

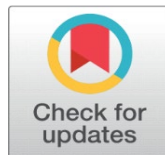
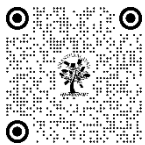
PATIENT SATISFACTION – A VITAL TOOL OF HEALTHCARE EFFECTIVENESS: A PREFERENTIAL STUDY AT TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Patient satisfaction has become a pivotal metric for assessing healthcare system effectiveness, reflecting the quality, accessibility, and responsiveness of healthcare services. This study aims to evaluate the role of patient satisfaction as an indicator of healthcare system performance using primary data collected from a diverse patient population. A cross-sectional survey was conducted, capturing quantitative and qualitative insights on factors such as access to care, quality of service, affordability, and patient outcomes. The findings revealed strong correlations between patient satisfaction and key healthcare performance metrics, including reduced wait times, effective communication, and perceived provider competence. Additionally, disparities in satisfaction levels were identified across demographic groups, highlighting systemic barriers such as affordability and accessibility in underserved populations. The study underscores the importance of integrating patient feedback into policy and operational decision-making to enhance patient-centered care and overall system effectiveness. Recommendations include adopting real-time satisfaction monitoring and addressing specific gaps to improve healthcare delivery and equity.

Keywords: Patient satisfaction, Healthcare effectiveness, Accessibility of health Services, and Patient-centered approach.



1. INTRODUCTION

In an era where patient-centered care has become the cornerstone of healthcare delivery, evaluating patient satisfaction has gained prominence as a critical measure of healthcare system effectiveness. Beyond clinical outcomes and operational efficiency, patient satisfaction provides unique insights into the quality, accessibility, and responsiveness of healthcare services. It reflects how well the healthcare system meets the expectations and needs of patients, making it a valuable tool for assessing and improving performance.

Patient satisfaction (Naidu.A, 2009) is a multidimensional construct influenced by various factors, including communication with healthcare providers, wait times, facility environment, affordability, and treatment outcomes. Studies suggest that higher patient satisfaction correlates with better health outcomes, increased treatment adherence,

and lower hospital readmission rates. However, it also serves as a barometer of the broader healthcare system, shedding light on systemic issues such as inequities in access and disparities in care quality.

Despite its growing importance, measuring patient satisfaction remains complex, as it is shaped by subjective perceptions and diverse individual expectations. Moreover, there is an ongoing debate about its reliability as a standalone indicator of healthcare effectiveness. This study seeks to address these challenges by evaluating patient satisfaction through primary data collection, examining its determinants, and assessing its relationship with healthcare system performance.

The primary objective of this research is to provide actionable insights into how patient satisfaction can be leveraged as a strategic tool (Angela Alibrandi, 2023) for enhancing healthcare delivery. By exploring the nuances of patient experiences across different demographic groups, healthcare settings, and service types, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on patient-centered healthcare systems.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Angela Alibrandi et al, (2023) in their study summarizes the experience of a sample of patient at the University Polyclinic in Messina (Italy) and provides a detailed assessment of the satisfaction of patients experiencing healthcare at different Departments. Information collected through a specific survey allowed to build a dataset with more than 350 observations. The estimation of a logistic model was then carried out. The results outlined the relevant factors for patient satisfaction: they depend both on the ambulatory where the care is provided and the judgement about quality of care. Other crucial factors in determining a higher satisfaction were the availability of parking lots, the cleaning of structures and the judgment on physicians, the latter endorsing the probability of being highly satisfied when expectations on physicians' competences and professionalism are confirmed.

Faiza Manzoor et al, (2019), Patient satisfaction is a measure of the extent to which a patient is content with the health care they received from their health care provider. Patient satisfaction is one of the most important factors to determine the success of a health care facility. The purpose of this study was to determine patient satisfaction with healthcare services and encompass the physician's behavior as moderation between patient satisfaction and healthcare services. By using the convenient sampling technique, 290 sample participants were selected from the target population. Specifically, the study suggests that the physician's behavior significantly moderates the effect of health care services on the satisfaction of patients. The overall opinions about the satisfaction level of patients for the availability of health services in the hospitals were good. The degree of satisfaction was satisfactory with respect to laboratory and diagnostic care, preventive healthcare, and prenatal care services.

Fereshteh Farzianpour et al, (2015) in their study stated that patient satisfaction with hospital services is one of the most important indicators of effectiveness and quality of hospital services. Patient satisfaction surveys can provide valuable data for evaluating the current status, awareness of quality and quantity of process improvement programs and quality improvement to health managers and policy makers. The present study discusses previous studies conducted in this area, and presents recommendations to improve patient satisfaction. Continuous evaluation of patient satisfaction and identification of the factors affecting it requires establishment of comprehensive and accurate data system in this area; that by application of the results of previous studies steps can be taken to improve patient satisfaction. Patients' satisfaction in Iran, compared with other countries, is desirable. In addition, the overall satisfaction of patients in recent years has increased compared to previous years and the reason can be measures like different ways of improving the quality, customer orientation, and applying the results of research conducted in this area.

Onyeka Uche Ofili (2014), in his study explained that patient satisfaction is a topic that is important both to medical (health) care providers, the patients (consumers) themselves and other thirdparty stakeholders in the medical care industry. For health care providers, it is therefore critical for them to ensure that patient are satisfied is a continuous effort. To achieve this, the health care providers embark on research to feel the pulses of the patient and discover ways of serving them better. However, deciding the right instrument and methodology to effectively measure the satisfaction level of consumers is a major challenge for health care providers/researchers. This paper attempts to explain what constitutes satisfaction in the perspective of the patient and the method(s) that can be adopted by healthcare providers/researchers to unveil factors that are responsible for patient satisfaction.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Hospitals compete to improve the quality of their services with patients. Receiving quality health services is an important element to achieve patient satisfaction and loyalty to the hospital. The quality of hospital services is the level of difference between patients' perceptions and their expectations about hospital services. Hence, the researcher attempted to understand the various aspects leading to satisfaction of Health Care Services in Tirunelveli District.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the socio-economic profile of the respondents in Tirunelveli district.
- To assess the level of satisfaction of the respondents towards healthcare services in the study area.
- To offer suitable suggestions to overcome the problems faced by the respondents.

5. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study utilized a descriptive cross-sectional design to evaluate patient satisfaction as a measure of healthcare system effectiveness. A structured survey was conducted using interview schedule to gather data from patients regarding their experiences and perceptions of the healthcare services they received. The sample size for the study was 120 respondents. Outpatients who visited private hospitals were selected through convenience sampling, as the researcher had to rely on patients who were willing to spare their time to respond to the inquiries. This sampling method was chosen due to constraints related to time and resources. This sample size was determined based on feasibility, resource availability, and the objective of gathering diverse perspectives on patient satisfaction within the study's timeframe. Percentage analysis and One Way Anova were used to analyze the data. The secondary data collected from various books, magazines, journals, etc.,

6. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on evaluating patient satisfaction as a measure of healthcare service effectiveness. This study focuses on the respondents in Tirunelveli district.

7. DATA ANALYSIS

This section presents the analysis of the data and its interpretation. The following table shows the socio-demographic profile of the respondents,

Table 1 Socio-demographic Profile of the Respondents

Socio-demographic Variable	Categories	No of Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	82	68.3
	Female	38	31.7
Income Level (Monthly)	Low level	29	24.2
	Medium level	74	61.7
	High level	17	14.1
Area of residence	Rural	38	31.7
	Semi-urban	55	45.8
	Urban	27	22.5
Marital status	Married	96	80.0
	Unmarried	19	15.8
	Divorced/Widowed	5	4.2

The above table 1 shows that 68.3% of the respondents are male and 31.7% of the respondents are female. It is evident from the table that for 24.2% of the respondents the income level is low, for 61.7% of the respondents the income level is medium and for 14.1% of the respondents the income level is high. The table shows that 31.7% of the respondents are from rural areas, 45.8% of the respondents are from semi-urban areas and 22.5% of the respondents are from urban areas. The table also shows that 80% of the respondents were married, 15.8% of the respondents were unmarried and 4.2% of the respondents were divorced/widowed.

Table 2 Preference of Healthcare Services

Healthcare	No of Respondents	Percentage
Allopathy	61	50.8
Homoeopathy	35	29.2

Siddha	16	13.3
Others	8	6.7

It is clear from the table 2 that 50.8% of the respondents prefer allopathy healthcare system, 29.2% of the respondents prefer homoeopathy system, 13.3% of the respondents prefer Siddha and 6.7% of the respondents prefer other healthcare such as Ayurveda, Unani, etc., Since Allopathy has quick remedy patient are highly satisfied with it, followed by homeopathy service.

8. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CLASSIFICATION OF SATISFACTION OF PATIENTS TOWARDS HEALTHCARE SERVICES

The researcher has identified 5 factors determining the satisfaction of respondents towards healthcare system namely "Service quality", "Accessibility", "Cost affordability", "Healthcare outcome" and "System efficiency and Transparency". In order to examine the relationship between Satisfaction of patients towards healthcare system and their socio-demographic profile of the respondents, the researcher has adopted ANOVA.

Table 3 Socio-demographic classification of Satisfaction of Patients towards Healthcare services - ANOVA

Socio-demographic variables		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Monthly income level	Between Groups	7.032	5	1.752	.833	.010
	Within Groups	65.324	114	1.551		
	Total	72.356	119			
Area of residence	Between Groups	4.549	5	1.152	1.129	.004
	Within Groups	39.541	114	1.111		
	Total	44.090	119			
Marital status	Between Groups	5.427	5	1.743	1.167	.023
	Within Groups	54.184	114	1.37		
	Total	59.611	119			

The test of difference using ANOVA was found to be significant with regard to the satisfaction of patients towards healthcare system and monthly income level [$F(5, 119) = 0.833, p = .010 < 0.05$], area of residence [$F(5, 119) = 1.129, p = .004 < 0.05$] and marital status [$F(5, 114) = 1.167, p = .023 < 0.05$]. It implies that there is significant association between the satisfaction of patients towards healthcare system and socio-demographic profile of the respondents.

9. FINDINGS

It is found that socio economic status of patient has significant role in satisfaction with the health care services. Level of income of patient becomes deciding factor of choosing the type of treatment and so the satisfaction is based on that. Patients initially prefer nearby hospital which give them comfort in all accessibility. Most of the patients visiting the hospital were married and the satisfaction level was associated area of residence and family income also.

10. SUGGESTIONS

- The healthcare service providers should reduce the waiting time for appointments and treatments.
- Training should be given to healthcare providers in effective communication skills to ensure clear and empathetic interactions with patients.
- The healthcare providers must maintain a clean, comfortable, and safe environment in healthcare facilities.
- The healthcare providers must implement electronic health records (EHRs) to streamline patient information management.
- It must be ensured to offer transparent billing practices and detailed explanations of charges.

11. CONCLUSION

Patient satisfaction is a critical metric for evaluating the effectiveness of healthcare systems, as it reflects not only the quality of care provided but also the system's ability to address patient needs and expectations. This study highlights those high levels of patient satisfaction are linked to factors such as timely access to care, clear communication with healthcare providers, the perceived competence of medical staff, and the overall healthcare environment. Conversely, dissatisfaction often arises from long wait times, lack of empathy, insufficient communication, and unmet expectations.

By assessing patient satisfaction, healthcare systems can identify the areas for improvement and implement targeted interventions to enhance the patient experience. Additionally, patient satisfaction serves as a proxy for measuring other dimensions of care, such as safety, efficiency, and equity, making it an invaluable tool for monitoring system performance.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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