



## A STUDY ON QUALITY OF HOSPITAL SERVICES AND SATISFACTION OF PATIENTS IN CORPORATE HOSPITALS IN ANDHRA PRADESH

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### Abstract

During the last few decades, the number of private hospitals providing health care services has been growing, and the private sector health care services market has turned out to be a competitive environment. Quality is such an important aspect that it is considered a really major concept in our real life. It is considered as a strategic weapon. And the vital need of increasing service organizations and advancing their services necessitates the measuring of service quality. Hospitals provide the various types of services but with different quality. Therefore, quality can be considered as one of the important strategy to create the competitive advantage.

**Keywords:** *Quality, Services, Corporate Hospital.*

### Introduction

The concept of marketing is essentially a concept of customer orientation. For a long time it has been preached by all, including Mahatma Gandhi, that "the customer is king". What this implies is that products/services are bought not merely because of their quality, packaging or brand names, but because they satisfy a specific need of a customer. It also implies that organizations have to provide services to their customer and that too without any obligation. A successful relationship marketing firm leverages its knowledge of customer needs and values in order to determine resource allocation to different customer groups. The relationship marketing process emphasizes on continuous interactions between the firm and the customer. These interactions lead to firms acquiring accurate, timely and relevant information from the customer, which helps in creating a differentiated or customized offer for each customer, which in turn, leads to higher customer loyalty.

### Service Quality and Patient's Satisfaction

The importance of quality in the Health care sector has been recognized relatively recently, but it has been accelerated over the past years through the development of quality assurance, quality improvement programs and patients' agendas. Quality was very popular in the marketing literature where the notion of satisfying the customer was a dominant model of quality of service provided and consumer satisfaction. This movement initiated a global research with over 15,000 articles on assessing customer satisfaction in the past 20 years and more than 18,000 articles on Medline measuring somewhat patient satisfaction with care. The vast majority of these articles developed and used a patient satisfaction scale. Only few researchers developed a conceptual framework for conceptualization of service quality and patient satisfaction, before validating their scale. Measurement of patient satisfaction lacks a conceptual soundness as it reflects dimensions considered important by researchers and not by respondents.

### Patient's Satisfaction in Hospitals

Health care scenario is fast changing all over the world. Patient satisfaction is one of the established yardsticks to measure success of the sendees being provided in the hospitals. Improved socio economic status and easier access to medical care has led to high expectations and demands from consumers of hospital services. For health care organization to be successful monitoring of customers' perception is a simple but important strategy to assess and improve their performance. A patient is the ultimate consumer of the hospital. He is the person in distress. He expects from hospital comfort, care and cure. Patient forms certain expectations prior to visit. Once the patient come to the hospital and experience the facilities, they can become either satisfied or dissatisfied. Human satisfaction is a complex concept that is related to a number of factors including lifestyle, past experiences, future expectations and the value of both individual and society. The goal of any service organization is the creation of satisfaction among customers.

### Review of Literature

Jane W. Licata, John C. Mowen and Goutam Chakraborty, (1995)<sup>1</sup>, quoted that medical service channel is very sensitive channel of hospitals. Managing service providers, medical staff and pricing environment of hospitals are very much necessary to manage and care; and quality of service and service channel are also essential. The authors concluded that all the patients, both inpatients and outpatients, are equal and they are to be treated equally. Primary health care physicians, specialist physicians and service providers are giving valuable and quality medical services to all types of patients. Hawa Caha, (2000)<sup>2</sup>, analyzed in his study the Service Quality in private hospitals in Turkey. The study analyses a dynamic model

of service performance and Service Quality in private hospitals in Turkey. The study indicates that satisfaction of the patient seem to be most important factor for the private health care providers. The overall study uses a dynamic model in determining the quality of hospitals and the customer satisfaction. Victor Sower, JoAnn Duffy, William kilbourne, Gerald kohers and Phyllis Jones (2001)<sup>3</sup> had conducted a study using a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. The authors concluded that the study reflects the current trend to include the health care customer's perspective in the definition of quality; and also examines the theoretical dimensions of quality. Hari Dayal Gupta, (2008)<sup>4</sup>, identified that human life is valuable and the health care deals with human lives tremendously. The author concluded that medical service to patients is essential and most wanted action from the doctors. Facilities for attendants, parking, display of doctors qualifications, recognizing and remembering names of the patients, introduction of the latest technology increases to reputation of the hospital. Figen A. Yesilada and Dicle Yurdakul. (2009)<sup>5</sup> explored about improving the Health Care Service Quality. The authors concluded that service quality of patients can be improved according to the expectations of patients. Dr. J.P. Gupta, Mr. R.K. Juyal, Dr. T.R. Anand, Mr. A.S. Prabhakar and Dr. O.P. Aggarwal, (2009)<sup>6</sup>, indicated that the demand for the health service is raising very rapidly due to growth of population and increased health consciousness in the community. The authors concluded that the areas of patient dissatisfaction have been identified calling actions on these aspects.

### **Need and Importance of the Study**

The interaction between service provider and customer is the primary core of the service businesses of different natures. The intimate contact between service provider and service recipient is involved in the scenario of service, and such contact opportunity shall definitely and greatly influence the customer's evaluation process and focal point. One of the important factors is that inseparability exists between production and consumption in such services. Oftentimes, the service encounter system, including service personnel, physical facility, and other tangible elements, are regarded by customers as a part of the service. In addition, trust can further save cost to increase patient satisfaction by creating customer value, and establish long-term customer relationships. Researchers have pointed out that trust imposes positive influence on patient satisfaction. Therefore, the influence of trust on service quality and customer satisfaction could not be ignored in interpersonal-based service encounters. However, the lack of existing literature on the correlation between service quality, patient trust, and satisfaction from the prospect of interpersonal-based medical service encounters has created a research gap in previous studies. Therefore, this study attempts to bridge such a gap with an evidence-based practice study. The study aims at seeking to develop and design high-quality medical service solutions, measures, training or public relation activities, etc., in order to improve the medical service quality and the patients' satisfaction with medical services.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To identify the Service Quality dimensions of hospital services in Andhra Pradesh.
- To measure the influence of demographic variables on Service Quality dimensions and Patient Satisfaction.

### **Methodology of the Study**

This study is based on empirical in nature. The researcher has chosen Andhra Pradesh for his study. The sample for this study consists of all 13 district head quarters or major city in the district. All the respondents were in patients in private hospitals. To mitigate the difficulty in establishing direct access to private hospital's inpatient, the researcher approached the managers of the nearby hospitals in the district for data collection for this survey through direct personal interview method from patients' relatives who have accompanied with them. And the researcher also collected questionnaires from patients and spent few minutes that came out from hospitals after taking treatment. Some questionnaires also were collected from the respondents through patients' relatives. The exercise of data collection was fixed for a month in 13 approved and recognised hospitals in Andhra Pradesh. The researcher selected 13 hospitals in Andhra Pradesh and a total of 645 questionnaires were circulated to inpatients who took medical treatment in these private hospitals and only 507 questionnaires were collected and taken for analyses.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The researcher used both primary data as well as secondary data. The primary data were collected through a well structured questionnaire to receive the service quality and patient's satisfaction in hospital services. The secondary data were collected from journals, magazines, books, articles, News papers, periodicals and websites. The researcher analysed the collected primary data with the help of questionnaire through the some statistical tools: Simple percentage analysis is applied to study the demographic profile and personal details of the respondents and T-test, Factor analysis, Cluster analysis, Chi - Square analysis, One way ANOVA and Linear Multiple regression analysis are applied to identify the impact of service quality dimensions, factors influencing patient satisfaction and to examine the influence of demographic variables on service quality dimensions and patient satisfaction.

### Findings of the Study

The service quality dimensions of hospitals in Andhra Pradesh depends upon 8 dimensions, namely, Confidence Building, Assurance, Tangibles, Courtesy, Empathy, Responsiveness, Communication and Reliability.

- **Confidence Building:** In this dimension, of the patients are confident on hospitals, their service providers and existence of positive environment in the hospitals. The Doctors technically explain the treatment procedure and truthfulness; the charges for every treatment is explained to every patient; Doctors and Nurses personally interact with the patients to increase their confidence; the hospital staffs confirm the patients to secure the confidence for the surgery; Doctors, Nurses and Paramedical staffs thoroughly explain the patients about their doubts after discharge; transparent procedure and appropriate communication to the patients build confidence among the patients.
- **Assurance:** In this dimension, the patients in hospitals are shown excellent reputation, Number of staffs are adequate to meet the patients needs; The patient feels highly secured in the hospital premises; Nurses and doctors treat patients with warm and caring attitude; Visitors are treated properly and punctuality is maintained, They act as per the request and need of the patients; Security systems in the hospital are aimed at patients certainty and transparency; Patients are assured for the speedy recovery; Professionals and administrative staffs are sincere in solving patients' problems. Therefore, they act as an assurance in the hospitals.
- **Tangibles:** In this dimension, the appearance of hospital building is very neat and properly maintained, The hospital staffs regularly clean the premises; The wards are very pleasant looking for the patients; Doctors, nurses and paramedics are very neat in the uniform; Beds, beds spreads and room toilets are very clean; The doctors and nurses are highly reliable in delivering the services. Therefore, this factor can be called Tangibles.
- **Courtesy:** In this dimension, housekeeping staffs are punctual in discharging their duties; Nurses and Doctors actively participate in listening to the patients problems; Employees are very polite during admission procedure; Doctors and Nurses are very careful to create an optimistic psychology among the patients. Therefore, this factor can be called Courtesy.
- **Empathy:** In this dimension, the Patients are given individual attention; The nurses and doctors are able to realize the patients discomfort; Patients are assured of getting appropriate treatment; and The doctors, nurses, paramedical staffs and other staffs are highly efficient in answering the queries of the patients. Therefore, this factor can be called Empathy.
- **Responsiveness:** In this dimension, the behavior of staffs are aimed for quick recovery of patients; They regularly attend their patients' needs; They take less time for admission and other hospital administration; Doctors, Nurses and Paramedical staffs thoroughly explain the patients about their doubts after discharge. Therefore this factor can be called Responsiveness.
- **Communications:** In this dimension, the patients are observed regularly by the nurses and doctors; there is an understanding between doctors and nurses for the smooth relationship. Therefore, this factor can be called Communication.
- **Reliability:** In this dimension, the patients are giving importance to the Doctors and the doctors are punctual in going round the wards. Therefore, this factor can be called Reliability.

### Suggestions of the Study

1. Today many hospitals are attaching with some insurance companies. Patients are willing to take medical services from the hospitals which offering this facilities. Therefore, all the hospitals should make some arrangements with the insurance companies.
2. Like other marketing services, visitor's book can be maintained and patients can be allowed to register their opinion or their satisfaction. It will be much useful to the hospitals to set right their services.
3. Hospitals should make transport facilities to facilitate the patients to easily access the hospitals. Hospitals-owned ambulance vehicles can be operated. Special camps can be conducted to create awareness among illiterate, students, public etc. to prevent the diseases well in advance.
4. Hospitals must treat their services as a product and attempt to continuously improve the quality of it. Service product features have to be imbibed at every stage by the personnel. While cost could emerge as a constraint, in modern days, even patients belonging to poor income group are prepared to pay for the best treatment.

### Conclusion of the Study

The number of hospitals has been increasing year by year. But the quality of medical services is questionable. All the hospitals do not offer quality services to their patients. The patients prefer some hospitals than other hospital services. Doctors are considered as Gods and Goddess since they are providing life to the patients. The marketing of hospital services is not an easy job. Many hospitals find it difficult to face the marketing functions. Pricing of hospital services, nature of



medical services, cost considerations, equipments used, strategies adopted by the competitors, potential for development, population and income distribution of the area are the main factors which have to be considered while taking marketing strategies towards medical services.

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