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**INDO AMERICAN JOURNAL OF
PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCES**<http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3244127>Available online at: <http://www.iajps.com>**Research Article****A COMPARISON OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HOSPITALS: A
QUALITATIVE STUDY AND REVIEW OF SERVICES AND
ITS EFFECT ON PATIENT SATISFACTION**¹Dr Sarosh Javed, ²Dr Ayesha Habib, ³Dr Sehrish Asad¹Female Dental Surgeon at Mufaza Tul Hayat Hospital, Lahore²Allama Iqbal Medical College, Lahore³Holy Family Hospital, Rawalpindi**Article Received:** April 2019**Accepted:** May 2019**Published:** June 2019**Abstract:**

A number of patients visit the public and private sectors each day. There are numerous factors that effect the patient's choice of visiting a hospital which lead to certain perception among patients and effect the satisfaction of patients to the healthcare services provided at the hospital. The study involves analysing 5 parameters of patient satisfaction, cost consideration, educational status of a physician, waiting area time and quality of services at one public and two private hospitals in Lahore. The results were analysed using SPSS version 22.0. The results have unanimously favoured the quality of services provided at the private setup compared to the public setup and enhanced level of satisfaction of patients visiting the private set up. Public hospitals are open to all where all kinds of patients can visit. The number of patients visiting public hospitals are also higher compared to the private hospitals. However due to an under funded system of public hospitals there is an observation of mismanagement of patients in the public hospitals. While in the private hospitals there is an easy flow of services, easy accessibility, more reliability of services, rapid reception, less waiting area time and more time for consultation that leads to increasingly satisfied patients in the private hospitals as compared to the public hospitals where all these parameters need deliberation or need attention for improvement. Except for the cost consideration which were found moderately higher than public hospitals all other aspects were in favour of private setup. There is thus a requirement to improve the services availability in the public hospitals and make the private hospitals cost effective for a larger population of patients visiting healthcare departments so that the mass of population visiting the public sectors can be diverted to private hospitals for treatment at fairly reasonable costs.

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INTRODUCTION:

Disease, sickness, illness, ailment are the various terms we use when we visit a hospital. A disease is a condition where body suffers from a disorder in function or structure that may demand necessary treatment for which one has to visit the hospital.[1] A hospital is a place where any medical or surgical treatment is provided and there are doctors together with the nursing staff that helps improve the health of the patient through their sickness [2] further the healthcare system is divided into primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare departments. Primary healthcare is the cost effective care that is legally, morally and socially ethical to be practiced by the doctors and is universally acceptable[3] Secondary healthcare department is where the primary healthcare physician sends the patient to be examined further by the specialist since it requires specialized skills, equipment's and treatment for taking care of the disease. Highly specialized medical care that requires taking care of the patient over an extended period of time by the specialist in an advanced medical setup [4]

Hospitals may have all the three different categories of healthcare departments depending on type of infrastructure and quality of manpower available at such places. There are two sets of hospitals in every country where healthcare is provided. These are public hospitals and private hospitals. The major difference that exists between a public and a private hospital is that of ownership. The public hospitals are funded by the government. Whereas a private hospital is the one that is owned by a person or a group of people that are managing the finances of the hospital entirely on their own. Since the management for both the sets of hospitals is different so the way the services provided at these places also differ [5]

The purpose of this article is to find out the differences between the private and public set up of hospitals and how the services provided at the public and the private hospitals effect the choices of the patient that go to these hospitals. Normally the public hospitals are considered for all patients since they have a tendency to cater all kind of patients whether they are affording or non-affording. On the other hand private hospitals due to their higher fees accommodate a group of population that can meet the expense of the hospital services. This article will help us look at various aspects of public and private setup from cost consideration to quality assurance and patients' satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY:

The study was carried out on 267 patients in 3 different outpatient department (OPD) of various public and private hospitals in Lahore city. The study involved 144 patients from 1 public hospital

and 123 patients from 2 private hospitals. The study was of qualitative type and a self-developed questionnaire was made that covered 5 main parameters on the various aspects of the public and private hospitals. There was a total of 16 questions with the choices to choose between based on grading system mentioned in Likert scale with choice between 1 to 4 where 1 being "very much" and 4 being "not at all". The questionnaire was made in English and translated in Urdu as well to accommodate the various mind-set of patients that come to different public and private hospitals and for ease of patients understanding. The 5 main parameters that were focused in the questionnaire were (I) patients satisfaction (ii) cost consideration including the cost of various lab tests and radiography performed at the hospitals (iii) doctors educational status (iv) waiting area time and (v) quality insurance.

Patient satisfaction mainly addressed the two major features of hospital services provided (i) the patients satisfaction with the treatment provided and (ii) the patient satisfaction with the non-clinical experience with the doctor and staff of the hospital. Cost consideration included the costs of lab tests as well as radiograph reports that had overall effected the cost of the patient treatment and outcome of the treatment. It also involved the patient impression on the insurance policies that are provided for treatment at various private hospitals and how they manage to help the costs of the treatment. And the quality assurance mainly overviewed the reliability of services, accessibility, tangible realm of hospital services, trust between a doctor and patient and empathy. The other two parameters of the five parameters were asked as single question in the questionnaire.

The data was collected after having taken the approval from the 1 public and 2 private hospital setup and the patients were presented with the questionnaire in the outpatient department. The data was then analysed using the SPSS version 22.0 and the data was analysed to measure the 5 main parameters into frequencies and means to compare the values of the public hospital to those of private hospitals.

RESULTS:

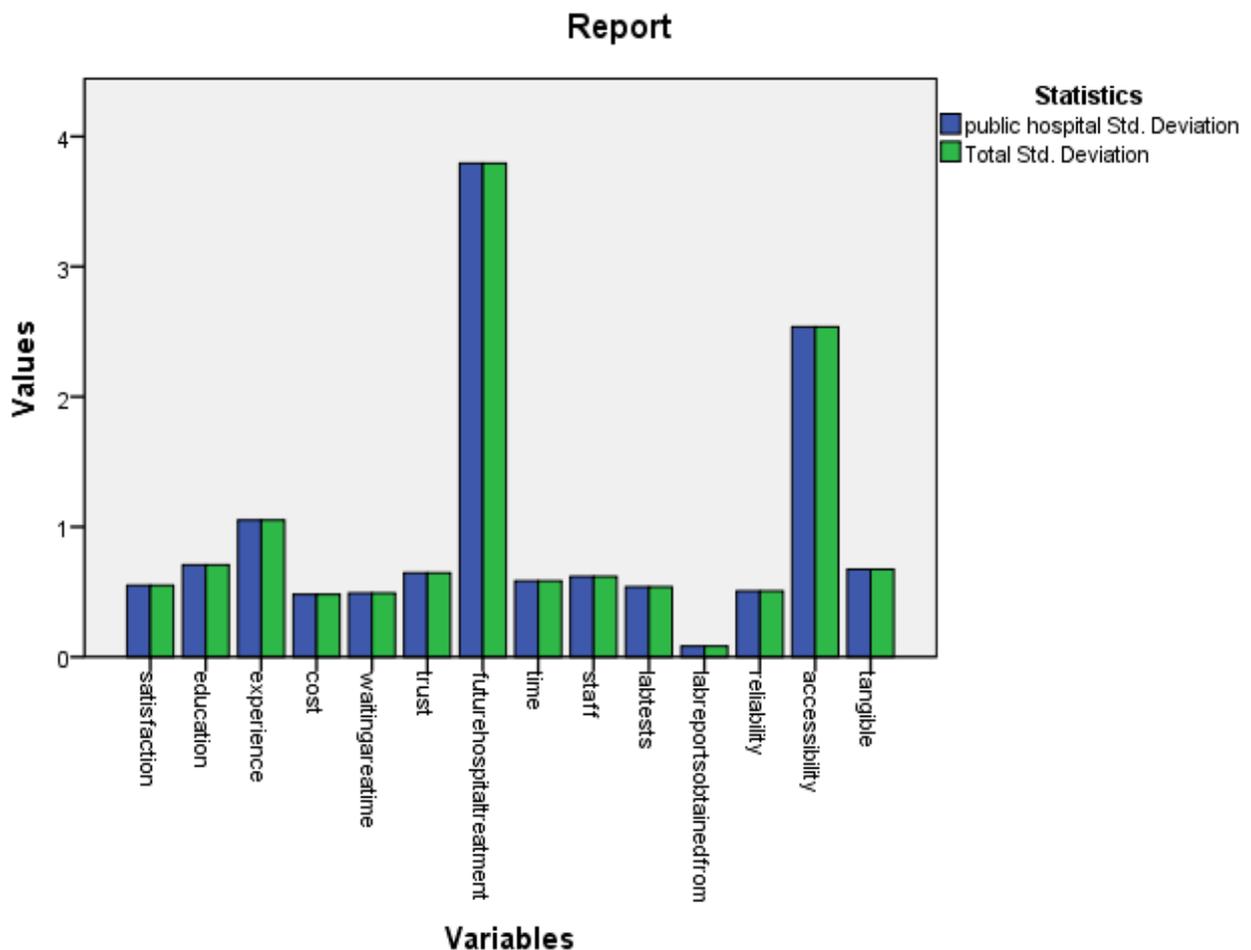
The result was compiled using SPSS version 22.0 and the variables of public hospital and the two private hospitals were analysed into frequencies and means and then compared.

The means for satisfaction was 2.28 with SD of 0.55 for public hospital as compared to the mean of 1.37 with SD of 0.56 for private hospitals, cost had a mean of 1.25 with SD of 0.48 for public hospital as compared to the mean of 2.27 with SD of 0.64 for

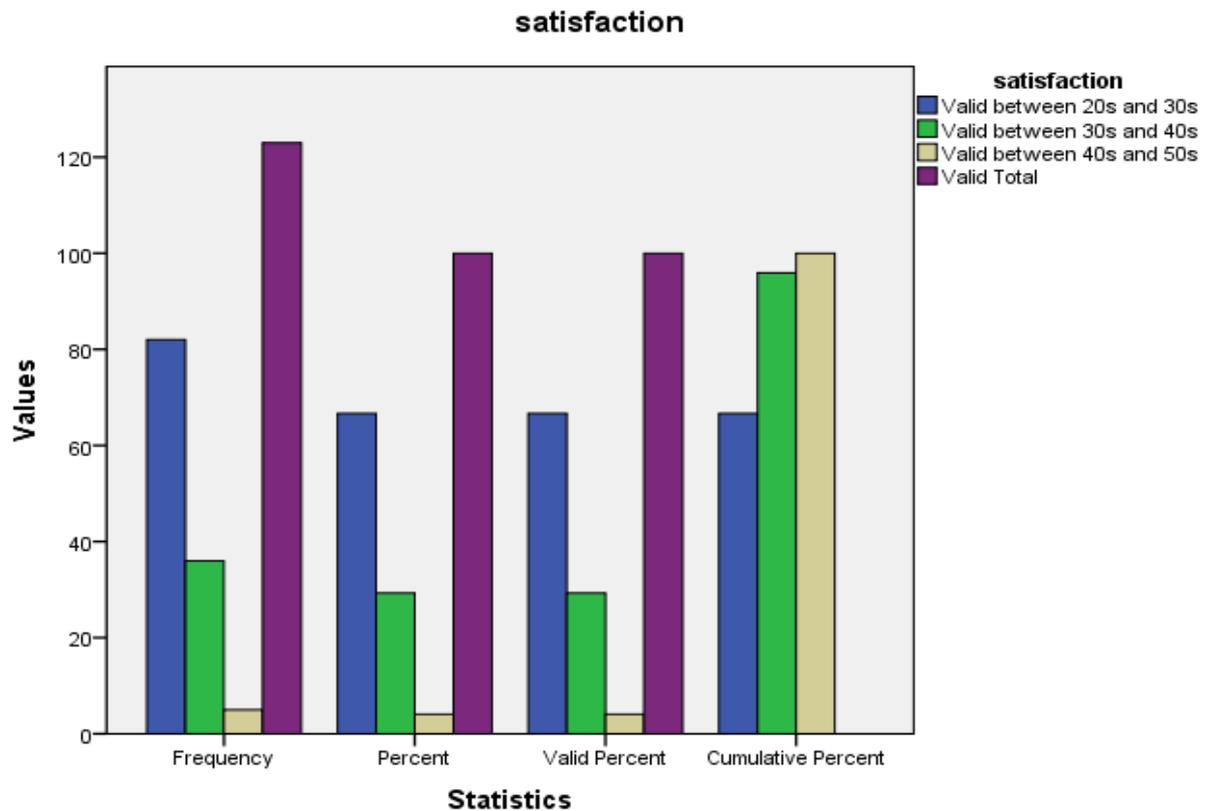
private hospitals, educational status with a mean of 2.45 with SD 0.70 for public hospital compared to 1.27 with SD of 0.46 for private hospital, waiting area time with a mean of 3.06 with SD of 0.49 in public hospital compared to the private hospital having mean of 1.81 with SD of 1.11 and public hospital with quality insurance showing a mean of 3.15 with SD of 0.51 whereas private hospitals had a mean of 1.40 with SD of 0.55.

Therefore, the results favoured the services provided at private hospitals being better than those at the public hospital. The patients being very much satisfied at private hospitals compared to just fine level of satisfaction at public hospitals. Cost was just fine for the private hospitals as compared to affordable treatment procedures provided at public hospital. Educational status was very much looked upon in the private hospitals by the patients as compared to the just fine or not very much concern

regarding educational status of patient. In public hospitals the concern for the treating physician or doctor was more towards experience of the doctor. The most variation was found to be in the waiting area time for the public and private hospitals. The waiting area time for public hospitals went from more than 15 mins to more than 30 minutes for majority of patients. While the waiting area time for the private hospitals was not much and patient received their consultation between 5 to 15 minutes. The other major difference found between public and private hospitals was of quality of services provided at the hospital. Where the patients were very much satisfied with the quality of services provided at the private hospital that had led to more reliability, accessibility, patient trust as well as tangible realm of services provided by the hospital. Other than patient doctor trust, the public hospital patients were not very much satisfied with the quality of services provided at the public hospital.



The above values are for patients visiting the public hospitals, whereas values showing
 1=very much satisfied
 2=just fine level of satisfaction
 3= not very much satisfied
 4=not at all satisfied



Private hospital frequency of satisfaction level of patients of different age groups vs total number of patients surveyed

DISCUSSION:

Patient satisfaction is the prime objective of any healthcare system. It is one of many methods to ensure quality healthcare is being provided to its best at hospital. Private patients show somewhat a higher level of patient satisfaction as compared to the patients visiting the public hospitals. There are many prerequisites to level of satisfaction of patient. Some are:

- Whether the medical care is being provided to its adequate extent.
- Whether the treatment performed is satisfactory to the patient or not
- And whether the behaviour and attitude of the healthcare provider meet up to the compassionate care and maintain a respectful relationship between patient and doctor.
- Whether the treatment is at par with the expectations of the patient [6]

All these prerequisites somehow effect the level of patients' satisfaction when they visit a hospital to get treatment. What the patient expects even before the treatment has begun to greatly influences the level of patients' satisfaction. These expectations are greatly the result of easy access and availability of information even if the information is superficial.

These unusual expectations can be significantly attributed to the general information flow available everywhere regarding diseases and the necessary treatment and outcomes of those disease. It is therefore necessary for the doctors to understand this issue and correct the patient's perception of medical treatment they are taking[7] patient satisfaction can also be improved through patient suggestion to improve the quality of treatment provided at the hospital and by increasing services that may involve comfort, cleanliness and parking and reduction of wait time especially in public hospitals where majority of population visits every day for treatment and yet the level of satisfaction doesn't come at parity with the services of the hospital [8]

Cost is one of the major factors that differentiates the number of patients visiting a public or a private hospital. It also determines the quality of services provided at a hospital. The more is the cost at a certain hospital the better are the facilities available at that hospital. Generally, the rule is public hospitals are cost effective and affordable to the mass majority of population while the private hospitals have variation in the cost treatment depending upon the type of and quality of services available at the facility. The private hospitals cost can be compared to those at private clinics. At the

same time the tests available are also comparatively more expensive than those done at public hospitals that may be free of cost for the patients visiting public hospitals or are provided to its patients at minimal costs. However, for the tests that are performed for a less common disease they may be slightly more expensive than a hospital based OPD. One study found that the private clinics sometimes charge more to their patients compared to the private hospitals. Nevertheless, this study was performed on a specific group of population and for the special purpose of investigating the medical history of any previous disease in those patients that will interfere with the future treatment planning by the clinician. [9]

In our study however we had analysed the aspect of cost consideration in respect of patient satisfaction. Whether the public patients were satisfied with the cost of the treatment or not. The results had favoured the cost satisfaction of public hospitals as compared to the private hospitals where costs were found to be much higher than the public hospitals. When interviewed with some of the patients in the OPD, they said that they were not very much satisfied with the costs of the private hospitals however when they were asked as to why they still visit the hospital. They had simply explained the quality of services provided at the private hospital were much better than those of public hospitals. Also, some patients went on to say that private hospitals don't have much crowd of patients that cause a delay in the treatment or consultation with the doctor due to which they prefer to visit a private hospital as compared to the public hospital.

It was found in both the public and private sectors that the educated patients had a higher level of satisfaction with the doctors with a post graduate and higher degree qualification. Where education is talked about, experience plays an equally important role that helps develop a rapport between doctor and patient. In one of blog on network Katie Fridsma said that some say education is important while others may quote of Bill Gates and Steve Jobs that they were college drop outs yet had experience. Yet the truth is education and experience equally count [10] The ethics of medical education involves good communication skills with the patient as well. It highly influences the patient's choice of visiting a doctor. Better are the communication skills between doctor and patient better is the patient compliance towards the necessary treatment and thus an improved outcome of treatment results [11] patient educational status equally effects the treatment outcome. Physicians tend to be more inclined towards general physical examination and nutrition counselling of less educated patients. However, the counselling of educated as well as not so educated patients had nearly similar results according to the

study of Kevin Fiscella [12] Educational status and experience of a physician was more of a concern for patients visiting private hospitals while the public hospital patients accounted more on a doctor's experience than education. An overall agreement was however found among patients of public as well as private hospitals that counselling and doctor calmly listening to their problems had led to a more satisfying treatment irrespective of a doctor's educational status or experience.

Waiting area time is often found to be an important component of assessment of performance and quality assurance of a hospital. Waiting time for treatment, general check-ups and appointments is one of the major health service problems that we face especially in the public hospital [13] When the patients in public hospital were asked how long they had to wait for the consultation, their response was more than 30 minutes to up to an hour. Due to this reason they were not satisfied at all with the wait time. On the other hand, the private patients didn't have much difficulty getting consultation with the doctor within minutes. Public hospitals provide free treatment to their patients due to which majority of patients may prefer to visit public hospitals for consultation.

This leads to over crowded out patient departments of the public hospitals and an overworked staff that may reflect an underfunded system and improvements at the part of hospital authorities. The waiting time thus is higher for public hospitals as compared to the private hospitals. The patients that visit a public hospital thus may experience frustration, stress and anxiety due to prolonged waiting time before the patient reaches the doctor for consultation. On the other hand, the private patients may develop a communal trust with the hospital staff and a flexible waiting area time that meets up to the patient's expectations for the kind of treatment they want and expect from a private hospital facility and more time with the healthcare professional to meet up to the patient satisfaction. The general research collected has always shown that the waiting area time is more for public hospitals as compared to the private hospitals. Yet, depending on the nature of procedure that is required to be done on a patient and the type of medical emergency the waiting time may vary. Since the public hospitals have higher number of patients, they deal with a variety of patient population and some rare cases as well. They also tend to perform more surgeries on the patients and public hospitals take in certain adverse cases as well. Thus, the waiting area time may not affect the good care and quality of treatment provided at the public hospital when linked to the private hospital [14] Many patients prefer to get treatment from private hospitals because of better quality of services provided at a private setup. Whereas public sector

hospitals are having a constant pressure from government to improve quality of services at the government or public hospitals [15] The health provider organization mainly rely on good quality staff and good quality work for the increasing satisfaction and trust of patients. With the advancement in the field of medicine and technology, there is an increased level of awareness among patients which leads to higher expectation of patients regarding the quality of services provided at the hospital. As the private patients have to pay more for their health, they also tend to desire for better services availability, reliability, accessibility that balance to their expectations of the patient and their satisfaction. Due to long reception time, not so easy accessibility and prolonged waiting are time public hospitals are still a subject to improvement in quality. While rapid reception, easy accessibility and better reliability and early consultation with the doctor led to greater quality assurance in private sector. There is an increased public awareness to the right of having improved quality of services. So for future improvements and better accessibility of patients quality assurance should be constantly under check by the healthcare providers that may effect the perception and satisfaction of patients seeking healthcare services [16]

LIMITATIONS:

The study mainly involved 5 major parameters which have been further discussed in the article. However, each parameter has the capacity to be researched upon and documented further. Another limitation of the study was; the study was carried out in well populated and frequently visited hospital setups whereas further research can be carried out on private and public hospitals including the BHUs (basic healthcare units) and the RHCs (rural healthcare centres) located in periphery areas.

CONCLUSION:

The government should increase the funds of public hospitals so that improvement can be made in the quality of services and treatment provided in the public hospitals. Public hospitals are open to all and since there are greater number of patients visiting a public hospital. There should be regular quality checks by the healthcare providers so that constant and easy flow of treatment continues for the patients visiting the public sector. This will lead to improved patients satisfaction visiting government hospitals and quality could be improved to some extent to become at parity with private hospitals. At the same time, the private hospitals need to reduce unnecessary increase in the costs of the treatment so that more patients are able to avail treatments provided in the private sector and an overflow of patients that visit public set up is diverted to private setups for patients that can afford the treatment costs to a reasonable extent.

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