

Factors Influencing People Preference of Public Hospital to Private Hospital Selection in Coimbatore

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ABSTRACT

Selection of a hospital is a crucial consideration for those seeking treatment for diseases that they or their loved ones have succumbed to. In India both public and private hospitals serve their purpose of treating people for their healthy living. Because of the amenities and facilities provided by private hospitals the demand for health care in private hospital, is expanding year after year. There is a link between the choice of hospital & services and the cost of services provided in the hospital. In this study, the main focus is to find out the factors behind the people's preference of public to private hospital selection. It is found that factors such as hospital amenities, infrastructure, service and facilities, efficiency and care are the common expectation from the respondents which influences them in hospital selection. However, there is a need to improve the quality and performance of government health services by considering the above factors in formulating those developments. If proper enhancement is taken for the facilities at public hospitals and its services are made better, then the economically weaker section will get benefited.

Keywords: Hospital Selection, Public hospital, Private Hospital, Coimbatore

INTRODUCTION

Healthy living is becoming an important desire of many during this modern era. The seriousness of concern for health is improving due to the uncertain bodily diseases which make people to fear for their health. For maintaining such good health conditions people were more prone towards depending on doctors and medical experts. However, the emergence of new diseases every year tends to create a distress inside people regarding their life expectancy. That eventually leads in seeking good treatments for the diseases for they or their loved ones succumbed. Hospital selection is a major criterion for them in undergoing treatment for such diseases. In India, both public and private hospitals serve their purpose of treating people for their healthy living. Selection of hospitals is crucial and people choose based on their own criteria. Because of the amenities and facilities provided by private institutions, the demand for health care in private hospitals is expanding. Patients can select a hospital based on what is most important to them, such as location, pricing considerations, infrastructure availability, recommendations from friends, referrals from physicians, and so on [9]. There is a link between the choice of hospital and services and the cost of the services provided in the hospital, and it has been discovered that the cost of services incurred has an influence on the choice of hospital for medical treatment. In private hospitals, patients may approach anybody, even reception personnel, who are mostly helpful, and also the private hospitals are equipped with modern equipment and the physicians treat patients in a courteous manner [1]. While the same is not in the case of public hospitals. Despite the fact that the government has recently taken measures to improve the general healthcare system of the country, there are significant gaps in the organisation and execution. Females in rural regions prefer to visit frequently to public health centres over males, who prefer private care. Also, people who are educated and aware of the benefits of using government programmes place their confidence in them and use public-sector services, whilst those who are uneducated continue to go to private hospitals and spend far more than they can afford [6].

Patients expressed clear preferences for all significant attribute levels, in decreasing order: a large number of diagnostic facilities, full drug availability, continuity of care, good nursing communication, partial drug availability, good physician communication, and a shorter consultation wait time. Different hospital care features had a substantial and variable effect on patients' hospital choice. The study provides information regarding patients' preferences and the trade-offs between many possible process-related features. When designing hospital services, decision makers should focus on patient preferences and pick qualities in order to optimize patient happiness. Preferences in health care, with an emphasis on patients' priorities, willingness to wait, and relative attribute influence in public hospitals. Continuity of treatment in the hospital was also an essential factor in hospital selection. Even in another survey of health care preferences, this was the most appreciated characteristic of care [2]. More and more individuals, particularly those with middle-low incomes, choose to get health-care services from private institutions. However, there is still a scarcity of

evidence in the literature on the demand side, especially how consumers pick health care services and whether or not they consider the features of the providers when making their decision. Health-care systems in affluent countries differ markedly from those in poor countries. Knowing the doctor, hospital type, and distance from the hospital to the house, waiting time at the hospital, out-of-pocket expense, and the number of visits over the entire treatment period are among the variables that impact respondents' choice for health care utilization. Perpetual urban people, in particular, value private health care less; rural migrants, on the other hand, are more likely to be indifferent between public and private service [8]. Because rudeness, random acts of unkindness, physical abuse, and neglect by nurses have been frequently documented, a variety of regulations aiming at strengthening interactions between health care personnel and patients have been implemented [5]. This has fueled notions that the public health system is overburdened and under-resourced, and that it has 'deteriorated' over time.

HEALTH CARE SYSTEM IN TAMILNADU

The Tamil Nadu Health care system is categorized into Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Care. Primary care serves a population range of 3000-5000 in Health Sub Centres (HSC) and 20,000-30,000 in Primary Health Centres (PHC). Secondary Care serves a population of 80,000-120,000 people through Community Health Centres (CHC) and Area Hospitals throughout the district. Specialty hospitals, regional and central institutions, medical colleges are all part of Tertiary Care (Indian Public Health Standards). The Tamil Nadu Government is providing health insurance scheme for more than a million people in their state. Over and above 65% of state population has been benefited under this health insurance. Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme (CMCHIS) or Amma Maruthuva Kapitu Thittam or Amma Health Insurance Scheme is an initiative taken by the Government of Tamilnadu which concentrates on low-income group to treat their family members during their medical emergency. It covers the entire family's medical treatments at free of cost. To avail the benefit of Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme, they should be a resident of Tamil nadu having a family ration card and their annual family income should be less than 72,000/- per annum. Family members including dependent parents can also be included in this scheme provided the dependent parents name should be present in their ration card. Migrants from other states can also join in this by giving a request letter along with a list of eligible members from labour department stating that they are living in the state for more than six months. Orphans, rescued girl children can also get benefited under this scheme. However, Public hospitals are not chosen because of the lower quality of their services, despite the fact that these treatments are supplied at a low cost. There is an urgent need for investment in health and other private hospitals in order to save time and money earned from work rather than saving money from public hospitals. Because poor and working-class individuals do not have Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) cards or Employee State Insurance (ESI) cards, they do not receive the benefits that they are entitled to. That is why the poor and working class prefer private hospitals over state hospitals. Salaried government employees, on the other hand, choose public hospitals to take use of CGHS and other health-care programs (Sarda Prasad, 2013).

METHODS

In this study, the descriptive approach is utilised to examine the characteristics of a population. The population is based on the 2011 Coimbatore district census, which is further subdivided into taluks for each responder. The sample size is chosen using the stratified sampling methodology, which involves taking a segmented population based on taluks and then collecting samples from each taluk using the random sampling method.

Sample Size

A sample size of 387 respondents was used to represent the population. The study's target population is the residents of the Coimbatore district. According to the 2011 census, the population of Coimbatore district is 34,58,045 people. As a basis, samples have been taken from Coimbatore North, Coimbatore South, Mettupalayam, Pollachi, Sulur, and Valparai taluks.

Data Collection

To begin collecting primary data, pilot research with 10% of the sample size was done, and the findings were evaluated for dependability. The major source of data was acquired through the use of a questionnaire. Each questionnaire contains demographic information on the respondents, and the constructs included in the study were obtained using a Likert five-point scale. The knowledge of PHC's early cancer screening service was framed using dichotomous questions. We collected data by delivering questionnaires to Coimbatore District people via internet distribution. Three-fourths of the data were collected online, while one-fourth was collected in person by meeting with respondents. The fraction of each taluk and its population was used to obtain samples. Data collected on paper and online is encoded into numeric form for statistical analysis. For the analysis, IBM SPSS statistical software was used. All data collected was analysed in order to offer interpretation for the study. The research that provides discoveries and outcomes, as well as a final conclusion.

RESULTS

Results were obtained from the data collected using questionnaires and they are further analysed using statistical software. The data analysis was given below as follows:

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

n=387

Particulars	Frequency (Percent)
Location	
Mettupalayam	29 (7.5)
Sulur	36 (9.3)
Coimbatore North	71 (18.3)
Coimbatore South	178 (46.0)
Pollachi	65 (16.8)
Valparai	8 (2.1)
Age	
Below 18	6 (2)
18-24	116 (30)
25-34	163 (42)
35-44	64 (17)
45-54	21 (5)
55-64	11 (3)
65 and above	6 (2)
Qualification	
School and below	30 (8)
Undergraduate	152 (39)
Post graduate and above	186 (48)
Others	19 (5)
Gender	
Male	203 (52.5)
Female	184 (47.5)
Occupation	
Government employee	42 (11)
Private employee	124 (32)
Business	32 (8)
Professional	58 (15)
Others	131 (34)
Marital Status	
Married	250 (65)
Single	137 (35)
Family Income	
Less than 10,000	42 (11)
11,000-20,000	97 (25)
21,000-30,000	69 (18)
31,000-40,000	43 (11)
41,000-50,000	34 (9)
51,000 and above	67 (17)
No income	35 (9)

The location of the respondents was obtained and evaluated based on their taluk in the 2011 census. With a population response rate of 46 percent, Coimbatore South had the highest population response rate. Valparai, which has a smaller population than the other taluks, had fewer responses. Response rates in Coimbatore North and Pollachi are comparable. The age of the interviewees clearly reflects their preferences in each area. The 25-34 age groups is more active in responding to the poll. The 18-24 age range shows a moderate level of receptivity. Respondents to the poll are more likely to be between the ages of 18 and 34. The educational qualifications of the respondents influence their own hospital preference. Approximately 48% of those questioned had a postgraduate degree or above. Three-ninety-nine percent are undergraduate students. While respondents' educational credentials account for 8% of the total, schooling and below account for 8% of the total. There is a less substantial difference in cancer screening knowledge between men and women. Gender distribution is as follows: 53% are male and 47% are female. As a consequence, regardless of gender, approximately equal responses are recorded. The survey's input

from private workers is around 32%. Others, including students, contributed around 34%. The occupation of a family has a bigger effect on their desire for health care services. The marital status of respondents impacts their decision to offer health care to their family. Sixty-five percent of individuals questioned are married, with the remaining 35 percent single. Respondents with wages ranging from 11,000 to 20,000 had a household income that is approximately 25% greater than all other responses. Responses from individuals with earnings ranging from 21,000 to 30,000 revealed that 18% of them had taken part. The lowest recorded response rate was 41,000 – 50,000.

Table 2: Factors influencing People preference of Private to Public Medical Services

n=387| Frequency (Percentage)

S.No.	Particulars	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Hospital Amenities					
	Availability of modern and advanced equipment is the reason for selecting the hospital	10 (2.6)	18 (4.7)	55 (14.2)	139 (35.9)	165 (42.6)
	Specialty services (all under one roof) may be the reason for choosing	4 (1)	20 (5.2)	55 (14.2)	137 (35.4)	171 (44.2)
	Reputation of doctors working in the hospital attracts patients in choosing	8 (2.1)	26 (6.7)	76 (19.6)	120 (31)	157 (40.6)
	The location of the hospital attracts the patients to choose a hospital	14 (3.6)	35 (9)	96 (24.8)	135 (34.9)	107 (27.6)
	I know the cost of treatment is more in private hospital, but I feel that I get a better treatment	13 (3.4)	29 (7.5)	90 (23.3)	132 (34.1)	123 (31.8)
2	Infrastructure					
	Whether the ambiance inside a public hospital is welcoming to you?	24 (6.2)	64 (16.5)	152 (39.3)	93 (24)	54 (14)
	Do you think the cleanliness of public and private hospital is similar?	58 (15)	90 (23.3)	132 (34.1)	75 (19.4)	32 (8.3)
	Whether Primary Health Center is easily accessible to you than a private hospital/clinic?	29 (7.5)	47 (12.1)	115 (29.7)	112 (28.9)	84 (21.7)
	Does your Primary Health Center have adequate space for undergoing treatments?	45 (11.6)	88 (22.7)	120(31)	85 (22)	49 (12.7)
3	Service and Facilities					
	I am free to tell the doctor at the private hospital my problems rather than one at public hospital	27 (7)	41 (10.6)	25 (22)	116 (30)	118 (30.5)
	In my view the waiting time is lesser in private hospital	28 (7.2)	48 (12.4)	97 (25.1)	116 (30)	98 (25.3)

	To my knowledge in public hospitals, they do regular basic checkups only and do not do the necessary test	48 (12.4)	68 (17.6)	123 (31.8)	85 (22)	63 (16.3)
	In private hospitals, I can approach the doctor to clarify the doubts regarding the treatment at ease	12 (3.1)	31 (8)	94 (24.3)	146 (37.7)	104 (26.9)
4	Efficiency and Care					
	In private hospital, I felt the nurses are qualified, skilled and trained to deal with emergency situations	32 (8.3)	55 (14.2)	103 (26.6)	105 (27.1)	92 (23.8)
	I believe that the doctors at the private hospital examines me with utmost care compared to the doctor at public hospital	14 (3.6)	34 (8.8)	114 (29.5)	133 (34.4)	92 (23.8)
	I feel great confidence in the doctors at private hospitals	20 (5.2)	51 (13.2)	132 (34.1)	116 (30)	68 (17.6)

People Preference for Hospital Amenities

From the table it is inferred that, under the head Hospital selection, 43 percent of people feels that the availability of modern and advanced equipment is a strong reason for preferring a hospital. While 44 percent consider specialty services like all under one roof is also a reason for their selection. Reputation of the doctor is preferred by 41 percent as one variable which attracts people towards choosing a hospital. A substantial number of people who are of about 35 percent prefer the location and 34 percent prefers the cost also plays an important part in their selection of hospital.

People Preference for Infrastructure

On considering Infrastructure, 39 percent were neutral towards ambiance of private and public hospital, and 24 percent agrees that the ambiance inside a public hospital is welcoming to them. On cleanliness 23 percent were not satisfied with the public hospital and 34 percent reserves neutral towards cleanliness. About 30 percent said that neither the public nor the private hospital accessibility is a consideration for hospital selection. For adequate space, about 31 percent were neutral in their opinions while 23 percent were not satisfied with the space for undergoing treatments at public hospitals.

People Preference for Service and Facilities

In Service and Facilities, 31 percent of people felt that they can approach a doctor in a private hospital more easily than the one at public hospital. 25 percent agrees that waiting time is less in a private hospital than at public. However, another 25 percent denies that there is no such differences. 22 percent says that in public hospitals they do only basic routine tests and don't do required tests. About 38 percent of respondents said that in private hospitals they can clarify their doubts than that of a public hospital.

People Preference for Efficiency and Care

From the table under the head Efficiency, 27 percent felt that nurses are qualified, skilled and trained to deal with emergency situations in a private hospital than that of a public hospital. On the other hand, 27% claim they don't and aren't equipped. In terms of caring, 34 percent feels that private hospital doctors treat them with utmost care than that of a public hospital doctor. 30 percent of respondents were greatly confident about private hospital doctors for their treatments.

DISCUSSION

From the study it is found that, people preference on hospital selection is influenced by the following four factors: Hospital Amenities, Infrastructure, Service and Facilities, Efficiency and Care. Hospital amenities such as availability of modern and advanced equipment, Specialty services, reputation of doctors, location of the hospital and cost of treatments. Infrastructure includes ambiance, cleanliness, accessibility and adequate space for treatments.

Service and Facilities covers patient’s freeness to approach doctors, less waiting time, necessary tests and clarify doubts at ease. Efficiency and Care includes qualified, skilled and trained nurses, care for patients and confidence on treatments. Most people prefer a medical service based on the availability of modern and advanced equipment which they think, can diagnose the disease more accurately at an early stage. Some also prefer hospitals providing all services under one roof so that they can get complete treatment within the premises. People choose a particular hospital based on the reputation of its doctor. However, a substantial number prefers location and cost for undergoing treatments as a criterion for hospital selection. Many respondents feels that the ambiance inside a public hospital is similar to that of a private hospital. While some people were not satisfied with the cleanliness of public hospitals. When the respondents were questioned with the easily accessible of hospitals, most of them said that their nearby Primary Health Center is nearer than a private hospital. People feel that Primary Health Centers are in greater need to expand the availability of space for better treatments. Majority of people feels that approaching a doctor in private hospital is easier than that of a public hospital. A considerable count of respondents agrees that waiting time in private hospital is less when compared to public hospital. People also feel that only basic routine tests are done at public hospital whereas private hospitals do the required tests. In some public hospitals specific tests like MRI, X ray, Ultra sound, echo test and a few more tests are not available and so the patients are directed to take those tests outside the hospitals at private labs. This causes burden to patients as the cost incurred should also be borne by them. Clarifying doubts with physician is difficult in public hospital while they get it clarified with the private one. According to respondents, Private hospitals have qualified, skilled and trained nurses who can handle emergency situations than nurses of public hospitals. Private hospitals doctors take utmost care on patients compared to public hospitals. Most of the respondents were confident about private hospital doctors in undergoing their treatments. The following model represents the factors which influence the people preference for hospital selection:

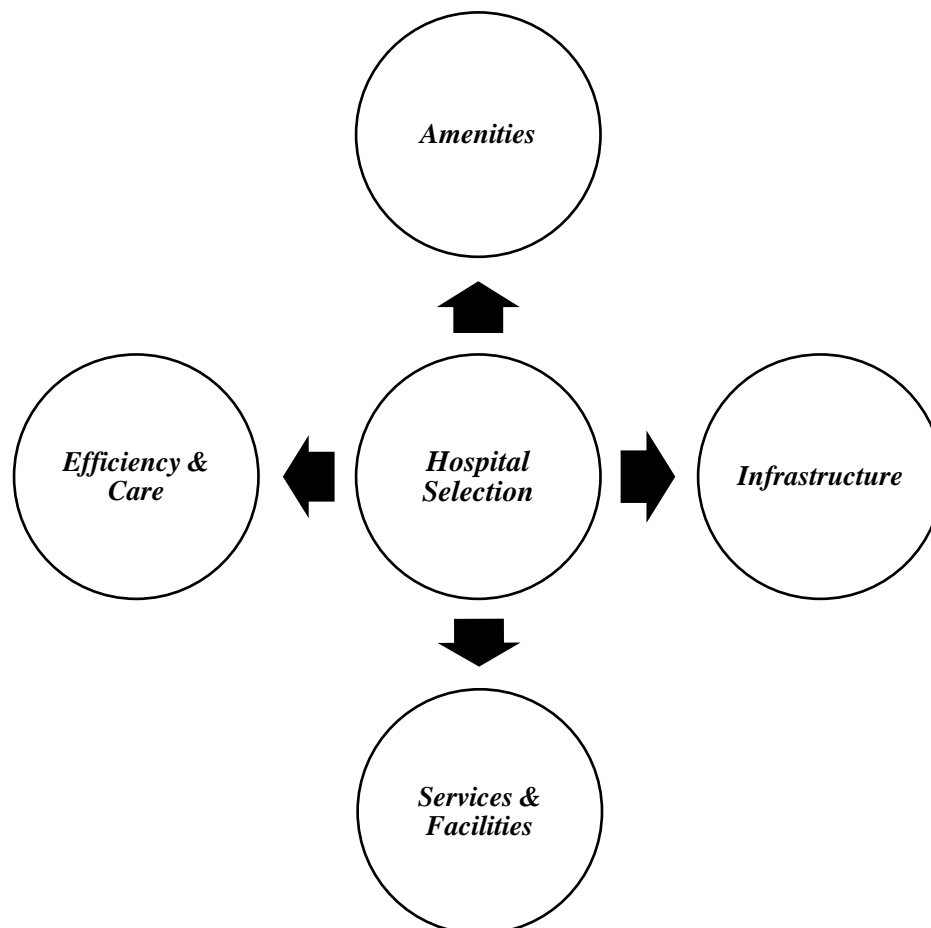


Figure 1: Factors Influencing People Preference of Public to Private Hospital Selection

CONCLUSION

Public hospitals are having a holistic way of approach in rendering health service to the society. Our health system provides best referral using the three-tier care which helps the patients to undergo treatments based on their severity. This enables them to get right treatment within their accessible limit. On the counter side, Private hospitals comes up with services which are way ahead of public hospitals. In order to cater the need of people, Private hospital stake advantage of the lagging in the existing health system of the country. Hence, there is a need to improve the quality

and performance by keeping people's expectations as a key focus in formulating those developments. This study gives a clear picture on the influencing factors for people preference towards public to private hospital selection. The key factors including the amenities, infrastructure, services and facilities, efficiency and care should be looked in for further enhancement so that they can be made beneficial to the public. The Government should take initiative for monitoring and up gradation of public hospitals services by assigning an expert team to ensure the proper workflow of medical related services. If the facilities at public hospitals are enhanced and its services are made better, then people will come upon for using the medical services, so that many will get benefited. This will enable the economically weaker section of the country to get timely and good medical service at ease.

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