture. The results are anticipated to stimulate policymakers in Malaysia and other nations with an interest in the matter, to implement the suggested practices through the enactment of favorable legislative measures. This study contributes to the body of knowledge by illuminating the antecedents of customer satisfaction model that can be used by Muslim-friendly healthcare providers to formulate strategies and policies to reduce the financial and business risk due to unsatisfied customers' reactions. Subsequently, achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals of good health and well-being (Goal 3) and peace, justice and strong institutions (Goal 16).

**Keywords:** *Healthcare Services, Muslim Patients, Customer Satisfaction, Systematic Literature Review*

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### 1. Introduction

Mordor Intelligence (2022) reported that Malaysia is among the top 5 destinations of choice for medical tourism markets in Asia-Pacific besides Thailand, India, Singapore and South Korea. This achievement has further proliferated Malaysia's medical tourism market to become one of the top six Muslim travel destinations in the world together with Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Turkey, and Qatar as reported in the Global Muslim Travel Index 2023 by MasterCard-Crescent Rating (2023). These outstanding accomplishments were reflected in Malaysia's Medical Tourism Industry achievements in attaining a cumulative revenue of 1.7 billion in 2019 and is expected to expand steadily reaching a projected annual revenue of RM2 billion in 2025 (Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council, 2021). These attainments are also the results of the rise in the number of Muslim medical tourists who choose to visit Malaysia in pursuit of exceptional healthcare services that align with the principles and values of Islam (Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council, 2021).

Despite the potential profitability of this sector, the integration of Muslim-friendly healthcare services presents notable challenges, namely in reconciling Islamic medical ethics with the individualized needs of Muslim medical tourists. These difficulties have a broader scope beyond linguistic aspects and encompass complete viewpoints, including concepts related to health, disease, recovery, and death, which have a significant impact on the overall quality of healthcare interaction. Variations in the foundational views that influence the criteria for hospital services might arise as a result of the heterogeneous educational, religious, and cultural experiences of individuals. Hence, understanding the precise determinants of healthcare service deliveries pertaining to Muslim-friendly medical care holds significant relevance for hospital employees, patients, and the Muslim community at large.

Henceforth, the objective of this study is to examine the appropriate determinants for Muslim-friendly healthcare service delivery that align with Islamic principles, as well as the preferred environment for Muslim patients and their carers. The utilization of a comprehensive literature review methodology is employed to

examine the various elements and sub-elements of hospital practices that align with Islamic principles, to identify the underlying mechanisms that support each element. Ultimately, a conceptual model on customer satisfaction towards Muslim-friendly healthcare service deliveries will be proposed to serve as the guidelines for the industry.

## 2. Understanding the Issue

The field of Islamic medical ethics is closely associated with Islamic Law (Sharia), which classifies activities into many categories including compulsory, forbidden, recommended, discouraged, and authorized (Padela, 2007). Due to the individual and cultural variations inherent in Islam, the provision of healthcare services that cater to the specific needs of Muslim patients might provide challenges, as the responsibility for religious observance is primarily placed on individuals. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the most effective strategy for addressing the requirements of this significant population to ensure the inclusive and sustainable development of the Muslim-friendly medical tourism industry.

Hence, it is imperative in the current Muslim-friendly healthcare complex context that healthcare providers prioritize the provision of service delivery and an environment that aligns with Islamic principles, thereby meeting the demands of Muslim patients and their carers. Furthermore, it is imperative to guarantee that the service offered adheres to the principles of Islamic teachings as dictated by the Al-Quran and Sunnah, thereby ensuring their compliance with Halal requirements. According to Al-Qaradawi (2013), the term "halal" denotes an entity or action that is deemed to be in accordance with the principles of Shariah and aligns with the tenets of the Islamic faith. Hence, a service system that adheres to Shariah principles must impose strong limitations on physical contact, to the extent that any form of touching between unrelated individuals of different genders is prohibited. According to Al-Shahri (2002), it is recommended that Muslim patients receive medical treatment exclusively from health personnel of the same gender. In cases where this is not possible, it is suggested that opposite-gender patients undergo inspection or treatment in the presence of an adult relative.

Unfortunately, the issue around appropriate hospital practices and the desired environment for Muslim patients and their carers and the consequential impact on customer satisfaction remains ambiguous. Therefore, this study's objective is to examine and propose a conceptual model that addresses the pragmatic aspects of customer satisfaction in the context of healthcare services tailored to meet the needs of Muslim individuals.

## 3. Methodology

To ensure a methodical, comprehensive examination and synthesis of pertinent research, a systematic literature review (SLR) approach, was employed to maintain a structured, transparent, and rigorous methodology throughout each phase of the investigation. The review protocol employed in this study was the Preferred Reporting Item for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) technique. During the period of identification, various terminologies were employed, including Islamic hospital, Shariah-compliant hospital, Muslim hospital, Islamic-friendly hospital, and Islamic medical care. A total of 156 publications were selected for inclusion in the study based on a comprehensive search conducted throughout the Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar databases. Following a thorough process of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion, only seven papers (Zailani et al., 2016; Rahman et al., 2021; Shariff et al., 2018; Rahman et al., 2018; Ratnawati et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2017; Zawawi & Othman, 2018) that meet the selection criteria were selected and underwent content analysis, through which the study successfully identified the elements and contexts of an Islamic-friendly hospital environment that are sought after by Muslim patients and their carers.

Subsequently, following the thematic analysis conducted, eight potential components and viewpoints relevant to Islamic-friendly hospital service delivery requirements desired by Muslim patients were established from the patterns of work reviewed. The identified elements serve as the cornerstones of the proposed Muslim-friendly customer satisfaction model. The identified components are Halal pharmaceuticals and medical equipment, Islamic facilities and amenities, proficient personnel, empathy and supportive staff,

compliance and supportive hospital policies, welcoming Islamic settings, reasonable and suitable pricing, and Islamic work culture.

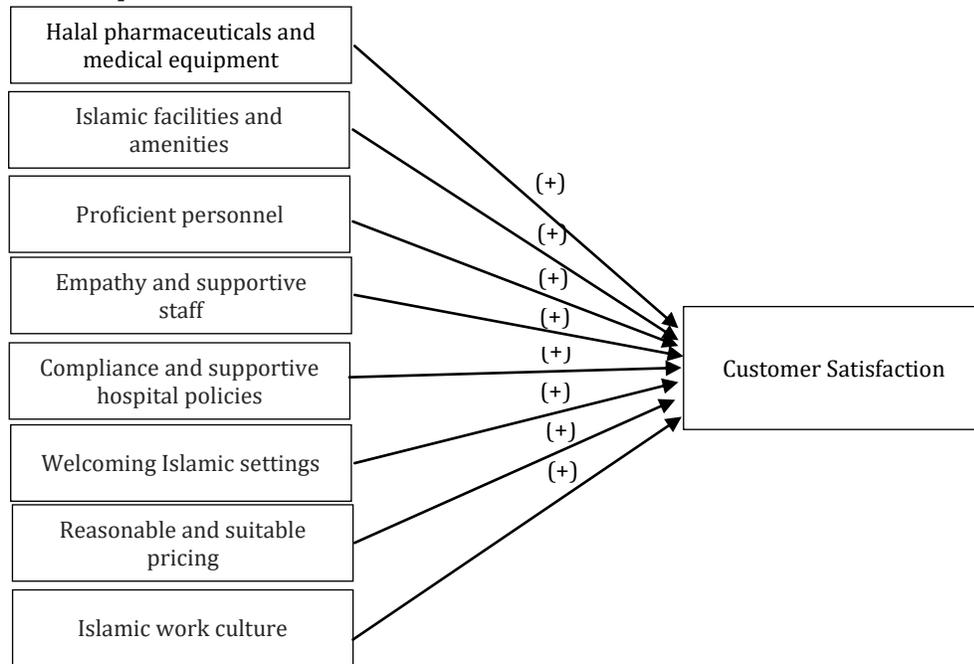
Based on the findings, there are eight essential requirements that hospitals must meet. First and foremost, empirical evidence supports the notion that fulfilling the prescription requirements for Halal pharmaceuticals and Halal medical equipment is a paramount necessity for Muslim patients. Patients must be advised of the components of the prescription medication and any potential negative effects by the healthcare professional. Secondly, hospitals must address the requirements of patients and carers by providing Islamic infrastructure that includes adequate prayer facilities and amenities, such as a tayammum kit, praying mat, and directions. Thirdly, medical personnel must demonstrate proficiency in delivering healthcare services to patients of the same gender, as well as when gender-specific therapies are required. Additionally, the inclusion of family members or nurses during the treatment process should be consistently implemented. The fourth component of the requirement is demonstrating empathy and providing support to both patients and their families. In addition, it is recommended that the hospital allocate nursing personnel or staff members to assist immobile patients or those with urinary catheters in maintaining personal hygiene before engaging in prayer rituals.

The fifth requirement pertains to the assurance that the hospital's medical services align with the criteria for Islamic medical care. Ensuring compliance and supportive hospital policies necessitates the commitment and engagement of top management. Following that, the sixth factor emphasizes the cultivation of welcoming Islamic settings. Therefore, it is imperative to prioritize the provision of Halal meals, products, and services. The seventh factor that ought to be implemented by Muslim-friendly hospitals encompasses the provision of services that are both cost-effective and easily accessible. To accommodate Muslim patients, hospitals should ensure that they implement equitable and suitable pricing for medical treatments. To facilitate patients in making well-informed decisions, it is imperative to furnish them with comprehensive treatment information and associated expenses.

The final components pertain to the cultural dynamics within Islamic work environments. To improve the quality of healthcare and the overall happiness of Muslim medical tourists, healthcare institutions should prioritize the recruitment of competent, supportive, empathetic, accommodating, and attentive healthcare professionals and administrators within an environment that promotes a hospital culture conducive to the needs and preferences of Muslim patients.

**Theoretical Model and Propositions:** The aforementioned characteristics encompass a broad array of components that serve as crucial factors in the creation of a hospital that is accommodating to the needs and preferences of Muslim patients and their carers. They serve as fundamental components that attract patients and their family members, encouraging them to return for future medical treatment or consultations. The following model depicts the essential attributes considered in the construction of the conceptual model for assessing customer satisfaction with healthcare services that are tailored to meet the needs of Muslim individuals.

**Figure 1: Proposed conceptual model**



Given the implications of the proposed conceptual model and the traits that have been observed, further research is needed to analyze and understand the impact of the determinants on customer satisfaction towards Muslim-friendly healthcare service deliveries. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model developed to have a better understanding of the relationship between the determinants and customer satisfaction. Tentatively, the following eight propositions are proposed based on the conceptual model:

- Halal pharmaceuticals and medical equipment have a significant positive effect on Muslim-friendly healthcare customer satisfaction.
- Islamic facilities and amenities have a significant positive effect on Muslim-friendly healthcare customer satisfaction.
- Proficient personnel have a significant positive effect on Muslim-friendly healthcare customer satisfaction.
- Empathy and supportive staff have a significant positive effect on Muslim-friendly healthcare customer satisfaction.
- Compliance and supportive hospital policies have a significant positive effect on Muslim-friendly healthcare customer satisfaction.
- Welcoming Islamic settings has a significant positive effect on Muslim-friendly healthcare customer satisfaction.
- Reasonable and suitable pricing has a significant positive effect on Muslim-friendly healthcare customer satisfaction.
- Islamic work culture has a significant positive effect on Muslim-friendly healthcare customer satisfaction.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The main aim of this study is to develop a conceptual model that can be utilized to identify the factors that affect customer satisfaction in the context of healthcare practices that are compatible with Muslim beliefs and practices. Although previous research has explored several aspects of customer satisfaction, there is a dearth of scholarly investigation into the domain of Muslim-friendly healthcare practices. This study fulfilled the existing theoretical gap and mitigated the disparity in research coverage by examining the factors that influence customer satisfaction towards Muslim-friendly healthcare practices, utilizing the systematic literature review methodological approach. In this study, the systematic literature review was employed to establish the foundational basis for the proposed conceptual model.

This study additionally functions as a foundation for future research endeavors and encourages further intellectual dialogues aimed at refining and scrutinizing the proposed hypotheses. With the establishment of the conceptual model, the subsequent phase entails conducting comprehensive literature reviews and substantiating the hypotheses through the examination of case studies or practical research. Further investigation is necessary to validate and augment the proposed conceptual model. Therefore, it is recommended that future research initiatives prioritize the incorporation of qualitative and quantitative research approaches to examine the correlation between the factors that influence consumer satisfaction with Muslim-friendly healthcare practices. To establish the validity of the conceptual model, it is strongly recommended that future research should integrate perspectives from both practitioners and academia.

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