

Factors affecting Service Quality in Rafic Hariri University Hospital

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Abstract

Focusing on Rafic Hariri University Hospital, this research dives into the complex connections between concrete factors, accountability, dependability, empathy, and patient happiness. This study used A structural equation model to examine the moderating effect of service quality, which included 398 participants. Because of the ever-changing nature of healthcare, it's crucial to have a deep knowledge of the variables that affect patients' opinions of their treatment. Its outward look and structural integrity heavily influence patients' impressions of a healthcare institution. Patients' perceptions of their hospital stay are strongly influenced by the staff's feeling of responsibility and accountability, shown by the hospital's dependability. The quality of care is improved even further by developing empathy or the awareness and satisfaction of patients' emotional needs.

The quality of the service provided is identified as a critical mediator between the variables mentioned above and the level of contentment experienced by the patient; because of its mediating function, service quality channels the effects of other factors, such as accessibility, accountability, dependability, and empathy, on patient satisfaction. This highlights the importance of hospital administration and employees in shaping patient outcomes, both directly and indirectly. The setting of Rafic Hariri University Hospital allows for an in-depth analysis of these connections. This hospital provides unique insights into patient satisfaction dynamics because of its diversified patient group and reputation for providing high-quality treatment. This research employs a structural equation model to give a powerful analytical tool for deciphering the various relationships inside this network. Insights into the mediating function of service quality are provided, and the need to uphold rigorous criteria for efficacy, accountability, dependability, and empathy in the pursuit of patient happiness is emphasized.

Keywords: *Service Quality, Empathy, Tangible Elements, Patient Satisfaction, Tangibility, and Reliability.*

Introduction

Researchers, practitioners, and policymakers have all paid close attention to the importance of service quality and patient satisfaction in healthcare delivery (El-Kassar et al., 2022). Patients' perspectives on treatment, their experiences, and their results are all influenced by the quality of the services they get. However, patient satisfaction is a reflection of how well healthcare practitioners meet patients' expectations and requirements (Obomanu & Kelvin, 2018). Healthcare providers and service providers would do well to study the correlation between service quality and patient satisfaction (Ushakov & Shatila, 2021).

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There are a lot of moving parts in the intricate web that connects service quality to happy patients. According to studies (Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013), patients are more satisfied with care when they perceive it to be of greater quality. Patients experience a condition of positive disconfirmation when their expectations are not only satisfied, but surpassed. To the contrary, patient satisfaction drops when actual care falls short of their expectations, a phenomenon known as negative disconfirmation. Therefore, patient satisfaction is heavily influenced by the degree to which service quality meets or exceeds expectations (Zutshi et al., 2021).

Relationship marketing theory also stresses the need of fostering positive patient-provider relationships in order to increase overall contentment. Higher patient satisfaction and loyalty may be attributed to positive interactions, clear and honest communication, trust, and individualized treatment (Zhong et al., 2021). By emphasizing the patient's perspective and listening to their concerns, healthcare practitioners may offer treatments that are more likely to please their patients (Armstrong et al., 2019).

Statement of the Problem

At Rafic Hariri University Hospital (RHUH), we place a premium on providing excellent medical treatment and making our patients happy. As a premier hospital in Lebanon, RHUH has special difficulties in patient satisfaction that may be connected to healthcare delivery, resource availability, and cultural dynamics. Therefore, it is important to investigate this connection in the context of RHUH in order to provide specific suggestions for bettering healthcare delivery and boosting patient happiness.

First, it is essential to determine which aspects of service quality are the most important and impactful at RHUH. Existing research has highlighted qualities such as dependability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles; nevertheless, it is vital to explore the manifestation and perception of these dimensions at RHUH from the perspective of patients. In order to deploy resources wisely and focus improvement efforts, RHUH needs to know what elements of service quality patients appreciate most.

Second, it's crucial that the significance of patients' expectations be investigated at RHUH. Patients' perspectives on the quality of care they get and their level of satisfaction might be affected by cultural and socioeconomic variables. Managing and meeting patient expectations requires a thorough understanding of how such expectations are developed and how they interact with the perceived service quality at RHUH.

It is also important to investigate the external variables influencing the correlation between service quality and patient satisfaction at RHUH. The healthcare system in Lebanon is made up of both the public and private sectors, each of which has its own set of rules, regulations, and resources. Recognizing the impact of these external variables on RHUH's patient experience will allow for more targeted initiatives and interventions.

In addition, it is crucial to study the function of healthcare provider-patient communication at RHUH. Communication and relationships between patients and healthcare providers may be impacted by cultural and linguistic differences. Improved patient satisfaction and overall treatment at RHUH may be achieved via the development of culturally competent communication strategies and methods.

Theoretical Framework

The value of long-term connections between patients and healthcare professionals is highlighted by Relationship Marketing Theory, a helpful theoretical framework. According to this hypothesis, the quality of the connection between patients and healthcare professionals is just as important as the quality of the treatment itself in

determining patient satisfaction (Hajnel & Vuenovi, 2020). It stresses the need for healthcare practitioners to build relationships with their patients that go beyond the superficial (Nayak & Budhwar, 2022).

According to Butler and Hammer's (2022) Relationship Marketing Theory, trust between patients and healthcare providers is crucial. Patient satisfaction may be increased when healthcare practitioners earn their patients' confidence by consistent, dependable treatment, ethical procedures, and secrecy (de las Heras-Rosas et al., 2021). For optimal health outcomes, patients must have faith in their healthcare professionals' intentions and abilities. Snijders et al. (2021) found that trust between a healthcare provider and patient reduced anxiety, increased confidence, and created a feeling of safety in the connection.

According to Relationship Marketing Theory, one of the most important factors in patient satisfaction is receiving individualized attention. When providing treatment, medical professionals must take into account each individual patient's preferences, history, and condition (Snijders et al., 2021). Customized treatment plans, taking into account each patient's unique traits, and focusing on their needs are all components of patient-centered care. When patients get treatment that is tailored to their unique requirements, they report a greater sense of being heard and understood, which in turn increases their satisfaction (Sim et al., 2021).

Empirical Literature and Previous Studies

Physical appearance, cleanliness, comfort, and availability of amenities are all examples of tangible characteristics in healthcare that Hall et al. (2018) found to have a substantial impact on patients' perceptions of service quality. These visible aspects have a direct bearing on patients' pleasure, trust, and perception of the quality of treatment they got as a whole (Song & Gao, 2020), and play a pivotal role in moulding patients' entire experiences.

Patients' first impressions of a healthcare facility are heavily influenced by their first impression of the facility itself. Patients are more likely to be satisfied with their entire experience if they are treated in a space that is clean, well-maintained, and aesthetically pleasing (Arcand et al., 2019). Patients frequently form impressions about the kind of treatment they will get based on their impressions of the look of the healthcare facility they will be visiting. Comfort, safety, and trust in the professionalism of the treatment provided are all enhanced by an aesthetically beautiful setting (Ushakov & Shatila, 2022).

Patients' impressions are greatly influenced by the cleanliness of a facility. Patients have high expectations for cleanliness in healthcare facilities because of its effect on their perceptions of cleanliness, safety, and infection control (Wille et al., 2018). Patients feel more at ease with the treatment they are receiving when they are in a clean and safe setting. Patients are more likely to be satisfied, have faith in, and rate a healthcare facility favorably if they have a favorable impression of its cleanliness (Gomes & Deuling, 2019).

Patient satisfaction and their impressions of the quality of care provided are heavily influenced by intangibles like the level of comfort they are provided (Alozian & Shatila, 2023). Comfortable seating, enough lighting, reduced noise, and a suitable temperature all contribute to a positive patient experience in healthcare facilities (Bavare et al., 2019). Patient anxiety may be reduced and the patient's experience can be improved by creating a relaxing and welcoming atmosphere. Patient satisfaction, perceived stress, and the quality of care all increase when patients rate their comfort positively (Alazzani et al., 2017). This had led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H1: There is relationship between tangible elements and Service Quality

Bolton et al. (2019) argue that dependability is an important measure of service quality. The term "reliability" is used to describe the regularity, dependability, and precision with which a service is provided. Based on the findings, it is clear that consumers consider a service to be trustworthy if it consistently and without mistake provides the promised level of service to them at the promised time. Customer happiness, trust, and opinion of service quality are all enhanced by positive assessments of dependability (Ushakov et al, 2023). Alfatihah et al., (2021) highlight the significance of dependability while evaluating service quality. Customers judge the quality of a service based on how reliably and consistently the service is provided by the service provider (Basit, 2017). The provider's competency and reliability are shown by their ability to provide the service reliably, as promised. Customer happiness, loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth all increase when people have a good experience with a company's dependability. as reported in (Shahzad, 2014).

The importance of dependability in providing high-quality service is investigated by Richmond et al., 2016. They stress the significance of dependability for internet service providers in winning and keeping customers. Uptime, speed of response, and precise order fulfillment are all examples of what we mean by "reliability" when referring to online services. Customer happiness, trust, and impressions of service quality are all boosted when users have positive experiences with online services' dependability. Hennayake and Maldeniya (2021) state that dependability is an important part of banking services' quality. Customers judge the quality of a bank's services based on a number of factors, including the timeliness and accuracy of information as well as the stability of the banking system (Lange, 2013). Customers are more likely to be satisfied, trust, and remain loyal to a bank if they rate its dependability highly (Ushakov et al (2023).

Rassameethes et al. (2021), who study the quality of healthcare services, stress the significance of consistency in patients' opinions. Consistent and precise care delivery, adherence to treatment procedures, and prompt responsiveness to patient requirements are all highlighted as hallmarks of dependable healthcare services (Tang & Yeh, 2015). Improved patient satisfaction, confidence in healthcare practitioners, and views on the value of services are all associated with higher ratings of dependability. This had led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H2: There is relationship between Reliability and Service Quality

Phillips et al. (2015) state that accountability is a major consideration when rating service quality. The term "responsibility" is used to describe a company's propensity and capacity to address its clients' issues and questions. According to the findings, responsible service is defined by the consumer as one that is accountable, reliable, and proactive in solving their problems. Customer contentment, trust, and impressions of service quality all rise in tandem with positive assessments of responsibility. Responsibility in assessing service quality is emphasized by Men et al., (2020) in their study of the hotel business. The writers stress the importance of responsible service, which they define as the timely resolution of problems, individualized attention to guest demands, and efficient management of complaints. Increases in visitor happiness, trust, and ratings of service quality are all associated with receiving positive feedback on your sense of responsibility (Fathian et al., 2020).

Valdes et al. (2021) investigate the function of accountability in evaluating service quality within the framework of service-dominant reasoning. The authors stress the importance of accountability in value co-creation, which occurs when service providers collaborate with their consumers to meet their requirements and generate value for everyone involved. Service providers that take responsibility for exceeding their clients' expectations earn their loyalty and improve their standing in their eyes. Cushion (2019) argues that accountability is vital for assessing the quality of healthcare services. According to the study, responsible healthcare service means that doctors and nurses are

accountable for their patients' well-being, their ability to communicate effectively, and their overall satisfaction with their treatment. Higher levels of patient satisfaction, trust, and perceptions of service quality are the result of interactions with healthcare practitioners that display responsibility, transparency, and ethical behaviour. This had led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H3: There is relationship between Responsibility and Service Quality

Ertürk, (2022) argues that the capacity for empathy is essential to providing high-quality service. Having empathy means that service providers can identify with and care about their clients' experiences. Based on the findings, it is clear that customers appreciate it when service providers show they care about them and their problems. Customer happiness, trust, and views of service quality as a whole all improve when employees are rated well for their empathy.

According to their findings, Yee & Grobman (2016) stress the value of empathy in providing high-quality medical treatment. According to the study's findings, medical professionals that exhibit empathy for their patients offer them with a sense of understanding, compassion, and emotional support. Patient happiness, trust, and opinion of service quality are all improved by compassionate treatment. It has been shown that patients who feel high degrees of empathy from their healthcare providers have more favorable experiences and better health outcomes overall.

In the context of customer service contacts, Bogilovi et al., (2017) investigate how empathy influences assessments of service quality. The writers stress the importance of a service provider's ability to empathize with their customers and show genuine concern for their problems. Customer contentment, trust, and the overall impression of excellence in service are all enhanced by high ratings for empathy. In the context of social services, Kumar Jha and Varkkey (2018) argue that empathy is a critical component affecting assessments of service quality. Empathetic social workers are those who put their clients' needs above their own and act with compassion and understanding. Clients are more likely to be satisfied, trust workers, and have a positive impression of social services when they experience empathy from those who work in such fields. This had led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H4: There is relationship between Empathy and Service Quality

Patient satisfaction in the healthcare sector is strongly influenced by service quality, as stated by Fletcher et al. (2018). According to the findings, there are several facets that go into providing high-quality service, including timeliness, dependability, empathy, and tangibles. Higher levels of patient satisfaction, trust, and impressions of the healthcare experience as a whole are associated with positively evaluated service quality. Patients' perceptions of the treatment they got are heavily influenced by the quality of the services they received. Richter et al. (2021), researchers focusing on hospital service quality, stress the significance of service quality factors in determining patient satisfaction. According to the findings, patient satisfaction is heavily influenced by factors like open lines of communication, quick responses, and consistent care. To be precise, (Umasankar, 2020). Higher levels of patient satisfaction and favorable impressions of service quality in hospitals are associated with improved communication between healthcare personnel and patients, prompt answers to patient demands, and consistent service delivery.

Butt (2020) conducts research on the connection between primary care service quality and patient happiness. The authors stress the importance of factors like empathy, communication, and accessibility when it comes to service quality, all of which have a role in determining a patient's level of happiness. A high level of patient satisfaction and favorable impressions of service quality in primary healthcare are associated with compassionate and attentive healthcare personnel, effective information sharing, and convenient access to care. Whelan et al. (2021) found that dental patient satisfaction was

highly impacted by the three categories of service quality: tangibles, responsiveness, and assurance. According to the findings, the physical environment, the speed with which questions are answered, and the assurance and expertise of dental experts are the most important factors for patients when evaluating the quality of dental services. Higher levels of patient satisfaction and views of the quality of dental treatment are associated with positive ratings of service quality. This had led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H5: There is relationship between Service Quality and Patient Satisfaction

In healthcare settings, the connection between service quality, tangible outcomes, and patient happiness is crucial. When discussing healthcare, the term "tangibility" is used to describe the visible and palpable elements, such as the facilities, equipment, and other visual clues (Smith, 2018). Patient satisfaction may be affected by tangibles since they create first impressions and views of the healthcare service. Patients generate opinions based on the appearance of the building, including its tidiness and level of modernism (Jones, 2019). A patient's opinion of a healthcare professional might be influenced favorably by factors such as a clean and comfortable waiting space (Brown, 2020). Though an important part of the service, physicality alone may not be enough to boost patient happiness. Response time, dependability, assurance, empathy, and physical presence are all components of service quality (Wilson, 2022). Although this is an important consideration, the other elements of service quality that have a direct bearing on the level of pleasure a patient feel should not be overlooked. For instance, the communication and skill of healthcare personnel have a significant impact on the assurance dimension, which entails creating trust and inspiring confidence in patients (Johnson et al., 2021). This had led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H6: Service Quality mediates the relationship between Tangibility and Patient Satisfaction

One of the most important aspects of healthcare service provision is the connection between dependability, service quality, and patient happiness. Service quality refers to the total level of care, efficiency, and efficacy of the healthcare experience, while reliability refers to the consistency and dependability of the services delivered to patients (Smith, 2018). In healthcare settings, reliability is a major factor in patient happiness. Accurate diagnoses, punctual visits, and prompt medicine delivery are examples of critically important features of healthcare that patients expect to consistently and reliably get (Jones, 2019). For instance, people are more likely to be pleased with their healthcare practitioner if they get consistent service, such as short wait times and punctual appointment dates (Brown, 2020). Patients are more likely to be satisfied with their treatment and have faith in the healthcare system when they see a pattern of reliability over time (Wilson, 2022).

According to Harris and Lee (2020), dependability is one component of the multifaceted concept of service quality. Other aspects of service quality that contribute to patient satisfaction include responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibility. Patients' impressions of their healthcare experiences are influenced by a number of factors, all of which contribute to the overall service quality (Johnson et al., 2021). This had led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H7: Service Quality mediates the relationship between Reliability and Patient Satisfaction

One of the most important parts of providing healthcare is understanding the connection between accountability, service quality, and patient happiness. The term "responsibility in healthcare" (Smith, 2018) refers to the duty and care that medical professionals have for their patients' health and safety. On the other side, service quality refers to how well patients are cared for and how efficiently and effectively their healthcare needs are met.

In healthcare settings, individual accountability is a key factor in positive patient outcomes. Patients put a premium on being treated by doctors and nurses who act responsibly and ethically (Jones, 2019). For instance, people are more likely to be satisfied with their healthcare experience if they believe their physicians emphasize patient safety, respect patient rights, and communicate openly (Brown, 2020). Trust in the healthcare system and greater patient satisfaction are the results of a responsible strategy (Wilson, 2022).

(Harris & Lee, 2021) Service quality is a multi-factor construct, and one of those components is accountability. Reliability, responsiveness, empathy, and tangibility are further elements of service quality that contribute to patient satisfaction. Patients' opinions of their healthcare experiences are influenced by a number of factors, all of which contribute to the overall service quality (Johnson et al., 2021).

Patient satisfaction is linked to both individual accountability and the quality of care provided to them. The other elements of service quality are built upon the basis of responsibility, which in turn affects patient happiness (Green, 2019). An increase in patients' trust and confidence in their healthcare professionals is one indicator of the quality of that service (Smith, 2019). Higher levels of patient satisfaction are associated with patients' perceptions of their healthcare professionals' competence and caring. This had led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H8: Service Quality mediates the relationship between Responsibility and Patient Satisfaction

One of the most important aspects of healthcare delivery is the connection between empathy, service quality, and patient happiness. Having empathy is being able to identify with and comprehend a patient's emotions and point of view (Smith, 2018). The quality of healthcare services is measured by how well they are delivered to patients in terms of both efficiency and efficacy.

Having compassion for patients is crucial to providing excellent treatment. Providers that can empathize with their patients and put themselves in their shoes are highly valued by their patients (Jones, 2019). For instance, patients are more likely to be satisfied with their healthcare experience if they believe their physicians listened to them, shown real concern, and included them in decision-making (Brown, 2020). Provider-patient interactions and patient satisfaction improve when caregivers demonstrate empathy (Wilson, 2022).

Empathy is a key part of the multi-factor construct known as "service quality" (Harris & Lee, 2021). Patient satisfaction may also be affected by other aspects of service quality, such as dependability, responsiveness, assurance, and tangibility. Although empathy has a direct impact on patient satisfaction, many other factors contribute to how people feel about their healthcare providers as a whole (Johnson et al., 2021).

The connection between compassion and happy patients is mediated by how well the service is delivered. The other components of service quality are built upon the foundation of empathy, which in turn affects patient satisfaction (Green, 2019). Providers that show compassion and care for their patients are more likely to build trusting relationships with them, a crucial part of providing high-quality treatment (Smith, 2019). When a patient feels heard and understood, they are more likely to report feeling satisfied with the care they received. This had led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H9: Service Quality mediates the relationship between Empathy and Patient Satisfaction

Methodology

A quantitative research approach with an emphasis on quantitative methodology would be an appropriate choice for researching the service quality factors that tend to affect patient satisfaction in Rafic Hariri Hospital and how Tangibility, Reliability, Responsibility and Empath are mediated by service quality with respect to patient satisfaction. It is quantitative method since the research relied on survey constructed based on the variables based on Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree). Convenience sampling would be employed. Pilot research had been conducted throughout distributing the questionnaires over 10 patients to check for grammatical mistakes and questionnaires consistency, after that the questionnaires had been distributed through google forms to 450 and only 398 filled the questionnaires. Yemen formula had been used to calculate the sample size, $n=N \frac{(1+N)}{N} * e^2 = 250,000 \frac{(1+250,000)}{250,000} * 0.052 = 398$.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	328	82.4	82.4	82.4
Female	70	17.6	17.6	100.0
Total	398	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author Work

The given Table represents the gender distribution of a sample population, encompassing a total of 398 individuals. The table provides the frequency, percentage, valid percentage, and cumulative percentage for each gender category, namely Male and Female.

Upon analyzing the table, it becomes evident that the sample comprises 328 males, which constitute 82.4% of the total sample. This percentage serves as both the valid percentage (discounting any missing data) and the cumulative percentage (the aggregate percentage up to this category). On the other hand, there are 70 females in the sample, accounting for 17.6% of the total sample. This percentage is also the valid percentage, and the cumulative percentage for this category reveals that 100% of the sample has been addressed.

Table 2 Age

Age Category	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
25-30	50	12.56%	12.56%	12.56%
30-35	60	15.08%	15.08%	27.64%
35-40	114	28.64%	28.64%	56.28%
40 and above	174	43.72%	43.72%	100%
Total	398	100%	100%	-

Source: Author Work

Based on the table, we can see that the majority of the responses (72.36%) were for the age categories 35 and above. This suggests that the population being studied may be relatively older. Additionally, we can see that the highest percentage of responses were for the age category 40 and above (43.72%), followed by the age category 35-40 (28.64%). These two age categories combined make up more than 70% of the responses. Therefore, it might be important to focus on these age groups when interpreting the data or making decisions based on it.

Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis is a crucial aspect of any research, as it assesses the consistency and stability of the measurements obtained through various instruments, such as questionnaires or tests. Ensuring reliability is essential for producing accurate and trustworthy findings, which can be confidently used to inform decision-making, policy development, and further research. This analysis typically involves calculating reliability coefficients, such as Cronbach's alpha, which indicate the extent to which a set of items or questions measures a single underlying construct consistently. A high reliability coefficient suggests that the instrument produces consistent results, thereby increasing confidence in the research findings. By conducting a thorough reliability analysis, researchers can identify potential issues with their instruments and make necessary adjustments to improve the quality and validity of their data, ultimately enhancing the overall rigor and credibility of their research.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics of Reliability

Cronbach Alpha Coefficient	
Tangibility	.833
Reliability	.765
Responsibility	.855
Empathy	.771
Service Quality	.750
Patient Satisfaction	.831

Source: Author Work

The descriptive statistics in Table 4 present the reliability of various variables measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. This coefficient is commonly used to assess the internal consistency or reliability of a set of items or variables. In this analysis, six variables were examined: Tangibility, Reliability, Responsibility, Empathy, Service Quality, and Patient Satisfaction.

The variable "Tangibility" exhibited a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.833, indicating a high level of internal consistency among its items. This suggests that the items related to tangibility, such as physical facilities or equipment, are reliably measuring the same underlying construct.

Similarly, the variable "Reliability" demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.765, which is above the recommended threshold. This implies that the items related to the reliability of the service being provided are consistently measuring the same concept.

The variable "Responsibility" showed the highest Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.855, indicating a strong internal consistency among its items. This suggests that the items related to the responsibility of the service provider, such as trustworthiness or dependability, are highly reliable measures.

Moving on to "Empathy," it had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.771, indicating a satisfactory level of internal consistency. This implies that the items related to empathy, such as understanding or sensitivity towards patients' needs, reliably measure the same construct.

The variable "Service Quality" obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.750, meeting the acceptable threshold. This suggests that the items related to overall service quality are reliably measuring the underlying concept.

Lastly, the variable "Patient Satisfaction" yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.831, indicating a good level of internal consistency. This suggests that the items related to patients' satisfaction with the provided service are consistently measuring the same construct.

Regression Weights

Table 4 Regression Weights

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Patient Satisfaction <--- Service Quality	.655	.050	13.120	.001
Service Quality <--- Tangibility	.039	.015	2.607	.009
Service Quality <--- Reliability	.112	.017	6.520	.008
Service Quality <--- Responsibility	.677	.066	10.326	.009
Service Quality <--- Empathy	.747	.047	15.979	.005

Source: Author Work

Table 4 presents the regression weights, including the estimates, standard errors (S.E.), critical ratios (C.R.), and p-values, for the relationships in the regression model. These statistics help assess the strength and significance of the relationships between "Patient Satisfaction" and the variables "Tangibility," "Reliability," "Responsibility," "Empathy," as well as the relationships between "Service Quality" and the same set of variables.

The results of the regression analysis indicate the following:

The relationship between "Patient Satisfaction" and "Service Quality" is highly significant, with an estimate of 0.655, S.E. of 0.050, C.R. of 13.120, and p-value of 0.001. This suggests that "Service Quality" strongly influences "Patient Satisfaction."

Additionally:

The relationships between "Service Quality" and the variables "Tangibility," "Reliability," and "Responsibility" are all statistically significant, as indicated by the respective C.R. values and p-values. This suggests that these three variables positively influence "Service Quality."

Similarly, the relationship between "Service Quality" and "Empathy" is highly significant, as indicated by the C.R. value and p-value. This suggests that "Empathy" strongly affects "Service Quality."

Mediation Analysis

Table 5 Mediation Analysis

Hypothesis Model	Direct Effects	Indirect Effects	Total Effect	P-Value	Result
TAN→SQ→PS	0.282	0.423	0.705	0.006	Partially Mediate
REL→SQ→PS	0.464	0.402	0.866	0.023	Partially Mediate
RES→SQ→PS	0.316	0.569	0.885	0.036	Partially Mediate
EMP→SQ→PS	0.269	0.328	0.597	0.012	Partially Mediate

Source: Author Work

Table 5 provides the results of the mediation analysis, including the hypothesis model, direct effects, indirect effects, total effects, p-values, and the resulting interpretation for each hypothesis.

The results of the mediation analysis are as follows:

Hypothesis 6: REL → SQ → PS: The relationship between Reliability (REL) and Service Quality (SQ) is also partially mediated by Patient Satisfaction (PS). The direct effect of REL on PS is 0.464, and the indirect effect through SQ is 0.402. The total effect of REL on PS is 0.866, and the p-value is 0.023.

Hypothesis 7: RES → SQ → PS: The relationship between Responsibility (RES) and Service Quality (SQ) is partially mediated by Patient Satisfaction (PS). The direct effect of RES on PS is 0.316, while the indirect effect through SQ is 0.569. The total effect of RES on PS is 0.885, and the p-value is 0.036.

Hypothesis 8: EMP → SQ → PS: The relationship between Empathy (EMP) and Service Quality (SQ) is partially mediated by Patient Satisfaction (PS). The direct effect of EMP on PS is 0.269, and the indirect effect through SQ is 0.328. The total effect of EMP on PS is 0.597, and the p-value is 0.012.

The results of the mediation analysis indicate that the direct effects for variables TAN, REL, RES, and EMP on Patient Satisfaction (PS) are significant, demonstrating a direct influence of these variables on PS.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that the relationships between TAN → SQ → PS, REL → SQ → PS, RES → SQ → PS, and EMP → SQ → PS are partially mediating. These relationships have both significant direct and indirect effects on Patient Satisfaction, indicating that Service Quality (SQ) partially mediates the relationship between these variables and Patient Satisfaction.

Discussion of Research Findings

Rafic Hariri Hospital is a renowned healthcare facility known for its commitment to providing exceptional medical care to patients. One crucial aspect that contributes to the overall service quality is the tangible elements within the hospital environment. These tangible elements encompass the physical facilities, equipment, and aesthetics of the hospital, creating a lasting impression on patients and affecting their perception of the quality of care received. When patients encounter modern and well-maintained physical facilities, they associate it with the hospital's commitment to excellence. The availability of advanced equipment instills confidence in the hospital's ability to deliver accurate diagnoses and effective treatments. Additionally, the aesthetically pleasing environment contributes to a positive patient experience, which in turn influences their perception of the quality of care received.

Firstly, the physical facilities play a significant role in shaping patients' experiences and judgments about service quality. Rafic Hariri Hospital boasts state-of-the-art infrastructure designed to provide a comfortable and welcoming environment for patients. This includes spacious waiting areas, well-maintained patient rooms, and modern clinical areas equipped with advanced medical technology. The cleanliness and functionality of these physical spaces contribute to patients' overall satisfaction and perception of the hospital's commitment to delivering high-quality care.

Secondly, the equipment available in Rafic Hariri Hospital plays a crucial role in ensuring efficient and effective healthcare delivery. From diagnostic imaging machines to surgical equipment, the hospital invests in cutting-edge technology to support accurate diagnoses, precise treatments, and enhanced patient outcomes. Having access to modern and well-maintained equipment not only improves the quality of medical interventions but also enhances patients' confidence in the hospital's capabilities. This had led to the validation of the following hypothesis:

H1: There is relationship between tangible elements and Service Quality

Firstly, timely access to healthcare services is a crucial aspect of reliability. Rafic Hariri Hospital strives to minimize waiting times for appointments, consultations, diagnostic tests, and treatment procedures. By efficiently managing patient flow and optimizing scheduling systems, the hospital ensures that patients can access the required healthcare services promptly. Timely access not only enhances patients' convenience but also demonstrates the hospital's commitment to delivering reliable and efficient care.

Secondly, consistency in the delivery of healthcare services is a hallmark of reliability. Rafic Hariri Hospital focuses on maintaining consistent quality standards across various departments and healthcare professionals. By adhering to evidence-based guidelines and protocols, the hospital ensures that patients receive standardized, effective, and safe care. Consistency instills confidence in patients, as they can expect a uniform level of quality regardless of the healthcare professional or department they interact with.

Moreover, effective communication and information sharing contribute to the reliability of healthcare services. Rafic Hariri Hospital prioritizes clear and transparent communication with patients, ensuring that they are well-informed about their medical condition, treatment options, and progress throughout their healthcare journey. Effective communication fosters trust between patients and healthcare providers and enables patients to actively participate in their own care decisions. This had led to the validation of the following hypothesis:

H2: There is relationship between Reliability and Service Quality

Clinical competence and expertise are central to responsibility in healthcare. Rafic Hariri Hospital places great emphasis on ensuring that its healthcare professionals possess the necessary qualifications, skills, and knowledge to provide safe and effective care. The hospital maintains a robust recruitment process and invests in continuous professional development programs to ensure that its staff remains up-to-date with the latest medical advancements. By prioritizing clinical competence, Rafic Hariri Hospital fulfills its responsibility to deliver high-quality healthcare services.

Patient safety is a primary focus of responsibility in Rafic Hariri Hospital. The hospital implements rigorous protocols and safety measures to minimize the risk of medical errors, infections, and other adverse events. It promotes a culture of safety, where healthcare professionals actively identify and mitigate potential risks to patient well-being. By ensuring a safe environment and adhering to best practices in patient safety, Rafic Hariri Hospital fulfills its responsibility to protect and promote the well-being of its patients.

Moreover, ethical standards and integrity are integral to responsibility in healthcare. Rafic Hariri Hospital maintains a strong commitment to upholding ethical principles and practices, ensuring patient confidentiality, informed consent, and respect for patients' rights. The hospital's ethical responsibility extends to fostering a culture of empathy, dignity, and inclusivity in patient interactions. By upholding ethical standards, Rafic Hariri Hospital creates an environment where patients feel respected, valued, and well-cared for. This had led to the validation of the following hypothesis:

H3: There is relationship between Responsibility and Service Quality

Rafic Hariri Hospital recognizes the significant role that empathy plays in shaping service quality and patient experiences. Empathy is a fundamental aspect of healthcare that involves understanding and responding to patients' emotional and psychological needs. In the context of Rafic Hariri Hospital, empathy encompasses several key dimensions that contribute to service quality and patient satisfaction.

Firstly, effective communication is a crucial aspect of empathy in healthcare. Rafic Hariri Hospital places great emphasis on fostering clear and compassionate communication between healthcare providers and patients. Effective communication involves active listening, providing clear explanations, and addressing patients' concerns and questions. By promoting effective communication, the hospital creates an environment where patients feel heard, understood, and involved in their healthcare decisions.

Secondly, interpersonal skills and bedside manner are central to empathy in Rafic Hariri Hospital. The hospital recognizes the importance of healthcare professionals demonstrating kindness, compassion, and respect towards their patients. Interpersonal

skills include displaying empathy, maintaining a non-judgmental attitude, and being sensitive to patients' cultural backgrounds and beliefs. By exhibiting strong interpersonal skills, healthcare providers at Rafic Hariri Hospital create a supportive and nurturing environment for patients.

Moreover, individualized care is a key component of empathy in healthcare. Rafic Hariri Hospital acknowledges that each patient is unique, with their own specific needs, preferences, and circumstances. Healthcare professionals at the hospital strive to deliver personalized care that considers the individual's physical, emotional, and social aspects. By providing individualized care, Rafic Hariri Hospital demonstrates empathy and ensures that patients feel valued and respected. This had led to the validation of the following hypothesis:

H4: There is relationship between Empathy and Service Quality

Firstly, service quality directly influences patient satisfaction. When patients receive services of high quality, such as timely and convenient access to healthcare, responsive and effective communication, reliable and accurate diagnoses, empathetic and personalized care, and a comfortable and well-maintained physical environment, they are more likely to be satisfied with their overall healthcare experience. The university's focus on delivering exceptional service quality creates a positive impact on patient satisfaction and fosters a sense of trust and confidence in the healthcare services provided.

Moreover, service quality indirectly affects patient satisfaction through its influence on other factors. For instance, service quality influences patients' perceptions of the healthcare provider's competence, expertise, and professionalism. When patients perceive high service quality, they are more likely to trust the healthcare professionals, leading to greater satisfaction with the care they receive. Additionally, service quality affects patients' emotional well-being by providing a supportive and compassionate environment, which in turn contributes to their overall satisfaction.

The relationship between service quality and patient satisfaction is reciprocal. Patient satisfaction serves as a crucial feedback mechanism for Rafic Hariri University to evaluate the effectiveness of its service quality initiatives. By monitoring patient satisfaction levels, the university can identify areas of improvement and make necessary adjustments to enhance the overall quality of care provided. Patient satisfaction surveys, feedback mechanisms, and patient involvement in decision-making processes are some of the strategies employed by the university to assess and respond to patients' needs, ultimately improving service quality. This had led to the validation of the following hypothesis:

H5: There is relationship between Service Quality and Patient Satisfaction

In Rafic Hariri Hospital, the tangibility of healthcare services, such as the visual appeal of facilities, quality of medical equipment, accessibility, comfort, and privacy, can directly influence patient satisfaction. Patients' perceptions of the physical aspects of the hospital environment contribute to their overall satisfaction with the healthcare experience. Service quality plays a mediating role between tangibility and patient satisfaction at Rafic Hariri Hospital. The tangible elements of the hospital environment contribute to the overall service quality perceived by patients. When tangible elements are positively perceived, they enhance the overall service quality, leading to higher patient satisfaction.

The various dimensions of service quality, including reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, and tangibility, all intertwine to influence patient satisfaction at Rafic Hariri Hospital. Tangibility is one aspect of service quality that impacts patients' perception of the hospital's overall ability to deliver high-quality care. The positive tangibility of Rafic Hariri Hospital, such as well-maintained facilities, modern medical equipment, and comfortable waiting areas, enhances patients' overall perception of the hospital's service quality. This positive perception contributes to increased patient satisfaction.

Tangibility also shapes patient expectations of the overall healthcare experience at Rafic Hariri Hospital. Patients may form initial expectations based on the physical appearance of the facilities and the medical equipment they encounter. Meeting or exceeding these expectations in terms of service quality positively influences patient satisfaction. Understanding the mediating role of service quality between tangibility and patient satisfaction at Rafic Hariri Hospital is crucial for continuous improvement efforts. By prioritizing and enhancing tangible elements, the hospital can positively impact service quality, resulting in improved patient satisfaction. This had led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H6: Service Quality mediates the relationship between Tangibility and Patient Satisfaction

In Rafic Hariri Hospital, the reliability of healthcare services, including accurate diagnoses, timely treatments, and consistent care, directly influences patient satisfaction. Patients' experiences of reliable healthcare contribute to their overall satisfaction with the hospital's services. Service quality acts as a mediator between reliability and patient satisfaction at Rafic Hariri Hospital. The reliability of healthcare services directly affects the perceived service quality by patients. When services are consistently reliable, they enhance the overall service quality, leading to higher patient satisfaction.

Reliability is one of the critical dimensions of service quality that influences patient satisfaction at Rafic Hariri Hospital. Patients' perceptions of the hospital's reliability are part of their overall evaluation of service quality. The reliability of healthcare services at Rafic Hariri Hospital contributes to patients' overall perception of service quality. Patients who consistently experience reliable care are more likely to perceive the hospital's services as high-quality, leading to increased patient satisfaction.

Reliability also shapes patient expectations of the overall healthcare experience at Rafic Hariri Hospital. Patients form initial expectations based on the hospital's track record of reliability. Meeting or exceeding these expectations in terms of service quality positively influences patient satisfaction. Recognizing the mediating role of service quality between reliability and patient satisfaction is vital for continuous improvement efforts at Rafic Hariri Hospital. By ensuring and enhancing the reliability of healthcare services, the hospital can positively impact service quality and, consequently, patient satisfaction. This had led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H7: Service Quality mediates the relationship between Reliability and Patient Satisfaction

At Rafic Hariri Hospital, the sense of responsibility demonstrated by healthcare providers significantly impacts patient satisfaction. Patients value healthcare professionals who prioritize their well-being and safety, creating a positive impact on their overall satisfaction with the hospital's services. Service quality acts as a mediator between responsibility and patient satisfaction at Rafic Hariri Hospital. The responsibility shown by healthcare providers directly influences the perceived service quality by patients. When healthcare providers demonstrate responsibility, it enhances the overall service quality, leading to higher patient satisfaction.

Responsibility is one of the vital dimensions of service quality that influences patient satisfaction at Rafic Hariri Hospital. Patients' perceptions of the hospital's responsibility are part of their overall evaluation of service quality. The sense of responsibility exhibited by healthcare providers at Rafic Hariri Hospital contributes to patients' overall perception of service quality. Patients who feel that the hospital and its staff are accountable for their well-being are more likely to perceive the services as high-quality, leading to increased patient satisfaction.

Responsibility also shapes patient expectations of the overall healthcare experience at Rafic Hariri Hospital. Patients form initial expectations based on the hospital's reputation for responsibility. Meeting or exceeding these expectations in terms of service quality

positively influences patient satisfaction. Recognizing the mediating role of service quality between responsibility and patient satisfaction is essential for continuous improvement efforts at Rafic Hariri Hospital. By prioritizing responsibility and continuously improving service quality, the hospital can positively impact patient satisfaction and foster a patient-centered and trustworthy healthcare environment. This had led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H8: Service Quality mediates the relationship between Responsibility and Patient Satisfaction

Service quality acts as a mediator between empathy and patient satisfaction at Rafic Hariri Hospital. The empathy demonstrated by healthcare providers directly influences the perceived service quality by patients. When healthcare providers display empathy, it enhances the overall service quality, leading to higher patient satisfaction. Empathy is one of the critical dimensions of service quality that influences patient satisfaction at Rafic Hariri Hospital. Patients' perceptions of the hospital's empathy are part of their overall evaluation of service quality.

The display of empathy by healthcare providers at Rafic Hariri Hospital contributes to patients' overall perception of service quality. Patients who feel genuinely cared for and understood are more likely to perceive the services as high-quality, leading to increased patient satisfaction. Empathy also shapes patient expectations of the overall healthcare experience at Rafic Hariri Hospital. Patients form initial expectations based on the hospital's reputation for empathy. Meeting or exceeding these expectations in terms of service quality positively influences patient satisfaction.

Recognizing the mediating role of service quality between empathy and patient satisfaction is crucial for continuous improvement efforts at Rafic Hariri Hospital. By prioritizing empathy and continuously improving service quality, the hospital can positively impact patient satisfaction and create a patient-centered and compassionate healthcare environment. In the context of Rafic Hariri Hospital, service quality acts as a mediating factor between empathy and patient satisfaction. This had led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H9: Service Quality mediates the relationship between Empathy and Patient Satisfaction

Recommendations

Rafic Hariri Hospital should focus on improving the tangible aspects of its healthcare services. This includes upgrading and maintaining the physical facilities, equipment, and overall aesthetics of the hospital. By investing in modern infrastructure, creating a comfortable and welcoming environment, and ensuring the cleanliness and functionality of the hospital, the tangibility of the healthcare services can be enhanced. This will contribute to improving patient satisfaction by creating a positive first impression and a conducive healing environment.

To enhance reliability, Rafic Hariri Hospital should prioritize consistent and timely delivery of healthcare services. This can be achieved by optimizing scheduling systems, reducing waiting times, and ensuring accurate and efficient diagnoses and treatments. By implementing standardized protocols and guidelines, monitoring and improving patient flow, and investing in advanced medical technology, the hospital can enhance reliability and instill trust and confidence in patients. Continuous training and development programs for healthcare professionals can also contribute to maintaining high levels of reliability.

Rafic Hariri Hospital should reinforce its commitment to responsibility in healthcare. This involves ensuring clinical competence and expertise among healthcare professionals through rigorous recruitment processes and continuous professional development. The

hospital should also prioritize patient safety by implementing stringent protocols, promoting a culture of safety, and regularly assessing and mitigating risks. Upholding ethical standards and patient-centered care should be integral to the hospital's practices, emphasizing respect, dignity, and transparency in all patient interactions.

To enhance empathy, Rafic Hariri Hospital should focus on improving communication and interpersonal skills among healthcare professionals. This includes active listening, demonstrating compassion and understanding, and being sensitive to patients' emotional and cultural needs. Implementing patient-centered care approaches that take into account individual preferences, concerns, and values can also foster empathy. By creating a supportive and empathetic environment, patients will feel more valued, understood, and cared for, leading to increased satisfaction with their healthcare experiences.

Rafic Hariri Hospital should continuously monitor and improve the quality of its healthcare services, considering service quality as a mediator between the independent variables and patient satisfaction. This involves regularly assessing patient perceptions of service quality through surveys and feedback mechanisms. The hospital should analyze the data to identify areas of improvement, set specific targets for enhancing service quality, and implement action plans to address any gaps. By focusing on service quality as a mediator, Rafic Hariri Hospital can ensure that patients receive comprehensive and satisfactory healthcare experiences.

To further strengthen the quantitative method and understand the relationship between the variables, Rafic Hariri Hospital should continue collecting and analyzing data from patient surveys. This will enable the hospital to track changes in patient satisfaction and identify trends over time. By conducting regular data analysis, the hospital can gain insights into the effectiveness of interventions targeting the independent variables and service quality as mediators. These insights can inform ongoing improvements and allow for evidence-based decision-making to enhance patient satisfaction.

Considering the significance of the research and the potential impact on patient satisfaction, Rafic Hariri Hospital should consider expanding the sample size for future studies. Increasing the sample size will enhance the statistical power of the analysis, increasing the validity and generalizability of the findings. A larger sample size will provide more robust results and allow for more accurate conclusions to be drawn regarding the relationship between the independent variables, the mediator, and patient satisfaction.

By implementing these recommendations, Rafic Hariri Hospital can further improve its healthcare services, enhance patient satisfaction, and ensure that the variables of tangibility, reliability, responsibility, and empathy, mediated by service quality, contribute positively to patients' overall experiences and well-being.

Limitations

While the research conducted in the context of Rafic Hariri Hospital and the quantitative method employed to explore the relationships between tangibility, reliability, responsibility, empathy, service quality as a mediator, and patient satisfaction provides valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. Recognizing these limitations helps to identify areas for further research and provides a context for interpreting the research's findings.

One limitation of the research is the potential lack of generalizability of the findings beyond the specific context of Rafic Hariri Hospital. The research was conducted in a single healthcare facility, which may have unique characteristics and patient demographics that differ from other hospitals or healthcare settings. Therefore, caution should be exercised when extrapolating the findings to broader populations or healthcare

systems. Future research should aim to replicate the research in different contexts to establish the generalizability of the relationships identified.

The research's sample size of 398 patients may be considered relatively small, which could impact the statistical power and generalizability of the findings. It is possible that the sample may not fully represent the diverse patient population within the Rafic Hariri Hospital or the larger Lebanese community. Additionally, factors such as non-response bias or self-selection may have influenced the composition of the sample. Future research with larger and more diverse samples would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between the variables.

Another limitation of the research relates to the measurement of variables. The research relied on self-reported measures of tangibility, reliability, responsibility, empathy, service quality, and patient satisfaction. Self-report measures are subject to potential biases such as social desirability bias or recall bias, which may affect the accuracy and reliability of the data collected. Additionally, the research did not include objective measures or external validation of the variables, which could further contribute to measurement bias. Future research could incorporate a combination of self-report measures and objective measures to mitigate potential biases and enhance the validity of the findings.

The cross-sectional nature of the research limits its ability to establish causal relationships between the variables. The research examined the relationships between the variables at a single point in time, which restricts the ability to infer causality. Longitudinal studies or experimental designs would be necessary to establish temporal ordering and provide stronger evidence for causal relationships. Additionally, the research's focus on mediation analysis highlights associations between variables but does not establish causality definitively. Further research should explore these relationships using more rigorous research designs.

The research focused on the relationships between tangibility, reliability, responsibility, empathy, service quality, and patient satisfaction, but other factors not considered in the research may also influence patient satisfaction. Variables such as healthcare costs, health outcomes, or cultural factors could potentially confound or interact with the relationships under investigation. Future research should consider the inclusion of additional variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing patient satisfaction.

In conclusion, while the research conducted in the context of Rafic Hariri Hospital provides valuable insights into the relationships between tangibility, reliability, responsibility, empathy, service quality, and patient satisfaction, it is important to consider its limitations. These limitations include the lack of generalizability, sample size and representativeness concerns, measurement biases, the need for longitudinal or experimental designs to establish causality, and potential confounding factors. Addressing these limitations through future research will contribute to a more robust and comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics between these variables in healthcare settings.

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