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The Mediation Role of Passenger Overall Satisfaction in the Effect of Complaint Satisfaction on Repurchase Intention: An Empirical Study on Airline Passengers[1]

Hizmet Telafisinden Duyulan Memnuniyetin Yeniden Satın Alma Niyetine Etkisinde Yolcu Tatmininin Aracılık Rolü: Havayolu Yolcuları Özelinde Bir Araştırma

Ali Emre Sarılgan[2], Mustafa Fatih Yücel[3]

Abstract

This study, based on justice theory, aims to understand the effects of the sub-dimensions of complaint satisfaction on repurchase intention through the mediating role of passengers' overall satisfaction. An empirical study was conducted using survey data gathered from 246 passengers who volunteered to participate in the study in İstanbul, utilizing structural equation modeling. As a result, complaint satisfaction related to adequacy and customer relations positively affects repurchase intention through the mediation of passengers' overall satisfaction. Complaint satisfaction related to adequacy and passenger relations also directly affects passengers' overall satisfaction positively. Additionally, passengers' overall satisfaction positively influences repurchase intention. Developing communication skills, courtesy, and empathy among employees is crucial for enhancing the tolerance levels of passengers who have experienced service failures. This study aims to contribute to the literature by examining the mediating role of passengers' overall satisfaction in the relationship between complaint satisfaction and repurchase intention among airline passengers who have previously faced service failures.

Keywords: *Passenger Overall Satisfaction, Repurchase Intention, Complaint Satisfaction.*

Öz

Adalet teorisine dayanan bu çalışma, hizmet telafisi memnuniyetinin alt boyutlarının, genel yolcu tatmininin aracılık rolüyle yeniden satın alma niyeti üzerindeki etkilerini anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. İstanbul'da yapılan bu ampirik çalışma, araştırmaya katılmayı gönüllü olarak kabul eden 246 yolcudan toplanan anket verileri üzerinde, yapısal eşitlik modellemesi kullanılarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Sonuç olarak, genel yolcu tatmini, hizmet telafisinin yeterliliği ve yolcu ilişkilerinden duyulan memnuniyetin yeniden satın alma niyeti üzerindeki etkisinde aracılık rolünü oynamaktadır. Hizmet telafisinin yeterliliği ve yolcu ilişkilerinden duyulan memnuniyet, genel yolcu tatminini olumlu bir şekilde etkilemektedir. Ayrıca, genel yolcu tatmininin yeniden satın alma niyeti üzerinde olumlu bir etkisi vardır. Çalışanlar için iletişim becerilerini, nezaketi ve empatiyi geliştirmek, hizmet aksaklıkları yaşayan yolcuların hoşgörü seviyelerini artırmak açısından çok önemli bir konudur. Bu çalışma, daha önce hizmet başarısızlığı yaşayan havayolu yolcularının hizmet telafisi memnuniyetlerinin yeniden satın alma niyetine etkisinde genel yolcu tatmininin aracılık rolünü inceleyerek literatüre katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Genel Yolcu Tatmini, Yeniden Satın Alma Niyeti, Hizmet Telafisi.*

Araştırma Makalesi [Research Paper]

Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Beyanı: Çalışmanın araştırma kısmı Eskişehir Teknik Üniversitesi Fen ve Mühendislik Bilimleri Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etik Kurulu'nun 12.10.2023 tarih ve 12/3 sayılı Kararı ile alınan izin doğrultusunda gerçekleştirilmiştir.

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Introduction

With the increasing needs of individuals in a globalizing world, air transportation has become one of the most important modes of transportation worldwide. Particularly when it is not feasible or takes too long to reach a destination using other modes of transport, many people rely on airlines each year for business, entertainment, education, health, or other purposes.

However, challenges that may arise during, before, or after a flight can negatively impact passengers' travel experiences. Service failures such as delayed flights, lost or damaged luggage, and flight cancellations reduce passengers' overall satisfaction (Hess et al., 2007).

It is crucial for airlines to implement effective compensation strategies when service failures occur. Such strategies aim to mitigate the impact of passengers' negative experiences and enhance overall service satisfaction by improving complaint satisfaction (Smith et al., 1999). Furthermore, leveraging technology creates opportunities for airlines to provide more comprehensive and effective service recovery. For instance, some airlines actively use social media platforms to promptly address passenger complaints and improve passenger satisfaction (Baker & Magnini, 2016).

Some studies have highlighted the effect of complaint satisfaction on customer satisfaction in the literature (Temiz and Kurtoğlu, 2023; Öztürk and Yılmaz, 2020; Özdemir and Çataltepe, 2020). Lajevardi (2014) investigated the effect of customer satisfaction on repurchase intention. Studies by Nagel and Santos (2017) and Vanniarajan and Gurunathan (2009) examined the bilateral relationships between complaint satisfaction, customer satisfaction, and repurchase intention. Additionally, research has explored connections between factors such as customer complaints, brand image, service quality, loyalty, and repurchase intention in the aviation industry (Xu et al., 2019; Nikbin et al., 2015; Amoako et al., 2023). However, there are few studies investigating the mediating effect of passengers' overall satisfaction on the relationship between complaint satisfaction and repurchase intention. To summarize, the aim of this study is to investigate the mediating role of overall customer satisfaction in the relationship between complaint satisfaction and repurchase intention. This study also provides additional insights into factors such as whether the flight is short- or long-haul, whether the airline is low-cost or full-service, and whether passengers shared their complaints on websites.

1. Conceptual Framework

Complaint satisfaction, repurchase intention, and passengers' overall satisfaction are discussed in the conceptual framework section, respectively. In line with the aim of this study, relevant studies on service failures in the aviation sector are also highlighted.

1.1. Complaint Satisfaction

Service failures can inevitably occur because services are consumed at the time they are produced. Losing customers due to service failures is likely to result in negative consequences (Yalçın, 2023). In the literature on service recovery, justice theory is frequently used to evaluate the adequacy of compensation methods implemented for customers (Ha and Jang, 2009). Adapting the basic assumptions of justice theory to the context of service recovery has led to the development of a new approach. According to this approach, customers experience a sense of emotional or financial loss following a service failure. Customers perceive service recovery as fair when it adequately compensates for their loss. In this context, a recovery process deemed fair by customers is more likely to encourage positive behavioral responses (Cranage, 2004). In evaluating service recovery, the widespread use of justice theory stems from its foundational role in understanding recovery processes. Justice theory provides essential constructs—procedural, distributive, and interactional justice—that allow researchers to analyze and interpret customer perceptions of fairness in service recovery. As a core framework for assessing the fairness and effectiveness of recovery actions, justice theory is widely employed in the service sector to explain customer satisfaction and behavioral responses to recovery actions (Voorhees and Brady, 2005; Rashid et al., 2014).

According to justice theory, customers evaluate service recovery through three dimensions: procedural, distributive, and interactional justice (Tax et al., 1998). Procedural justice involves assessing whether the methods and practices used in the compensation process are adequate. Timing is critical in compensating for failures caused by service disruptions, particularly in the aviation sector. When customers encounter a service failure, their initial emotional response is often negative, leading to dissatisfaction and potential distrust toward the service provider. Effective timing in the recovery process can prevent dissatisfaction from escalating and mitigate the reduction in repurchase intention among customers using the same airline (Tang et al., 2018). For service providers, the speed and ease of executing the compensation process are key aspects of procedural justice.

Distributive justice refers to the fair distribution of resources in the compensation process. In other words, the adequacy of the solution offered to customers falls under the scope of distributive justice. Airlines' ability to provide adequate service recovery can lead to various positive or negative outcomes. When passengers believe their issues have been satisfactorily resolved, their willingness to travel with the airline again may increase. Conversely, if the service recovery is inadequate, passengers may perceive the airline as indifferent or negligent toward their concerns (Park and Park, 2016).

Interactional justice, on the other hand, refers to the adequacy of communication, empathy, and courtesy demonstrated by employees toward customers who report issues, enabling the compensation process to begin (Smith et al., 1999). Interactional justice is a crucial component of service compensation and is directly related to passenger relations. Passenger relations involve managing communication, satisfaction levels, and overall interactions between airlines and passengers. This encompasses a wide range of activities, from customer service and complaint management to social media interactions and crisis management. The primary goal of customer relations management is to enhance service quality by understanding the needs and expectations of airline passengers. When service failures occur, it is essential to inform passengers quickly and effectively to address their concerns. Effective customer relations management provides timely interventions and satisfactory solutions to passengers during this process (Sigurdson et al., 2021).

In the model established for this study, the sub-dimensions of complaint satisfaction arising from service recovery are described as complaint satisfaction for timing (CST), complaint satisfaction for adequacy (CSA), and complaint satisfaction for passenger relations (CSR).

1.2. Repurchase Intention

Repeating purchasing behavior demonstrates a customer's loyalty to a brand or product. Customers who feel satisfied when their needs are met are likely to choose the same brand, product, or seller for their next purchase. This behavior is known as repurchase intention. It is a behavioral response resulting from a cognitive process that develops over time (Çabuk et al., 2013).

Retaining existing customers requires at least as much time and effort as acquiring new ones. Repurchase intention reflects a customer's commitment to a particular good or service. Repeated purchasing habits directly influence sellers' income and profitability. The relationship between buyer and seller is critical to the seller's success. A strong relationship ensures that existing customers are retained and significantly enhances their loyalty to the business (Armağan and Gider, 2017).

For airlines, in particular, passengers' repurchase intentions play a crucial role in business success. Airline services often involve high-cost and complex customer experiences. Therefore, an increase in passengers' repurchase intentions can significantly impact airlines' profitability (Rhoades and Waguespack, 2008).

1.3. Passenger Overall Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction refers to a customer's attitude toward the use of a good or service they have experienced and the behavior they exhibit afterward (Tse et al., 1990). In other words, it is a concept that defines the pleasurable feeling or happiness created by the customer's perception of receiving the expected benefit after using a product (Fornell and Robinson, 1983).

Based on studies in the literature on passenger satisfaction, factors such as service quality, comfort, punctuality, and effective complaint resolution significantly influence passengers' satisfaction levels. For example, research conducted by Chen and Chang (2005) demonstrates that elements enhancing service quality, such as responsiveness, confidence, and reliability, have a critical impact on the satisfaction and loyalty of passengers who experience airline services. To highlight the factors that improve the satisfaction levels of passengers facing service failures, sensitivity toward passengers and assurance provided during service recovery play a key role. Additionally, successfully managing complaints and providing effective compensation for service failures significantly influence passengers' opinions and future intentions. Research has also found that effectively resolving customer complaints not only enhances customer satisfaction but also fosters the loyalty of satisfied consumers (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002).

2. Hypothesis

To align with the study's objectives, seven hypotheses have been developed. Below, each hypothesis is presented alongside a review of relevant studies from the literature that substantiate and contextualize its foundation:

According to Etemad and Bohrer (2019), it is important to implement service recovery strategies that are prompt, communicative, and empathetic toward passengers to mitigate the negative effects of service failures on passengers.

This approach can lead to an increase in passengers' satisfaction levels. Mattila and Mount (2003) found that response time is a significant determinant of customer satisfaction with the complaint-handling process, which, in turn, influences overall satisfaction and repurchase intentions. The importance of timely service recovery is further emphasized by McColl-Kennedy and Sparks (2003), who highlight that customers' perceptions of service fairness are closely linked to the timeliness of recovery actions, which positively impacts satisfaction levels. The findings of Johnston and Michel (2008) and Xu et al. (2019) also support these conclusions.

H_1: "Complaint satisfaction for timing" significantly affects "passenger overall satisfaction" in a positive way.

Within the scope of the findings by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2022), it is stated that effectively and comprehensively resolving passenger complaints increases passenger satisfaction. According to Nikbin et al. (2011), the adequacy of the service recovery level perceived by passengers has a positive effect on their satisfaction. Recent studies emphasize that offering adequate compensation enhances passenger perceptions of service recovery, ultimately improving satisfaction and loyalty. Research indicates that when airlines provide appropriate compensation, passengers are more likely to feel valued and perceive the airline as making meaningful efforts to address any issues (Demeter et al., 2021). Additionally, the findings of Chou et al. (2014) and Hussain et al. (2015) further support these conclusions.

H_2: "Complaint satisfaction for adequacy" significantly affects "passenger overall satisfaction" in a positive way.

In their study on airline passengers, Mohd-Any et al. (2019) found that the interactional dimension—one of the components of service recovery, which includes customer relations—has a greater impact on passenger satisfaction than other components of service recovery. This finding aligns with the results of studies conducted by Wang and Mattila (2011) and Forbes et al. (2005), which also support these conclusions.

H_3: "Complaint satisfaction for passenger relations" significantly affects "passenger overall satisfaction" in a positive way.

According to Davidow (2003), customers' perceived levels of justice in service recovery significantly affect customer satisfaction and repurchase intention. Similarly, De Ruyter and Wetzels (2000) concluded that increased satisfaction with service recovery positively impacts customers' overall satisfaction levels. Ahmad (2023) highlighted the positive relationship between satisfaction with service quality and the likelihood of repurchasing tickets from the same airline. This research found that when passengers experience high satisfaction with airline services, they are more likely to exhibit repeat purchase intentions. The findings of Spreng et al. (1995), Liao (2007), and Law et al. (2022) further support these conclusions.

H_4: "Passenger overall satisfaction" significantly affects "repurchase intention" in a positive way.

De Ruyter and Wetzels (2000) also found that customers' perceptions of service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty significantly increased with higher complaint satisfaction. Davidow (2003) emphasized that perceived justice has a significant impact on repurchase intention and customer satisfaction. Additionally, Nikbin (2011) noted that improvements in the sub-dimensions of perceived justice enhance repurchase intention, while Smith and Bolton (2002) demonstrated that the sub-dimensions of service recovery increase overall passenger satisfaction. Moreover, a study conducted by Maxham and Netemeyer (2002) revealed that customer satisfaction partially mediates the effects of perceived justice on word-of-mouth communication and repurchase intention.

H_5: "Passenger overall satisfaction" mediates the effect of "complaint satisfaction for timing" on "repurchase intention".

H_6: "Passenger overall satisfaction" mediates the effect of "complaint satisfaction for adequacy" on "repurchase intention".

H_7: "Passenger overall satisfaction" mediates in the effect of "complaint satisfaction for passenger relations" on "repurchase intention".

3. Material And Method

This section outlines the materials used to conduct the research, the data collection method, sample adequacy, and research limitations.

3.1. Data Collecting Method and Conceptual Model

The survey form used in the research was based on scales previously established in the literature. The sub-dimensions of the complaint satisfaction and passenger overall satisfaction scales were translated into Turkish following the necessary translation procedures using English sources. The repurchase intention scale, already translated and validated for reliability in Turkish, was used directly without further translation. Subsequently, experts in the airline

industry reviewed the clarity of the items and their suitability for the industry, making any necessary adjustments. The items used in the scales within the scope of the research, along with their sources, are listed below.

The conceptual model of the study is presented in Figure 1 below:

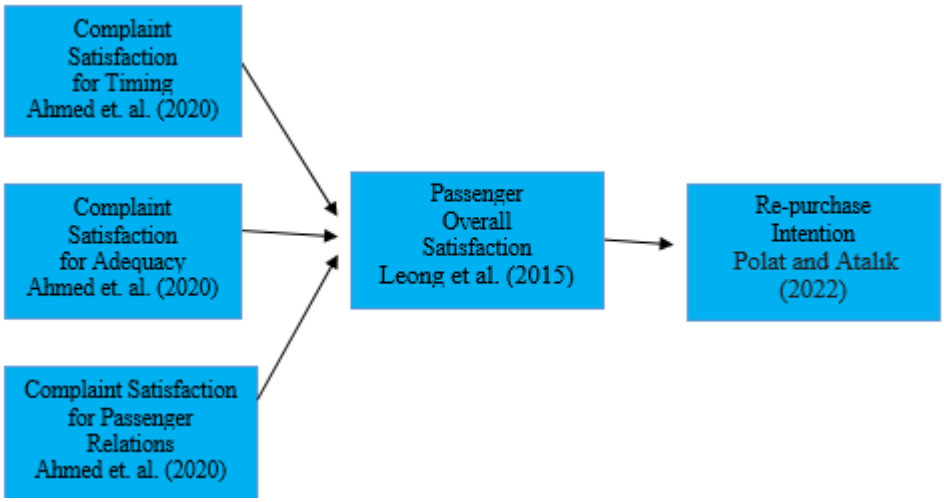

Figure 1. Conceptual Model

3.2. Sampling Adequacy, Population, Sample and Limitations

The study population consists of passengers who experienced at least one service failure during a flight in İstanbul. According to Hair et al. (2010), the sample size should be at least 10 times the number of items included in the research model. For 17 items, a minimum of 170 samples would be required. The study sample comprises 246 surveys collected from volunteer passengers at Istanbul and Sabiha Gökçen Airports. However, conducting a power analysis to determine the minimum sample size is more appropriate.

To calculate the minimum sample size using power analysis, Equation (1) was applied. The hypothetical effect size ($|h|$) of 0.201 represents a small to medium effect size. Although modest, this value is acceptable due to the high power value of 0.901 (Z_{β}). Z_{α} is set to 1.96 for a 95% confidence interval. The mean of standard deviations (α_{mean}) for the five variables shown in Figure 1 was calculated. The standard deviations are 0.95, 0.94, 0.96, 1.1, and 1.2 for complaint satisfaction for timing, complaint satisfaction for adequacy, complaint satisfaction for relations, passenger overall satisfaction, and repurchase intention, respectively. The mean of the standard deviations is 1.03 (α_{mean}). The calculation indicates that a minimum sample size of 216 is sufficient, with the power value ensuring the study's capability to detect effect sizes.

$$N = (Z_{\alpha} + Z_{\beta})^2 . \alpha_{mean} / (|h|)^2 \quad (1)$$

$$N = (1.96 + 0.901)^2 . (1.03) / (0.201)^2 \quad (2)$$

$$N = 216 \quad (3)$$

In terms of research limitations, only Turkish citizens participated in the study. Additionally, passengers who had not experienced a service failure on any previous flight were excluded from the survey. Furthermore, since the surveys were collected within a three-month period, the study could not account for potential seasonal variations in the opinions of participants.

4. Findings

This section presents the frequency statistics for demographic and flight-related variables, normality tests, reliability analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and hypothesis tests.

4.1. Frequency Statistics

Demographic information, flight habits, and variables related to the flight during which passengers experienced their most recent service failure (e.g., gender, age, occupation, education level, the airline involved in the service failure, flight frequency, and complaint-sharing preferences on online platforms) are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency Statistics

	F	%		F	%
Gender			**Education**		
Male	118	48	High School	52	21
Female	128	52	Associate	57	23
Total	46	100	Bachelor's	117	48
Age			Master and PHD	20	8
18-25	68	28	Total	246	100
26-30	33	13	**Airline that passengers experienced service failure**		
31-40	75	31	Low-Cost Carriers	170	65
41 and more	70	28	Full-Service Carriers	76	35
Total	246	100	Total	246	100
Occupation			**Flight Frequency**		
Worker	39	16	1-2 times a year	55	22
Civil Servant	34	14	3-4 times a year	69	28
Retired	10	4	5 times or more	122	50
Self-Employment	57	23	Total	46	100
Unemployed	31	13	**Flight Duration**		
Student	37	15	Less than 2 hours	160	65
Other	38	15	More or equals to 2 hours	86	35
Total	246	100	**Complaint Sharing Preference**		
			Positive feedback	4	2
			Negative feedback	80	32
			Not Shared	162	66

4.2. Normality Tests

To determine whether the data follows a normal distribution, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests can be used. However, these hypothesis tests are not sufficient for larger sample sizes (n > 100). For this reason, skewness and kurtosis values were used in this study. According to Table 2, all skewness and kurtosis values fall between -1.5 and +1.5, indicating that the normal distribution conditions are met (Tabachnick et al., 2013).

Table 2. Normality Test

Variables	Items	Skewness	Kurtosis
Complaint Satisfaction for timing (CST)	CST1	-0.445	-0.640
	CST2	-0.186	-0.584
	CST3	-0.580	-0.352
	CST4	-0.287	-0.757
Complaint satisfaction for adequacy (CSA)	CSA1	-0.556	-0.253
	CSA2	-0.299	-0.620
	CSA3	-0.234	-0.442
	CSA4	-0.413	-0.388
Complaint satisfaction for passenger relations (CSR)	CSR1	-0.383	-0.561
	CSR2	-0.403	-0.373
	CSR3	-0.590	-0.359
Passenger Overall Satisfaction (POS)	POS1	-0.321	-0.680
	POS2	-0.315	-0.753
	POS3	-0.101	-0.895
Repurchase Intention (REI)	REI1	-0.498	-0.580
	REI2	-0.435	-0.723
	REI3	-0.495	-0.501

4.3. Reliability Analysis

First, Cronbach's Alpha (α) values were evaluated to assess the reliability levels of the items. In this context, Cronbach's α values greater than 0.70 are necessary but not sufficient on their own. Another critical metric is the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values shown in Table 3. If the AVE value of each factor exceeds 0.50, it indicates that composite reliability is achieved (Hair et al., 2010). The Cronbach's Alpha values for CST, CSA, CSR, and POS in studies where the scale was originally developed in Turkish were reported as 0.821, 0.793, 0.800, and 0.888, respectively. Additionally, the AVE values for the scales in their original language are 0.685, 0.635, 0.645, and 0.726. These values indicate an

acceptable level of internal consistency. Following the translation and adaptation process into Turkish, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for this study showed slight variations. These minor differences could be attributed to sample-specific factors or cultural nuances, which may have slightly influenced the alignment of item responses within the adapted version. Nonetheless, the consistency between these values suggests that the translated scale retains reliability comparable to the original, confirming its suitability for use in this new context.

Table 3. Reliability Analysis and Factor Loadings

Variables	Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's α	AVE
Complaint Satisfaction for timing (CST)	CST1	0.731	0.850	0.602
	CST2	0.774		
	CST3	0.741		
	CST4	0.854		
Complaint satisfaction for adequacy (CSA)	CSA1	0.739	0.850	0.588
	CSA2	0.767		
	CSA3	0.790		
	CSA4	0.774		
Complaint satisfaction for passenger relations (CSR)	CSR1	0.732	0.803	0.577
	CSR2	0.807		
	CSR3	0.740		
Passenger Overall Satisfaction (POS)	POS1	0.906	0.889	0.738
	POS2	0.869		
	POS3	0.796		
Repurchase Intention (REI)	REI1	0.935	0.949	0.860
	REI2	0.952		
	REI3	0.892		

Additionally, HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio) values express discriminant validity for structural equation models. In this context, the fact that all HTMT values shown in Table 4 are below 0.90 indicates that discriminant validity is assured (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	CST	CSA	CSR	POS	REI
CST	1.00	-	-	-	-
CSA	0.87	1.00	-	-	-
CSR	0.83	0.89	1.00	-	-
POS	0.52	0.62	0.62	1.00	-
REI	0.48	0.61	0.61	0.80	1.00

4.4. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The Confirmatory Factor Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Non-Normalized Fit Index (NNFI) values, as shown in Table 5, are all greater than 0.90. According to Hu and Bentler (1999), values exceeding 0.90 are considered acceptable for these fit indices. Similarly, the Normal Fit Index (NFI) value is sufficient for this study, as it is also greater than 0.90 (Schumacker and Lomax, 2010). Based on these results, it can be stated that each factor and its items meet the measurement requirements.

The normed Chi-square value, calculated as Chi-square (χ^2) divided by degrees of freedom (df), being less than 3 (Chin and Todd, 1995), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) value being less than 0.1 (Hair et al., 2010), further confirm that the model fit is sufficient.

Table 5. Fit Indices for Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The normed Chi-square (x^2/df)	CFI	TLI	NNFI	NFI	RMSEA
2.651	0.942	0.929	0.929	0.911	0.082

4.5. Hypothesis Tests

According to the results of the study, "complaint satisfaction for timing," one of the sub-dimensions of complaint satisfaction, does not have a significant effect on passenger overall satisfaction ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, H1 is not supported. "Complaint satisfaction for adequacy" has a significant ($p < 0.01$), positive, and moderate effect on passenger overall satisfaction (estimated value = 0.561). Thus, H2 is supported. "Complaint satisfaction for passenger relations" also has a significant ($p < 0.05$), positive, and moderate effect on passenger overall satisfaction (estimated value = 0.450). Therefore, H3 is supported. Since the R-square value for the passenger overall satisfaction variable is 0.491, it can be stated that the explanatory power of the sub-dimensions of complaint satisfaction for passenger overall satisfaction is highly sufficient for social sciences (Henseler et al., 2009; Hair et al., 2011). The study also concluded that "passenger overall satisfaction" has a significant ($p < 0.05$), positive (estimated value = 0.825), and strong effect on repurchase intention. Moreover, with an R-square value of 0.681, passenger overall satisfaction demonstrates sufficient explanatory power for repurchase intention. Thus, H4 is supported.

Table 6. Direct Effect Coefficients

Predictor	Outcome	β	Standard Error	z-value	P	Hypothesis	
CST	POS	-0.334	0.289	-1.684	0.104	H_1	Not supported
CSA	POS	0.561	0.390	2.068	0.043	H_2	Supported
CSR	POS	0.450	0.291	2.190	0.030	H_3	Supported
POS	REI	0.825	0.110	15.705	< .001	H_4	Supported
** R-square values: 0,491 (POS) , 0,681 (REI)*							

Table 7 indicates that "passenger overall satisfaction" does not mediate the effect of "complaint satisfaction for timing" on "repurchase intention" ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, H5 is not supported. "Passenger overall satisfaction" mediates the effect of "complaint satisfaction for adequacy" on "repurchase intention," with a high estimation value ($\beta = 0.819$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, H6 is supported. "Passenger overall satisfaction" also mediates the effect of "complaint satisfaction for passenger relations" on "repurchase intention," with a moderate estimation value ($\beta = 0.657$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, H7 is supported.

Table 7. Mediation Coefficients

Predictor	Mediator	Outcome	β	Standard Error	z-value	p	Hypothesis	
CST	POS	REI	-0.488	0.291	-1.676	0.094	H_5	Not supported
CSA	POS	REI	0.819	0.398	2.057	0.040	H_6	Supported
CSR	POS	REI	0.657	0.301	2.182	0.029	H_7	Supported

Figure 3 illustrates the structural equation model of the research. During the analysis of structural equation modeling, "factor scaling" is a crucial step in developing a metric for latent variables. In this study, "factor variance" was selected as the factor scaling method. As emphasized by Kline (2016), this approach fixes the variance values of the factors to 1, ensuring that the factors are standardized and consistent while stabilizing the estimation process. In the model created using this method, factor loadings, residual variance values, and β coefficients are presented in Figure 3.

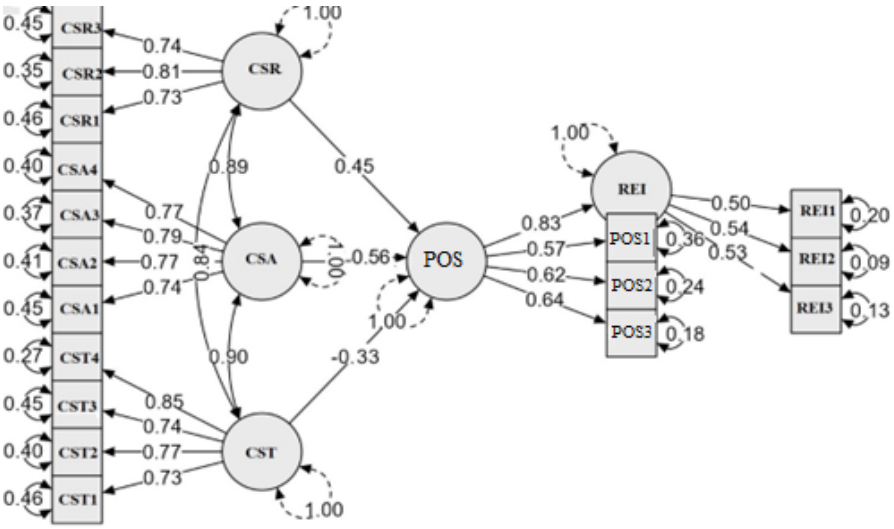

Figure 2. Structural Equation Model

Conclusion and Discussion

There is extensive research on service failure, compensation strategies, and the effects of complaint satisfaction on customer satisfaction, loyalty, and repurchase intention (Xu et al., 2019; Nikbin et al., 2015; Amoako et al., 2023; Chen and Chang, 2005; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002). These studies have developed an understanding of the role of perceived justice in repurchase intention. However, this study specifically investigated the mediating role of passenger overall satisfaction in the relationship between complaint satisfaction and repurchase intention.

The results indicate that the adequacy of complaint satisfaction is associated with positive outcomes, such as increased passenger overall satisfaction and repurchase intention. The effect of complaint satisfaction for adequacy on passenger overall satisfaction is moderate, as is the effect of complaint satisfaction for passenger relations. However, the effects of both complaint satisfaction for adequacy and complaint satisfaction for passenger relations on repurchase intention, mediated by passenger overall satisfaction, are stronger.

In this context, it is crucial to emphasize the mediating role of passenger overall satisfaction in the relationship between complaint satisfaction and repurchase intention, rather than solely examining bilateral correlations between these variables. Since no meaningful effect of complaint satisfaction for timing on repurchase intention was observed, it can be inferred that the adequacy of service recovery, along with the tolerance, courtesy, and empathy levels of airline employees, is more important than the speed of service recovery. This finding is supported by Mohd-Any et al. (2019), who concluded that the interactional dimension, or customer relations in service recovery, has a greater impact on passenger satisfaction than other components of service recovery.

As a practical implication, airlines should consider implementing employee training programs aimed at enhancing communication, empathy, and problem-solving skills to improve customer relations. Additionally, optimizing complaint management systems and integrating digital solutions, such as real-time monitoring tools or AI-driven customer support, could help minimize service failures and streamline recovery processes.

As a result, when airlines ensure passenger overall satisfaction by addressing all critical determinants of flight services, passengers' tolerance levels increase, making them more likely to travel with the same airline in the future. Other studies also support the conclusions of this study (Wang and Mattila, 2011; Forbes et al., 2005; De Ruyter and Wetzels, 2000; Nikbin, 2011).

This research was conducted with passengers who experienced service failures at airports in Istanbul. Future studies could analyze the effects of participants' socio-demographic and cultural differences by extending the research to different cities or countries. Additionally, factors such as flight duration and frequency could be incorporated into the structural equation model to investigate how they influence the current prediction coefficients.

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Appendix 1. Scale Items

Variables	Source	Items
Complaint Satisfaction for Timing (CST)		
The response time of staff is swift to respond my complaints	(Ahmed et al. ,2020)	CST1
The response time of the airline is quicker than my expectations		CST2
I do not have any problem while registering my complaints		CST3
In general, the response time of the crew and ground staff is very quick		CST4
Complaint Satisfaction for Adequacy (CSA)		
The airline is capable to resolve complaints in a refined manner	(Ahmed et al. ,2020)	CSA1
The ground staff is handling & resolving complaints in a perfect manner		CSA2
The crew of the airline is highly skilled to respond to my complaints		CSA3
In general, the airline is capable enough to resolve complaints in a professional and comprehensive way		CSA4
Complaint Satisfaction for Passenger Relations (CSR)		
The airline staff was able to establish good relationship with me	(Ahmed et al. ,2020)	CSR1
The attitude of executives strengthens the customer-airline relationship		CSR2
The executives' attitude enhances the overall quality of services due to timely response to complaints handling		CSR3
Passenger Overall Satisfaction (POS)		
I am satisfied with my decision to use this airline	(Leong et al. ,2015)	POS1
My choice to use this airline was a nice one		POS2
I feel that my experience with this airline has been enjoyable		POS3
Repurchase Intention (REI)		
I have intention to continue my air travels by using this airline	(Polat and Atalık,2022)	REI1
I am planning to continue my air travels by using this airline		REI2
It is highly possible that I repurchase flight ticket from this airline		REI3

*Note: Passengers were asked to complete a questionnaire with 5-point Likert-type items regarding their most recent flight in which they experienced a service failure.