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# EVALUATION OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES AT PRIVATE HOSPITALS DURING PANDEMIC-- A SERVPERF APPROACH

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose** – *The purpose of this research is to measure the service Quality and its impact of patients' satisfaction.*

**Methodology** – *SERVPERF, a scale developed and validated by Cronin and Taylor (1994) is adopted to measure the service quality. A sample 269 data were collected from the customers of private hospitals. Scales used were tested for their model fit. Correlation and Regression were used to analyse the outcomes.*

### **Findings**

*The research results reveal that the dimensions namely reliability, tangibility, responsiveness and assurance are greatly influencing Customer satisfaction and empathy is not significant in its impact. There is no significant difference on service quality based on the demographic profile of customers.*

### **Research Limitations**

*This research focuses only on the service perception and further research can be initiated by considering customer loyalty and switching behaviour and an effect of service quality.*

### **Practical Implications**

*The results derived in this research is useful in taking decisions on service delivery in most effective ways and frame strategies to strengthen customer satisfaction by private hospitals.*

**Key Words:** Health Care Services, Service Quality, Service Perception and Customer Satisfaction

## **INTRODUCTION**

The entire humanity world- wide faces naval coronavirus called COVID 19 on Dec 2019, which resulted in effecting public health and dramatic loss of human health. During pandemic frontline health care workers (HCW) who plays a crucial role in providing care to infected public. Despite of this HCW faced unprecedented several mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, burnout stress related disorders. Above the all HCW are overloaded work beyond their capacity which increases case of dearth and medical issues, other major challenges faced by HCW is with low resources setting they have to frame the strategies such as curtailment of routine out and inpatient services, postpone electric surgeries, duty shifting, etc. When health systems are overwhelmed so frontline workers fail to access needed care for direct mortality and indirect mortality which leads to a) Misinformation and limitations

on movement that disputes the delivery of healthcare b) Shortage of quality personal protective equipment (PPE) c) Lack of incentives and d) Absence of coordination and proper management during their services.

Health care Service sector in India is having major impact due to COVID-19 pandemic in terms of delivering essential services. The biggest challenge in the beginning was maintaining preventive and curative services to children and aged persons who are more vulnerable. World Health Organisation is coordinating between different nations to access high quality essential services. The approach towards the patients by the hospital employees was completely different in the initial times of pandemic. Many patients were not allowed for regular treatments and sometimes there were provided with basic medicine without medical checkups. This research aims at understanding the customer perception towards service quality of private hospitals.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Mesut Akdere, Mehmet Topb and Sabahattin Tekingunduzc (2018), proposed in their study that the perceived level of service quality have become important component in healthcare sector. For measuring the level of quality of service in different dimensions the SERVPERF model is used. This model demonstrates the growing importance of quality of service in service industries. This study concludes that the Assurance producing highest and empathy producing lowest impact in service quality perception. Suneela Garg, Saurav Basu, Ruchir Rustagi, Amod Borle (2020), stated in their study that the Primary healthcare centers (PHCs) are the first tier of the Indian healthcare system, providing essential outpatient services for the people living in the rural, suburban, and hard to reach areas. The Lower-middle-income countries (LMICs) are facing major challenges during COVID-19 pandemic due to unavailability of health care infrastructure and there is a need of effective planning in health care infrastructure.

Mrs. D. Subashini, Dr. S. Poongodi, (2015) stated in their study that it is important to have knowledge about patients perception in health care quality for initiating reforms in health care sector and satisfying the customers become important task for health care service sector. By using the SERVQUAL instrument as testing tool it is found that the “Responsiveness” having high impact in maximising level of satisfaction of patients towards health care service. Fan L-h, Gao L, Liu X, Zhao S-h, Mu H-t, Li Z, et al. (2017), stated in their study that the relationship between Doctor and Patient becoming more

important now a days. The Hospitals needs to improve their service quality through reducing conflict between doctor and patient. The hospitals are to understand their service quality it must identify its own competitive advantages and disadvantages. The six service quality dimension model is used for finding the negative gap between patient's expectation and perception and it is found that the largest gap is economy dimension. The hospitals must provide adjust according to situation and should provide constant quality of service to improve their service quality.

Mohammad Ali Abbasi-Moghaddam, Ehsan Zarei, Rafat Bagherzadeh, Hossein Dargahi and Pouria Farrokhi (2017). State that the customer attitude towards perceived quality, accuracy of procedure and constant monitoring of healthcare services are important for to assess the service quality in health care and it is found that to improve the disclosure of information to patient, reduce waiting time in online appointment system for physician and physical environment of clinics to increase patient's positive perception. Isaac Theophilus Ampah, Rabi Sidi Ali (2019) stated that the study aims to analyse the effective quality of service leads to Customer Satisfaction in Public Healthcare Institutions. The institutions have to increase service quality and customer satisfaction for have long-lasting and win-win relationship with customers. They found that the appointment of qualified personnel and adequate funding form government will enhance the service quality and customer (patients) satisfaction in public healthcare institutions.

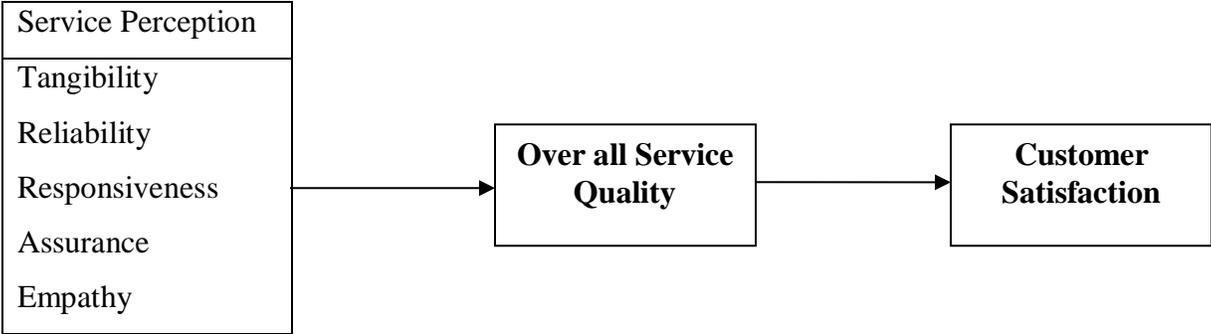
Vishal Kamra, Supreet Kaur Sethi, J. K. Sharma (2019), this study aims to compare quality healthcare service in private with public hospitals. "Zero defections" a new concept introduced by hospitals to cater service excellence. It is found that the tangibility in location, equipment, personnel, parking space etc. are playing important role in service quality and the public hospitals needs to concentrate more on these components to provide quality of service. Muhammad Shafiq, Muhammad Azhar Naeem, Zartasha Munawar, and Iram Fatima (2017) remarks that based on nature and ownership the hospitals vary in terms of their resource availability, speciality and services offered. The SERVQUAL instrument is used to find the service quality gap. It is identified that there is a need assess the customers for to improve their quality of service.

Ching-Sheng Chang, Su-Yueh Chen and Yi-Ting Lan (2013) proposed that in service sector the interpersonal interaction is becoming important element and it influence the trust on service quality and customer satisfaction, this study try to bridge the gap in service quality with an evidence based practice. In this research it is identified that the medical care institutions work with 'customer-oriented'

operational philosophy to develop ‘customer value’ and also work towards the objective of customer satisfaction through customer perception. Nhi Xuan Nguyen, Khoa Tran, Tuyet Anh Nguyen (2021) reveals that the service quality dimensions are analysed and how it influence in patient perceived value, customer satisfaction and loyalty in private healthcare service. The Doctors and nurse and well qualified and offering high quality service even though many studies stated the healthcare lacks in patient satisfaction. The healthcare service sector must follow patient-centered design for satisfying the customers. It is found that, for inviting new customers the private hospitals must have focus on social media and post treatment service too.

Suzana Markovic, Dina Loncaric, Damir Loncaric (2014) states that in Croatia, the Specialty hospitals and health spas operates as the non-profit sector, but trying to provide their services to healthcare tourism market. To participate the in that they should adopt new business philosophy and this created the need for ‘customer-oriented’ and more focus on service quality and satisfaction. In this research it is found that the patients are more conscious about cleanliness and neatness in equipment and environment and expecting more professionalism in service offering. Dr. Darshana R. Dave, Reena Dave (2014) proposed that, in India households spending is more than public spending. Aim of the study is to identify the effect of service quality in customer (patients) satisfaction and loyalty in private hospitals. After Second World War in some countries like Eroup, Africa and Asia the healthcare sector took part in economic development. It is identified that healthcare service provide must offer correct information time to time, need to have convenient operating hours and must give individual attention and also to develop a strategy to provide quality of service.

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**



## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The patients who have recently experienced the services at private hospitals were contacted to collect the primary data. An on line survey was conducted to collect the data. The researcher has adopted SERVPERF model which has five dimensions and 22 items to measure perception on service quality. Lahore, et al's (2004) customer satisfaction measure is adopted. Face validity was conducted with 20 customers of private hospitals and few questions were rephrased for better understanding of customers. A descriptive study was conducted to find out the impact of service perception on service quality and its impact on customer satisfaction. In order to attain the major objectives statistical tools namely Anova, t test, Correlation and Regressions were conducted using SPSS 21. The Cronbach's Alpha value for the 22 items of servperf scale was examined and found .763 which represents that the scale adopted is more reliable for this set off respondents and data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS*

The sample shows that 58% of participants were male and 67% of them fall in the age group of 50 – 60 years. Among the respondents 83% of them have completed atleast a degree. The occupation of the respondents mostly falls in the category of private employees with 72%. With regard to reasons for availing services, 76% of patients have taken treatment for Covid in the hospital, 12% of patients for general checkup the remaining patients for treatment like dentist, eye and cardiologist.

### **DIFFERENCE IN PERCEPTION OF SERVICE QUALITY**

	F	Sig.
Gender	1.018	.315
Age	.389	.816
Occupation	1.253	.287
Income	.573	.235

**Table1. Difference on perception of Service Quality based on demographic profile**

The results reveal that there is no significant difference in the opinion of customers based on different demographic profile towards service quality perception. Since the significant values are higher than the standard value .05, the null hypothesis is accepted which means there is no significant difference.

## SERVICE QUALITY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Regression analysis is used for test the level of influence of service quality Dimensions on Customer satisfaction. The dimension with the largest coefficient represents the most important dimension in terms of its influence on customer satisfaction. The next largest coefficient represents the second most influential dimension and so forth.

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.822	0.676	0.675	0.582

**TABLE 2. REGRESSION SUMMARY**

The adjusted R square value was 0.676 which means that service quality dimensions in hospitals account for 68 percent of the variance in “Customer Satisfaction Service Quality”. It represents 32 percent of customer satisfaction is explained by something other than the service quality dimensions. It was observed that the overall regression model is significant ( $F=373.835$ ,  $p<0.00$ ) and hence the model has a good fit.

	Reliability	Assurance	Tangibility	Empathy	Responsiveness
Customer Satisfaction	.870	.789	.684	.122	.883

**TABLE 3. CORRELATION**

The relationship between different dimensions of service quality and their impact was examined in this research for their influence on customer satisfaction at private hospitals. The four dimensions namely reliability, tangibility, responsiveness and assurance have positive impact on customer satisfaction. Empathy is found to be low in private hospitals during pandemic which is the most important factor to be considered for customer satisfaction in health care industry.

## CONCLUSION

The impact of service quality perception plays a vital role in determining customer satisfaction. The demographic profile is not showing any difference on perception towards service quality of private hospitals. Future research can focus on different cultural settings. This research can be further used by the private hospitals for framing the policies to take at most care in maintaining empathy during all service encounters.

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