

Service Quality and Job Satisfaction among Tertiary Healthcare Workers

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between perceived service quality gap and job satisfaction among healthcare workers in selected tertiary hospitals. Anchored in the SERVQUAL framework, the study assessed perceived service quality across tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, while job satisfaction was examined in terms of pay and incentives, opportunities for growth, leadership style, social relations, and work safety and stability. A descriptive-correlational research design was employed, with 135 healthcare workers, including nurses, medical technologists, and other allied health personnel, as respondents. Data were gathered using a structured survey questionnaire adapted from established instruments and analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and Spearman's rho at the 0.05 level of significance. Results showed an overall high level of perceived service quality, with tangibles receiving the highest mean and empathy the lowest, interpreted as moderate. Job satisfaction was also generally high, with opportunities for growth rated highest and pay and incentives rated lowest. Correlation findings revealed that tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy had significant positive relationships with job satisfaction, while assurance was not significantly related. The study concludes that improvements in workplace conditions, service delivery systems, responsiveness, and interpersonal support are associated with higher job satisfaction among healthcare workers. It recommends strengthening compensation systems, employee development, leadership practices, workplace support, and empathy-related service practices. The study supports SDG 3, Good Health and Well-Being, and SDG 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth, by addressing healthcare worker well-being and sustainable employment conditions. Its sustainability impact lies in promoting institutional, public health, and socio-economic sustainability through improved employee satisfaction, retention, and healthcare service systems.

Keywords: Empathy, Healthcare Workers, Job Satisfaction, Pay and Incentives, Perceived Service Quality Gap, Responsiveness, SERVQUAL, Tertiary Hospitals

1. Introduction

Healthcare institutions are expected to maintain both quality patient care and supportive work environments that promote employee well-being and organizational effectiveness. In tertiary hospitals, where responsibilities and workloads are highly demanding, healthcare workers' job satisfaction becomes essential to sustaining workforce commitment and improving service delivery outcomes. Existing literature indicates that workplace experiences, particularly perceptions of internal service quality, influence employee motivation, satisfaction, and institutional performance. This study examines the relationship between perceived service quality gap and job satisfaction among healthcare workers in tertiary hospitals.

Healthcare organizations increasingly recognize that employee well-being contributes directly to quality healthcare delivery. In tertiary hospitals, healthcare workers who experience greater job satisfaction are more likely to remain committed and deliver higher-quality care, strengthening organizational outcomes (Sapar & Oducado, 2021). Job satisfaction is influenced by multiple workplace factors, including leadership support,

compensation fairness, and service environment quality. One important concept explaining employee workplace experiences is the perceived service quality gap, defined as the difference between expected service standards and actual workplace conditions. Larger perceived gaps may reduce motivation and satisfaction, whereas smaller gaps may contribute to more favorable workplace experiences (Abdullah et al., 2021). Within healthcare institutions, service quality extends beyond patient care and includes organizational systems, facilities, and processes that support employees' ability to perform effectively. Understanding how perceived service quality gaps influence job satisfaction provides insight into improving employee well-being and institutional performance (Abdullah et al., 2021).

The literature consistently identifies service quality as an important determinant of employee outcomes in healthcare settings. The SERVQUAL framework has been widely applied to measure differences between expectations and actual service experiences. Studies show that internal service quality dimensions—including tangibles, responsiveness, and empathy—significantly influence healthcare workers' satisfaction (Goula et al., 2022). Employee job satisfaction has also been found to strengthen the relationship between service quality and broader organizational outcomes, highlighting the importance of internal perceptions within healthcare systems (Chaanine & Sleilati, 2024). Evidence across healthcare contexts further demonstrates that reliability, responsiveness, and empathy are associated with improved employee satisfaction and engagement (Ali et al., 2023; Sonali & Shenoy, 2025). Employees who perceive stronger organizational support and sufficient workplace resources report smaller expectation–perception gaps, contributing to improved morale and lower burnout (Jusoh et al., 2023; Goula et al., 2022). Job satisfaction itself is increasingly viewed as a multidimensional construct influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Compensation, recognition, and work environment remain important determinants (Purohit et al., 2021), while leadership support, career development opportunities, and workplace safety have emerged as stronger predictors of satisfaction than salary alone (Rodgers et al., 2026; Abboodi, 2025). Adequate staffing and effective organizational communication also contribute to reduced dissatisfaction and improved employee retention (Kumar & Singh, 2023; Hassan et al., 2022).

Across healthcare settings internationally, service quality and employee satisfaction remain central concerns for sustaining workforce effectiveness. Research conducted in European and Asian hospital environments demonstrates consistent relationships between service quality dimensions and employee satisfaction outcomes (Ali et al., 2023; Sonali & Shenoy, 2025). Contemporary healthcare institutions increasingly emphasize organizational support mechanisms that reduce service quality gaps and strengthen employee experiences, thereby contributing to institutional effectiveness and continuity of care (Jusoh et al., 2023; Goula et al., 2022).

This study is conceptually anchored in the SERVQUAL framework, which explains service quality through the comparison of expected and actual service experiences. Within healthcare organizations, this framework provides a basis for evaluating how employees perceive workplace conditions through dimensions such as tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The study further conceptualizes job satisfaction as a multidimensional outcome reflected in pay and incentives, opportunities for growth, leadership style, social relations, and work safety and stability. Existing findings suggest that improvements in internal service quality reduce perceived service gaps and enhance employee satisfaction (Rodrigues et al., 2023).

1.5 Research Gaps and Rationale on Perceived Service Quality Gap and Job Satisfaction Among Healthcare Workers in Tertiary Hospitals

Although prior studies establish associations between service quality and employee satisfaction, evidence suggests that SERVQUAL dimensions may not contribute equally across healthcare environments. Tangibles and responsiveness often demonstrate stronger effects than assurance and reliability (Kim et al., 2022; Lee & Park, 2025). Given these variations, further investigation is needed to determine how perceived service quality gaps relate to job satisfaction among healthcare workers in tertiary hospitals. Understanding this relationship may support the development of workplace strategies that improve employee experiences and organizational performance.

This study aligns with SDG 3 - Good Health and Well-Being by supporting healthier and more effective healthcare work environments through improved employee satisfaction and service quality conditions. The study also aligns with SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth because it addresses workplace conditions, employee well-being, and organizational practices that contribute to productive and sustainable employment in healthcare institutions.

This study contributes primarily to public health sustainability and institutional sustainability by emphasizing workplace conditions that support healthcare workers' well-being and organizational effectiveness. The findings may also contribute to socio-economic sustainability by supporting employee retention, reducing dissatisfaction, and strengthening healthcare service systems through improved internal service quality and job satisfaction.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to determine the relationship between perceived service quality gap and job satisfaction among healthcare workers in tertiary hospitals. This design was used to describe the levels of perceived service quality in terms of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, as well as job satisfaction in terms of pay and incentives, opportunities for growth, leadership style, social relations, and work safety and stability. It also examined whether a significant relationship existed between the two variables without manipulating any conditions.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in selected tertiary hospitals. The provided text does not specify the names or geographic locations of the hospitals.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents were healthcare workers employed in selected tertiary hospitals. They included nurses, medical technologists, and other allied health personnel directly involved in patient care and hospital operations. The study focused on these workers because they are directly exposed to service delivery systems and organizational processes that influence perceived service quality and job satisfaction.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

A total of one hundred thirty-five (135) healthcare workers participated in the study. The provided text identifies the sample size and respondent groups but does not specify a separate sampling procedure.

2.5 Research Instrument

The primary instrument was a structured survey questionnaire designed to measure perceived service quality gap and job satisfaction among healthcare workers. The first section measured perceived service quality using the SERVQUAL dimensions of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. It assessed both expected and perceived service levels, with the difference between the two representing the perceived service quality gap. The second section measured job satisfaction based on pay and incentives, opportunities for growth, leadership style, social relations, and work safety and stability. Items were rated using a Likert scale, where higher scores indicated higher satisfaction. The questionnaire was adapted from established and validated instruments used in healthcare service quality and employee satisfaction studies to ensure relevance, clarity, and consistency of measurement.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Permission was first secured from the hospital administration and relevant authorities. After approval, questionnaires were distributed to healthcare workers during appropriate working schedules to avoid disrupting hospital operations. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, the confidentiality of their responses, and the academic purpose of the data. Completed questionnaires were collected, reviewed for completeness, and prepared for encoding and statistical analysis.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Mean and standard deviation were used to determine the levels of perceived service quality and job satisfaction based on their respective dimensions and indicators. Spearman's rho was used to determine the correlation between perceived service quality gap and job satisfaction because the data were ordinal and did not meet the assumption of normality. All statistical analyses were interpreted at the 0.05 level of significance.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Main Findings on Service Quality and Job Satisfaction Among Healthcare Workers

3.1.1 Perceived Service Quality Across SERVQUAL Dimensions

The results showed that healthcare workers reported an overall high level of perceived service quality, with an overall mean of 2.64. Tangibles obtained the highest mean of 2.78, followed by responsiveness with 2.71, reliability with 2.62, and assurance with 2.60, all interpreted as high. Empathy received the lowest mean of 2.48 and was interpreted as moderate, indicating that emotional support, individualized attention, and interpersonal sensitivity were less strongly perceived compared with other service quality dimensions. These findings suggest that tertiary hospitals are generally meeting healthcare workers' expectations in structural and procedural aspects of service quality, particularly in facilities, equipment, workplace conditions, service consistency, and responsiveness. However, the moderate rating for empathy indicates a need to strengthen relational and emotional dimensions of workplace support. This pattern reflects the tendency of healthcare institutions to perform better in visible and system-based service quality areas than in interpersonal dimensions. Studies in healthcare settings

confirm that tangible service quality dimensions are often rated higher than empathy due to institutional focus on infrastructure and systems rather than emotional interaction quality (Goula et al., 2022; Jonkisz et al., 2022).

3.1.2 Job Satisfaction Across Work-Related Dimensions

The results indicated that healthcare workers had an overall high level of job satisfaction, with an overall mean of 2.72. Opportunities for growth obtained the highest mean of 2.94, followed by work safety and stability with 2.72, social relations with 2.71, and leadership style with 2.63, all interpreted as high. Pay and incentives received the lowest mean of 2.49 and were interpreted as low, showing that compensation remained the weakest area of satisfaction among the respondents. These results show that healthcare workers were generally satisfied with non-monetary aspects of their work, particularly professional growth, job stability, social relationships, and leadership. However, dissatisfaction with pay and incentives suggests that compensation may not be perceived as adequate in relation to workload and performance demands. This indicates that while intrinsic and organizational support factors contribute positively to job satisfaction, extrinsic rewards remain a concern. This pattern reflects a common trend in healthcare workforce studies where employees report higher satisfaction in intrinsic motivators than in salary-related factors, especially in public and private hospital systems experiencing workload pressure (Barili et al., 2022; Sapor & Oducado, 2021; Yasin et al., 2024).

3.2 Relationship Between Service Quality Dimensions and Job Satisfaction

3.2.1 Correlation Between SERVQUAL Dimensions and Job Satisfaction

The results showed that tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy had significant positive relationships with job satisfaction among healthcare workers. Tangibles had a significant positive correlation with job satisfaction, with a Spearman's rho of 0.201 and a p-value of 0.012. Reliability also showed a significant positive relationship, with a Spearman's rho of 0.165 and a p-value of 0.041. Responsiveness had a stronger significant positive relationship, with a Spearman's rho of 0.238 and a p-value of 0.005. Empathy showed the highest significant positive relationship, with a Spearman's rho of 0.254 and a p-value of 0.003. Assurance, however, did not show a significant relationship with job satisfaction, with a Spearman's rho of 0.118 and a p-value of 0.089. These findings indicate that improvements in physical facilities, consistency of service, prompt response, and interpersonal care are associated with higher levels of job satisfaction among healthcare workers. Among the significant dimensions, empathy and responsiveness showed the strongest correlations, suggesting that human-centered and timely organizational support play a more important role in shaping employee satisfaction than purely structural factors. The non-significant relationship between assurance and job satisfaction may indicate that confidence in procedures, competence, or organizational credibility is already expected in healthcare settings and therefore does not strongly influence satisfaction levels. Overall, the results suggest that although SERVQUAL dimensions contribute to workplace experience, responsiveness and empathy are more critical in shaping healthcare workers' job satisfaction. Recent studies support these findings, indicating that responsiveness and empathy are among the strongest predictors of employee satisfaction in healthcare environments, as they directly affect emotional well-being and workplace engagement (Abdullah et al., 2021; Goula et al., 2022).

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concludes that healthcare workers in tertiary hospitals generally perceived service quality and job satisfaction at high levels. Service quality was rated highly in terms of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, although empathy remained comparatively weaker. Job satisfaction was also high, particularly in opportunities for growth, social relations, leadership style, and work safety and stability, while pay and incentives emerged as the lowest-rated dimension. The findings further showed that tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy were significantly related to job satisfaction, indicating that improvements in service delivery systems, workplace conditions, and interpersonal interactions are associated with higher employee satisfaction.

Hospital management should strengthen compensation systems, particularly pay and incentives, through more transparent, fair, and performance-based reward mechanisms. Continuous investment in employee development, leadership enhancement, and workplace support systems should also be sustained to maintain job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Healthcare institutions should further improve empathy-related service practices through training in emotional intelligence, communication, and patient-centered care, while also strengthening responsiveness and interpersonal relationships within the organization.

The study may be further expanded by including other hospitals or sectors and by examining additional variables such as workload, burnout, and organizational culture. This suggests that the present findings are limited to the variables and setting covered in the study, and broader coverage may provide a more comprehensive understanding of employee satisfaction dynamics.

5. Compliance with ethical standards

The study observed ethical considerations by securing permission from the hospital administration and relevant authorities before conducting data collection. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, the confidentiality of their responses, and the academic purpose for which the data would be used.

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