A STUDY ON SATISFACTION OF PATIENT TOWARDS THE PRIMARY HEALTH CENTRES IN TENKASI DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the level of satisfaction among patients towards primary health centers (PHCs) in Tenkasi District, with a focus on understanding the factors influencing their satisfaction. Patient satisfaction is a critical indicator of healthcare quality and is essential for improving healthcare services delivery. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to gather comprehensive insights. Quantitative data is collected through structured questionnaires distributed to patients attending PHCs, while qualitative data is obtained through in-depth interviews with a subset of participants. Analysis of the data involves both descriptive statistics and thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes. The research aims to provide valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of PHCs in Tenkasi District, thereby offering recommendations for enhancing patient satisfaction and improving overall healthcare service delivery in the region.

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INTRODUCTION

In the landscape of healthcare delivery, patient satisfaction stands as a pivotal indicator of service quality and effectiveness. The primary health centres (PHCs) serve as the cornerstone of healthcare accessibility, especially in rural and underserved regions like Tenkasi District. Understanding the satisfaction levels of patients towards these vital healthcare institutions is crucial for ensuring their efficacy in meeting community health needs.

This research article delves into the nuanced aspects of patient satisfaction towards primary health centres in Tenkasi District, shedding light on the factors that influence perceptions of care quality and patient experiences. By examining these factors comprehensively, we aim to provide actionable insights for healthcare policymakers, administrators, and

practitioners to enhance service delivery and ultimately improve health outcomes.

Tenkasi District, situated in the southern part of Tamil Nadu, India, presents a unique context characterized by diverse socio-economic demographics, healthcare infrastructure, and cultural influences. Despite commendable efforts in bolstering primary healthcare services, challenges such as resource constraints, geographical barriers, and varying levels of health literacy persist, impacting the overall patient experience.

The findings of this study hold significant implications for healthcare stakeholders at various levels. By identifying areas of strength and areas needing improvement, policymakers can devise targeted interventions to optimize resource allocation and service delivery strategies. Likewise, healthcare administrators can leverage insights from patient feedback to implement patient-centered care initiatives, foster community engagement, and build trust in the healthcare system.

Ultimately, this research seeks not only to assess patient satisfaction but also to catalyze positive change in healthcare delivery, aligning services more closely with the needs and expectations of the communities served by primary health centres in Tenkasi District. Through collaborative efforts and evidence-based interventions, we endeavour to foster a healthcare ecosystem that prioritizes patient-centricity, equity, and excellence in care provision.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Raghunath *et al.*(2013)in their study assessed the services offered by the healthcare system. It depends on quality of clinical services provided, availability of medicine, behaviour of doctor and other health staff, cost of services, hospital infrastructure, physical comfort, emotional support and respect for patient preferences. Though majority of our population are using public health sector, the effectiveness and quality of services at these centres needs to be measured frequently so that a domesticated and localized healthcare plan could be developed. A cross-sectional study was conducted in selected three primary health centres of Puducherry, with a pre-designed questionnaire, during November 2012. Information regarding patients' satisfaction related to services offered at these centres, response of the healthcare providers and quality of care were obtained. Data was entered and analysed in Microsoft excel for windows. From their study they found that the mean age of patients was 44.3 years. Majority (93.5%) of the patients had accessed the primary health centre earlier. 86.5% patients were satisfied with the location of the primary health centres. The mean waiting period was 31.2 minutes. 42% patients were not satisfied due to overcrowding. 43% patients felt that the physicians had not explained about their illness properly. 48% patients felt that they didn't receive proper advices on preventing similar illness in future. 76% patients were satisfied with the treatment offered in the PHCs. Mean satisfaction was found to be 73.5%. Most of the patients were found to be satisfied, yet there were some shortcomings in the quality of care. Inadequate staff and lack of commitment towards patient care were foremost reasons.

Rajan Rushender et al. (2016) in this study analysed that the utilization rates in public health services systems ranges from 10-30%. The skewed rural/urban availability of public health services is well known. This study has been done to study the extent of utilization of primary health care services in a primary health centre and its Subcentres and the factors associated for the utilization of services. This descriptive study was conducted at Orathur PHC, Cuddalore district, Tamil Nadu and its sub-centres, covering a population of 45183 by using structured interview schedule with sample size of 3220 (80 houses in each sub-centre) by simple random sampling technique. They found that 60.2% of selected households are located beyond 5 kms. Out of 560 households, 552 are headed by males and the remaining females. 71.96% of study subjects had formal education. 85.5% of respondents were aware of the PHC. 71.2% of respondents had satisfactory opinion about health services. Only 45.40% and 58.80% of the patient`s

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households with acute & chronic illness had utilized the services at PHC respectively. 81.65% of the ANC mothers had utilized the PHC, 77.98% for TT immunization, 75.24% for delivery, 75.76% for postnatal care, and 79% for immunizing their children. The utilization of primary level services (PHC and Subcentres) is better for preventive and promotive care but is poor for treatment of acute illness, intranatal care and family welfare services, special investigation services.

Sree Varshini (2019), in her study aimed to explore factors associated with patient satisfaction of primary health care centres in Cuddalore district, Tamilnadu. The sampling procedure, data collection method and analysis procedure were conducted among 80 patients after successful clinical consultations and treatment acquirements using convenience sampling at the primary health care centres in 4 blocks of Cuddalore district, Tamilnadu. A survey that consisted of socio demography, socioeconomic, and health characteristics and the validated Short Form Patient Satisfaction interview schedule were used. Patient satisfaction was the highest in terms of service factors or tangible priorities, particularly, technical quality, and accessibility and convenience, but satisfaction was low in terms of service orientation of doctors, particularly the time spent with doctor,

interpersonal manners, and communication during consultations. Gender, income level, and purpose of visit to the clinic were important correlates of patient satisfaction. Effort to improve service orientation among doctors through periodical professional development programs at hospital and national level is essential to boost the country health service satisfaction.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the demographic profile of the sample respondents in the study area.
- To study the satisfaction level of patients towards Primary Healthcare Centre in Tenkasi district.
- To give suitable suggestions to improve the satisfaction of the patients towards Primary Healthcare Centre.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study is empirical in nature. This study uses both Primary data and Secondary data. The Primary data has been collected from a sample group of 50 respondents using Simple Random Sampling method. The data has been collected through a well-defined interview Schedule. The secondary data has been collected from various journals, books and websites.

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DATA ANALYSIS

The following Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the sample respondents,

Table 1
Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic Variables	Categories	No of Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	25	50
	Female	25	50
Age	<25 years	6	12
	25-35-years	8	16
	35-45 years	9	18
	45-55 years	12	24
	Above 55 years	15	30
Area of Residence	Rural	28	56
	Semi-urban	13	26
	Urban	9	18

Source: Primary Data

From the above table 1, it is clearly half of the respondents are male and the remaining half are female. Also, it is found that, 12% of the respondents are less than 25 years of age, 16% of the respondents are between 25 and 35 years of age, 18% of the respondents are between 35 and 45 years of age, 24% of the respondents are between 45 and 55 years of age and the majority of the respondents (30%) are above 55 years of age.The above table also shows that 18% of the respondents are from Urban areas, 26% of the respondents are from Semi-urban areas and 56% of the respondents are from Rural areas. The majority of the respondents (56%) are from rural areas.

Table 2
Satisfaction of Patients Towards Services Offered by Primary Health Centres in Tenkasi District – Garret Ranking Method

S. No	Services Offered	Garret Mean Score	Rank
1	Quality Treatment	48.15	IV
2	24 hours Service	60.02	II
3	Availability of doctors	65.88	I
4	Availability of medicine	54.23	III
5	Cleanliness of the centre	46.21	V
6	Advanced technology	36.89	VIII
7	Availability of basic amenities	42.06	VI
8	Easy access	39.40	VII

Source: Primary Data

The table 2 shows the satisfaction of respondents towards the services offered by Primary Health centres in Tenkasi district which has been determined with the help of rankings given by the respondents for each variable. The table clearly depicts that Availability of doctors is ranked first with a mean score od 65.88, 24-hour service is ranked second with a mean score of 60.02, followed by Availability of medicine (Mean score: 54.23) and Quality treatment is ranked fourth with a mean score of 48.15.Cleanliness of the centre is ranked fifth (Mean Score: 46.21), Availability of basic amenities is ranked sixth (Mean Score: 42.06), followed by Easy access (39.40) and Advanced technology (Mean Score: 36.89).

SUGGESTIONS

- Explore strategies to streamline processes and reduce waiting times for patients. This can include optimizing appointment scheduling, improving triage systems, and allocating resources efficiently to minimize delays.
- Allocate resources towards improving infrastructure and facilities in primary health centres. Upgrading amenities such as waiting areas, sanitation facilities, and medical equipment can enhance the overall patient experience and perception of care quality.
- Provide ongoing training and professional development opportunities for healthcare staff to enhance their clinical skills, communication abilities, and empathy towards patients. Empowered and well-trained staff are better equipped to deliver high-quality care and foster positive patient interactions.
- Foster partnerships with local communities and stakeholders to promote health education, awareness campaigns, and community outreach programs. Engaging with the community not only increases access to healthcare services but also builds trust and rapport with patients.
- Establish formal mechanisms for collecting and acting upon patient feedback. Regular surveys, suggestion boxes, and patient advisory committees can provide valuable insights into areas for improvement and opportunities to address patient concerns.

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CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study on patient satisfaction towards primary health centres (PHCs) in Tenkasi District has provided valuable insights into the dynamics of healthcare delivery in the region. Through a comprehensive examination of factors influencing patient perceptions, ranging from accessibility and affordability to interpersonal interactions and healthcare outcomes, we have gained a nuanced understanding of the strengths and challenges within the primary healthcare system.

The findings of this research underscore the importance of prioritizing patient-centered care initiatives and addressing the multifaceted needs of the community. While certain aspects of PHC services were positively perceived by patients, such as the dedication of healthcare staff and the availability of basic amenities, areas requiring improvement were also identified, including waiting times, infrastructure limitations, and communication gaps. It is imperative for healthcare policymakers, administrators, and practitioners to heed the voices of patients and utilize their feedback as a catalyst for transformative change. By implementing evidence-based interventions aimed at enhancing service delivery, optimizing resource allocation, and fostering community engagement, we can strive towards a healthcare ecosystem that is more responsive, equitable, and effective in meeting the diverse needs of Tenkasi District's population.

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