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**"STUDY OF FOOD SERVICE QUALITY A KEY FACTOR INPATIENT  
SATISFACTION IN PRIVATE HOSPITALS"**

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**ABSTRACT**

This research paper assesses the impact of quality food services on patient's satisfaction in private hospitals. It shows that high-quality foodservice has a remarkable relationship with the success factor of private hospitals. This study exacts the private hospitals to enlarge and expand knowledge about a patient's food need and how it should be measured to provide better quality food service. Foodservice quality means a certain patient perception of how well the foodservice meets and fulfills their expectation. It is concluded and evaluated by patients, visitors, and staff. The nature of foodservice is interactive; Service quality is assessed immediately after service. Quality is the essential tool in this competitive period. It is necessary for a researcher to find out the quality measuring tool and enhance the service quality. It should be necessary to improve the service quality of food provided to patients because the continued improvement in foodservice quality has affected and enhanced patient satisfaction and loyalty.

**INTRODUCTION**

Private hospitals have competed with other health care organizations as well as public hospitals. The immediate need is to know the patient's expectations and perspectives about the food services, identify the gap and provide good quality food to patients to fulfill their expectations. Private hospitals should shift their focus from earning more profit to patient's satisfaction because it positively influences existing patients and new ones, which directly affects the hospital's rating. The service cost, service time, service quality, communication skills, and food delivery process are connected with patient satisfaction. It creates a positive or negative impact on the overall satisfaction, retention, and loyalty of patients. This research study focuses on developing effective communication and

encouraging a caring nature in service providers.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To examine the food quality provided by a private hospital.
2. To investigate the relationship between the food service and quality and patient satisfaction.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research is descriptive and aims to determine the various food services and quality of private hospitals' food services and their impact on patient satisfaction. The study explores the information collected through surveys and secondary sources like a published research paper in journals and magazines, books and reference books, and internet sources.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Various researches have conducted studies to find out the link between the foodservice quality and success of private hospitals. Patient satisfaction and loyalty relationship with hospital health care service (Taqdees Fatima 2017), mouth publicity and recommendation from exiting employee is positively affected on the choice of hospital, and service quality depends on the various facilities available in the hospital, the researcher uses SERVQUAL model to find out the service quality and satisfaction of patients (Suagandha Sirohi, Rajendra Singh 2016), tangible service quality dimension and personnel which affects patient satisfaction (Rehman B 2018), the food menu and nutrition affects patients expectation is the new determination of hospital food production system in the UK (Ahmed 2015), food safety-related programs organized in Turkey indicate unhygienic food and absence of food safety knowledge, inadequate financial resources are primary problems in hospital food service quality (Bas, Murat 2005)

### **VARIOUS FACTORS AFFECTING FOOD SERVICE QUALITY**

The following factors affect foodservice quality and patient satisfaction in private hospitals.

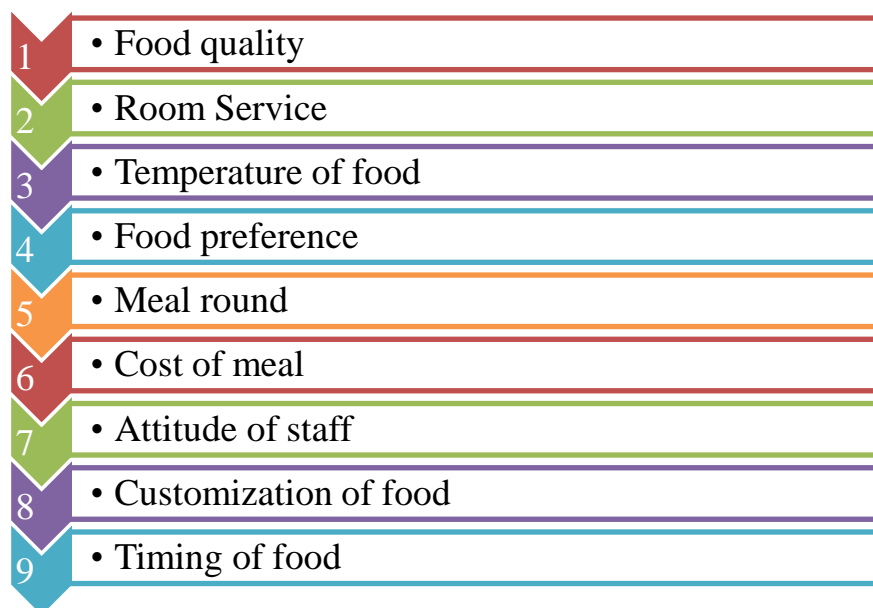


Figure no 1- Factors affected on foodservice quality

1. **Food quality**- every private hospital has its own food service institute or canteen; otherwise, the hospital outsources food services. Food quality service can be discriminated based on various factors and aspects, i.e., food taste, savor, flavor, variety of food and dishes, type of food- vegetable, protein, grains, dairy, meat, poultry, fish, etc. The patient expects healthy food. For the purpose of change in taste, food service providers should change the menu. It should focus on a diet chart provided by doctors and deliver customized, healthy food to meet patients' needs and expectations. Every private hospital should connect and register with dieticians and nutritionists. They must make efforts to prepare a perfect menu for patients to enhance the food quality. Foodservice providers should focus on the usage of fresh food, fruits, vegetables in every menu. It offers a variety of flavor and menus which is familiar to patient diet. They should use fresh herbs, pepper, spices, gravy, stock, etc. It focuses on the patient's choice and alternative selection. It includes the preparation of a weekly menu card and food rotation. Changes in food also help enhance service quality. It should take patient's feedback on food quality regularly to measure food quality and satisfaction. Foodservice quality should use surveys to maintain food service quality.

2. **Room service**- if the patient cannot go to the snack room or hotel canteen to pick up meals, then private hospitals provide room service. It gives various advantages like implementing a doctor's diet chart, improving food service quality, maintaining meal temperature, minimizing meal waste, and decreasing food cost. Room service is quite costly due to exceptional staff for serving meals.

3. **Temperature**- almost all of the admitted patients depend on hospital food service. Hospital foodservice organizations provide food or meals to the patient on their demand. Most of the patients demand fresh and hot meals. Temperature is the most important factor affecting patient's satisfaction during hospitalization. Hospital food service staff should maintain the temperature and optimum quality for every meal. It must retain food with temperature control food safety

regulations. These need temperature control during processing, storage, and distribution of meals. Food temperature has been displayed of high importance with a view of caring for patients. Hospitals should arrange safe food for patients at the time of meal preparation. While serving, following the standards, nutritional value, diet chart, quality, and proper temperature balance because sometimes hot food cools down and chilled food warms up. Food temperature is an essential factor of patient's satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

**4. Food preference-** It is related to the patient's expectations about the meal and service. It is a significant factor that influences meal satisfaction. Various factors influence food preference, i.e., personal factors-expectation of patients, choice of familiar food, patient, mood, and emotions of patients, etc., also socio-economical factors like status and society in which the patient belongs. Educational factors also affect the preference. Education is related to the knowledge and understanding power of the meal. Some religious and cultural factors also affect meal preference. For example, the Muslim religion prefers non-vegetarian food like meat, fish, poultry meal. Every state and region have their own food culture. Patients prefer meals associated with their culture. Food temperature, texture, flavor, quantity, and presentation are also essential factors that affect patients' preferences. Repetition of the same meal creates dissatisfaction, and if hospital service providers prepare a variety of meal offerings, then it improves the satisfaction level.

**5. Meal round-** it means during mealtime food service providers meet patients and ask about the food intake, the staff has to serve meals as per the requirement of the patient, during mealtime staff should be on around again to serve hot food in sufficient quantity, it improves the satisfaction level of patients, it also improves communication and a personal touch with patients. Patients feel happy with a positive attitude and polite language of serving staff. It improves the service quality. Meal round must take feedback about the service quality of food, attitude of staff, taste, temperature, and dissatisfaction area for the purpose of providing better quality food services to patients.

**6. Cost-** everyone wants food and meal at a minimum price, but patients forget the primary role of hospital food service in recovering a patient. The patient gives importance to medical activities. They pay high costs for medicines and treatment but ignore the food quality due to the cost factor. In recent years, everyone has turned health-conscious, and so they want healthy food during hospitalization. The measurement of service quality of food is difficult to compare with the cost paid for the same meal. Foodservice providers should provide all necessary information about the quantity, quality, and cost of food. Many research studies show that reducing meals and food costs increases patient satisfaction, so hospital management should concentrate on reducing the price and providing food at minimum expenses that are affordable to the patient with high-quality nutrition.

**7. The attitude of service provider staff-** The right attitude of foodservice providers positively impacts patient satisfaction. It includes body language, sense of urgency, loyalty, knowledge about handling a complaint effectively, punctuality, and attitude towards the patient. Punctual service takes an interest in serving food to patients, handles patients positively. Foodservice providers should appoint knowledgeable staff who have knowledge about the various languages,

cultures, and religions. They should also be well aware of the various food costs of food. They should focus on patients' demands and wants and provide meals according to the patient preference. Staff should know the likes and dislikes of patients in terms of food. Staff must follow the rules and regulation of food safety and hospital rules. They must show respect to patients and senior staff. They must provide quick service as well as speedy service to patients. Staff should not argue with patients and always prefer to immediately solve any complaints received from the patient. Staff should always smile to enhance and attract patients' attention, and positive body language creates a positive attitude and happy environment.

**8. Customization-** It focuses on a patient-centric approach. It concentrates on providing a meal according to patient preference, expectation, and doctor recommendation. Foodservice provider serves meals as per the nutrition and diet chart. They prepare the meal and serve the plate as per the requirement of the patient.

**9. Timing of food-** the patient can expect food on time. Every private hospital has a dietician and nutritionist that schedules meal activities for patients. It concentrates on mealtime. Sometimes patients aren't satisfied with food service, and they refuse hospital food service because of the inappropriate timing of meals provided by hospital food service providers. Doctors suggest taking the meals on time, but some external factors affect mealtime—ward activities like checking the time of nurse, doctor, etc.

## **PRACTICAL IMPLICATION**

This research has contributed an exploratory and theoretical model for food service quality, patient satisfaction, and private hospital success. This study is essential for private hospitals, patients, and also foodservice providers. This research paper provides basic knowledge about the quality of food services, patient satisfaction, loyalty, etc. This study also points out the relationship between the foodservice quality and its impact on patient's health, hygiene, and satisfaction level, which directly affects private hospitals' success.

## **CONCLUSION**

Current research evaluates the effect of foodservice quality on patient satisfaction that enhances the patient's loyalty. Foodservice quality is positively correlated with patient satisfaction and affects the private hospital's public image and goodwill. The study finds out that private hospitals will establish a loyalty perspective by providing good quality food services to patients, visitors, and staff. The research objective was to find out how various food services impact patient satisfaction. The excellent quality services are related to each other. Quality food services and the success of private hospitals positively influence each other. The result reveals that private hospitals provide quality food services to patients, visitors, and staff. Management focuses on the diet food which is recommended by the doctor and provides basic nutrition and immunity booster foods for faster recovery while the management focuses on basic hygiene, cleanliness, taste quality, service time, food temperature, and attitude of staff, meal rounds, room service and price of food. Every private hospital should provide quality food to

attract and retain patients. Private hospitals should concentrate on high-quality food service. It has revealed that quality service promotes the holding of existing customers and recalls patients, and attracts new patients.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. Foodservice providers should concentrate on patient demand for food and provide quality food.
2. Hospital management and foodservice providers should be connected with the doctor to receive clear direction about the patients' diet chart and provide tasty food with the right nutrition.
3. It should take care of patients from a food quality perspective.
4. It should provide clean and healthy food and take care of the hygiene of food preparation.
5. It should create a positive attitude and communication network with patients and visitors.
6. It should give continuity in quality food to the patient.
7. It should focus on patient satisfaction strategies.
8. It should strongly be recommended that continuous improvement efforts for quality of food services.

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