
The Role of Perceived Value as a Mediating Variable in the Relationship Between Employee Competence, Responsiveness and Store Atmosphere on Customer Satisfaction

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Abstract

Objective – This study aims to analyze the influence of employee competence, responsiveness, and store atmosphere on customer satisfaction, with perceived value as a mediating variable at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Jepara.

Design/Methodology/Approach – A quantitative approach with explanatory research design was employed. Data were collected through closed-ended questionnaires using a ten-point Likert scale distributed to 304 students who had received madrasah services within the last six months. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software.

Findings – The results indicate that responsiveness and store atmosphere positively and significantly affect perceived value and customer satisfaction, while employee competence has no significant direct effect. Perceived value significantly influences customer satisfaction and mediates the relationships between the independent variables and satisfaction.

Implications – These findings suggest that customer satisfaction in educational services is strongly shaped by perceived value, highlighting the importance of enhancing service responsiveness and environmental factors to improve student satisfaction both theoretically and practically.

Keywords: Employee Competence, Responsiveness, Store Atmosphere, Perceived Value, Customer Satisfaction, Educational Services.



INTRODUCTION

Customer satisfaction is a key indicator of organizational success in the service-based economy, both in the private and public sectors. Customer satisfaction is not solely determined by the quality of the product or service output, but rather by the overall experience experienced during the service process. This experience includes interactions with employees, the speed and accuracy of responses to needs, and the physical environment in which the service is delivered. Therefore, organizations across various sectors are increasingly focusing on improving employee competence, service responsiveness, and creating a supportive service environment to build perceived value and sustainable customer satisfaction (Söderlund, 2020).

Increasing expectations for service quality are currently growing in the public sector, including education. The public no longer judges public services solely on procedural compliance or administrative efficiency, but also on the overall quality of the service experience. Clarity of information, speed and accuracy of responses, empathetic attitudes of staff, and a comfortable physical environment are integral to shaping public perceptions of service quality (Nurcahyani et al., 2025). In the world of education, this dynamic presents both challenges and opportunities. Transparent and accountable administrative services, open and accessible communication processes, and prompt response to needs and complaints are indicators that are increasingly being considered by the public. Madrasas are expected to provide transparent and prompt administrative services, a comfortable and safe physical environment, and responsive personal interactions between staff, teachers, and students.

Nationally, the quality of education services in Indonesia has shown relatively good performance. A 2025 survey by the Center for Research and Community Service, University of Indonesia (P3M UI), recorded that 89.8% of respondents rated the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education's performance in advancing primary and secondary education as good or very good (Antaranews, 2025). Similarly, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education's Stakeholder Satisfaction Index in 2025 reached a score of 88.70, with a rating of "Very Good," reflecting a high level of public trust in national education services (Kemendikdasmen, 2025). However, at the regional level, public satisfaction with education services remains variable. The Public Satisfaction Index (PSI) within the Labuhanbatu Regency Education Office, for example, was recorded at 78.93, categorized as "Good," indicating room for improvement to achieve superior service standards (Kemenpan-RB, 2025). This data demonstrates that although educational services have been generally assessed positively, the public remains high-expected for improved service quality. In the context of madrasas (Islamic schools), employee competence, responsiveness to student needs, and the quality of the school's physical environment are crucial factors in shaping user satisfaction and trust.

State Islamic Senior High School (MAN) 1 Jepara is a state educational institution with a large student population. Based on the madrasah's internal data, in the 2025/2026 academic year, the number of students will reach 1,312 across various levels and majors. Assuming each student engages in at least one service interaction per month, whether for administrative services, academic consultations, guidance counseling, or facilities and infrastructure services, an estimated 15,744 service transactions will occur annually. The high volume of services demands the performance of madrasah officials who are professional, responsive, and have adequate public service competencies.

However, initial observations and informal interviews with several students indicate persistent challenges in the service process, such as delays in administrative correspondence, slow

responses to facility complaints, and weak coordination between work units within the madrasah. This situation indicates that despite MAN 1 Jepara's efforts to provide optimal service, gaps remain in employee competency, service responsiveness, and the quality of the environment, potentially impacting student perceptions of value and satisfaction as the primary service recipients.

Several factors influence customer satisfaction, including employee competence, responsiveness, and the service atmosphere. Employee competence refers to the ability of teachers and educational staff to provide academic and administrative services professionally, encompassing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and service ethics (Khalida, 2024). Strong competence enables employees to provide accurate, consistent, and user-oriented services (Kultalahti et al., 2023). According to Lesmana & Maurisni (2024) good competency will improve the quality of interactions between service providers and recipients, thereby building positive perceptions of the institution.

Furthermore, responsiveness is a crucial aspect of service delivery. Responsiveness refers to the promptness and speed with which educators and staff respond to the needs, complaints, or questions of students and parents (Rafah et al., 2025). High responsiveness demonstrates an institution's commitment to customer service, thereby improving perceptions of service quality.

Another factor is store atmosphere. Although the term is more commonly used in a retail context, the concept of store atmosphere is also relevant in education. Store atmosphere in madrasahs can be defined as the physical and psychological atmosphere of the madrasah environment, including cleanliness, classroom comfort, spatial layout, supporting facilities, and a conducive social climate (Riandi, 2026). A comfortable and supportive learning environment will provide a positive experience for students, thus influencing their satisfaction levels (Putra, 2019).

However, the relationship between employee competence, responsiveness, and store atmosphere on customer satisfaction is not always direct. In consumer behavior theory, psychological variables act as internal mechanisms in shaping satisfaction, one of which is perceived value. Perceived value is a customer's subjective assessment of the benefits received compared to the sacrifices incurred (Kasadah & Roosdhani, 2025). In education, benefits can include quality learning, administrative services, and adequate facilities, while sacrifices can include costs, time, or effort.

Parasuraman et al. (1988) service quality theory explains that customer satisfaction is formed through evaluations of the quality of service interactions, which include the dimensions of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. In this study, employee competence and responsiveness represent the interaction quality dimensions, while store atmosphere represents the physical environment quality. Meanwhile, Expectation-Confirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980) explains that satisfaction arises when service performance meets or exceeds customer expectations. This evaluation is mediated by perceived value, which is a subjective assessment of the balance between benefits and sacrifices. Thus, perceived value becomes a crucial variable because customers tend to be satisfied if they perceive the value received as greater than the costs or sacrifices made. This means that even if employee competence, responsiveness, and the environment are good, customer satisfaction will be greatly influenced by how customers assess the overall value they receive. Therefore, perceived value acts as a mediating variable that bridges the influence of service variables on customer satisfaction.

Numerous empirical studies support the mediating role of perceived value in the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. Prompt and appropriate responsiveness to customer needs and complaints has been shown to increase perceived value and strengthen the emotional bond between customers and the organization (Tung et al., 2017). Physical environmental

factors, or store atmosphere, also play a role in shaping the service experience. Elements such as cleanliness, layout, lighting, and environmental comfort can influence customer mood and perceptions of service quality, ultimately impacting satisfaction and intention to repurchase the service (Jalil & La Isa, 2021; Ndengane et al., 2021). In modern services, adaptability to change and service complexity also contributes to the formation of perceived value, particularly when customers assess the balance between benefits received and effort expended (Sahabuddin et al., 2024).

Although numerous studies have examined the influence of employee competence, responsiveness, and store atmosphere on customer satisfaction, most have focused on the commercial and tourism sectors. Research integrating these three variables in the context of state educational institutions, particularly Islamic schools (madrasahs), remains very limited. Furthermore, most previous studies emphasize the direct relationship between variables, while the role of perceived value as a mediating variable has not been widely explored, even though this construct functions as a psychological mechanism that bridges perceptions of service quality and user satisfaction (Sahabuddin et al., 2024; Sitinjak et al., 2019).

On the other hand, empirical findings regarding the direct effect of employee competence on customer satisfaction also show inconsistent results. Some studies find a significant positive effect, while others indicate that the effect is weak or insignificant without mediation by specific psychological factors, such as trust or perceived fairness (Putri & Alversia, 2020). Furthermore, the majority of studies use the context of external customers, while this study focuses on internal customers of educational institutions, namely students, who have different characteristics, expectations, and service interaction patterns.

Based on the conceptual framework and theoretical development outlined above, this study formulates ten hypotheses consisting of direct and indirect (mediation) effects. Directly, employee competence is suspected to have a positive effect on customer satisfaction (H1) and also a positive effect on perceived value (H2). Furthermore, responsiveness is predicted to have a positive effect on customer satisfaction (H3) and a positive effect on perceived value (H4). Store atmosphere is also assumed to have a positive effect on customer satisfaction (H5) and perceived value (H6). Furthermore, perceived value itself is predicted to have a positive effect on customer satisfaction (H7).

Furthermore, in its role as a mediating variable, perceived value is assumed to bridge the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. Therefore, three mediation hypotheses are formulated: perceived value mediates the effect of employee competence on customer satisfaction (H8), perceived value mediates the effect of responsiveness on customer satisfaction (H9), and perceived value mediates the effect of store atmosphere on customer satisfaction (H10). Thus, this study has a total of 10 hypotheses, consisting of 7 direct effects and 3 indirect effects through mediation mechanisms.

Based on this description, this study aims to examine the effect of employee competence, responsiveness, and store atmosphere on customer satisfaction, with perceived value as a mediating variable in educational services at MAN 1 Jepara. This research is expected to fill the theoretical gap in the study of public service management while providing practical contributions in the form of recommendations for improving the quality of educational services in accordance with the characteristics of state madrasahs in Indonesia.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with explanatory research, aiming to explain the causal relationships between variables in the research model. The focus of this study was to examine the influence of employee competence, responsiveness, and store atmosphere on customer satisfaction, with perceived value as a mediating variable. A quantitative approach was chosen because it allows for objective hypothesis testing through statistical analysis based on survey data.

The study was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 1 Jepara during the 2025/2026 academic year. The research location was selected based on the high level of service interaction between students and the madrasah, encompassing administrative, academic, guidance, counseling, and infrastructure services. Therefore, this madrasah was deemed relevant for assessing the quality of public services in the context of religious education.

The population in this study was all 1,312 active students at MAN 1 Jepara in the 2025/2026 academic year. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, which is a sampling technique based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2019). The respondent criteria in this study were: a) active students at MAN 1 Jepara; b) Have received madrasah services (administrative, academic, guidance and counseling, or infrastructure) at least once in the last six months; and c) Willing to complete the questionnaire in full. Based on these criteria, a sample size of 304 respondents was obtained. This sample size meets the minimum requirements for Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis, which recommends an adequate sample size for testing structural and mediation models.

This study involved five main variables operationalized through several measurable indicators. Employee competence (X1) is defined as the ability of employees and teachers to provide professional services, encompassing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and service ethics. This variable is measured through indicators such as the ability to explain information clearly, the accuracy and precision of service, professionalism in providing service, a friendly and polite attitude, and mastery of service procedures. Responsiveness (X2) refers to the alertness and speed of educators and educational staff in responding to student needs and complaints, as measured by speed of service, willingness to help, accuracy in handling complaints, ease of contact, and attention to student needs.

Furthermore, store atmosphere (X3) is defined as the physical and psychological atmosphere of the madrasah environment that influences student comfort in receiving services. Indicators include school cleanliness, classroom comfort, spatial layout and facilities, lighting and ventilation, and environmental safety. Perceived value (Z) is students' subjective assessment of the benefits of the service compared to the sacrifices made, as measured by the suitability of benefits to expectations, service quality commensurate with effort, perceived value greater than cost, and the appropriateness of quality relative to available facilities. Customer satisfaction (Y) is defined as the level of student satisfaction after comparing expectations with the service performance received. This is measured by overall satisfaction with the service, satisfaction with employee interactions, satisfaction with facilities, suitability of the service to expectations, and willingness to recommend the madrasah to others.

Data collection was conducted using a closed-ended questionnaire developed based on variable indicators adapted from relevant previous research. The research instrument used a ten-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 indicating "strongly disagree" to 10 indicating "strongly agree." The questionnaire was distributed directly to respondents and filled out independently, thus enabling the collection of comprehensive data on students' perceptions of the quality of madrasah services.

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares-based Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the aid of SmartPLS software. This method was chosen because it can accommodate complex research models, medium sample sizes, and does not require normally distributed data. According to Hair et al. (2021) PLS-SEM is a prediction-oriented approach and is highly suitable for use in research aimed at explaining endogenous construct variance and developing theory in exploratory and confirmatory contexts. The analysis stages include evaluating the measurement model (outer model) to test the validity and reliability of the instrument, which includes tests of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability. Next, the structural model (inner model) is evaluated by testing the R-square value, effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). Hypothesis testing is conducted through a bootstrapping procedure to determine the significance of direct and indirect influences between variables. The role of perceived value as a mediating variable is analyzed by testing the indirect effect in the structural model. The results of this analysis are used to explain the extent to which perceived value is able to bridge the influence of employee competence, responsiveness, and store atmosphere on student customer satisfaction at MAN 1 Jepara.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 304 respondents, all of whom were students at MAN 1 Jepara. This indicates that the study respondents met the established subject criteria, thus ensuring that the data obtained were relevant to the research context.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Category	Number of Respondents (persons)
Service Experience	Have received service	Majority
	Never received service	Small portion
Respondent Status	Students at MAN 1 Jepara	304
	Not Students at MAN 1 Jepara	0
Gender	Male	80
	Female	224
	Total	304
Age (years)	15	65
	16	110
	17	92
	18	37

Source: Data Respondent

Based on the respondent characteristics data, it can be concluded that all respondents in this study were active students of MAN 1 Jepara, totaling 304. There were no respondents from outside the madrasah, so the data obtained fully represent the perceptions of the institution's internal customers, namely students as direct users of educational services. This indicates that the sample met the purposive sampling criteria established in the study. In terms of service experience, the majority of respondents stated they had received service from the madrasah, while only a small proportion reported having not or rarely received service. This indicates that most respondents have direct experience interacting with the madrasah's service system, so the assessments given for

research variables such as employee competence, responsiveness, store atmosphere, perceived value, and customer satisfaction are based on actual experiences, not hypothetical perceptions.

Based on gender, the respondents were predominantly female students (224 students, approximately 73.7%), while 80 were male students (approximately 26.3%). This composition indicates that perceptions of service quality in this study were predominantly represented by female students. The predominance of female respondents may reflect the proportion of the madrasah student population or a higher participation rate in the questionnaire among this group. In terms of age, the majority of respondents were in the 16-year-old age range (110 students), followed by 17-year-olds (92 students), 15-year-olds (65 students), and 18-year-olds (37 students). This distribution indicates that most respondents were in the middle phase of their madrasah aliyah education, which generally means they have sufficient experience in receiving various types of madrasah services. Therefore, respondents were deemed sufficiently mature in terms of experience to provide an objective evaluation of the quality of the services they received.

Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

The measurement model evaluation (outer model) was conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the constructs used in the study. The outer model testing in this study included internal reliability and convergent validity, which were evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (ρ_a and ρ_c), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

Table 2. Results of Reliability and Construct Validity Tests

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (ρ_a)	Composite reliability (ρ_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Customer Satisfaction	0.970	0.970	0.975	0.868
Employee Competence	0.967	0.967	0.976	0.909
Perceived Value	0.957	0.957	0.969	0.886
Responsiveness	0.955	0.956	0.965	0.847
Store Atmosphere	0.933	0.934	0.949	0.789

Source: Smart-PLS data processing results

Construct Reliability Test

Construct reliability aims to ensure that the indicators in each latent variable have good internal consistency. A construct is considered reliable if its Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values are greater than 0.70. Based on the analysis, all constructs in this study demonstrated very high Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values. The Customer Satisfaction construct had a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.970 and a Composite Reliability (ρ_c) of 0.975, indicating excellent reliability. The Employee Competence construct also demonstrated a very high level of reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.967 and a Composite Reliability (ρ_c) of 0.976.

Furthermore, the Perceived Value, Responsiveness, and Store Atmosphere constructs each had a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.90 and a Composite Reliability value above 0.94, indicating that all constructs met the internal reliability criteria. Therefore, it can be concluded that all latent variables in this study are reliable and suitable for further analysis.

Convergent Validity Test

Convergent validity is used to measure the extent to which indicators within a construct are able to explain the latent variable they represent. Convergent validity criteria are declared met if the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value is greater than 0.50. The test results indicate that the AVE values for all constructs are well above the minimum required limit. The Customer Satisfaction construct had an AVE value of 0.868, Employee Competence of 0.909, Perceived Value of 0.886, Responsiveness of 0.847, and Store Atmosphere of 0.789. These values indicate that each construct is able to explain more than 50% of the variance in its indicators. Therefore, it can be concluded that all constructs in this study have met the criteria for convergent validity.

Based on the results of the reliability and convergent validity tests, it can be concluded that the measurement model (outer model) in this study has met all evaluation criteria, both in terms of reliability and validity. Therefore, the measurement model is deemed feasible and can proceed to the structural model evaluation stage (inner model).

Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

Structural model evaluation is conducted to assess the relationship between constructs in the research model. One commonly used indicator is the R-square (R^2), which indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variables.

Based on the analysis results, the R-square values obtained in Table 3 are as follows:

Table 3. Coefficient of Determination (R^2) Values

	R-square	Kriteria
Customer Satisfaction	0.859	Substansial
Perceived Value	0.787	Substansial

Source: Smart-PLS data processing results

The evaluation of the structural model (inner model) shows that the research model has high predictive ability. The R-square value for Customer Satisfaction is 0.859, which means that approximately 85.9% of the variation in customer satisfaction can be explained by the constructs in the model. This criterion is considered substantial, indicating that the model is able to predict Customer Satisfaction well. Meanwhile, Perceived Value has an R-square value of 0.787, indicating that approximately 78.7% of the variation in perceived value can be explained by the model constructs. This value is also considered substantial, indicating that the relationship between the constructs is quite strong in explaining Perceived Value. Overall, these results indicate that the research structural model is effective in explaining the variability of both dependent variables, namely Customer Satisfaction and Perceived Value.

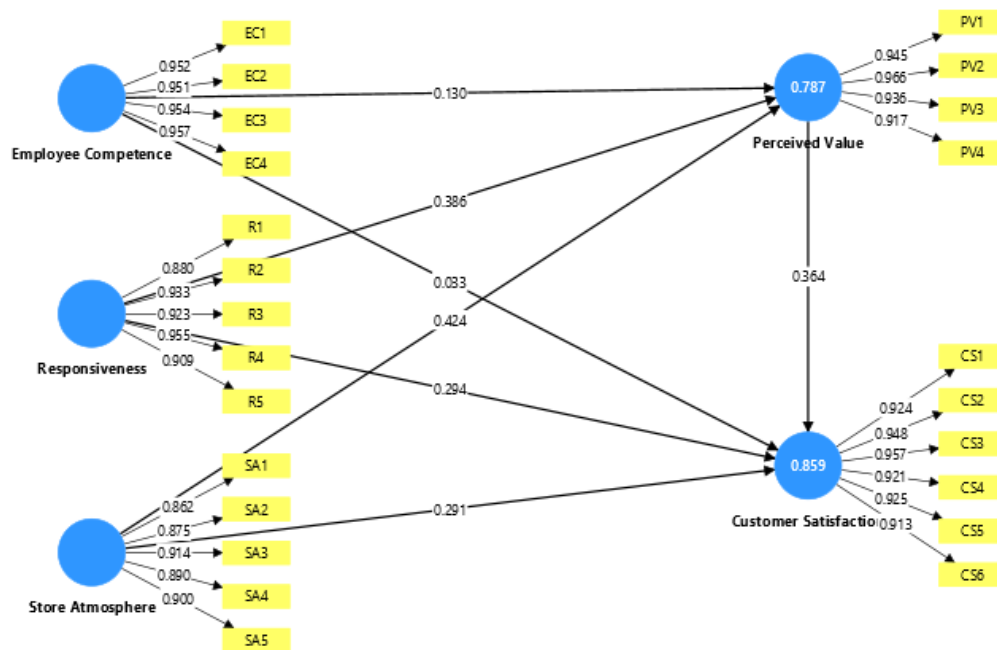


Figure 1. SEM-PLS Structural Model

Source: Smart-PLS data processing results

Based on the results of the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) analysis, this study demonstrated that the model developed had excellent explanatory power. The R-square value for the Perceived Value variable, 0.787, indicates that 78.7% of the variation in customer perceived value can be explained by employee competence, responsiveness, and store atmosphere. Meanwhile, the R-square value for the customer satisfaction variable, 0.859, indicates that 85.9% of customer satisfaction is influenced by these three exogenous variables, along with perceived value. This high coefficient of determination confirms that the research model is strong and relevant in explaining customer satisfaction behavior at MAN 1 Jepara.

The results of the direct relationship test indicate that employee competence has a positive influence on perceived value, albeit with relatively weak strength. This finding indicates that employee competence still plays a role in shaping customer value perceptions, but is not yet a primary factor directly perceived. Conversely, responsiveness and store atmosphere demonstrate a stronger positive influence on perceived value. This suggests that responsiveness in service and a comfortable, tidy, and pleasant service environment are more readily perceived by customers, thereby increasing their perceived value of the service they receive.

Furthermore, the analysis also shows that perceived value has a positive and fairly strong influence on customer satisfaction. This finding confirms that customer satisfaction is not solely shaped by direct service aspects, but is strongly influenced by the extent to which customers perceive the benefits, convenience, and alignment between expectations and the service received. In other words, the higher the perceived value, the higher the level of satisfaction.

Regarding the direct influence on customer satisfaction, responsiveness and store atmosphere were shown to have a moderate positive effect. This indicates that speed, alertness, and

a supportive service environment can directly increase customer satisfaction. Meanwhile, employee competence had a relatively small direct influence on customer satisfaction. This indicates that employee competence is not fully perceived as a key factor in satisfaction unless it is accompanied by a perceived value experience by customers.

Furthermore, the results of this study confirm the strategic role of perceived value as a mediating variable. In the relationship between employee competence and customer satisfaction, perceived value acts as a dominant mediator, meaning employee competence will have a more meaningful impact on satisfaction if it is able to first create perceived value for customers. Meanwhile, in the relationship between responsiveness and store atmosphere and customer satisfaction, perceived value acts as a partial mediator. This means that these two variables not only directly influence satisfaction but also indirectly through increasing perceived value for customers.

Table 4. Results of the Direct Effect Test

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Employee Competence -> Customer Satisfaction	0.080	0.085	0.075	1.071	0.284
Employee Competence -> Perceived Value	0.130	0.136	0.085	1.523	0.128
Perceived Value -> Customer Satisfaction	0.364	0.364	0.093	3.919	0.000
Responsiveness -> Customer Satisfaction	0.434	0.425	0.097	4.483	0.000
Responsiveness -> Perceived Value	0.386	0.376	0.105	3.687	0.000
Store Atmosphere -> Customer Satisfaction	0.446	0.450	0.077	5.763	0.000
Store Atmosphere -> Perceived Value	0.424	0.428	0.076	5.602	0.000

Source: Smart-PLS data processing results

The results of the direct effect test indicate a difference in the level of significance between variables. Employee Competence on Customer Satisfaction has a path coefficient of 0.080 with a t-statistic of 1.071 and a p-value of 0.284, and on Perceived Value of 0.130 with a t-statistic of 1.523 and a p-value of 0.128. A p-value greater than 0.05 indicates that the influence of Employee Competence on both dependent variables is insignificant. Meanwhile, Perceived Value has a positive and significant effect on Customer Satisfaction with a path coefficient of 0.364, a t-statistic of 3.919, and a p-value of 0.000. Responsiveness also showed a positive and significant effect on both Customer Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.434$, $t = 4.483$, $p = 0.000$) and Perceived Value ($\beta = 0.386$, $t = 3.687$, $p = 0.000$).

Furthermore, Store Atmosphere had a positive and significant effect on Customer Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.446$, $t = 5.763$, $p = 0.000$) and Perceived Value ($\beta = 0.424$, $t = 5.602$, $p = 0.000$). This indicates that the better the atmosphere and responsiveness of the service, and the higher the perceived value, the higher the customer satisfaction. Overall, Perceived Value, Responsiveness, and

Store Atmosphere variables proved to be significant factors in increasing customer satisfaction, while Employee Competence did not have a significant direct effect.

Table 5. Indirect Influence Path

No	Specific Indirect Effect	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
1	Responsiveness -> Perceived Value -> Customer Satisfaction	0,140	0,137	0,053	2,667	0,008
2	Store Atmosphere -> Perceived Value -> Customer Satisfaction	0,154	0,156	0,050	3,081	0,002
3	Employee Competence -> Perceived Value -> Customer Satisfaction	0,047	0,049	0,034	1,398	0,162

Source: Smart-PLS data processing results

The results of the specific indirect effects test revealed the role of Perceived Value as a mediating variable in the relationship between Responsiveness, Store Atmosphere, and Employee Competence on Customer Satisfaction. Interpretation was performed by examining the T-statistics (>1.96) and P-values (<0.05).

In the Mediation of Perceived Value on Responsiveness and Customer Satisfaction, the original sample value of 0.140, with a T-statistic of 2.667 and a P-value of 0.008 (<0.05), indicated that this indirect effect was positive and significant.

This indicates that responsiveness significantly influences customer satisfaction through perceived value. The faster and more responsive the service provided, the higher the perceived value, which in turn increases customer satisfaction.

In the Mediation of Perceived Value on Store Atmosphere and Customer Satisfaction. This path had the highest original sample value of 0.154, with a T-statistic of 3.081 and a P-value of 0.002 (<0.05).

These results indicate that store atmosphere has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction through perceived value, and is the most dominant indirect influence among the other variables. This means that a comfortable and attractive store atmosphere can significantly increase customer perceptions of value, thus significantly impacting customer satisfaction.

Regarding the mediation of perceived value on employee competence and customer satisfaction, the original sample value was 0.047, with a T-statistic of 1.398 and a P-value of 0.162 (>0.05), indicating that this indirect effect was insignificant.

This indicates that employee competence does not significantly influence customer satisfaction through perceived value. Therefore, perceived value cannot mediate the relationship between employee competence and customer satisfaction.

This study aims to analyze the influence of employee competence, responsiveness, and store atmosphere on customer satisfaction, with perceived value as a mediating variable in the service context at MAN 1 Jepara. The results of the SEM-PLS analysis indicate that the research model generally has very strong explanatory power, as reflected by substantial R-square values for the perceived value and customer satisfaction variables. This finding indicates that customer satisfaction in this research context is influenced by a combination of service quality factors and customer perceptions of value.

The results indicate that employee competence does not have a direct, significant effect on either perceived value or customer satisfaction. This finding indicates that employee competence, although conceptually important, is not yet fully perceived by customers as a source of value or satisfaction. In the context of MAN 1 Jepara, customers are more likely to assess satisfaction based on tangible and immediate service experiences, compared to aspects of employee internal competence, which tend to be implicit. This finding aligns with previous research by Kamaluddin & Suwardin (2024), which states that employee competence does not always have a direct impact on customer satisfaction, especially when customers do not have sufficient in-depth interaction to assess the technical aspects of competence. In the context of routine services, customers tend to be more sensitive to service outcomes and emotional experiences than to the quality of technical employee competence.

However, this study also shows that the influence of employee competence becomes more significant when mediated by perceived value, indicating that new employee competence will impact satisfaction if it translates into benefits and value directly perceived by customers. Although the mediation of perceived value in the relationship between employee competence and customer satisfaction was not statistically significant, conceptually, competence still plays a strategic role in building long-term service quality. High competence can strengthen service consistency, increase student trust, and build an institution's reputation. Previous findings by Aliryanti & Roosdhani (2024), showed that perceived value plays a significant role in increasing customer satisfaction, consistent with research on purchasing decisions for Skintific products in Jepara Regency. Thus, these findings strengthen the role of perceived value as a psychological mechanism that bridges internal service quality with customer satisfaction.

Responsiveness has been shown to have a positive and significant influence on both perceived value and customer satisfaction. These findings indicate that responsiveness, speed, and promptness of service are factors that are highly perceived by customers and directly shape their perceptions of value and satisfaction. In educational services, students tend to value prompt responses to academic and administrative questions, as well as personal complaints. These findings are consistent with previous research, which confirms that responsiveness is one of the most dominant service quality dimensions influencing customer satisfaction, particularly in the service sector (Tresnadjaja, 2017; Zain, 2022). When customers perceive that a service provider is responsive to their needs and complaints, they are more likely to perceive the service as valuable and satisfying (Herdini & Widiyarta, 2020).

Furthermore, these findings also indicate that perceived value acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction. This means that responsiveness can directly and indirectly increase satisfaction by increasing customer perceived value. This supports the argument of Fadhillah & Nainggolan (2024) that customer satisfaction is formed through a combination of direct service experience and subjective evaluation of the service's value.

The results also show that store atmosphere has the strongest positive and significant influence on perceived value and customer satisfaction. This finding indicates that service environment conditions such as comfort, cleanliness, lighting, ventilation, security, and layout are crucial factors in shaping the customer experience. In education, the physical atmosphere of a madrasah serves as a supporting facility and a space for students to develop emotional experiences. A comfortable and safe environment can improve learning concentration, a sense of belonging to the institution, and a positive perception of the service as a whole. These findings align with research by Wikasari & Susanti (2025) which states that service atmosphere plays a crucial role in creating

emotional experiences for customers and increasing satisfaction. A comfortable and pleasant service environment can enhance perceived value and create a lasting positive impression on customers. In this study, perceived value also acts as a partial mediator between store atmosphere and customer satisfaction. This suggests that a positive service atmosphere will increase customer satisfaction both directly and through increased perceived value. In other words, customers will feel satisfied because of the comfortable atmosphere, assess the experience as valuable, and meet their expectations.

One of the main findings of this study is that perceived value has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction and serves as a key mediator in the research model. This finding confirms that customer satisfaction is not solely shaped by objective service quality but is strongly influenced by how customers assess and interpret the benefits they receive. These results support the customer value theory, which states that satisfaction results from a comparative evaluation of perceived benefits versus sacrifices (Setiawan, 2019). In the context of MAN 1 Jepara, customers will feel satisfied when the service they receive is perceived as valuable, relevant, and appropriate to their needs.

Theoretically, this study strengthens the value-based customer satisfaction model by positioning perceived value as a strategic mediating variable. Contextually, the results of this study indicate that improving customer satisfaction at MAN 1 Jepara will be more effective if it focuses not only on improving employee competency, but also on enhancing service responsiveness, the environment, and creating a truly valuable service experience for customers.

From a practical perspective, madrasah management can prioritize policies that strengthen responsive service systems (e.g., prompt administrative services, clear complaint channels, effective digital communication), as well as improving the quality of the school's physical environment. Meanwhile, improving employee competency needs to be directed toward greater integration with the service experience experienced by students, so that these competencies are not only internal but also tangible and tangible.

Thus, this study provides empirical and practical contributions, demonstrating that student satisfaction, as internal customers of educational institutions, is more sensitive to direct service experiences than to implicit technical competency. Therefore, strategies to improve the quality of educational services need to be designed holistically, emphasizing the creation of value and positive experiences for students as the center of educational services.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that the research model examining the role of perceived value as a mediating variable in the relationship between employee competence, responsiveness, and store atmosphere on customer satisfaction at MAN 1 Jepara has very strong explanatory power. This is demonstrated by the substantial coefficient of determination (R^2) values for both perceived value and customer satisfaction. Therefore, the model is deemed relevant and suitable for explaining customer satisfaction in the context of educational services.

The results show that employee competence does not have a direct, significant effect on perceived value or customer satisfaction. This finding indicates that employee competence has not yet been fully perceived by customers as a key factor in shaping value and satisfaction. However, employee competence becomes more meaningful when mediated by perceived value, confirming that employee competence will only impact satisfaction if it is translated into benefits and value directly perceived by customers. Furthermore, responsiveness has been shown to have a positive and significant effect on perceived value and customer satisfaction. This indicates that

responsiveness and speed of service are aspects that are highly perceived by customers and play a crucial role in shaping perceptions of value and satisfaction. In this relationship, perceived value acts as a partial mediator, meaning responsiveness can increase satisfaction both directly and through increased customer perceived value.

The results also show that store atmosphere has the strongest positive and significant influence on perceived value and customer satisfaction. This finding confirms that a comfortable, tidy, and pleasant service environment is a crucial factor in creating a valuable and satisfying service experience. Perceived value also acts as a partial mediator in this relationship, indicating that a good service atmosphere will increase customer satisfaction both directly and indirectly through increased perceived value. Overall, this study confirms that perceived value is a key variable that plays a strategic role in bridging the gap between service quality and customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction at MAN 1 Jepara is strongly influenced by how customers assess the benefits and service experience they receive.

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