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The Role of Empathy and Relationship Quality in Building Customer Loyalty in Community Pharmacies: Evidence from Jordan

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ABSTRACT

Aim: This study explores how pharmacist empathy influences customer loyalty through the mediating role of relationship quality in community pharmacies.

Methodology: A cross-sectional study utilizing a web-based questionnaire and convenience sampling was conducted in Jordan. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

Results: A total of 536 responses were gathered and analyzed from all Jordanian regions. The gender distribution was balanced, with 261 males (48.7%) and 275 females (51.3%). The age distribution was concentrated in the 35-44 age group (29.3%), followed by 25-34 (25.6%). The majority had a high level of education, with 323 (60.3%) holding a Bachelor's degree or higher academic qualification (19.0%). Most participants visited pharmacies at least once every six months (50.6%), primarily using independent community pharmacies (52.1%). The study findings highlight a significant positive impact of pharmacist empathy on the three key dimensions of pharmacist-patient relationship quality (trust, satisfaction, and commitment). Furthermore, a significant positive relationship was found between the relationship quality dimensions and both customer loyalty dimensions (attitudinal and behavioral loyalty).

Conclusion: The study findings highlight the central role of pharmacist empathy in establishing a strong and enduring pharmacist-patient relationship quality, which in turn, enhance consumers loyalty, which is essential for thriving and surviving in today's competitive market.

Keywords: Relationship quality; Pharmacist Empathy; Customer Loyalty; Community pharmacies; Jordan

1. INTRODUCTION

In the midst of intense market competition, businesses must establish and sustain strong relationships with their profitable customers over the long term [1]. Building, managing, and maintaining these relationships is not just a business strategy; it is a fundamental approach that contributes to customer loyalty, cost savings, and sustainable competitive advantage in a dynamic market environment [2,3,4,5].

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One substantial indicator of relationship success is relationship quality [6]. Relationship quality goes beyond mere interaction, delving into the depth and strength of the connection between customers and sellers. A high level of relationship quality has the potential to not only strengthen and prolong the bond between customers and sellers but also play a crucial role in enhancing customer loyalty over time, which in turn enhances business sustainability [1,2,3,7,5,8].

Customer loyalty is crucial as it contributes to customer retention, leading to substantial cost savings, including reduced marketing expenses [9]. Acquiring new customers can be up to five times more costly than

maintaining existing ones [10]. Simultaneously, retaining customers has the added benefit of boosting profit rates through heightened purchase frequency and increased referrals [3]. Thus, enhancing customer loyalty is particularly important in sectors where continuous customer involvement and interaction are crucial, as seen in industries like the pharmaceutical sector and businesses such as community pharmacies.

In the pharmaceutical industry, particularly, the community pharmacies, where customers desperately seek solutions to health concerns, pharmacist empathy could be a factor shaping relationship quality. Empathy, defined as the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, forms the building blocks of meaningful interactions [11]. The ability of pharmacists to build an empathetic bond with the patient by actively listen to patients' needs, and understand their concerns could significantly contributes to the quality of the relationship.

The pharmaceutical sector in Jordan is experiencing rapid growth, mirroring global trends. Within the domain of community pharmacies, their numbers have increased by approximately 65.7%, rising from 2,157 in 2012 to 3,576 in 2022 [12,13]. Although chain pharmacies were appeared in Jordan in the last 2 decades with relatively enough investment on the ground, it seems it is unstable and many chains left the market with major financial failures. It's also crucial to emphasize that community pharmacies operate as businesses with limited resources [14]. These aspects emphasize the requirement for sustainability of managerial activities, alongside the primary function of dispensing pharmaceuticals. These activities could include the focus on pharmacist empathy and relationship quality to enhancing community pharmacies sustainability as it enhances customer loyalty. None of the previous studies has explored the impact of empathy and relationship quality, in community pharmacies context, on enhancing customer loyalty. Thus, understanding this relationship is crucial for community pharmacies aiming to grow in an increasingly competitive market.

The current study aims to explore the impact of pharmacist empathy and customer-pharmacist relationship quality on the customer loyalty in the context of community pharmacies in Jordan. Particularly interested in the role of relationship quality, measured through trust, commitment, and satisfaction, as a mediator in this process. By understanding these dimensions, pharmacy owners can develop targeted marketing strategies, benefitting customers through improved service experiences and enhanced healthcare outcomes. Consequently, this leads to an enhancement of loyalty, and contributing significantly to the sustainability and success of community pharmacies.

1.1 Conceptual background and study hypotheses

Customer Loyalty

According to the American Marketing Association, customer loyalty is characterized by a consumer consistently choosing the same product or service from a specific seller over time, rather than making purchases from various sellers within the category [15]. Customer loyalty is a multidimension construct that commonly understood as either an attitude (referred to as attitudinal loyalty) or an intention that prompts specific behaviors (known as behavioral loyalty) [5]. Attitudinal loyalty reflects the customer’s emotional and psychological attachment to a specific offering, leading to positive word-of-mouth and recommending the service to others [16,17,18,19]. While behavioral loyalty involves interpreting repeat purchasing patterns as indicative of customer loyalty [2].

Relationship quality

Relationship quality is core concept in the relationship marketing. Relationship quality is a multi-dimensional concept that refers the comprehensive evaluation of the relationship strength and the extent to which it meets the needs and expectations of the parties based on a history of successful interactions [20]. Relationship quality was initially defined through dimensions like trust and satisfaction [21], the conceptualization was later expanded

to include commitment as an additional dimension to gauge the quality of the relationship [22]. Several previous studies in marketing context adopted this expansion [2,3,5,23]. Our study aligns with this expansion, employing trust, satisfaction, and commitment as dimensions to assess relationship quality.

In the marketing literature, relationship quality consistently emerges as a key factor influencing the attitudinal and behavioral customer loyalty [2,5,24,25,26]. Accordingly, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: Trust positively affects customer behavioral loyalty to the community pharmacy.

H2: Trust positively affects customer attitudinal loyalty to the community pharmacy.

H3: Satisfaction positively affects customer behavioral loyalty.

H4: Satisfaction positively affects customer attitudinal loyalty.

H5: Commitment positively affects customer behavioral loyalty.

H6: Commitment positively affects customer attitudinal loyalty.

Empathy

Pharmacist empathy is crucial for patient-centered care, plays a crucial role in establishing and maintaining positive patient-pharmacist relationship in community pharmacy settings. Empathy was identified as the ability to comprehend both the spoken and felt aspects of a patient's expression and convey this comprehension verbally [27]. Building on this definition, the concept of empathy was expanded suggesting that it encompasses cognitive attributes involving an understanding of patients' experiences, effective communication of this understanding, and an intention to offer assistance to the patient [28]. Our study explores how empathetic interactions contribute to the three dimensions relationship quality. Accordingly, the following hypotheses has been proposed:

H7: Pharmacist empathy positively affects trust.

H8: Pharmacist empathy positively affects customer satisfaction.

H9: Pharmacist empathy positively affects customer commitment.

1.2 Research model

The current research has adopted the research model presented in Figure 1. This model serves as a comprehensive framework to guide the investigation and analysis conducted in this study.

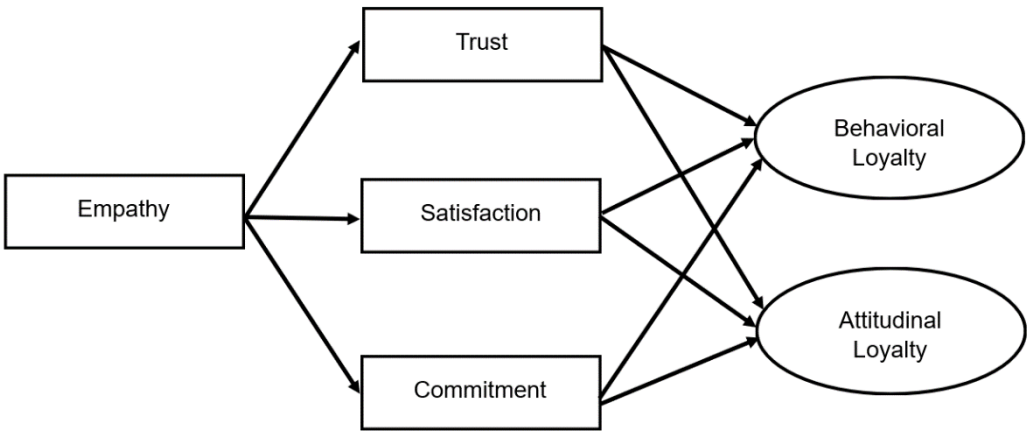

Figure 1. Research Model

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 The setting

The study was carried out in Jordan. Inclusion criteria were being over 18 years of age and regularly visiting community pharmacies, regardless of whether they were independent community pharmacies or part of larger chain pharmacies.

2.2 Data collection instrument and the sample size

This cross-sectional study utilized a quantitative approach, collecting data through a web-based questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised three sections: the first focused on demographic information, including age, gender, and location of residence. The second part involved inquiries about their preferred community pharmacy and the one where they consistently buy pharmaceutical products including the frequency of visits to pharmacy and the type of pharmacy (independent pharmacy, chain pharmacy, or online pharmacy). The third section consisted of 24 items that used to measure the variables in the research model. A five-point Likert scale was used for all of the questionnaire items.

Table 1 provides details of the measures, their sources (references), and item counts for each variable in this study. References were selected based on their relevance to our focus on empathy, relationship quality (trust, commitment, and satisfaction), and behavioral and attitudinal loyalty. For example, Almomani [2] and Rauyruen et al. [5] investigated the impact of relationship quality dimensions, including trust, satisfaction, and commitment, on attitudinal and behavioral loyalty, aligning closely with our study's focus. Similarly, Alshuriadeh et al. [3] examined the antecedents and consequences of relationship quality in the pharmaceutical industry, using trust, commitment, and satisfaction, which are pertinent to our exploration of relationship quality dimensions. Furthermore, Murray et al. [29] investigated the interaction between empathy and responsiveness in determining consumer perceptions of service quality and loyalty in pharmacy retailing, providing valuable insights into the importance of empathy, a key component of our study's focus on relationship quality. All items utilized from these sources were updated to fit the current study context.

To ensure the instrument's face validity, we conducted a pilot study with 20 participants, including 10 customers, 8 pharmacists, and 2 academic experts in the field. Based on their feedback, we enhanced the questionnaire's clarity by translating it into Arabic and conducting a thorough review to clarify any unclear questions, as well as to correct grammar and spelling errors. These modifications aimed to improve the questionnaire's quality, ensuring accurate and meaningful participant responses.

Regarding the sample size, previous study determined a suitable range of sample size requirements for studies employing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), ranging from 30 to 460 cases [31]. This study collected a sample size of 536, surpassing the established range. The sample size of 536 was selected to ensure robust statistical power, practical feasibility, and enhanced generalizability, aiming to exceed recommended sample size ranges and ensure more representative and reliable study results.

Table 1. Measures source and count

Variable (Dimensions)	Reference	Items #
Pharmacist Empathy	29, 30	4
Relationship Quality (Trust, satisfaction and commitment)	2, 3, 5	12
Loyalty (Attitudinal and Behavioral)	2, 5, 15, 30	8

2.3 Analysis

The study data underwent analysis using both SPSS and SPSS Amos software. Descriptive statistics using frequencies and percentages were employed for demographic data. To assess the reliability and validity of data collection instrument, Cronbach's Alpha, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance extracted (AVE) were calculated.

Following the methodology of previous studies [2, 14, 32], the model's fit to the data was evaluated using various fit indices. These indices included the Chi-square of degree of freedom (Chi2 /df), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), normed fit index (NFI), standardized root mean-square residual (SRMR), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). For assessing the goodness of measurement model fit using SEM, the evaluation criteria were established as follows: Chi-square ($p < 0.05$); (Chi2/df≤3) goodness-of-fit index (GFI ≥ 0.90); adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI ≥ 0.80); comparative fit index (CFI ≥ 0.90); normed fit index (NFI ≥ 0.90); standardized root mean square residual (SRMR ≤ 0.08); and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA < 0.10). These indices collectively offer a comprehensive assessment of how well the model aligns with the observed data.

SEM was then applied to test the research model and the hypotheses, with a significance level set at $p < 0.05$ in the analysis.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Participant Demographics

Survey was collected from 536 participants. The sample descriptive analysis (frequencies and percentages) is illustrated in Table 2. There was an approximately equal representation of males and females. Regarding age distribution, the majority of respondents fell within the 35-44 age group (29.3%), followed by the 25-34 age group (25.6%). The majority of participants were relatively highly educated with Bachelor's degree or higher. Moreover, the frequency of visits to the pharmacy varied, with the majority visiting at least once every 6 months (50.6%). Regarding pharmacy type, a slight majority of respondents reported visiting independent community pharmacies (52.1%), followed closely by chain pharmacies (42.9%), with a smaller percentage utilizing online pharmacies (5.0%).

3.2 Instrument reliability and validity

Both types of factor analysis (EFA and CFA) were utilized to assess the construct validity of the data collection instrument. Table 3 demonstrates the appropriateness of using Factor Analysis, supported by a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.950 and a statistically significant Bartlett's test for the variables (p-value = 0.000) (Figure 2).

EFA using the SPSS and CFA using the SPSS AMOS were conducted. The results are shown in Table 3. Any item with factor loading less than 0.40 was removed [33].

The instrument's internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Table 4 displays the Cronbach's alpha values for each variable before and after factor analysis. An alpha coefficient of 0.6 and above is considered acceptable [34]. Thus, the results from the reliability analysis confirm the internal consistency reliability of all instruments.

3.3 Structural equation model results

The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis results support for all nine paths (H1-H9) in the research model. The detailed outcomes of hypothesis testing using are provided in Table 5. Notably, pharmacist empathy positively influences the three dimensions of pharmacist-patient relationship quality, trust, satisfaction, and commitment. Additionally, the relationship quality influence both aspects of customer loyalty, the attitudinal and behavioral loyalty.

Table 2. Participants characteristics

Characteristics	Number (Percentage)
Sex	
Male	261 (48.7%)
Female	275 (51.3%)
Age	
18-24	61 (11.4%)
25-34	137 (25.6%)
35-44	157 (29.3%)
45-54	111 (20.7%)
55-64	44 (8.2%)
>=65	22 (4.1%)
Prefer not to say	4 (0.7%)
Education level completed	
No formal education	1 (0.2%)
Secondary school	52 (9.7%)
Diploma	54 (10.1%)
University (Bachelor)	323 (60.3%)
University (Masters or PhD)	102 (19.0%)
Prefer not to say	4 (0.7%)
Frequency of visits to pharmacy rated	
At least once every week	57 (10.6%)
At least once every month	143 (26.7%)
At least once every 6 months	271 (50.6%)
At least once a year	65 (12.1%)
Pharmacy type	
Independent community pharmacy	279 (52.1%)
Chain pharmacy	230 (42.9%)
Online pharmacy	27 (5%)

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.950
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	9360.962
	df	276
	Sig.	.000

Figure 2. KMO and Bartlett's test

Table 3. EFA and CFA Results, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted.

Constructs and items		EFA results		CFA results		
Pharmacist Empathy		**Factor loadings**	**Eigen Value**	**Factor Loadings**	**Composite reliability**	**Average variance extracted**
Em1	I feel that the pharmacist takes the time to understand my feelings when providing guidance on my health	0.73	5.279	0.81	90.90%	57.17%
Em2	I feel satisfied with the emotional support provided by the pharmacist	0.753		0.88		
Em3	I feel that the pharmacist listens well and shows empathy when discussing my health concerns	0.761		0.85		
Em4	The pharmacist is empathetic when discussing my health condition.	0.748		0.84		
Relationship Quality (Trust)		**Factor loadings**	**Eigen Value**	**Factor Loadings**	**Composite reliability**	**Average variance extracted**
Tr1	I trust the recommendations and advice provided by the pharmacist	0.666	4.176	0.72	86.24%	40.80%
Tr2	I believe that the pharmacist would not provide false information, even if there could be personal gain from doing so	0.667		0.79		
Tr3	I trust that the pharmacist will keep my health-related information confidential	0.637		0.74		
Tr4	I believe that the pharmacist is honest	0.706		0.87		
Relationship Quality (Satisfaction)		**Factor loadings**	**Eigen Value**	**Factor Loadings**	**Composite reliability**	**Average variance extracted**
Sa1	I am satisfied with the overall services provided by the pharmacist	0.654	3.412	0.81	88.11%	52.04%
Sa2	I am satisfied with the speed of service when obtaining medications from the pharmacy	0.572		0.87		
Sa3	I am pleased with the pharmacist	0.728		0.73		
Sa4	I believe that the pharmacist always meets my expectations	0.678		0.81		
Relationship Quality (Commitment)		**Factor loadings**	**Eigen Value**	**Factor Loadings**	**Composite reliability**	**Average variance extracted**
Ct1	I am committed to continuing my relationship with my pharmacist for future healthcare services	0.720	3.089	0.80	86.56%	49.39%
Ct2	I feel a sense of commitment to maintaining a long-term relationship with my pharmacist	0.693		0.83		
Ct3	I am willing to invest time and effort to sustain a lasting relationship with your pharmacist	0.672		0.77		
Ct4	I see my relationship with my pharmacist as similar to that of a family member	0.662		0.74		
Attitudinal Loyalty		**Factor loadings**	**Eigen Value**	**Factor Loadings**	**Composite reliability**	**Average variance extracted**
AL 1	I recommend this pharmacy to anyone who seeks my advice.	0.771	1.226	0.86	85.29%	47.34%
AL 2	I will recommend the pharmacy products to close friends and family	0.773		0.87		
AL3	I would say positive things about the pharmacy to other people.	0.772		0.89		
AL4	I hold a favorable opinion and attitude towards	0.761		0.84		
Behavioral Loyalty		**Factor loadings**	**Eigen Value**	**Factor Loadings**	**Composite reliability**	**Average variance extracted**
BL1	I will buy from this pharmacy in the future	0.695	1.226	0.77	81.40%	35.61%
BL2	I will not switch to another pharmacy even though there are lots of other pharmacy options	0.646		0.74		
BL3	This pharmacy is my first option and I will choose this it for my pharmaceutical needs	0.714		0.80		
BL4	I am willing to travel to my favorite pharmacy to make a purchase, even if there are closer pharmacies to my location.	0.081 (Deleted)		-		

Table 4. Cronbach's Alpha test

Variables	Before factor analysis		After factor analysis	
	Items #	Cronbach's Alpha	Items #	Cronbach's Alpha
Pharmacist Empathy	4	0.908	4	0.908
Trust	4	0.857	4	0.857
Satisfaction	4	0.884	4	0.884
Commitment	4	0.876	4	0.876
Attitudinal Loyalty	4	0.923	4	0.923
Behavioral Loyalty	4	0.692	3	0.761

Table 5. Results of Hypotheses Testing using SEM

Research Proposed Paths	Estimate	Standard Error	t-value	p-value	Result
H1: Empathy → Trust	0.478	.038	12.617	0.000	Confirmed
H2: Empathy → Satisfaction	0.457	.036	12.548	0.000	Confirmed
H3: Empathy → Commitment	0.938	.058	16.184	0.000	Confirmed
H4: Trust → Attitudinal Loyalty	0.274	.078	3.529	0.000	Confirmed
H5: Trust → Behavioral Loyalty	0.121	.062	1.970	.049	Confirmed
H6: Satisfaction → Attitudinal Loyalty	0.291	.071	4.100	0.000	Confirmed
H7: Satisfaction → Behavioral Loyalty	0.273	.057	4.791	0.000	Confirmed
H8: Commitment → Attitudinal Loyalty	0.340	.038	9.001	0.000	Confirmed
H9: Commitment → Behavioral Loyalty	0.326	.032	10.215	0.000	Confirmed

The model fit indices, as shown in Table 6, indicate the appropriateness of the research model in relation to the collected data. The scaled chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (CMIN/df) stands at 2.938, suggesting a well-fitting model. Further, the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) is reported as 0.0336, denoting a low level of model fit discrepancy. The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) is estimated at 0.901, while the Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) is 0.867, both indicating favorable fit. The Normed Fit Index (NFI) stands at 0.942, implying a high degree of fit, and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) registers at 0.965, reinforcing the model's adequacy. Lastly, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is reported as 0.059, confirming a reasonably close fit between the research model and the observed data.

Table 6. Measurement Model Fit Indices

	DF	CMIN/DF	P	SRMR	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
Criteria		≤3	<0.05	≤0.08	≥0.90	≥0.8	≥0.90	≥0.90	<0.1
Study Model	213	2.938	0.00	0.028	0.902	0.873	0.934	0.955	0.060

4 DISCUSSION

The current study highlights the relationship quality as a crucial mediator in the pathway from pharmacist empathy to customer loyalty. This mediation suggests that pharmacist empathy positively influence relationship quality dimensions (trust, satisfaction, and commitment). Trust, serving as the building block of any enduring relationship, emerges as a natural consequence of empathetic interactions. Satisfaction, reflecting the harmony between patient expectations and the care received, is nurtured by the empathetic bond. Commitment, the allegiance to a healthcare provider, finds

its roots in the genuine and empathetic engagements within the pharmacist-patient relationship. Consequently, these dimensions shapes and influences both aspects of customers loyalty (behavioral and attitudinal loyalty) to the community pharmacy.

Enhancing customer behavioral loyalty has the potential to boost overall customer retention, a critical consideration in the competitive field of pharmaceutical care. Retaining customers within the community pharmacy is an economically sound practice. Several studies consistently confirm that acquiring new customers incurs significant costs and challenges compared to retaining existing ones [3,10,35]. Furthermore, long-term customers often contribute to cost savings through valuable, free-of-charge referrals of new customers [36].

The current study provided evidence that empathy and relationship quality affect attitudinal loyalty. This aspect of loyalty emerges as a critical dimension influencing customer behavior within community pharmacies. As customers develop emotional connections to the pharmacist and pharmacy, attitudinal loyalty becomes a motivator and driver force behind their repeat engagements, and customers become advocate powerful advocates through positive word-of-mouth [3,37]. This positive word-of-mouth serves as a substantial factor in attracting and acquiring new customers.

Amid a 65.7% increase in the number of pharmacies in Jordan over the last 10 years, community pharmacies face heightened competition, necessitating a thorough examination of consumer preferences beyond traditional factors. Previous studies explored the traditional determinants of consumer selection of community pharmacies like pharmacy location, medicine availability, satisfaction level of the pharmaceutical services provided as well as the quality of these services, discount prices, pharmacists expertise, and continuous education [38,39,40], all of which remain important. However, in the current competitive market, empathic pharmacist-patient relationships become increasingly crucial in differentiating pharmacies in the marketplace. This finding aligns with broader healthcare studies which emphasize the importance of empathy in the healthcare sector as empathic engagement could lead to better patient compliance and adherence [28,41], reduced anxiety and depression [28], and more accurate prognosis [28,42].

Unlike other sectors, customers visit community pharmacies seeking treatments, advices and guidance for their diseases and illnesses, adding a unique layer of significance to the role of empathy. This uniqueness shed the light on the necessity for pharmacies to strategically invest in training programs focusing on building strong empathetic communication skills, emotional intelligence, active listening to understand customer needs, particularly among pharmacists who serve as primary healthcare interfaces.

In Jordan, the Jordan Food and Drug Administration (JFDA) sets medicine prices, prohibiting pharmacists from offering discounts. Despite this, discounting is common in community pharmacies [43]. While adhering to these strict rules is challenging [44], pharmacies can overcome the negative impact of these rules by focusing on empathy and building strong customer relationships. Our study found that being empathic and building a quality relationship can significantly enhance customer loyalty, even under strict regulations.

Building upon the findings of our study, it's noteworthy to consider the potential consequences of a deficient pharmacist-patient relationship, customer dissatisfaction, and a lack of trust in the pharmacist. Previous studies established a link between these factors and consumers resorting to alternative, potentially unsafe sources for their medications, including online pharmacies and the internet which are a potential source of fake medicines [45,46,47,48]. Interestingly, within our cohort of 536 participants, 27 individuals acknowledged having purchased medicines from online sources. This observation highlights the practical significance of our study, suggesting that a strengthened pharmacist-patient

relationship, cultivated through empathetic communication and enhanced relationship quality, may play a crucial role in preventing consumers from seeking medications from potentially unsafe online sources.

5 Limitations and future research

While this study offers valuable insights into the role of pharmacist empathy in shaping the pharmacist-patient relationship and enhancing customer loyalty, some limitations should be considered. The use of a convenience sampling method and the specific cultural focus may impact the generalizability of our findings. Cultural factors, including norms, values, and communication styles, can influence the perception and expression of empathy in pharmacist-patient interactions. Therefore, the findings may not be directly applicable to other cultural contexts. Future research should consider more diverse samples and explore the different cultural nuances that influence empathy in pharmacist-patient interactions. Moreover, while we concentrated on the patient's perspective, future investigations should also explore the dynamics from the pharmacist's viewpoint. Understanding pharmacists' experiences of empathetic interactions and aligning them with patient experiences can offer a more comprehensive understanding.

6 CONCLUSION

The current study explores the crucial elements of pharmacist-patient interactions in community pharmacies, emphasizing the link between pharmacist empathy, relationship quality, and customer loyalty. Our findings underscore the significant role of pharmacist empathy in fostering strong relationships characterized by trust, satisfaction, and commitment, which in turn enhance customer loyalty. For community pharmacies in highly competitive markets, prioritizing pharmacist empathy is a key strategy to maintain positive relationships and boost customer loyalty—both essential for sustained success. Implementing training programs to enhance pharmacist empathy can be a valuable approach, and future research should delve into the reciprocal nature of empathetic interactions from the pharmacist's perspective.

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Conflict of interest

There are no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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دور التعاطف وجودة العلاقة في بناء ولاء العملاء في الصيدليات المجتمعية: دليل من الأردن

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ملخص

الهدف: يستكشف هذا البحث كيف يؤثر تعاطف الصيدلي على ولاء العملاء من خلال الدور الوسيط لجودة العلاقة في الصيدليات المجتمعية.

المنهجية: تم إجراء دراسة مقطعية باستخدام استبانة عبر الإنترنت وأخذ عينات مريحة في الأردن. تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام نمذجة المعادلات الهيكلية.

النتائج: تم جمع وتحليل ما مجموعه 536 استجابة من جميع مناطق الأردن. كان توزيع الجنس متوازنًا، حيث كان هناك 261 ذكراً (48.7%) و275 أنثى (51.3%). كانت الفئة العمرية الأكثر تركيزاً هي من 35 إلى 44 عامًا (29.3%)، تلتها الفئة من 25 إلى 34 عامًا (25.6%). معظم المشاركين كانوا من ذوي التعليم العالي حيث حصل 323 منهم (60.3%) على درجة البكالوريوس أو أعلى من المؤهلات الأكاديمية (19.0%). الأغلبية يزورون الصيدليات مرة واحدة على الأقل كل ستة أشهر (50.6%)، ويستخدمون بشكل رئيسي الصيدليات المجتمعية المستقلة (52.1%). تبرز نتائج الدراسة تأثيرًا إيجابيًا كبيرًا لتعاطف الصيدلي على الأبعاد الثلاثة الرئيسية لجودة العلاقة بين الصيدلي والمريض (الثقة، والرضا، والالتزام). علاوة على ذلك، تم العثور على علاقة إيجابية كبيرة بين أبعاد جودة العلاقة وأبعاد ولاء العملاء (الولاء السلوكي والولاء التوجهي).

الخلاصة: تسلط نتائجنا الضوء على الدور المركزي لتعاطف الصيدلي في إنشاء علاقة قوية ودائمة بين الصيدلي والمريض، مما يعزز ولاء المستهلكين، وهو أمر ضروري للنجاح والبقاء في السوق التنافسية الحالية.

الكلمات الدالة: جودة العلاقة، تعاطف الصيدلي، ولاء العملاء، صيدليات المجتمع، الأردن.

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