

Examining Patient Contentment with the Quality of Nursing Care in the Public Healthcare Sector

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Abstract— Patient satisfaction has grown in popularity as a vital component of determining the quality of care. A crucial part of quality improvement should comprehend with the viewpoint of patients as this is fully human centric. The degree of patient satisfaction with nursing care is a crucial indicator of the calibre of hospital treatment. A happy patient is more likely to recommend the hospital to others for treatment. To ensuring the proper levels of service improvement, it is vital to understand the factors that affect patient satisfaction with nursing care. This study aims to explore that how happy patients are with the quality of nursing care provided in hospitals. Many Sri Lankans, especially those who work as nurses or midwives, strongly believe that providing care alone is inadequate and believe nursing as a unique service rather than a career. This sensitive concern amongst nursing professionals underscores the significance they place on nursing care. In terms of research methodology, this study follows the qualitative approach, and the necessary data for the execution of the study were gathered through structures interviews around 100 patients reside in Ratmalana area. The primary focus of the sampling was patients who visit the hospitals monthly; outpatient clinics. The study deployed the thematic analysis.

The result of the study revealed that nurses have demonstrated effective management of both personal hygiene and cleanliness in their work environment. Additionally, nurses have exhibited competence in their professional roles as well. However, further development is needed in cultivating qualities such as politeness and kindness.

Keywords— Quality of nursing care, Patients Satisfaction, Medical sector

I. INTRODUCTION

Since achieving independence, Sri Lanka has embraced a policy of healthcare, ensuring that all its citizens have access to free public healthcare services. The public sector offers healthcare services at no cost, while the private sector provides a wide range of healthcare options for a fee. In 2021, Sri Lanka allocated 3.8% of its GDP to

healthcare expenditure, which falls below the average health expenditure of 4.1% for lower-middle-income countries but surpasses the average health expenditure of 3.5% for South Asian nations (Budget Brief Health Sector Sri Lanka, 2021). Between 2015 and 2020, approximately 82% of Sri Lanka's public health expenditure predominantly consisted of recurring expenses, including salaries to healthcare professionals and the supporting staff (Budget Brief Health sector Sri Lanka, 2021).

In providing healthcare services, nurses play vital role in bridging connectivity between the healthcare services and patients. Nurses are regarded as the crucial factor in determining patients' satisfaction as they have a higher frequency of patients' interaction compared to other healthcare professionals (Johansson *et al.*, 2002). The nightingale oath, which promises that nurses will do their utmost to serve patients and the nation, unites nurses as a knowledgeable and skilled team from the moment they start working in the field. The study aims to investigate the friendliness of nurses towards patients and assess patient satisfaction with nursing services revealed that the role of nurses in providing continuous care and treatment is significantly affect patients' satisfaction (Kruijver *et al.*, 2000).

The number of healthcare professionals and facilities in Sri Lanka is provided, indicating a shortage of medical care (Ministry of Health, 2021). With the COVID-19 pandemic, hospitals are overwhelmed with a rising number of patients. Nurses serve as intermediaries between doctors and patients, and conflicts between nurses and patients have been observed in high frequency level which leads to unsatisfied medical service (Karlsson, 2020).

Therefore, considering these background researchers tend to explore that, how happy patients are with the quality of nursing care provided in government hospitals in Sri Lanka and the need to improve the quality of nursing services.

IV. Problem Statement

As a human being, health is a much important thing. No one is without at least one little illness, either psychologically or physically. As a result, the hospital will serve as their place of healing. In the present situation, people are getting sick more than in past years due to unhealthy lifestyles, changing weather patterns and busy lives.

Accordingly, a report declared by the Ministry of Health, Sri Lanka in 2021 emphasized that 93 doctors and 214 nurses per 100,000 population, 643 hospitals and 86,589 hospital beds available in Sri Lanka. Therefore, there are 4 beds for 1000 people. By considering these factors, a scarcity of medical services could be identified in Sri Lanka.

There are three parts mainly patients, Doctors, and nurses can be seen in a hospital. Especially doctors and patients are the main parts since patients talk about their illnesses and doctors are the people that control and heal them (Dankyi *et al.*, 2020). But all other activities and linking of these two parties are done by nurses. Accordingly, nurses are the team that interconnects with the patient in this service (Johansson *et al.*, 2002). Therefore, many incidents happened between these three parties. In the present situation, many conflicts have occurred in a hospital between this parties. Therefore, current research is taken to understand the quality and satisfaction of nursing care.

There are plenty of articles, describing the satisfaction of patients with health care services in general. But there is a gap in satisfaction with the quality of nursing care. Previous studies indicate that, although patients' satisfaction with doctors' services has been studied, there is a discrepancy in the level of satisfaction with nursing care (Karlsson, 2020).

Therefore, this study fills the knowledge gap by analysing patients' satisfaction with the quality of nursing care in the medical sector.

V. Research Objectives

The main objective of this research is to determine patient satisfaction with the service of nurses. And also, there are sub-objectives to identify the nurser's personal qualities and how those factors impact on patient satisfaction and identify nurses' problem-solving ability.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Introduction

The purpose of the literature review is to provide definition of important issues, patient satisfaction, nursing care quality, and theories and concepts relating to the current study.

B. Theoretical Background

According to the Henderson's theory (The Need Theory) by Virginia Henderson explains that nursing's unique function is to assist the individual, sick or well, in performing those activities contributing to health or its recovery (or to peaceful death), that she would perform unaided if she had the necessary strength, will, or knowledge (Ahtisham & Jacoline, 2015).

The Need Theory emphasizes the need of enhancing the patient's independence and concentrating on the fundamental needs of people to ensure that recovery from hospitalization doesn't take longer than necessary and focuses on the fundamental needs of people and how nurses can address them.

Linder-Pelz defined "patient satisfaction as a positive attitude" and presupposed a value expectancy model in the formulation of satisfaction (Williams, 1994).

Fishbein and Azjen defined attitude as the "overall assessment or feeling of favorability toward the object in the issue."

Based on the idea that "attitudes are moderated by environmental, individual, physical, psychological, or sociological variables," Tucker (2002) asserted that "socio-demographic attributes such as environmental, individual, physical, psychological, and sociological characteristics" should be used to measure patient satisfaction. Patient satisfaction and the social identity theory were given empirical evidence in. Patient assessments of access, communication, outcomes, and quality were important determinants of satisfaction (Tucker, 2002).

Patient satisfaction theory regarded patient satisfaction to be an attitude. According to her research, the patient's unique traits considerably contribute to their level of happiness (Linder-Pelz, 1982). This finding supports the social identity hypothesis, which claimed that views were adjusted and influenced by demographic, situational, environmental, and psychological aspects.

III. Methodology

A. Research approach, population, and sample

This research was inductive in approach. The objective of this research is to gain an understanding on patients' satisfaction in relation to the quality of nurses' service. The researchers discovered a dearth of research conducted in this field in Sri Lankan context, indicating that the study appears to be more of an exploratory nature. This aligns with the criteria outlined by Creswell (2007) for employing qualitative methodology.

The population taken for this study were patients who receive medical treatments monthly or visit clinics monthly in government hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The study aimed collect data from patients who receive medical treatments monthly or visit clinics monthly in government hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka due to the limited access to in-patients in government hospitals. Hence, the purposive sampling method was used as the most preferable. Accordingly, the researchers selected the sample of the current study as 35 patients who live in Ratmalana Area, Colombo.

B. Data collection and Data analysis method

The data were gathered using semi-structured interviews with 35 patients. An interview schedule consisting of open-ended questions was employed. Nonetheless, the questions were posed in a manner that was deemed most appropriate as the interview unfolded, using a few closed-ended questions as well.

The thematic analysis method was used for the analysis of the data. The ensured the research ethics through safeguards such as ensuring privacy and anonymity through consent forms, securely storing recordings and transcripts, and refraining from disclosing the names of interviewees.

The interviews have been carried out with 20 female patients and 15 male patients. Accordingly, the percentage has recorded 57% female patients and 43% male patients. Among the sample population of 35 respondents, a significant majority, comprising over 50%, fell within the age bracket of 40 to 50 years.

C. Data analysis

The thematic analysis was utilized in data analysis of the current study.

Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis technique that involves going through a collection of data and extracting themes by identifying significant patterns across the data. The most using process under Six steps; familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining, and naming themes, and writing were used in the study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study systematically reviews the data on patients' satisfaction with the quality of nursing care in the government hospitals using thematic analysis. The thematic analysis method was used to manually analyse the collected data. All captured data through interviews was transcribed into individual sheets as the first step. As the next step, coding was conducted to identify repetitive answers and categorized them accordingly to generate meaningful themes support to the research objectives.

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The interview guideline encompassed a total of 24 questions, supplemented by occasional additional questions as needed to enhance clarity and obtain crucial insights from the respondents. Each respondent was engaged in an interview lasting between 30 to 40 minutes, ensuring ample time to gather pertinent and precise data.

A. Understanding patient satisfaction with nurses' service:

The respondents who participated in interviews expressed their ideas about the quality of nursing care as a patient.

The results of the analysis fabricated through coding and sorting of the findings contributed to generate the following themes with respect to understanding patients' satisfactions in relation to nurses' services.

Table 1: Themes related to understanding patients' satisfaction with nurses service.

Patients' expectation on nurses' service	Nurses' Cleanliness
Compassionate service Professionalism in providing services	Personal cleanliness/ Cleanliness of the place/premises

Source: (Authors)

1) Theme 1: Patients' expectation on nurses' service

In health care, patient expectations have been identified as a factor in patient satisfaction. The theme consists of two categorizations; compassionate service and professionalism in providing service.

a. Compassionate service

Simply caring or compassionate can be defined as someone being worried or distressed about something. Obviously, nurses are the closest people in the hospital to patients compared to other medical professionals. Hence, patients expect care from nurses continuously. Patients would like to gain the attention from nurses. More than 50% of the respondents were not in satisfactory level relating to the compassionate sense of the service provided by nurses.

"I felt down when I am walking to the doctor with the nurse. But that nurse did not care about me and she told me to come quickly." (Interviewee 01)

"Though my child cried continuously, the nurse didn't look at him. So, I also felt very upset." (Interviewee 05)

b. Professionalism in providing services

Nurses' main duty is to provide treatments to the nurses. Some of the main duties of nurses are obtaining blood samples, urine samples, and other bodily fluids for laboratory work; preparing of patients for examinations and treatment; engaging in wound care and providing support for medical procedures.

"Yes, obviously, private sector nurses took much time on obtaining blood from me. But government nurses did that quickly without painning me." (Interviewee 07)

2) Theme 2: Nurses' cleanliness

Cleanliness can be defined as the quality or state of being clean or maintained in a clean state. Being clean is much important for patients since the availability of a high risk of entering the germs for the patient's body. Accordingly, that special requirement should be satisfied from the nurses' side as well. The theme generated based on two categorizations;

a. Personal cleanliness

Since nurses are treating the patients, they should be cleaned in every external aspect. Accordingly, washing or sanitizing their hands before moving to another patient or changing their gloves, and wearing clean dresses, can be done by the nurses in order to maintain cleanliness.

"Nurse sanitized her hand by the patient to patient. And the sanitizer was finished after some time. Also, the nurse wanted to re-place it quickly, a small-time went to bringing the sanitizer." (Interviewee 31)

Some respondents compared the personal cleanliness with other medical professionals and commented.

"Actually, compare to other jobs, nurses are wearing clean dresses" (Interviewee 28)

b. Cleanliness of the place/premises

The concept of premises cleanliness entails the practice of thorough cleaning both prior to and following each patient investigation, as well as the proper removal of unwanted items from their designated locations. It is one of the most important things since germs can be spread to the patients from the garbage in the healthcare sector.

"Almost every nurse put the used injections to the respective just right after using them. (Interviewee 01)

"Nurses are keen on the cleanliness of the premises. One day I saw that a used cotton fell on the floor. Then that nurse quickly picked it up and put it in the garbage bin." (Interviewee 33)

Based on the findings, it is evident that nurses play a crucial role in providing professional service to patients.

But still, they need to improve the compassionate sense of the service as patients have high expectations in this regard.

Maintaining cleanliness is of utmost importance due to the elevated risk of infections for patients. Although nurses are made to actively and continuously address this matter, there are challenges such as waiting for the replenishment of cleaning supplies and variations in support staff's service delivery.

B. Identify the nurse's personal qualities on patients

The analysis yielded significant findings that facilitated the identification of the following themes pertaining to the nurses' personal qualities and their impact in patients.

Table 2: Themes pertaining to the nurses' personal qualities

Patient-driven nursing care	Way of communication
Politeness	Speed of speaking
Respectability	Language supportiveness
Kindness	

Source: (Authors)

1) Theme 1: Patient-driven nursing care

The term "Patient-Driven" emphasizes the patient's central role in shaping their care experience, highlighting the importance of meeting their expectations for politeness, respectability, and kindness. These can be identified as traits expected by nurse as well. A trait is a characteristic, quality, or tendency that someone or something possesses.

a. Politeness

Politeness can be defined as the practical implementation of exemplary manners or etiquette to prevent causing harm or offense to others. Accordingly, politeness facilitates the reduction of negative feelings, making communication between patients and healthcare providers more effective.

"Yes, nurses communicated with me in a good way. I was never hurt when they communicate with me." (Interviewee 05)

"Contrary to my request for a brief restroom break, the healthcare professional instructed me to quickly come to put the medicine. Consequently, I proceeded directly to the dressing room without having the chance to visit the washroom. (Interviewee 25)

b. Kindness

Kindness embodies the attributes of helpfulness, friendliness, and thoughtfulness. When individuals exhibit kindness towards others, it can be facilitating

transformations in their mental and physical well-being, ultimately resulting in a reduction in stress levels as well. Following are the few responses given by patients.

“I was screaming due to the pain on my legs. The nurse did not help to find a wheelchair for me. Instead, she shouted at me to stop screaming” (Interviewee 31)

“Though I had back pain, she told me to stand up quickly in an angry mood. Then I was helpless because I went alone into the clinic room without support. The nurse even did not allow my son to come inside.” (Interviewee 24)

c. Respectability

The term respect refers to the feeling or recognizing that someone or something is essential, serious, or should be treated appropriately. Respect is an essential thing in communication. Following are the few responses given by patients’ relation to respectability of nurses towards patients.

“Never.... They did not talk respectfully. They think that they are doing a social welfare activity, and they think we came to government hospitals due to no money to pay for private hospitals.

So, they think that we came there since we do not have any other options. So, we should tolerate all the disrespectfulness of them (Interviewee 17)

2) *Theme 2: Way of communication*

The way of speaking or communicating nurses with patient is identified under this theme. It consists of two categories, Speed of the communication and language supportiveness.

a. Speed of the communication

The rate at which nurses communicate has a significant impact as a personal quality on how patients understand the speech.

“Most nurses are speaking very fast since they have a lot of work to do. Once I again raise the same clarification, she replied in the same speed which I couldn’t catch the explanation” (Interviewee 19)

“The nurse ignored my question. Once I asked again, she replied with low volume.” (Interviewee 10)

b. Language supportiveness

Languages are the primary method of communication for humans, and they can be expressed orally, visually, or in writing. Besides, individuals who lack proficiency in a language that differs from their mother tongue require assistance and support for effective communication.

Followings are the answers given by respondents relating to language supportiveness of nurses.

I am not good at English. But the Doctor told me something in English and I could not understand them well. But the nurse understood my situation and she explained it me in Sinhala.” (Interviewee 24)

“I could not understand one medicine on the prescription, which is a new one. So, I saw it to the nurse, and she explained it me clearly”. (Interviewee 18)

Based on the above analysis, politeness in nurse-patient communication is crucial as patients feel embarrassed when nurses are impolite. Kindness has a positive impact on patients' mental health, as it strengthens the immune system, lowers blood pressure, and reduces stress and anxiety. Thus, there is a need for improvement in nurses' kindness in patient care services, as it plays a significant role in providing mental health support to patients.

Additionally, nurses should prioritize showing respect to patients, as it further enhances their well-being. The study also points out that the speaking speed of nurses may be higher due to workload, leading to patients misunderstanding information provided. Language supportiveness is vital as nurses act as intermediaries between doctors and patients, providing treatment and information. Nurses' support in overcoming language barriers and difficulties is highly valued.

C. Identifying the impact of nurses’ problem-solving ability on the patients’ satisfaction.

The final objective of this research is to identify the impact of nurses’ problem-solving ability on the patients’ satisfaction. Nurses are much involved in problem-solving activities in various scenarios. Though nurses act as the middle party between doctors and patients, many problems will occur in their day today work. Accordingly, patients are the people who confront difficulties. Therefore, the ability of problem-solving nurses will have much of an impact on the patient.

The analysis derived two themes to demonstrate the content as follows;

Table 3: Themes pertaining identify the impact of nurses’ problem solving ability on the patients’ satisfaction

The way of keeping interpersonal relationship with patients	Availability of knowledge
Human Skills Being flexible	Energetic in-patient care duties Applying knowledge

Source: (Authors)

1) Theme 1: The way of keeping interpersonal relationship with patients

Empathy, trust, and open communication characterise the interpersonal bond between nurses and patients. Patients depend on nurses' knowledge and compassion while receiving care, support, and advocacy from them. This connection encourages recovery, comfort, and a satisfying medical experience for the patient.

1) *Human Skills*

The interpersonal relationship between nurses and patients significantly relies on the application of human skills. Nurses utilize their abilities to understand, influence, and guide the behaviour of patients. Effective communication, coordination, motivation, and the formation of a cohesive bond contribute to a successful nurse-patient interaction.

“Usually, I don't like to get medicine. But due to continues pain in my arms and legs, I went to the hospital and get access to the monthly clinic. Nurses are very friendly and they coordinated me to get my medicine correctly”. (Interviewee 09)

2) *Being flexible*

Patients expect flexibility of the nursing care through responding to patient requirements individually, altering their care strategy accordingly, etc. Generally, nurses are supposed to put patients' choices first, deal with unforeseen circumstances and stay adaptable to changing healthcare needs to ensure the best and most individualised care to the patients.

The analysis shows that 22 out of 35 patients were not in positive mind relating to the flexibility in nursing care.

“I requested a nurse to give me pain killers, when I went to the clinic due to sudden headache. But the nurse said that they are prohibited to give any medicine without the doctor's permission. And the doctor was late a few hours, and she did not ask from the other doctor as well. So, I was waiting with my pain until the doctor come and give me medicine.”(Interviewee 14)

2) *Theme 2: Availability of knowledge*

Applying knowledge in nursing care services is crucial for providing high-quality patient care. To assess, diagnose, plan, administer, and evaluate treatment, nurses use their clinical judgement, knowledge, and evidence-based practices. Applying this knowledge ensures that patients receive safe, specialized, and high-quality healthcare that is tailored to their requirements. Under two categories this is analysed as follows;

a. *Energetic in patients care duties*

This is referring to nurses' commitment in patient care duties energetically by actively participating in all aspects

of care delivery. This is referring to nurses' commitment in patient care duties energetically by actively participating in all aspects of care delivery. Patients anticipate nurses to engage patient care duties as quick as possible. During the data collection 20 out of 35 showed positive attitudes towards nurses' energetic engagement.

“When I suddenly felt like faint, there was male supporting staff, he also could not be able to hold me and keep on the bed. But young lady nurse was there she quickly attend to me and fixed my bed properly.” (Interviewee 16)

“That nurse quickly did her all work without anyone's help. At the same time, she checked my fever; give medicine to the next person and got blood from another one. The main thing is she performed all the work without showing rush, hurry, or anything” (Interviewee 10)

b. *Applying knowledge*

In particular, nursing is one of the practical and critical professions since they are interacting with people who are not healthy on real time basis. To be professional, having knowledge is not sufficient, but they should demonstrate the application as well. Almost all the participants to the research evident the satisfactory level relating to the application of knowledge, since they experience it monthly. Followings are the few statements which prove the patients' satisfaction.

“The nurse always checked the expiry date of the medicine before she uses them to clean my wound” (Interviewee 21)

“I was suffering from high fever and headache and vomited many times when I was waiting in the que to the clinic. My husband informed a nurse and she tried to induce vomiting me in many ways. However, it was succussed.” (Interviewee 24)

Based on the findings, it is evident that nurses demonstrate dedication and commitment in patient care duties, actively engaging in all aspects of care delivery, which supports effective problem solving talents. Patients appreciate nurses' energetic approach and the application of their professional knowledge. However, the study highlights a need for improvement in the flexibility of nursing care services.

While nurses excel in demonstrating good human skills towards patients, enhancing flexibility in their approach to care could further enhance patient satisfaction. By addressing this aspect and incorporating problem-solving abilities into their practice, nurses can better adapt to individual patient needs and provide more personalized and effective care.

Overall, the finding emphasizes the importance of nurses' problem-solving abilities in ensuring patient satisfaction and suggests that further attention be given to enhancing flexibility in nursing care services.

V. CONCLUSION

The research aimed to understand patient satisfaction with the quality of nursing care in the government medical sector, specifically in the Ratmalana area. It identified a gap in the literature regarding patient satisfaction with nursing care. The study had three objectives: understanding patient satisfaction with nurses' service, identifying the impact of nurses' personal qualities on patient satisfaction, and assessing the impact of nurses' problem-solving ability on patient satisfaction.

The findings revealed that nurses play a crucial role in providing professional service to patients, but improvements are needed in terms of compassion and meeting patient expectations. Maintaining cleanliness was identified as a key aspect due to the high risk of infections, although challenges were faced in terms of waiting for supplies and variations in support staff's service delivery. Politeness and kindness in nurse-patient communication were found to be crucial, as patients felt embarrassed when nurses were impolite. Kindness had a positive impact on patients' mental health, while respecting patients' well-being was also important. It was noted that nurses' speaking speed, influenced by workload, sometimes led to patient misunderstandings. Language supportiveness was vital in overcoming barriers and providing effective care.

The study highlighted the dedication and commitment of nurses in patient care duties, as well as the application of professional knowledge and problem-solving abilities. However, the flexibility of nursing care services needs improvement to further enhance patient satisfaction. Addressing this aspect and integrating problem-solving skills into nursing practice can enable nurses to adapt to individual patient needs and provide more personalized care.

In conclusion, the research underscores the importance of patient satisfaction with nursing care in the government medical sector. It emphasizes the need for compassionate and respectful communication, maintaining cleanliness, addressing language barriers, and enhancing the flexibility and problem-solving abilities of nurses to ensure optimal patient satisfaction and quality care. Further attention and improvements in these areas will contribute to enhancing the overall healthcare experience for patients.

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