



Understanding Patient Preferences on Selection of a Hospital for Care: Focusing on Mother and Childcare Unit

By

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INTRODUCTION

- Choosing the right hospital for maternal and childcare is a crucial decision for expectant mothers and their families.
- Understanding patient preferences helps healthcare providers deliver patient-centered care tailored to the unique needs of mothers and children.
- **Influential Factors:**
 - **Quality of Care:** Patients prioritize hospitals known for high standards of medical care and successful health outcomes.
 - **Expertise of Medical Staff:** The qualifications and experience of doctors and nurses are vital in influencing patient choice.
 - **Hospital Reputation:** The overall reputation of the hospital, based on reviews and testimonials, plays a significant role.
 - **Cost:** The affordability of services and transparent pricing are important considerations for many families.
 - **Cleanliness and Hygiene:** A clean and hygienic environment is essential for patient safety and comfort.
 - **Specialized Services:** Availability of specialized services such as gynecology, obstetrics, and pediatric care is crucial.
- By focusing on these preferences, hospitals can significantly enhance patient satisfaction. Understanding and addressing patient preferences can lead to better health outcomes for mothers and children.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Authors (Year)	Study Location	Sample Size	Sampling Technique	Salient Features
Sitzia, J., & Wood, N. (1997)	USA	Not Specified	Not Specified	This comprehensive review discusses the various dimensions of patient satisfaction, including factors like communication, care quality, hospital environment, and interpersonal aspects of care. It emphasizes the importance of considering patient preferences and experiences in healthcare delivery to improve quality and satisfaction.
Jenkinson, C., Coulter, A., & Bruster, S. (2002)	UK, USA, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland	10,000	Random Sampling	This study developed and validated a comprehensive patient experience questionnaire, highlighting the importance of patient preferences in healthcare delivery.
Sudhinaraset, M., Treleaven, E., Melo, J., Singh, K., & Diamond-Smith, N. (2016)	India	300	Stratified Random Sampling	This study explores maternal healthcare experiences in India, focusing on cultural and socioeconomic factors influencing hospital choice. It highlights the need for comprehensive, culturally sensitive care in maternal and childcare service
Grob, R. (2008)	USA	Not Specified	Not Specified	This paper argues for the centrality of patient experience in assessing healthcare quality. It discusses how understanding patient preferences can lead to better healthcare delivery and improved patient satisfaction.



RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the key factors influencing patient preferences when selecting a hospital for mother and childcare?

What strategies can healthcare providers implement to better align their services with patient preferences?

OBJECTIVES



To identify the primary factors influencing patient preferences in selecting mother and childcare units.



To evaluate the relative importance of these factors in patient decision-making.



To provide suggestions for healthcare providers to improve service quality and patient satisfaction

METHODOLOGY

Study Design: The present study is Descriptive in nature

Study Tools: Questionnaire, Interviews, Research Article

Sample Size: A sample of 100 patients who have recently chosen a hospital for maternal and childcare services

Selection Criteria:

- Inclusion Criteria:
 - Mothers who have recently delivered in a hospital
 - Parents seeking childcare services in a hospital.
- Exclusion Criteria: Patients who have not utilized maternal or childcare services in the past year.

Data Collection Procedures: Primary data was collected through a questionnaire in the Google forms.

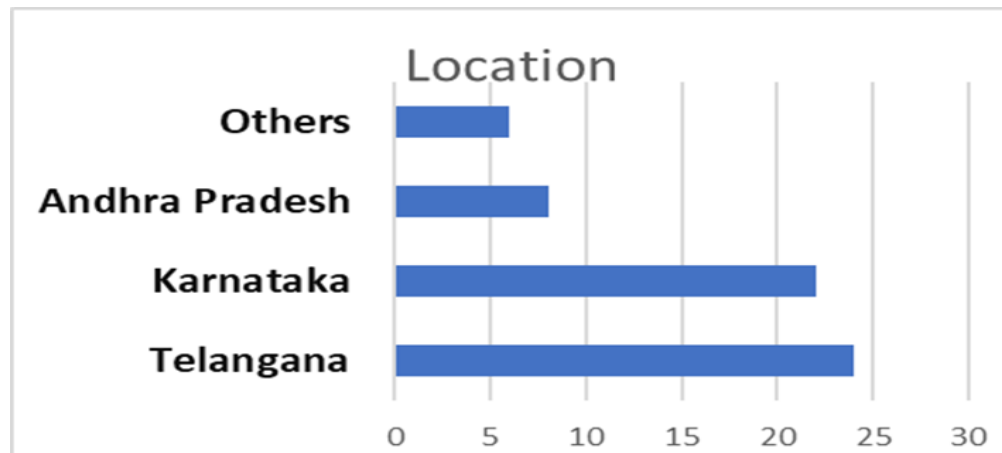
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KEY FINDINGS:

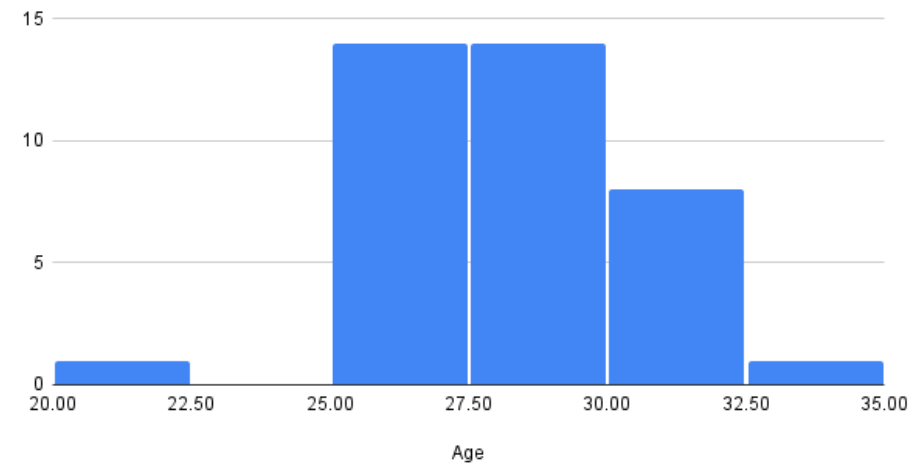
Age and Geographic Distribution:

Out of the total of 100 responses, the majority were in the age group range of 25-30. While the minimum and maximum were 22 and 37 years. The patients were mainly from the reproductive age group seeking medical attention for themselves or their children.

The majority of the responses are from Telangana, followed by Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. While others include those from Odisha and Tamil Nadu.

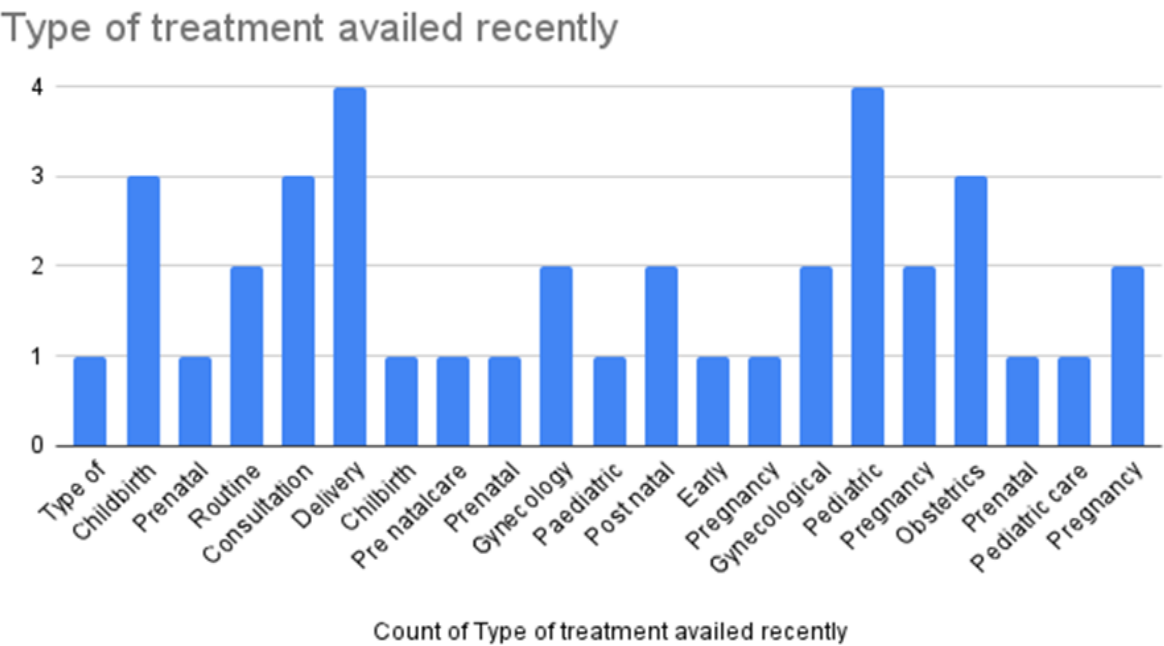


Histogram of Age

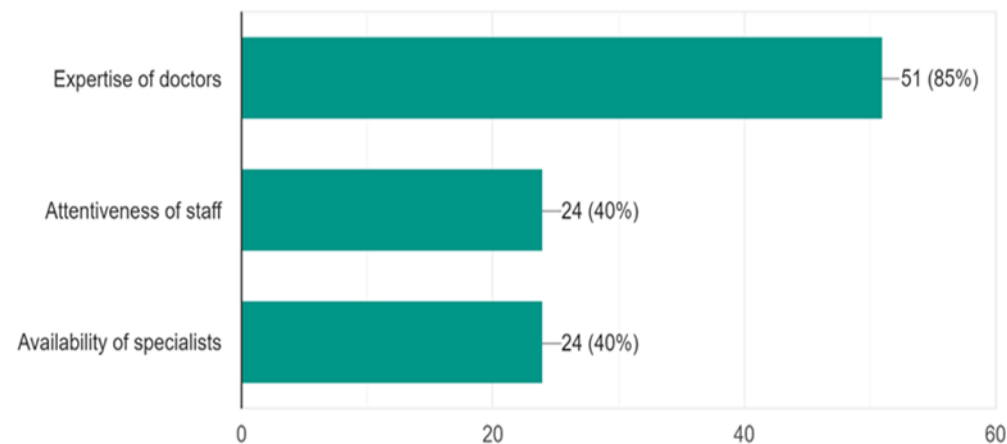


Type of Treatment availed recently:

The responses ranged from gynecological consultations to childbirth and pediatrics. The number of responses related to childbirth are 40, pediatric are 40, others are 20.

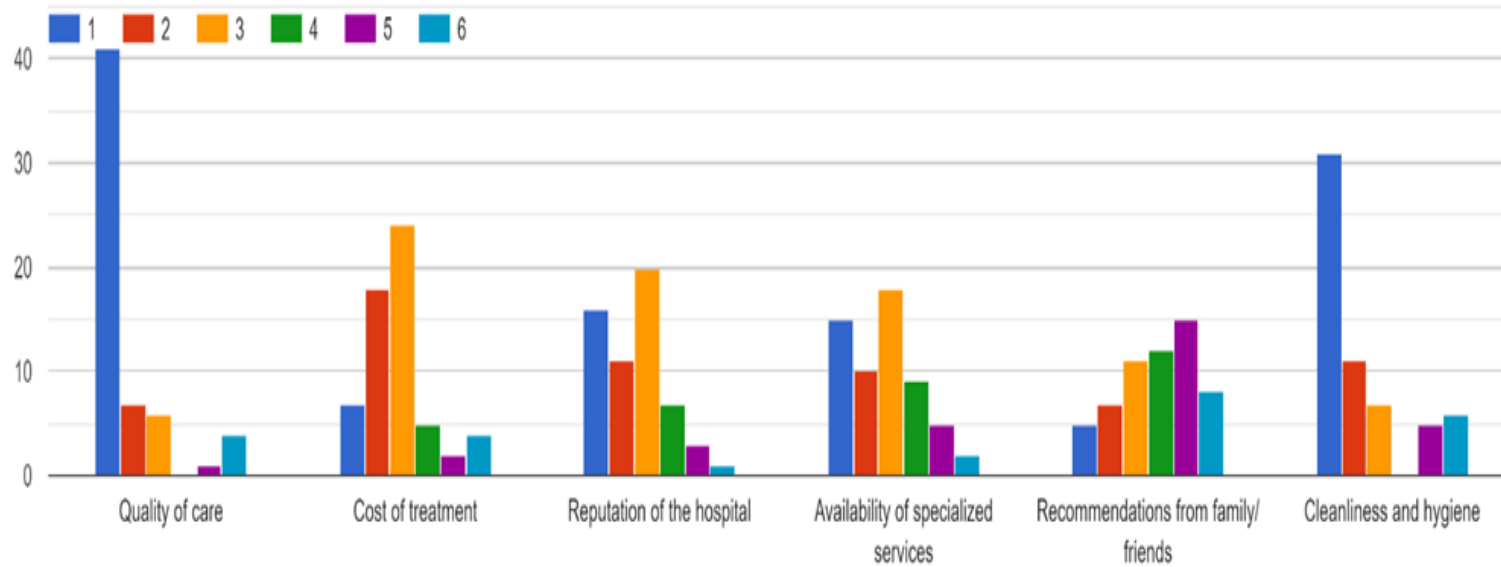


Aspect of the care most important for the patients:



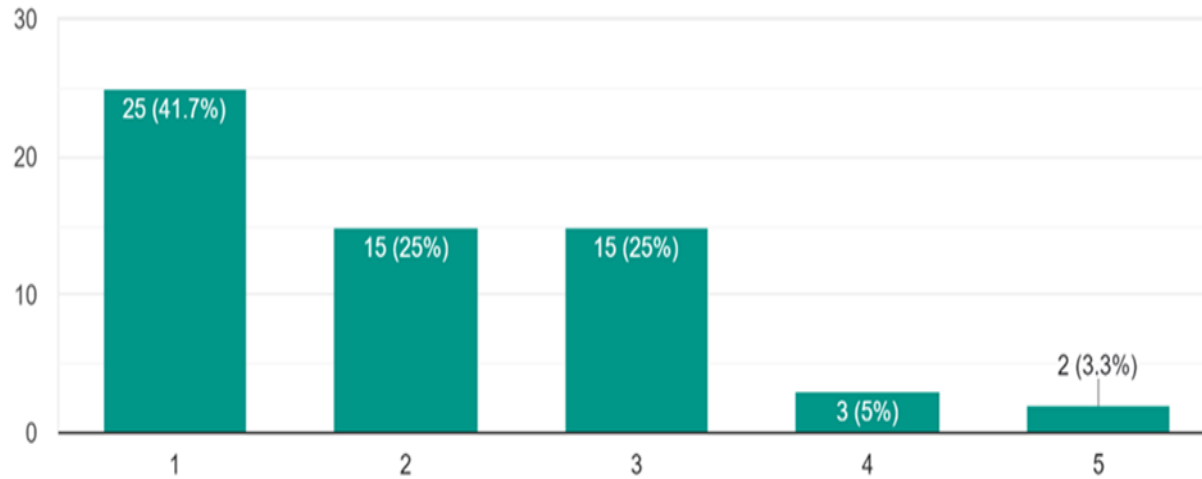
About 85% of the participants had chosen the expertise of the doctors as the most important factor, while attentiveness of staff and specialists availability were given equal importance by 40% of the participants.

Factors impacting the selection of the hospitals among the patients:



The sample group of patients was given a variety of options, and the participants were asked to rank them in order of importance. The most important factors for the majority were cleanliness hygiene and quality of care, followed by the cost of treatment, reputation of the hospital, the availability of specialists, and recommendations from family/friends.

Importance of the location of the hospital:

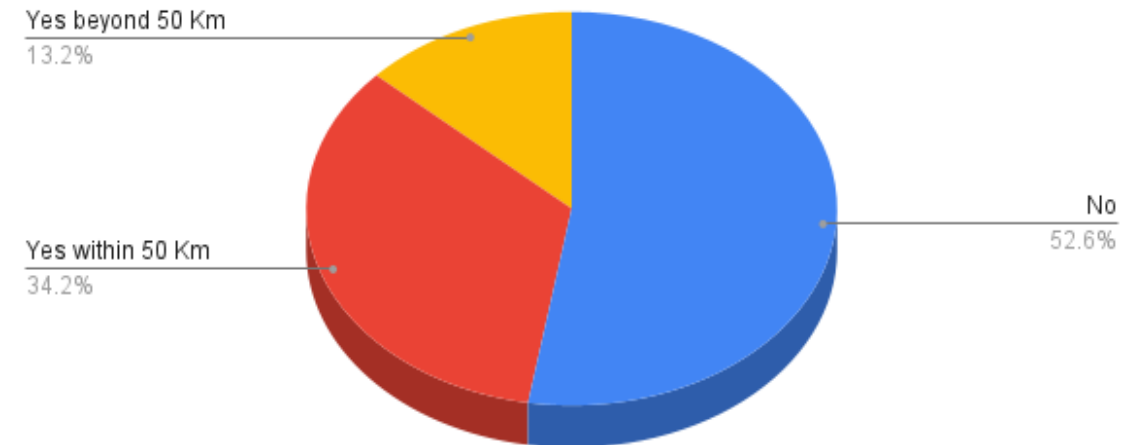


1- Very Important, 2 – Important, 3 – Neutral, 4 – Not Important, 5 – Can be ignored.

For the importance of location, a majority of the participants chose that it's a very important factor while decision-making, while an equal number of people chose it as important and neutral factor for selecting a hospital.

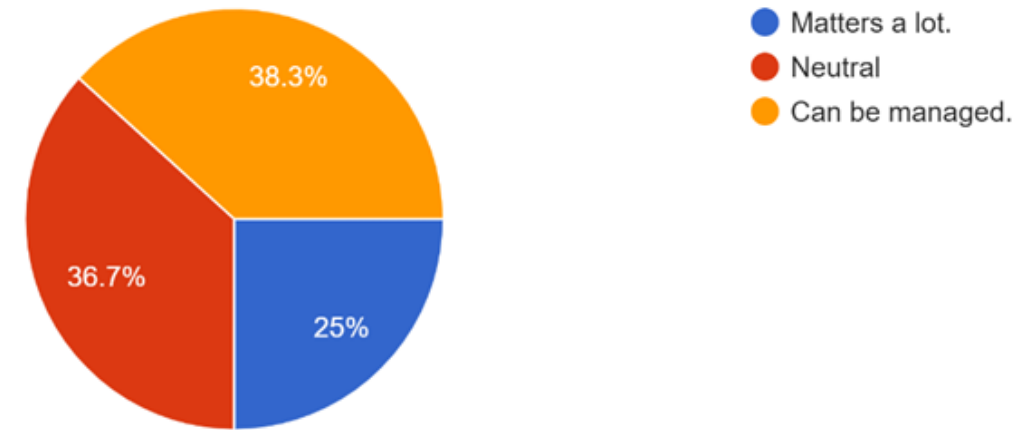
Willingness to travel farther for better quality care:

Though the location of the hospital was an important factor as discussed above, a majority of 52% of the participants chose not to travel farther from their base location for treatment. The other half of the participants were welcoming to the idea of travelling to a different location if the care would be better than the existing nearby ones. Among them, 34% of the participants were free to travel a distance within 50 km whereas the rest 13% of the participants were ready to travel beyond 50 km to avail better facilities and treatment.

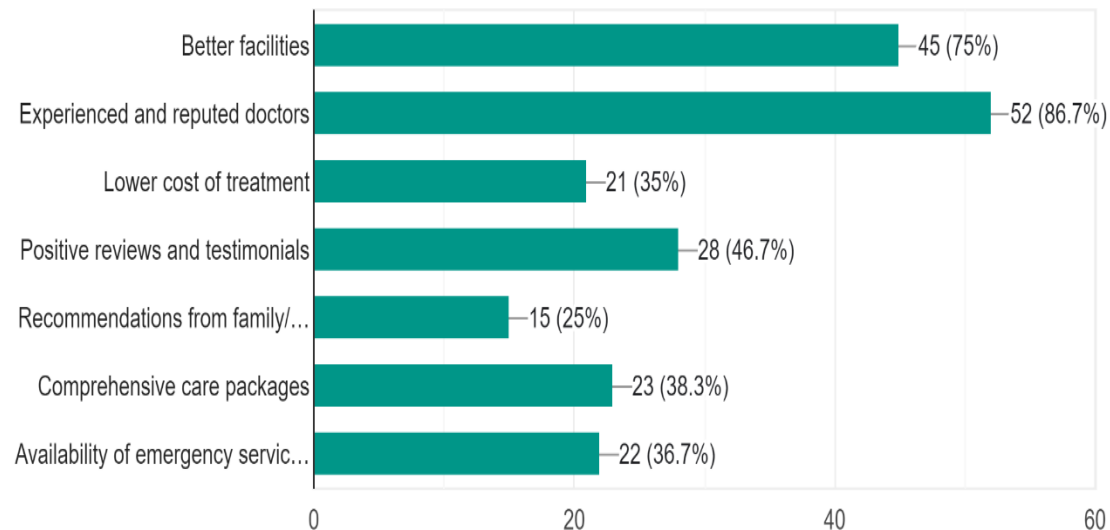


Cost of the treatment:

While the cost of a healthcare service is important, keeping in mind that majority of healthcare expenses in India are Out Of Pocket expenses, majority (38.3%) said that they can manage the cost, while an almost close percent of 36.7% said that they are neutral to costings.



Factors that would be deciding factor to choose one hospital over another:



When choosing a hospital many factors can alter the decision from one to another, in the questionnaire that participants were given various options that could affect their choice of hospital, majority preferred experienced and reputed doctors, followed by better facilities.

DISCUSSION

Findings: 85% of participants prioritized the expertise of doctors as the most important factor.

Literature Correlation: This aligns with Sztia and Wood (1997), who emphasize the importance of care quality and interpersonal aspects, and Sudhinaraset et al. (2016), who highlight the need for comprehensive care in maternal health, indicating that patients highly value clinical expertise and quality of care.

Findings: Cleanliness and hygiene were ranked as the most important factors before choosing a hospital.

Literature Correlation: The significance of cleanliness and hygiene is supported by the findings of Sztia and Wood (1997), who discuss the importance of hospital environment in patient satisfaction. This indicates that maintaining high standards of cleanliness directly impacts patient choices.

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CONCLUSION

- **Medical Expertise is Paramount:** The expertise of doctors is the most critical factor influencing patients' choice of maternal and childcare units, underscoring the need for highly qualified and experienced medical professionals.
- **Cleanliness and Hygiene are Essential:** Maintaining high standards of cleanliness and hygiene is vital for attracting and retaining patients, as it is one of the top priorities for those choosing a hospital.
- **Location Matters, But Quality Can Compensate:** While proximity to home is important, a significant number of patients are willing to travel for better quality care, indicating opportunities for regional centers of excellence.
- **Cost is a Significant Consideration:** The cost of treatment is a crucial factor for many patients, highlighting the need for affordable and transparent pricing to meet patient needs and expectations.
- **Reputation and Reviews Influence Decisions:** A hospital's reputation and positive patient testimonials play a major role in attracting patients, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a good public image and high-quality service.
- **Availability of Specialized Services:** Access to specialized services and comprehensive care packages is a significant deciding factor, indicating the need for hospitals to offer a wide range of services to meet diverse patient needs.
- **Holistic Patient-Centered Care is Critical:** Providing holistic care that addresses various patient needs, including emotional and psychological support, enhances patient satisfaction and health outcomes.
- **Regional Preferences and Access:** Understanding local healthcare needs and preferences is crucial, as geographic location impacts hospital choice, with regional variations in patient priorities and access to services.
- **By focusing on these key areas, hospitals can improve patient satisfaction, attract more patients, and provide better maternal and childcare services.**

SUGGESTIONS:



Enhance Cleanliness and Hygiene Standards:

Regular audits and improvements in cleanliness protocols can reassure patients and contribute to a safer healthcare environment.



Expand Geographical Reach: Consider establishing satellite centers or partnerships to bring specialized maternal and childcare services closer to underserved regions, reducing travel burdens for patients.



Implement Transparent Pricing Models:

Develop clear and accessible pricing structures for treatments and services, helping patients make informed decisions and reducing financial uncertainties.



Utilize Technology for Patient Engagement:

Implement telemedicine options, online appointment scheduling, and patient portals to improve access to care and enhance communication between patients and healthcare providers.

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