MANAGING SERVICE QUALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF HEALTH CARE SECTOR

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ABSTRACT
Service quality and its dimensions are important for any organization in the modern era. Services play a key role in empowering the customer satisfaction and loyalty for an organization. With respect to health care services, service quality is an important determinant of brand image creation of the hospitals. Since in the health care sector the key concern is improving the health condition of the patients it is crucial to manage effective service quality. Service delivery in the right time to the patients is very important. The delivery of right service quality is dependent on various factors. In this present study, an attempt is made to understand the presence of appropriate service quality with respect to hospitals in Chennai city. The data were statistically analyzed and interpreted through SPSS. Based on the findings of the study suitable recommendations were drawn.

Keywords: Service quality, healthcare sector, service delivery

INTRODUCTION
Service quality Management had been extensively researched in the context of profit making business. The service quality management issues are addressed in the context of health care sector in Chennai in this study. In Chennai, significant developments in the health sector have been witnessed with recently. This created the necessity to identify the impact of service quality dimensions on patient satisfaction in the health care sector. Empirical research is conducted to analyze the patients’ opinion of service quality in a specialty hospital. This paper provides directions for hospitals to develop suitable strategies for meeting the patients’ needs and expectations with respect to service quality.

SERVICE QUALITY
Quality in health care can be understood as technical or outcome quality and functional or process quality (Grönross 1984). Parasuraman et al. (1985) define service quality as a “function of the differences between expectations and performance along the quality dimensions”. Hillestad and Berkowitz point out that in health care, quality is not defined in terms of clinical quality, but rather in terms of service-delivery quality (Hillestad and Berkowitz 2013, 203).

DESIGN OF THE STUDY
The purpose of this study is to identify the patients’ expectations towards service quality in the selected hospitals of Chennai city. The ServQual dimensions included in this study are Latest technology, equipments, Attractive ambience, Courteous staff, Hygienic environment, Prompt service delivery. The sample size is 300 and was collected from patients of specialty hospitals. The demographic profile of the study showed that the females were (64%) and males were (36%), the majority of the
respondents (63%) were older than 55 years. 51% stayed at the hospital for the first time. The data collected were analyzed through statistical software SPSS.

**OBJECTIVE**

To examine the impact of service quality dimensions on patients' satisfaction

**METHODOLOGY**

Multiple Regression analysis is performed.

Dependent variable: Patient satisfaction (Y)

Independent variables:
1. Latest Technology and Equipments (X1)
2. Attractive ambience (X2)
3. Courteous staff (X3)
4. Hygienic environment (X4)
5. Prompt service delivery(X5)

Multiple R value: 0.761
R Square value: 0.580
Adjusted R Square: 0.575
F value: 138.504
P value: 0.000**

<table>
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<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
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<td>Prompt service delivery</td>
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a Dependent Variable: Patient satisfaction

As evident from the study, the service quality dimensions were statistically significant (p<0.05) in determining patient satisfaction and explained a total of 58 % variance on patient satisfaction (R2 =.580). Among the service quality dimensions, these factors significantly influenced patient satisfaction. Courteous staff (β=.661, p=.000) had the most significant impact on patient satisfaction, followed by prompt service delivery (β=.404, p=.000) attractive ambience (β=.320, p=.000), Latest technology and equipments (β=.221, p=.000) hygienic environment (β=.182, p=.000).
CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

It is evident from the study that the service quality dimensions have an impact on patients’ expectations and satisfaction in the health services segment. The results of the regression analysis show that the highest expectations of the patients are related to Courteous staff, prompt service delivery, attractive ambience, latest technology and hygienic environment as a whole. Hence, the managers of health care sectors have to pay attention to these aspects. Therefore, specialty hospitals have to formulate strategies to improve service quality by including recreational activities, sports, yoga to meet patients’ expectations in par with the industry trends.

REFERENCES