

EVALUATION OF PATIENT SATISFACTION LEVEL WITH DIFFERENT OUTPATIENT DEPARTMENT SERVICES: A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS IN A TERTIARY CARE HOSPITAL

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To evaluate satisfaction of outpatients with respect to administrative services and the level of satisfaction towards the various facilities available in an outpatient department of a tertiary care hospital.

Study Design: Cross sectional survey.

Place and Duration of Study: Combined Military Hospital, Malir Cantt, from Nov 2018 to Dec 2019.

Methodology: Data was collected from 756 participants, using an "Outpatient Feedback Form" to evaluate the satisfaction level of patients. Nonprobability, convenient sampling technique was used to select study participants.

Result: The patient satisfaction was present in 388 (51%) followed by 235 (31%) participants graded the Outpatient department facilities (OPD) as excellent and good respectively. However, only 16 (3%) were disgruntled with the present OPD administrative and medical service of the hospital.

Conclusion: Overall the study showed a good satisfaction level of patients with OPD services received from the hospital. Hospital administration has managed to deliver excellent quality services towards betterment in every discipline and created an example for other hospitals to become an effective part of the healthcare delivery system.

Keywords: Level of satisfaction, Patient's satisfaction, Outdoor patients, Outpatient department, Outpatient services.

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INTRODUCTION

Patient satisfaction can be explained as an extent to which patients are satisfied and happy with their health care related services provided within and outside the doctor's consultation room. Their loyalty and fidelity depend on an attitude towards the services received at hospital according to their expectations, either fulfilled or not.¹

The ultimate aim of the hospital providing tertiary care services is to provide best possible health care to the patients in order to provision of highest level of quality health care services to patients. In a current modern era, it is the right of every patient to demand best available health care services in hospitals, so, hospital administration and staff must deliver optimum efforts for patient's satisfaction (PS). Although, it is difficult to measure the efficiency and receptivity of hospital's services as the clinical and nonclinical treatment outcomes influence patient satisfaction level.¹ A satisfaction or dissatisfaction level of patient is a judgment of quality of services provided in all of its aspects. Evaluation of hospital services through assessment of PS provides opportunity to rectify the gaps

and loopholes in services.² Patient Satisfaction Level (PSL) has been observed as a vital concept in a sector of services and considered one of the recognized yardsticks to evaluate the quality of services being provided by health care providers.³

Being the first interaction of patients with hospital staff, outpatient hospital services are an essential element of hospital administration, usually known as Outpatient Department (OPD) or may referred as Ambulatory Care Services. OPD services are like a demonstration of the functioning of the hospital as visited by a large proportion of community on regular basis.⁴ Satisfaction level of the patients in relation to provision of healthcare services has been recognized as a crucial step in assessing the quality services of a hospital. The World Health Organization (WHO) declares PS as one out of nine core essential indicators used to evaluate the delivery of the quality healthcare services.⁵ Hence, satisfaction of patients is a crucial factor in hospital performance and quality care services.³

Satisfaction is a psychological consequence that can be defined in various ways. Usually, its gratification is based on the individual's experience over time regarding object, product, service or an event.^{2,6} A number of factors such as life style, past experiences, future expectations as well as the value of individual

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and society both, relates to a human satisfaction that makes it complex in nature.^{2,7} It is a fundamental source to measure performance either personnel or organizations through feedback as well as tool for institutional financial measures.^{8,9} However, quality of delivered healthcare services influence significantly on patient satisfaction level.¹⁰

Patients' level of satisfaction assessment has been generally ignored in experiential researches that causes a significant gap in existing healthcare literature especially in underdeveloped countries. This study evaluates the satisfaction level of patients visiting OPD of the tertiary care hospital in various aspects. The higher the quality of providing services, higher the level of patient's satisfaction. The hypothesized conceptual model (Figure-1) shows the health care services that were evaluated for patient's satisfaction level. The rationale of selecting these diverse services is the scarcity of the empirical research on the evaluation of patient's satisfaction level specifically in outpatient services perspective. Moreover, this study will aid to assess the healthcare system of Pakistan as the current system is generally associated with unsatisfied patients with low quality life due to substandard healthcare services (Figure-1).

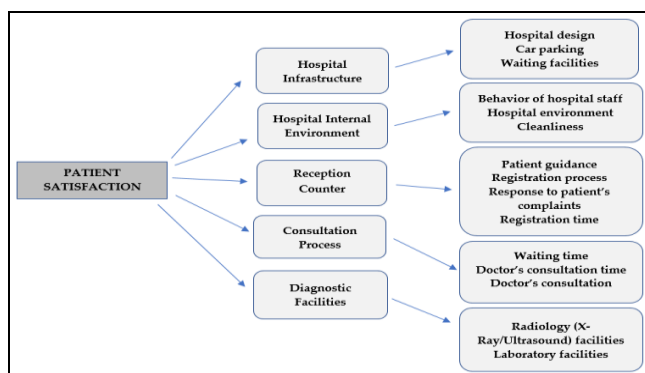


Figure-1: Hypothesized conceptual model of patient's satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

This cross-sectional survey was conducted at a Tertiary Care Hospital Karachi, from November 2018 to December 2019. The hospital provides health care services to the closely populated area of Karachi East, residence to a population of vast differences in religion, socio-economic group, occupational background, ethnicity and linguistic group. A total of 800 participants volunteered for the survey while few of the forms were excluded because of improper and/or incomplete information leaving behind a sample size of

756. Non-probability convenient sampling technique was used to select study participants.

Inclusion Criteria: All the patients attending outpatient department of CMH, Malir Cantt were included in the study.

Exclusion Criteria: Non-consenting patients were excluded.

Sample size was calculated using open Epi.com online sample size calculator by keeping 95% confidence level, absolute precision of 3% and the anticipated frequency of the outcome (Patient Satisfaction Level) at 85% 1, 2, 3 and the sample size came out to be 544. Though, the sample size was increased to reinforce the outcome as per availability of time and resources.

Each department assigned a staff member, specially trained for the data collection procedure, to collect and compile data. Patients from 6 different OPDs (i.e. Medical, Gynecology, Surgery, Pediatrics, ENT and Eye) were asked to fill up the questionnaire after completion of their checkup. Those who volunteered after the verbal consent and answered the complete questionnaire were included in the study. To assess the level of satisfaction among patients, a self-constructed, pre designed "Out-patient Feed Back Form" was used. A small-scale pilot study on 20 patients was conducted to evaluate the validity of questionnaire. 5 core domains of the available health care services were assessed using 15 items in the questionnaire including hospital infrastructure, internal environment of the hospital, facilities at the reception desk, consultation process and diagnostic tests facilities Each item was based on 4 points Likert Scale rating as excellent, good, satisfactory and unsatisfactory explaining higher to lower levels of satisfaction. Few open-ended questions were also asked as participants' suggestions for the betterment of services. Data from participants were also collected about a small section of basic identification information mainly related to age, gender, religion and employment status (serving, retired or jobless). Jobless females and house-wives were taken as equivalent.

Data collection process was started after receiving the Ethical Review Committee Letter (File No. 1440/2018/Trg/Adm) of the same hospital, Karachi. The purpose of the research was verbally explained to the volunteered patient and their attendants before signing the official informed consent. Anonymity was maintained during the entire process of research with all information kept confidential. The data was entered and

analyzed using Microsoft Excel (MS-XL) for proportions and frequency analysis by Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.

RESULTS

Observed socio-demographic profile of 756 participants has been given in Table-I; amongst whom majority were between the age of 40-60 years (>35%). A good bulk of the participants was males (69%) and belonged to religion Islam (91%). However, the employment status was somehow consistent.

Table-I: Socio-demographic characteristics of patients (n=756).

Variables		Frequency (n)	Percentages (%)
Age (in years)	>20	99	12.94
	20-40	142	18.78
	41-60	271	35.84
	61-80	136	17.68
Gender	<80	108	14.28
	Male	234	31.00
Religion	Female	522	69.05
	Muslims	688	91.00
	Christians	53	7.01
	Hindus	13	1.72
Employment status	Others	2	0.26
	Employed	287	37.96
	Unemployed	219	28.96
	Retired	250	33.07

The satisfaction levels of the out-patients regarding different aspects of hospital care areas are as described in Table-II. Most of the respondents found the hospital infrastructure, customer friendly showing

Table-II: Predictors of satisfaction among out-patients (n=756).

Predictors of Patient Satisfaction	Excellent, n (%)	Good, n (%)	Satisfactory, n (%)	Unsatisfactory, n (%)
Hospital Infrastructure				
Hospital design	347 (45.90)	320 (42.33)	68 (8.99)	21 (2.78)
Car parking	274 (35.98)	375 (49.60)	83 (10.98)	26 (3.44)
Waiting facilities	333 (44.05)	308 (40.74)	93 (12.30)	22 (2.91)
Hospital Internal Environment				
Behavior of hospital staff	418 (55.29)	276 (36.51)	47 (6.22)	15 (1.98)
Hospital environment	334 (44.18)	336 (44.44)	75 (9.92)	11 (1.4)
Cleanliness	388 (51.32)	272 (35.98)	81 (10.71)	15 (1.99)
Reception Counter				
Patient guidance	393 (51.98)	270 (35.71)	74 (9.79)	19 (2.52)
Registration process	371 (49.07)	293 (38.76)	78 (10.32)	14 (1.85)
Response to patient's complaints	322 (42.59)	308 (40.74)	74 (9.79)	52 (6.88)
Registration time	555 (73.41)	159 (21.03)	20 (2.65)	22 (2.96)
Consultation Process				
Waiting time	450 (59.52)	235 (31.09)	38 (5.03)	33 (4.37)
Doctor's consultation time	534 (70.63)	181 (23.94)	19 (2.51)	22 (2.92)
Doctor's consultation	427 (56.48)	260 (34.39)	57 (7.54)	12 (1.59)
Diagnostic Test (Laboratory & Radiology) Facilities				
Radiology (X-Ray/U/S*) facilities	309 (40.89)	323 (42.72)	92 (12.17)	32 (4.23)
Laboratory facilities	298 (39.42)	320 (42.33)	87 (11.51)	51 (6.74)

*Ultrasound

more than 85% ranked excellent and good. However, in an open-ended question there were complaints about lack of sign boards showing directions. Deemed to the internal environment of the hospital, out-patients were fully satisfied with the behavior of staff (>55%) and cleanliness (>51%) of hospital leading to a comfortable internal environment.

Almost half of the study participants marked the check-in services as excellent followed by more than 35% marking it in the good category. Moreover, the registration time was found to be the topmost rated domain (>73%). An insight regarding eminence of proficient service by doctors at the hospital labeled high levels of satisfaction with the working of the doctors showing only less than 5% of low level of satisfaction. Most of them stated that the time devoted by the doctor on them was ample while the competence of the doctors in diagnosis and treatment of their condition was satisfying as well. The diagnostic test facilities in the realm of radiology and pathology was found to be swift and sound. Tough a very few were dissatisfied with the inadequate waiting area and extensive waiting time in radiology for x-rays and ultrasounds.

Figure-2 summarizes the outline of this situational analysis showing remarkable performance by the management, doctors and paramedics of the tertiary health care center. Out of 51% out-patients rated the level of satisfaction as "excellent" followed by 37% as "good" whereas only 3% were unsatisfied with the health care system of the hospital.



Figure-2: Overall level of satisfaction of study participants.

DISCUSSION

Healthy life is a basic requirement of every individual. Pakistan being an emerging developing nation, is continuously trying to cope with the demand and supply imbalances in the existing health care sector for the rapidly growing population. According to the demands of patient with increasing population, the hospital's management and healthcare professionals need to be employed to facilitate patient satisfaction. The present study evaluates the patient satisfaction level related to the various aspects of OPD services of a tertiary care hospital, and found that healthcare services and patient satisfaction are positively and significantly associated with each other. Overall, the study indicates that 51% of the responded patients were satisfied with the services they received at hospital OPD which were about half of the total studied participants. On the contrary, researches showed significantly high satisfaction level (70% above) in patients visiting OPD in comparison of this study.¹¹⁻¹³ A variety of factors that reflects expectations of patients and their experiences makes an outcome of delivering acceptable and suitable health care services.^{14,15} Services provided by doctors in lieu of consultation time they given, emerged to be significant factor that influence patient satisfaction level. Studies conducted in Iran and Norway also mentioned the doctor services as an important factor among services delivered for patient satisfaction.^{16,17} In Pakistan, generally doctor-patient relationship especially in public sector hospitals facing issues due to less consultation time and consultation process³ however, on the contrary, despite being a tertiary care hospital with high patient turnover, this study showed the higher patient satisfaction level in consultation time and process (history taking, physical examination, etc). For instance, efficient and reliable diagnostic laboratory and radiological services are significantly important to satisfy patients according to their

expectation level as found satisfactory in this study. This is in line and supported with the studies conducted by Parchman *et al*,¹⁷ and Jayanti.¹⁸

Apart from medical consultation services, administrative services such as hospital cleanliness, comfortability and spacing of waiting areas as well as waiting time etc., are the essential factors that influence patient satisfaction level during service delivery. Efficient and effective delivery of the services directly linked to the patient satisfaction that must be taken into consideration by administrative personnel of the hospital.¹⁹ Patient were considerably satisfied with administrative services in a current study; however, administrative problems negatively affect patients resulting in the failure of loyalty and fidelity towards hospital.²⁰ Additionally, results of this study revealed that majority of the patients are well satisfied with waiting time for consultation, hence waiting time has been found to be one of the significant factors associated with patient's gratification.⁸ Thus, hospital management must adopt policies for effective services and take serious decisions for the improvement and upgradation of these services to enhance patient satisfaction level.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

This research was conducted only in a tertiary care hospital, so the findings and implications cannot be generalized to other healthcare private institutions and non government organisations (NGO's). The patient were selected using convenient sampling technique and were selected upon their will, hence selection bias cannot be ignored.

CONCLUSION

The study investigates the fundamental factors such as hospital internal environment and infrastructure, reception counter facilitation, consultation and diagnostic tests facilities impacting patient satisfaction while using these services and their effect on overall impression and commitment towards hospital. The contact time between patient and doctor during consultation process was the main component that impact the satisfaction level of patients in a general.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Improving diagnostic laboratory and radiological facilities, waiting time reduction and betterment of infrastructure along with its cleanliness are the essential factors need to be consider that significantly increases the satisfaction level and fidelity of patients. Patients satisfaction level with various type of health-care providers could have given more insight into various other aspects associated with patient satisfaction. The public health care system should ensure to upgrade the quality and effective delivery of the health care services

especially in tertiary care hospitals through updating policies, developmental programs, regular audits and appraisals.

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Conflict of Interest: None.

Author's Contribution:

FMQ: Manuscript drafting, literature survey and bibliography, data interpretation, SFB: Data collection and analysis, interpretation of result and tabulation, final proof read and grammatical and language check, HJS: Conceived the main research idea & developed the study design & study tools, MT: Research supervisor main research and analysis of results, final approval of the manuscript, KK: Helped in data collection, data entry, analysis & interpretation for results, SR: Helped in data collection, data entry & data analysis.

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