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Research Article

UNDERSTANDING FIVE Ls' PRINCIPLES OF QUALITY HEALTHCARE; SPECIAL REFERENCE TO DELIVERING EXCELLENCE TO PATIENTS

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ABSTRACT

Globalization has brought tremendous changes to today's service and manufacturing industries. The changes like advancement in technology, high competition, concern for quality etc. These have led to fundamental business challenge, survival and success in a turbulent and increasingly competitive environment. This chaotic competition has given rise to careful attention on pre-services and post-services procedures inculcated into service industry whereas healthcare is the matter of focus. At the moment, service industries are growing faster in developed countries, which have resorted to quality. A matter of concern and consideration by the customer has taken lead in the services industry where poor services, decline the satisfaction of customers. The hullabaloo and mushroom health centres have compromised quality, where the lives of patients are in indispensable danger. As a matter of fact, paying attention, respect, sincerity, directing and keeping patients informed has been granted concession. In this regards, the study was to examine the relationship between 5Ls' principle of quality healthcare and patients' satisfaction and to identify strategies to increase patients' loyalty. The sample size was 475 patients, both in-patients and out-patients in four health institutions in India. Proportionate stratified sampling was employed, because the patients were divided according to strata, (in-patients and out-patients). It was observed that kind word and politeness had the highest correlation coefficient. Thus the first step to patients healing was the use of kind words and politeness. It was recommended that, the Five Ls' principles of quality healthcare services notably, (I must treat patients with civility and respect (Loving), I must pay attention to patients (Listening), I must be faithful to patients' information (Loyalty), I must guide patients (Leading), I must educate patients (Learning) must be clearly pasted on vantage points to remind health professionals that quality is every health professionals responsibility.

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INTRODUCTION

Currently, the healthcare industry faces threats and opportunities due to technology advancement coupled with the rising needs of people; this has created tremendous demands for new services which resort to quality. Similarly the growths of mushroom health providers who are keen on capturing market share have preferred commercial practices rejecting the rudimentary practices and relegating patients' satisfaction. In vivid exposition on patients satisfaction which is depended on the quality of services provided by the hospitals.

Patients have integrated comparism, attitude, respect, kind words, reliability, commitment and compassion of health professionals as the key parameters to measure quality.

Gopichandra (2013) in his research explained that, "more than half of the healing takes place because of the kind words of the doctor. The rest of the healing takes place during treatments. Patients express an impressive opinion about being clueless and naïve with a new hospital. Thus patients require health professionals to be kind and talk to them patiently. Most times when patients compare the private hospitals to the public ones, their conclusion stands like private health professionals are more polite than the public; thus health providers in the private hospitals spend more and check on them meticulously. Jain et al. (2006), in their research reported that, the quality health care service provided in the rural community under study was poor rather respondents prefer private providers ranging from indigenous medical practitioners, RMPs' and qualified doctors.

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Also [Çaha \(2007\)](#), pointed out that patient's formed a positive intangible opinion about private hospitals, they believe that they provide qualitative health service. Even though they provide the best treatments yet patients complains about the waiting time and the consultation time. His research further revealed that, lack of physical facilities and qualified human resource of these hospitals seem to be the main reasons behind the quality of their service. Patients trust is created when they are interacted with more and their queries are well explained.

However, putting yourself in the shoes and understanding patients is a sign of love, listening to the patient, addressing all doubts and questions showing the learning capacity of the health professional, inspiring and motivating patients' assuring them of rehabilitation is leading and ensuring accurate result and confidentiality of patients requires loyalty. For better exposition on understanding the Five Ls' principles of quality healthcare; special reference to delivering excellence to patients, adequate literature were reviewed to ensure clarity of the topic.

Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between 5Ls' principle of quality healthcare and patients' satisfaction.
2. To identify strategies to increase patients' loyalty to a health institution.

H	Hypotheses	Decision before testing
1.	There is positive relationship between Prompts services patients satisfaction	Nil
2.	There is positive relationship between Understanding patients needs and patients satisfaction	Nil
3.	There is positive relationship between Knowledge to answer patients' questions and patients satisfaction	Nil

LITERATURE REVIEW

Service quality has received a significant amount of attention by both researchers and practitioners. It has been defined in a variety of ways. Therefore there is no universal and parsimonious definition of quality. [Reeves and Bednar \(1994\)](#) summarized different definitions of quality as follows: (a) quality as excellence, (b) quality as value, (c) quality as conformance to specification, and (d) quality as meeting or exceeding customer's expectations (5). Institute of Medicine (IOM) define; quality in healthcare as possessing the following dimensions: safe, effective, patient-centered, timely, efficient and equitable. Also [Rathore \(2017\)](#), explained that, quality is considered as one of the important factors in differentiation and excellence of services and it is a basis of competitive advantage so that its understanding, measuring, and developing it are important challenges for all health services organizations.

[Itumalla \(2011\)](#), reported that, patients have pointed out several shortcomings including lack of responsiveness to patients' needs, delays, unreliable supply of medicines in hospital, maintaining cleanliness and inadequate availability of diagnosis services. Health personnel conduct and practices was rated lowest with 84.4% out of four aspects of service quality such as Health personnel conduct and practices, Adequacy of resources and services, healthcare delivery and financial and physical accessibility. Overall respondents in hospital

based study perceived quality of care at the hospital OPD as favorable.

[Brahmbhatt et al. \(2011\)](#), explained that Out of 5 dimensions Private hospitals perform better than public hospital in 4 dimensions namely Physical Aspects, Encounter, Process and Policy, while public sector hospitals perform better than private sector only in one dimension namely Reliability. Overall private sector is performing better in Encounter dimension, but specific Encounter-Responsiveness public sector has lowest score. A similar study by [Sharmila \(2013\)](#), indicated better healthcare services were being provided by private hospitals which satisfied patients. The result can be used by the hospitals to reengineer and redesign creatively their quality management processes and the future direction of their more effective healthcare quality strategies.

[Vashist and Jain \(2013\)](#), reported that, quality of medical care, greater penetration of insurance, increased purchasing power, changing demographic structure, etc. Private sector also changes day to day. They further reported that, healthcare was viewed as a profitable venture. Inherent factors like improved efficiency, better quality, greater reliability and transparency has also aided in the growth of private healthcare. [Atkinson \(1988\)](#) found out that cleanliness, security, value for money and courtesy of staff determine customer satisfaction. [Knutson \(1988\)](#), revealed that room cleanliness and comfort, expediency of location, prompt service, safety and security, and friendliness of employees are important.

Exploring 5Ls' principle of quality healthcare and patients' satisfaction

Quality service has various dimensions; from the review of the literature it is evident that trust, compassion, professionalism, efficiency and effectiveness can be deduced as love, listening, leading, learning and loyalty.

The principle of Love

[Sternberg \(1993\)](#), in his theory proposed that, relationships built on two or more elements are more enduring than those based upon a single component. In this case Sternberg was explaining the term *consummate love* to describe combining intimacy, passion, and commitment. Ensuring patients feel satisfied depends on the passion, relationship and commitment of the health professionals. Sternberg suggests that this type of love is rare. American Psychiatrist (1893-1990) Karl Menninger quoted that, 'Love is the basic need of human nature, for without it, life is disrupted emotionally, mentally, spiritually and physically. Karl explained that the immediate healing to life is Love. In 1948, the WHO, defined health as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity' Patient expectations are met when professionalism is coupled with love.

The principle of Listening

From listening comes, wisdom and from speaking repentance. Italian proverb. When patients are listened to they feel a sense of belonging and the cognitive process of assimilating sickness is ruled out. [Wilson Mizner \(1933\)](#), expressed that a good listener is not only popular everywhere, but after a while he

knows something. In quality service health professionals needs to listen to the patients before administrating treatment. Looking for the solution without listening to the problem is working in the dark. Dean Rusk sounded well, by saying one of the best ways to persuade others is by listening to them. With the gift of listening comes the gift of healing. Catherine (1985). Any health professional with the gift of listening always administer the right treatment to the right patient at the right time.

The principle of Loyalty

According to Philip Armour (2000) quoted that, there is one element that is worth its weight in gold and that is loyalty. When patients expectations are met the next step is trust which leads to loyalty. In Marketing there are some customers who are loyal to a product or service, some not because they are not loyal; but the performance and the services received never satisfied them hence they switch form product or service. The base is trust. Napoleon Hill, said, it will cover a multitude of weakness. Lack of loyalty is one of the major causes of failure in every walk of life. Confidentiality of patients' information is very crucial. Loyalty comes when health professionals keep patients medical records confidential and build the best relationship which results from the comeback of patients'. Also A. P. Gouthey (2007) said, if virtues be grades, loyalty, I think, would stand near the top of the list. At any rate, no leader can demonstrate his full capabilities without it. Management and employees loyalty is required in the healthcare industry that is conformance to the Code and conduct of Medical Council of India. Grøndahl (2012), concludes that patients' perceptions of quality of care and patient satisfaction was depended on the desire to regain health, need to be met in a professional way as a unique person, perspective on life, and need to have balance between privacy and companionship.

The principle of Learning

According to Oxford dictionary, to learn is to gain knowledge of or skill in (something) through study or experience or by being taught. Physicians, Clinicians, paramedics, health workers etc, for ensuring quality service; they need to be adequately trained and learn modern way of administering treatment. Ultra Modern diagnostic equipment comes with high level skills of operating it and health professional needs to be trained well before operating it to save lives not to harm patients. Learning keeps you informed and aware of your environments that is area of your expertise. In this context, knowledge/ education/ teachings/ instruction and learning are used interchangeably. According to Mark Twain Training is everything. There must be consistent training for health workers to ensure adequate skills and up-to-date knowledge. Confidence is built in health professionals when, they are able to answer patients queries. Patients trust experienced and competent physicians. Kenneth AB *et al*, (2016), in their research explained that, prescribing drugs is a standard component of most physicians' practices. It is an important area of practice that requires appropriate knowledge, skill and professional judgment. To improve patient safety when prescribing, these qualities set out expectations for physicians who prescribe drugs. The skills and professional judgement are very important component patients' consider.

The principle of Leadership

Every health professional is a leader. The extension statement explains that, influence is indefatigable ingredient which cannot be segregated from leadership. James C. Hunter defines leadership as: "The skills of influencing people to enthusiastically work toward goals identified as being for the common good, with character that inspires confidence" (2004, 32). Bloisi *et al*. (2007, p. 648) describe leadership is the act of providing directions, energizing others and obtaining their voluntary commitment to the leader's vision. Health professionals' puts patients first, inspired them of cure and rehabilitation, and provides excellent physical facilities, proper waste management and proper management policies.

Strategies to increase patients' loyalty

The term loyalty refers to connection which shows an individual unswerving commitment to a particular subject or phenomenon. Loyalty abruptly affects the emotions, will, feelings and the habit of an individual.

Creating awareness of your brand

Ensuring patients' loyalty is about what you practice and what you stand for. Delivering on your promises creates brand equity; patients will always recommend a hospital that gives a better treatment. This builds trust and loyalty. Demonstrate that your first priority is your patient's health and welfare.

Patients' referral system

A satisfied patient will always want to refer a particular hospital to their relatives' and friends. Increasing patients' loyalty comes as a result of patients' satisfaction, care, attention, kind words and the investigative outcome of treatment. To keep track of patients there is also a unique system called referral management system. Is a unique and powerful tool for health providers to keep track of their patient referrals throughout the care continuum. The principal objective is to advance and streamline connection with primary care physicians, specialists, and any other health professionals involved in a patient's care.

Charges

Health is very expensive, the ability to spread the charges of health services evenly, is very crucial and difficult. A satisfied patient will pay more or be willing to pay when quality services meet with value. 'Q + V = PS'. Where 'Q' is quality and 'V' is value and 'PS' is patients' satisfaction. Patients tend to detest a hospital that charges more and fails to deliver their promises.

Confidentiality

Patients concern, accurate medical results, privacy and confidentiality of patients' medical records are very essential components of ensuring and increasing patients' loyalty

Frequency of visit

The number of visits and referrals of a patient depends on how satisfied they are. In the service industry, the come backs of customers explain how well they are satisfied and willing to influence others to patronize. Recognize the future of healthcare extends beyond the four walls of a traditional care setting.

Model developed for the study

The rudimental practice of healthcare is Love, showing love is the basis of listening, loyalty, learning, and leading effectively. One cannot listen to patients without loving them, or keeping them (patients) informed without loving, or inspiring and encouraging patients to endure pain without love is apparently out of place.

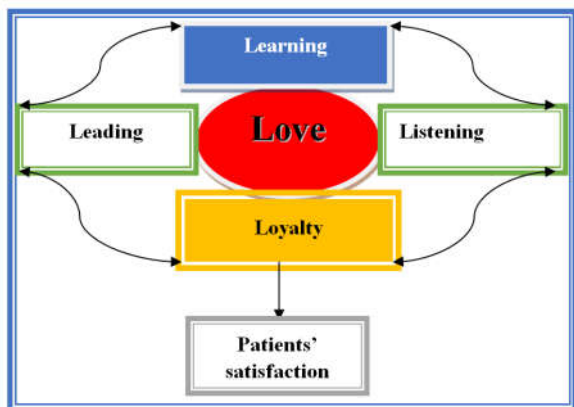


Fig 1 The 5L's Model

A health professional cannot learn new trend of administering treatment without loving what they do. Giving maximum deference and cure to patients implicitly satisfy them. The technical nomenclature for this model developed is called *5Ls' principle of quality healthcare*.

METHODOLOGY

The study gathered the data using questionnaires which were distributed to 475 patients both in-patients and out-patients in four health institutions in India specific states includes; Tami Nadu, West Bengal, Karnataka and Maharashtra. Proportionate stratified sampling was used, because the patients were divided according to strata, (in-patients and out-patients).

Data analysis

The data was analysed, interpreted and hypotheses were tested, to make a claim of acceptance or rejection.

To examine the relationship between 5Ls' principle of quality healthcare and patients' satisfaction

Table 1 The principles of Listening

Independent Attributes (Listen)	Dependent attributes	Person correlation	Sig 2 tailed	N	Hypothesis after testing
Understanding patients needs	Patients Satisfaction	.799	.000	475	Supported
Prompts services	Patients Satisfaction	.856	.000	475	Supported

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). (Original source, 2017)

The Sig. 2-tailed levels were .000, .000, and .000 respectively which shows that there was significance between understanding patients needs and prompt services and patients satisfaction and the relationship was positive 79.9%, and 85.6% respectively, which means that, as understanding patients needs and prompt services and variables goes up or down so will patients satisfaction.

From the correlation table above the Sig. 2-tailed levels were .000, .000, .000 and .000 respectively which explains that there was statistically significance between Excellent physical facilities and waste management, Excellent dress code, Ultra-modern diagnostic medical equipment and Adequate support

Table 2 The principles of Leadership

Independent Attributes (Leadership)	Dependent attribute	Person correlation	Sig 2 tailed	N	Hypothesis after testing
Excellent physical facilities and waste management	Patients Satisfaction	.829	.000	475	Supported
Excellent dress code	Patients Satisfaction	.867	.000	475	Supported
Ultra-modern diagnostic medical equipment	Patients Satisfaction	.813	.000	475	Supported
Adequate support for Health Professionals	Patients Satisfaction	.889	.000	475	Supported

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). (Original source, 2017)

for Health Professionals and patients satisfaction and the relationship was positive 82.9%, and 86.7% respectively, which means that, when Excellent physical facilities and waste management, Excellent dress code, Ultra-modern diagnostic medical equipment and Adequate support for Health Professionals increases simultaneously patients satisfaction also increases.

Table 3 The principles of Love

Independent Attributes (Love)	Dependent attribute	Person correlation	Sig 2 tailed	N	Hypothesis after testing
Kind words, and politeness	Patients Satisfaction	.934	.000	475	Supported
Trust in Health Professionals	Patients Satisfaction	.861	.000	475	Supported
Passion and commitment	Patients Satisfaction	.829	.000	475	Supported

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). (Original source, 2017)

The correlation table explains clearly, how kind words and politeness, trust in health professionals and passion and commitment had a strong positive correlation with person correlation (R) 93%, 86%, and 83% respectively. There was statistical significance between kind words and politeness, trust in health professionals and passion and commitment and patients satisfaction with the Sig. 2-tailed levels were .000, .000, and .000 respectively this indicate an increase in the independent variables concurrently increase the dependent variables.

Table 4 The principles of learning and Loyalty

Independent Attributes (Learning)	Dependent attribute	Person correlation	Sig 2 tailed	N	Hypothesis After testing
Skills and competency	Patients Satisfaction	.908	.000	475	Supported
Knowledge to answer patients' questions	Patients Satisfaction	.908	.000	475	Supported
Confidence in Health Professionals	Patients Satisfaction	.876	.000	475	Supported
Confidentiality of Patients information (Loyalty)	Patients Satisfaction	.890	.000	475	supported

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). (Original source, 2017)

There was a strong positive correlation between Skills and competency, Knowledge to answer patients' questions, Confidence in Health Professionals and Confidentiality of Patients information and patients satisfaction, whereas the R values were 91%, 91%, 88% and 89% showing strong relationship. The 2-tailed levels were .000, .000, and .000 respectively were statistically significant. The relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables were very strong and positive. An increase in one resulted in a simultaneously increase in the other, and vice-versa.

Strategies for patients' loyalty

Table 5

Strategies	Description	Proportion (100%)
Re-visit and recommendation	Yes	65.5
	No	34.5
Number of visits	Once	21.9
	Twice	51.2
	Many times	26.9
Awareness	Friends/relatives	42.95
	Media	7.37
	Internet	12.84
	Referred by Physicians	36.84
Charges	Standard	12.00
	Average	27.37
	Moderate	32.00
	Expensive	14.32
	Very expensive	14.32

(Original source, 2017)

Patients revisit to a particular hospital or health institution shows that they trust and are loyal to it. From the table above, patients revisit and recommendation was 65.5%, this perfectly explained that patients' were satisfied and were willing to recommend the health institution. Whilst 34.5% of patients expressed that, they will neither revisit nor recommend the hospital. The reasons accounted for 34.5% of patients unwillingness to revisit or recommend was due to lack of cure, impoliteness of some health professionals, delays etc. Patients were asked the number of times they visit the hospital, 21.9% of the patients had visited once. 51.2% of the patients had visited twice whereas 26.9% said they had visited the hospital many times. The reasons accounted for twice and many times visit was due to patients' loyalty, consultation and lack of cure. Further patients were queried on the awareness of the health institution under study; about 42.95% were aware of the hospital under study. Patients who were made aware of the hospital through media represented 7.37%. Internet awareness represented 12.84% and Physicians' referrals represented 36.84%. Patients' referrals and Physicians' referrals were the best advertising tools. Finally, the patients were asked about the hospital charges, 12% were of the view that the charges were standard, whilst 27.37% said the charges were average, majority of the patients expressed that the hospital charges were moderate, also 14.32% of the patients said the charges were expensive and lastly, patients representing 14.32% explained that the charges were very expensive.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

It was established that health professionals had clear understanding of patients. It was found that prompt services had a strong relationship with patients' satisfaction. There were no delays; waiting time and just-in-time service were rendered

to patients. Understanding the needs of patients and rendering prompt services were attributed to listening principle. It was also observed that, Excellent physical facilities and waste management, Excellent dress code, Ultra-modern diagnostic medical equipment and Adequate support for Health Professionals had a strong positive relationship with patients' satisfaction all these parameters were credited to leadership. Reaching the ultimate goal of quality care effective leadership principle is a must for all health institutions. Further findings, were; Kind words, and politeness, Trust in Health Professionals, and Passion and commitment had a perfect relationship with patients satisfaction. It was observed that kind word and politeness had the highest correlation coefficient.

Thus the first step to healing was kind words and politeness. It was seen that health professionals were polite, kind, passionate, and committed to what they do, which built patients trust for the health professionals these attributes related to the Love principle. With inference from the above correlation table, Skills and competency, Knowledge to answer patients' questions and Confidence in Health Professionals also displayed a positive strong relationship with patients' satisfaction. A satisfied patient is the one whose queries are well answered. Patients easily trust an experience and skills health professionals. Skills and competency of a health professional puts the hospital in a better competitive advantage. However, it is imperative on the part of health professionals to have up-to-date knowledge of current trend of diagnostics and drug prescription pattern. Learning keeps health professional well informed and makes confidence in what they do. Thus learning has a strong relationship with patients' satisfaction. The study also revealed that, Confidentiality of Patients information had a positive relationship with patients' satisfaction.

It was found that patients' medical records were free from errors and were kept sacred. These were features of the principle of loyalty. Loyalty is expression of transparency between the service provider and the service beneficiary which leads to trust. The study further found that, patients expressed come backs and even recommended the hospital to their friends and relatives. It was also observed that, majority of the patients had visited the hospital twice and were impressed with the services. Patients' referrals were found out to be the major loyalty strategy. The study further revealed the hospital charges were moderate. It can be concluded that, listening to patients, willingness to help patients, and giving prompt services can never be achieved; when ultra-modern diagnostic medical equipment, proper waste management and excellent physical facilities are not well established.

Nonetheless, kinds words in politeness, build trust and health professionals commitment to what they do, becomes useless when patients are dissatisfied and willing to recommend friends/relatives. A Loved patient to a large extent is a Loyal patient all time. Also skills and competencies were the basic components discovered in this study among health professionals indicated by patients. Patients automatically trust in skilled and competent physicians; believing them for cure and rehabilitation. An experienced health professional is the one who continuously learning to update the currently trend of the area of expertise. It was recommended that management

should improve on training and development of health professionals to ensure continuously learning.

It was also recommended that health professionals should listen to patients to understand their needs before administering treatments. Patients referrals were the key loyalty strategies, thus it was recommended patients should be given the best treatment right from the front office to the back office since they are the voice of the hospital. Amoah-Binfoh *et al* (2014) reception of hospital should be nice and welcoming whereas patients are the best ambassadors. It was recommended that, the Five Ls' principles of quality healthcare services must be clearly pasted on vantage points to remind health professionals that quality is everyone's responsibility.(I must treat patients with civility and respect (Loving), I must pay attention to patients (Listening), I must be faithful to patients information (Loyalty), I must guide patients (Leading), I must educate patients (Learning))

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