

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF HOSPITAL PATIENTS'
SATISFACTION IN CHINA AND MALAYSIA

BY

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UTAR	Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman
CNY	Chinese Yuan
MOH	The Ministry of Health

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF HOSPITAL PATIENTS' SATISFACTION IN CHINA AND MALAYSIA

CHAPTER 1 RESEARCH OVERVIEW

1.0 Introduction

The healthcare sectors of both China and Malaysia have experienced significant growth and transformation in recent years, driven by a confluence of dynamic policy reforms, technological innovations, and evolving societal paradigms. These two countries have a significant impact on the global healthcare industry thanks to their unique approaches to improving the standard, availability, and security of healthcare. This study aims to provide a thorough overview of the healthcare sectors in China and Malaysia, with a focus on examining patient satisfaction in hospitals at various levels of treatment, against the backdrop of the integration of medical resources.

Within this context, this chapter serves as an overview of a Comparative Study of Hospital Patients' Satisfaction in China and Malaysia. This study has the potential to shed light on significant healthcare-related issues and provide ideas that might help the field develop. The chapter begins with section 1.1 research background which explores the background and context of the research and sets the stage for the investigation that follows. The problem statement is then defined in Section 1.2, which outlines the complex issues and nuances that affect the situation of Hospital Patients' Satisfaction in China and Malaysia. The discussion is then furthered in Section 1.3 by establishing the research questions, which capture the core conundrums expressed in the problem statement. In Section 1.4, the research's objectives are strategically aligned to guide the exploration. The last section of this chapter, 1.5 Research Significance, justifies the study's necessity.

1.1 Research Background

The healthcare industry in both China and Malaysia has witnessed substantial growth and transformation in recent years, making patient satisfaction a central aspect of interest. As countries with diverse healthcare systems and cultural backgrounds, China and Malaysia offer intriguing settings for a comparative study of hospital patients' satisfaction. These developments have sparked academic and practical interest in comprehensively examining the distinctive trajectories, challenges, and opportunities that define their respective healthcare industries.

In China, access to health care is a fundamental human right, and both the national and local governments are responsible for providing it. The principal institutions where people have access to medical care in China are hospitals and general hospitals. The "Chinese model" of healthcare reform serves as an example of how the Chinese healthcare system has considerably improved access to medical treatments, which has improved locals' health indices. The medical sector in China has transformed dramatically, establishing itself as a major player in the international healthcare market (Cui et al., 2020). A major contributor to China's economic growth, the country's medical business now has a market value of more than RMB 1 trillion (Cui, Zuo & Meng., 2018). The historical development of China's medical sector, which is firmly anchored in the culture of traditional Chinese medicine, has led to its current diverse nature. The industry's journey exhibits a blend of continuity and quick innovation, from using old practices to adopting contemporary medical technologies. China's medical sector has steadily introduced market mechanisms and capital investment as part of the country's shift from a planned to a market economy, and medical resources have significantly increased (Li, Swe, Jabbar, & Ching, 2023).

At present, China's medical industry covers a wide range of fields, including hospitals, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and healthcare services. Hospitals are organized into three tiers based on their roles and responsibilities. A community can receive preventative, rehabilitative, and basic medical treatment from the first-level hospital. The second-level hospital is tasked with diagnosing and treating common and regularly occurring diseases in a number of villages, accepting referral patients from primary healthcare facilities and tertiary hospitals, and carrying out scientific research, teaching, and training activities. A regional medical facility that offers specialized medical services to numerous regions is a tertiary hospital. These hospitals offer prevention, healthcare, and rehabilitation services in addition to conducting scientific research, clinical teaching, and training. However, the medical industry in China is faced with substantial hurdles. China, with a population of around 1.4 billion individuals and ranking as the second-largest global economy, confronts various challenges including an ageing population, the prevalence of non-communicable diseases, and escalating healthcare expectations. These issues arise within the context of China's ongoing economic expansion. The population of individuals aged 65 years and above has reached a significant figure of 201 million, so imposing an increased burden on healthcare resources. In addition, there has been a significant

increase in public investment in healthcare and hygiene, reaching a total of 2.25 trillion Chinese Yuan (CNY). This figure underscores the considerable financial dedication necessary to uphold and enhance the healthcare system (Statista, 2023).

Furthermore, it is evident that the allocation of medical resources in China is characterised by a significant imbalance, with a clear bias towards major urban centres and esteemed healthcare institutions (Meng, Yin, Mills, & Abbasi, 2019). As a result, individuals may pursue "unnecessary medical interventions" at expensive healthcare facilities. In order to address these issues, China implemented a hierarchical system of diagnosis and treatment in 2009, assigning patients to the proper care tiers according to the severity of their ailments. With the help of this approach, patients should obtain quick and effective care at the most appropriate healthcare facility, and less needless trips to prestigious hospitals will be made. China formed medical alliances in 2012 as an additional tactic to strengthen the hierarchical system, realising the necessity for more advancements and resource optimisation. Government officials typically take a leadership role in these alliances, whether they are highly organized and exclusive networks or more flexible and open collaborations. Their primary objectives include the consolidation of healthcare resources across various levels of care, simplifying coordinated patient treatment, designating specific hospitals as pivotal institutions for advanced training and complex cases, and fostering collaboration among member hospitals (Cui, Zuo & Meng, 2018).

The medical alliances adopt measures like prepaid insurance, enabling doctors to treat patients at different hospitals. Core hospitals encourage cooperation through joint projects, and electronic health records are exchanged (Meng, Yin, Mills, & Abbasi, 2019). These actions improve the effectiveness and efficiency of Chinese healthcare. Additionally, China's healthcare industry is quickly adopting new technologies, using cloud computing, big data, and AI to improve medical services. This includes medical imaging firms powered by AI that are advancing diagnoses. The development of the COVID-19 vaccine is an example of how the pharmaceutical sector is investing in R&D (He, Li, & Bian, 2018). China's medical equipment businesses are expanding internationally and offering developing countries solutions. Despite issues including unequal access to healthcare and tense doctor-patient relationships, government initiatives are fostering growth. The improvements improve primary healthcare and increase insurance coverage. The use of technologies for disease prevention and personalized treatment is encouraged by policy.

On the other hand, Malaysia's healthcare industry has a long history that dates back to the colonial era, when the UK introduced medical practices. Malaysia has had a significant upgrading of its medical sector since gaining independence in 1957. To assure quality and accessibility, government initiatives have concentrated on improving healthcare policies and programs. The Ministry of Health (MOH), the primary regulatory and policy-making organization in Malaysia, has primary responsibility over the healthcare industry. Two levels of healthcare systems offer medical services through both public and private hospitals. Despite the existence

of clinics and specialty facilities, this study only concentrates on hospitals. Malaysia's healthcare system offers a variety of services, from primary care to specialized treatments, with more than 140 public and 200 private institutions. The industry's importance is further increased by medical tourism, which draws patients from outside and enhances foreign exchange profits (Health Facts, 2018).

Evolution-wise, Malaysia's healthcare industry has undergone continuous reform, with pivotal steps taken post-independence to improve service accessibility and quality. The establishment of the National Health Plan in 1981 stands out as a milestone, enacting a comprehensive nationwide healthcare system. Presently, the Malaysian healthcare landscape boasts impressive technological advancements and facilities. Both public and private hospitals coexist, equipped with state-of-the-art medical equipment spanning various specialties. International recognition is evident, particularly in medical tourism, with Kuala Lumpur emerging as a hub for global patients seeking top-notch services, including diagnostics, treatment, and aesthetics (He, Li, & Bian, 2018). The Ministry of Finance allotted RM27 billion as part of the 2018 Budget to supply and enhance the caliber of healthcare services. They have set aside RM1.4 billion in the budget for the renovation and upkeep of the healthcare facilities. It is clear that the administration is concerned about providing healthcare services as the nation develops (MOF, 2018).

Looking toward the future, the industry is positioned for growth amid a landscape characterized by both favorable prospects and obstacles. One notable trend observed in the healthcare sector is the convergence of medical technology and the process of digital transformation. The government is implementing many measures, such as the adoption of electronic health record systems and the promotion of telemedicine, intending to improve both the efficiency and quality of healthcare services. Furthermore, the aging population is a major burden, necessitating the increase of geriatric and long-term care services. Since Malaysia focuses a strong emphasis on enhancing both the accessibility and quality of healthcare services, it offers an intriguing contrast to China's healthcare system. But like its counterpart, this problem deals with the challenges brought on by a demographic change towards an older population, which typically encompasses individuals aged 65 years and above (Statista, 2023). Also, there is the need to ensure an equitable and fair distribution of healthcare resources. Examining patient satisfaction in this specific context might provide important information on the effectiveness of Malaysia's healthcare policies and their ability to meet a variety of patient needs.

1.2 Problem Statement

Healthcare institutions are widely recognized as the primary providers of disease diagnosis and treatment. People typically hold higher expectations of the institution. Patients express a desire for improved service while in a state of illness and when seeking assistance from hospital employees. Previous research conducted on medical alliances in Beijing has shown the significant influence of patient satisfaction on their decision-making process about medical treatment, particularly their preference for initially seeking assistance from primary care facilities (Meng, Yin, Mills, & Abbasi, 2019). Patient satisfaction is derived from the cognitive process of evaluating and contrasting anticipated expectations with real-life encounters with medical treatments, constituting a subjective evaluation of the quality of care (Hemaddeh et al., 2018).

Based on the theoretical framework of customer satisfaction, there exists a positive relationship between elevated levels of patient satisfaction and enhanced loyalty, as well as an increased probability of return visits and positive referrals (Hill & Alexander, 2018). However, it is important to note that the needs of patients in the healthcare sector are distinct from those of normal consumer items. Patients are primarily concerned with the severity of their ailments, the processes involved in their treatment, and the ultimate outcomes they might expect to achieve. As a result, individuals actively pursue services that are in accordance with a range of parameters, including the dependability of the services, the level of assurance and communication provided, the waiting time for services, and the quality of the hospital environment and infrastructure. Therefore, it is crucial to conduct further investigation into patient satisfaction within this particular setting in order to assess the effectiveness of ongoing changes and identify areas for improvement.

1.3 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How does the reliability of services impact patient satisfaction in hospital settings?

RQ2: To what extent do assurance and communication influence patient satisfaction during their healthcare experience?

RQ3: What is the relationship between waiting time for services and patient satisfaction?

RQ4: How do the hospital environment and infrastructure contribute to overall patient satisfaction levels?

1.4 Research Objectives

The main objectives of this research are:

RO1: To examine the impact of service reliability on patient satisfaction within hospital contexts.

RO2: To assess the influence of assurance and communication on patient satisfaction in healthcare facilities.

RO3: To analyze the relationship between waiting time for services and patient satisfaction.

RO4: To investigate the role of hospital environment and infrastructure in shaping overall patient satisfaction levels.

1.5 Significance of Study

The present study holds significant importance in the field of healthcare management and policy. The dynamic change and reform of the healthcare sectors in China and Malaysia necessitate a comprehensive

understanding of the factors that influence patient satisfaction. It is vital to comprehend the structure and intricacies of China's healthcare system, given that it is not wholly devoid of cost. In the records of history, it is noteworthy that China had previously achieved a state of near-universal healthcare coverage. However, subsequent reforms implemented throughout the latter half of the 20th century resulted in a reduction of state-sponsored healthcare assistance. As a result of these modifications, hospitals in China underwent a shift towards a more profit-oriented approach, resulting in increased reliance on direct payments from patients. Despite the implementation of governmental programmes aimed at revitalising and broadening coverage in recent years, numerous services continue to entail accompanying expenses.

Given this context, it is crucial to conduct a comprehensive examination of the factors that influence patient satisfaction in both nations. The primary objective of this inquiry is not alone to enhance the quality of service, but also to strengthen strategic decision-making across different levels inside the institution. Moreover, this research aims to fill a significant vacuum in existing information by examining the intricate elements of service reliability, assurance, communication, waiting time for services, and hospital environment and infrastructure. The results of this study give healthcare administrators, politicians, and clinicians a comprehensive comprehension of the complexities that influence patient happiness. This understanding empowers them to implement a more focused and efficient strategy for allocating resources, improving services, and developing policies.

A thorough examination of the cultural, environmental, and systemic factors on patient satisfaction is conducted using the cross-country comparison of China and Malaysia as a lens. This comparative approach not only deepens our comprehension of the challenges posed by healthcare delivery but also offers insightful information that may be applied to different international situations. The results of this study could revolutionize patient-centered care approaches by encouraging a setting in which healthcare services are responsive to patient's needs and demands. Moreover, this study holds academic relevance as it contributes to the advancement of literature in healthcare administration and service quality. It promotes more investigation into the factors affecting patient satisfaction, enabling advancements in healthcare service and results. Furthermore, improving patient experiences, provider-patient interactions, and healthcare outcomes are among the research's useful implications, which are in line with shifting worldwide healthcare trends towards patient-centric service.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a thorough analysis of the available research on patient satisfaction in healthcare settings. The primary objective of this literature review is to build a comprehensive understanding by critically analyzing the various aspects that contribute to patient satisfaction, as well as the theoretical framework that serves as the basis for this research. Furthermore, the study hypotheses that will be examined are developed using the knowledge acquired from the literature review.

Chapter 2 began with section 2.1, which initiated an exploration of the concept of patient satisfaction and its consequential importance within the context of healthcare. In section 2.2, a study of its affecting elements is presented, including service assurance, communication, waiting time, and hospital environment. The theoretical foundation for this study is outlined in part 2.3, laying the groundwork for section 2.4's introduction of the research hypotheses that describe anticipated correlations between variables and patient satisfaction. Section 2.5 of the chapter concludes by summarising the crucial conclusions drawn from the literature review.

2.1 Patient Satisfaction

The satisfaction of patients holds significant importance in evaluating the quality of healthcare and the provision of services, as it serves as an indicator of the effectiveness of healthcare services and the quality of interactions between patients and healthcare providers. According to Al-Abri and Al-Balushi (2014), the concept of healthcare experience comprises the perceptions, feelings, and evaluations of persons regarding the healthcare they receive. The multidimensional nature of patient satisfaction has been widely acknowledged by scholars, who have identified a range of elements that contribute to its development. Early research showed that patients with moderate expectations frequently reported higher satisfaction levels compared to those with extremely high expectations, as emphasized by He, Li, & Bian (2018) and Meng et al. (2019). Patients expressed satisfaction with such services when their expectations for the provision of healthcare were met. Since those first attempts, there has been a substantial surge in the multitude of elements associated with patient satisfaction, which exhibits considerable variation across different research studies. Nevertheless, a comprehensive assessment revealed a positive correlation between patient happiness and the degree to which healthcare delivery aligns with people's expectations.

According to Alkazemi et al. (2020), when healthcare delivery aligns with patients' pre-existing conceptions, it leads to favorable ratings of the services provided. As such, the importance of healthcare practitioners and institutions in effectively managing and fulfilling patient expectations is emphasized by this concept. Furthermore, the understanding of elements contributing to patient satisfaction has substantially grown as healthcare systems have evolved, which has been facilitated by many research investigations. Several studies have identified various factors that impact patient satisfaction, including but not limited to reliability, assurance, waiting time, and response, as well as the hospital environment and infrastructure. The degree of

satisfaction plays a pivotal role as it has an impact on the patient's inclination to return to the healthcare facility and endorse the specific unit or service to others (Cui et al, 2020). Thus, understanding the importance of patient happiness is crucial not just for healthcare practitioners but also for legislators. Satisfied patients are more likely to follow through on prescribed therapies and follow-up appointments, which improves health outcomes (Jalil et al., 2018). In turn, this helps healthcare organizations in their efforts to deliver high-quality care and improve patient experiences. In the end, a significant resource for forming healthcare plans, enhancing patient-provider relationships, and improving overall healthcare outcomes is the complexity of the literature on patient satisfaction.

2.2 Factors Influencing Patient Satisfaction

2.2.1 Reliability of Services

Reliability of services is the first factor in this framework. The concept of reliability refers to the ability of a service to consistently and accurately perform its intended functions (Alkazemi et al. 2020). According to Parasuraman et al. (1988), reliability can be defined as the capacity to consistently and precisely deliver the service that was promised. The dependability of healthcare services involves various dimensions, including the precision of diagnosis, the efficacy of treatments, and the consistent provision of care. Accurate diagnoses, successful treatments, and consistent care delivery are all part of what is meant by a healthcare service being reliable. Patients value the reassurance that the healthcare they receive is dependable and will provide favorable health results (Schoenfelder et al., 2018). Due to the direct impact it has on how patients view the efficacy of medical therapies, reliability has a substantial impact on patient satisfaction. According to Jalil et al. (2018), if a patient is pleased with the level of reliability, they will likely return to the same healthcare facility.

2.2.2 Assurance and Communication

The variable of assurance and communication is integral to understanding patient satisfaction within healthcare settings. According to Chandra, Ward, & Mohammadnezhad (2019), assurance includes several crucial aspects, such as employees' knowledge, politeness, and capacity to foster a sense of security and safety. This element of care talks to patients' expectations of receiving respect and dignity in addition to having faith in the skill of healthcare professionals. Patients express privacy and confidentiality as their top concerns, underscoring the importance of assurance. Patients trust healthcare providers with their private information because they believe they will be treated with the utmost discretion (Cui et al., 2020).

Another important aspect of this variable is effective communication between healthcare providers and patients constitutes. Patients value healthcare providers' capacity to communicate, resolve issues, and include

them in decision-making. Moreover, patients appreciate doctors who acknowledge their emotional needs and concerns with sensitivity and understanding. In fact, empathetic communication creates rapport, trust, and patient confidence in their healthcare journey (Jalil et al., 2018). Therefore, communications by healthcare of professional is important.

2.2.3 Waiting Time for Services

The waiting time refers to the duration during which an individual must wait subsequent to requesting an action or service and before the actual occurrence of the action or service (Li et al., 2023). In the context of healthcare facilities, waiting time for services pertains to the period during which a patient has to wait prior to obtaining medical attention or services at said facility. The primary objective of an organization is to minimize the duration of waiting periods between various operational activities. Extended waiting periods have the potential to induce feelings of irritation, physical discomfort, and overall unhappiness among patients. In contrast, the provision of effective and punctual service has the potential to augment patient satisfaction through the manifestation of regard for their temporal commitments and general well-being (Hemadneh et al., 2018).

2.2.4 Hospital Environment and Infrastructure

The hospital environment and infrastructure encompass the physical setting and facilities where healthcare services are delivered. This covers elements like the facilities' appearance, comfort, and cleanliness as well as their accessibility to cutting-edge medical technology and equipment. According to Li, Swe, Jabbar, & Ching (2023), the presence of a hospitable and properly managed setting has the potential to mitigate feelings of tension and anxiety, thus enhancing the whole experience in a positive manner. Furthermore, updated medical technology improves diagnostic accuracy and treatment efficacy, increasing patient satisfaction (Cui et al., 2020). Thus, hospital environment and infrastructure greatly impact patient satisfaction with healthcare services.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Theoretical frameworks provide the foundational structure and direction for this investigation, guiding the exploration of patient satisfaction within the healthcare systems of China and Malaysia. This section serves as a guide, delineating the research direction and providing a framework for analyzing the complex interaction among crucial aspects such as service reliability, assurance and communication, service waiting

time, and hospital environment and infrastructure, in relation to patient satisfaction. Figure 2.1 depicts a visual representation of the theoretical framework, providing a graphical illustration that complements the written explanation. This illustration is essential for organizing the research and interpreting the empirical data in order to derive significant conclusions regarding the intricate dynamics of patient satisfaction within the healthcare systems of China and Malaysia.

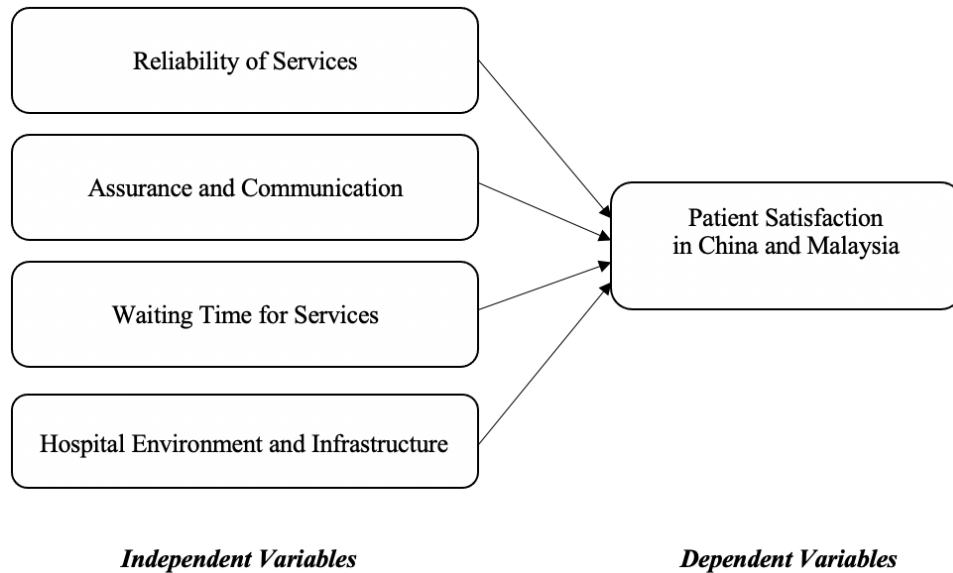


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

In addition, the Customer Satisfaction Theory posits that the crucial aspect of ensuring patient loyalty, promoting repeat visits, and generating favorable word-of-mouth recommendations is effectively meeting patient expectations (He, Li, & Bian, 2018). The utilisation of queuing theory holds significant relevance in comprehending the ramifications of staggered appointment scheduling on patient satisfaction. Queuing theory, a field within the discipline of operations research, focuses on the examination of waiting lines and the development of techniques for their effective management. Within the healthcare domain, queuing theory offers useful insights into the effects of various scheduling approaches, such as staggered appointments, on patient wait times and subsequent patient satisfaction (Al-Rahim et al., 2021). According to Fun et al. (2022), one operational method that is influenced by queuing theory is staggered appointment scheduling. By spreading out appointment times throughout the day, it aims to minimise traffic and delays and shorten the amount of time patients must wait for service. Healthcare facilities can create appointment schedules that meet patient expectations and anticipate expected wait times by using the concepts of queuing theory. This will ultimately affect the patient's satisfaction levels.

The above mentioned notion can be effectively applied in the healthcare setting, as people tend to prefer hospitals that effectively meet their demands, hence significantly impacting their overall satisfaction. Building upon these observations, the SERVQUAL model, which holds a prominent position within the field of service quality literature, highlights the essential aspects of reliability, assurance, and empathy in

influencing patients' evaluations of service quality. Consequently, these evaluations have a significant impact on overall satisfaction levels (He, Li, & Bian, 2018).

2.4 Research Hypothesis

2.4.1 Relationship between Reliability of Services and Patient Satisfaction

Based on a study of the distinct healthcare systems in China and Malaysia, it appears that there is an obvious connection between the reliability of healthcare services and the level of satisfaction experienced by patients in both nations. According to Ferreira, Raposo, & Tavares (2020) and Zhang (2019), the level of patient confidence in the accuracy of diagnoses, effectiveness of treatments, and consistency of care plays a crucial role in determining overall satisfaction. Hence, it is hypothesized that robust healthcare service reliability will foster patient trust and enhance satisfaction levels in both contexts.

2.4.2 Relationship between Assurance and Communication and Patient Satisfaction

The second hypothesis suggests that there exists a positive correlation between the variables of assurance and communication and the outcome of patient satisfaction. The establishment of a strong rapport between healthcare providers and patients is contingent upon the implementation of effective communication strategies and the provision of patient-centered care. According to the findings of Crow et al. (2018) and Hemadeh et al. (2018), there exists a strong correlation between patients' satisfaction and the ability of healthcare workers to actively listen to and comprehend their concerns. The establishment of a two-way communication system facilitates the development of partnerships and fosters collaborative decision-making, ultimately enhancing patient satisfaction. Indeed, patients who perceive that their emotional well-being is taken into account express satisfaction with the quality of their healthcare (Meng et al., 2019). Therefore, it is anticipated that the compassionate and sympathetic communication linked to assurance will have a significant impact on improving patient confidence and overall satisfaction.

2.4.3 Relationship between Waiting Time for Services and Patient Satisfaction

The third hypothesis suggests that waiting time for services is inversely related to patient satisfaction. Research consistently indicates that prolonged waiting times can lead to dissatisfaction and negatively influence patients' perceptions of the quality of care (Ferreira, Raposo, & Tavares, 2020). While shorter waiting times are indicative of an organized and attentive healthcare system, longer waiting times can cause frustration and hinder overall satisfaction. However, a study by He, Li, & Bian (2018) found that waiting times have a considerable impact on patients' satisfaction with public hospitals. Similarly, according to a study by Kraska et al. (2018), responsiveness has less of a bearing on customers' loyalty. Patients' perceptions of the quality of care are influenced by lower waiting times, which they perceive as indicators of an effective

and responsive healthcare system. Thus, it is hypothesized that keeping patient satisfaction levels high requires cutting down on waiting times and improving service effectiveness.

2.4.4 Relationship between Hospital Environment and Patient Satisfaction

Against the backdrop of a comparative analysis in China and Malaysia, this hypothesis proposes a positive correlation between the hospital environment and patient satisfaction. The facilities and physical surroundings have a significant impact on how patients perceive the quality of their care and overall satisfaction. According to Li et al. (2023) a hospital setting that is aesthetically pleasing and well-maintained could reduce tension and anxiety while also improving the overall patient experience. Additionally, the presence of cutting-edge healthcare facilities and technology is projected to improve treatment efficiency and diagnostic accuracy, leading to an increase in patient satisfaction (Datta & Vardhan, 2018). Consequently, a hypothesis is constructed positing a positive correlation between the hospital environment and patient satisfaction.

2.5 Conclusion

To sum up, this chapter concludes with a thorough analysis and examination of the research and findings from previous studies. The literature study examined many aspects of patient satisfaction and highlighted the complex interaction between expectations and experiences in healthcare. The reliability of services, assurance, and communication, waiting times for services, hospital atmosphere and infrastructure, as well as other criteria, were assessed thoroughly. These factors work together to influence patients' perceptions and significantly impact their overall satisfaction levels. Moreover, the formulated research hypotheses establish a clear path for investigating the relationships between these factors and patient satisfaction, providing the framework for empirical exploration. Therefore, this literature review and theoretical framework employed in this study aim to provide a rigorous investigation into the complex dynamics involved in the pursuit of a comparative study between China and Malaysia.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

Research methods are methodologies applied during a study. According to Bell (2019), research methodology is a methodical approach to problem addressing. This chapter explores the methodology that serves as the foundation for the examination of hospital patients' satisfaction within the healthcare systems of China and Malaysia. A rigorous and systematic study is guided by a methodology, which ensures that the data are collected and analyzed in a way that is consistent with the study's objectives. Thus, Chapter 3 provides a comprehensive explanation of the research design, sampling methodology, data collection method, and proposed data analysis tool. Each section contributes to establishing the credibility, validity, and reliability of the study's findings.

The framework for this study's research methods and procedures utilized to gather and analyze the necessary data will be discussed in Section 3.1 Research Design. Following this, Section 3.2 looks into the sampling design, providing a detailed explanation of the methodology's approach to the selection of data sources for analysis. For this qualitative study, the sole reliance on secondary data sources is highlighted in Section 3.3 Data Collection Method. Moreover, in Section 3.4, the approach provided for analyzing and interpreting the secondary data collected is presented. The crucial portion of Section 3.5 is Ethical Considerations, which highlights the ethical responsibility of accurately attributing and citing sources, even within the context of secondary data utilization.

3.1 Research Design

The research design acts as the strategic roadmap that directs all phases of the research process and determines how data will be gathered, analyzed, and evaluated (Saunders et al., 2019). The research design plays a crucial role in investigating the satisfaction levels of hospital patients in China and Malaysia in this study.

The methodology used in this study, which primarily relies on secondary data, aims to achieve these goals. According to Saunders et al. (2019), secondary data is pre-existing information that was obtained for purposes other than the current study. In order to uncover the many layers of patient satisfaction across these two healthcare systems, this study used secondary data to draw on a multitude of already assembled sources, including scholarly journals, academic articles, insight archives, and surveys. Additionally, in keeping with the qualitative approach, this research design delves deeply into comprehending patient satisfaction experiences from a human-centered perspective (Silverman, 2020). With an emphasis on depth and context, qualitative research offers a complex understanding of the topic under study. In the context of this study, qualitative inquiry helps us to analyze the patient experience, identify cultural quirks, and decipher the underlying factors that influence satisfaction while viewing everything through the prism of well-established scholarly work.

As such, this research design contributes to a comprehensive and insightful examination of hospital patients' satisfaction in China and Malaysia by combining the use of secondary data and a qualitative approach. It is based on a solid foundation of prior knowledge and empirical evidence and embraces the rich complexity of human experiences and perspectives.

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 Data Collection Method

In this research, a comparative study approach is employed to evaluate patient satisfaction in the healthcare systems of Malaysia and China, anchoring the investigation on secondary data. As defined by Bell (2019), secondary data encompasses resources and information that have been previously gathered, organised, and recorded by other researchers for various objectives. Secondary data in this context refers to academic articles, research papers, journals, and studies that specifically examine patient satisfaction within the healthcare systems of China and Malaysia. The utilisation of secondary data is a deliberate choice that enables the research to capitalise on pre-existing information and insights. This approach presents numerous benefits, including the ability to analyse trends over time and derive conclusions from diverse viewpoints.

3.2.2 Data Processing

Data processing involves the systematic organization, manipulation, and structuring of collected data to make it suitable for analysis. After obtaining secondary data from scholarly journals for this study, there are a number of processes involved in data processing. The information is examined and evaluated for its

applicability to the research questions and objectives. In order to keep the analysis focused and in line with the research goal, irrelevant or redundant data is removed.

The data processing stage, which includes converting comparative data into insightful analytical unit.

3.3 Data Analysis

The process of data analysis is an essential part of research, wherein obtained data is systematically examined, interpreted, and synthesized to derive relevant insights and make conclusions. The process entails a meticulous examination of the gathered secondary data in order to discern recurrent themes, concepts, and views pertaining to the satisfaction of hospital patients. Through a process of organizing and analyzing, the study aims to organize the data into coherent themes that reflect the nuances of patients' experiences and perceptions. Also, since the process of analyzing qualitative data is iterative, it involves constant refinement and validation of emerging themes. Therefore, it is hoped to ensure the validity and dependability of the conclusions by comparing and contrasting data from different sources.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations in research encompass a collection of concepts that provide guidance for the design and implementation of research endeavors. The aforementioned principles encompass voluntary involvement, informed permission, anonymity, secrecy, risk for damage, and results communication (Ilea, 2023). As such, maintaining academic integrity and adhering to ethical principles are imperative when exploiting and referencing the work of other researchers, especially when incorporating secondary data.

The ethical aspect of this study includes using secondary data responsibly by following appropriate reference and citation guidelines. In other words, it demonstrates respect for the ideas advanced by other scholars in addition to being a matter of ethical integrity. Accurate citations protect against plagiarism and uphold the values of academic cooperation by acknowledging the sources of data and concepts. The fact that the body of scholarly knowledge is based on the contributions of several scholars serves as another evidence of the significance of ethical reference. In addition to upholding academic standards, accurate attribution shows a dedication to academic integrity and acknowledges the wider academic community as a whole.

3.5 Conclusion

In a nutshell, The detailed methodological framework that supports the analysis of hospital patients' happiness within the healthcare systems of China and Malaysia is laid out in Chapter 3, which acts as a key pillar of this study. Purposive sampling is used in the research design, which is shaped to reveal the intricacies

of patient experiences through a qualitative lens. By drawing on previously published academic ideas, the use of secondary data is a powerful tool for the study that follows, driven by ethical considerations. The objective of the data's rigorous processing and analysis is to draw out consistent themes and patterns that could assist people in fully understanding the topic. The strategic choices made in this chapter lay the groundwork for an in-depth investigation of the factors influencing patient satisfaction and set the stage for the future direction of the research.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

Chapter 4 focuses on analyzing the collected information for a research study examining patient satisfaction in healthcare systems in China and Malaysia. Utilizing the qualitative methodology discussed in Chapter 3, this chapter aims to thoroughly analyze and interpret secondary data. The objective is to obtain a comprehensive understanding of different aspects of patient satisfaction within these two distinct healthcare contexts.

The main objective of this chapter is to analyze the secondary data using a qualitative approach, identifying significant themes, patterns, and insights related to our research questions. This involves a detailed examination of factors such as service reliability, assurance and communication, waiting times, and the hospital environment which are considered important for patients in healthcare settings of both countries. The structure of this chapter includes presenting the findings from data analysis followed by a discussion section where these findings are interpreted and compared with existing literature and theories. By combining these findings, the study aims to uncover the key factors that impact patient satisfaction.

4.1 Data Analysis and Findings

The qualitative data analysis in this study is primarily grounded in the examination of secondary sources such as academic journals, research papers, and other scholarly articles (Silverman, 2020). It aims to identify common themes and patterns that illuminate the factors influencing patient satisfaction within the healthcare systems of China and Malaysia.

The importance of patient satisfaction in healthcare cannot be underestimated. Patient satisfaction plays a crucial role in evaluating the quality of healthcare services and identifying areas for improvement. It provides valuable insights into patient's experiences and perceptions of the healthcare system, helping healthcare organization tailor their services to meet patient expectations (Li et al., 2023). Hence, the key areas of focus in this study include service reliability, assurance and communication, waiting times, and the hospital environment.

4.1.1 Service Reliability and Patient Satisfaction

Service reliability is a key factor that influences patient satisfaction in both China and Malaysia. The integration of traditional medicine with modern medical practices in the healthcare system of China has created a distinctive environment for ensuring service reliability. Patients have emphasized the importance

of consistency, accuracy, and dependability when it comes to medical treatment and care (Wau & Purba, 2019).

Meeting the dual expectations of historical medical wisdom and contemporary scientific approaches in China is a challenging task. The healthcare system must ensure service reliability and accuracy in medical procedures while also respecting traditional practices. Research indicates that successfully balancing these diverse expectations leads to significantly higher patient satisfaction (Li et al., 2023; Wau & Purba, 2019). On the other hand, research conducted in Malaysia by He, Li & Bian (2018) highlights that the country's healthcare system is heavily influenced by Western medical practices. These practices prioritize reliability based on modern healthcare standards, encompassing advanced technologies and up-to-date treatment methods delivered efficiently. Al-damen's (2017) study further underscores the correlation between patient satisfaction in Malaysia and their perception of state-of-the-art facilities and innovative treatments. Additionally, Jalil et al. (2017) suggest that accurate and timely diagnoses and treatments are highly valued by patients as indicators of reliable and high-quality healthcare services.

Similarly, Meng et al. (2019) point out that reliable management of long-term health issues and prompt response to medical emergencies are key drivers of patient satisfaction in both countries. The level of satisfaction in both countries is directly influenced by how well the healthcare services meet these expectations. When patients perceive that their healthcare needs are being met reliably, their satisfaction levels tend to increase. In fact, patients in China and Malaysia share a common expectation for healthcare systems to deliver consistent and dependable care, especially in managing long-term health issues and responding promptly to urgent medical needs.

Hence, the importance of service reliability in ensuring patient satisfaction is a critical factor in both China and Malaysia, despite differing cultural influences. Research has shown that patients are more likely to continue seeking healthcare from institutions that meet their expectations for reliable service (Anbori et al., 2010). Therefore, combining cultural expectations with modern medical standards seems essential for improving overall patient satisfaction levels regarding service reliability.

4.1.2 Assurance and Communication in Patient Satisfaction

Assurance and communication play a crucial role in healthcare settings, impacting patient satisfaction. In this context, assurance pertains to the trust patients have in the healthcare system, which is reinforced by the expertise, politeness, and reliability of their caregivers. Communication involves conveying information to

patients, actively listening to them, and efficiently addressing their expectations and worries (Jalil et al., 2018; Butt & Run, 2010).

The healthcare delivery system in China has historically been hierarchical, impacting patients' perception of assurance and communication. Research shows that patients often face barriers when trying to communicate with their healthcare providers due to the overwhelming demands placed on the system (Meng et al., 2019). However, recent reforms such as the establishment of medical alliances and advancements in technology are beginning to change this situation. These changes have the potential to improve patient satisfaction by enhancing both assurance and communication (Hu, et al., 2011). Effective communication plays a critical role in building trust and satisfaction among patients, as highlighted by Lin et al. (2023). This involves providing clear explanations of medical procedures, actively listening to patient concerns, and showing respect for meeting their needs.

The way Malaysia approaches assurance and communication has been heavily influenced by its healthcare system, which consists of both public and private facilities. Studies indicate that private healthcare facilities have a stronger focus on patient-centered care, which inherently promotes better communication and assurance (Tran & Nguyen, 2012). This is consistent with the findings of Aliman and Mohamad (2013) and Ahmad et al. (2011), which suggest that the assurance provided by knowledgeable and empathetic healthcare professionals, along with effective communication, can lead to higher levels of patient satisfaction. Besides, the Malaysian healthcare model's success in the private sector could offer valuable lessons for public healthcare systems in both Malaysia and China. For instance, the Malaysian private healthcare sector's emphasis on communication and assurance could be adapted to the public sector, potentially leading to improved patient satisfaction despite resource limitations (Al-Abri & Al-Balushi, 2014).

Overall, patient satisfaction relies not only on clinical care but also on assurance and effective communication. Cultural nuances, systemic structures, and resource availability should be taken into account when attempting to improve these areas. As healthcare systems continue to develop, it is crucial to continually evaluate and adjust communication strategies to meet the expectations of patients and enhance their overall experience.

4.1.3 Waiting Time for Services and Patient Satisfaction

The duration patients have to wait for services in healthcare settings is a significant element that impacts their satisfaction. It serves as an important measure of how efficiently and responsively the healthcare system operates. Lengthy waiting periods can lead to patient frustration and disappointment, which negatively affects their perception of the quality of care provided. Conversely, shorter waiting times are often linked to

a more positive experience with healthcare services, influencing patients' views on efficiency and attentiveness (Hemaddeh et al., 2018).

In China, managing waiting times poses a significant challenge due to the country's large population and high healthcare demands. Despite implementing reforms such as a hierarchical system for diagnosing and treating patients to alleviate pressure on tertiary hospitals, individuals often face extended waiting periods. These prolonged delays indicate systemic issues including uneven distribution of resources and inefficiencies in patient management (Liang et al., 2021; Meng et al., 2019). One notable problem is the concentration of top-quality medical resources in major urban areas which results in overcrowding and longer wait times. This not only causes inconvenience but also raises concerns about equal access to healthcare. According to a nationwide survey analyzed by Li et al. (2020), long waiting times were among the top reasons for patient dissatisfaction, especially in urban hospitals. Such data highlights the urgent need for effective management of patient flow within Chinese healthcare facilities.

In Malaysia, there is a significant difference in waiting times between public and private healthcare facilities. Private hospitals are known for their customer-focused approach and generally have shorter waiting times compared to public hospitals. This efficiency is often associated with higher levels of patient satisfaction. On the other hand, public hospitals face challenges such as larger patient volumes and limited resources which result in longer waiting times. This contrast highlights the importance of organizational structure and resource management in shaping patients' experiences (Manaf & Phang, 2007). Research by Luthy et al. (2017) found that patients in private hospitals reported much higher satisfaction levels due to shorter wait times when compared to those in public hospitals. This emphasizes the impact of efficient service delivery on patient satisfaction, highlighting the need for hospitals to prioritize reducing waiting times for a better medical experience for patients.

4.1.4 Hospital Environment and Patient Satisfaction

The role that the physical environment of hospitals plays in shaping patient experiences and satisfaction is crucial. This not only includes how the facility looks and how clean it is but also factors like the availability and quality of medical equipment and technology. A well-maintained and welcoming hospital environment can alleviate stress and contribute positively to patient perceptions of care quality (Hu et al., 2019). Thus, the importance of a conducive hospital environment in enhancing patient satisfaction is increasingly recognized in both China and Malaysia.

The rapid advancement of healthcare infrastructure in China has resulted in significant enhancements to hospital environments. The modernization efforts have focused on creating a patient-centered atmosphere, incorporating features like natural light, comfortable waiting areas, and private consultation rooms. These

improvements not only improve the aesthetics but also help alleviate patient stress and increase satisfaction levels (Hu et al., 2019). Nevertheless, overcrowded public hospitals still face difficulties ensuring high standards of cleanliness and privacy. As Shan et al. (2016) note, patients often express dissatisfaction with overcrowded wards and limited privacy, which can negatively impact their overall experience.

In Malaysia, private hospitals are renowned for their focus on creating a welcoming and comfortable atmosphere, often resembling hotels with careful attention to patient rooms, lobbies, and other facilities. By prioritizing the hospital environment as part of the healthcare experience, these establishments gain a competitive edge in attracting patients (Amin & Nasharuddin, 2013). Although not as lavish as private hospitals, public healthcare institutions in Malaysia also prioritize cleanliness and safety. However due to resource limitations similar to China's situation, maintaining a consistently high-quality environment in public hospitals can pose challenges.

Studies have shown that a positive hospital environment could significantly improve patient satisfaction. For instance, research by Laursen et al. (2014) indicates that patients in various countries highly value hospital cleanliness, noise levels, and the comfort of their surroundings as indicators of quality care. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2019) show that initiatives aimed at improving the physical environment of hospitals are directly correlated with increased patient satisfaction. Consequently, it is crucial to prioritize a well-maintained and user-friendly hospital setting to improve overall patient satisfaction levels. With ongoing developments in healthcare systems, attention towards maintaining an optimal hospital environment will continue to play a vital role in delivering high-quality healthcare services

4.2 Conclusion

To sum up, this chapter has examined secondary data to identify the variables affecting hospital patients' happiness in Malaysia and China. The findings highlight the importance of service reliability, assurance, communication, waiting times, and the hospital environment as key determinants of patient satisfaction. Firstly, service reliability emerges as a pivotal factor in both countries, with China's blend of traditional and modern medicine and Malaysia's emphasis on contemporary healthcare standards highlighting different cultural approaches to reliable care. Secondly, the chapter underscores the crucial role of assurance and communication in patient satisfaction. China's evolving healthcare system is enhancing patient-provider communication, while Malaysia's private sector exemplifies the importance of patient-centered care. Additionally, the impact of waiting times and the hospital environment on patient satisfaction is evident, with both countries facing challenges in these areas, albeit in different contexts. Overall, the chapter concludes that patient satisfaction is influenced by a complex interplay of service reliability, assurance, communication, efficient service delivery, and the quality of the hospital environment, with cultural nuances and systemic structures playing significant roles in shaping these experiences.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

5.0 Introduction

An extensive summary of the study's key findings is presented in Chapter 5, together with a thoughtful analysis of their implications, limitations, and potential future research areas. It seeks to contextualize and critically examine the insights derived from the comparative analysis of hospital patient satisfaction in the healthcare systems of China and Malaysia. This section lays the groundwork for a thorough understanding of how these findings add to the broader discussion on patient satisfaction and healthcare quality, particularly in varied cultural and systemic contexts.

5.1 Discussion of Major Findings

Summary of Findings

Hypothesis	Decision	Supported Researchers
H1: There is a significant relationship between service reliability and patient satisfaction.	Accept	[1] (Li et al., 2023) [2] (Wau & Purba, 2019) [3] (Meng et al., 2019) [4] (Jalil et al., 2017) [5] (Al-damen, 2017) [6] (Anbori et al., 2010).
H2: There is a significant relationship between assurance and communication and patient satisfaction.	Accept	[1] (Lin et al., 2023) [2] (Meng et al., 2019) [3] (Jalil et al., 2018) [4] (Al-Abri & Al-Balushi, 2014) [5] (Aliman & Mohamad, 2013) [6] (Tran & Nguyen, 2012) [7] (Hu, et al., 2011) [8] (Butt & Run, 2010)
H3: There is a significant relationship between waiting times for services and patient satisfaction.	Accept	[1] (Liang et al., 2021) [2] (Li et al., 2020) [3] (Meng et al., 2019) [4] (Hemadeh et al., 2018) [5] (Luthy et al., 2017) [6] (Manaf & Phang, 2007)

<p>H4: There is a significant relationship between the hospital environment and infrastructure and patient satisfaction.</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>[1] (Hu et al., 2019) [2] (Zhang et al., 2019) [3] (Shan et al., 2016) [4] (Laursen et al., 2014) [5] (Amin & Nasharuddin, 2013)</p>
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Table 5.1: Summary of Findings

5.1.1 Reliability of Services

Based on the findings presented in Table 5.1, there is strong evidence supporting the hypothesis that a significant relationship exists between service reliability and patient satisfaction. Reliability encompasses different aspects such as the consistency and accuracy of diagnoses, treatments, and predictability of healthcare outcomes. This is supported by research by Li et al. (2023), which shows that patients value accuracy and consistency in medical care. This assertion is further supported by Wau & Purba (2019) and Meng et al. (2019), who show that patients not only prioritise but also anticipate dependable healthcare services.

The findings are corroborated by Jalil et al. (2017) and Al-damen (2017), who contend that Malaysia's emphasis on contemporary healthcare and China's blending of traditional and modern practises are crucial factors in determining how satisfied patients are with service reliability. Anbori et al. (2010) further explore the significance of service reliability, emphasizing that it goes beyond fulfilling patients' clinical requirements. Instead, it encompasses instilling a feeling of safety and confidence that the healthcare system is capable of addressing their health issues effectively, whether they are routine or urgent. As such, the reliability of services becomes crucial in determining whether patients will continue to seek care from the same provider or recommend their services to others.

5.1.2 Assurance and Communication

The qualitative analysis provides strong evidence of the notable impact of assurance and communication on patient satisfaction. Therefore, the correlation between assurance, communication, and patient satisfaction is well supported. In a healthcare context, assurance refers to patients' confidence in the competence of healthcare providers and the system. On the other hand, communication involves clear, empathetic, and

effective information exchange between healthcare providers and patients. By ensuring that healthcare providers are competent in their roles, assurance significantly contributes to overall patient satisfaction with their healthcare experience.

This result aligns with previous research that emphasizes the importance of effective communication in building patient trust and satisfaction. Studies by Lin et al. (2023) and Meng et al. (2019) highlight this connection, while Jalil et al. (2017) further demonstrate how patients' understanding of their health status and care plan is essential for their overall satisfaction. Similarly, the study by Al-Abri & Al-Balushi (2014) further elucidates that when patients feel heard and understood, their level of anxiety decreases, and their trust in the healthcare system increases. Further critical examination by Aliman & Mohamad (2013), Tran & Nguyen (2012), and Butt & Run (2010) highlight that effective communication in healthcare goes beyond conveying medical facts, but also includes providing emotional support. These studies emphasize the significance of empathy in communication, noting that when patients perceive genuine concern from their healthcare providers regarding their well-being, it enhances satisfaction levels.

Based on the analysis of these findings, it is evident that assurance and communication are closely connected and have a combined impact on the overall patient experience. Effective communication plays a crucial role in providing assurance, which directly influences patient satisfaction by influencing their perception of care quality. As a result, healthcare providers and administrators should prioritize enhancing both assurance and communication as part of their strategic objectives to enhance patient satisfaction.

5.1.3 Waiting Times for Services

Next, The findings of Liang et al. (2021) and Li et al. (2020) support the hypothesis that longer waiting times for services are linked to lower patient satisfaction. This pattern is observed consistently across various healthcare settings, particularly in systems with high patient volumes and limited resources.

According to several studies conducted by Meng et al. (2019), Hemadeh et al. (2018), Luthy et al. (2017), and Manaf & Phang (2007), enhancing the efficiency of service delivery and reducing wait times are important factors in improving patient satisfaction, especially given the increasing demands on healthcare systems. These studies suggest that an organization's ability to effectively manage patient flow and meet service demand directly impacts waiting times, which in turn influences how patients perceive their experience. This implies that system-wide efficiency is not only a logistical consideration but also a crucial determinant of patient satisfaction.

After carefully analyzing these findings, it becomes evident that waiting time is not a superficial concern but rather one that has profound implications for healthcare delivery at both operational and strategic levels.

Extended waiting times often highlight underlying systemic problems, including limited resources, staffing issues, and inefficient processes. Additionally, in the cultural context of healthcare where timeliness equates to respect and value for patients, prolonged waits can significantly impact patient satisfaction. Therefore, these insights emphasize the importance of prioritizing the reduction of waiting times among healthcare providers and policymakers.

5.1.4 Hospital Environment and Infrastructure

The confirmation of the hypothesis that patient satisfaction is significantly influenced by a positive hospital environment and infrastructure is established. Hu et al. (2019) and Zhang et al. (2019) provide evidence supporting the idea that improving healthcare infrastructure and creating patient-centered atmospheres lead to higher levels of satisfaction. Studies by Shan et al. (2016) investigate the crucial role played by the hospital environment in shaping patients' emotions and stress levels, highlighting how it can profoundly impact their psychological well-being, which subsequently affects their overall satisfaction with the healthcare experience. Laursen et al. (2014) as well as Amin & Nasharuddin (2013) further emphasize that an ideal hospital setting should not only meet clinical safety standards but also provide a tranquil healing space for patients.

Therefore, a thorough analysis of these results suggests that the idea of complete healthcare is intimately related to the relationship between the hospital's infrastructure and environment. In an environment that fosters comfort and healing, this approach places a high priority on treating patients with respect and dignity. It acknowledges that each aspect of the environment, beginning with the moment patients arrive at the hospital, affects their level of satisfaction overall. As such, it underscores how critical it is that healthcare systems focus not only on clinical care but also on creating and maintaining environments that support patients' emotional and psychological welfare.

5.2 Implications of the Study

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in academic research to understand the factors that contribute to patient satisfaction in healthcare settings. This knowledge has important implications for improving clinical practices and policy-making. The findings of this study indicate that various aspects including reliability of services, assurance and communication, waiting times for services, and hospital environment and infrastructure are all positively associated with patient satisfaction.

5.2.1 Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study have several theoretical implications. Firstly, they support the idea that patient satisfaction is a complex and multidimensional concept that requires a comprehensive perspective to fully understand. This aligns with the theories proposed by the SERVQUAL model, which emphasizes tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy as important dimensions of service quality. Additionally, this study addresses gaps in our theoretical understanding of patient satisfaction by providing empirical evidence from two different healthcare contexts, China and Malaysia. It sheds light on how various dimensions of service quality contribute to patient satisfaction within unique cultural and healthcare settings. The results also indicate that these dimensions are closely intertwined with the cultural and operational aspects of healthcare delivery, suggesting that models for understanding patient satisfaction should be adaptable across different healthcare contexts.

Furthermore, this study provides valuable insights for future research, highlighting the need for flexible and adaptable theoretical models that can account for cultural variations. It suggests that the importance of different dimensions of patient satisfaction may vary in different regions, which is crucial when developing universal models of patient satisfaction. These findings have important implications in guiding healthcare providers toward evidence-based practices that enhance overall patient satisfaction. Future studies should focus on comprehensive and contextually sensitive theories to further advance our understanding in this area. Consequently, the significance of all elements pertaining to patient satisfaction has been well-established. These components provide a solid foundation for creating inclusive patient satisfaction models that take into account cultural differences.

5.2.2 Practical Implications

The practical implications of this study extend into several key areas of healthcare service delivery and management. Healthcare practitioners and administrators should take note of the strong relationship between the variables studied and patient satisfaction, highlighting the importance of a comprehensive approach that prioritizes patients' needs. One practical implication is to implement continuous quality improvement programs in healthcare facilities, focusing on improving accuracy in diagnoses, consistency in care, and adherence to treatment protocols. Additionally, leveraging technology may be necessary to monitor and enhance reliability in patient care.

Secondly, the significance of assurance and communication revealed in this study highlights the importance of meaningful interactions between healthcare professionals and patients. As a practical approach, incorporating patient communication skills into medical education curricula and ongoing professional development training is crucial. Additionally, it emphasizes the necessity for healthcare facilities to invest in

systems that promote open and transparent communication, such as patient portals and other digital tools facilitating two-way communication.

Moreover, the importance of managing patient flow efficiently is highlighted by the study's findings on waiting times. Healthcare administrators can consider implementing process re-engineering strategies like Lean or Six Sigma to reduce delays and improve service efficiency. Setting realistic expectations for wait times and improving the waiting experience could also mitigate the negative effects of delays. Lastly, the significant influence of hospital environment and infrastructure on patient satisfaction suggests that healthcare institutions should prioritize creating healing-oriented facilities, including aesthetically pleasing and comfortable patient spaces as well as easily accessible medical equipment and technology.

As a result, this study provides valuable insights for healthcare providers to enhance patient experiences and satisfaction. By addressing the identified key areas, healthcare systems can exceed patient expectations, leading to improved outcomes and increased loyalty.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

While the study delves into various aspects of patient satisfaction in China and Malaysia's healthcare systems, it comes with a few limitations. Drawing from secondary data sources provides a broad analysis but may overlook recent or detailed perspectives on patient satisfaction. This restricts exploration of emerging aspects of the patient experience and fails to keep up with evolving healthcare services.

Furthermore, this study only examines the healthcare systems of two specific countries. While China and Malaysia serve as valuable subjects for research, their unique cultural and operational characteristics may not translate directly to other healthcare systems. Factors affecting patient satisfaction may differ across nations, which limits the generalizability of this study's results.

Additionally, it is important to mention that this study has limitations due to its qualitative approach. Although qualitative research offers valuable context and insights, it does not provide statistical generalizability like quantitative research. As a result, while the findings of this study indicate trends and relationships, they should be regarded as exploratory and serve as a foundation for future conclusive research.

5.4 Recommendation for Future Research

To further enhance our understanding of patient satisfaction, future studies should aim to refine and expand our knowledge on this complex subject. By incorporating primary data collection methods, researchers can delve deeper into the analysis of patient satisfaction. Directly capturing patients' experiences and perspectives will allow for a more comprehensive exploration of the various aspects involved in patient satisfaction,

revealing emerging patterns and individual stories that may not be fully captured through secondary sources alone.

To enhance the relevance of future research findings, it is recommended to broaden the scope beyond China and Malaysia's healthcare systems. By including a wider range of global healthcare contexts, a comprehensive comparative analysis can be conducted, offering insights into patient satisfaction in various cultural and operational settings. Moreover,

integrating quantitative methods with qualitative research in measuring the correlations between different independent variables and patient satisfaction may enhance accuracy. Regression models or structural equation modeling techniques can be utilized to uncover how specific independent variables anticipate patient satisfaction, providing a deeper understanding of these relationships. Longitudinal study designs are also valuable in studying how patient satisfaction evolves in response to healthcare reforms and policy changes.

Lastly, to comprehensively understand the factors influencing patient satisfaction, future researchers should also consider a broader range of independent variables. This could involve examining dimensions such as the cultural competence of healthcare professionals, the effectiveness of incorporating patient feedback into service improvements, patients' autonomy in decision-making about their care, and ease of navigating healthcare systems. A deeper exploration of these variables may uncover new possibilities for enhancing healthcare delivery. As such, these recommendations could assist future studies and provide a more thorough understanding of the factors that influence patient satisfaction. This, in turn, could generate targeted strategies for improving healthcare, which have the potential to greatly enhance patient outcomes and experiences.

5.5 Conclusion

To sum up, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of patient satisfaction in the healthcare systems of China and Malaysia. It identifies key factors, such as service reliability, assurance and communication, waiting times, and hospital environment that significantly affect patient satisfaction. The implications of these findings are relevant for both theory and practice, highlighting the need for comprehensive models of patient satisfaction and patient-centered care practices. While limitations exist due to reliance on secondary data and focus on only two countries, this study paves the way for future research to explore a wider range

of variables using mixed-methods approaches. Overall, these insights underscore the importance of addressing various aspects related to patient satisfaction to improve healthcare delivery outcomes.

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