

Service Quality and Patient Satisfaction in Outpatient Department Insights for Improved Care Delivery

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify key factors influencing service quality and patient satisfaction in the outpatient department to enhance care delivery. Effective healthcare services rely heavily on maintaining high service quality, particularly in outpatient settings where patient interactions are brief yet impactful. This study was conducted in selected hospitals in the 6th district of Pangasinan, Philippines, using a descriptive quantitative approach. Data were collected through structured questionnaires, assessing dimensions such as waiting time, facility cleanliness, staff communication, and accessibility. The findings revealed that patients reported the highest satisfaction in areas where staff provided clear explanations, facilities were well-maintained, and waiting times were effectively managed. However, significant differences in satisfaction levels were observed based on gender, highlighting the need for personalized care approaches. The study emphasizes the importance of patient-centered care that prioritizes efficient service delivery, empathy, and effective communication. This research serves as a foundation for implementing strategies that enhance healthcare delivery, promote high-quality services, and ultimately contribute to better patient well-being and community health.

Keyword: - satisfaction, patient, strategy, outpatient, health, care

1. Introduction

In order to meet the expectations of its growing patient population, the global healthcare business is changing quickly. Patients are no longer viewed as passive recipients of care, but rather as knowledgeable, informed customers who are exercising their rights and choices. Because of this change, managers and administrators of healthcare organizations now have serious concerns about measuring the quality of intangible services. Patient satisfaction, a complicated phenomena influenced by personal characteristics, health state, patient expectations, and health system influences, has emerged as a critical metric for assessing the efficacy of healthcare services. Afrashtehfar & Bryant, (2020). It shows how well patients' opinions of the care they receive match their expectations of that care. It reflects the degree to which patients' expectations of care align with their perceptions of the care they receive. According to the World Health Organization (2020), quality of care refers to the degree to which health services for individuals and populations increase the likelihood of desired health outcomes. It is based on evidence-based professional knowledge and is critical for achieving universal health coverage. In light of nations' commitment to "Health for All," timely, equitable, people-centered, safe, integrated, and effective healthcare services are crucial. Patient satisfaction, a crucial indicator of healthcare quality, encompasses both the technical and interpersonal facets of healthcare delivery and reflects the individual expectations and subjective perceptions of

the care patients receive. As an example, Gavurova (2021) encompasses the subjective and emotional responses to these encounters, whereas patient experience refers to what transpired during a care episode and how it transpired from the patient's point of view.

Patient satisfaction and overall healthcare results are strongly impacted by service quality. The degree to which a healthcare service fulfils or surpasses patient expectations is referred to as service quality (Febres-Ramos et al., 2021). Five essential dimensions—tangibility, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy are used to characterise service quality in the well-known SERVQUAL model created by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry. These factors are especially important in the healthcare industry since patients frequently have high standards for prompt, courteous service, and professional care. Beyond medical care, high-quality healthcare services encompass the physical setting, the dispositions of medical personnel, the effectiveness of administrative procedures, and the lucidity of patient communications (Chen et al., 2020). When it comes to outpatient department (OPD) services, patient impressions are greatly influenced by the quality of the services provided. According to Liu et al. (2021), OPDs frequently serve as patients' initial point of contact and have a big impact on how they feel about the healthcare system as a whole. Wulandari et al. (2021) claim that effective and superior OPD services can improve patient outcomes by lowering patient anxiety, cutting down on wait times, and improving the entire healthcare experience. On the other hand, subpar service, which is typified by protracted wait times, unresponsive employees, or ambiguous communication, can make patients unhappy and possibly harm health outcomes (Pogorzelska, 2022).

The Philippine healthcare system has made strides, but there are still many obstacles to overcome. Nationwide advances in health outcomes are nonetheless hampered by workforce dispersion, system fragmentation, and unequal access to high-quality healthcare (Maramba-Lazarte, 2020). To address the nation's expanding health needs, the Department of Health (DOH) launched the Universal Healthcare (UHC) initiative, also known as "Kalusugang Pangkalahatan" (KP), in 2011. Local government units (LGUs), other national agencies, development partners, civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations, and other stakeholders were asked to collaborate and support this effort. The UHC Law, also known as Republic Act No. 11223, which aims to provide access to health services, expand primary care, and promote equitable treatment for all Filipinos, further strengthened this commitment (Abad et al., 2021). In this endeavour, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) is also essential. It is in charge of creating national development plans and strategies that encourage inclusive economic growth and support changes in the health sector. By tackling inequalities in healthcare access and quality, NEDA's partnership with the DOH seeks to guarantee that healthcare changes are in line with more general national development goals (Macabasag et al., 2022). Furthermore, as stressed in Section 30.12 of the UHC Law, LGUs have been instructed to pass stringent regulations that enhance and expand current health promotion policies and initiatives. Executive Order 138 on full devolution, which mandates that LGUs provide necessary services and facilities in accordance with national policies, guidelines, and standards, further strengthened this obligation. To encourage surroundings that support health throughout the Philippines, the Department of Health and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) have adopted the Healthy Communities Framework. While much of the responsibility now lies with LGUs, certain hospitals in the 6th district of Pangasinan, such as Tayug Family Hospital, Eastern Pangasinan District Hospital, Umingan Community Hospital Outpatient Department (OPD), and Balungao Rural Health Unit, have been acknowledged for their significant contributions to health promotion and exemplary healthcare services.

However, despite these efforts, significant gaps remain. There is a critical need to assess whether the current healthcare structures and policies effectively address patient satisfaction, particularly in the context of OPD services. The quality of OPD services substantially impacts patient satisfaction, healthcare outcomes, and the hospital's overall reputation. This study proposes a comprehensive plan to improve service quality and patient satisfaction in selected hospitals in the 6th district of Pangasinan

2. Methodology

The research design is the comprehensive plan, framework, or strategy that governs the entire research process. It outlines a researcher's methodology for gathering and evaluating data while maintaining authenticity, consistency, and dependability throughout the investigation. The foundation of each major research endeavour is a clearly specified research study design, which offers a methodical framework for the inquiry process. This approach produces reliable outcomes by guaranteeing validity, consistency, and dependability in data gathering and

processing. Descriptive research is also useful for comprehending the traits, habits, and trends of a certain population. By using this style, the researcher can provide a thorough overview while delving into the nuances of a given occurrence. According to Rezigalla, (2020), a descriptive research strategy can employ various research tools to examine one or more variables. This study employs a quantitative descriptive technique to examine service quality and patient satisfaction in the outpatient department. Quantitative research is an inquiry into a social or human problem based on testing a theory composed of variables measured with numbers and analyzed with stratified procedures to determine whether the theory's predicted generalizations are accurate. The goal of descriptive research is to observe and characterize features, behaviors, or phenomena within a given population systematically and objectively. In this case, the study aims to ascertain the prevalence of service quality and patient satisfaction within the target group of patients from the chosen institutions. Data collection is primarily based on a questionnaire produced by the researcher expressly for this study. The questionnaire has "Likert scale items" for designing perceptions and health outcomes.

2.1 Population and Locale of the Study

The study is conducted at four selected hospitals in the 6th district of Pangasinan. The researcher used convenience sampling to collect data from respondents and create a questionnaire.

2.2 Data Gathering Tool

The researcher developed a checklist for the questionnaire as part of the investigation. This well-structured application ensures that all important data points are adequately recorded by methodically collecting information from responders. The researcher carefully reviews previous research and literature to make sure the questionnaire checklist is comprehensive and pertinent. The development of a data collection tool that efficiently gathers the required information was made possible by this methodical approach, which identified important factors and relevant questions. The researcher improved the validity and reliability of the data gathered by firmly establishing the questionnaire in existing research. Part II covers the general level of service quality and the patient experience at the hospital in question, including waiting times, cleanliness of the facilities, staff communication, and accessibility. The questionnaire checklist was evaluated, refined, and improved by research professionals, including two Urdaneta City University professors and a chief nurse.

The goal of the validation is to ensure that every question is easily understood and relevant to the respondents' actual experience. This is important to ensure that respondents have difficulties answering the questionnaire and that the data collected is genuine. The feedback was integrated into the final draft. The questionnaire checklist was completed and it has been approved.

2.3 Data Gathering Procedure

After the questionnaire checklist has been modified and approved, the researcher request for the approval from the Chief of the participating hospitals. This formal approval authorized the conduct of the study, guaranteeing that it adheres to ethical principles and respects the rights of the respondents. The researcher personally administer the questionnaire to the respondents and patients at selected hospitals to ensure data accuracy and minimize potential misunderstandings. The researcher described the purpose and significance of the study after the questionnaire is distributed in order to promote volunteer participation. Following completion, the researcher compiled the questionnaires to ensure that all the data is accurate.

3. Results

Patient satisfaction is a multidimensional construct that reflects patients' perspectives on their healthcare experiences. It includes a variety of factors including as medical care quality, communication with healthcare providers, service accessibility, wait times, and the physical environment of healthcare facilities. High levels of patient satisfaction are linked to better health outcomes, enhanced adherence to medical recommendations, and a lower risk of malpractice lawsuits. (Bhatt, 2024)

Table 1: Weighted Mean Result on Waiting Time on the Service Quality and Patient Satisfaction in Outpatient Department

WAITING TIME - Oras ng Paghihintay	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1.The waiting time before receiving services was reasonable. (<i>Maikli at makatuwiran ang oras ng paghihintay bago makuha ang serbisyo.</i>)	4.38	Strongly Agree
2.The estimated waiting time was clearly communicated to me. (<i>Maayos na ipinaalam sa akin ang tinatayang oras ng paghihintay</i>)	4.38	Strongly Agree
3.There was an organized system to streamline the queuing and check-in process. (<i>May sistema upang mapabilis ang proseso ng pagpila at pag-check-in.</i>)	4.52	Strongly Agree
4.Staff promptly assisted me during emergencies or urgent needs. (<i>Agad akong tinulungan ng staff sa oras ng emergency o kagyat na pangangailangan</i>)	4.53	Strongly Agree
5.Scheduled appointment times were adhered to. (<i>Nasusunod ang itinakdang oras ng mga appointment</i>)	4.39	Strongly Agree
6.The payment or prescription process was completed quickly. (<i>Mabilis na natapos ang proseso ng pagbabayad o pagkuha ng reseta</i>)	4.38	Strongly Agree
7.The waiting time did not cause inconvenience or discomfort. (<i>Ang oras ng paghihintay ay hindi nagdulot ng abala o hindi kaaya-ayang karanasan</i>)	4.13	Agree
Average Weighted Mean	4.39	Strongly Agree

The weighted mean result for waiting time, service quality, and patient satisfaction in the outpatient department is 4.39, as shown in Table 1. Patients significantly feel that they received assistance for emergencies or urgent requirements, as evidenced by their highest weighted mean of 4.53. The speed at which patients receive care during emergencies has a significant impact on their satisfaction levels. Delays in treatment can have a negative impact on health and erode public trust in healthcare. The importance of timely care was highlighted in 2024 when the Daily Telegraph reported on a case in which a patient's appendix burst in an emergency department recliner while they were waiting for surgery due to a shortage of beds.

With the second-highest weighted mean of 4.52, an orderly system to expedite the check-in and queuing procedure has been put in place, offering patients great satisfaction and high-quality service in the outpatient department. According to Heeringa et.al, (2020) research, long wait times are a major contributor to patient dissatisfaction in outpatient departments. Prolonged wait times can lead to frustration, anxiety, and a feeling that the care is inadequate. Effective check-in and queue procedures are crucial to addressing these issues since they directly affect the patient's perception of the calibre of the services.

Additionally, with the lowest weighted mean of 4.13, patients concur that they were not inconvenienced by the waiting period. Waiting time in healthcare settings refers to how long patients have to wait after arriving before getting treatment. Negative perceptions of the quality of care are often associated with lengthy wait times, which can lead to patient dissatisfaction, a decline in following medical advice, and worse health outcomes. In the end, outpatient department wait times are important for reasons other than convenience; they are a measure of the overall quality of healthcare. By prioritising patient-centered approaches and reducing wait times, organisations show their

commitment to delivering high-quality treatment, which fosters a more flexible and conveniently accessible healthcare system.

Table 2: Weighted Mean Result on Facilities Cleanliness on the Service Quality and Patient Satisfaction in Outpatient Department

FACILITIES CLEANLINESS - Kalinisan ng Pasilidad	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1. The outpatient facility was clean and well-maintained (<i>Malinis at maayos ang pasilidad ng outpatient services</i>)	4.53	Strongly Agree
2. The waiting area and other public spaces were regularly cleaned (<i>Regular na nililinis ang waiting area at iba pang pampublikong lugar</i>)	4.53	Strongly Agree
3. Adequate trash bins were available and properly used. (<i>Sapat ang bilang ng mga basurahan at ito'y maayos na ginagamit</i>)	4.52	Strongly Agree
4. The restrooms were clean and easily accessible (<i>Ang mga banyo ay malinis at madaling gamitin.</i>)	4.24	Strongly Agree
5. The medical equipment appeared sanitized and safe for use. (<i>Ang mga medikal na kagamitan ay mukhang maayos at ligtas gamitin.</i>)	4.51	Strongly Agree
6. Chairs, tables, and other furnishings were tidy and in good condition. (<i>Malinis at maayos ang mga upuan, mesa, at iba pang kagamitan sa pasilidad.</i>)	4.47	Strongly Agree
7. The cleanliness of the facility inspired confidence in the quality of care provided. (<i>Ang kalinisan ng pasilidad ay nagbibigay ng tiwala sa kalidad ng serbisyo</i>)	4.49	Strongly Agree
Average Weighted Mean	4.47	Strongly Agree

Referring to Table 2 obtaining an average weighted mean of 4.47, displays the impact of cleanliness of facilities relating to the service quality and patient satisfactory in outpatient department. With the highest average weighted mean of 4.53, outpatient facility's cleanliness and well-maintenance is strongly agreed by the patients. One of the main factors affecting patient happiness and service quality in hospital settings is cleanliness. Patients' perceptions of the quality of care at outpatient departments (OPDs), where they seek medical consultation and treatment without being admitted to the hospital, are greatly influenced by the facility's cleanliness. Studies show that well-maintained outpatient clinics reduce the incidence of healthcare-associated infections, boosting patient trust in healthcare providers and improving health outcomes. A clean and well-maintained outpatient facility promotes positive patient experiences, which directly affects patients' faith in the medical system. When patients enter a clean environment with proper waste management, spotless surfaces, and well-kept waiting areas, they are more likely to feel safe and assured about the care they will receive (Shi, 2022).

However, patients firmly believe that the waiting area and other public areas were routinely cleaned, as indicated by the weighted mean of 4.53. The cleanliness of a medical facility's waiting rooms and public spaces also affects its reputation. First impressions are crucial since patients and visitors usually base their opinions about the quality of care on how the facility looks. A clean environment fosters trust and confidence in the healthcare services provided, but an unclean environment may lead to negative opinions and harm the facility's reputation. In the digital age, when patients may share their experiences online, keeping a clean environment is essential to maintaining a positive public image. (Wager and others, 2021).

Bathrooms have a significant impact on how patients perceive facility management, cleanliness, and service quality, despite their seeming insignificance. Although people think outpatient department restrooms are clean and accessible, there may still be room for improvement, according to the study's lowest weighted mean of 4.24. Healthcare institutions must continuously monitor and maintain restrooms, which are high-traffic locations that

require strict hygiene procedures, in order to meet patient expectations and uphold cleanliness requirements. Keeping the restroom clean is crucial for avoiding and treating illnesses, as well as increasing patient satisfaction.

Table 3: Weighted Mean Result of Staff Communication on the Service Quality and Patient Satisfaction in Outpatient Department

STAFF COMMUNICATION - <i>Komunikasyon ng Staff</i>	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1. The staff provided clear and respectful explanations about processes and services. (<i>Magalang at malinaw ang paliwanag ng staff tungkol sa mga proseso at serbisyo</i>)	4.65	Strongly Agree
2. The staff were approachable and friendly. (<i>Madaling makipag-usap sa mga staff, at sila'y palakaibigan</i>)	4.58	Strongly Agree
3. My questions were answered with adequate knowledge and patience (<i>Sinagot ng staff ang aking mga tanong nang may sapat na kaalaman.</i>)	4.58	Strongly Agree
4. Clear instructions were given regarding medication, tests, and follow-up care. (<i>Nagbigay ng malinaw na impormasyon tungkol sa gamot, pagsusuri, at follow-up.</i>)	4.60	Strongly Agree
5. The staff showed genuine concern for my condition and needs. (<i>Ipinakita ng staff ang malasakit sa aking sitwasyon at pangangailangan</i>)	4.61	Strongly Agree
6. The staff encouraged me to ask questions to understand my condition better. (<i>Hinihikayat ng staff ang mga pasyente na magtanong para maunawaan ang kanilang kondisyon</i>)	4.54	Strongly Agree
7. Staff responded promptly to patient inquiries and concerns. (<i>Mabilis na tumutugon ang staff sa mga tanong o alalahanin ng pasyente</i>)	4.50	Strongly Agree
Average Weighted Mean	4.58	Strongly Agree

With a result of overall weighted mean of 4.58 in terms of staff communications on the service quality and patient satisfaction in outpatient department is referred in Table 3. The patients highly believe that the outpatient department's procedures and services have been explained in a courteous manner, as evidenced by their highest weighted mean of 4.65. Furthermore, in patient-centered communication, the patient's needs, preferences, and values are prioritised, ensuring that they are integral to the decision-making process. By encouraging a therapeutic relationship between patients and medical staff, this approach enhances patient satisfaction and health results. A research by Greenwald (2022) found that PCC increases patient satisfaction ratings by making patients feel valued and understood.

Adopting a patient-centered approach guarantees that even brief interactions are meaningful and effectively address the patient's issues in outpatient settings, where time constraints are typical. Ensuring patient compliance requires succinct and straightforward descriptions of medical procedures and services. Second, with the next highest weighted mean of 4.61, patients strongly think that staff members demonstrated genuine concern for their needs and condition. The perception of genuine concern from healthcare professionals has a significant impact on patient satisfaction and overall healthcare outcomes. A high level of comfort and trust in the medical setting is indicated by the patients' strong agreement that staff members genuinely care about their wants and circumstances. This essay explores the various dimensions of such genuine concern, examining its effects on patient satisfaction, treatment plan adherence, psychological well-being, and the overall quality of healthcare services. Strong nurse-patient relationships characterised by sincere concern are positively correlated with patient satisfaction. A study that was published in the Journal of International Crisis and Risk Communication Research found that nursing care

satisfaction is strongly predicted by relational care. (2023). Additionally, with the lowest weighted mean of 4.50, patients strongly concur that staff members addressed their questions and concerns in a timely manner. Staff responsiveness is the speed and attention to detail with which medical personnel respond to the demands, enquiries, and worries of their patients. It demonstrates how committed the healthcare system is to patient-centered treatment, where people actively participate in their own well-being.

Table 4: Weighted Mean Result of Accessibility on the Service Quality and Patient Satisfaction in Outpatient Department

ACCESSIBILITY		Strongly Agree
1. The outpatient facility was easy to locate and visit. (<i>Madaling mahanap at puntahan ang outpatient facility</i>)	4.49	Strongly Agree
2. Sufficient and well-organized parking was available for patients (<i>May sapat at maayos na paradahan para sa mga pasyente.</i>)	4.49	Strongly Agree
3. Ramps or elevators were accessible for persons with disabilities or special needs. (<i>Mayroong ramp o elevator para sa mga may kapansanan o espesyal na pangangailangan.</i>)	4.41	Strongly Agree
4. The facility was easily reachable by public transportation. (<i>Ang lugar ay madaling marating gamit ang pampublikong transportasyon</i>)	4.38	Strongly Agree
5. Signages and directions were clear and easy to follow. (<i>Ang signage at mga direksyon ay malinaw at madaling sundan.</i>)	4.45	Strongly Agree
6. The facility was accessible to all patients, regardless of their condition or needs. (<i>Ang pasilidad ay accessible sa lahat ng uri ng pasyente, anuman ang kanilang kondisyon o pangangailangan</i>)	4.50	Strongly Agree
Average Weighted Mean	4.45	Strongly Agree

With an overall score of 4.45, the table above shows the weighted mean impact of accessibility on patient satisfaction and service quality in the outpatient department. With a highest weighted mean of 4.50, the data indicates that patients highly agree that the facility was accessible to all patients, regardless of their needs and conditions. In the healthcare sector, accessibility refers to how simple it is for individuals to obtain essential medical services. Among its numerous aspects are physical accessibility, service availability, cost, and accommodating various patient needs. The term "physical accessibility" describes how medical facilities are designed to be easily navigable by everyone, including people with disabilities.

Furthermore, patients strongly agree that the outpatient facility was easy to find and visit, and that parking was accessible for all patients, which is explained by the second-highest weighted mean of 4.49. The accessibility and convenience of outpatient facilities, especially parking availability and location, have a major impact on patient satisfaction. Operational, geographic, and physical accessibility are some of the several facets of accessibility in healthcare settings. Physical accessibility refers to a facility's structural design that ensures all patients, including those with disabilities, may move around freely. Geographic accessibility refers to where medical facilities are located and how simple it is to get there by various means of transportation. Clear wayfinding, effective appointment scheduling, and simplified check-in procedures are all components of operational accessibility that promote usability.

Finally, with the lowest weighted mean of 4.38, patients strongly concur that public transit made it easy to go to the hospital. How easy it is to use public transport to travel to outpatient clinics is another significant factor affecting patient satisfaction. Patients who don't possess cars or who rely on public transit due to health conditions

or economical constraints benefit from well-connected healthcare facilities. According to a study by Daumas (2020) hospitals with convenient locations close to buses, subways, or other public transit options had higher patient satisfaction and retention rates. When healthcare providers collaborated with local transportation authorities to improve transit routes to their facilities, they also reported a decrease in appointment cancellations and late arrivals.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that several key aspects of outpatient department services are positively perceived by patients. Firstly, in terms of waiting time, respondents express strong appreciation for the efficiency of service. They commend the prompt assistance they receive upon arrival, particularly during situations involving emergencies or urgent medical concerns. The presence of an organized and systematic queuing process is also highlighted, as it significantly contributes to a smoother and more orderly service delivery experience.

Secondly, regarding facility cleanliness, patients report feeling reassured about the quality of care they are receiving. A clean, well-maintained, and hygienic environment not only enhances their overall comfort but also reinforces their trust in the safety and professionalism of the healthcare setting.

When it comes to staff communication, this area emerges as the most highly rated by respondents. Patients praise healthcare personnel for their ability to communicate clearly and effectively. They especially value the respectful and empathetic manner in which staff members interact, which fosters a sense of being heard, understood, and genuinely cared for. Lastly, the aspect of accessibility is viewed very positively. Patients find that the healthcare facilities are easy to locate and conveniently situated. Moreover, the institutions demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity by ensuring that individuals with disabilities or special needs are accommodated through appropriate infrastructure and supportive services.

In summary, the study highlights a generally favorable patient experience across multiple dimensions of outpatient care, reflecting the effectiveness of the healthcare services being provided.

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