CHAPTER - 3
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter gives a conceptual framework of the research undertaken. Hence stating the reasons for choosing variables for the study based on review of literature. The identification of the variables for the study are listed along with the literature support.

The outcome of quality service delivery is reflected in terms of patients’ satisfaction. Every patient has expectations about quality of service delivered. If the service quality delivered exceeds patients’ expectation, it adds to patients’ satisfaction, otherwise erodes patients’ satisfaction. It is well known that patients’ satisfaction differs from time to time, place to place and person to person. Therefore to achieve a consistent level of patients’ satisfaction consistency in the service delivery process is essential. For measuring and monitoring patients’ satisfaction, SERVQUAL is found to be a reliable instrument by Zeithaml [205].

The SERVQUAL model is an instrument used for measuring service quality and consequently the satisfaction of patients’. This instrument has been applied in different studies in different service industries. Healthcare being highly patient centric operations, this study focuses on patients’ satisfaction with SERVQUAL model of Parasuraman and Zeithaml incorporating therein two additional dimensions viz., accessibility and price.

The dimensions of service quality have been identified through the pioneering research of Parasuraman, Valarie Zeithaml, and Leonard Berry (figure 3.1). Their research identified five specific dimensions of service quality that apply across a variety of service. The five dimensions identified act as drivers of service quality.
The five dimensions of service quality are:

i. **Reliability: Delivering on Promise**

Reliability is defined as the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. Of the five dimensions, reliability has been consistently shown to be the most important determinants of perceptions of service quality. In its broadest sense, reliability means that the service provider delivers on its promise – promise about delivery, service provision, problem resolution and pricing. Customers want to do business with companies that keep their promises, particularly their promises about the service outcomes and core service attributes.

![SERVQUAL Model by Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml](image)

ii. **Assurance: Inspiring Trust and Confidence**

Assurance is defined as employees’ knowledge and courtesy and their ability to inspire trust and confidence. This dimension is likely an important dimension for services that customers perceive as high risk or for services of which they feel uncertain about their ability to evaluate the outcome.
iii. **Tangibility: Representing the Service Physically**

Tangibility is defined as the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and written material. Tangibility provide physical representations or images of the services that customers, particularly new customers, will use to evaluate quality.

iv. **Empathy: Treating Customers as Individuals**

Empathy is defined as the caring, individualized attention given to customers by the service provider. The essence of empathy is conveying, through personalized or customized service, that customers are unique and special as well as that their needs are understood. Customers want to feel understood by and important to firms that provide service to them.

v. **Responsiveness: Being Willing to Help Responsiveness**

Responsiveness is the willing to help customers and provide prompt service. This dimension emphasizes attentiveness and promptness in dealing with customer requests, questions, complaints and problems. Responsiveness is communicated to customers by the length of time they have to wait for assistance, answer to questions or attention to problem. To excel on the dimension of responsiveness, a service provider must view the process of service delivery and the handling of requests from the customers’ point of view rather than from the company’s point of view. Standards for speed and promptness that reflect the company’s view of internal process requirements may be very different from the customer’s requirement for speed and promptness. To truly distinguish themselves on responsiveness, companies need well-staffed customer service departments as well as responsive frontline people in all contact positions.

The SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml was amended (figure 3.2) based on literature reviews for the purpose of this study. Francis Buttle (1994) stated as to the five dimensions proposed for service quality are not universals; the number of dimensions comprising service quality is contextualized [206]. Therefore the items do not always load on to the factors which one would a priori expect, hence apart from these other dimensions could be
considered and there is a possibility of high degree of inter-correlation between the different dimensions.

The generic determinants of service quality presented by Parasuraman et al. (1985) and service quality proposed by Zeithaml et al (1990) encompassed dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding the customer and tangibles [207, 208]. Rosen and Karwan (1994) in the study on prioritizing the service quality dimensions stated accessibility also played a vital role in the evaluating the service perceived by the customer [209]. The customers’ expectation and perception upon a service rendered to them is also been valued based on the access.

Figure 3.2: Amended Model of SERVQUAL

Valarie A. Zeithaml (1998) in the study on consumer perceptions of price, quality, and value: a means-end model and synthesis of Evidence sited the literature on hedonic quality measurement maintains that price is the best measure of quality [210]. Considerable empirical research has investigated the relationship between