Indonesian Journal of Global Health Research

Volume 6 Number S6, December 2024 e-ISSN 2715-1972; p-ISSN 2714-9749



http://jurnal.globalhealthsciencegroup.com/index.php/IJGHR

MODEL OF STRATEGY TO INCREASE PATIENT INTEREST IN VISITING HOSPITALS AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a significant decrease in hospital visits due to fear of virus transmission. RSUD Anuntaloko Parigi, experienced a decrease in patient visits after the pandemic, requiring strategies to increase patient interest. This study explores the TOWS matrix, which evaluates internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats). Objective: This study aims to find strategies increase patient visit interest in the Regional General Hospital (RSUD) after the Covid-19 pandemic period. Method: A quantitative descriptive study with a cross-sectional design was conducted involving 12 respondents through structured interviews. Data were analyzed using TOWS analysis framework was applied in excel program and Descriptive analytics. Results: Results indicated that external opportunities outweighed threats, scoring 5.51, while internal strengths surpassed weaknesses, scoring 11.64. The hospital is positioned in the progressive quadrant, suggesting it can leverage its strengths to seize opportunities. Key strategies identified include improving comfort, and cleanliness, collaboration with BPJS, and program knowledge, patient education and utilizing social media for digital engagement. Conclusions: Anuntaloko Parigi Hospital has great opportunities, in a progressive position. Relevant strategies are improving comfort, cleanliness, and cooperation with BPJS, as well as program introduction, patient education, and utilization of social media in promotion.

Keywords: covid-19; hospitals; patients; tows

How to cite (in APA style)

Purnamasari, N. D., Subardin AB, S. A., & Sudirman, S. (2024). Model of Strategy to Increase Patient Interest in Visiting Hospitals after the Covid-19 Pandemic. *Indonesian Journal of Global Health Research*, 6(S6), 515-524. https://doi.org/10.37287/ijghr.v6iS6.4640.

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new type of coronavirus known as SARS-CoV-2, which causes fever, cough, shortness of breath, and fatigue, it can spread through droplets that have become a global pandemic, affecting the health system, economy, and daily lives of people in various countries (Subbarao & Mahanty, 2020). Infectious diseases often cause an increase in morbidity and mortality, including during the Corona Virus Disease-19 pandemic (Anjaswarni et al., 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak has caused changes in visiting patterns and patient service needs in hospitals so that they cannot carry out their functions and obligations properly, thus experiencing the impact of a decrease in low visiting interest, some regional hospitals have experienced a decline in estimated at up to 80% (Ika, 2020; Santosa, 2021). The fear of contracting the virus has led to decreased patient visits and decreased patient interest (Falcone et al., 2020; Lin et al., 2022).

Adaptation after the spread of COVID-19 is a challenge for every health service to rehabilitate patients. Every hospital must immediately think of strategies or methods to maintain and improve the quality of its services. Anuntaloko Regional General Hospital (RSUD) is the only hospital in Parigi, Parigi Moutong Regency, which is the main referral for the community in Parigi Regency, which is currently experiencing a decline in interest in

visits so it requires a development strategy to meet the needs of the community. The TOWS matrix is an important tool in developing strategies that help managers identify the company's internal strengths and weaknesses associated with external opportunities and threats, so as to design effective strategies to achieve organizational goals (Gery Azhari Putera & Jerry Heikal, 2021; Kulshrestha & Puri, 2017). Effective strategies can improve the overall patient experience in the hospital. This can be achieved through improved customer service, efficient appointment scheduling, and implementation of telemedicine services. By prioritizing patient comfort, hospitals can create a more welcoming and patient-centered environment that encourages repeat visits and referrals (Harkey et al., 2021; Permana et al., 2019).

Understanding the factors that influence patient behavior, such as the balance between perceived benefits and costs, is crucial in formulating successful strategies (Jonathan et al., 2022). In addition, using tools such as the TOWS Matrix can assist in evaluating the hospital's internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats in the healthcare environment (Adinugroho & Hidayati, 2021). TOWS analysis is a strategic analysis method used to study the environment and personality analysis of organizations. The TOWS concept is closely related to SWOT analysis, but TOWS is a novelty that utilizes external challenges to overcome weaknesses as a form of opportunity (Dargahi et al., 2019). Based on this description, the problem formulation in this study is how to increase interest in visiting patients after the COVID-19 pandemic at Anuntaloko Parigi Hospital. This study aims to find strategies to increase patient visit interest in the Regional General Hospital (RSUD) after the Covid-19 pandemic period. The novelty offered in this research is that the Visit Interest Increase Strategy Model develops a TOWS matrix strategy model. This model involves various approaches, such as opportunities, threats, strengths, and weaknesses.

METHOD

This study uses an approach referenced and adapted from the TOWS Concept which consists of 4 aspects of measurement, namely External (Opportunities and Threats) and Internal (Strengths and Weaknesses). The research design used descriptive quantitative with an observational approach and cross-sectional design. Data analysis was carried out using the Excel program and Descriptive analytics. This research has been carried out at Anuntaloko Parigi Hospital 2024. The data collection techniques used were interviews, and direct observation of 12 respondents, in a structured manner where researchers asked direct and open statements by referring to a questionnaire instrument consisting of 25 statements, determining scores using the Likert scale principle. The stages in this study, namely starting from the situation identification or observation stage include determining respondents, designing, and analyzing the model to be applied (TOWS), with the External Strategy Factor (EFAS) approach. As well as Internal Strategy Factors (IFAS). Furthermore, the data obtained is mapped in a matrix diagram of 4 quadrants, then the strategic aspects using the CSF principle as a basic form of follow-up strategy that can be used.

RESULT

This study had been conducted to find strategies increase patient visit interest in the Regional General Hospital (RSUD) after the Covid-19 pandemic period so that the results obtained;

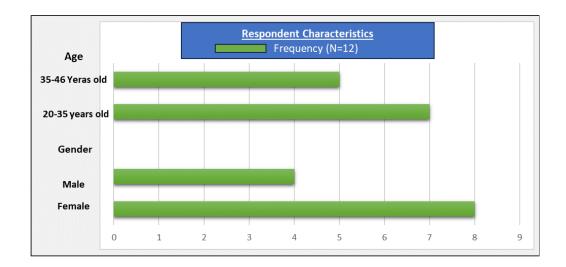


Figure 1. Characteristics of Respondents

Figure 1. illustrates important characteristics in understanding the demographic profile of respondents in two main categories: age and gender. Out of 12 respondents, the majority were 20-35 years old, totaling 7 people, while the other 5 respondents were in the 35-46 age range. In terms of gender, the majority of respondents were female, with 8 people, while there were 4 men. This shows that the 20-35 age group dominates the respondents, with the majority of them being female.

Table 1. External Factor Assessment Dimension

STATEMENT	- Skor	Weigts	SxW
Opportunity	SKOI	Weigts	S X W
Improve the comfort, safety and hygiene of the waiting room according to patient needs	4,75	0,95	4,49
Social media and other digital platforms for the promotion of hospital services.	4,00	0,80	3,20
Introduction of health education programs for patients	4,42	0,89	3,93
Hospital facilities and infrastructure have mostly been fulfilled according to regulations	3,75	0,75	2,80
Telemedicine services for remote consultation	3,92	0,78	3,06
Providing Homecare services	3,67	0,73	2,67
Threats	Skor	Weigts	S x W
Patients' Fears of Infection in Hospitals due to COVID-19 Risk	3,83	0,76	2,93
Poor service or previous inconvenience during the covid19 pandemic	2,83	0,58	1,65
Competition with other clinics and telemedicine	3,67	0,73	2,67
Avoiding hospitals because they are considered expensive	3,00	0,62	1,85
Shortage of skilled medical personnel	2,75	0,56	1,55
Obsolete and/or inadequate facilities	2,75	0,55	1,50
Changing needs and desires of society	3,58	0,71	2,54

Table 1. illustrates the analysis of external factors of Anuntaloko Parigi Hospital in two categories, namely Opportunities, and Threats, each with a score, weight, and the product of score-weight ($S \times B$). In the Opportunities section, there are six factors with a total score of 20.2. While the total value of the threat factor is 14.65 out of seven factors. Overall, the total value of the hospital's external factors is 5.51.

Table 2. Internal Factor Assessment Dimension

STATEMENT	Skor	Weigts	S x W
Weakness	SKOI	Weigts	S X W
Complicated and time-consuming registration and administration process	2,08	0,42	0,87
Lack of strategy preparation	2,50	0,51	1,27
Use of information technology that is not well integrated	2,17	0,44	0,95
Less Friendly or Less Professional Service	2,08	0,42	0,87
Long wait time to get services	2,50	0,49	1,23
Shortage of Medical Personnel, especially specialists	2,08	0,42	0,87
Negative Image due to previous covid-19 cases	2,58	0,51	1,32
Strengths	Total	Bobot	S x B
Health workers are young and insightful	3,92	0,78	3,06
Many positive responses from the public related to hospitals after the covid-19 pandemic	4,00	0,80	3,20
Cooperation with national health and employment insurance (BPJS)	4,50	0,91	4,09
The strategic location of the hospital is on the side of the highway	4,67	0,93	4,33
Hospital workers are able to work well with the team	4,67	0,93	4,33

Table 2. shows the analysis of the weaknesses (Weaknesses) and strengths (Strengths) of RSUD Anuntaloko Parigi. In the weakness section, there are seven points with a total score of 7.37. In the strengths section, there are five points, with a total strength score of 19.01. The internal factors of this analysis obtained a calculation score of 11.64. The position obtained based on the four quadrant diagram is;

Figure 2 Determination of the position point of Anuntaloko Hospital in a 4-quadrant

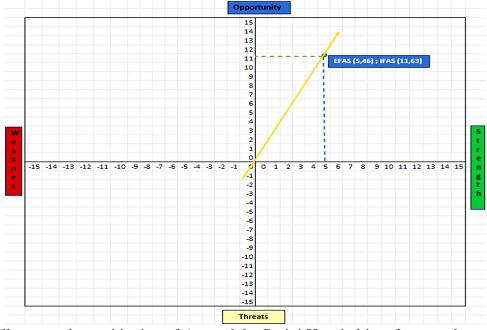


Figure 2. illustrates the positioning of Anuntaloko Parigi Hospital in a four-quadrant diagram based on a TOWS analysis, using data from external and internal factors. The vertical axis represents external factors, consisting of threats (T) and opportunities (O), with a score of

5.46. The horizontal axis represents internal factors, namely weaknesses (W) and strengths (S), with a score of 11.63. Based on the combination of these values, the point in the diagram is placed in the Progressive quadrant, indicating the hospital's strategic position. The results of this analysis are important for determining the optimal managerial strategy by utilizing the TO strategy (leveraging strengths to seize opportunities) to increase competitiveness. This strategy aims to enhance interest in patient visits. The following points can be developed into strategies based on the Critical Success Factor (CSF) principle, focusing on strengths to capitalize on opportunities.

Table 3.

Critical Succes Factor (CSF)

Strategy Dimension Opportunity - Strengths	skor	bobot	skor	status
Improve the comfort, safety and cleanliness of the waiting room according to patient needs	4,75	0,95	4,49	priority 1
Social media and other digital platforms for the promotion of hospital services	4,00	0,80	3,20	priority 5
Introduction of health education programs for patients	4,42	0,89	3,93	Priority 4
Hospital facilities and infrastructure have mostly been fulfilled in accordance with regulations	3,75	0,75	2,80	Priority 7
Telemedicine services for remote consultation	3,92	0,78	3,06	Priority 6
Providing Homecare services	3,67	0,73	2,67	Priority 8
Health workers are young and insightful	3,92	0,78	3,06	Priority 6
Many positive responses from the public related to hospitals after the covid-19 pandemic	4,00	0,80	3,20	Priority 5
Cooperation with national health and employment insurance (BPJS)	4,50	0,91	4,09	priority 3
Strategic location of the hospital on the side of the highway	4,67	0,93	4,33	priority 2
Hospital workers are able to work well with the team	4,67	0,93	4,33	priority 2

Table 3. shows the analysis of opportunities combined with the strengths of Anuntaloko Parigi General Hospital. There are 11 points evaluated with individual scores and weights to determine factors that serve as strengths to be used as opportunities to increase patient visit interest. Priority 1 is improving the comfort, safety, and cleanliness of the waiting room. Priority 2 is the hospital's strategic location along the main road and the employees' ability to work as a team. Priority 3 is cooperation with the National Health and Employment Insurance (BPJS), and Priority 4 is the introduction of programs, patient education, and using social media and digital platforms to promote hospital services. These points are factors that can be utilized to attract patients to use the healthcare services at Anuntaloko Parigi General Hospital. However, other factors can also be implemented, even if they are not part of the strategic priorities. These factors can be developed into strategies to enhance patient visit interest at Anuntaloko Parigi General Hospital and to expand service reach and communication with patients on a broader scale.

DISCUSSION

Based on the objectives established in this study, the results show that the analysis of external factors at Anuntaloko Parigi Regional Public Hospital (RSUD Anuntaloko Parigi) indicates that the opportunities dimension is significantly greater than the threats, which supports a growth strategy. Internal factors reveal the strengths of RSUD Anuntaloko, far outweighing its weaknesses. This highlights the hospital's potential to capitalize on opportunities. The TOWS analysis places the hospital in a progressive quadrant, indicating optimal potential to increase patient interest. Recommended strategies include improving comfort, and cleanliness, collaborating with BPJS, and utilizing social media, which are relevant to strengthening competitiveness in the digital era. The results of this study underscore the need for adaptive strategies to increase interest in patient visits post-COVID-19 pandemic, service

adaptation through improving the comfort, safety, and cleanliness of health facilities has proven effective in increasing patient confidence in hospital services. The TOWS analysis in this study shows that the combination of the RSUD's internal strengths, such as the comfort, safety, and cleanliness of the waiting room according to patient needs, strategic location and partnership with BPJS, and the ability of teamwork can be utilized as a strategic opportunity to attract new patients. Cleanliness has a significant impact on patient satisfaction, with studies showing that well-maintained facilities are perceived as safer and more welcoming, because satisfied patients are more likely to return to a facility that demonstrates a high level of hygiene. (Jemal et al., 2020; Kagura et al., 2023; Peters et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the utilization of social media, digital technology, and telemedicine allows patients to get remote consultations, which not only helps reduce hospital overcrowding but also provides an alternative for patients who need services without a physical visit. It is possible to reach out to the younger age group, which constitutes the majority of respondents in this study, and help increase interest in visits by providing relevant information. The hospital requires marketing strategies to continuously maximize services and ensure sustainability (Hapsari et al., 2021). The TOWS analysis shows that the progressive position is key among these strategies, particularly in improving comfort and cleanliness, which are important for enhancing patient satisfaction and attracting new patients (Mallmann et al., 2014). By focusing on these aspects, RSUD can create a more welcoming environment that meets patient expectations, fostering loyalty and a positive experience (Sun et al., 2020). Moreover, collaborating with BPJS (Social Security Administrator) can significantly enhance the accessibility of healthcare services, making RSUD more competitive in the digital era (Endradita et al., 2020).

This partnership can facilitate better service delivery and expand the patient base, aligning with the growing demand for efficient healthcare solutions. Additionally, leveraging social media as a communication tool can further engage patients (Chikwawawa & Bvirindi, 2019; Harting et al., 2019). This approach not only increases visibility but also builds a community around the healthcare provider, crucial for maintaining relevance in the rapidly evolving digital landscape (Chen, 2023). With the increasing reliance on technology and online platforms, hospitals can utilize social media, email marketing, and online advertising to reach potential patients and promote their services. By creating engaging and informative content, hospitals can attract and retain the interest of individuals seeking healthcare services (Edim Eka James et al., 2021; Mackey & Liang, 2013). To increase patient interest in visiting hospitals post-COVID-19, a multifaceted strategy is essential, focusing on enhancing communication and emotional support. Implementing virtual models has proven effective in maintaining connections between patients and their families (Reis et al., 2024). Additionally, a market penetration strategy can be employed by providing informational and promotional media about the types of services offered (Jati et al., 2021).

Another important aspect of increasing patient interest in hospital visits is the provision of personalized and high-quality care. Hospitals can prioritize patient satisfaction by ensuring that all interactions with healthcare professionals are positive and supportive. This can be achieved through continuous staff training and development programs, as well as the implementation of patient feedback mechanisms to improve services continuously (Rose et al., 2021). A study showed high satisfaction levels with visitation procedures, including both virtual and face-to-face options, indicating a strong preference for diverse communication methods (Lopez-Picazo et al., 2023). Post-pandemic, patients expect a more personalized approach from healthcare providers, emphasizing trust and empathy (Nag & Gilitwala, 2023).

Key areas of focus to improve quality include timeliness, fairness, and patient-centered care (Sudirman et al., 2024). Strategies should include the implementation of loyalty and incentive programs to encourage repeat visits from patients. By offering discounts, rewards, or special promotions, hospitals can provide incentives for individuals to choose their facility for healthcare needs (Lan et al., 2016; Nastasoiu & Vandenbosch, 2019). All aspects of healthcare services are fundamental to patient needs (Kareba et al., 2023). The majority of patient visits utilizing healthcare services are by women, making this an important consideration for healthcare providers when developing strategies (Ginting et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that RSUD Anuntaloko Parigi has a great opportunity to improve competitiveness and patient interest. External factors show that opportunities are much greater than threats, while internal factors reveal the hospital's significant strengths compared to its weaknesses. Through TOWS analysis, the hospital is in a progressive position, indicating optimal potential for growth. Relevant strategies include improving comfort, cleanliness, and cooperation with BPJS, as well as program introduction, patient education, and utilization of social media in promotion, thereby expected to increase patient visits and loyalty in the post-COVID-19 pandemic digital era.Limitation of the study, the data obtained in this study only came from one hospital. The use of a cross-sectional method that only captures data at one point in time makes it unable to describe longitudinal changes in patient interest..

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