

## **Impact of Counselling on Customer Retention in The Pharmaceutical Industry: A Case in Ashanti Region**

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### **Abstract**

Doing business these days has become complex and sophisticated due to several factors of which the nature of the competition plays a commanding role. In every industry, people use up-to-the-second approaches to facilitate business processes to drive home and retain customers. The reason is that, to the majority, effective customer retention is the only way in which a business can survive and/or outwit its competitors. In the pharmaceutical industry, retaining customers is very important to take the business to the next level. Amidst the various strategies, the paper investigated the role of counseling and its impact on customers to ascertain whether it is a strategy worthy of committing resources. The researcher examined the relationship between the industry players and the customers, and the place of counseling; using a descriptive survey type based on quantitative analysis to ensure good customer service. Focusing on counseling and its impact secondary data was analyzed based on the sample population of 350, comprising 6 selected pharmacies, 100 pharmacy attendants, and 250 customers from these pharmacies. The results of this investigation were synthesized based on the collective findings delineated in preceding studies. The analysis revealed a robust correlation between customer services and the quality of work delivered. This noteworthy underscored the premise that an elevation in service quality is conducive to higher customer satisfaction and loyalty. Because of that counseling services must be attached to pharmacy attendants as the determinants of service quality to ensure customer retention. The findings of this study elucidate that, amidst an intensely competitive landscape, the retention of existing customers is paramount for achieving market success. The paper recommended that to facilitate customer retention, it is imperative to adopt a customer-centric approach. Emphasizing such a paradigm is essential, as organizations that prioritize customer needs are likely to focus on delivering high-quality services promptly. Therefore, there is a need to provide effective guidance and counseling services in pharmaceutical shops to increase customer satisfaction. The reason is making this the highest priority, which has a greater impact on both the internal marketers and the customers, and thus constitutes one of the most critical variables influencing customer retention.

**Key Words:** Impact of Counselling, Customer Retention, Pharmaceutical Industry.

### **Introduction**

All types of companies, businesses, and industries have a great deal of fluctuation in sales these days. It is not the quality of products that hinders their growth; it's about competition from similar companies, businesses, and industries. The products could be regulated in price but chosen by customers not to patronize cheap and quality goods. If the marketing is not working despite regulated prices and well-qualified stocks, then that customer disloyalty problem may result from the good customer service failure. How customers are welcome matters to the customer. When a customer enters an industry, and nobody is attending to him or her for some period without a reason, this customer will be emotionally unstable about the occurrence, and it might happen that the customer won't come again. So, if you want to keep your customers then customer satisfaction should be a great target.

Counseling can be a major factor towards industrialization and as an advancement strategy for organizations as consumers play a central role in any given industry. As the saying goes, all businesses are in existence to satisfy the demands of clients known as customers, (Kabu and Soniya, 2017). Apart from product differentiation due to quality, the people rendering the client's required services also play a big role in ensuring that the client is retained. It is very common in competitive industries to have many or the same level of products at the same cost yet a difference in customer patronage in a particular industry is based on customer service. Customer retention is a strategy that allows the organization to maintain the current customers for a relatively longer period by gratifying the needs as well as the wants of the customers at the core to increase profit and reduce costs. (Kankam and Ama, 2019)

It is quite probable to acquire a new customer as customer orients himself towards a New Customer or similarly tries to purchase similar or other New Products. Customers use the present product to earn materialism unless and until materialism earns the need to use another type of product. Customer visits the pharmaceutical industry either physiologically or psychologically and the industry needs to back the new customer for him to stay permanently in the industry. How customer services are offered to the customer is important since it is likely to create a feeling of respect and security in the customer. Retaining a new customer requires good customer service that is as paramount as offering a good product and efforts should be channeled towards good customer service. (Kabu and Soniya, 2017).

Keeping the customers is way more than just meeting their basic needs and expectations. The aim of customer retention is rather to delight the customers to turn them into loyal ambassadors of the product. Engaged employees were analyzed, and their performance is based on research published by Fleming and Asplundh (Irina et al, 2019) where revenue generated from engaged customers was 1.7 times greater than that of average customers and combined engaged employees and engaged customers gave a revenue multiplied of 3.4 times the market average.

Customer retention refers to the situation where a business is retained, and the client's services or products are maintained, not allowing the client to go to competitors. The reason why businesses seek to minimize loyal customers switching over to rival companies is because a decrease in market share and profits of their company can lead to its bankruptcy. Customer retention is among the key strategies used in the marketing of products by businesses because it is about ensuring that the services of the clients are met blush grown-ups. Most effectively today's businesses are facing the most resistive partition. They can overcome the argument by placing priority on good customer service alongside quality products.

Customers should be made the center of the culture of a company so that other organizations should be on a fast pace to transition to the new order and incorporate e-commerce, wireless, and other methods to gain an edge, which says that organizations should have in their minds ideas of producing what their clientele requires from them. (Roya, 2017)

Eva et al (2018), pointed out that retaining new clients generates an economic burden approximately 5 times heavier in comparison with acquiring new customers. Retention of customers presents a clinical, moral, and commercial issue that requires counseling services. These attitudes stand on the utilization of addiction treatment, but a considerable portion of the appropriate population still does not engage in a treatment program even after undergoing and completing a prolonged assessment procedure satisfying all requirements (Robert et al, 2021).

Customer retention refers to the actions undertaken by a selling organization to reduce customer defects. Effective customer retention begins with the very first interaction an organization has ever had with a customer and follows them throughout the entire eternality of a relationship. Customer retention is the marketing objective of decreasing customer defection to a competitor (Daniel, Ronald, Yusuf, 2021). Customer retention is when organizations turn their attention to existing customers to maintain business with these clients (Mridula, 2021) On the other hand customer retention also refers to the number of customers who remain with the provider over some time (Anthony and Ellen, 2020).

Perceived service quality is the never-ending gap between customer expectation and firm performance which leads to customers returning to firms that provide service above expectations (Eliza et al, 2020).

Customer retention strategy is very keen. The competition drive is rampant and especially in pharmaceutical industries customer retention strategies cannot be downplayed. By working on your customer's emotions outside of the purchase, you can secure customer retention. Customer service personnel need to be made in cognizance with the customer mindset that paves the way for retainment of new and existing customers. Customers of the pharmaceutical industries are physiologically and/or psychologically disturbed, customers who visit numerous pharmaceutical industries need more than giving them the appropriate or prescribed drugs. Their psychological needs should also be catered for. If the customer realizes that the employee is empathizing with him or her, it helps to calm the nerves of the customer.

## **Theoretical Elucidations**

### **Thought of customer Gratification**

Customer gratification serves as a pivotal determinant influencing the practice of customer retention. It is characterized as a psychological state of assurance and connection that emerges from fulfilling the expectations and anticipations of customers (Lawrence, 2020). Teresa and Mariana (2019) articulated that satisfaction constitutes a fundamental metric for evaluating the extent to which customers expect from the producers.

The perception of customers regarding a firm's performance is also regarded as a significant factor in fostering customer satisfaction, as it is posited that customers who experience satisfaction and contentment with a firm's performance are likely to become loyal patrons (Marcus & Chukwudi 2020).

Customers exhibiting elevated levels of satisfaction are inclined to make frequent purchases in larger quantities and to explore new offerings from the same provider (Ashish, Ram, and Minakshi 2018). Additionally, they are typically proactive in disseminating information regarding their positive experiences within their social networks. Furthermore, competitive pricing, effective customer service, and adept management of customer dissatisfaction are critical strategies for cultivating and sustaining customer satisfaction (Ashish, Ram, and Minakshi 2018).

Historically, enduring customer behavior as noted by Nitin, Anad, and Saurabh (2023), increased customer satisfaction correlates with enhanced retention rates, favorable word-of-mouth promotion, and financial advantages for firms catering to these customers. Consequently, it is unsurprising that the primary objective of an enterprise is to effectively augment customer satisfaction. (Rui, Yujie, Kairui, Yufeng 2021).

### **Impression of Purchaser Retaining**

The concept of retaining customers as posited by (Bliemel, 2018), constitutes a systematic framework aimed at enhancing the transactional experience, predicated on the favorable positioning of the customer, and the resultant willingness to engage in repeated purchases. Retention strategies demonstrate optimal efficacy when the retention rate of the enterprise is elevated, as even a modest increase of 5 percent in retention can lead to an augmentation of company profitability

exceeding 85 percent. The profitability of retention strategies is attributable not only to the augmented revenue derived from loyal clientele but also to the diminished costs associated with servicing long-standing customers. These two aspects can be delineated from the perspective of the customer, particularly concerning the customer.

Customer retention denotes the expressed intention of customers to maintain an ongoing business relationship with the organization (Jani, 2021).

The phenomenon of customer retention encompasses the initiatives undertaken by a selling entity to mitigate customer attrition. The foundation of successful customer retention is established from the initial interaction and continues till the customer becomes loyal to the company. (Ro King, 2015).

Numerous studies underscore the critical importance of customer retention within the pharmaceutical industry (Muhammed et al 2022). The rationale supporting customer retention is relatively uncomplicated. Retaining customers is more cost-effective than acquiring new ones. This is primarily because the costs associated with customer acquisition are incurred exclusively during the initial phases of the commercial relationship (Donald, 2019). Furthermore, long-term customers tend to purchase more frequently, and if they are satisfied, they may engender favorable word-of-mouth promotion for the organization.

Zepeda (2024) articulates customer retention as the marketing objective of deterring customers from transitioning to competitors. Customer retention encapsulates how organizations concentrate their efforts on existing customers in a bid to sustain ongoing business interactions with them (Ho-Taek, Chankoo, Fortune, Henry, 2021). Nonetheless, customer retention may also refer to the number of customers who maintain their association with the provider over a defined timeframe, such as one year (Kabu & Soniya, 2017).

Customer retention exerts a direct influence on the long-term customer lifetime value, which represents a more lucrative pathway for firms aspiring to achieve growth and sustainability or for those aiming to shield themselves from market contractions arising from an economic downturn (Gee et al., 2018). Zeithaml, Katrien, and Alexander (2020) assert that customer retention materializes when customers repeatedly purchase a product or service, a phenomenon referred to as customer retention over an extended duration.

### ***Impact of Customer Retention***

Customer satisfaction is conceptualized as a psychological state characterized by comfort and attachment, which emerges from the fulfillment of customer expectations and anticipations (Michel & Jennifer, 2020). Nevertheless, the degree of satisfaction varies among individual consumers, notwithstanding their exposure to analogous service providers (Haemoon & Kawon 2017). Customers exhibiting a higher level of satisfaction are inclined to make frequent and substantial purchases, in addition to acquiring new offerings from the same provider (Kumar, Bharath, Ilaria & Shaphali 2019). They are also recognized for disseminating information regarding their positive experiences within their social networks.

According to Simon (2022), a significant portion of marketing theory and practice is predominantly focused on the acquisition of new customers, rather than the retention and nurturing of existing clientele; the traditional emphasis has been on sales generation rather than relationship cultivation. It would be judicious for an organization to systematically assess customer satisfaction, as it serves as a pivotal element in the retention of customers. A highly satisfied customer tends to exhibit prolonged loyalty, increased purchasing behavior as the company unveils new offerings and enhances existing ones, advocates positively for the company and its products, pays diminished attention to rival brands, displays reduced price sensitivity, contributes product or service suggestions to the company, and incurs lower servicing costs than new customers due to the routine nature of transactions. Some organizations erroneously perceive that gauging customer satisfaction is merely a matter of counting customer grievances; however, it is noted that 96% of dissatisfied customers refrain from lodging complaints and instead cease their purchasing activities.

Moreover, the establishment of reasonable pricing, the provision of efficient customer service, and the adept management of customer dissatisfaction are fundamental strategies for fostering and sustaining customer satisfaction (Guzmán & Francisco, 2023). The perception held by customers regarding the performance of the firm is also regarded as a significant catalyst in achieving customer satisfaction, as it is posited that customers who are pleased and content with the firm's performance are likely to become loyal patrons of the firm (Seo, Ranganathan, & Babad, 2018).

Conversely, satisfied customers tend to be patrons who are likely to recommend and persist in their purchasing behaviors. A trustworthiness activities implemented by the firm that rewards customers based on their cumulative purchases represents a vital strategy to augment customer loyalty, while simultaneously serving as an indirect effort to bolster customer retention practices (Alina & Mark, 2019).

Customer loyalty is defined as the emotional bond that a customer develops towards a firm and its offerings, which enhances their commitment to the firm. The disposition of loyal customers undoubtedly benefits the firm, as these customers are inclined to maintain their association for extended periods and amplify their purchasing behaviors. (Oyeniya & Joachim, 2018). Loyal customers can be categorized into four distinct segments: secured, satisfied, vulnerable, and dissatisfied (Mofokeng, Taylor & Francis 2021). Secured customers are individuals who exhibit a high degree of satisfaction and are likely to recommend and persist in their purchasing behavior with the firm. This phenomenon inherently promotes repeat purchasing by offering incentives that encourage customers to increase both the frequency of their purchases and, at times, the volume of their transactions (Alina & Mark, 2019).

Conversely, Oriol, Stefan, Medhi & Jatinder (2020) assert that the value provided by firms to customers, the confidence customers have in the firm, and the firm's commitment to fostering close relationships with customers are critical components for enhancing customer loyalty. Furthermore, Nanyama & Wainaina (2022) accentuated the importance of interaction by positing that "customer service" is equivalent to "interactive quality," which pertains to the engagement between the customer and service personnel.

According to Vikas & Ogunmola (2021), there exists a significant correlation between the quality of service rendered and the customer's propensity for repeat purchases from the same firm. Perceived service quality is conceptualized as the discrepancy between customer expectations and the actual performance of the firm, wherein customers are inclined to return to firms that deliver services exceeding their anticipations (Victor & William, 2024). It is also noteworthy that awareness regarding the service quality of the firm is heightened among retained customers primarily due to their familiarity and experiential knowledge of the firm and its offerings (Daly & Ayesha 2021). Moreover, attributes of the products, provision of ancillary services, exemplary customer care, reasonable pricing, and user-friendly procedures are posited to significantly influence customer perceptions of the quality of the firm's service (Htet, 2023).

Concept of lifetime value is not novel, it is extensively applied in consumer goods brand management to mitigate the risk of customer attrition, as long-term customer behavior is pivotal to organizational success, given the cost-effectiveness of retaining existing customers versus acquiring new ones (Eva, 2018).

### ***Customer Retention Strategies***

A foundational aspect of cultivating relationships and fostering connections is the establishment of interdependencies between suppliers and customers (Shu-Hui, 2020). In contrast, augmented products, encompassing technical guidance and long-term maintenance and operational costs, tend to eclipse functional characteristics and price considerations in importance.

Gökçay, Aylin & Kum (2019) posited that enterprises should safeguard their lucrative customer relationships by establishing not only social bonds. Social bonds pertain to the constructive interpersonal relationships between employees and potential customers. As a result, structural bonds contribute to value creation and minimize mitigating associated with the necessity for investments and alternative suppliers.

Resources may manifest in various forms, including financial assets, network positioning, skills, or a suite of technologies. Activities pertain to collaborative endeavors, such as research and development. While the industrial marketing perspective acknowledges that the nature of the product significantly influences the purchasing process, the business-to-business (B2B) marketing perspective recognizes the complexity of customer relationships, emphasizing that businesses maintain multiple interconnected relationships (Ford, Gadde, Håkansson, Lundgren, Shehota, Turnbull & Wilson, 2018). Potential strategies that embody industry best practices were predominantly derived from consulting experiences. According to Dahlgren & Norlén (2023), in customer retention practice, successful firms maintain customer loyalty not solely by concentrating on customer retention but also by attending to employee and investor retention. He advocated for a three-pronged methodology for managing customer retention, which encompasses the identification and acquisition of appropriate customers, employees, and investors (Feleke, 2021).

### ***Features influencing client tactics***

The primary obstacles encountered by organizations in their efforts to retain clientele include elevated customer expectations, competitive offerings, and the degree of customer allegiance to the entity. To ascertain customer satisfaction regarding the retention strategies implemented by the organization, customers were subjected to a survey. The results indicated that customers expressed dissatisfaction with the handling of customer complaints and exhibited uncertainty regarding the assurance of product quality (Lake, 2018).

### **Experiential evaluation**

Tuncer et al (2021) ascertained those behavioral intentions were positively affected by the degree of customer satisfaction. Organizations exhibiting higher levels of customer satisfaction typically demonstrated reduced retention elasticity. This assertion is substantiated by substantial literature evidencing a correlation between satisfaction levels and behavioral intention. Dam & Dam (2021) discovered that both customer satisfaction and customer perceptions of service quality served as pivotal predictors of attitudinal loyalty; however, satisfaction exhibited the most significant correlation with the loyalty construct.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In this segment, a variety of theoretical perspectives are delineated to fortify the investigation. Comprehensive empirical studies have been conducted to ascertain the determinants that influence customer allegiance to a particular financial institution and the implications of such retention on organizational efficacy. A plethora of theoretical constructions has emerged; however, a universally recognized theory of customer retention remains elusive. An in-depth understanding of these theoretical frameworks will empower managers to gain a more profound understanding of consumer behavior.

### **Customer satisfaction theory**

Customers may articulate elevated stages of satisfaction with an organization in survey responses; nevertheless, satisfaction is different from loyalty. Being loyal is evidenced through customer behavior; it is possible for customers to exhibit significant satisfaction yet lack true loyalty. Du, Hu & Zhu (2019) posits that loyalty does not stem from monopolistic conditions; upon the introduction of a new competitor into the marketplace, a substantial portion of customers may transition to alternative options, especially as novelty diminishes. Furthermore, loyalty is not engendered merely through discount strategies.

Authentic loyalty emerges from the relational dynamics between suppliers and customers, with the brand serving as a crucial instrument for higher purchasing of goods. The model asserts that the outcomes of satisfaction are contingent upon perceived performance and perceived disconfirmation. The latter is influenced by perceived performance relative to a standard of comparison. The consumer will encounter negative disconfirmation (indicating that the service failed to meet the comparison standard). The perceived performance of the service provider is inconsequential in this context.

### **Product life cycle theory**

Xie & Teo (2022) emphasized the importance of the product itself (as opposed to the country or the manufacturing technology employed). He articulated that a product undergoes a life cycle, which necessitates a comprehensive understanding of this cycle for effective product design and market introduction. Introduction - This phase is characterized by substantial investment and initial market adoption. Growth - Should the product succeed, the resultant increased volumes will reduce costs, thereby fostering further growth. Maturity - The success of the product attracts competitors who vie for market share, leading to a stabilization of the sales curve, with revenue increasingly derived from existing customers rather than new clientele. Saturation - An excess of market participants results in overcrowding. Decline - As supplier interest wanes, the product experiences a downturn towards obsolescence. Awareness of the cycle is instrumental for commercial banks, facilitating comparative usage, advisory roles, and dynamic application. Consequently, it is imperative to comprehend the principal stages of the product's progression to ascertain its status (Cooper, 2019).

### **Social Exchange Theory**

Eastwick et al (2019) posited that the principal premise of social exchange theory is that individuals endeavor to maximize the rewards they derive from a relationship while simultaneously minimizing associated costs. For a relationship to thrive, it is anticipated that both parties will engage in reciprocal giving and receiving in equal measures (Pietromonaco & Overall, 2021). Social exchange theory constitutes a vital element of customer retention strategies for businesses, as they gain significantly successful relationships with their clients

According to Afthanorhan et al (2019), customer satisfaction is defined as the assessment made determining whether a product satisfactorily meets the demands of the customer. By comprehensively understanding customer expectations concerning a product or service, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) can subsequently tailor their offerings to effectively address these needs and fulfill these desires, ultimately leading to greater customer satisfaction. (Tetteh-Afi, 2023). Counselling is the basic act, and pharmaceutical industries need it to serve customers. Counseling is pivoted in mental health and overall well-being. Counseling/therapy will be the tick for clients and solve their issues, manage their emotions, and improve customers' growth. Which will eventually improve customer retention.

### **Counseling services to build good customer care**

Counseling is a collaborative partnership between counselor and client, in which the client can be an individual, family, couple, or a group of people with different backgrounds. Since counseling is for everyone, it means, anyone who has feelings and thoughts needs counseling. Building good customer care is very necessary and quite demanding. A customer expects much from the producer and always he is right since business must go on. A cross-section we come across daily has feelings or mental health conditions that are hidden such as anxiety, depression, some form of phobias, and eating disorders.

Counseling is not just for particular people who are struggling with mental health issues or illnesses. Stress which are not dealt with can lead to severe challenges so all people need some form of counseling at any point in time.

Providing employee assistance program on a time basis to the Pharmacy attendant or the assistance on how to handle a customer. Being an active listener pays to maintain customers and feels at home.

Pharmacy assistants must learn to follow up on their clients to check on them periodically. Checking your customers paves the way for you to learn from your client and it builds customer-produced relationships.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Most Pharmaceutical industries consider marketing as selling off products and how those can boost their market share profitability not paying attention to customer service to acknowledge if customers are satisfied with it along with the product. The question is, 'How should we expect pharmaceutical industries to retain their customers?'

### ***Research Objectives***

1. To examine the relationship between the industry players and customers, and to investigate the impact of counseling on customer retention initiatives the need for counseling
2. To determine the level of applicability of counseling to customer retention strategies by the organization.

### ***Significance of Study***

1. The pharmaceutical business can put into practice the right customer retention strategies.
2. To hearth a decent employee-customer relationship and the need to hire counselors

### ***Operational Definitions***

Customer: The consumer or company that buys merchandise or service away from a store.

· Retention: To keep, hold on, or maintain something.

Customer profitability: refers to the difference between revenues generated from and costs incurred concerning a customer relationship over a while.

· Average consumer: These are customers who purchase the goods when the price is lowered.

### ***Methodology***

The design used in the study was correlation. This study was quantitative and used counseling as a tool to ensure good customer service in the focus of their sample and whether it played an important role in the retention of customers within the population. In this study, descriptive surveys were used to collect data. The researcher is in a diligent investigation of an assemblage of variables concerning investigating or elaborating things/ occurrences (Ataabasum, 2020). According to some research (2019), this achievement is done by principal and secondary data for a study in several methods. As such, the study conducted surveys as well as interviews. Data was collected using a questionnaire. Seventy percent of data were collected from a sample customer base across Six (6) pharmacies in Kumasi. That choice is based on the fact that all kinds of pharmacies exist in each region and they have characteristics that we now know from our interviews will make it easier to sample at least types of them. The selection is based on the size, that is, how many customers there are and what the distance between pharmacies is. The questionnaire was filled out by customers in front of the pharmacy on a random basis. Those unable to read were assisted.

The population refers to the total number of individuals in a specific area. In other words, the population is the complete set of cases, whether individual or not, from which a sample is selected (Fisher & Jeronimus., 2018). The population for this study consisted of all customers of certain Pharmacies in Kumasi, chosen PIDA Pharmacy, Silvapharma Pharmacy, Western Pharmacy, Benny's Pharmacy, Pharmax Pharmacy, and De Love Pharmacy. The target population was 350, with 330 participants completing the questionnaire.

The sample size refers to a subset or selection that represents the whole population and is tested and examined to obtain information or statistical data (Mweshi & Kwesi, 2020). The population for this study was 350, comprising 6 selected pharmacies, 100 pharmacy attendants, and 250 customers from these pharmacies. This sample size is justified by the formula:  $N > 50 + 8m$ , where  $N$  is the number of participants and  $m$  is the number of independent variables (Lakens, 2022). This formula indicates that the total number of participants ( $N$ ) should be greater than the sum of 50 and the product of 8 and the number of independent variables ( $m$ ), based on the theoretical framework of the study.

### ***- Results and Discussion***

The ensuing subsections elucidate the results in alignment with the research objectives posited. These objectives encompassed a comprehensive examination of service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. Service quality was scrutinized through the dimensions of Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy, whereas customer satisfaction and loyalty were evaluated through the lenses of customer satisfaction metrics and customer loyalty indicators. Finally, the findings of both correlation and multiple regression analyses are elucidated.

This section delineates the findings derived from the analysis regarding the impact of customer satisfaction and loyalty on customer retention. It incorporates a correlation analysis and articulates the outcomes of a bivariate correlation founded on Pearson correlation statistics in the subsequent sections.

As articulated in Table 1 below, the primary aim of this investigation, which is to evaluate the impact of counseling on customer retention within selected community pharmacies in Kumasi, has been successfully attained. The correlation coefficient established between service quality and customer satisfaction and loyalty is  $r = 0.79$ , with a corresponding significance level of 0.01, denoting statistical significance. In essence, there exists a direct and positive association between service quality and both customer satisfaction and loyalty (refer to the second table below).

**Table 1. Correlation Matrix of Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty**

Variable		Reliability	Responsiveness	Assurance	Empathy	Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty
Reliability	Correlation Coefficient ( $\alpha$ )	0.91				
	Determination Coefficient (%)	83%				
Responsiveness	Correlation Coefficient ( $\alpha$ )	0.89	0.87			
	Determination Coefficient (%)	79%	76%			
Assurance	Correlation Coefficient ( $\alpha$ )	0.90	0.90	0.87		
	Determination Coefficient (%)	81%	81%	76%		
Empathy	Correlation Coefficient ( $\alpha$ )	0.94	0.88	0.83	0.81	
	Determination Coefficient (%)	88%	77%	69%	66%	
Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty	Correlation Coefficient ( $\alpha$ )	0.83	0.90	0.91	0.87	0.89
	Determination Coefficient (%)	69%	81%	83%	76%	91%
		<b>Level 0.05*</b>	<b>level 0.01**</b>			

Source: Field data, 2024.

**Table 2. Service Quality Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty**

Variables	Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty Coefficients	
	Correlation ( $\alpha$ )	Determination (%)
Service Quality	**0.83	69
Reliability	**0.94	88
Responsiveness	**0.91	83
Assurance	**0.89	79
Empathy	**0.86	74
Significant level	0.01, 0.01, 0.01, 0.01 & 0.05 respectively	
N	330	

Source: Field data, 2024.

**Table 3. Correlations**

		Service Quality	Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty
Service Quality	Pearson Correlation	1	0.93**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	7	7
Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty	Pearson Correlation	0.93**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	7	7

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Field data, 2024.

The preceding table illustrates that the coefficient of determination of the correlation between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty is quantified at 86%; this indicates that 86% of the variability is jointly explained by Service Quality alongside Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty.

The influence of service quality (Independent Variables) on customer satisfaction and loyalty (Dependent Variable) was quantitatively evaluated through the application of multiple regression analysis. The ensuing table delineates the findings and a synopsis of the model, where the focal point is the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> statistic, recorded at 0.317. This implies that service quality elucidates 31.7% of the variance observed in customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The findings delineated in this section pertain to the reliability analysis encompassing three dimensions (each consisting of four items). Descriptive statistics were employed to gauge the level of service quality. The Mean and Standard Deviation (S.D) for the three dimensions of service quality were also computed to ascertain the respondents' evaluations regarding the extent to which pharmacy attendants and pharmacists engage.

**Table 4. Descriptive Statistics on Reliability**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Dependency **	330	1.20	5.00	4.4172	.92768
Accuracy	330	2.11	5.00	3.6936	.84690
Timeliness*	330	1.415	5.00	3.9920	.84810
<b>Reliability (Overall)</b>	330	1.57	5.00	3.9751	.87475
<b>Valid N (List wise)</b>	<b>330</b>				

*Source:* Field data, 2024.

The table presented above reveals that dependency exhibited the highest mean value of 4.4172, accompanied by a standard deviation of 0.92768, followed closely by timeliness, which recorded a mean of 3.9920 and a standard deviation of 0.84810. Accuracy, while ranked the lowest, still maintained a commendable mean score of 3.6936 and a standard deviation of 0.84690. Overall, reliability yielded a mean score of 3.9751 and a standard deviation of 0.87475. It is pertinent to highlight that the mean scores surpassed the midpoint, indicating that these pharmacy attendants demonstrate elevated levels of service quality.

This segment delineates the findings of the analysis concerning responsiveness, which is evaluated through three dimensions, each comprising four items. Descriptive statistical methods were employed to gauge the responsiveness exhibited by pharmacy attendants. The Mean and Standard Deviation (S.D) for the three dimensions of responsiveness were computed to ascertain the respondents' appraisal of the extent of services rendered to them. The descriptive statistics of the results are displayed in Table 5 below.

**Table 5. Descriptive Statistics on Responsiveness**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Prompt service*	330	1.25	5.00	3.7234	.89693
Willingness to serve**	330	1.83	5.00	3.9439	.89846
Query response	330	2.37	5.00	3.8937	.89790
<b>Responsiveness (Overall)</b>	330	1.69	5.00	3.7736	.89835
<b>Valid N (List wise)</b>	<b>330</b>				

*Source:* Field data, 2024.

The results signify that the willingness to serve exhibited the highest mean score of 3.9439 alongside a standard deviation of 0.89846, succeeded by query response, which achieved a mean score of 3.8937 and a standard deviation of 0.89790. Although prompt service registered the lowest mean score, it still maintained a commendable value of 3.7234 with a standard deviation of 0.89693. Concerning the mean scores attributed to pharmacy attendants from the selected pharmacies, the findings revealed an overall mean score of 3.7736 and a standard deviation of 0.89835. This indicates that the pharmacy attendants demonstrate elevated levels of responsiveness.

The findings about assurance due to effective counseling are delineated in Table 6 below. The results encompass an examination of the respondents' assurance across three dimensions, each comprising three items. Descriptive statistics were employed to evaluate the levels of assurance exhibited by pharmacy attendants in these selected pharmacies. The Mean and Standard Deviation (SD) of the three dimensions of assurance were computed to ascertain the respondents' evaluation of the degree to which pharmacy attendants possess these competencies.



**Table 6. Descriptive Statistics on Assurance**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Trustworthy	330	2.04	5.00	3.7568	.96217
Sympathy*	330	1.93	5.00	3.9937	.84984
Politeness**	330	1.44	5.00	4.0189	.89899
<b>Assurance (Overall)</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>1.75</b>	<b>5.00</b>	<b>3.9625</b>	<b>.89763</b>
<b>Valid N (List wise)</b>	<b>330</b>				

*Source:* Field data, 2024.

The data illustrated in the preceding table indicates that the construct of politeness achieved the highest mean value of 4.0189 alongside a standard deviation of 0.89899, succeeded closely by sympathy, which recorded a mean value of 3.9937 and a standard deviation of 0.84984. Although it was the lowest mean score among the evaluated constructs, the dimension of trustworthiness still yielded a considerable mean score of 3.7568 with a standard deviation of 0.96217. Nonetheless, the aggregated mean score for the dimension of assurance across these pharmacies was 3.9625, accompanied by a standard deviation of 0.89763. This finding suggests that the pharmacy attendants under consideration exhibit elevated levels of assurance.

The findings about the dimension of assurance are delineated in Table 7 below. This analysis encompasses an evaluation of the respondents' perceptions regarding the pharmacy attendants' empathy and comprehension, which are examined through three distinct dimensions, each comprising three items. Descriptive statistical methods were employed to ascertain the degrees of empathy and comprehension demonstrated by the pharmacy attendants within the selected pharmacies. The Mean and Standard Deviation (S.D) for the three dimensions of assurance were computed to determine the respondents' evaluations of the extent to which pharmacy attendants embody these competencies. The descriptive statistical outcomes of the investigation are presented in the table below.

**Table 7. Descriptive Statistics on Empathy**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Kindness*	330	2.34	5.00	3.9412	.96636
Concern	330	1.92	5.00	4.0954	.84769
Understanding**	330	1.46	5.00	4.1398	.89985
<b>Empathy (Overall)</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>1.79</b>	<b>5.00</b>	<b>3.9857</b>	<b>.89821</b>
<b>Valid N (List wise)</b>	<b>330</b>				

*Source:* Field data, 2024.

The data presented in the table indicates that the construct of understanding exhibited the highest mean score of 4.1398, accompanied by a standard deviation of 0.89985. This was closely followed by the variable of concern, which attained a mean score of 4.0954 and a standard deviation of 0.84769. In contrast, kindness, albeit still demonstrating a commendable mean score of 3.9412 and a standard deviation of 0.96636, represented the lowest score among the variables assessed. Nevertheless, the overall mean score about assurance provided by these pharmacies was recorded as 3.9857, with a standard deviation of 0.89821. This finding suggests that the pharmacy attendants under study exhibit significant levels of assurance.

### **Conclusion**

The outcomes of this investigation can be synthesized based on the collective findings delineated in preceding studies. The analysis reveals a robust correlation between service quality ( $r = 7.467$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and both customer satisfaction and customer loyalty ( $r = 0.79$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This noteworthy positive correlation underscores the premise that an elevation in service quality is conducive to enhanced customer satisfaction and loyalty. Consequently, pharmacy attendants must place greater emphasis on the determinants of service quality to ensure customer retention.

The empirical findings elucidate that the perceptions regarding customer satisfaction and loyalty within the pharmacy sector can be attained through the various dimensions of service quality. This assertion was corroborated by the prior studies conducted by Chetthamrongchai (2019). Additionally, the current investigation highlights the existence of diverse models of customer satisfaction, which aligns with the findings established by other scholars in earlier research (Agag, Shehawy, Almoraiash, Lababdi, Labben & Abdo, 2024). The author posits that one of the pivotal dimensions contributing to customer satisfaction and loyalty is service quality, which encompasses the effective delivery of services; however, satisfaction is indicative of customers' experiential interactions with those same services, as evidenced by the research conducted by the scholars.

### **Summary of Findings, Conclusion, and Recommendation**

The influence of service quality on customer satisfaction and loyalty: The empirical investigation has demonstrated a pronounced association between service quality and both customer satisfaction and loyalty. A significant positive correlation indicates that elevated levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty are consequential to enhanced customer retention.

### **Conclusion**

The primary objective of the research was to evaluate the impact of counseling on customer retention in the pharmaceutical industry. Initially, the results of this investigation indicated that there exists no formalized or universally accepted protocol for service providers to adhere to in the pursuit of customer retention.

Moreover, the findings culminate in the assertion that service providers must possess comprehensive awareness of all their operational activities and management practices on customer interactions. Regarding the dimension of service quality, all variables considered in this study were deemed significant for effective service delivery, thereby ensuring that customers experience satisfaction and subsequently recommend the counselling services such as active listening, follow-up and other services to others.

In addition, several pivotal factors contributing to customer retention, specifically service quality, encompass reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy; the integration of these elements fosters customer satisfaction and loyalty, ultimately facilitating customer retention. The establishment of customer satisfaction and loyalty, along with the creation of switching barriers, represents strategies that business organizations implement to maintain their clientele through these critical factors.

Broadly speaking, the researcher posits that these findings may be extrapolated to encompass all types of business organizations, including both product and service entities, rather than being confined solely to the pharmacy or service sectors. Customers' voices need to be heard.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Drawing upon the findings of the model that elucidates the relationship among the variables from the perspective of pharmacy customer retention, the study suggests that within the service sector, service quality exerts a more substantial effect on customer loyalty than customer satisfaction; notwithstanding, the descriptive analysis revealed that the mean score for customer satisfaction surpassed that of service quality. As a result, pharmacy proprietors, along with those operating within the service industries, ought to consider all critical variables identified in this study while formulating their marketing strategies. Furthermore, they should endeavor to enhance customer satisfaction and devise measures to incentivize satisfied customers towards loyalty to their services.

The findings of this research indicate that pharmacy attendants, as well as all service providers, should concentrate on all facets of service quality to ensure customer retention. Moreover, service providers ought to possess sufficient knowledge and understanding that encompasses all dimensions of customer relationships throughout their lifecycle. Clients are entitled to continual recognition and appreciation from their service providers if they maintain their patronage. In addressing customer concerns, genuine effort must be exerted in counseling services.

In the context of customer retention, there exist specific service attributes, including overall experiences, that significantly influence customer satisfaction. Consequently, service providers should ascertain the reasons why, despite their commendable efforts, customers may remain dissatisfied with the quality of service rendered.

The findings of this study elucidate that, amidst an intensely competitive landscape, the retention of existing customers is paramount for achieving market success. To facilitate customer retention, the adoption of a customer-centric paradigm is essential, as organizations that prioritize customer needs are likely to focus on delivering high-quality services promptly. Hence, customer satisfaction must be accorded with the highest priority, as it constitutes one of the most critical variables influencing customer retention. Managers should also hire workplace counsellors or psychologists to meet their workers' needs and to be taught on customer care services for customer retention and better customer loyalty.

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