

Vol 6 Issue 12 Sept 2017

ISSN No : 2249-894X

*Monthly Multidisciplinary
Research Journal*

*Review Of
Research Journal*

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A STUDY ON QUALITY OF HEALTH CARE SERVICE PROVIDED BY A LEADING PRIVATE HOSPITAL IN TAMILNADU

M. Kirubaharan¹ and Dr. K. Karthikeyan²

¹Assistant Professor , Department of Management Studies , Indra Ganesan College of Engineering, Tiruchirapalli .

²Head & Associate Professor , Department of Management Studies , Saranathan College of Engineering, Tiruchirapalli.

ABSTRACT :

This paper investigates the perception and expectation of patients regarding health care services provided by leading private hospital in Tamilnadu by using service quality gap model. A simple random sampling technique is used to collect data from the respondents who already have experience as in-patients. The major emphasis of the study is to identify the service quality gap. It is found that there is a huge gap in dimensions among the patients who have their experience in the hospital i.e., providing error free records, provide services at the time they promise to do so, knowledge to answer patients questions, never be too busy to respond to patient request and Hygienic care & procedures followed by hospital personnel



KEYWORDS : Expectation, Perception, Service Quality, In-patients.

1. INTRODUCTION

Changing customer demands, increased expectations for superior quality of products or services and the global competition has created a competitive environment among different industrial sectors. Quality has become an icon for customers while selecting a service or product and at the same time organizations are making efforts for providing quality products or services as per customers' needs and wants. Quality has been considered as a strategic advantage for the organizations to gain success and to sustain in the business world. Health care covers not merely medical care but also all aspects of preventive care too. Like the other service organizations; the healthcare sector has also become a highly competitive and rapidly growing service industry around the world. The biggest challenge faced by healthcare markets is to define and measure the service quality.

2. HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY

The Indian healthcare industry is poised for a huge growth with the hospital industry comprising 80% of the total market. India is now acknowledged as the premier destination for medical tourism, owing to cheaper costs and treatments in the country. The government is also encouraging the growth of this market through policies such as a reduction in import duties on medical equipment, higher depreciation on life-saving medical equipment (40%, up from 25%), and a number of other tax incentives.

While the population growth rate for India has steadily gone down, it is still at over 1.3 percent and is not expected to go below one percent in the near future. Also, it is interesting to note that our population aged above 60 years is projected to grow to around 193 million, compared with over 96 million in 2010. This change in the

population pyramid is expected to fuel the demand for healthcare in general, particularly lifestyle diseases. In the past decade, India has witnessed a rapid increase in levels of wealth and disposable incomes. Coupled with a better standard of living and health awareness, this has led to an increase in spending on healthcare and wellness.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Service Quality as perceived by patients is defined as the degree and directions of discrepancy between patients’ service perceptions and expectations. It is also defined as difference between “technical quality” (what is delivered in the form of treatment) and “functional quality” (how it is delivered), and as “process quality” (judged during the treatment of process) and “output quality” (judged after the treatment).

Some of the problems today’s hospitals faces are communication gap, service proliferation and complexity, improper selection and training of service staff like doctors, paramedical staff, nurses etc. If a hospital gives a quality treatment service, they can survive and run over any kind of crunch situation.

4. METHODOLOGY:

The study is a descriptive one. Primary data collected with the help of structured questionnaire administered to patients who had been admitted more than 4 days at Apollo Hospitals in Tamilnadu. Data was collected from respective Apollo Hospital at five main cities namely Chennai, Madurai, Trichy, Tiruvannamalai and Karur. Totally there were 1415 patients admitted in the Apollo Hospitals in the study area. In that 802 respondents were selected by adopting scientific method of determining the sample size for known population. Sampling technique adopted was simple random sampling using lottery method. To find out the suitability of the questionnaire a pilot study was carried out among 20 respondents and necessary additions and deletions were made in the questionnaire.

4.1 Research Objective:

- To study about the expectations and perception of various service quality dimensions of the Apollo hospitals in Tamil Nadu.

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:

The Expectations of patients along with the Apollo hospitals performance as perceived by patients are shown in Table 1. The table shows that there were mean differences between patients expectations and perceptions in all the dimensions.

Table 1: shows the Expectation – Perception of patients in Apollo Hospitals

STATEMENTS		Mean Score		Service Quality Gap	Rank
Expectation	Perception	Exp	Per		
Tangibility	Tangibility	3.60125	3.80575	-0.2045	
Excellent Hospitals will have modern looking equipment	The HOSPITAL has modern looking equipment	3.259	4	-0.741	
The physical facilities at excellent hospitals will be visually appealing	The physical facilities in the HOSPITAL are visually appealing	3.963	3.963	0	
Personnel at excellent hospitals will be neat in appearance	Personnel in the HOSPITAL are neat in appearance	3.963	3.741	0.222	
Materials associated with service will be visually appealing in an excellent hospital	Materials associated with service are visually appealing	3.22	3.519	-0.299	

Reliability	Reliability	3.155	2.8946	0.2604	5
When excellent hospitals promise to do something by a certain time they will do so.	When the HOSPITAL promise to do something by a certain time it does so.	3	3.481	-0.481	
When a patient has a problem, excellent hospitals will show a sincere interest in solving it	When you have a problem, the HOSPITAL shows a sincere interest in solving it	3.296	3.222	0.074	
Excellent hospitals will get things right the first time	The HOSPITAL get things right the first time	3.259	3.067	0.192	
Excellent hospitals will provide their services at the time they promise to do so	The HOSPITAL provides its services at the time it promises to do so	3.22	2.481	0.739	
Excellent hospitals will insist on error free records	The HOSPITAL insists on error free records	3	2.222	0.778	
Responsiveness	Responsiveness	2.898	2.799	0.099	3
Personnel in excellent hospitals will tell patients exactly when services will be performed	Personnel in the HOSPITAL tell you exactly when services will be performed	3.185	3	0.185	
Personnel in excellent hospitals will give prompt service to patients.	Personnel in the HOSPITAL will give you prompt service	2.222	2.741	-0.519	
Personnel in excellent hospitals will always be willing to help patients	Personnel in the HOSPITAL are always willing to help you.	2.963	2.751	0.212	
Personnel in excellent hospitals will never be too busy to respond to patient request	Personnel in the HOSPITAL are never be too busy to respond to your request	3.222	2.704	0.518	
Assurance	Assurance	3.0555	2.861	0.1945	4
The behavior of personnel in excellent hospitals will instill confidence in patient	The behavior of personnel in the HOSPITAL instill confidence in you	3.259	3.259	0	
Patients of excellent hospitals will feel safe in their dealings with the hospital	You feel safe in your dealings with the HOSPITAL	3.222	2.963	0.259	
Personnel in excellent hospitals will be consistently courteous with patients	Personnel in the HOSPITAL are consistently courteous with you	2.963	2.963	0	

Empathy	Empathy	3.148	3.230	-0.0816	
Excellent hospitals will give patients individual attention	The HOSPITAL gives you individual attention	3.259	3.741	-0.482	
Excellent Hospitals will have operating hours convenient to all their patients	The HOSPITAL has operating hours convenient to all their patients.	2.963	3.444	-0.481	
Excellent hospitals will have staff who give patients personal attention	The HOSPITAL has Personnel who give you personal attention	3.037	3.222	-0.185	
Excellent hospitals will have the patients best interest at heart	The HOSPITAL has your best interests at heart	3.259	3	0.259	
The personnel of excellent hospitals will understand the specific needs of their patients	The personnel of the HOSPITAL understand your specific needs.	3.222	2.741	0.481	
Paramedical / Support Staff	Paramedical / Support Staff	3.247	3.161	0.0863	2
Excellent Hospitals will have qualified Paramedical / Support Staff available all the time	The Hospital has qualified Paramedical / Support Staff available all the time	3.778	3.519	0.259	
The Paramedical / Support staff in excellent hospitals will show compassion and support	The Paramedical / Support staff showed compassion and support	2.741	3	-0.259	
The Paramedical / Support staff in excellent hospitals will show adequate respect to patients	The Paramedical / Support staff showed adequate respect to you	3.222	2.963	0.259	
Adequacy of Resources & Services	Adequacy of Resources & Services	3.5038	3.447	0.0568	1
Excellent Hospitals will have adequate Rooms	Rooms are adequate	3.963	3.731	0.232	
Waiting for consultation will be too long in Excellent hospitals	Waiting for consultation was not too long	3.519	3.788	-0.269	
Drugs are available all the time in excellent hospitals	Drugs are available all the time	4	3.721	0.279	
Proper safety and comfort measures will be present in the excellent hospital	Proper safety and comfort measures are present in the hospital	2.778	3.248	-0.47	
Hygienic care and procedures will be followed by personnel in excellent hospitals	Hygienic care and procedures are followed by hospital personnel	3.259	2.747	0.512	

Source : Primary Data

From the Table 1, the service quality dimension gap score, which is the discrepancy between patient's expectation and perception about the dimensions of service quality, revealed that negative gaps occurred in two of the dimensions out of seven dimensions employed in the study. The dimensions with the negative gaps were Tangibles and Empathy. Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Paramedical / Support Staff and Adequacy of Resources & Services had positive dimension gaps. The positive gap of Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Paramedical / Support Staff and Adequacy of Resources & Services means that patients were satisfied with the service quality associated with these five dimensions. However, the negative

gaps across the two dimensions indicated that patients' expectations generally were not being met with the largest gap being for Tangibility (gap score -0.2045) followed by Empathy (gap score -0.0816) in that order as indicated in table 1. This suggests that, even though patients' overall satisfaction was good or high, there is more room for the hospital to improve service quality in relation to the dimension with the negative gaps

From this study, it is found that there is a huge gap in dimensions among the patients who have their experience in the hospital i.e., providing error free records, provide services at the time they promise to do so, knowledge to answer patients questions, never be too busy to respond to patient request and Hygienic care & procedures followed by hospital personnel.

As a diagnostic instrument, SERVQUAL has identified where the largest service quality gaps, as perceived by patients, occur across seven service quality dimensions used in the study. The instrument also allows management to identify in further detail where such gaps are occurring by analyzing the individual statements that make up each dimension. Further, SERVQUAL allows for prioritization across the seven dimensions by assessing gap score of each dimension. Across the seven dimensions, statistically significant gap scores were found for Reliability, Assurance, Responsiveness, Paramedical / Support Staff and Adequacy of Resources & Services. Comparison of these gap scores suggests that the priority gap as far as patients' assessment of service quality is concerned is that of Reliability since it has the largest gap score. Within the Reliability dimension there are different aspects of performance as denoted by the individual statements. It may be possible to prioritize further between these aspects of service quality by examining the gap scores for each. This suggests that management should consider ways of rendering prompt and timely service to patients.

7. CONCLUSION:

The measurement of service quality is important to health care delivery since it paves the way for a better, more focused quality service for patients. In order to achieve that, it is necessary to identify information on patient expectations and perceptions so as to assess their satisfaction about the service they receive. This in turn will help hospitals identify where service improvements are needed.

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M. Kirubaharan

Assistant Professor , Department of Management Studies , Indra Ganesan College of Engineering, Tiruchirapalli .



Dr. K. Karthikeyan

Head & Associate Professor , Department of Management Studies , Saranathan College of Engineering, Tiruchirapalli.

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E-Mail-ayisrj@yahoo.in/ayisrj2011@gmail.com