

STUDENT CORNER

SERVICE QUALITY OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PHYSIOTHERAPY INSTITUTES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY IN LAHORE

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ABSTRACT

Background: Ever since quality of services is gaining importance in every industry as it is the indicator of consumer/customer satisfaction, it is of utmost importance to measure service quality of educational institutes to determine the satisfaction of students. Thus, the study aimed to determine the important factors in service quality dimensions which contribute to the satisfaction of students.

Methods: This was a Comparative Cross Sectional study in which final year department of physical therapy (DPT) students were included from three private and three public physiotherapy institutes.

Results: The largest mean Positive Gap scores for Public Physiotherapy Institutes was 0.18 for accessibility and affordability 0.18. The largest negative mean gap score for Private Physiotherapy domain was "Accessibility and Affordability" found to be -1.96.

Conclusion: Students were satisfied with service quality of private institutes in all domains except for the "Accessibility and Affordability" whereas, in Public Institutes largest negative quality gaps were found in "Empathy" and "Assurance".

Keywords: Service Quality; Physical Therapy Institutes; Education.

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doi.org/10.36283/PJMD8-4/019

INTRODUCTION

Educational eminence of any institute is depicted by the quality of services it provides, the affirmative view of service quality has a momentous effect on the contentment of students and it is an indicator of students' enthusiasm and their intellectual presentation¹. In view of the fact that service quality had been evaluated in terms of end user's satisfaction earlier but its significance in educational institutes has been realized and is valued to gain approval of its end user i.e., student, in this regard service quality can be separated by having it in two groups, the "technical quality" that is not specifically measured by the student itself (final outcome) and the "functional quality" that is determined by the student itself (process of delivery)².

The student is contented by the foundation when the services given meet their expectations i.e.,

when they perceive more than or equal to what they have expected, likewise the quality of student's learning and teaching experience has been widely recognized as an indicator of student satisfaction for example, if the educator's pedagogical methodology and skills are excellent the student will rate the quality of services with optimistic perception and hence fulfillment with the quality service given there³.

When the services are provided with excellence in the educational organizations the students are retained and with positive word of mouth other candidates are fascinated towards that institute as well, and with healthier performance of students the institute remains distinct and outstanding². Contentment from service quality is achieved when the perception is more than expectation i.e., the student is getting what they were expecting or more than what they have expected⁴.

The measurement tool for student satisfaction regarding each dimensions of service quality is SERVQUAL which was initially developed by Parasuraman⁵. We are provided with five dimensions from this tool i.e., Tangibility (Availability of facilities, staff and way of contact), Reliability (Accuracy of given services each time), Responsiveness (Resilience to endow with services and facilitate consumers), Assurance (Gaining trust by utilizing skills and information) and Empathy (considerations according to unique need of consumer)⁶.

Measuring quality of services is quite difficult and complex due to its intangible nature as service quality is students expectations and perception dependent, SERVQUAL is one of the several models suggested but it is one of its kind that is more suitable to estimate the service quality of educational institutes⁶. Main objective of study is to evaluate the service quality of physical therapy institutes in public and private institutes and to what extent these institutes are delivering quality of services to the students to meet and exceed their perceptions.

METHODS

A comparative cross sectional study was conducted on private and public physiotherapy institutes. All of the final year DPT students were included from 3 public institutes with 70 students and 3 private institutes with 95 students. The study has been approved by Ethical committee of Lahore college of Physical therapy. The study settings were Allied School of Health Sciences, Allama Iqbal Medical College and King Edward Medical University which are public institutes. The private institutes included were Lahore Medical and Dental College, Fatima Memorial Hospital and Rashid Latif Medical and Dental College. An informed consent has been taken from each participant prior collecting data. The sampling procedure was non probability convenience sampling. The duration of study was from August 2018 to January 2019.

The tool used for this study was SERVQUAL model with reliability of 0.88. It consists of five domains Tangibility, Reliability, Assurance, Empathy, Accessibility and Affordability. Each domain consists of 5 scores. The data was collected from both public and private physiotherapy institutes and their results were compared. Positive and Negative Quality Gaps were identified and their means scores were

calculated. Comparison between institutes was evaluated through independent sample t test.

RESULTS

The largest mean Positive Gap scores for Public Physiotherapy Institutes were from the domain of accessibility and affordability for "charges for services rendered by institute should be affordable"(0.18), meaning that expectations lag behind perceptions i.e., students perceived more than what they had expected. The largest mean Negative gap score for private physiotherapy domain was "Accessibility and Affordability" was found to be (-1.96) meaning that here perceptions are far lagging from what the students had expected. Private physiotherapy Institutes have a greater mean (4.5652) of dimension tangibility than the mean of tangibility (3.2890) of public physiotherapy institutes showing that patient's perception about tangibility items at private physiotherapy institutes is better than at the public physiotherapy setup. Private physiotherapy institutes has a greater mean (4.2178) of dimension "reliability" than the reliability mean (3.7807) of public physiotherapy institutes which depicts that students perceive that private physiotherapy institutes were more reliable towards the students than public physiotherapy institutes. Private physiotherapy institutes have a greater mean (3.9685) of dimension "responsiveness" than the mean of responsiveness mean (2.1643) of public physiotherapy institutes which shows that students perceive services regarding responsiveness dimension of service quality at private physiotherapy institutes much better than those provided at public physiotherapy institutes. Private institutes have a greater mean (4.1849) of dimension "Assurance" than the mean of "Assurance" (3.5662) of public institutes showing that patients perceive the assurance items of service quality at private institutes much better than at public institutes. Private institutes have a greater mean of (4.5687) of empathy dimension than the mean of (4.1987) of public institutes that means that students perceive that private institutes provides better empathy items of students than does the public institutes. Public physiotherapy institutes have a greater mean (4.9796) of dimension "accessibility and affordability" than the mean of same dimension in private physical therapy institutes (3.6400) therefore students from private institutes perceive charges are unaffordable and also students have difficulties with parking and accessibility of location (Table 1 and 2).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of domains of service quality for public and private physical therapy institutes.

Domain	Sector	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Tangible	Private	4.5652	0.6287	.10044
	Public	3.2890	0.4565	.04836
Reliability	Private	4.2189	0.4575	.08567
	Public	3.8756	0.3867	.095342
Responsiveness	Private	3.9685	0.2898	.054873
	Public	2.1643	0.2568	.087968
Assurance	Private	4.8436	0.3548	.068548
	Public	3.7532	0.4538	.097659
Empathy	Private	4.5687	0.2967	.057845
	Public	4.1987	0.3686	.067426
Affordability	Private	3.6400	.95511	.06367
	Public	4.9796	1.28929	.08595
Total Score	Private	25.8049	2.98261	0.430931
	Public	22.204	3.21169	0.482700

Table 2: Comparison between institutes evaluated through independent sample t test.

Variable	Sector	Mean± SD	p-value
Service Quality	Private	25.8049±2.98261	0.001
	Public	22.204±3.21169	

DISCUSSION

To achieve excellence in education, service quality is an important parameter. Student satisfaction directly relates with the positive perception of service quality as said by Yeo¹. A study by Adee et al. concluded the same results as in the current study about service quality offered in private educational setup which shows that using SERVQUAL private institutes scored less negative scores in terms of their service quality as compared to government institute⁶.

The impact of different quality services assessment regarding student satisfaction in institutes providing higher level education was measured in a study done in 2018 and it revealed that the reliability of the services would boost the trust among students on their institution, closely similar to our results, but this study measured the reliability of services as a whole³.

In 2012, the current level of overall satisfaction among physical therapy students in various institutes was studied by Bhatti. The results showed that out of 10th every 4th respondents were satisfied with their educational systems which comes up with that physical therapy institutes are not providing better quality of educational services and are merely not successful in gaining student satisfaction, in accordance to our study where we have measured the service quality perceptions with respect to their public or private institutes⁷. A study in 2010 by Malik et al. conducted the research on higher educational institutes of management sciences owing to the greater importance of Service quality in educational institutes⁸.

CONCLUSION

This research concluded that students were satisfied with service quality of private institutes in all domains except for the "Accessibility and Affordability" where in public institutes, larger negative quality gaps were found in "Empathy" and "Assurance".

RECOMMENDATIONS

The future studies should focus on evaluating the trends of service quality of physical therapy institutes among different provinces of Pakistan. This will lead to the quality assurance and improved standards of quality education for students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank honorable Prof. Hafiz Muhammad Asim, Dean Lahore College of Physical Therapy for his endless support and mentorship; it is also a matter of pride to thank Dr. Samreen for

motivating and guiding us to complete this endeavor. We would also like to thank our supervisor who helped us and guided us to reach this final version of the research.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

ETHICS APPROVAL

The study has been approved by Ethical review board of Lahore College of Physical Therapy.

PATIENTS CONSENT

An informed consent has been taken from the participants before including them in study.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

FZ did the conception and design, data collection and assembly work. RA did the revision of the intellectual content and HMA did the final editing of the article.

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