

An applied study of patient perception for service quality in orthopedics clinics of public and private hospitals: A case study in Istanbul

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Abstract

It is apparent that hospitals' service quality is of utmost importance for the patients. The main objective of the study is to find out the patients' public and private hospital preferences and the elements determining their preferences. Some differences concerning the increase in the patient satisfaction were observed in the study. The study examines whether the patients' views on general quality level of orthopedics clinics differ according to some characteristics. In the study, measurement material is the questionnaire prepared for the patients in "Istanbul Private Maltepe Hospital". Within the scope of the study, 250 questionnaires were distributed to the participants. The questionnaire, answered by randomly selected 169 patients, was considered suitable for the analysis. At the end of the reliability analysis, Cronbach's coefficient about the basic data was found 0,928. At the end of the study, it has been observed that physicians, nurses, services and clinical factors have a profound impact on the patient satisfaction. It has been observed that the participants are highly satisfied with physician and nurse services, polyclinic hygiene, interest of personnel, treatment and care services. Most of the participants think positively for the hospital quality, and patients at orthopedics clinics also think positively. Further, it has been observed that the level of patients' satisfaction differs according to demographical characteristics.

Keywords : Health service, patient satisfaction, hospital and quality

Introduction

Patient satisfaction has today become an important concept used in evaluation of the quality, performance and efficiency of health services. Thanks to the increase in customer-oriented or patient-oriented management mentality in health sector, significant improvement has observed in the importance attached to the patient satisfaction and to the researches on evaluation of patient satisfaction (Huang *et al.*, 2004). Patient satisfaction is accepted as a result of health services and an indicator of service quality (Mpinga and Chastonay, 2011). Systematic and regular

researches are being conducted today regarding patients' expectations, the satisfaction they get and the experiences they have in receiving health service in many healthcare organizations and particularly hospitals in many countries. Findings obtained from the researches conducted are released to the public together with other quality indicators (Crow *et al.*, 2002). Even the international accreditation bodies examine whether the hospitals conduct patient satisfaction researches permanently and systematically while accrediting hospitals and they bring obligatory regulations to hospitals regarding this matter (Bautista *et al.*, 2007).

Health services and quality

Health services are one of the most important indicators of socio-economic development level of countries. Increase in countries' level of welfare also increases the importance attached to health. Individuals spend more, countries allocate more resources to health expenditures from their budget. Health services included within the service marketing can be defined as the works for protection of health and treatment of diseases (Kavuncuba 1, 2000).

The quality of patient care services means satisfaction the patient gets from health services (Bashir *et al.*, 2011). Health services are a subject examined at international scale by the individuals who are in health sector. Health services are different from other service sectors (Gaur *et al.*, 2011; Turner and Pol, 1995). Quality of service in health is defined as the degree of offering the health results the individuals desire in an efficient and affordable way (Tafreshi *et al.*, 2007). As in every service, the expectation of the person who gets the service is the factor which determines the quality of service. If the customer gets what she expects from the service, that service is of good quality. Therefore, "patients' expectations" is the determinant criterion in evaluation of the quality of health services (Güllülü *et al.*, 2008).

High-quality health service is defined as efficient distribution and use of resources, effective service delivery, paying attention to equality both in target population's reaching to the services and in resource allocation, and ensuring the satisfaction of those who use the service during service delivery (Ya cı *et al.*, 2006). There is a strong relation between patient satisfaction and the sustainability of quality in health system (Önsüz *et al.*, 2008).

Undoubtedly, globalizing competition environment and technological developments affect health sector most. Use of technology in medical equipment

increases the expectations about the quality of health services. The most important factor for sustainable competition and survival of institutions is the quality of service produced. The number of institutions operating in health sector in Turkey is gradually increasing, and studies are carried out by those institutions in order to implement various quality standards (Çelikkalp *et al.*, 2011; Sava and Bahar, 2011).

Health services and patient satisfaction

Today's health services are shaped with the perspectives of professional managers regarding service delivery to more patients, getting patient satisfaction and ensuring the patient's preference for the same hospital again (Erdem *et al.*, 2008). Thanks to the developing technology and information opportunities, patients can evaluate the health services they receive in more detail, they can question its quality and compare the institutions delivering health service particularly hospitals in terms of the quality of their services (Narlı, 2009).

Patient satisfaction about health services was first evaluated in the field of nursing in USA in 1956. In recent years, patient satisfaction especially in developed countries has a significant place as a standard for the quality of health care (Kılınç, 2009). There are various institutions delivering service in the health sector, and hospitals among them underlie the health system (Narlı, 2009).

As hospitals are the service institutions that offer benefits for their customers by providing health service, the main subject in those institutions is patient satisfaction. Health services provided by healthcare organizations to the patients must have high quality in order to ensure this (Kamçı, 2003 and Gülmez, 2005).

Hospitals develop as long as they provide customer satisfaction and commitment like other businesses (Tengilimo lu *et al.*, 2009). The success or

failure of a hospital largely depends on the satisfaction patients get from the services. Patients pay attention not only to hospital environment but also the services offered recently. Therefore, understanding patient satisfaction is more important (Mohan and Kumar, 2011).

Patient satisfaction that is related to perception of healthcare results and meeting expectations can be defined as such. Patient satisfaction is “the key criterion giving information about to what extent patient’s values and expectations are met and indicating the quality of care in which the real authority is the patient” (Demir, 2007). Patient satisfaction is a factor measuring the success of the services offered in health institutions (hospitals) (Agrawal, 2006 ; Sodani and Sharma, 2011).

Consistency between the health services offered to customers and their expectations may give us information about patient satisfaction. If the perceived service is higher than the expected service, customer satisfaction is high. Otherwise satisfaction is lower. In that case, level of satisfaction can be increased by reducing expectations or increasing perceptions (Tengilimo lu, 2011).

Customer satisfaction should be defined, measured and monitored. Customer satisfaction is determined by two factors. The first one is customer expectation, and the second one is the perceptions of customers regarding the service they receive. Customers’ perception depend on their own characteristics and previous experiences with medical institutions (Tengilimo lu, 2011).

Researches on patient satisfaction are necessary for evaluation of quality for management and design of health system (Emhan *et al.*, 2010). According to some researchers, the factors constituting satisfaction may vary in different conditions or the effect level of a factor may change (Andaleeb and Conway, 2006). The

factors affecting patient satisfaction can be classified under three titles as the characteristics of patients, the characteristics of service providers and corporate characteristics (Özer and Çakıl, 2007).

Factors affecting patient satisfaction

Managers should determine the factors affecting patient satisfaction in order to meet the wishes and expectations of patients and to ensure their satisfaction. Thus, managers can decide on what to do in order to increase patient satisfaction (Gök, 2010). As can be seen, there are a lot of factors affecting patient satisfaction. These are important in terms of indicating the current situation with the patient included. Individual’s physical, psychological and service related experiences affect the level of satisfaction. Socio-psychological and cultural factors are also of great importance (Demir, 2007). There are three main factors affecting patient satisfaction. These factors depend on patient, personnel, physical and environmental conditions. Socio-demographic characteristics of patients such as age, education, occupation, income, sex, language, religion, race and family play separate and different roles in the level of satisfaction patients get from the services. Those criteria which vary from person to person are closely related to the level of satisfaction obtained from health services (Andaleeb *et al.*, 2007 and Top *et al.*, 2010).

Material and methods

This research is a case study applied to a group of patients in 3 public and 2 private hospitals operating in health sector, which is a different field of service sector. The purpose of the study is to compare the general viewpoints of the patients referring to 5 hospitals in Istanbul about the quality of services offered by those hospitals by the variables of age, level of income and marital status, to determine the factors affecting patient satisfaction, and to increase the

awareness about the concept of “patient satisfaction”. Three of those hospitals in which the case study was carried out are public training and research hospitals. Other two hospitals are those offering private health services with 50-250 bed availability in full capacity.

The scope of the study is composed of the patients referring to five hospitals in the Istanbul city center. The case study is conducted by the researcher with a face-to-face questionnaire. A total of 250 questionnaires were conducted in those hospitals. Patients were randomly selected. Following the research, a preliminary test was carried out with the purpose of ensuring the reliability of data obtained. Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found 0.892 after the preliminary test and reliability analysis. The questionnaire used in the preliminary test includes data belonging to 53 participants. The number of the questionnaire put to general analysis is 169. Other questionnaires obtained were excluded from the analysis due to being inappropriate for the case study.

Analysis results were obtained and interpreted with SPSS 17.0 statistics package program. Following the reliability tests, Cronbach Alpha (Internal Reliability) coefficient of the scale was calculated and the result was found to be 0.928. This ratio is considerably higher than the ratio 0.70 accepted in social sciences. Accordingly, internal reliability ratio of the scale used in the research is at a statistically accepted level.

The first part of the questionnaire contains the questions about some demographic characteristics of patients. The questions in the second part aim at determining the perceptions of patients about general healthcare services of the hospital (ambulatory care services), physical environment and general attitudes and behaviors of physicians and nurses, and determining the factors that affect patient satisfaction.

In the questionnaire, the patients were expected to state to what extent they agree with the statements about general quality of hospitals, and the extent of agreeing with those statements was prepared with the use of 3-point likert scale. So evaluation was carried out in “Good-1”, “Very good-2” and “Excellent-3” groups.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Characteristics

Data regarding the demographic characteristics of the individuals who participated in the research have been presented. 49.1% of the participants are male, 50.9% is female. 14.8% of the participants are aged between 18-25, 18.3% is aged between 25-30, 26.6% is aged between 30-35, 18.3% is aged between 35-40, 13% is aged between 40-45, 2.4% is aged between 45-50 and 6.5% is aged between 50-60. 40.8% of the participants are married and 45% is single, 5.9% is widow and 8.3% is divorced. 14.2% is literate, 33.7% is primary school graduate, 30.8% is high school graduate, 10.1% is vocational school graduate, 10.7% is university graduate and 0.6% has master's degree by the educational background of the participants. According to the social security status of the participants, 61.5% is registered to retirement fund, 37.3% is registered to SSI and 1.2% is registered to BA _KUR (social security organization for artisans and the self-employed). Regarding the profession of the participants, 18.3% is retired, 32.5% doesn't work, 30.8% is worker, 4.7% is civil servant and 13.6% is student. Regarding the distribution of income, 5.3% of the participants have a monthly income of 501-1001 TL, 40.2% earns 1001-1501 TL, 46.7% earns 1501-2001 TL, 6.5% earns 2001-2501 TL, 0.6% earns 2501-3501 TL and 0.6% earns 3501-5001 TL. 78.7% of the participants live in the city center in Istanbul 17.2% lives in surrounding cities, 3.6% lives in regions close to Istanbul and 0.6% lives in the cities far from Istanbul.

Table - 1. Pearson chi-square table regarding the relation between opinion about general quality of hospital and age groups

| | Test Statistics | df | Significance |
|--------------------|---------------------|----|--------------|
| Pearson Chi-square | 27.146 ^a | 12 | 0.007 |
| Probability | 21.345 | 12 | 0.046 |

Table - 2. The relation between opinion about general quality of hospital and marital status

| | | What do you think about general quality of hospital? | | | Total |
|----------------|----------|--|-----------|--------|--------|
| | | Excellent | Very good | Good | |
| Marital Status | Married | 58 | 10 | 1 | 69 |
| | | % 84.10% | 14.50 | 1.40% | 100.00 |
| | Single | 51 | 24 | 1 | 76 |
| | | % 67.10% | 31.60 | 1.30% | 100.00 |
| | Widow | 9 | 0 | 1 | 10 |
| | | % 90.00% | 0.00% | 10.00 | 100.00 |
| Divorced | 13 | 1 | 0 | 14 | |
| | % 92.90% | 7.10% | 0.00% | 100.00 | |
| Total | | 131 | 35 | 3 | 169 |
| | | % 77.50% | 20.70 | 1.80% | 100.00 |

Table - 3. Pearson chi-square table regarding the relation between opinion about general quality of hospital and marital status

| | Test Statistics | df | Significance |
|--------------------|---------------------|----|--------------|
| Pearson Chi-square | 15.199 ^a | 6 | 0.019 |
| Probability | 15.509 | 6 | 0.017 |

According to the table - 1, there is a relation between opinion about general quality of hospital and age groups tested. Following the Pearson chi-square test, the significant value was $0.007 < 0.05$, a significant relation was found between opinion about general quality of hospital and age groups with 5% margin of error. Concerning the results of cross analysis, 77.50% of all age groups think the general quality of the hospital is excellent, 20.70% thinks very good and 1.80% think good (Table – 2 and 3).

Following the Pearson chi-square test regarding the relation between opinion about general quality of hospital and marital status, the significant value was $0.019 < 0.05$, a significant relation was found between opinion about general quality of hospital and marital status with 5% margin of error. Concerning the results of cross analysis by marital status, 77.50% of all patients think the general quality of the hospital is excellent, 20.70% thinks very good and 1.80% think good. It is also observed that single participants find the hospitals with lower quality in comparison to the other participants in the same marital status. Divorced participants find the hospitals with much higher quality in comparison to the other participants in the same marital status. As a result, we can say that hospitals are found to have high quality by marital status (Table – 3 and 4).

Table - 4. The relation between opinion about general quality of hospital and distribution of income

| | | What do you think about general quality of hospital? | | | Total |
|-----------|-----------|--|-----------|---------|---------|
| | | Excellent | Very good | Good | |
| Income | 501-1001 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 9 |
| | | % 44.40% | 44.40% | 11.10% | 100.00% |
| | 1001-1501 | 49 | 17 | 2 | 68 |
| | | % 72.10% | 25.00% | 2.90% | 100.00% |
| | 1501-2001 | 71 | 8 | 0 | 79 |
| | | % 89.90% | 10.10% | 0.00% | 100.00% |
| | 2001-2501 | 7 | 4 | 0 | 11 |
| % 63.60% | | 36.40% | 0.00% | 100.00% | |
| 2501-3501 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | |
| | % 0.00% | 100.00% | 0.00% | 100.00% | |
| 3501-5001 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | |
| | % 0.00% | 100.00% | 0.00% | 100.00% | |
| Total | | 131 | 35 | 3 | 169 |
| | | % 77.50% | 20.70% | 1.80% | 100.00% |

Following the Pearson chi-square test, the significant value was calculated as $0.004 < 0.05$. Accordingly, we can say that there is a significant relation between opinion about general quality of hospital and distribution of income. Concerning the

results of cross analysis by the distribution of income, 77.50% of all patients think the general quality of the hospital is excellent, 20.70% think very good and 1.80% thinks good. Regarding the distribution of income, the participants who have an income of 1501-2001 TL have stated that the general quality of the hospital is better than others in comparison to those having the same income. The participants who have an income of 501-1001 TL have stated that the general quality of the hospital is lower than others in comparison to other income groups. As a result, the majority of the participants conclude that the general quality of the hospital is high (Table – 5).

Table - 5. Pearson chi-square table regarding the relation between opinion about general quality of hospital and distribution of income

| | Test Statistics | df | Significance |
|--------------------|---------------------|----|--------------|
| Pearson Chi-square | 26.182 ^a | 10 | 0.004 |
| Probability | 24.194 | 10 | 0.007 |

Regarding the question “Were the personnel who took care of you interested and kind enough?” that was directed to the participants, 50.9% of the participants said yes, 48.5% said partially, 0.6% said no. Accordingly it can be put forth that the participants are significantly or partially satisfied with the interest and kindness of the personnel (Table – 6).

Table - 6. Percentage distribution of the patients’ views regarding the question “were the personnel who took care of you interested and kind enough?”

| <i>Were the personnel who took care of you interested and kind enough?</i> | Number | Ratio (%) |
|--|--------|-----------|
| Yes | 86 | 50.9 |
| Partially | 82 | 48.5 |
| No | 1 | 0.6 |

Regarding the question “How was the hygiene of orthopedics clinics?” that was directed to the

participants, 21.9% of the participants said very clean, 59.8% said clean, 17.8% said not bad and 0.6% said dirty. 81.7% of the participants said very clean and clean about polyclinics, 0.6% said dirty about polyclinics. It is possible to say that the majority of the participants find polyclinics clean (Table – 7).

Table - 7. Percentage distribution of the patients’ views regarding the question “how was the hygiene of polyclinics?”

| How was the hygiene of Orthopedics Clinics? | Number | Ratio (%) |
|---|--------|-----------|
| Very clean | 37 | 21.9 |
| Clean | 101 | 59.8 |
| Not bad | 30 | 17.8 |
| Dirty | 1 | 0.6 |

Regarding the question “How do you find the treatment and care you receive?” that was directed to the participants, 87% of the participants defined it as excellent, 13% defined as very good. It has been ascertained that the participants generally find treatment and care they receive exceptionally good.

When we examine the factors affecting patient satisfaction, it has been determined that satisfaction level about the matters of physicians, nurse, services and clinical evaluation affects patient satisfaction. Information parameter was found not to have a significant effect on patient satisfaction ($p > 0.05$) In case satisfaction level increases regarding the matters of physician, nurse, service and clinical evaluation, and so does patient satisfaction.

Table - 8. Percentage distribution of the patients’ views regarding the question “how do you find the treatment and care you receive?”

| <i>How do you find the treatment and care you receive?</i> | Number | Ratio (%) |
|--|--------|-----------|
| Excellent | 147 | 87 |
| Very good | 22 | 13 |

Regarding the satisfaction levels about physician and nurse practices, it is observed that average satisfaction level for the services of nurses is 7.58 out of 10, and the average satisfaction level for the services of physicians is 11.69 out of 16. It can be uttered that patients are generally satisfied with the services of physician and nurses (Table – 9).

Table - 9. Distribution of the views regarding the attitudes and behaviors of physicians and nurses about service

| | N | Min. | Max. | Avrg. | SS. |
|-----------|-----|------|------|---------|---------|
| Nurse | 168 | 0.00 | 10.0 | 7.5833 | 2.09195 |
| Physician | 168 | 6.00 | 16.0 | 11.6905 | 3.15271 |

As a result of one-way ANOVA test conducted, it has been determined that there is a significant difference between the patients in different clinics in terms of the level of satisfaction ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion

Measurement of patient satisfaction which is the focus in delivery of health services and accepted as a factor determining the service quality is important and necessary in fast-developing and changing health sector. "Patient satisfaction"-oriented management mentality and service delivery are highly important for the increase in health services and ensuring the productivity and efficiency of the health services.

A total of 169 individual participated in the research that was conducted for the measurement of patient satisfaction. In the inception part of the research, demographic characteristics of individuals such as sex, age, marital status, educational background, social security, occupation and income were explained. In the case of study part, the relations between the general quality of hospital and age, marital status and distribution of income were tested with the use of Pearson Chi-Square test. It has been determined that there is a significant relation between the view

about the general quality of the hospital and age, marital status and distribution of income. Via cross-tables, some inferences were made regarding the relations between the view about the general quality of the hospital and age, marital status and distribution of income. It is concluded that the general quality of hospital is high for each of three variables according to the answers of the participants.

Three questions were directed to the participants of the research regarding the kindness and interest of the personnel who take care of them, hygiene of orthopedics clinics and their general evaluation about the treatment and care they receive. The majority of the participants are satisfied with the kindness and interest of the personnel. The majority of the participants have stated that the polyclinics are clean. All participants were highly satisfied with the treatment and care they receive, none of the participants gave a negative answer to this question. Due to the fact that all the answers given are excellent and very good, it has been concluded that the participants of the research are generally satisfied with the treatment and care they receive.

In the last part, the factors affecting patient satisfaction were examined, and it has been stated that the level of satisfaction about physician, nurse, services and clinical evaluation affects patient satisfaction. It is now clear that information doesn't have a significant effect on patient satisfaction. In this sense, it has been concluded that if satisfaction level increases regarding the matters of physician, nurse, service and clinical evaluation, and so does patient satisfaction.

Additionally, it can be said that patients are generally satisfied with the services of physicians and nurses when the satisfaction levels about physician and nurse practices were examined.

When public and private hospitals are compared, it has been observed that the service quality of private

hospitals is high, but it is low in public hospitals. However, the most important factor affecting the preferences of the patients living in the city center and coming from another city is cost factor and transportation factor. Reliability perception was examined, so university and training and research hospitals were found to be more reliable. The most important factor affecting the preference between private and public hospitals is cost and reliability factor.

The most important factors affecting patient satisfaction are physician information, the quality of service offered, costs, transportation and care. Another significant point is that the higher the educational status of the participants is, the higher service perception occurs in parallel to this. The cost dimension is one of the factors affecting hospital preference, and the amount the patient has to pay for the services offered with the private hospital share is among the other factors affecting the motive to prefer.

In conclusion, reliability, physician's quality, personnel's service quality, transportation and costs were determined as the factors affecting the patient satisfaction preferences.

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