

Determinants Of Service Quality Perception in Healthcare Sector in Erode

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Abstract—Healthcare is a fundamental aspect of human well-being, and hospitals serve as the backbone of any healthcare system by providing curative and preventive services. The quality of hospital services is a key factor that shapes patients' perceptions, influencing their trust, satisfaction, and overall health outcomes. Service quality perception refers to how patients evaluate various aspects of care, including professionalism of staff, infrastructure, responsiveness, and hygiene. Patients often experience disparities in hospital services due to variations in staff behavior, facility maintenance, and communication effectiveness. In Erode, many patients feel that service quality is inconsistent, leading to dissatisfaction so understanding patients' perception towards hospital service quality is energetic for improving hospital services. In this junction, this study aimed to analyze service quality perception towards hospital services in Erode. This study adopted a descriptive research design and utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to patients to gather information on their demographic profile and perceptions of service quality towards hospital services. The questionnaire was developed using a 5-point Likert scale to assess various aspects of hospital service quality. A total of 157 patients from various hospitals in Erode were selected using a random sampling technique. Secondary data were obtained from published articles, books, journals, and credible internet sources. The collected data were entered into MS Excel and analyzed using SPSS 22.0 software, employing statistical tools such as percentage analysis, mean score, standard deviation and ANOVA. The analysis mentioned that highest level of service quality perception towards hospital services is obtained by the patients who belong to 41–60 age category, male, getting treatment in private hospitals, undergoing surgical treatments and rated the hospital service quality as good.

Index Terms—Service Quality, Patient Perception, Hospital Services, Healthcare Quality, Healthcare Delivery, Quality of Care.

I. INTRODUCTION

Hospitals play a crucial role in providing essential healthcare services to the community, focusing on both curative and preventive care. Quality hospital services are defined by timely medical attention, skilled healthcare professionals, well-maintained infrastructure, and a patient-centered approach. Effective communication, courteous staff behavior, and the availability of necessary facilities such as diagnostic labs, ICUs, and emergency care contribute significantly to patient satisfaction. A clean and hygienic environment further enhances the overall experience. In regions like Erode, improving the quality of hospital services can build trust among patients and ensure better health outcomes through accessible, reliable, and compassionate medical care. Service quality perception towards hospital services refers to how patients evaluate the overall standards of care and support they receive during their interaction with healthcare institutions. It encompasses various dimensions such as the responsiveness of medical staff, communication clarity, empathy, availability of facilities, cleanliness, and the overall patient experience. In regions like Erode, this perception plays a critical role in determining the trust, satisfaction, and loyalty of patients towards hospitals. A positive service quality perception reflects well-organized healthcare delivery, professional staff behavior, and efficient systems that meet patient expectations. Conversely, negative perceptions may arise from delayed services, poor communication, or inadequate infrastructure. Hospitals that prioritize patient-centered care by ensuring timely treatment, maintaining hygienic environments, and fostering respectful communication are more likely to earn favorable perceptions.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In view of Jaswal (2021) indicated that the service quality was far from satisfactory, along with huge gaps in fulfillment of the patients' expectations. Further, it was found that these perceived gaps differed significantly based on different patient and hospital attributes. Explicitly, the research found that COVID-19 patients were relatively more satisfied than those with other ailments. The author Subashini (2018) mentioned that patient satisfaction in corporate hospitals of Erode City was significantly influenced by various SERVQUAL dimensions. Also, a strong correlation between patient demographics and perceived service quality, while hospital-related factors such as name, visit frequency, and length of stay as significant predictors of satisfaction. Among the three hospitals studied, patients demonstrated the highest loyalty toward Lotus Hospital. The study of Sengottuvel (2017) revealed that service quality dimensions namely responsiveness, assurance, empathy, reliability and tangibility significantly influenced both the expectations and perceptions of patients in primary health care centres in Erode District. The study assumed that the strong and positive relationship between service attributes and patient satisfaction levels.

The researchers Ali and Kodikal (2021) noticed that the patients prioritise trustworthiness and safety because they were unable to completely assess the technical quality of healthcare treatments whereas this was followed by infrastructure personal quality and administrative procedure. Moreover, indicated that in order to get a holistic view of their offerings, hospital service providers must first understand the demands of patients. According to Kasturi Mohanty (2024), patients perceive private hospitals as providing more attentive and facility-rich services, while government hospitals are valued for their cost-effective care. However, long waiting times in government hospitals and heavy patient loads in private hospitals remain challenges. The study identified that both sectors must address systemic issues to enhance service quality and patient satisfaction. The study by BanuSundari and Karpagavalli (2016) found that patients' satisfaction levels varied significantly across hospital types in Erode district. Also, respondents from private hospitals reported higher satisfaction, while those from government and trust-run hospitals indicated

lower satisfaction due to concerns over facilities like ventilation, signage, diagnostic services, and water access. In addition, degree-holding patients showed greater awareness of hospital services.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In today's competitive healthcare environment, the quality of hospital services plays a vital role in determining patient satisfaction, trust, and continued utilization. In a growing urban region like Erode, hospitals both public and private are expected to deliver efficient, accessible, and patient-centered care. However, there is often a significant gap between the services provided and the expectations of patients. Issues such as poor communication, inadequate facilities, lack of responsiveness, and unempathetic behavior from healthcare staff can lead to dissatisfaction, affecting the perception of service quality. Understanding how patients perceive the quality of hospital services is important for identifying specific areas that require improvement. Despite the increasing demand for quality healthcare in Erode, limited research exists that captures the service quality perception from the patients' perspective. Hence, this study aimed to evaluate the service quality perception towards hospital services in Erode.

Objectives of the Study

- To explore the demographic profile of the selected patients in Erode.
- To evaluate the Perception of Service Quality among Patients in Erode Hospitals.

Hypothesis of the Study

- There is no significant difference in mean service quality perception towards hospital services with regard to type of the hospital of the patients.
- There is no significant difference in mean service quality perception towards hospital services with regard to nature of treatment of the patients.
- There is no significant difference in mean service quality perception towards hospital services with regard to opinion on service quality of the patients.

IV. RESEARCH METHODS

This study implemented a descriptive research design to examine the service quality perception towards hospital services in Erode. Both primary and

secondary data sources have been utilized. The target population for this research comprises patients who have availed services from hospitals in Erode. A structured questionnaire was developed to collect information on patients' demographic profiles and their perceptions of service quality in hospitals. The questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale to gauge various dimensions of service quality. Secondary data were sourced from books, academic journals,

published articles, and reliable internet resources to support the study framework. A total of 157 patients were selected using a random sampling method to ensure representativeness. The collected data were entered into MS-Excel for tabulation and systematically analyzed using SPSS version 22.0. the statistical tools such as percentage analysis, mean score, standard deviation, and ANOVA were applied to investigate the sample data.

V. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Demographic profile of the Respondents

The details about demographic profile of the selected patients of hospitals in Erode are given in the following table.

Table 1: Demographic profile and Service Quality Perception towards Hospital Services

No.	Variables Name	Number of Respondents	%	Mean	SD
1	Age				
	• Upto 25 Years	16	10.2	3.52	0.62
	• 26-40 Years	35	22.3	3.61	0.57
	• 41-60 Years	59	37.6	3.81	0.42
	• Above 60 Years	47	29.9	3.79	0.40
	Total	157	100.0		
2	Gender				
	• Male	86	54.8	3.79	0.44
	• Female	71	45.2	3.64	0.52
	Total	157	100.0		
3	Type of the Hospital				
	• Government	56	35.7	3.65	0.48
	• Private	101	64.3	3.85	0.47
	Total	157	100.0		
4	Nature of Treatment				
	• Surgical	34	21.7	3.89	0.49
	• Medical	82	52.2	3.59	0.51
	• Maternity	25	15.9	3.86	0.29
	• Emergency	16	10.2	3.85	0.35
	Total	157	100.0		
5	Opinion on Service Quality				
	• Excellent	17	10.8	3.36	0.54
	• Good	62	39.5	3.89	0.43
	• Average	45	28.7	3.78	0.44
	• Poor	33	21.0	3.69	0.51
	Total	157	100.0		

- The above table mentioned that 10.2% of the patients are upto 25 years of age, 22.3% of the patients belong to the 26–40 age group, 37.6% of the patients fall in the 41–60 category and 29.9% of the patients are above 60 years.
- The analysis revealed that 54.8% of the patients are male and 45.2% of the patients are female.
- The analysis displayed that 35.7% of the patients visited government hospitals while 64.3% of the patients preferred private hospitals.
- The analysis illustrated that 21.7% of the patients received surgical treatment, 52.2% of the patients received medical treatment, 15.9% of the patients were maternity cases and 10.2% of the patients received emergency care.
- The analysis confirmed that 10.8% of the patients rated the service as excellent, 39.5% of the patients valued as good, 28.7% of the patients as average and 21.0% of the patients opined as poor.

5.2 Service Quality Perception towards Hospital Services

The following table explores the service quality perception towards hospital services among the selected patients in Erode. For this study, the

researcher has developed eight statements related to patients' perception of various aspects of hospital service quality, such as staff behavior, infrastructure, emergency responsiveness, cleanliness, communication, and billing processes.

Table 2: Service Quality Perception Towards Hospital Services

S. No	Service Quality Perception	Mean	SD
1	Doctors and nurses at the hospital are courteous and respectful	3.87	1.10
2	Facilities such as pharmacy, lab and ICU are adequately available in the hospital	3.94	0.97
3	The hospital responds quickly to emergency situations	3.82	0.96
4	The hospital premises are clean and well-maintained	3.75	0.92
5	The hospital provides timely and efficient medical services	3.96	0.87
6	I am confident in the medical expertise of the hospital staff	3.55	1.11
7	The billing process at the hospital is transparent and easy to understand	3.32	1.14
8	The hospital provides clear communication regarding treatment and procedures	3.60	1.26

The Cronbach's Alpha value for the statements on service quality perception towards hospital services is 0.893, indicating that the scale has high internal reliability and is fit for further analysis. The study observed that most of the patients strongly agreed with the statement 'The hospital provides timely and efficient medical services', which recorded the highest mean score of 3.96 and a standard deviation of 0.87, followed by 'Facilities such as pharmacy, lab and ICU are adequately available in the hospital' with a mean of 3.94 and SD of 0.97. In contrast, the lowest mean score was attained for the statement 'The billing process at the hospital is transparent and easy to understand' with a mean of 3.32 and SD of 1.14, indicating that billing and cost-related clarity is an area requiring improvement.

Testing of Hypothesis (ANOVA)

5.3 Relationship between Independent Variables and Service Quality Perception towards Hospital Services

This section has examined that the relationship between the independent variables and service quality perception towards hospital services among selected patients in Erode. In order to analyse the relationship between selected independent variables and service quality perception towards hospital services, a hypothesis has been developed and tested by using ANOVA.

Type of the Hospital and Service Quality Perception towards Hospital Services

H₀: There is no significant difference in mean service quality perception towards hospital services with regard to type of the hospital of the patients.

Table 3: Type of the Hospital and Service Quality Perception towards Hospital Services

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	'p' value
Between Groups	1.498	1	1.498	6.718	0.010*
Within Groups	34.565	155	0.223		
Total	36.063	156			

Note: * – Significant at 1% level

From the analysis, it is justified that the 'p' value is 0.010, which is less than 0.05 whereas the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in the mean service quality perception towards hospital services with regard to the type of the hospital of the patients. This study measured that patients' perceptions of service quality vary

significantly between government and private hospitals.

Nature of Treatment and Service Quality Perception towards Hospital Services

H₀: There is no significant difference in mean service quality perception towards hospital services with regard to nature of treatment of the patients.

Table 4: Nature of Treatment and Service quality perception towards hospital services

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	'p' value
Between Groups	3.172	3	1.057	4.919	0.003*
Within Groups	32.891	153	0.215		
Total	36.063	156			

Note: * – Significant at 1% level

It is mentioned that the 'p' value is 0.003, which is less than 0.05 consequently the null hypothesis is rejected. So, there is a significant difference in the mean service quality perception towards hospital services with regard to the nature of treatment of the patients. This study indicated that patients undergoing different

types of treatments such as surgical, medical, maternity, or emergency perceive the quality of hospital services differently.

Opinion on Service Quality and Service quality perception towards hospital services

H₀: There is no significant difference in mean service quality perception towards hospital services with regard to opinion on service quality of the patients.

Table 5: Opinion on Service Quality and Service Quality Perception towards Hospital Services

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	'p' value
Between Groups	3.384	3	1.128	5.280	0.002*
Within Groups	32.680	153	0.214		
Total	36.063	156			

Note: * – Significant at 1% level

From the analysis, it is noticed that the 'p' value is 0.002, which is less than 0.05 therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in the mean service quality perception towards hospital services with regard to the opinion on service quality of the patients. This study noted that patients' overall opinions whether excellent, good, average, or poor have a statistically significant impact on how they perceive the quality of hospital services.

VI. FINDINGS

- It is assumed from the study that the majority of patients fall in the 41–60 years age group. The analysis indicated that patients in the 41–60 age category have the highest level of service quality perception towards hospital services (Mean: 3.81).
- It is inferred from the study that a slightly higher proportion of hospital service users are male. The analysis indicates that male patients have a greater perception of service quality (Mean: 3.79) compared to female patients.
- It is assumed from the study that the majority of patients opt for private hospital services. The analysis showed that patients receiving treatment in private hospitals have a higher level of service quality perception (Mean: 3.85) when compared to those using government hospitals.
- It is found that most (52.2%) respondents availed general medical services. However, the analysis revealed that surgical patients show the highest service quality perception (Mean: 3.89) indicating that patients undergoing surgical treatments tend to rate service quality more positively.

- It is identified from the study that the majority of patients perceive the hospital services as good. The analysis proved that those who rated the services as 'Good' recorded the highest mean score (Mean: 3.89).
- The mean score analysis examined that most of the patients strongly agreed with the statement 'The hospital provides timely and efficient medical services', which recorded the highest mean score of 3.96 and the statement 'The billing process at the hospital is transparent and easy to understand' with a lowest mean of 3.32.
- The ANOVA assumed that there is a significant difference in the mean service quality perception towards hospital services with regard to the type of the hospital of the patients.
- From the 'F' test analysis, it is indicated that there is a significant difference in the mean service quality perception towards hospital services with regard to the nature of treatment of the patients.
- The result of ANOVA confirmed that there is a significant difference in the mean service quality perception towards hospital services with regard to the opinion on service quality of the patients.

VII. SUGGESTIONS

- The analysis indicated that patients in the 41–60 age category have the highest level of service quality perception towards hospital services. Hence, hospitals can adapt communication, preventive care, and wellness programs to better engage this age group.

- The analysis indicates that male patients have a greater perception of service quality compared to female patients. Therefore, hospitals should identify specific concerns of female patients and address gender-sensitive service improvements to ensure balanced satisfaction.
- The analysis showed that patients receiving treatment in private hospitals have a higher level of service quality perception when compared to those using government hospitals. So, government hospitals should adopt best practices from the private sector, such as improving responsiveness and patient interaction.
- The analysis revealed that surgical patients show the highest service quality perception indicating that patients undergoing critical or specialized treatments tend to rate service quality more positively. Consequently, hospitals should replicate the structured care and attention offered in surgical units across other departments to improve overall perception.
- Since 'Good' service ratings align with the highest mean score, hospitals should identify the elements behind this perception and promote them consistently to elevate overall service standards.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the service quality perception towards hospital services in Erode. Service quality perception towards hospital services reflects patients' overall evaluation of care. A positive perception not only enhances patient satisfaction but also strengthens trust and loyalty towards hospitals. This study mentioned that there is a significant difference in the mean service quality perception towards hospital services with regard to the selected variables such as type of the hospital, nature of treatment and service quality provided by the hospital. To enhance service quality perception towards hospital services in Erode, hospitals should focus on improving staff responsiveness, clear communication and compassionate patient care. Additionally, upgrading medical facilities and maintaining a hygienic environment can significantly improve patient satisfaction.

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