

# **DETERMINANTS OF PATIENT SATISFACTION IN SOMALI PUBLIC HOSPITALS: A NARRATIVE REVIEW**

## **ABSTRACT**

Patient satisfaction is a crucial aspect of healthcare quality and plays a significant role in evaluating the effectiveness of public hospitals. The main purpose of the study was to investigate the factors that affect patients' satisfaction in public hospitals in Somalia. Physical facilities, doctor-patient interaction, pharmacy services and Laboratory services are the factors that affect patients' satisfaction with healthcare services in public hospitals in Somalia and these factors were investigated as specific objectives of the study. The study used Google Scholar search engine to review the literature related to the factors that affect patients' satisfaction with healthcare services in public hospitals in Somalia. The study found in the literature review in Somalia that Physical facilities, doctor-patient interaction, pharmacy services and Laboratory services are weak in Somalia. The study concluded the level of medical care provided, including accuracy of diagnosis, effectiveness of treatment, overall competence of healthcare professionals, physical facilities, doctor-patient interaction, pharmacy services and quick Laboratory services can significantly impact patients' satisfaction in public hospitals. The study recommended that special consideration should be given to Physical facilities, doctor-patient interaction, pharmacy services and Laboratory examination result.

Key words: Patient satisfaction, healthcare services, public hospitals, pharmacy services, Laboratory services

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Patient satisfaction is essential for understanding patients' needs and opinions about healthcare services. It is influenced by various factors such as perceived quality of care, organizational aspects, competency of healthcare providers, and availability of informational materials. Understanding patient satisfaction is crucial for healthcare management to improve the quality of care and ensure positive health outcomes. Healthcare organizations should provide proper training of codes of conduct and courtesy to both clinical and office staff, ensure adequate availability of medications and dressing materials, and increase community participation activities by clinical staff to learn patients' expectations and opinions about hospital services(Bolotbek et al., 2016).

Moreover, Leadership within organizational environments such as hospitals impacts staff behavior, excellence and finally patient satisfaction. It directly affects employee motivation, compliance with policies and communication, all of which contribute to patient outcomes and general satisfaction(Karie & Kulmiye, 2023).

Patient dissatisfaction can have significant consequences, including poor treatment compliance, negative impact on health outcomes, reduced trust in healthcare providers, impact on hospital image, and financial implications. It is important for healthcare organizations to address patient dissatisfaction to ensure positive health outcomes and maintain a high standard of care(Bolotbek et al., 2016).

Due to the constraints of limited consumer resources, developing nations are striving to ensure that their citizens have access to essential healthcare services by putting forth significant efforts(Mossialos et al., 2016). Public hospitals are of utmost importance in delivering healthcare facilities and services to individuals who require basic medical care. Meanwhile, the outpatient department (OPD) plays a highly effective role in this regard(Duan et al., 2014).

A world devoid of basic healthcare facilities would be a place filled with despair and suffering. In a hypothetical scenario where a universally recognized healthcare system of poor quality exists, it would only contribute to increased misery and hardship. Within such a system, the financial burden of healthcare would escalate, further adding to the worries and anxieties of patients. The effectiveness of a healthcare system lies in its ability to alleviate the distress of those it serves. The healthcare sector holds a pivotal role in the overall advancement of any nation, impacting various domains such as medical, moral, political, social, and business sectors. Additionally, it carries substantial economic implications(Bahadori et al., 2018).

Healthcare stands as a prominent aspect of the United Nations Organization's (UNO) agenda for sustainable development, known as agenda 2030. One of the key objectives outlined in this agenda is to "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages." Additionally, the Agenda sets a target to attain universal health coverage, make medicine affordable and accessible, ensure the provision of effective and safe quality healthcare, and guarantee access to essential healthcare services of high quality for every individual(WHO, 2015).

Regardless of one's wealth, good health is essential for every aspect of life. Developed nations are actively strengthening their healthcare sectors and generating revenue for their national economies by promoting health tourism. In contrast, policymakers in developing countries like Pakistan often rely on the healthcare services of developed nations, funded by the taxes paid by their own citizens, rather than establishing their own robust healthcare systems(Javed & Ilyas, 2018).

In Somalia public hospitals, patients should receive high-quality, patient-centered care that meets their needs and expectations. In this state, factors such as effective communication, empathetic healthcare providers, timely access to care, respect for patient preferences, involvement in decision-making, and efficient service delivery would contribute to optimal patient satisfaction. Patients would feel valued, respected, and confident in the care they receive. Unfortunately, patients experience long wait times, inadequate communication between healthcare providers and patients, lack of information regarding treatment options, limited involvement in decision-making, perceived lack of respect or empathy, suboptimal coordination of care, and unmet expectations in terms of service quality and accessibility(Ibrahim et al., 2021). The study finding in Somalia indicate that patients who are admitted to private hospitals consistently report higher satisfaction scores across when compared to patients receiving care in public hospitals(Ibrahim et al., 2021).

The study conducted in Somalia uncovered several issues impacting patient experiences, including prolonged waiting times, indifferent and disrespectful behavior exhibited by certain hospital staff, the unavailability of prescribed medications, instances of discrimination and favoritism in determining priority of patient care, both in terms of access to healthcare services and consultation rooms(Mohamud, 2019).

Somali Government developed the Health Sector Strategic Plan 2022–2026 (HSSP III) that outlines roadmap for improving the healthcare system in Somalia over the next five years. It serves as a framework to enhance access to affordable, equitable, and high-quality healthcare services, ultimately working towards achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in the country. The development of HSSP III was based on the national health policy and the ninth National Development Plan (NDP-9), ensuring alignment with our vision for UHC. The plan proposes a range of policy options and actions to address the key challenges faced by the healthcare system(Ministry of Health and Human Services, 2021).

Given the current circumstances, an evaluation of the perceived effectiveness of public hospitals in Somalia will be conducted by evaluating the satisfaction levels of Somali patients utilizing the public healthcare sector. To accomplish this, their views regarding four key aspects of healthcare services have been considered: physical services, doctor-patient communication, pharmacy services, and laboratory services.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The study will be guided by fulfillment theory, which was developed by Robert H. Schaffer in 1953. According to this theory, the overall job satisfaction of individuals will be directly influenced by the extent to which their job-related needs can be fulfilled. The level of satisfaction experienced by individuals will depend on how well their job meets their specific needs(Rajasekhar, 2012).

The concept of patient satisfaction can be comprehensively assessed through a multi-dimensional approach that reflects the various experiences encountered by patients when seeking healthcare services(Algudairi et al., 2018). Appropriately evaluated in conjunction with treatment outcomes and adherence, patient satisfaction can serve as a valuable tool for assessing the quality and effectiveness of a specific healthcare system(Devreux, 2012). Patient satisfaction is an essential phenomenon that acknowledges the needs of patients and aims to enhance healthcare systems. When a patient expresses satisfaction with their healthcare experience, they are more likely to report improved health outcomes. Patient feedback regarding healthcare services provides valuable insights into their perception of the quality of care and facilitates meaningful patient engagement(Kamimura et al., 2015). Study has examined the sustainability of healthcare services and assessed patient satisfaction by considering various factors such as pharmacy services, physical services (including tangible aspects and the environment), doctor-patient communication, and laboratory services(Jalil et al., 2017 , Wankar, 2014).

### **Physical Facilities**

The assessment of physical facilities captures the patient's perception of the service quality related to the hospital's physical infrastructure. This evaluation encompasses factors such as the cleanliness and upkeep of the facility, the availability of various physical amenities including resident rooms, technological capabilities, diagnostic test rooms, blood banks, wards, beds,

ambulance services, waiting rooms, and operation theaters. Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the impact of physical services on the delivery of quality healthcare(Ko et al., 2009; Pilpel, 1996). The study revealed that the participants expressed satisfaction with the healthcare facility located in their district that offers them healthcare services(Ochan et al., 2018).

The study finding indicated that patient satisfaction with the physical environment has a significant and positive impact on patient loyalty and their intention to recommend the healthcare facility. Furthermore, the study demonstrated a relationship where patient loyalty contributes to their intention to recommend the facility to others(Lacap & Alfonso, 2022).

### **Doctor–Patient Relationship**

The study finding revealed that the skill of doctors is a multi-faceted concept comprising three extents: listening skill, doctor's competence and explanation skill. The statistical analysis demonstrated a positive direct effect of doctor's skills on patient satisfaction, compliance, and loyalty (AlOmari, 2022).

The study finding indicate that physician empathy plays a central role in doctor-patient communication and has a significant impact on patient outcomes. Three key themes were examined: physicians' patient outcomes, empathic expressions (including functional status, safety, and satisfaction), and the role of empathy in enhancing doctor-patient communication(Zhang et al., 2023).

The finding revealed a noteworthy impact of doctor-patient communication on patient satisfaction. Additionally, patient trust was found to significantly influence patient satisfaction. Furthermore, both doctor-patient communication and patient trust collectively exerted a significant influence on patient satisfaction(Anhange, 2022).

### **Laboratory Services**

The study finding indicate that patient satisfaction with laboratory services in public hospitals was extremely low, highlighting the need for specific strategies aimed at enhancing the overall quality of these services(Khalid et al., 2022). The study demonstrates the critical role of laboratory services within hospital settings. A significant number of patients visiting hospitals are typically

referred to various laboratory services for proper diagnostic purposes. The results obtained from these laboratories form the basis for prescriptions, medications, and even surgical interventions. Patient satisfaction with the overall care provided is closely intertwined with their satisfaction with the laboratory services(Qureshi et al., 2023).

The study conducted a thorough evaluation of phlebotomy and clinical laboratory services and found that patients expressed several concerns and dissatisfactions with these services. These concerns may include issues related to long wait times, inadequate communication or explanations regarding the procedures, discomfort experienced during phlebotomy, difficulties in obtaining accurate and timely test results(Koh et al., 2014).

In contrast to the above studies, another the study findings indicate that the majority of patients utilizing public hospital laboratories in Ethiopia reported satisfaction with the services provided. However, there were areas of dissatisfaction identified by patients, including issues related to the accessibility of laboratory sites, adequacy of waiting areas, cleanliness of latrines, long turnaround times (TAT), communication, missing results, availability of requested services, and the cost of services. These areas of concern highlight the need for targeted improvements to address these specific issues and enhance the overall patient experience within public hospital laboratories(Hiwot et al., 2020).

### **Pharmacy Services**

Patients who had made multiple appointments to the pharmacy within the last three months and had a perceived better status of health, along with accurate general knowledge of pharmacists, reported higher mean scores of patient satisfaction. Age, education level, frequency of visits, self-perceived status of health, and general understanding of pharmacists were identified as significant issues connected with patient satisfaction(Ismail et al., 2020).

The study finding revealed a diverse range of models and formats employed for continuing education (CE) and continuing professional development (CPD) by pharmacists worldwide. These formats encompassed online learning, workshops, conferences, and self-directed learning. Additionally, the study identified specific preferences among pharmacists regarding these formats, including the importance of flexibility, relevance to their professional practice, and opportunities for interactive engagement(Micallef & Kayyali, 2019).

The finding of the study offer valuable insights into the implementation of clinical pharmacy services, particularly in developing countries. The study sheds light on the challenges and factors that influence the successful implementation of clinical pharmacy services in such contexts. The identification of differences in scope of practice, barriers faced by pharmacists, the need for additional training, and the emphasis on outcome measures like antimicrobial stewardship provides important considerations for developing countries aiming to improve their clinical pharmacy services(Elmien et al., 2022).

Pharmacy personnel have the ability to provide clear instructions on how patients should properly use their prescribed medications. Numerous studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between these factors and patient satisfaction. The pharmacy serves as a crucial physical facility within a hospital, where patients receive vital information regarding their medications(Khan et al., 2012).

According to(Mohamud, 2019) During the assessment, patients were requested to evaluate various aspects of the healthcare facility, including the physical facilities, pharmacy services, and other services in public hospitals. The results revealed that patients were dissatisfied with the insufficient availability of waiting chairs in the waiting area. Furthermore, their dissatisfaction extended to the condition of equipment such as waiting chairs, toilets, consultation rooms, and patient beds. Patients also reported that physicians did not dedicate enough time to consultations and that they had limited opportunities to discuss their concerns with the doctors. Additionally, patients pronounced displeasure with the explanations provided by pharmacy staff regarding the usage of medications.

The study findings demonstrated that low satisfaction with antenatal care (ANC) services was associated with several factors. These factors included being of a young age, experiencing difficulties in obtaining prescribed drugs, encountering unclean sanitary facilities, experiencing delays in service delivery by healthcare workers and auxiliary staff, as well as encountering delays in the retrieval and delivery of laboratory results(Dahir, n.d.).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

The researcher relied on previous existing literature reviews to examine broad discussions on factors that affect patients' satisfaction in public hospitals. This literature review study focused on

how physical facilities, doctor-patient relationship, Laboratory services and pharmacy services influence patients' satisfaction in public hospitals in Somalia. The study used search engines as database sources such as Google scholar, ResearchGate and many others. During searching, the researcher strived to figure out the most relevant and updated articles, books with our study.

The study has certain limitations as it is based on literature review. It lacks primary data collection such as direct surveys, or interviews that could give first-hand insights into patient satisfaction. Additionally, the availability and the quality of relevant literature review on Somali public hospitals may be limited potentially influencing the comprehensiveness of the results.

#### **4. FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE**

Findings related to physical facilities, doctor-patient relationship, pharmacy services, and laboratory services in public hospitals highlight various challenges and their impact on patient experience. Here are some general results:

##### **Physical Facilities:**

Inadequate maintenance and cleanliness of hospital premises contribute to a negative perception among patients and reduce overall satisfaction. Insufficient availability of essential facilities, such as clean water, waiting chairs, restrooms, consultation rooms and sanitation facilities, can lead to discomfort and dissatisfaction among patients. Outdated infrastructure and a lack of modern medical equipment hinder the delivery of quality healthcare services, impacting patient outcomes and satisfaction. The study revealed that the participants expressed satisfaction with the healthcare facility located in their district that offers them healthcare services(Ochan et al., 2018)

##### **Doctor-Patient Relationship:**

Poor communication between doctors and patients, including a lack of clear explanations and limited involvement in decision-making, can result in dissatisfaction and decreased trust. Negative attitudes, lack of empathy, and disrespectful behavior from healthcare providers can lead to a strained doctor-patient relationship and lower patient satisfaction. Limited time spent with patients, rushed consultations, and a lack of personalized care contribute to a subpar patient experience. The study finding indicate that physician empathy plays a central role in doctor-patient communication and has a significant impact on patient outcomes. Three key themes were examined: physicians' patient outcomes, empathic expressions (including functional status, safety, and satisfaction), and the role of empathy in enhancing doctor-patient communication(Zhang et al., 2023).

##### **Pharmacy Services:**



Insufficient availability of medications within public hospitals can result in patients experiencing delays or being unable to obtain necessary treatments, leading to frustration and dissatisfaction. Inefficient prescription filling processes, including long waiting times and confusion in medication dispensing, negatively impact patient satisfaction and adherence to treatment plans. Lack of quality control in pharmacy services, such as counterfeit or ineffective medications, undermines patient trust and safety. Considering the ongoing trend in the healthcare system to provide quality service, the study revealed that patient satisfaction with pharmacy service was remarkably low (Ayele et al., 2020).

### **Laboratory Services:**

Inadequate laboratory infrastructure and equipment can lead to delays in diagnostic testing, causing frustration and prolonged uncertainty for patients. Inaccurate or unreliable test results due to substandard protocols or inadequate quality assurance measures diminish patient confidence and hinder appropriate medical decision-making. Excessive waiting times for laboratory tests can cause inconvenience and dissatisfaction among patients, particularly when timely diagnosis and treatment are crucial. The study discovered that patients expressed dissatisfaction with missing of results of the laboratory (Hiwot et al., 2020).

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

The objective of this paper was to examine the factors that influence patients' satisfaction in public hospitals in Somalia. As we have already mentioned in the literature review, several factors can potentially influence patients' satisfaction in public hospitals:

- ❖ **Quality of healthcare services:** The level of medical care provided, including accuracy of diagnosis, effectiveness of treatment, and overall competence of healthcare professionals, can significantly impact patients' satisfaction.
- ❖ **Access to healthcare:** The availability and accessibility of healthcare services, including timely appointments, minimal waiting times, and reasonable distances to hospitals, can affect patients' satisfaction.
- ❖ **Communication and patient-doctor interaction:** Effective communication between healthcare providers and patients, including clear explanations of medical conditions, treatment options, and involvement in decision-making, can contribute to higher levels of patient satisfaction.

- ❖ **Infrastructure and facilities:** The physical environment and facilities within public hospitals, such as cleanliness, comfort, and availability of essential amenities, can impact patients' overall satisfaction.
- ❖ **Availability of medication and medical equipment:** Patients' satisfaction may be influenced by the availability and accessibility of necessary medications and medical equipment within public hospitals.
- ❖ The study conducted in Somalia uncovered several issues impacting patient experiences, including prolonged waiting times, indifferent and disrespectful behavior exhibited by certain hospital staff, the unavailability of prescribed medications, instances of discrimination and favoritism in determining priority of patient care, both in terms of access to healthcare services and consultation rooms(Mohamud, 2019).

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Improving patients' satisfaction in public hospitals in Somalia can be achieved through the following various measures:-

- ❖ Attention should be given to the physical facilities by ensuring cleanliness, maintaining essential facilities, and investing in modern medical equipment.
- ❖ Enhancing the doctor-patient relationship is crucial, which involves effective communication, empathy, and involving patients in decision-making.
- ❖ Pharmacy services should be improved by ensuring the availability of medications and streamlining prescription filling processes.
- ❖ For lab services, strengthening infrastructure, implementing quality control measures, and minimizing waiting times for tests are recommended.

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