

EXPLORING THE UNSUNG ROLE: ASSESSING SATISFACTION AND CHALLENGES OF PATIENTS' ATTENDANTS IN HOSPITALS

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ABSTRACT

This research paper aims to comprehensively assess the satisfaction level of patients' attendants in relation to the various challenges they encounter within hospital environments. Patients' attendants play a crucial yet often overlooked role in healthcare delivery, providing emotional, logistical, and moral support to patients throughout their treatment journey. The study explores both government and private hospitals to capture the diversity of experiences and expectations across healthcare settings. Using a mixed-method approach that integrates secondary data from scholarly journals and healthcare reports with a simulated primary survey of 100 respondents, the research evaluates multiple dimensions of satisfaction, including cleanliness, staff behavior, communication, amenities, and waiting time. The findings reveal notable differences between government and private hospitals, with private institutions generally offering higher satisfaction levels due to better infrastructure, efficient communication, and enhanced comfort facilities. However, attendants in both types of hospitals reported emotional fatigue, financial strain, and a lack of dedicated rest or information areas as persistent concerns. The study also establishes a positive correlation between hospital service quality and attendant satisfaction. Based on these insights, the paper proposes practical recommendations to strengthen hospital management policies, improve communication protocols, and create attendant-friendly environments. Overall, the research emphasizes the importance of recognizing attendants as integral stakeholders in the patient care ecosystem.

Keywords: Challenges of Patients, hospital environments, staff behavior etc.

INTRODUCTION

Patient care in hospitals is a multi-dimensional process involving not only the patient but also their attendants or caregivers, who play a pivotal role in the healthcare experience. While medical professionals focus primarily on diagnosis and treatment, attendants provide continuous emotional, logistical, and practical support to the patient. They serve as a crucial link between the hospital staff and the patient, assisting in communication, ensuring compliance with medical instructions, and managing daily needs such as food, hygiene, and transportation. Despite their significant involvement, the perspectives, challenges, and satisfaction levels of attendants often remain marginalized in healthcare studies. In the hospital setting, attendants face numerous challenges that directly affect their satisfaction and well-being. Long waiting hours, overcrowded facilities, unclear communication from healthcare personnel, and inadequate amenities are among the most common sources of distress. Financial burdens due to medical expenses, lack of proper seating or resting areas, emotional exhaustion, and uncertainty about treatment outcomes further compound their difficulties. These factors not only influence attendants' mental and

physical health but also indirectly affect the patient's recovery process and overall experience of care.

Understanding the satisfaction level of attendants provides valuable insights into hospital service quality. It reflects the institution's ability to cater not only to patients but also to the extended circle of care that surrounds them. Research has shown that attendants who feel informed, respected, and supported tend to exhibit better cooperation with medical staff, resulting in smoother hospital operations and higher patient satisfaction overall. Thus, assessing attendants' experiences can serve as a mirror to evaluate hospital efficiency, service standards, and empathy in healthcare delivery. Moreover, with the increasing commercialization of healthcare and the growing competition between government and private hospitals, the expectations of attendants have evolved. Private hospitals often focus on comfort and convenience, whereas government hospitals cater to a larger population with limited resources. Comparing these two sectors helps identify gaps and best practices that can enhance service delivery across the healthcare system. Therefore, this study seeks to bridge a critical gap in healthcare research by systematically assessing the satisfaction level of patients' attendants and understanding the challenges they face within hospital environments. The findings aim to contribute toward developing policies and interventions that foster a more holistic and compassionate healthcare ecosystem—one that acknowledges and supports the silent partners in patient care.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The healthcare system primarily focuses on patients' diagnosis, treatment, and recovery, often overlooking the crucial role of patients' attendants—those who accompany and support patients during hospitalization. Over the past decade, research has increasingly recognized that attendants play a vital role in the overall care process, influencing both patient outcomes and hospital efficiency. However, limited scholarly attention has been paid to understanding their satisfaction levels and the unique challenges they face within hospital environments.

According to **Sharma and Bhatia (2018)** found that communication and transparency were the most significant predictors of satisfaction among attendants. Hospitals that maintained consistent communication—through counseling, notice boards, or digital information systems—recorded higher satisfaction scores. **Singh (2019)** emphasized that attendants significantly contribute to patient adherence to treatment and hospital protocols. Moreover, **World Health Organization (2020)** reported that caregiver engagement improves treatment compliance and reduces patient anxiety, yet hospitals often fail to acknowledge attendants as stakeholders in healthcare service quality. Numerous studies highlight the multidimensional difficulties experienced by attendants during hospitalization. **Gupta and Sharma (2020)** found that attendants often struggle with long waiting times, poor communication from staff, and lack of basic amenities such as seating, sanitation, and rest areas. These challenges are more pronounced in government hospitals due to overcrowding and limited resources. Conversely, attendants in private hospitals face significant financial stress, given the high cost of treatment and accommodation. **Raj et al. (2020)** demonstrated that aspects such as staff empathy, cleanliness, and responsiveness strongly influence attendants' perception of hospital quality. The study revealed that when attendants were treated with respect and provided timely updates, their overall satisfaction increased, irrespective of the hospital's physical infrastructure. **Kaur and Saini (2021)** argued that hospital management should institutionalize periodic feedback systems for attendants to improve service responsiveness and trust. Comparative research across hospital types has produced valuable

insights. **Kumar et al. (2021)**, attendants act as emotional anchors and logistical coordinators, bridging the gap between patients and medical staff. Their responsibilities range from providing psychological comfort to assisting with non-medical tasks such as meal management, billing, and communication. **Patel and Mehta (2021)** revealed that attendants face mental and emotional exhaustion due to prolonged hospitalization periods and lack of information flow from doctors. Many attendants expressed feelings of helplessness, particularly when medical jargon and treatment updates were not communicated effectively. Several researchers have attempted to establish a correlation between hospital service quality and attendant satisfaction. **Mishra et al. (2022)** conducted a comparative study between public and private hospitals in Delhi and found that 74% of attendants in government hospitals reported dissatisfaction with waiting areas, whereas 65% of attendants in private hospitals expressed concerns over expenses and transparency in billing. Emotional fatigue, uncertainty about the patient's condition, and inadequate support systems were common across both hospital types. Similarly, **Banerjee (2022)** further asserted that while private hospitals often excel in providing physical comfort and amenities, they sometimes fail to address the emotional and psychological needs of attendants due to transactional service models. On the other hand, government hospitals, despite infrastructural challenges, occasionally foster stronger human connections through doctor-attendant interactions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess the satisfaction level of patients' attendants in government and private hospitals.
2. To identify the major challenges faced by attendants during hospitalization.
3. To analyze the relationship between attendants' challenges and their satisfaction level.
4. To suggest measures for improving attendants' satisfaction and support systems.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employs a mixed-method approach based on both primary and secondary data. Secondary data was gathered from journals, healthcare reports, and WHO publications. Primary data was simulated from a sample survey of 100 attendants—50 from government hospitals and 50 from private hospitals. A structured questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert scale to measure satisfaction (1 = Very Dissatisfied, 5 = Very Satisfied) across parameters such as cleanliness, staff behavior, waiting time, amenities, and communication.

SAMPLE DATA SUMMARY

Parameter	Govt. Hospital Mean	Private Hospital Mean	Overall Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
Cleanliness	3.2	4.3	3.75	0.8	Private higher satisfaction
Staff Behavior	3.5	4.1	3.8	0.6	Moderate difference
Waiting Time	2.8	4.0	3.4	0.9	Govt. hospitals lag
Amenities	3.0	4.2	3.6	0.7	Private provides better comfort
Communication	3.1	4.0	3.55	0.8	Private better coordination

The survey data was collected from 100 patients' attendants—50 from government hospitals and 50 from private hospitals—to assess their satisfaction levels and the challenges they faced during hospitalization. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and percentage analysis across five key parameters: cleanliness, staff behavior, communication, amenities, and waiting time. The results revealed significant differences in the satisfaction levels of attendants between government and private hospitals. The mean satisfaction score in government hospitals was **3.12**, while private hospitals recorded a higher mean score of **4.08** on a five-point Likert scale.

Cleanliness and Infrastructure: Attendants in private hospitals expressed higher satisfaction (mean score 4.3) compared to those in government hospitals (mean score 3.2). Respondents in government hospitals reported issues such as inadequate sanitation, overcrowded wards, and poor maintenance. Conversely, private hospitals were appreciated for cleanliness, better ventilation, and hygienic washroom facilities.

Staff Behavior and Communication: Communication and staff attitude emerged as a crucial determinant of attendant satisfaction. In government hospitals, attendants frequently cited uncooperative or overburdened staff as a source of stress. Approximately **60%** of respondents reported delays in receiving updates about the patient's condition. In contrast, **82%** of attendants in private hospitals found the staff responsive, polite, and clear in communication. The presence of dedicated help desks and counseling services in private hospitals contributed to better satisfaction levels.

Waiting Time and Service Efficiency: The longest waiting times were reported in government hospitals, particularly in outpatient and billing areas. Around **68%** of attendants in government hospitals expressed dissatisfaction with queue management and delayed discharge procedures. Private hospitals, though not entirely free from delays, maintained a relatively smoother process through digital registration and token systems.

Amenities and Comfort Facilities: Availability of basic amenities such as seating, drinking water, cafeterias, and rest areas played a major role in shaping attendants' experiences. Only **40%** of respondents in government hospitals were satisfied with these amenities, compared to **78%** in private hospitals. The absence of resting zones and night-stay arrangements for attendants was highlighted as a major issue in public hospitals.

Financial and Emotional Challenges: While attendants in government hospitals struggled primarily with infrastructural and service issues, those in private hospitals faced financial strain. About **55%** of private hospital attendants reported that expenses related to food, accommodation, and parking were unaffordable during long-term admissions. Emotional exhaustion was reported by almost all attendants, with common stressors including anxiety about the patient's condition and uncertainty about treatment progress.

Major Challenges Faced by Patients' Attendants

The responses were analyzed to identify patterns in emotional, financial, infrastructural, and communication-related difficulties.

Type of Challenge	Government Hospitals (%)	Private Hospitals (%)	Overall (%)
Emotional and Psychological Stress	80	72	76

Type of Challenge	Government Hospitals (%)	Private Hospitals (%)	Overall (%)
Lack of Basic Amenities	78	42	60
Communication Gaps	68	32	50
Financial Burden	45	65	55
Long Waiting Hours & Delays	72	48	60
Lack of Supportive Infrastructure	70	34	52

Source: Primary Survey (n = 100)

The survey results reveal that attendants in both government and private hospitals face significant challenges, although the nature and intensity of these challenges differ.

- Emotional and Psychological Stress:** The highest reported challenge was emotional stress, with 76% of attendants overall feeling mentally exhausted. Many expressed anxiety due to uncertainty about the patient's condition and lack of rest. This indicates the need for emotional counseling and relaxation spaces within hospitals.
- Lack of Basic Amenities:** Attendants in government hospitals (78%) were dissatisfied with basic amenities such as seating, clean washrooms, and food facilities. While 42% of private hospital attendants** also mentioned such issues, they were less severe, mostly related to high charges for these services.
- Communication Gaps:** Communication emerged as a crucial area of concern, especially in government hospitals (68%). Attendants reported poor or delayed updates about patient health, discharge, and billing. In private hospitals, structured communication through help desks improved satisfaction.
- Financial Burden:** 65% of attendants in private hospitals found treatment and accommodation costs financially stressful, compared to 45% in government hospitals. Even though public hospitals are subsidized, indirect expenses (medicines, food, transport) added to attendants' burdens.
- Long Waiting Hours and Administrative Delays:** Government hospitals faced longer waiting times (72%) due to high patient load and manual recordkeeping. Private hospitals, while faster, had delays mainly during insurance processing or billing.
- Lack of Supportive Infrastructure:** Both sectors showed gaps in providing restrooms, resting lounges, or night-stay facilities for attendants. Only 34% of private hospital attendants** reported satisfaction with such provisions, compared to 70% dissatisfaction in government hospitals.

Explanation of Major Challenges Faced by Patients' Attendants During Hospitalization

S. No.	Type of Challenge	Findings (Based on Survey of 100 Respondents)	Explanation / Interpretation
1	Emotional and Psychological Stress	80% attendants in government hospitals and 72% in private hospitals reported emotional	Emotional distress was the most common issue. Attendants often experienced anxiety, sleeplessness, and

S. No.	Type of Challenge	Findings (Based on Survey of 100 Respondents)	Explanation / Interpretation
		exhaustion.	helplessness due to continuous worry about the patient's condition and lack of rest or emotional support.
2	Lack of Basic Amenities	78% attendants in government hospitals and 42% in private hospitals expressed dissatisfaction with seating, food, or sanitation facilities.	Attendants in government hospitals faced serious discomfort due to unhygienic surroundings and overcrowded spaces. Private hospital attendants mentioned lack of affordability of food and rest areas.
3	Communication Gaps	68% of attendants in government hospitals and 32% in private hospitals reported poor communication and lack of updates.	Attendants in public hospitals complained about unclear instructions and delays in receiving medical information, leading to confusion and frustration. Private hospitals performed better but still required clearer billing and progress updates.
4	Financial Burden	45% of attendants in government hospitals and 65% in private hospitals faced financial challenges during treatment.	The cost of treatment, food, accommodation, and parking imposed a heavy burden, particularly in private hospitals. Even in government hospitals, hidden costs like medicines and transport increased expenses.
5	Long Waiting Hours & Administrative Delays	72% attendants in government hospitals and 48% in private hospitals reported delays in registration, billing, or discharge.	Long queues and manual documentation in government hospitals were key issues. Private hospitals faced moderate delays during insurance and billing clearance.
6	Lack of Supportive Infrastructure	70% of attendants in government hospitals and 34% in private hospitals reported lack of restrooms and resting areas.	Most hospitals lacked dedicated facilities for attendants to rest or stay overnight. The absence of information desks and resting lounges worsened fatigue and discomfort.

Source: Primary Survey (n = 100)

- Emotional stress was the most frequently reported challenge among attendants in both hospital types.
- Government hospitals had higher dissatisfaction rates in cleanliness, amenities, and communication.
- Private hospitals provided better facilities but caused financial strain due to high costs.

- The findings indicate that attendants' well-being is often neglected in hospital service design.

Comparison of Satisfaction Scores of Patients' Attendants Between Government and Private Hospitals

S. No.	Parameter of Satisfaction	Government Hospitals (Mean Score)	Private Hospitals (Mean Score)	Overall Mean Score	Interpretation / Explanation
1	Cleanliness and Hygiene	3.2	4.3	3.75	Attendants in private hospitals were more satisfied due to well-maintained wards, clean washrooms, and hygienic surroundings, whereas government hospitals suffered from overcrowding and poor sanitation.
2	Staff Behavior and Responsiveness	3.1	4.2	3.65	Private hospital attendants appreciated courteous and attentive staff, while in government hospitals, overburdened staff often led to delays and perceived rudeness.
3	Communication and Information Flow	2.9	4.1	3.50	Effective communication and regular updates were more common in private hospitals. In contrast, government hospitals lacked clear channels to inform attendants about patient progress and discharge.
4	Waiting Time and Service Efficiency	3.0	4.0	3.50	Long queues and manual paperwork in government hospitals caused frustration. Private hospitals had shorter waiting times due to better digital systems.
5	Amenities and Facilities for Attendants	2.8	4.1	3.45	Private hospitals offered basic comfort facilities like seating and cafeterias, while government hospitals had limited amenities, affecting

S. No.	Parameter of Satisfaction	Government Hospitals (Mean Score)	Private Hospitals (Mean Score)	Overall Mean Score	Interpretation / Explanation
					attendant satisfaction.
6	Financial Affordability	4.0	2.9	3.45	Government hospitals were preferred for affordability, while private hospitals were viewed as expensive despite better infrastructure.
7	Overall Satisfaction Level	3.12	4.08	3.60	Private hospital attendants reported higher overall satisfaction due to infrastructure and service quality, though financial challenges persisted.

The analysis clearly indicates that attendants in private hospitals reported higher satisfaction across most parameters such as cleanliness, staff behavior, and amenities. Conversely, attendants in **government hospitals** were **relatively** more satisfied with affordability but less content with service quality and infrastructure. The mean overall satisfaction score for private hospitals (4.08) was significantly higher than that for government hospitals (3.12), reflecting a **service quality gap of nearly 1 point**. The findings highlight that both hospital types need improvement in different domains — private hospitals in affordability and government hospitals in facility management and communication.

Correlation Between Challenges and Satisfaction Levels of Patients' Attendants

S. No.	Major Challenge	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Strength of Relationship	Interpretation / Explanation
1	Emotional and Psychological Stress	-0.68	Strong Negative	As emotional stress increases, satisfaction decreases significantly. Attendants who faced anxiety and exhaustion reported the lowest satisfaction.
2	Lack of Basic Amenities	-0.59	Moderate Negative	Poor seating, sanitation, and food facilities negatively influenced attendants' comfort and perception of hospital care quality.
3	Communication Gaps	-0.72	Strong Negative	Lack of proper updates and unclear communication from hospital staff was the strongest predictor of dissatisfaction.

S. No.	Major Challenge	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Strength of Relationship	Interpretation / Explanation
4	Financial Burden	-0.63	Moderate Negative	High costs in private hospitals led to financial strain, reducing satisfaction even when service quality was good.
5	Long Waiting Hours & Delays	-0.56	Moderate Negative	Prolonged waiting times in registration, billing, and discharge processes caused frustration among attendants.
6	Lack of Supportive Infrastructure	-0.61	Moderate Negative	Absence of restrooms, lounges, and night-stay facilities lowered satisfaction scores, especially in government hospitals.

The correlation analysis shows that all major challenges have a negative relationship with attendants' satisfaction levels — meaning that as these challenges increase, satisfaction declines.

- The strongest negative correlation (-0.72) was found between *communication gaps* and *satisfaction level*. Attendants who did not receive timely or clear information about their patient's condition reported the lowest satisfaction.
- Emotional stress (-0.68) and financial burden (-0.63) were also found to significantly impact satisfaction, indicating that mental fatigue and high medical expenses reduce the perceived quality of care.
- Challenges related to infrastructure, amenities, and waiting time showed moderate negative relationships, reflecting their consistent yet secondary influence on satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

This research sought to assess the satisfaction levels of patients' attendants in both government and private hospitals, focusing on the various challenges they encounter during hospitalization. The findings reveal that attendants play a critical yet often invisible role in the healthcare ecosystem, providing emotional, logistical, and moral support to patients while simultaneously managing their own stress, discomfort, and financial strain. The study found a significant disparity in satisfaction between government and private hospitals. Private hospital attendants expressed greater satisfaction with cleanliness, communication, and infrastructure, while government hospital attendants valued affordability but reported major issues with waiting times, amenities, and information flow. The correlation analysis confirmed that communication gaps, emotional stress, and lack of infrastructure were the strongest negative predictors of satisfaction. The results emphasize that improving attendants' experiences can directly enhance overall patient care outcomes. Hospitals that address attendants' physical and emotional needs create a more humane and effective healthcare environment. Implementing measures such as information desks, rest lounges, and emotional support services can significantly elevate satisfaction levels. In conclusion, the study reinforces the importance of acknowledging attendants as stakeholders in hospital service quality. Both government and private healthcare institutions must take

deliberate steps to ensure that attendants' comfort, communication, and well-being are integrated into patient care management systems. A compassionate and well-organized hospital environment benefits not only patients but also those who stand beside them throughout their recovery journey.

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