

Reasons for choice of Private Hospitals by Patients: A Descriptive Study

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Abstract

Access to healthcare is an essential aspect of life, and patients have the right to choose where to receive medical care. In many countries, the choice of hospitals is often limited to either public or private facilities. The private hospital sector is a growing industry worldwide, and patients who can afford it tend to choose private hospitals over public hospitals. Identification of the reasons why patients choose private hospitals over public hospitals. The study highlights the importance of understanding patients' preferences and expectations when considering healthcare service delivery options. These preferences often include quick availability of specialised treatments, and procedures, such as advanced diagnostic imaging, advanced surgeries, and specialised rehabilitation services. In terms of amenities, patients also prefer private rooms, personalized meals, and entertainment options. It also emphasizes the need for public hospitals to improve the quality of care, reduce waiting times, and increase the availability of specialized services to compete with private hospitals. This study provides insights into the reasons why patients choose private hospitals and can inform policy decisions aimed at improving healthcare services.

Keywords: Healthcare Service Delivery, Patient Preferences, Quality of Care, Waiting Times, Specialized Services, Amenities, Personalized Care, Communication with Healthcare Providers.

Introduction

Access to healthcare is a fundamental right for everyone, regardless of social status, gender, or ethnicity. In many countries, the choice of hospitals is often limited to either public or private facilities. The public healthcare system is usually funded by the government and provides care to all citizens, regardless of their ability to pay. On the other hand, the private healthcare system is primarily funded by private entities and is accessible to those who can afford it. The private hospital sector is a growing industry worldwide, and patients who can afford it tend to choose private hospitals over public hospitals.

Patients' preference for private hospitals is influenced by several factors, including the perceived quality of care, waiting times, availability of specialized services, and comfortable amenities. However, the reasons why patients choose private hospitals over public hospitals may vary based on the country's healthcare system, cultural norms, and socio-economic factors. Understanding the factors that influence patients' preference for private hospitals is essential for policymakers and healthcare providers to improve the quality of care and make healthcare more accessible and affordable for all. Medication adherence also plays an important role in the patients' satisfaction (Alam et al. 2018).

It is important to identify the reasons why patients choose private hospitals over public hospitals. The study was conducted in a major city in a developing country, where patients have the option of choosing between private and public hospitals. The study's primary objective was to provide insights into patients' preferences for private hospitals and the factors that influence their decision-

making process. At the same time a large number of customer prefer branded medicines over the generic ones (Alam, Mittal, Chawla, 2019).

The following literature review also lends to the importance of patient-centred care in healthcare service delivery. Patients' preferences and expectations should be at the centre of healthcare service delivery, and policymakers and healthcare providers must recognize this. By providing patient-centred care, healthcare providers can increase patient satisfaction, improve health outcomes, and enhance the quality of care. In market segmentation approach it was found that there are three types of medicine buyers – “Brand Oriented”, “Generic Oriented” and “Cost Concern” (Alam, Mittal and Chawla, 2017).

The study's results are relevant to policymakers, healthcare providers, and patients, as they provide insights into the factors that influence patients' decision-making process when choosing between private and public hospitals. By understanding patients' preferences and expectations, policymakers and healthcare providers can improve the quality of care, reduce waiting times, increase the availability of specialized services, and provide comfortable amenities to compete with private hospitals. This study's insights can inform policy decisions aimed at improving healthcare services and making healthcare more accessible and affordable for all.

Literature Review

The healthcare sector is rapidly evolving, and patients have access to a range of healthcare options, including private and public hospitals. The literature suggests that patients' preferences for private hospitals are driven by several factors, including the perceived quality of care, waiting times, availability of specialized services, and comfortable amenities.

Studies have shown that patients tend to associate private hospitals with higher quality of care, better medical equipment, and advanced diagnostics and surgeries. Patients perceive private hospitals as having better communication with healthcare providers, personalized care, and more attention to their needs. In contrast, public hospitals are often associated with longer waiting times, overcrowding, and limited availability of specialized services.

Ullah et al. (2021) found that patients' preference for private hospitals was primarily driven by the quality of care and the availability of specialized services in Pakistan. Patients reported that private hospitals provided better medical facilities, modern equipment, and more advanced treatments than public hospitals. The study also found that patients who could afford private hospitals were willing to pay higher costs to access specialized services.

Similarly, Abuosi et al. (2020) in Ghana found that patients' preference for private hospitals was influenced by the quality of care, patient-centeredness, and personalized care. Patients reported that private hospitals provided a more comfortable and welcoming environment, with better amenities and personalized care. The study also found that patients who could afford private hospitals were willing to pay higher costs to access specialized services and avoid waiting times.

Moreover, Jain and Gupta (2018) conducted a qualitative study in Delhi, India, to explore the factors influencing patients' choice of private hospitals. The study found that patients preferred

private hospitals because they offered better infrastructure and facilities, personalized care, and specialist doctors. Patients also perceived private hospitals as providing higher quality care than public hospitals.

Similarly, Gye and Islam (2019) used the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) to identify the factors influencing patient choice of private hospitals in Malaysia. The study found that patients considered several factors, including the quality of care, cost, distance from home, availability of specialized services, and hospital reputation. The study also found that the quality of care was the most important factor for patients when choosing private hospitals.

Zhang et al. (2018) used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine the factors influencing patients' choice of private hospitals in China. The results of this study showed that patients considered various factors, including the quality of care, hospital reputation, cost, availability of medical resources, and accessibility, when choosing private hospitals. The study also found that the quality of care had the most significant impact on patients' choice of private hospitals.

Akinyemi and Orewole (2019) investigated the influence of demographic factors on patient choice of private hospitals in Nigeria. The study found that patients' gender, age, income, and education level influenced their choice of private hospitals. Patients who lived in urban areas and those with higher income levels were also more likely to choose private hospitals over public hospitals.

Mohanan et al. (2015) conducted a randomized controlled trial in India to assess the impact of providing free access to private hospitals on patient utilization of private hospitals. The study found that patients were more likely to choose private hospitals when given free access, even if they did not have a preference for private hospitals initially.

Ayalew and Worku (2016) conducted a cross-sectional study in Ethiopia to investigate the factors influencing patient choice of healthcare facilities. The study revealed that patients preferred private hospitals over public hospitals due to the perception of better quality of care, better service delivery, and shorter waiting times. The quality of care was a crucial factor that influenced patient choice, and patients considered the clinical competence of the healthcare providers, availability of drugs and medical supplies, and the overall cleanliness of the hospital. The study also highlighted that patients' perception of the quality of care was influenced by their socio-demographic characteristics, such as age, education level, and income.

Tambe et al. (2018) explored the factors influencing patient choice of private hospitals in India. The study found that patients considered several factors when selecting a private hospital, including the quality of care, reputation of the hospital, availability of specialists, and distance from home. The study also revealed that patients were willing to pay more for higher quality care, and this was particularly true for patients who were older, had higher education levels, and higher income. Patients' perception of the quality of care was also influenced by the hospital's infrastructure, availability of drugs and medical supplies, and the level of hygiene.

Abubakar et al. (2019) investigated the factors influencing patient choice of private hospitals in Nigeria. Patients chose private hospitals over public hospitals because of their perception of better

quality of care, shorter waiting times, and better facilities. They also considered the technical competence of healthcare providers, the hospital's reputation, and the availability of modern equipment when selecting a private hospital. Additionally, the study revealed that patients were willing to pay more for better quality care, and patients with higher income and education levels were more willing to pay extra for better services. It was also found that patients' choice of a private hospital was influenced by the proximity of the hospital to their place of residence and the availability of transportation.

Atuoye et al. (2020) examined the factors influencing patient choice of healthcare facilities in Ghana. Patients chose private hospitals over public hospitals because they perceived them to have better quality of care, better service delivery, and more modern facilities and that patients who lived closer to private hospitals were more likely to choose them over public hospitals. Xu et al. (2019) conducted a cross-sectional study in China to investigate the factors influencing patient choice of private hospitals. The study found that patients chose private hospitals over public hospitals because of their perception of higher quality of care, better amenities, and shorter waiting times. The study also found that patients who had previously used private hospitals were more likely to choose them again in the future.

In contrast, research has also highlighted the challenges associated with private hospitals, such as affordability and accessibility. Private hospitals are often more expensive than public hospitals, making them inaccessible to low-income patients. Additionally, private hospitals tend to be concentrated in urban areas, making them inaccessible to patients living in rural areas. Overall, the literature suggests that patients' preference for private hospitals is driven by several factors, including the perceived quality of care, waiting times, availability of specialized services, and comfortable amenities. These factors are crucial in healthcare service delivery, and policymakers and healthcare providers must understand patients' preferences and expectations to improve healthcare services' quality and accessibility.

Objective

- To analyze the reasons for choice of private hospitals by patients

Methodology

This study is descriptive in nature in which the data were obtained from the 219 respondents who have knowledge and experience of hospitality sectors. The respondents could include adult patients who have received inpatient or outpatient care at private hospitals, patients from different socioeconomic backgrounds including those with private health insurance and those without, patients with different medical conditions, including acute and chronic illnesses and patients from different geographical regions, to capture variations in healthcare access and availability. A checklist question was used to analyze and interpret the data. In a checklist question respondents choose “Yes” or “No” for all the questions.

Data Analysis and Interpretations:

Table 1 Reasons for choice of Private Hospitals by Patients

SL No.	Reasons for choice of Private Hospitals by Patients	Yes	% Yes	No	% No	Total
1	Private hospitals often have access to experimental treatments and clinical trials.	174	79.45	45	20.55	219
2	Private hospitals are usually equipped with the latest medical facilities and technology.	193	88.13	26	11.87	219
3	Private hospitals often have a better reputation for providing high-quality medical care.	200	91.32	19	8.68	219
4	Patients often have more choice over which doctor they see in a private hospital.	186	84.93	33	15.07	219
5	In private hospitals, patients may experience shorter wait times for consultations, tests, and procedures.	162	73.97	57	26.03	219
6	Private hospitals often provide more personalized care and treatment plans.	180	82.19	39	17.81	219
7	Private hospitals are often covered by private health insurance.	167	76.26	52	23.74	219
8	Private hospitals often have higher staff-to-patient ratios, which means that patients receive more individualized attention.	205	93.61	14	6.39	219

Table 1 shows the reasons for choice of private hospitals by patients. It was found that around 93.6% of respondents accept that private hospitals often have higher staff-to-patient ratios, which means that patients receive more individualized attention, often have a better reputation for providing high-quality medical care (91.3%), are usually equipped with the latest medical facilities and technology (88.1%), patients often have more choice over which doctor they see in a private hospital (84.9%), often provide more personalized care and treatment plans (82.1%), often have access to experimental treatments and clinical trials (79.4%), are often covered by private health insurance (76.2%) and patients may experience shorter wait times for consultations, tests, and procedures (73.9%).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the choice of private hospitals over public hospitals by patients is influenced by various factors, including the perception of higher quality of care, better amenities, and shorter waiting times. Patients are also willing to pay more for higher quality care and a more comfortable environment. The literature review presented in this paper reveals that the choice of private hospitals by patients is a global phenomenon, and several factors influence this decision. The findings from this study could be used to guide healthcare providers and policymakers in their efforts to improve the quality and accessibility of healthcare services. By addressing the concerns and preferences of patients, healthcare providers can improve patient satisfaction, enhance healthcare outcomes, and ultimately, promote better health for the population. This is also an impetus for the public healthcare service to bolster its efforts towards the larger welfare of the community by addressing the concerns that patients have which make them sway towards private healthcare.

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