



“Service Quality in Private and Government Hospitals: Empirical Evidences in Gulbarga District of Karnataka”

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ABSTRACT

The service sector plays an important role in modern economic development of a country. Healthcare is one of India's largest service sectors. The health care sector occupies a premiere position in ensuring sustainable over all socio-economic advancement in developing countries. The growth of hospital based services has been seen very obvious during the past decades in India. The up to date technological growth and advancement in equipment, subject knowledge of medical experts and other paramedical staff had led to an improvement in medical services. This has helped the patients to perceive the enhanced service quality of the hospitals with growing satisfaction. Healthcare sector contributes to the Indian economy a huge chunk of resources in terms of revenue and employment. The sector is expanding rapidly. In 2012, India's expenditure on healthcare was growing around \$40 billion. The private sector accounted for more than 80 per cent of total healthcare spending in India and the remaining 20 per cent was spent by the Government. In This study investigate the service quality of the customers in two types of hospitals. Now quality has become an icon for customers while availing any services or buying a product and it is also a strategic advantage for the organizations to gain success and remain competitive in the market by delivering superior quality of services or products based on customer requirements. For this purpose SERVQUAL instrument was used to measure the patient's perception about service quality delivered by these hospitals. Five service quality dimensions; empathy, tangibles, assurance, timeliness and assurance were used in order to measure the patients perceptions about the service quality of government and private hospital located in Gulbarga District.

KEYWORDS : Quality, Service, patient's, Hospitals, Private, Government

Introduction:

People today have taken a new approach to healthcare services – they are informed, suspicious, and eager to take responsibility for their own care. In this era of information, consumers of healthcare have exceptionally high expectations. The health care industry in recent years has restructured its service delivery system in order to survive in an unforgiving environment resulting from maturation of the industry, reduced funding, and increased competition¹. If one is sick, he/she goes to the doctor and expects him to fix it. If the doctor can't, he/she expects him to send the patient to a specialist who can. And the patient wants the full range of medical services regardless of his/her ability to pay. Thus, the post-modern hospital is a far different place as a result of the constant change in the needs and expectations of patients.²

Driven by economic necessity and technological advances, the patient demands a higher level of accuracy, reliability and overall better service than in the past. Because of the Internet, patients are well informed and research solutions to their health care problems. Due to this new paradigm in healthcare, hospital administrations need to be skilled practitioners in marketing and business planning.³

WHAT IS A SERVICE?

A service is not something that is built in a factory, shipped to a store, put on a shelf, and then taken home by a customer. A service is a dynamic living process and is something that is executed on behalf of, and often with the involvement of, the customer. A service is performed. A service rendered.⁴ A service is motion and activity not pieces or parts. The “raw materials” of a service are time and process not plastic or steel. A service cannot be stored or shipped only the means for creating it can. A service cannot be held in one's hand or physically possessed. In short, a service is not a thing but an intangible aspect of customers' perceptions⁵.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Health care services have a distinct position among other services due to the high risky nature of services and the general lack of expertise possessed by consumers. To maintain and improve the quality of health care services, besides relying on clinical and economic criteria, administrators should utilize the feedback

through patients' perceptions of care surveys. Adopting the marketing concept to health care requires the providers to be consumer oriented and concern themselves with the satisfaction of their patients. As hospitals and other health care providers begin to implement better and sophisticated patient surveys, they will understand the strengths, and weaknesses of their organizations from the patients' point of view.

A better understanding of how consumers evaluate the quality of health care will help administrators and service providers, in determining and improving the weaker aspects of their health care delivery system. With continuous monitoring of patient perceptions and improvements based on patient feedback, quality of care and patient satisfaction will improve. The present study has made an attempt to evaluate the service quality in private and public hospitals as per the view of the patients.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sohail (2001)⁶ used SERVQUAL instrument to examine and measure the quality of services provided by the public and the private hospitals in Malaysia. Factor analysis did not identify any meaningful dimensions that conform to the dimensions recommended by the SERVQUAL instrument

Uma (2002)⁷ revealed that quality performance of case hospital is of higher level. They also identified the requirement of higher service quality of hospitals as staff orientation, training general skills, inter personal skills, continuous medical education and stall development

Lim and Tang (2003)⁸ revealed the patient's expectation and satisfaction in the public and the private hospitals at Singapore. They revealed that the level of perception on service quality is not upto the level of expectation on service quality in both hospitals.

Syed (2012)⁹ identified that the incentive structure in the private and public hospitals would explain differences in the quality of services provided by these organizations. This contention was largely supported since the private hospitals obtained better ratings than the public hospitals on most of the measures of responsiveness, communication and discipline

Taner and Antony (2013)¹⁰ compared the hospital care service quality in public and private hospital at Turkey. They found that the service quality is far better in the private hospitals than in the public hospitals.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Hospitals play an integral part in health care system of a country. They perform Various functions like in-patient, outpatient services, research and development, training and a host of other services In India, the health care services are provided by both private and public hospitals. Public hospitals consumed more investment on the infrastructural facilities and provision of free medical services. The people living with poor standard of living prefer the medical services from the public hospitals because of their poor financial conditions. The feeling of free services among the patients is generating social responsibility and the responsibility to safeguard the public properties. On the other side, the staff working in the public hospitals is becoming more lethargic in their duties because of mismanagement of all resources at the government hospitals. Hence, the public hospitals are losing their images and value in public minds.

The private hospitals in India are growing at a faster rate on par with the international standards. India is becoming one of the important countries which provide the quality medical services at cheaper rate. It attracts many foreign patients to India. Even, it is not at a reachable level to the people living in India especially people with lower middle income and poor people. Some private hospitals are not following any ethical values in the medical profession. They are running only for profit motive. Both these incidents namely reluctance of public hospitals and higher service charges of private hospitals influence the patients' attitude towards the hospitals in a negative way. The service quality at public hospital is declining whereas the service quality in private hospital is increasing. But the problem is whether these are at the expected level of the patients or not. It was felt that the services of public sector hospitals have not given any regard for the quality of services. Therefore, the present study has made an attempt to evaluate the service quality in private and public hospitals as per the expectations and perceptions of the patients.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To study the service quality of selected Government Hospital & Private Hospital operating in Gulbarga District.

HYPOTHESIS: Hypothesis for this research is as follows:-

- H01:** There is no significant difference in the level of service quality in private and government hospital.
- H02:** There is significant difference in the level of service quality in private and government hospital.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Primary data has been collected through Questionnaire Method. The data collection tool is structured questionnaire. Questionnaire was distributed to respondent who were selected as sample. Respondents were asked to fill up the set of questions as per instructions mentioned on them. Schedules are explained by the researcher personally in a regional language and were filled by him personally. While drafting the questionnaires the researcher incorporated close-ended and open ended questions. In some of the Close ended or the selection type questions the respondents were asked to rate the level of importance/satisfaction on a 5-point scale.

Secondary Data: Secondary data has been collected through books, Journals, Websites etc.

Sample size: A sample of 200 respondents has been selected on the basis of randomly in the study area.

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES USED

Statistical tools are techniques used to facilitate the analysis and interpretation of numerical data. "Statistical Analysis is one particular language, which describes the data and makes possible to talk about the relations and the difference of the variables. Mean and Standard deviation tools have been used in this study.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY: The major limitations of the study are:-

- Due to paucity of time only Gulbarga district has been selected for the study.
- This research is concerned only with the service quality of government and private hospital operating in Gulbarga District.
- The reality of the study depends on questionnaire filled and responses given by the respondents.

TABLE NO.01 GROUP STATISTIC

	HOSPITALS	NO OF RESPONDENTS	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION
Empathy	Government	100	2.8664	1.26324
	Private	100	3.6684	0.81925
Tangibility	Government	100	2.5106	0.98754
	Private	100	3.8452	0.99164
Assurance	Government	100	3.3646	1.05864
	Private	100	3.6210	0.785624
Timeliness	Government	100	3.0121	1.25561
	Private	100	3.5122	0.95128
Responsiveness	Government	100	2.3310	1.11354
	Private	100	3.6531	0.89153

Source Field study

The above table no.01 showing the mean and standard deviation of the variables and constructs used in research study. These results exhibited that overall mean values of service quality constructs representing private hospitals are higher than the public hospitals. This indicated that major portion respondents availing facilities from private hospitals perceive that private hospitals are providing better services to their patients as compare to the government hospital. However, the mean value of the service quality construct assurance among government hospital is higher as compare to the mean values of other service quality constructs of government hospital. The representation of means provide a clear understanding about the service quality provided by the public and private hospitals in Gulbarga District based on respondent perceptions. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H01) is rejected and hypothesis (H11) is accepted mean there is significant difference in the level of service quality in private and government hospital.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the data provided the conclusions that almost in all the five dimensions, the perceived level of service quality was far lower than the desired levels. For a majority of the factors, the gaps were found to be more in the case of public sector than that of the private sector health care centres.

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