

Original Article

Level Of Patient's Satisfaction with Physical Therapy Services in Public and Private Hospitals

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ABSTRACT

Background: Physical therapy, a non-pharmacological intervention, plays a crucial role in aiding patients to improve disabilities and enhance their daily functional activities. Evaluating patient satisfaction is pivotal in understanding the efficacy of interaction and knowledge transfer between healthcare providers, particularly physical therapists, and their patients.

Objective: This study aimed to assess the level of patient satisfaction with physical therapy services in public and private hospital settings in Gujrat, Pakistan.

Methods: The study included 340 participants, selected through a non-probability convenience sampling technique from hospitals in Gujrat. The study encompassed patients from all conditions within the domain of physical therapy, who had attended at least one session of treatment. Exclusion criteria were set for patients with mental retardation, Parkinson's disease, and cognitive disabilities. A 12-item MedRisk questionnaire was employed to evaluate patient satisfaction levels with physical therapy services.

Results: The participant group comprised 141 males (41.5%) and 199 females (58.5%), with a mean age of 42.10 years (SD=15.80). Regarding the hospital setting, 177 participants received therapy in public hospitals, while 163 were treated in private hospitals. Satisfaction levels varied, with 9 participants (2.6%) reporting strong dissatisfaction, 159 (46.8%) expressing moderate satisfaction, and 172 (50.6%) indicating strong satisfaction. Specifically, in public hospitals, 9 participants were strongly dissatisfied, 113 moderately satisfied, and 55 strongly satisfied. In contrast, in private hospitals, no participants were strongly dissatisfied, 46 were moderately satisfied, and 117 were strongly satisfied. The statistical significance was marked with a p-value of 0.000.

Conclusion: The study concluded that there was a higher level of satisfaction with physical therapy services in private hospitals compared to public hospitals in Gujrat. This finding underscores the need for continual improvement and evaluation of patient care standards in different healthcare settings.

Keywords: Physical Therapy, Patient Satisfaction, MedRisk Questionnaire, Public and Private Hospitals, Healthcare Quality.

INTRODUCTION

Physical therapy, a discipline within the realm of healthcare, focuses on the non-pharmacological treatment and management of various health conditions. It encompasses the assessment, therapeutic intervention, counseling, and guidance for individuals suffering from mobility dysfunction, physiological impairments, and pain resulting from trauma or psychological conditions, employing physical agents for treatment (1). The uniqueness of physical therapy lies in the intensity of therapist-patient interaction, often more profound than in other healthcare professions. This interaction, shaped significantly by the environment of the physical therapy rehabilitation center and the comprehensive interaction between the therapist and patient, plays a crucial role in shaping the patient's perception of the therapeutic relationship (2). Physical therapy aims not only at early healing and rehabilitation but also at enhancing the patients' independence, competence, and quality of life (3).

Physical therapists apply their specialized knowledge and skills across a spectrum of practices, addressing issues related to various bodily functions like neurological, musculoskeletal, cardiopulmonary systems, and specialized areas such as sports physical therapy and geriatric physical therapy (4,5). In cases of neurological disorders like stroke, physiotherapy is crucial for functional motor restoration in survivors (6). Musculoskeletal conditions, including lumbar or cervical pain, osteoarthritis, and sports injuries, also see physiotherapists playing a pivotal role (7). The significance of physiotherapy is equally evident in cardiac rehabilitation, where it involves not just physical training but also a multifaceted approach to behavioral change, contributing to reduced mortality rates (8). Pediatric physical therapists specialize in addressing developmental challenges in infants and children, ranging from engagement constraints to cognitive issues, either present at birth or emerging later in life (9). In the context of sports, the primary aim of physical therapy is injury management and rehabilitation, ensuring a safe and efficient return to the sport (10). Furthermore, studies have highlighted the role of physical therapy in assisting the elderly in maintaining their health, well-being, and physical performance, thereby preventing disease and disability (11).

The healthcare system in each country is tailored to meet its population's specific needs within their unique social, cultural, and economic contexts. One of the primary goals in healthcare is to deliver equitable, effective, and accessible treatment to enhance patient satisfaction (12). Patient satisfaction, an indicator of healthcare quality, reflects the patients' perception of the care received and is influenced by various factors including therapist-patient interaction, environmental conditions, and socio-cultural norms (2). Research indicates that satisfaction levels are higher among patients with acute conditions, older adults, and women, especially when they receive consistent care from the same clinician (14). Satisfied patients are more likely to adhere to treatment plans, seek additional services, and generally experience an improvement in their quality of life.

However, factors such as lengthy therapy sessions, inadequate facilities, lack of confidence in the therapy or institution, and insufficient engagement about their condition can lead to decreased patient satisfaction (15). Assessing patient satisfaction, a complex and abstract concept, requires indirect methods and various qualitative measurement tools. One such tool, the MedRisk Instrument for Assessing Patient Satisfaction with Physical Therapy Services (MRPS), has been widely used for its reliability (16).

The MRPS, initially comprising 20 items, was refined to a 12-item questionnaire to evaluate patient satisfaction more effectively (17). This questionnaire includes items on external factors (items 1-3), internal factors (items 4-10), and two global measures of satisfaction (items 11-12), with patients rating each item on a scale of 1 to 5. Notably, items 4 and 7 are scored in reverse to ensure positive alignment (18). The validity and reliability of the MRPS were reinforced by a study in 2019, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.95 (19).

In countries like Pakistan, where physiotherapy is rapidly growing, the assessment of patient satisfaction is crucial yet often overlooked. The current study aims to evaluate patient satisfaction in Gujrat, Pakistan, to aid physical therapists in refining their practices according to patient perceptions and needs, thereby enhancing overall patient well-being (20).

The primary objective of this study is to assess the level of patient satisfaction with physical therapy services in public and private hospitals. This assessment is pivotal in understanding the effectiveness and quality of physical therapy services offered in different healthcare settings. Patient satisfaction is a critical indicator of the quality of healthcare services, reflecting the effectiveness of communication, the adequacy of care provided, and the overall patient experience. By comparing patient satisfaction in public and private hospitals, this study aims to identify potential disparities in service quality, areas requiring improvement, and factors contributing to patient contentment or dissatisfaction. This understanding is crucial for healthcare providers and policymakers to make informed decisions and implement strategies that enhance the quality of physical therapy services, ultimately leading to improved patient outcomes and satisfaction. Moreover, this comparison between public and private sectors can provide insights into the operational efficiencies, resource allocation, and patient care strategies that could be adopted or modified for better healthcare delivery.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional design to evaluate patient satisfaction with physical therapy services in public and private hospital settings. A total of 340 participants were enrolled from three distinct healthcare facilities (12): Aziz Bhatti Shaheed Hospital in Gujrat, Spine Care Clinic Gujrat, and City Hospital Gujrat. Prior to data collection, appropriate consent was obtained from these institutions.

A non-probability convenience sampling technique was utilized for participant selection. The study population comprised individuals of both genders, ranging in age from 15 to 70 years. All participants had undergone at least one session of physical therapy and represented a broad spectrum of conditions within the scope of physical therapy. However, individuals with mental retardation, Parkinson's disease, and cognitive disabilities were excluded from the study to maintain focus on the target demographic.

For the assessment of patient satisfaction, the MedRisk Instrument for Measuring Patient Satisfaction in Physical Therapy, a 12-item questionnaire, was employed. This instrument includes three items addressing external factors, seven items focusing on internal factors (particularly therapist-patient interaction), and two items related to overall satisfaction. The participants were provided with the questionnaire along with detailed instructions regarding its completion to ensure accurate assessment of their satisfaction levels with the physical therapy services received. The validity and reliability of this instrument have been previously established, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.95 (17).

Data collection was followed by a thorough analysis using SPSS software, version 24. The variables considered in this analysis included age, gender, the type of hospital setting (public or private), and the number of physical therapy sessions attended by each patient. Patient satisfaction levels were categorized into three scales: strongly dissatisfied, moderately satisfied, and strongly satisfied. Quantitative variables were analyzed using mean and standard deviation, while qualitative variables were assessed using frequency and proportions.

This study was conducted in strict adherence to the ethical guidelines and regulations stipulated by the Ethical Committee of the University of Lahore, ensuring the integrity and ethical compliance of the research process.

RESULTS

In the study, the participant pool consisted of 340 individuals, with a gender distribution of 41.5% male (141 participants) and 58.5% female (199 participants). The mean age of participants was 42.10 years, with a standard deviation of 15.81 years. Regarding the number of physical therapy sessions attended, 42.4% of participants (144 individuals) had attended 1 to 3 sessions, 26.2% (89 individuals) had attended 4 to 6 sessions, 15.9% (54 individuals) had attended 7 to 9 sessions, and 15.6% (53 individuals) had attended more than 10 sessions. The participants were almost evenly split between hospital settings, with 52.1% (177 individuals) receiving treatment in public hospitals (mean satisfaction score 41.31, SD=5.89) and 47.9% (163 individuals) in private hospitals (mean satisfaction score 47.64, SD=4.13). In terms of patient satisfaction levels, 2.6% of participants (9 individuals) were strongly dissatisfied, 46.8% (159 individuals) were moderately satisfied, and 50.6% (172 individuals) were strongly satisfied with the physical therapy services they received.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Study Participants

Variable	Mean (SD)	Frequency (%)
Gender of Participants		
Male		141 (41.5%)
Female		199 (58.5%)
Age of Participants	42.10	
	(15.81)	
Number of Sessions Attended		
1 to 3 sessions		144 (42.4%)
4 to 6 sessions		89 (26.2%)
7 to 9 sessions		54 (15.9%)
>10 sessions		53 (15.6%)
Hospital Setting		
Public	41.31	177 (52.1%)
	(5.89)	
Private	47.64	163 (47.9%)
	(4.13)	
Level of Patient Satisfaction		
Strongly dissatisfied		9 (2.6%)
Moderately Satisfied		159 (46.8%)
Strongly Satisfied		172 (50.6%)

Table 2: Cross Tabulation of Patient Satisfaction Level and Hospital Setting

Level of Patient Satisfaction	Public Hospital	Private Hospital	Total
Strongly Dissatisfied	9 (5.1%)	0 (0.0%)	9 (2.6%)

Level of Patient Satisfaction	Public Hospital	Private Hospital	Total
Moderately Satisfied	113 (63.8%)	46 (28.2%)	159 (46.8%)
Strongly Satisfied	55 (31.1%)	117 (71.8%)	172 (50.6%)
Total	177 (100%)	163 (100%)	340 (100%)

The cross tabulation of patient satisfaction levels with the type of hospital setting revealed distinct patterns. Among those treated in public hospitals, 5.1% (9 participants) were strongly dissatisfied, 63.8% (113 participants) were moderately satisfied, and 31.1% (55 participants) were strongly satisfied. In contrast, in private hospitals, not a single participant reported strong dissatisfaction. Instead, 28.2% (46 participants) were moderately satisfied, and a significant 71.8% (117 participants) were strongly satisfied. Overall, the total count for each level of satisfaction across both hospital settings was 9 participants (2.6%) for strong dissatisfaction, 159 participants (46.8%) for moderate satisfaction, and 172 participants (50.6%) for strong satisfaction, cumulating in a total of 340 participants.

DISCUSSION

The current study embarked on an exploratory journey to assess patient satisfaction with physical therapy services in Gujrat, Pakistan. This endeavor, a first of its kind in the region, utilized the validated MedRisk questionnaire based on Likert's scale. The findings revealed a higher attendance in public hospitals compared to private ones, potentially attributable to the cost differential of services. Specifically, the mean satisfaction score for public hospital participants was 41.3107 (SD= 5.89198), while for private hospitals, it was 47.6442 (SD= 4.12712).

A 2021 study, using the same MedRisk Instrument, presented a contrasting scenario in Lahore public hospitals. Of the 377 participants, a significant majority reported low satisfaction levels, with only a minority expressing high satisfaction (21). This discrepancy was primarily linked to inadequate communication and service provision by therapists. In contrast, the current study involving 340 participants found a notably lower count of highly dissatisfied individuals in public hospitals, with a substantial majority expressing moderate to high satisfaction in private hospitals. This stark difference underscores the pivotal role of effective clinician-patient communication and service quality in determining patient satisfaction.

While the previous study highlighted deficiencies in public hospitals, the present research paints a more positive picture regarding patient satisfaction levels. However, both studies converge on the importance of interpersonal dynamics and service quality in shaping patient experiences. These findings collectively point to the complex nature of patient satisfaction, necessitating a multifaceted approach to healthcare delivery.

A 2022 study further elucidated this complexity, revealing a balanced gender distribution and a slight preference for private hospitals among participants (22). In Gujrat, a notable disparity in satisfaction between public and private hospital patients was observed. Among the 340 participants, none from private hospitals reported strong dissatisfaction, in contrast to public hospitals.

Conclusively, the study indicates a higher satisfaction level with physical therapy services in private hospitals compared to public ones. These insights are invaluable for assessing and enhancing the standard of physiotherapy services in hospitals. The study advocates for the categorization of diseases into musculoskeletal and neurological types and suggests including therapist experience levels and adherence to current evidence-based practices in future research. This approach would offer a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing patient satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

While female patients outnumbered male patients, and more patients opted for public hospitals over private ones, the higher satisfaction levels in private hospitals highlight areas for potential improvement in public healthcare settings. This research serves as a critical tool for ongoing evaluation and enhancement of physiotherapy services, with implications for both clinical practice and healthcare policy.

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