

QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION ON INTERNAL MEDICINE PHYSICIAN'S PERCEPTION ON FEEDBACKS TOWARD PHYSICIAN'S WELL-BEING

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ABSTRACT

Feedback is information about the difference between the actual and expected levels of a system's parameters, and effective feedback helps improve future performance. Physician's well-being plays a vital role in the quality of patient health services. This research was conducted to determine the physician's perceptions of formal and informal feedback and its impact on the physician's well-being. Our study used a qualitative study design with a case study method. Data were collected by conducting interviews with informants, observation, and documentation. In collecting data, researchers conducted interviews with internal medicine physicians. The results of this study indicate that formal feedback harms the well-being of physicians but contributes to improving the performance of physicians. Informal feedbacks, on the other hand, affects the well-being positively. Recommendations to increase feedback also positively impact the well-being and performance of physicians. It can be concluded that formal feedbacks may improve the performance done by the physicians, while informal feedbacks aids to improve their well-being.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Feedback is a piece of information that can be confirmed, added, reduced, put together, or restructured by the feedback receiver (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). There are two types of feedback, formal and informal. Informal feedback can be given during any physician-patient interaction. Meanwhile, formal feedback is often planned and structured using tools such as questionnaires. The hospital often uses this form of feedback to track patient satisfaction.

Assessment of patient satisfaction can produce information that is valuable in the delivery of health services and patient management. The results of a practical assessment can improve the quality, experience, and outcomes of health services in the future (Shunmuga Sundaram et al., 2022). A high level of satisfaction with health services reflects a high quality of medical care and vice versa. However, relying on the quality of health services on satisfaction score surveys alone may provide limited validity due to the limitations of slight variation and potential for high bias, potentially affecting physicians' well-being. Positive feedback to physicians can directly increase morale and welfare of physicians (McKimm, 2009; Vilendrer et al., 2023).

In recent years, there has been an increase in awareness of the importance of physician's well-being. There is a relationship between the welfare of physicians with the quality of health services, medical errors, patient satisfaction, and the professional behavior of physicians. The importance of physician welfare is strengthened by supporting stakeholders who care about physicians' well-being and broadening healthcare goals from three to four types: improving patient experience, advancing public health, reducing treatment costs, and improving physician welfare (Shanafelt, 2021). This is why the consideration of the physician's well-being can be beneficial. In addition to the importance of their well-being, one primary outcome that requires attention is the physicians' performance.

While the patient satisfaction survey is essential to improve the quality of health services, a study found that the results are not always accepted well (Asprey et al., 2013). Therefore, our study aimed to evaluate the impact of formal and informal feedback on physicians' performance and well-being, especially internal medicine physicians.

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2. METHOD

Our study is a qualitative interview with a case study method conducted on internal medicine physicians working in Pekalongan Hospital, Indonesia. The respondents were sampled using a purposive sampling method. We gathered the data using semi-structured interviews to gather deeper information provided by our participants. Additionally, our process included observing and documenting the transcripts presented by the respondents through recording. Photos were also taken in relevance to the study to support administrative purposes. We composed transcripts by relistening to the recordings and retracing observation notes made during the interview. The data analysis was presented in theme identification and categorization, which we then interpreted. Lastly, we mapped the data by looking at the relationship between quotations and the relationship between the data as a whole. The interview and transcription were conducted in Indonesian, which we translated to English by the original transcript without changing the meaning.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the feedback

a. Informal Feedback

Informal feedback can be given anytime during daily communication and happens spontaneously between individuals (Schuler, Farr and Smith, 2013; Zomkowski et al., 2019). The internist in the Pekalongan Hospital prefers this type of feedback because it is given directly by the patient face-to-face. Therefore the physicians can observe the satisfied expression of the patients.

"... very delightful, sometimes (they also) give us gifts ..." (Physician 1)

"(With their) expression of gratitude towards us, we surely felt elated too if the patients were served well, psychologically we felt satisfied too, we felt happy too." (Physician 2)

"For me, I would feel happier (to hear the feedback) directly from the patients." (Physician 3)

b. Formal Feedback

Formal feedback is usually conducted systematically and by planning (Zomkowski et al., 2019). This generally affects the physicians' well-being, whereas unpleasant feedback can consequently affect their perception of themselves in providing the service. One of the internal medicine physicians in the hospital responded on how formal feedback might negatively affect their well-being.

"The negative impact, well emotionally, as a human, (it occurred to me) how could after the help, they were still complaining, that instead of saying 'thank you, they bad-mouthed us.'" (Physician 2)

However, this type of feedback serves as a positive tool to improve the performance done by the physicians.

"The positive impact is that the physicians will introspect themselves, then do better to improve the service..." (Physician 2)

"Well, (it serves as a tool) to do self-introspection." (Physician 3)

c. Transparency in Performance Appraisal

Transparency in performance appraisal acts to prevent unfair performance assessment. The obligation to be fair arises when there is interaction between individuals and groups of individuals who have mutually beneficial goals (Phillips, 1997). The lack of transparency regarding feedback on physician's performance assessments made internal medicine physicians at Pekalongan Hospital hope to be more involved in the questionnaire formulation process so that the assessment could cover all essential aspects of providing health services to patients. Additionally, the transparency from the feedback results is expected to be given individually. Hence it aids in evaluating the performance of physicians in providing health services.

"I have not read in detail how they could assess me as 'good,' what the indicators are, what the criteria are, what the parameters are, so I would like to know how the surveys are done in detail. Therefore we know in what aspects they feel satisfied with." (Physician 1)

"(Seeing) from the shown results, they were good, but I do not know personally, because I was never given (the feedback) from the hospital." (Physician 2)

d. Questionnaire as a Performance Evaluation Tool

A questionnaire is a collection of questions researchers or hospitals use to assess physicians' performance in providing health services to patients. Questionnaires can produce responses that are easy to tabulate and analyze (Patten, 2017). Internal medicine physicians at Pekalongan

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Hospital argued that a questionnaire is an essential tool for measuring the performance of physicians in providing services to patients and also as a measuring tool for hospitals to increase patient satisfaction.

"Of course, it is important regarding this matter for our evaluation, which aspects that we need to improve... We have to use a questionnaire to evaluate the (patients') satisfaction." (Physician 1)

"Well, for me, it is important, so for every patient who is managed to be given a questionnaire, everything related to (our) service, yes, not only hospitalization service, pharmacy, nurse service, also as physician service... Moreover, do not expose the results later (reveal) interpersonally... To motivate the physicians in charge to give the best service..." (Physician 2)

"Well, it is necessary for our hospital." (Physician 3)

Internalization of the feedback by the physicians

a. Emotional Impact from Formal Feedback

Formal feedback has a vital role in assessing the performance of physicians. However, suppose it does not contain specific suggestions to improve the outcome. In that case, this may also lead to dissatisfaction by the physicians, as it affects their self-perception and confidence in providing health services (Carless, 2006). While the emotional impact is not always upsetting, our study found that formal feedback negatively affected well-being.

"... (My) friends with the red (feedback results), well, they were feeling upset, yes, (I feel) bad for my friends, they feel sinful, like that, even they said 'is it better if I do not practice here, yes?' It is like that; I feel bad." (Physician 1)

b. Physician Professionalism

A physician's professionalism is the quality of a physician in providing health services (Holsinger Jr and Beaton, 2006). In providing health services to patients at Pekalongan Hospital, internal medicine physicians always listen and consider the needs of patients. Hence they can provide high-quality and maximum health services.

"Yes, almost always yes (that we comply with the patient), but of course, in a wise way. Yes, we will see the truth (situation) because we cannot ignore patient complaints; we cannot ignore them... Not at all (feel burdened); we respect what patients complain about. (Physician 1)

"...Yes, it is normal because the patient does not understand, meaning everyone wants to be examined, but we will explain... So as long as the examination has something to do with the disease, we can give the examination or the medicine, but as long as it has nothing to do with the disease, or the medicine is not for that disease, yes, we explain that there is no need." (Physician 2)

"Yes, usually if it is needed and it is related to the disease, it is okay, there is no problem. If it is not, I will explain that it is not necessary." (Physician 3)

c. Efforts to Improve Patient Satisfaction

Efforts to increase patient satisfaction require physicians to improve communication between physicians and patients, carry out continuous care, and reduce patient waiting time and service duration. To increase satisfaction, physicians need to realize that it can be increased through data obtained from patient assessment feedback (Shirley and Sanders, 2013). The internal medicine physicians at the hospital always try to give their best to increase the satisfaction of patients who visit and seek treatment by setting goals in providing services.

"... Sometimes we are tired, fighting the fatigue is difficult, sometimes we are emotional... I am still lacking; we must be even better because we want to protect their [patients] feelings, then give the best explanation." (Physician 1)

d. Physician Behaviour from Formal Feedback

The impact of formal feedback on physicians depends on the personal characteristics of each physician. Some say that monitoring the physician's performance through patient satisfaction feedback causes them to feel uncomfortable and less spontaneous in providing services, as sometimes they must also comply with the patient's wishes to have better scores (Vilendrer et al., 2023). However, with formal feedback on the behavior of physicians at Pekalongan Hospital, the performance of internal medicine physicians at Pekalongan Hospital has increased.

"... Of course, this helps us to improve ourselves more and improve our services." (Physician 1)

If the results are good, we are also grateful and happy. If the feedback is negative, we will accept it and continue to provide the best service." (Physician 2)

"The service delivery is getting better, except (if) the patient does not accept [the service provided]." (Physician 3)

e. Recommendations for Feedback Improvement

Recommendations for increasing feedback are urgently needed at Pekalongan Hospital to improve the welfare of physicians and involve physicians in distributing questionnaires to patients.

"We should be involved, yes, in making the questionnaire, we know what we need... So far I have only been involved in reading it, not involved in making the questionnaire." (Physician 1)

"The hope is that there are standard questionnaires, every 3 or 6 months towards each physician, towards the services... In the future, physicians will try to provide the best service and improve the service; this can be done if there is data, an assessment from the patient, such as that." (Physician 2)

With such recommendations from other professional domains, it is hoped that it can improve the performance of internal medicine physicians in providing health services.

"With pleasure, yes, we are a team, we need each other... Maybe we need to give a regular schedule, once every three months for [routine] evaluation." (Physician 1)

"It is also possible, but it is internal satisfaction; it can be done if there is time..." (Physician 2)

"It is okay, as long as it does not take up too much time, it is okay." (Physician 3)

External factors affecting the feedback

a. Challenges in Health Service Delivery

Our study found that additional challenges, such as a lack of resources, also affect the performance of the internal medicine physicians at Pekalongan Hospital in providing health services to patients.

"The real obstacle is the SSAH (Social Security Agency on Health) itself, because they limit it. Limit in terms of therapy, limit in terms of examinations, in terms of costs - we are baffled..." (Physician 1)

"It is just a small obstacle like the patient has not arrived yet, we are waiting for the patient like the medical records have not arrived... The laboratory, too, has to be sent out first, so it is a long wait for the results. Moreover, the last thing about ultrasound is that because we do not have a permanent radiologist, it has to be sent to another hospital; a CT scan is also not available, but it can be done at another hospital, but the time is wasted." (Physician 2)

"I have arrived, but the MR (medical record) has not arrived yet, so it just takes time." (Physician 3)

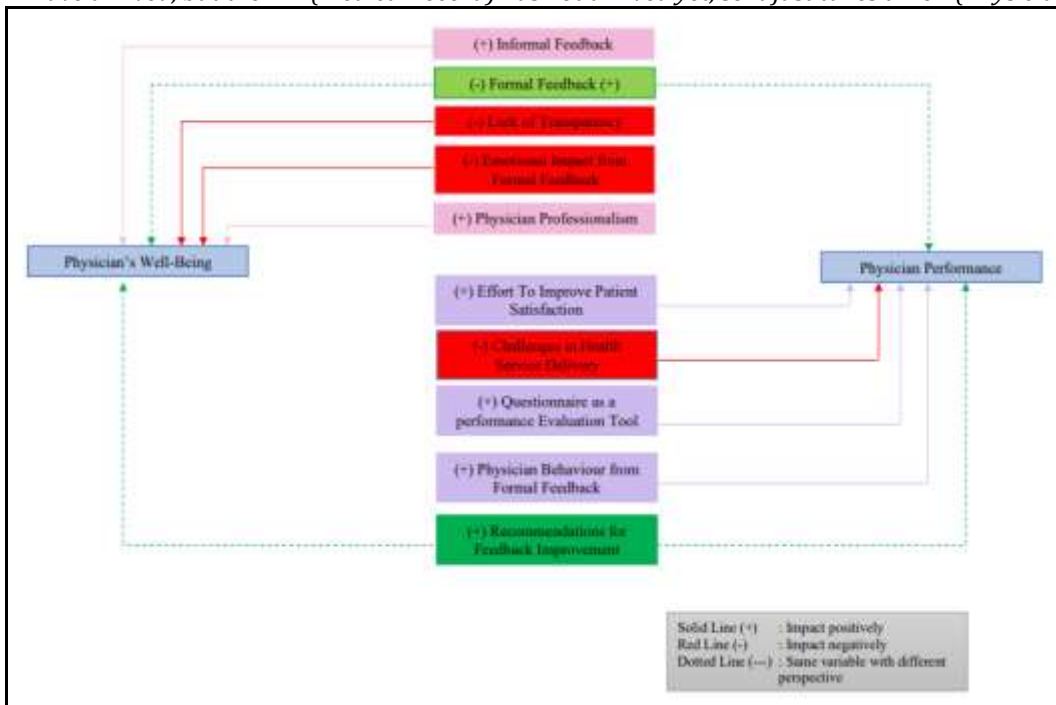


Figure 1. Factors affecting the well-being and work performance of internal medicine physicians at Pekalongan Hospital

4. CONCLUSION

Feedback is information about the difference between the actual and expected levels of a system's parameters, and effective feedback helps improve future performance. Physicians' well-being plays a vital role in the quality of patient health services. The results of this study indicate that formal feedback harms the well-being of physicians but contributes to improving the performance of physicians. Additionally, it can be concluded that recommendations to increase feedback positively impact the well-being and performance of physicians. Our study was reviewed and approved by the Ethical Committee of Economic and Business Faculty of Pelita Harapan University with reference No. 006M/EC-Jn/VI/2023. Our study was reviewed and approved by the Ethical Committee of Economic and Business Faculty of Pelita Harapan University with reference No. 006M/EC-Jn/VI/2023.

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