ABSTRACT

Evaluation of patients’ expected and perceived quality of hospital services using servqual approach in southern part of Tamilnadu were analyzed in this research. The identification of the research problem may be identified as the ground water is highly polluted by the tanneries and textiles industries especially in select southern districts of Tamilnadu namely Dindigul, Madurai, Theni and Tirunelveli. There are many diseases spread out in these areas where better hospital services are needed. Though many hospitals are in existence, the quality of services is not fulfilling the expectations of the patients. This research systematically analyzes the service quality of private and public hospitals. Service Quality of hospitals becomes very essential for patients’ satisfaction and retention. There is no exclusive study which covers the profile of the patients, their level of expectations and perceptions on the service quality of hospitals and their behavioral intentions. Hence the present study has made an attempt to fill up the research gap with proposed research model. Quality standards and accreditations in healthcare industry is carried by the Joint Commission accreditation groups.

The study is limited to four districts of southern part of Tamilnadu Madurai, Theni, Dindigul, Tirunelveli respectively. The instrument used in this study is self – administered schedule and standardised 22 items used by Parasuraman et al for collecting primary data. The schedule consists of four sections: Section 1 of the instrument is intended to collect the demographic information of the respondents. Section 2 of the instrument is intended to know the category of the hospital for the treatment. Section 3 of the instrument is intended to know the necessary and sufficient expectations of
the patients and perceptions of the hospital services provided by the hospital management with respect to SERVQUAL items and SIW, (SERVQUAL Importance Weights).

Five dimensions in SERVQUAL are Tangibility(1-4), Reliability(5-9), Responsiveness (10-13), Assurance (14-17), Empathy (18-22) and overall service quality (average of all factors), patients’ satisfaction. Section 4 of the instrument is intended to focus on collection of the behavioral index of the respondents by 4 factors namely, word of mouth(1-4), positive problem response (5-7), non-switching to competitor(8-11) and willingness to pay more(12-13).

The data was collected from the in-patients of the select hospitals. Questionnaire in Five point Likert scale after analyzing the variables and required data were collected from hospitals of selected districts by using 58 set of questions defining the service Quality and behavioral intention. In this study systematic random sampling method is adopted to select the respondents. The process of systematic sampling typically involves first selecting a fixed starting point in the larger population and then obtaining subsequent observations by using a constant interval between samples taken. In all the hospitals included in the study, the total number of potential sample is 1783.

The number of desired sample is 481. (1783/481) gives an n of 3.7 Ω 4. The data collected were analyzed with the help of Two-Way tables, Percentages, Averages, Ranges and Standard Deviation. The hypotheses are proved based on the Chi-Square test, Multiple regression, ANOVA followed by DMRT test, Correlation, Paired t-test, Discriminant Analysis and SEM has been used. Research model is drawn using Structural Equation Modeling to confer and analyze the problem and extract the results. SPSS – AMOS 18.0 version is used for analyzing this model.
In all items of service quality, perception is slightly less than expectation of patients. The only few exceptions are ease of discharge and convenient timing of service delivery for patients. It does not mean patients are expecting more. Rather it means that their satisfaction has not matched their expectation. The more facilities available at the hospital, the better will be the feeling of patients. Therefore, hospitals, both in public and private sector, need to concentrate on augmenting the facilities including modern equipments in the hospitals.

However, the facilities provided should be need based and hospitals have to bear in mind that mere availability of facilities will not work in their favour. Availability of qualified doctors to make use of the facilities for treatment is equally important. It is in this context, the private hospitals are able to take on the government hospitals. The study confirms that general feeling about a hospital is a leading factor when it comes to choice of hospital. So every hospital should work to create a favourable public opinion. People view hospital service in the four districts as medium in quality. So there is tremendous need and scope for improvement in all areas.