

Assessment Of Patient Satisfaction In Dental Services

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Abstract

INTRODUCTION: Dental services represent an essential component of the healthcare system, and their quality directly affects patient satisfaction and trust. Assessing patients' perceptions is a key indicator for identifying potential improvements in clinical dental practice, both in the public and private sectors.

AIM: This study aims to evaluate the level of patient satisfaction with dental services in the city of Peja, including aspects such as the behavior of dental staff, the quality of service delivery, and the experience during initial and ongoing contact with dental centers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: The study was conducted as a quantitative analysis using a structured questionnaire, which was administered to 100 citizens of Peja. Participants were categorized by gender (60% female and 40% male) and education level (40% with secondary education, 45% with university degrees, and 15% with a master's degree). Data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel with a focus on descriptive statistics.

RESULTS: Descriptive data showed a high overall level of satisfaction with dental services in Peja. The vast majority of respondents positively evaluated the communication, professionalism, and behavior of dental staff, without identifying significant irregularities in the visited centers.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: Based on the study results, it can be concluded that patients in the city of Peja are satisfied with the dental services provided. However, continuous monitoring of service quality and broader patient involvement in the periodic evaluation of dental centers are recommended, with the goal of further improving their experience.

Keywords: Patient Satisfaction, Dental Services, Dental Centers, Peja, Oral Healthcare.

I. INTRODUCTION

This research aims to understand patients' perceptions of services at dental centers, specifically focusing on their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the behavior exhibited by dental professionals at least once. We will analyze how willing and capable dental professionals are in providing services properly. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to gather as much information as possible so that improvements can be made if there are significant levels of dissatisfaction and irregularities.

The purpose of this study is to identify and assess the perceptions, expectations, and experiences of patients regarding the services provided by dental professionals with the following objectives:

Identify patients' perceptions of their relationships with dentists.

Identify which attributes of a primary dental care experience have the greatest impact on patient satisfaction.

Evaluate patient satisfaction indices based on those who have utilized the services.

With these study objectives, which aim to examine the quality of dental care services, the satisfaction of patients with dental care, patient trust and loyalty in dental care, and identify the impact between service quality, satisfaction, and trust. Providing the highest quality and service to patients can attract patient satisfaction, leading to customer loyalty by retaining current clients, engaging new ones, and even attracting competitors' customers. Moreover, having trust in the quality of services provided by service providers can greatly influence patients' revisiting of the clinic and the development of client loyalty.

The study was based on clients' perspectives and was conducted in the city of Peja. For this research, a quantitative approach was used. A questionnaire was distributed to dental patients who visited dental clinics in Peja to explore the factors influencing service quality that affect satisfaction, trust, and loyalty in dental care services. The findings indicated that the quality of service in structure, process, and outcomes positively impacts patient satisfaction, trust, and loyalty. The higher the service quality, the higher the patient satisfaction, trust, and loyalty.

One of these effects is the growing impact of patient satisfaction and dissatisfaction on the success of dental practice businesses. Patient satisfaction must be a key task for all dental service providers—46% of surveyed dentists in one study reported that dissatisfaction with how patients were treated by their dentist was seen "very often" or "quite often" as the reason for changing dentists. In a more recent study, patients cited "dissatisfaction with the dentist" as the primary reason for changing dentists. Just like with healthcare in general, patient satisfaction has been shown to influence compliance and, in turn, treatment quality. This is crucial in all aspects of dentistry, but especially so in situations where patient cooperation is vital, such as orthodontic treatment and periodontal therapy.

Although several studies on patient satisfaction were conducted in the 1960s and 1970s, the social, business, and professional environments have changed dramatically since then. Therefore, this review focuses only on studies conducted since the 1980s. Most of these studies, with a few exceptions, address a general list of five issues that influence patient satisfaction with dental care: 1. Technical competence 2. Interpersonal factors 3. Comfort 4. Costs and 5. Amenities. These characteristics align with the service quality dimensions described by Parasuraman and Berry, namely reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. As later noted, the way a patient perceives these attributes is just one determinant of satisfaction, and a very common assumption made in dental literature is that the sum of a patient's perceptions equals, and therefore is a measure of, their overall satisfaction.

Two well-known survey instruments, the Dental Satisfaction Questionnaire (DSQ) and the Dental Visit Satisfaction Scale (DVSS), both evaluate patient perceptions of different dimensions of care, ignoring the possible roles of other influences, particularly non-confirmation and attributes, which are considered extremely important in broader marketing and healthcare literature. The DVSS recognizes affective, cognitive, and behavioral impacts and seeks the patient's views on specific dental visits, unlike the DSQ, which focuses on cognitive factors and looks at dentists in general.

A small number of recent studies have examined the fulfillment of expectations by comparing patients' views on the ideal and actual behavior of dentists. 'Ideal behavior' equates to the 'desired service' component of the 'zone of tolerance' by Zeithaml and Bitner. These studies clearly show the gap between the type of service patients expect to receive and the service they actually receive. Lahti et al., for instance, reported that discrepancies found (between ideal and actual dentist behavior) mostly fall within the 'communicative and informative' factor, i.e., dentists often fail to provide information on preventive procedures, do not ask if the patient wanted local anesthesia, fail to inquire about specific patient problems, and do not ask how the patient feels.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The subject of the study was the population, regardless of age and gender, who have undergone dental services at least once, either in the main dental centers or in private practices in the city of Peja.

The objectives of the research project are:

To describe patient satisfaction during the provision of dental services in both public and private dental centers.

To describe the problems encountered by patients at least once while receiving dental services.

To collect data and analyze them.

To draw conclusions based on these factors.

Main Aim

The main aim of this study is to examine the satisfactions and dissatisfactions of the population regarding the services provided by dental healthcare teams. Furthermore, we aim to raise awareness among healthcare professionals in cases of irregularities and significant dissatisfactions, leading to improvements in the situation.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

During the process of compiling the research project and reviewing the literature, two hypotheses were developed, which are:

H1: Patients are satisfied with the dental services provided.

H2: Patients are not satisfied with the dental services.

In the first hypothesis, regarding patient satisfaction with the provided dental services, the result is positive, and the hypothesis is confirmed based on the table and responses gathered from the surveys.

In the second hypothesis, regarding dissatisfaction with dental services, the hypothesis gives a negative result, as the majority of the surveyed population expressed the opposite view.

III. METHODOLOGY

The type of research used for this study is cross-sectional study, which is used to determine the prevalence of a result or exposure within a specific group of individuals. These studies are very common in healthcare research and are quick, cost-effective, and easy to conduct.

The sample for this study consists of 100 patients from the city of Peja. Of these, 20% belong to the age group under 20 years, 40% belong to the age group 20-30 years, 20% belong to the age group 30-40 years, and 20% belong to the age group over 40 years. Regarding gender, 40% of the respondents are male, and 60% are female.

According to descriptive statistics on education level, 40% of the respondents have completed secondary education, 45% have a university degree, and 15% have a master's degree.

For the realization of this research, surveys were used, which are employed to determine the prevalence of a result or exposure in a specific group of individuals. The survey created for this study contains a total of 13 questions, including demographic data.

IV. RESULTS

For data analysis, Microsoft Excel was used. The types of analyses conducted in this research are descriptive statistics.

This chapter will primarily discuss the descriptive results from the surveys for specific questions.

As we can see in the figure below: *(Here, you would insert your graph or data visualization to support the findings)*

(Note: If you have specific results or figures from the survey, I can help you describe or interpret them further.)

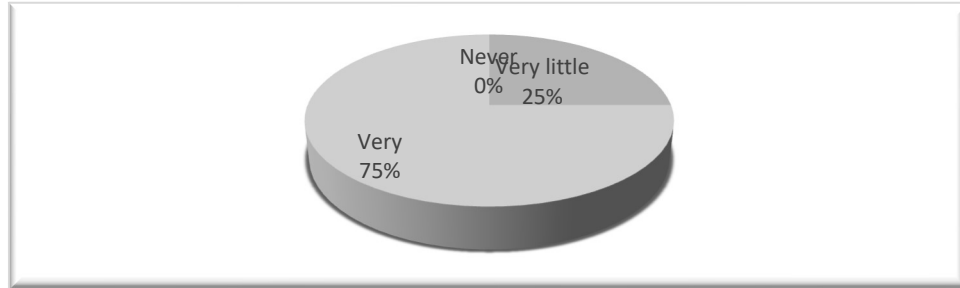


Figure 1: Data on how often citizens have frequented dental centers

0% of the respondents stated that they have never visited dental centers, 25% have visited them very rarely, and 75% have visited them frequently.

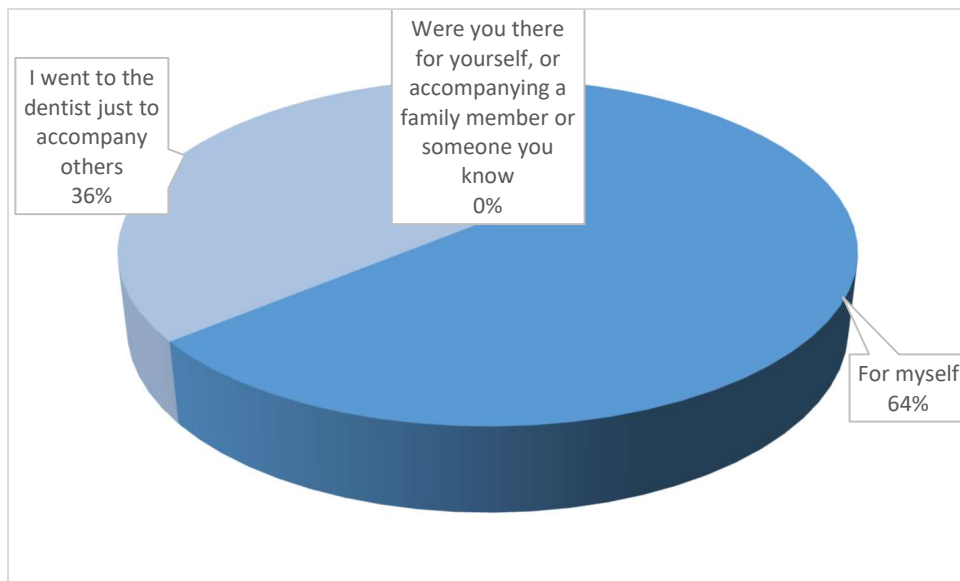


Figure 2: Data on whether they have visited dental centers for personal reasons or as companions 64% of the respondents have visited dental centers for their own health condition, while 36% have been companions to someone else.

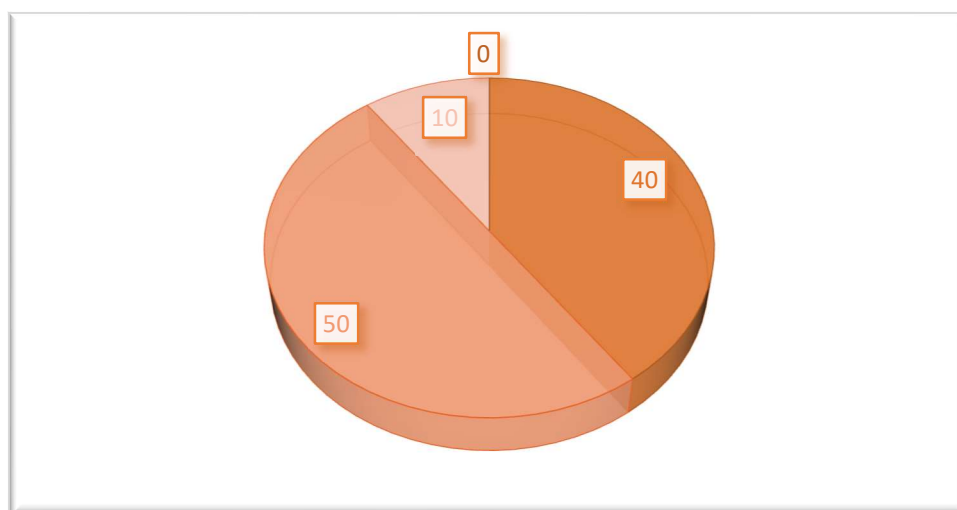
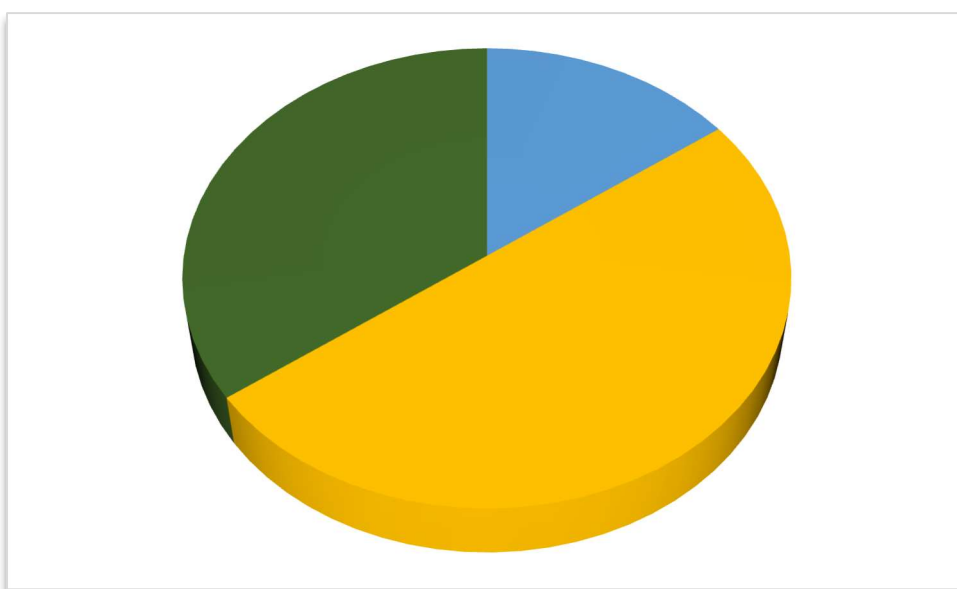


Figure 3: Data on the most common reasons for visiting dental centers 50% of the respondents have visited dental centers solely for medical consultations, 40% for some concerns, and 10% for other reasons.



Data on perceptions of the medical staff at dental centers 15% of the respondents think that the medical staff are strict, 50% think they are polite, while 35% believe that each staff member has a different behavior and they cannot give a general opinion.

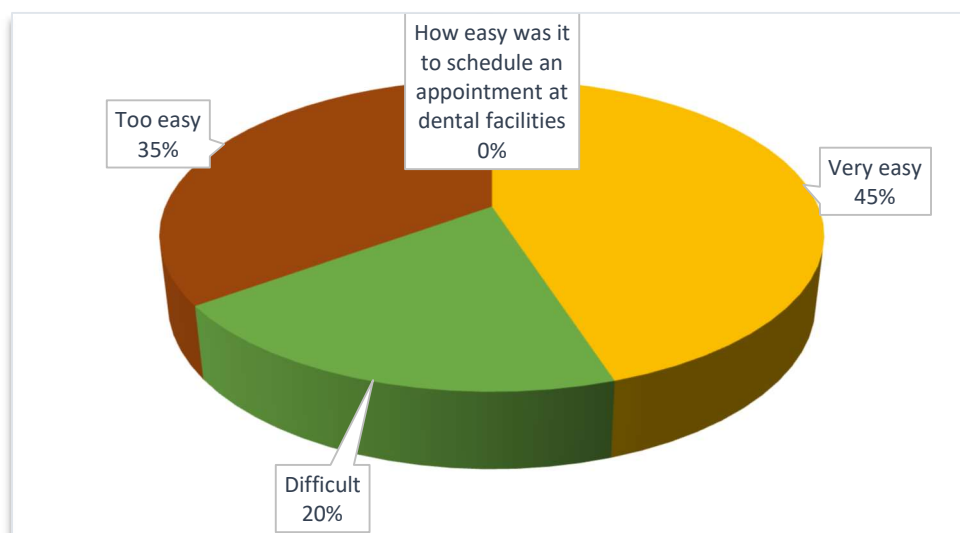


Figure 4: Data on how difficult it was to schedule an appointment at dental centers.

45% expressed that it was easy, 20% said it was difficult, while 45% had no difficulty at all.

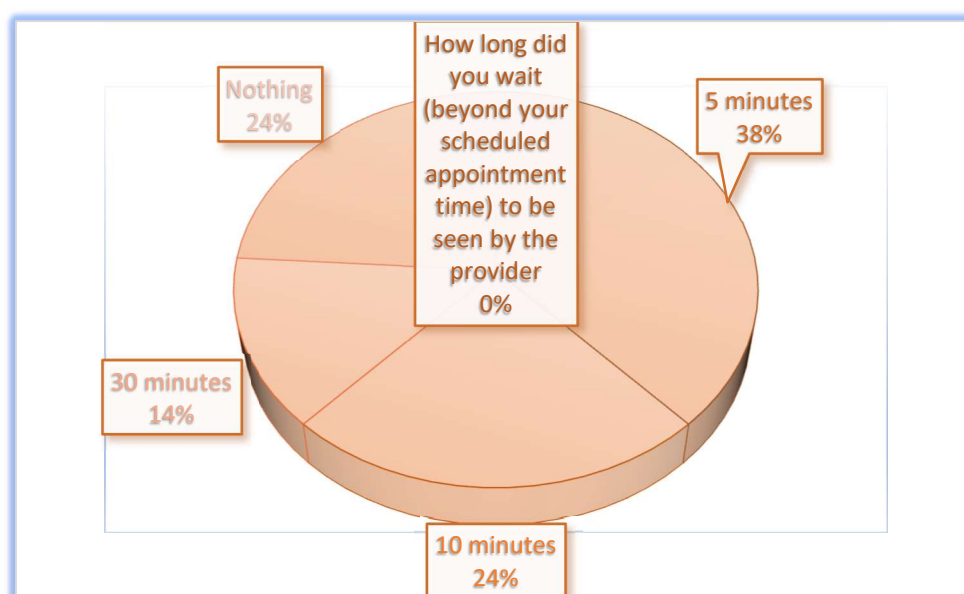


Figure 5: Data on whether patients had to wait for service at dental centers.

38% reported waiting for 5 minutes, 24% waited for 10 minutes, 14% waited for 30 minutes, while 24% said they didn't have to wait at all. Data on patient care and supervision by service providers during dental services: 10% reported that the service level was very low, 30% gave a positive response, and 60% were very satisfied with the service provided by the dental medical staff.

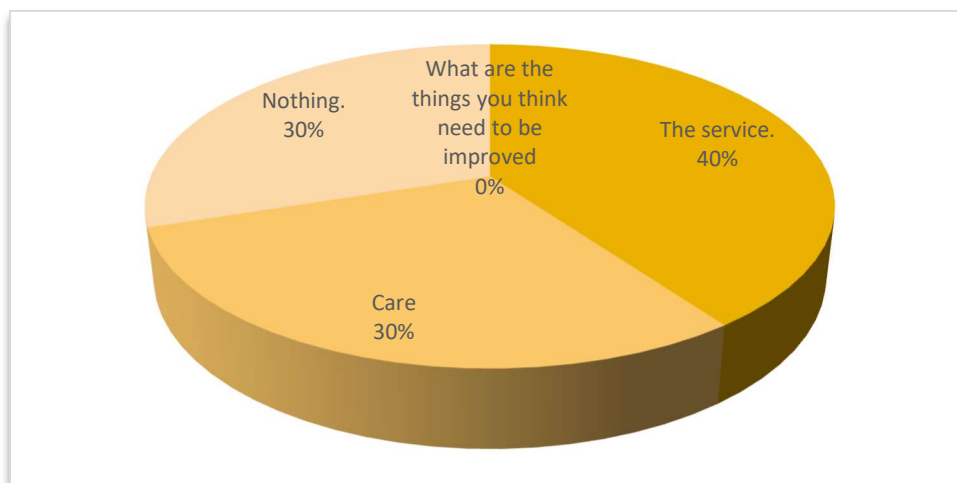


Figure 6: Data on patient suggestions regarding dental services. 40% expressed that the service could be improved, 30% think that the dental medical staff should take better care of the patients, while 30% believe that everything is at the desired level and no changes are necessary.

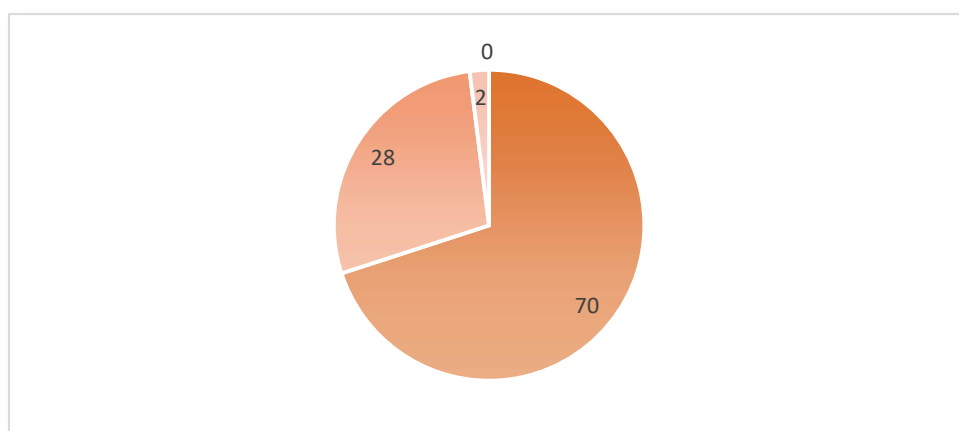


Figure 7: Data on how likely it is that you would recommend your dental facility to a friend or family member.

70% expressed satisfaction and were very willing to recommend it to everyone, 28% responded that it was unlikely they would make such a recommendation, while only 2% responded that they would not recommend it to others at all.

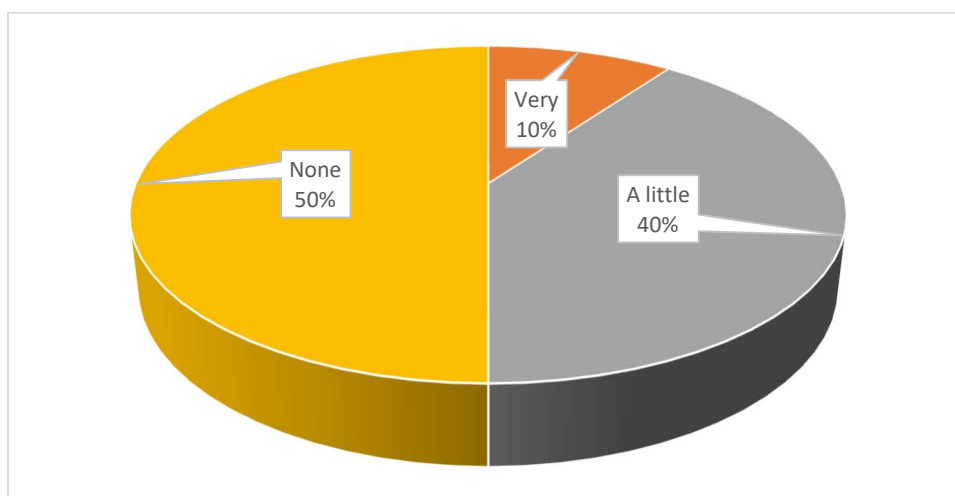


Figure 8: Data on the affordability of dental services.

10% expressed satisfaction with the prices of dental services, 40% expressed being somewhat satisfied, while 50%, the majority, expressed dissatisfaction with the prices of dental services.

Based on the descriptive data from the research, specifically the population's statements regarding their satisfaction with the behavior of healthcare professionals during their interactions and the services offered to them, the results show that most citizens are generally satisfied with the services provided, and the behaviors of healthcare professionals are considered very good by the majority of respondents.

Hypothesis 1

From these results, we conclude that in relation to Hypothesis 1 regarding patients' satisfaction with the dental services provided, the result is positive, and the hypothesis is confirmed based on the table and responses gathered through the surveys.

Hypothesis 2

For Hypothesis 2, related to patient dissatisfaction with dental service providers, the result is negative because the majority of respondents expressed positive opinions and satisfaction with the services received.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the data collected from this study, even though individual perceptions are subjective and influenced by personal and cultural factors, the results show a high level of overall patient satisfaction with the dental services provided. The majority of respondents expressed positive evaluations regarding the professional behavior of the medical staff, the services offered, and the care provided at dental centers. This suggests that the quality of interaction between the patient and healthcare professionals is a key determinant of the overall patient experience.

However, a significant element of dissatisfaction is related to the waiting time for appointments, beyond the scheduled appointment time. This extended waiting results in feelings of irritation and a loss of trust in the service organization. Research in the scientific literature supports the fact that waiting time is an important indicator of patient experience and significantly impacts overall satisfaction evaluations (Andaleeb, 2001; Ladhari, 2009).

One of the main recommendations derived from this research is the improvement of access to services. Dental centers should take concrete steps to increase the ease of scheduling appointments and reduce the average waiting time. Patients should not face

difficulties in contacting the center to schedule an appointment, and waiting time should not exceed the tolerable norm of 15–20 minutes. Failure to meet this standard requires a review of the time management and human resource processes.

To maintain and enhance the patient experience, healthcare institutions should create mechanisms for systematically measuring satisfaction, including surveys that assess ease of access, respect for time, professionalism, and willingness to recommend the institution. If a significant percentage of patients express a willingness to recommend the facility to a friend or family member, this indicates that their expectations have been successfully met.

Furthermore, every point of contact with the patient – from the receptionist, nurse, to the doctor – should be treated as an opportunity to build trust and leave a positive, lasting impression. Ongoing professional development for staff in communication, organization, and professional ethics is vital to maintaining this standard.

Recommendations

Improvement of Waiting Time Management: Healthcare institutions should review schedules and operational capacities to minimize patient waiting times. Considering more efficient planning models, such as "time blocking" or dynamic scheduling algorithms, can help reduce delays and increase efficiency.

Increasing Accessibility to Services: It is essential to ensure that patients have ease of contact, appointment scheduling, and information retrieval through modern tools (telephone, mobile applications, online platforms), reducing bureaucratic and time barriers to treatment.

Assessment and Improvement of Patient Experience at Every Point of Contact: Every interaction with the patient – from the reception to departure – should be considered critical to the overall experience. Regular training in communication and professional ethics for staff is essential.

Development of Mechanisms for Measuring Patient Satisfaction: It is recommended to create a standardized system for gathering feedback through post-visit surveys. This allows continuous evaluation of improvements and real-time identification of weaknesses.

Utilizing Personal Recommendations as a Marketing Tool: If a significant portion of patients is willing to recommend the service, this should be translated into a promotional strategy based on reputation. This increases trust and expands the patient base through the power of "word-of-mouth."

Ensuring Continuous Training for Healthcare Staff and Assistants: Healthcare professionals should be involved in regular training on patient communication, ethics, culturally sensitive care, and stress management to continually improve service quality.

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