

# **Determinants of Customer Satisfaction in Community Pharmacy Services: A Review of National and International Evidence**

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## **Abstract:**

Customer satisfaction is widely recognized as a fundamental indicator of healthcare service quality and patient-centered care, particularly within community pharmacy practice where pharmacists serve as the most accessible healthcare professionals. Despite the expanding role of community pharmacies in pharmaceutical care, health education, and primary healthcare support, variations in service quality continue to influence patient perceptions and satisfaction levels. In India, specifically in Rajasthan, limited district-level empirical evidence exists to systematically evaluate the determinants of customer satisfaction in community pharmacy settings. Most available studies are concentrated at national or metropolitan levels, thereby overlooking localized healthcare dynamics, professional practices, and contextual service variations.

The present review paper critically analyzes national and international literature published between 2005 and 2024 to identify and synthesize the major determinants influencing customer satisfaction in community pharmacy services. Drawing upon established service quality models and pharmaceutical care frameworks, the study examines multidimensional factors including pharmacist behavior, professional competence, drug availability, counseling effectiveness, accessibility, waiting time, infrastructure quality, and pricing transparency. Publication trends indicate a steady rise in scholarly attention, particularly post-2015, reflecting the global transition toward patient-centered pharmaceutical care. The review further identifies significant research gaps, including inadequate assessment of counseling quality, limited rural–urban comparative analyses, and the scarcity of district-specific investigations in Rajasthan. In particular, Jaipur district—despite rapid urbanization and expansion of community pharmacy networks—lacks comprehensive evidence-based evaluation of customer satisfaction determinants. This gap underscores the need for focused empirical research to understand local service disparities and patient expectations. By synthesizing existing evidence and highlighting contextual research deficiencies, this paper establishes a conceptual and methodological foundation for future district-level investigations in Jaipur. The findings aim to support pharmacists, healthcare planners, and policymakers in designing targeted interventions to enhance service quality, strengthen pharmaceutical care practices, improve medication adherence, and ultimately promote patient safety and healthcare outcomes in community pharmacy settings.

**Keywords**

Customer satisfaction, Community pharmacy, Pharmaceutical care, Service quality, Jaipur district

**1.Introduction**

Community pharmacies represent the most accessible and frequently utilized component of the healthcare system, particularly in developing countries such as India[1]. Due to their widespread presence, extended operating hours, and ease of access, community pharmacies often serve as the first point of contact for individuals seeking healthcare advice and medication[2]. Unlike hospitals and specialized healthcare institutions, community pharmacies provide immediate pharmaceutical services without the need for prior appointments, making them a crucial link between the healthcare system and the general population [3]. In the Indian healthcare context, community pharmacies play a multifaceted role that extends beyond the traditional function of medicine dispensing. Pharmacists are increasingly involved in health education, disease prevention, and basic primary care services, including guidance on medication use, lifestyle modifications, and management of minor ailments. For many patients, especially those from low- and middle-income groups, community pharmacies act as readily available healthcare centers that support self-care and promote rational use of medicines [4-10].

Customer satisfaction has emerged as a key indicator for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of community pharmacy services. Satisfied customers are more likely to adhere to prescribed medication regimens, seek professional advice from pharmacists, and maintain long-term relationships with specific pharmacies. Conversely, dissatisfaction with pharmacy services may lead to medication non-adherence, inappropriate self-medication, and reduced trust in healthcare providers, ultimately compromising patient safety and therapeutic outcomes [11].

Furthermore, increasing competition among community pharmacies, including the growth of chain pharmacies and online pharmacy services, has intensified the need to focus on service quality and patient-centered care. Factors such as pharmacist competence, interpersonal communication, availability of medicines, counseling services, and physical infrastructure significantly influence customer perceptions and expectations. Therefore, assessing customer satisfaction in community pharmacy settings is essential not only for improving service delivery but also for enhancing overall healthcare quality and patient well-being[12].

In this context, a comprehensive understanding of customer satisfaction in community pharmacy services is necessary to identify strengths, address existing gaps, and support evidence-based improvements in pharmaceutical care. Such evaluations are particularly important at the regional and district levels, where service quality may vary considerably due to differences in resources, professional practices, and population needs [13].

**2.Concept of Customer Satisfaction in Community Pharmacy**

Customer satisfaction is a complex and multidimensional concept that reflects the extent to which healthcare services meet or exceed the expectations of service users. In the context of community pharmacy practice, customer satisfaction is not limited to the successful procurement of medicines but

encompasses the overall service experience, including professional interaction, quality of information provided, and the environment in which services are delivered [14]. Community pharmacy customers typically expect timely service, accurate dispensing, clear instructions regarding medication use, and respectful treatment by pharmacy staff [15]. Satisfaction is influenced by both functional and relational aspects of service delivery. Functional aspects include factors such as medicine availability, waiting time, pricing transparency, and physical infrastructure, whereas relational aspects involve pharmacist behavior, communication skills, empathy, and professional competence. The interaction between these elements determines the customer's overall perception of pharmacy service quality [16].

Pharmacists play a pivotal role in shaping customer satisfaction through effective communication and counseling. Proper explanation of dosage regimens, possible side effects, drug–drug interactions, and storage conditions enhances patient understanding and confidence in medication use. Studies have shown that patients who receive adequate counseling are more likely to adhere to prescribed therapies and report higher levels of satisfaction with pharmacy services [17]. Thus, customer satisfaction serves as an important indicator of the quality of pharmaceutical care and patient safety. Moreover, customer satisfaction in community pharmacy settings is closely linked to trust and loyalty. Satisfied customers are more inclined to revisit the same pharmacy, seek professional advice from pharmacists, and recommend the pharmacy to others. In contrast, dissatisfaction may result in pharmacy switching, reduced utilization of professional services, and increased reliance on self-medication practices [18]. Therefore, customer satisfaction has both clinical and commercial implications for community pharmacy practice. In recent years, the concept of customer satisfaction has gained increased attention due to the evolving role of pharmacists from product-oriented dispensers to patient-centered healthcare providers. This shift emphasizes the need to evaluate pharmacy services from the patient's perspective [19]. Understanding customer satisfaction enables pharmacy professionals to identify service gaps, improve service delivery, and align pharmacy practices with patient expectations and healthcare goals.

### 3.1 Paper Published on community pharmacy customer satisfaction

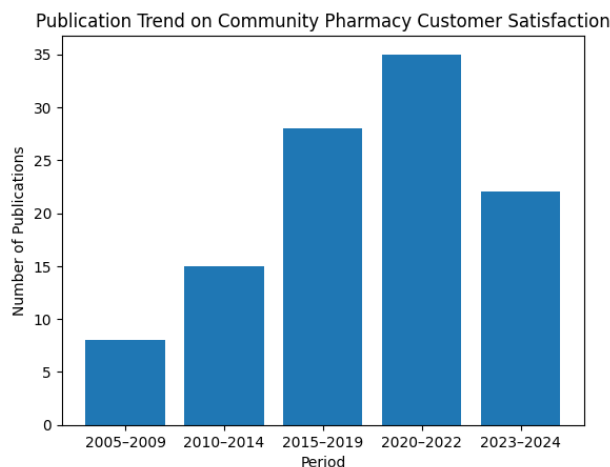


Figure 1: Publication trend on community pharmacy customer satisfaction (2005–2024)

The figure 1 illustrates the publication trend related to customer satisfaction in community pharmacy services over the period from 2005 to 2024. A gradual and consistent increase in the number of publications is observed across the studied time intervals, indicating growing scholarly interest in this research area. During the period 2005–2009, the number of publications is relatively low, suggesting that customer satisfaction in community pharmacy practice received limited academic attention during the early phase. A noticeable increase is seen in the period 2010–2014, reflecting an emerging recognition of service quality and patient perspectives in pharmacy research. The growth becomes more pronounced between 2015 and 2019, highlighting a shift toward patient-centered pharmaceutical care and evaluation of community pharmacy services beyond traditional dispensing roles. The highest number of publications is recorded during 2020–2022, which may be attributed to increased emphasis on healthcare service quality, patient experience, and accessibility during the COVID-19 pandemic period[20-22].

### 3.2 Factors influencing customer satisfaction in community pharmacy services

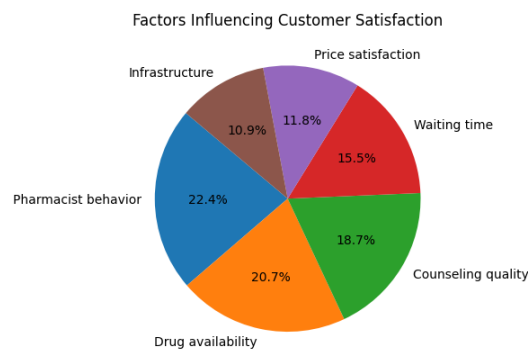


Figure 2: Factors influencing customer satisfaction in community pharmacy services

This Fig 2 the pie chart illustrates the relative contribution of various factors influencing customer satisfaction in community pharmacy services. Among the identified factors, pharmacist behavior accounts for the largest proportion, indicating that professional conduct, communication skills, and interpersonal interaction play a dominant role in shaping customer perceptions. This finding highlights the importance of pharmacist–patient relationships in delivering patient-centered pharmaceutical care. Drug availability represents the second most influential factor, demonstrating that consistent access to prescribed medicines and suitable alternatives is critical for maintaining customer trust and satisfaction. Counseling quality also constitutes a substantial proportion, emphasizing the significance of providing clear and accurate information regarding medication usage, side effects, and safety[23].

Waiting time contributes a moderate share to overall satisfaction, suggesting that operational efficiency and prompt service delivery remain important considerations for customers. Price satisfaction and infrastructure account for comparatively smaller proportions, indicating that while affordability and physical facilities influence customer experiences, they are secondary to professional and service-related factors[24].

Overall, the distribution clearly demonstrates that interpersonal and professional aspects of pharmacy services exert a greater influence on customer satisfaction than structural or economic factors. This

emphasizes the need for community pharmacies to prioritize pharmacist competence, effective communication, and medication counseling to enhance patient satisfaction and service quality.

#### 4. Dimensions of Community Pharmacy Service Quality

Service quality in community pharmacy settings is a multidimensional construct that encompasses various elements influencing customer perceptions and satisfaction. Unlike conventional retail services, pharmacy services involve healthcare delivery, where accuracy, professionalism, and ethical responsibility are of paramount importance. The quality of community pharmacy services is therefore evaluated not only on operational efficiency but also on the extent to which patient-centered care is provided [25]. One of the primary dimensions of service quality is **accessibility**, which includes the geographical location of the pharmacy, convenience of operating hours, and waiting time for service. Community pharmacies that are easily accessible and offer prompt services tend to attract higher customer satisfaction, particularly among elderly patients and individuals with chronic illnesses who require frequent medication refills [26].

Pharmacist competence is another critical determinant of service quality. It refers to the professional knowledge, technical skills, and dispensing accuracy demonstrated by pharmacists. Customers place significant trust in pharmacists for correct medication supply and appropriate advice [27]. Any error in dispensing or lack of confidence in professional knowledge can negatively affect customer satisfaction and compromise patient safety.

The interpersonal behavior of pharmacy staff plays a vital role in shaping customer experiences. Courtesy, empathy, respect, and effective communication significantly influence how customers perceive pharmacy services. A friendly and supportive interaction encourages patients to seek advice, ask questions, and actively engage in their treatment process [28]. Studies consistently report that positive pharmacist–patient relationships enhance satisfaction and foster long-term loyalty. Drug availability is a fundamental service quality dimension in community pharmacies. Consistent availability of prescribed medicines, as well as suitable alternatives when required, is essential for uninterrupted therapy [29]. Frequent stock shortages or lack of essential medicines often lead to dissatisfaction and may force customers to visit multiple pharmacies, reducing trust in pharmacy services. Counseling services represent a key component of pharmaceutical care and directly influence patient satisfaction and therapeutic outcomes [30]. Effective counseling includes clear explanations of dosage instructions, duration of therapy, possible side effects, drug interactions, and storage conditions. Adequate counseling not only improves medication adherence but also empowers patients to manage their health more effectively, thereby enhancing overall satisfaction. The physical infrastructure and environment of the pharmacy also contribute to service quality perceptions. Factors such as cleanliness, proper lighting, organized layout, availability of seating arrangements, and privacy during counseling affect customer comfort and confidence. A well-maintained pharmacy environment reflects professionalism and reinforces positive service impressions [31]. Lastly, pricing transparency and billing practices influence customer trust and satisfaction. Clear communication regarding medication costs, discounts, and billing details helps prevent misunderstandings and builds confidence among customers. Fair pricing practices are particularly important in low- and middle-income populations where affordability significantly

impacts healthcare access. Overall, these dimensions collectively determine the quality of community pharmacy services [32]. Understanding their relative influence on customer satisfaction enables pharmacy professionals and policymakers to design targeted interventions aimed at improving service delivery and strengthening the role of community pharmacies within the healthcare system.

Table 1 demonstrates that customer satisfaction in community pharmacy practice is multidimensional, involving professional, interpersonal, structural, and economic factors that together shape the overall service experience.

#### Dimensions of Community Pharmacy Service Quality

Dimension	Description
Accessibility	Location, operating hours, waiting time
Pharmacist competence	Professional knowledge and dispensing accuracy
Interpersonal behavior	Courtesy, empathy, communication skills
Drug availability	Consistent stock and alternative options
Counseling services	Guidance on dosage, side effects, interactions
Infrastructure	Cleanliness, layout, seating arrangement
Pricing transparency	Clear billing and fair pricing

### **5. Description of Factors Influencing Customer Satisfaction in Community Pharmacy Services**

Although research on customer satisfaction in community pharmacy services has increased considerably over the past two decades, several critical gaps remain evident in the existing literature. A significant limitation is the lack of district-level studies, particularly in states such as Rajasthan, where healthcare delivery systems and pharmacy practices vary widely across regions. Most available studies focus on metropolitan cities or state-level assessments, thereby overlooking local contextual factors that influence customer perceptions and service quality. Another notable research gap is the limited evaluation of counseling effectiveness in community pharmacy settings. While several studies acknowledge the importance of pharmacist counseling, few have systematically assessed the quality, depth, and impact of counseling on medication adherence and patient understanding. This gap restricts the ability to draw meaningful conclusions about the role of counseling services in improving therapeutic outcomes and customer satisfaction [33].

Furthermore, comparative studies examining differences between rural and urban community pharmacies are relatively scarce. Variations in infrastructure, staffing, medicine availability, and patient expectations across rural and urban settings are likely to influence satisfaction levels, yet these aspects remain insufficiently explored. The absence of such comparisons limits the generalizability of existing

findings and hampers the development of targeted service improvement strategies. In addition, the majority of studies rely predominantly on quantitative survey-based approaches, with minimal incorporation of qualitative methods such as interviews or focus group discussions. As a result, in-depth insights into patient experiences, expectations, and perceived service deficiencies are often lacking. Qualitative exploration is essential to capture the nuanced aspects of customer satisfaction that may not be adequately reflected through structured questionnaires alone. Overall, these research gaps highlight the need for comprehensive, region-specific investigations that combine both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Addressing these gaps is essential for developing evidence-based interventions aimed at enhancing community pharmacy services and improving patient-centered pharmaceutical care, particularly in districts such as Jaipur[34-35].

## **6. Research Gaps Identified**

Although research on customer satisfaction in community pharmacy services has increased considerably over the past two decades, several critical gaps remain evident in the existing literature. A significant limitation is the lack of district-level studies, particularly in states such as Rajasthan, where healthcare delivery systems and pharmacy practices vary widely across regions. Most available studies focus on metropolitan cities or state-level assessments, thereby overlooking local contextual factors that influence customer perceptions and service quality. Another notable research gap is the limited evaluation of counseling effectiveness in community pharmacy settings. While several studies acknowledge the importance of pharmacist counseling, few have systematically assessed the quality, depth, and impact of counseling on medication adherence and patient understanding. This gap restricts the ability to draw meaningful conclusions about the role of counseling services in improving therapeutic outcomes and customer satisfaction.

## **7. Jaipur District Context and Need for the Study**

Jaipur district, being the capital region of Rajasthan, has witnessed substantial growth in healthcare infrastructure over the past decade. Rapid urbanization, population growth, and increased health awareness have contributed to a significant rise in the number of community pharmacies operating across urban, semi-urban, and peripheral areas of the district. These pharmacies play a crucial role in meeting the pharmaceutical needs of the population by providing medicines, health advice, and primary healthcare support. Despite this expansion, considerable variation exists in the quality of services offered by community pharmacies within the district. Differences in professional staffing, availability of trained pharmacists, infrastructure, counseling practices, and medicine availability contribute to inconsistent service experiences among customers. While some pharmacies adhere to patient-centered practices and provide adequate counseling, others remain largely focused on medicine dispensing with limited professional interaction.

The absence of comprehensive, district-specific evidence on customer satisfaction in community pharmacy services presents a major challenge for healthcare planning and policy formulation. Most existing studies provide generalized findings that may not accurately reflect local service dynamics, patient expectations, or regional healthcare challenges. A localized assessment of customer satisfaction in Jaipur district is therefore essential to identify service gaps, understand patient perceptions, and

evaluate the effectiveness of current pharmacy practices. Such evidence can support pharmacists, regulatory authorities, and policymakers in developing targeted strategies to improve service quality, strengthen pharmaceutical care standards, and enhance patient safety. Moreover, region-specific findings can contribute to the optimization of community pharmacy services in Jaipur district and serve as a reference for similar urban districts in Rajasthan.

## **8. Conclusion**

Customer satisfaction has emerged as a crucial indicator of service quality and effectiveness in community pharmacy practice. As community pharmacies continue to function as the most accessible healthcare facilities, their role extends beyond medicine dispensing to include patient counseling, health education, and primary care support. The present review highlights that customer satisfaction in community pharmacy services is a multidimensional construct influenced by professional, operational, and environmental factors. The review of national and international literature reveals that pharmacist behavior, drug availability, and counseling quality are the most significant determinants of customer satisfaction. Interpersonal communication, professional competence, and empathy of pharmacists play a central role in shaping patient perceptions and trust. Operational factors such as waiting time, pricing transparency, and infrastructure also contribute to satisfaction, although to a comparatively lesser extent. The increasing number of publications over recent years reflects a global shift toward patient-centered pharmaceutical care and recognition of pharmacists as integral members of the healthcare team. Despite growing scholarly interest, the review identifies notable research gaps, particularly the lack of district-level studies in regions such as Rajasthan. Limited assessment of counseling effectiveness, inadequate rural–urban comparisons, and minimal use of qualitative methodologies restrict a comprehensive understanding of patient experiences. These gaps underline the need for localized and context-specific investigations to accurately capture variations in service quality and customer expectations. In the context of Jaipur district, rapid expansion of community pharmacies has not been uniformly accompanied by improvements in service quality. Variations in professional practices and infrastructure necessitate systematic evaluation of customer satisfaction to inform service improvements and policy decisions. Overall, this review emphasizes that enhancing customer satisfaction in community pharmacy services is essential for improving medication adherence, patient safety, and healthcare outcomes. Evidence generated from region-specific studies can support the development of targeted interventions, strengthen pharmaceutical care standards, and contribute to the advancement of patient-centered community pharmacy practice.

## **7. Future Research Directions**

Future research on customer satisfaction in community pharmacy services should focus on conducting empirical, district-level studies to generate context-specific evidence. Structured surveys combined with observational methods can provide quantitative insights into customer perceptions, while qualitative approaches such as interviews and focus group discussions can offer deeper understanding of patient experiences and expectations. Further investigations should assess the quality and effectiveness of pharmacist counseling services, particularly their impact on medication adherence, patient understanding, and therapeutic outcomes. Comparative studies between chain pharmacies and

independent community pharmacies are also recommended to evaluate differences in service quality, accessibility, and customer satisfaction levels. Additionally, with the increasing adoption of digital technologies in healthcare, future studies should examine the role of digital pharmacy services, including e-prescriptions, home delivery, and telepharmacy, in influencing customer satisfaction. Linking satisfaction metrics with clinical outcomes such as medication adherence and treatment success will strengthen the evidence base and provide valuable insights for improving community pharmacy practice. Overall, these future research directions will contribute to the development of patient-centered pharmaceutical care models and support evidence-based improvements in community pharmacy services at both regional and national levels.

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