

A STUDY ON PATIENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SERVICE QUALITY AT PRIVATE HOSPITALS IN TUTICORIN DISTRICT**P.VANITHA**

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Tamil Nadu, India – 627 012)**ABSTRACT**

In the context of hospitals, the client refers to the patient, who holds utmost significance as hospitals rely on them for their sustenance. Indirect marketing is carried out by the patients. The majority of patients select hospitals based on word-of-mouth and recommendations from other patients. Ensuring patient happiness is crucial and essential for the success of a Healthcare organisation. Health organisations encounter substantial obstacles in managing consumer behaviour (patients) who perceive quality as the primary factor for distinguishing the services they offer. Multiple studies demonstrate that patients who are content get quicker and more successful recovery from the administered medication. This fosters a positive reputation for the organisation, generates favourable word-of-mouth, and attracts a greater number of patients to the hospitals. Patient satisfaction is indicative of staff contentment and effective job performance. Therefore, by ensuring patient satisfaction, a hospital may guarantee its success. Hence, it is imperative to conduct surveys to obtain continuous feedback on patient satisfaction, as well as their perspective and expectations.

1. INTRODUCTION

Historically, hospitals were established as philanthropic organisations with the purpose of providing medical care to the sick and underprivileged. Their reputation was primarily based on the excellence of their medical and professional services, and consequently, their marketing approach was centred around highlighting this element. Today, it serves as a facility for diagnosing and treating human ailments, while also functioning as an educational, training, and research institution that promotes healthcare activities. Additionally, it plays a role in supporting bio-social research to some level. Today, hospitals are evaluated based on the calibre of their customer service, namely the provision of personalised assistance from considerate, compassionate, and amiable staff. Well-informed patients increasingly actively seek out hospitals that offer high-quality care and individualised service. A hospital, as a healthcare institution, is defined as an organisation that provides a range of services including prevention, treatment, pain relief, and rehabilitation. Nevertheless, the definition provided by the World Health Organisation (WHO) is comprehensive and specific. It defines primary healthcare as an essential component of social and medical systems that aims to deliver comprehensive healthcare services, encompassing both curative and preventive measures. Additionally, primary healthcare extends its outpatient services to the family within their home environment. The hospital serves as a hub for the education of healthcare professionals and for conducting bio-social research.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared its dedication to attaining the objective of universal health coverage, commonly referred to as "Health for All". The majority of countries, including India, have made a commitment to accomplish this objective. Hospitals nowadays offer bio-social research, as well as teaching and training facilities for doctors, nurses, para-professionals, paramedical staff, chemists, and other healthcare professionals. The hospital offers services to out-patients, in-patients, and general wards, as well as emergency, special wards, intensive care units, operation theatres, delivery suites. Additionally, it provides support services including pharmacy, radiology and imaging, CSSD (Central Sterile and Supplies Department), blood bank, and laboratory services to the community. Healthcare management is a contemporary field with a rich historical background. A healthcare service is an essential and unparalleled organisation that cannot be compared to any other. Its uniqueness and distinctiveness stem from its exploration of the fundamental concepts of mortality and existence. Patients are drawn to hospitals not just for their advanced technology, but also for the dedicated physicians, efficient and precise diagnostic facilities, excellent nursing care, and reliable supporting services such as pharmacy, laboratories, and blood bank. In the past, a solitary doctor oversaw the whole collection of literature on hospital administration. Currently, there is a widespread acknowledgement that the system necessitates a comprehensive strategy and complete professionalisation in order to attain both high quality and cost efficiency.

An understated revolution is occurring in the field of hospital administration in India. The private sector's involvement in healthcare is growing due to entrepreneurs and technocrats recognising significant profit potential in this industry. There is no empirical data indicating a propensity to use personal savings or organisational benefits to cover the costs of the services. The era of charity, whether through social organisations or the government, has come to an end. There is a possibility to generate income from this, and it is important to efficiently utilise resources to create a surplus that may be used to support those in need. The Healthcare industry in India has experienced significant growth due to the evolving demand, diverse support systems for delivering high-quality care, and a strong entrepreneurial culture. The advent of corporate hospitals in the Indian healthcare industry is very recent. This tendency has completely transformed the entire healthcare landscape in the country.

As a result, the hospitals have been operating in a very competitive environment. The majority of these hospitals are efficiently operated, aiming to deliver rapid, comprehensive, uninterrupted, and acceptable services to the patient population, as their primary focus is to provide high-quality healthcare while also generating profits. It is widely recognised that hospitals that prioritise service quality and financial surplus are the ones that thrive and continue to develop. Conversely, an increasing number of corporate and trust hospitals are joining the market, intensifying the competition that was previously initiated by previous participants. In light of these conditions, hospitals must develop and revise their strategies for delivering high-quality healthcare services that meet the needs of patients and ensure their own viability.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A customer is defined as an individual or entity who has the potential to purchase a product or service, and does so on a regular and organised basis. The source cited is Patton and Bleuel (2000). Satisfaction denotes the state of achieving total gratification of one's requirements. It is imperative for every organisation and individual within the organisation to make concerted efforts to both meet the needs of existing consumers and attract new clients. The disconfirmation model is the prevailing method for measuring consumer happiness. The source cited is Oliver (1980). The level of satisfaction a customer experiences during a service interaction is influenced by the discrepancy between the client's anticipated performance and the actual perceived performance of the service. A service refers to an

activity or a sequence of activities that occur during encounters with either a human representative or a mechanical device, with the aim of delivering consumer satisfaction. The reference "Aloaslan, 1995" is provided. Products has physical attributes, but services lack physical form. Hence, machines are responsible for the production of products, whereas services are rendered by individuals. Consequently, services exhibit greater variability in quality, whereas products are more uniform. One other distinction between products and services is that services cannot be stored if they are not used. An airline is unable to retain unoccupied seats, whereas an automobile manufacturer has the ability to maintain unsold vehicles in stock. Services, in comparison to items, possess a higher degree of perishability, which consequently results in increased risks for marketers of services. The citation (Assael, 1990) According to Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml (1994), the concept of service quality (SREVQUAL) is defined as the perception, definition, and assessment of quality that resides in the customer's mind.

The researchers disclosed that consumers primarily evaluate service quality based on five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The final two aspects, assurance and empathy, encompass elements such as communication, credibility, security, competence, civility, understanding/knowledge of clients, and access. The customer's anticipation of a specific service is influenced by factors such as recommendations, individual requirements, and previous experiences. An instance of disparity between the anticipated service and the perceived service is sometimes referred to as a gap. The service quality model, often known as the "GAP model," was developed in 1985 by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry at Texas and North Carolina. This model emphasises the key factors necessary for providing excellent service quality. The Gap Model highlights five discrepancies that contribute to failed delivery. Customers typically have a proclivity to compare the service they encounter with the service they anticipate. When the experience does not align with the expectation, a discrepancy occurs.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In the present era, the importance of high-quality healthcare cannot be overstated, since it is essential for maintaining good health and preventing illnesses in any healthcare system worldwide. Several scholars have proposed that the quality of healthcare service is determined by its capacity to fulfil the patients' requirements and all aspects of the service that are linked to its ability to meet the specific needs of its customers. There is a strong correlation between the quality of service and the satisfaction of patients. Service is a mindset that arises from a comprehensive and ongoing assessment of a hospital's overall performance. Conducting a survey to gauge patients' opinions on the healthcare service offered by hospitals is a primary method for assessing service quality. The pleasure of patients is a fundamental component of hospital management worldwide. The correlation between the quality of healthcare and patients' satisfaction with hospital services has been well acknowledged. Corroborating this perspective, numerous research have been undertaken and determined that contented patients exclusively adhere to doctors' recommendations, comply with doctors' instructions, and persist in utilising hospital services. Thus, this study aims to analyse the patients' beliefs that have a substantial impact on their overall satisfaction with healthcare organisations.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess the quality of service provided by private and government hospitals by examining their socio-economic characteristics.
2. The objective is to assess patients' impressions regarding the quality of care provided by private and government hospitals.
3. To ascertain the infrastructure available for both government and private hospitals.

4. The objective is to analyse and highlight the disparities in healthcare quality between private and government institutions.
5. To offer recommendations based on the study's findings.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An empirical approach to the research methodology is crucial for methodically assessing the research challenge. Utilising the suitable methodology will enhance the accuracy and reliability of the findings. The research requires a methodology that greatly influences the outcome of the analysis.

5.1 SAMPLING METHOD

Among the 25 private hospitals in tiruchendur taluk, a total of 8 hospitals have been chosen using a stratified random approach. Specifically, 2 hospitals have been selected from each of the four categories, namely Gynocologic, paediatric, orthopaedic, and general medicine. From these 8 hospitals, 212 sample respondents were picked using convenience technique from every hospital.

5.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The survey is exclusively done in specific regions inside the city of Coimbatore.
2. The study primarily focuses on the patients' perception and the quality of care provided by both private and government hospitals.
3. The data was obtained via a structured questionnaire and analysed using the information provided by the respondents.
4. To offer recommendations based on the study's findings.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS

The distribution of respondents' numbers displays the frequencies in different classes, providing initial insights into the objectives being studied. As an initial measure, a distribution of the number of respondents is created for each variable being studied in order to thoroughly evaluate the results. Percentages are calculated.

$$\text{Percentage Analysis} = \frac{\text{Number of respondents}}{\text{Total number of respondents}} \times 100$$

Table.1 - Distribution of Sample Respondents According to Age

Age	No of Respondent	Percentage
Below 20 years	66	12.8
20-30 years	84	19.0
31-40 years	50	26.2
Above 40 years	12	15.2
Total	212	73.1

Source: Primary Data

6.2 RANK ANALYSIS

Ranking method is one of the simplest performance evaluation methods. In this method employed are ranked from best to worst in a group. The simplicity of this method overshadowed by the negative impact of assigning a 'worst' and the 'best' rating to an

employee. Such discrimination lead to negativity within the a group and have a negativity within group and have a negative impact or performance.

Table.2 - Rank the features that you preferred in private hospitals

Features	1(6)	2(5)	3(4)	4(3)	5(2)	6(1)	Total	Rank
High cost	25 13	38 44	38 22	33 118	35 152	43 191	212 541	V
Health insurance scheme	27 14	45 82	43 118	41 152	30 44	26 44	212 380	VI
Facilities	30 15	42 51	36 19	36 126	35 162	33 192	212 565	IV
Experiences	27 14	50 52	50 102	39 147	27 180	19 203	212 698	III
Availability of all medicines	25 13	55 53	55 108	41 156	21 187	15 205	212 722	I
Service quality	26 13	52 52	53 105	42 152	23 185	16 204	212 711	II

Table.3 - Respondents Overall Satisfaction Level on the Doctor Consultancy in Private Hospitals

S.No	Factors	No.of Respondents	Likert Scale	Total Score
1	Highly satisfied	36	5	180
2	Satisfied	43	4	172
3	Neutral	54	3	162
4	Disatisfied	45	2	90
5	Strongly disatisfied	34	1	34
	Total	212		638

Table.4 - Respondents Overall Satisfaction Level on the Service of Nurses or Take Cares in Private Hospitals

S.No	Factors	No.of Respondents	Likert Scale	Total Score
1	Highly satisfied	34	5	170
2	Satisfied	45	4	180
3	Neutral	46	3	138
4	Dissatisfied	39	2	108
5	Strongly dissatisfied	48	1	48
	Total	212		644

7. SUGGESTIONS

- ❖ Today, the corporate hospital industry has played a crucial part in the global healthcare landscape. Over the past few decades, there has been a remarkable increase in the awareness of health and hospitals among the Indian people, both for minor and big healthcare issues.
- ❖ The hospitals should incorporate appropriate managerial and technological assistance, as well as ensure the provision of high-quality infrastructure facilities.
- ❖ Today's contemporary hospital environment offers comprehensive medical care within a single facility at a reasonable cost.
- ❖ Corporate hospitals should prioritise the provision of high-quality treatment at a reasonable cost. It is crucial to ensure that patient service extends beyond the quality of treatment itself. This entails efficiently addressing patients' requirements, managing their complaints, and fostering a conducive hospital environment.
- ❖ Appropriate modifications should be made in activities, attitudes, education, and training to enhance social relevance.

8. CONCLUSION

India is the second most populated country in the world, following China. Significant advancements have been made in the public healthcare sector since the 1950s. Corporate hospitals have played a crucial role in today's economic landscape, particularly in the realm of healthcare. Over the past few decades, these hospitals have witnessed significant growth in public awareness and concern for health and diseases. In the current competitive global climate, technology has advanced and is now being implemented in a greater number of multispecialty hospitals. In addition to enhancing literacy rates and promoting educational development. Today's consumers prioritise factors such as competitive pricing, robust infrastructure, technological advancements, accessibility, diverse payment choices, and high-quality service and therapies. This study proposes that technology and infrastructure will have a transformative impact on the delivery of healthcare services in India. The private sector will play a pivotal role in spearheading the implementation of technology in the health care system. This revolution has the potential to enhance the patients' experience and optimise operational efficiency. This study proposes that technology and infrastructure will have a transformative impact on the delivery of healthcare services in India. The private sector will play a pivotal role in spearheading the implementation of technology in the health care system. This revolution has the potential to enhance the patients' experience and optimise operational efficiency.

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