

The Clients' Satisfaction of Health Care Services at A Selected Health Care Facility in Accra.

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Abstract

This study investigated the levels of satisfaction with healthcare among patients who visit a selected health care facility in Accra. A total of ninety-three respondents were sampled using the convenience sampling technique. Structured questionnaires developed by the researchers which examined the overall and specific satisfactions were administered to the respondents. The cross-sectional survey design was used for the study implementation. Data analysis was done using One-way ANOVA and Independent t-tests. The results showed that significant sex differences exist in the overall general and specific satisfaction between male and female customers. Significant age differences were also observed in the levels overall general and specific satisfactions. However, years of patronage did not have any significant effect on overall general and specific satisfactions. The implications of the study to healthcare delivery are extensively discussed.

Key words

Health care delivery, consumer satisfaction, selected health care facility.

INTRODUCTION

Customer satisfaction is a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting for comparing product/service's perceived performance or outcome in relation to his or her expectations. Recently, Providers of medical services have awakened to consumer challenges,

competition, quality, and the realities of marketing. With these changes, a related and equally important issue has emerged, the client-provider relationship on the overall medical service quality evaluation. Clients are increasingly frustrated with the commercialization of medical service, proliferated bureaucratic health care system and weakened client-provider relationship

(Astrachan, 1991; Bryant et al, 1998; Sinay, 2002). It is recognized that high quality service is essential for firms that want to be successful in their business (Parasuraman et al., 1998; Rust & Oliver, 1994).

To achieve patient satisfaction, medical service providers should realize the importance of healthcare marketing. Therefore, hospitals, clinics and medical service providers should make effort to develop relationship marketing with their patients, determining their needs, and tailoring their services to meet those needs.

According to Blumenfeld (1993), developing countries are influenced heavily by findings in developed countries, hence have become increasingly interested in assessing the quality of their health care. This study will then try to determine the factors that influence client satisfaction and consequently its effect on customer loyalty as well at selected health care facility.

Objectives of the Study

This study has the following objectives:

1. To assess user expectations and degree of client satisfaction and quality of health care provided by the selected health care facility.
2. To assess the utilization of health services and client satisfaction for services provided by the selected health care facility.
3. To find out clients' perceptions of the quality of healthcare delivery at the selected health care facility.

Statement of Hypotheses

This study has the following hypotheses formulated to be tested:

1. Female customers are more likely to be generally satisfied with the healthcare they receive than male customers.
2. There will be significant age difference in the levels of general satisfaction with healthcare services the customers receive.
3. Customers who have been with the clinic for a relatively long period of time are likely to be more

satisfied with the healthcare they receive than new customers.

Significance of the Study

Even though, the healthcare sector plays a key role in the wealth of a nation and therefore needs to be efficient and effective in their service delivery there are few studies with regards to customer satisfaction as compared to other sectors like the banks, telecommunication and tourism in Ghana. The problem is that, if customers are not satisfied with the orthodox healthcare delivery systems, they would look for alternatives which might be dangerous to their health and the nation. In view of this, there is the need to examine the level of satisfaction among patients and their demographic characteristics associated with their overall general and domain specific satisfactions. Furthermore, the information will also be useful to the selected health care facility to be able to improve on their services to meet the satisfaction of the clients who patronize their services.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kumar and Lim (2008) in their study concluded that women are influenced by service quality more strongly than men whereas men are focused on perceived economic value in loyalty decisions. Thus, it is observable that sex differences exist between male and female customers in their perception of service which could influence their levels of satisfaction. Similar to these findings, it has been documented that women report greater overall satisfaction than men (Buller & Buller, 1987). Relatedly, some studies have suggested that men are less satisfied as customers than females (Chisick, 1997; Singh, 1990).

Furthermore, Rust and Williams (1994) in their study to determine the effects of customer satisfaction and length of patronage on repurchase behavior maintained that higher satisfaction and longer length of patronage of services predicted repurchasing behavior. This is because when customers are satisfied with the services that they receive; their chances of coming back are high than when they are dissatisfied with the services they receive. In addition, the longer length of patronage predicted higher repurchase behavior because longer patronage stems from satisfaction and consequently resulting in customers becoming attached to the services and continue patronage.

Smith and Swinehart (2001) pointed out a strong relationship between quality of product or service and satisfaction of customers. According to them, customers' perception regarding quality of products or services brings about satisfaction in their mind. This finding suggests that the healthcare delivery system should be made to be very effective in terms of taking care of the patients as this influence their satisfaction levels.

In addition to the earlier studies, Cooil, Keiningam, Aksoy and Hsu (2007) examined the moderating effects of customer characteristics on the link between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty and found that length of relationship and income moderated the customer satisfaction-loyalty relationship negatively by weakening such a relationship.

Sivesan and Karunanithy (2013) examined the relationship between personal demographical factors (age, sex, and income level, educational level and marital status) and customer satisfaction. The researchers used closed ended questionnaires to collect the needed data. The systematic random sampling method was used to select respondents for the study. Results from the data analysis showed that there is no significant difference between the personal demographic factors such as gender and marital status but there exist significant difference among age, income and education level on service quality.

Hazra (2013) examined the effect of demographic characteristics of customers between public and private sector banks, and the effect of demographic characteristics (education and occupation) of customers on customer satisfaction, customer commitment and customer trust. The data are collected from public sector banks and private sector banks in West Bengal. The survey method was used in this study. Purposive sampling method was used to collect data. Customer satisfaction, customer commitment, and customer trust emerged as a single factor. The results showed significant differences between public and private sector banks with regard to customer satisfaction and customer commitment. However, the demographic characteristics did not have any significant effects on the levels of customer satisfaction, customer commitment and customer trust.

In another study, Goncalves and Sampaio (2012) investigated the possible moderators of the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty. The analysis of their data revealed that gender and age of the client have a positive effect on the customer satisfaction-loyalty relationship when loyalty was measured with repurchase intention. In contrast, when loyalty was measured with repurchase behavior, the length of the relationship moderated the link significantly. This later finding was echoed by earlier research works that found the length of relationship to have a significant moderation effect on the customer satisfaction and loyalty link (e.g. Seiders, Voss, Grewal & Godfrey, 2005; Verhoef, 2003; Verhoef, Franses & Hoekstra, 2002).

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in a selected health care facility in Accrwhich provides private health services to the general public. The target population comprised of young men and women who attend or seek health care at the health care facility. The collection of the data lasted for one week.

A convenient sampling technique was employed in selecting the 93 health seekers out of the total population that attend the clinic. The data was collected with a self-designed questionnaire on the various areas of client satisfaction. This instrument was chosen because it would allow them to express their views of the quality of services given to them at the facility. The cronchach alpha of the instrument after administering yielded a high reliability of .89.

DATA ANALYSIS

The first hypothesis stated that female customers are more likely to be generally satisfied with healthcare they receive than male customers. This was tested with the *t* test with the results below:

Table 1: Summary of independent t-tests of sex differences customer satisfaction with healthcare

Dependent Variable	Sex	N	Mean	SD	df	t	ρ
General Satisfaction	Male	4	14.1	2.1	9	2.4	.0
	Female	1	7	8	1	1	1
		5	15.5	2.9			
Assessment	Male	4	23.2	3.2	9	2.8	.0
	Female	1	7	0	1	6	0
		5	25.8	5.0			
Treatment outcome	Male	4	10.6	2.0	9	.25	.4
	Female	1	8	4	1		1
		5	10.8	2.7			
Facilities	Male	4	15.2	2.2	9	1.4	.0
	Female	1	9	1	1	2	8
		5	15.9	2.2			
Communication	Male	4	26.5	6.2	9	1.0	.1
	Female	1	9	6	1	4	5
		5	27.7	4.1			
Environment	Male	4	14.5	1.9	9	.82	.2
	Female	1	9	7	1		1
		5	14.9	2.5			

The table 1 above shows that a significant difference between male and female customers on their general satisfaction with the healthcare they receive at the .05 level of significance, [t (91) = 2.41, ρ = .01]. Comparison of the two means showed that female customers (Mean=15.50) were more satisfied with the overall healthcare than male customers (Mean=14.17). This supports the hypothesis one that female customers are more likely to be generally satisfied with the healthcare they receive than male customers is supported. For the specific domains of healthcare, females reported more satisfaction with assessment by doctors and nurses than male customers. However, male and female customers did not significantly show in their satisfaction with treatment outcomes, facilities, communication/human relation and environment/hygienic conditions at the facility.

The second hypothesis also stated that there will be significant age difference in the levels of general satisfaction with healthcare services the customers receive.

To test this hypothesis, the One-way ANOVA was used to test the hypothesis as there are more than

two independent groups of participants and the dependent variable is assumed to be measured on an interval scale. The summary of the results are shown in the Table 2 below;

Table 2: Summary of One-way ANOVA of age differences in overall customer satisfaction with healthcare

DV	N	Mean	SD	df	F	ρ
20-24years	12	13.42	2.35	3,89	8.34	.00
25-30years	34	14.65	2.36			
31-35years	21	17.14	2.29			
Above 40 years	26	14.15	2.68			

An examination of the ANOVA table 2 above shows that age of customers has a significant effect on their overall general satisfaction at the .05 level, [F(3,89) = 8.34, ρ = .00]. Since the age groups are more than two, multiple comparison was used and the results show that respondents between 31 and 35years reported the highest satisfaction (Mean= 17.14) which was statistically significant from all the age groups. The least satisfied age group was customers between the ages of 20-24years. This therefore supports the second hypothesis that there will be significant age difference in the levels of general satisfaction with healthcare services the customers receive. Further analysis of domain specific satisfactions among the customers showed that significant age differences exist in customer satisfaction with assessment by doctors/nurses, Treatment outcome and Facilities. However, no significant age differences exist in customers' satisfaction with Communication/human relation with the healthcare staff and environment.

The last hypothesis examines the satisfaction level of the clients with regards to their duration with the facility. It stated that customers who have been with the clinic for a relatively long period of time are likely to be more satisfied with the healthcare they receive than new customers.

To test this hypothesis, the One-way ANOVA was used to test the hypothesis as there are more than two independent groups of participants and the dependent variable is assumed to be measured on an interval scale. The summary of the results are shown in the Table 3 below;

Table 3: Summary of One-way ANOVA of years of patronage and overall customer satisfaction with healthcare

DV	N	Mean	SD	df	F	P
Less than 1year	32	14.28	2.36	3,89	2.11	.11
1-3years	28	15.82	2.79			
4-6years	25	15.04	2.86			
7-9years	8	13.88	2.75			

The table 3 above shows that the years of patronage of the customers does not have a statistically significant effect on their overall general health at the .05 level of significance, $[F(3,89) = 2.11, \rho = .11]$. This shows that no significant differences exist in the overall general satisfaction with the healthcare received by customers due to years of patronage. Therefore, the third hypothesis that customers who have been with the clinic for a relatively long period of time are likely to be more satisfied with the healthcare they receive than new customers is not supported. Further analysis of specific satisfaction showed that years of patronage has a significant effect on the satisfaction with general assessment by doctors/nurses. However, years of patronage did not have any significant effect on their satisfaction of treatment outcomes, facilities, communication/human relation and environment/hygiene.

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study seeks to examine the patients' characteristics that influence their service satisfaction to inform modification and improved services tailored to the individual differences. The main objectives were to examine sex differences in customer satisfaction with general overall and domain specific services, to determine whether there are any significant age differences in the general overall and domain specific satisfaction with services they received and finally, to investigate the impact of years of patronage on general overall and domain specific satisfaction with services they received.

With reference to the first objective, it was observed that females reported more satisfaction with assessment by doctors and nurses than male customers. However, male and female customers did not significantly differ in their satisfaction with treatment outcomes, facilities,

communication/human relation and environment/hygienic conditions at the facility. These differences found between males and females can be attributed to the fact that males and females might go to the clinic with different expectations and general perception that females are generally not as strong as males might lead the health workers to pay more attention to them than the males. This is because they did not differ significantly on things that have to do with the environment or structures. This is consistent with previous works that found female customers to be more satisfied (Chisick, 1997; Singh, 1990; Kumar & Lim, 2008)

The second objective also examined the age differences in the levels of general satisfaction with healthcare services the customers receive. The results revealed that significant age differences exist in the levels of general satisfaction with overall healthcare services the customers receive. In terms of the domain specific satisfaction, significant age differences exist in customer satisfaction with assessment by doctors/nurses, Treatment outcome and Facilities. However, no significant age differences exist in customers' satisfaction with Communication/human relation with the healthcare staff and environment. Customers who are between the ages of 31 and 35 years reported the highest satisfaction compared to the age groups which indicate that older people tend to be more satisfied with the services than younger customers. This could be due to the changing socialization patterns where the younger generation now understands issues related to their rights and privileges in the healthcare delivery system through the use of information and communication technology. This is inconsistent with earlier works that significant age differences exist in customer satisfaction (Sivesan & Karunanithy, 2013)

The last objective which sought to find out the effect of duration in the facility and the level of satisfaction did not yield any significant difference. That is, there was no statistically significant difference between customers who have been with the clinic for a relatively long period of time and do not differ in their overall general satisfaction and domain specifics such as treatment outcomes, facilities, communication/human relation and environment/hygiene. They however differed on the satisfaction with assessment by doctors and

nurses. These findings mean that the number of years the individual has been with the clinic is not very important in determining the levels of satisfaction of customers. Thus, focus should be on the service that the health workers provide to their customers as people could still be visiting the clinic for various other reasons apart from satisfaction. This finding is inconsistent with previous works that found length of patronage to be significantly related to customer satisfaction (Rust & Williams, 1994).

Recommendations

Based on the findings above the following recommendations are suggested for improved customer satisfaction and healthcare delivery.

1. Attention should be paid to the individual differences in the delivery of healthcare services to the patients as their sex and ages have been found to have significant effects on the overall general satisfaction as well as some domain specific areas including assessment by doctors/nurses, treatment outcomes, communication/human relations and the facilities.
2. Health workers should do regular assessment of the satisfaction levels of customers to inform improved healthcare delivery and modification of their modus operandi,
3. Patients should be encouraged to express their concerns, opinions, views and possible suggest changes they would like to see implemented as customer satisfaction has been linked with company profitability, customer loyalty and retention.
4. For future studies, a larger sample should be used and the satisfaction levels should be compared between public and private health facilities as well as how customer satisfaction influences customer loyalty and retention.

Conclusion

This study seeks to examine the levels of customer satisfaction among patients who visit the selected health facility. The overall impression from this study is the fact that customers were fairly satisfied with the healthcare services they receive. The key issues that emerged from this study are the fact that there are significant sex differences in the level of overall customer satisfaction and some specific domains.

Significant age differences also emerged with older participants reporting better satisfaction than relatively younger ones. However, the level of satisfaction experienced by patients is not significantly affected by the length of patronage of healthcare from the clinic. It can be concluded that the demographic characteristics of respondents are very important in influencing customer satisfaction and therefore must be taken into consideration in healthcare delivery.

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