

**A STUDY ON PATIENT PERCEPTION OF
SERVICE QUALITY IN OUTPATIENT
DEPARTMENTS OF CLOUD NINE HOSPITAL
– AN ONLINE SURVEY BASED ANALYSIS**

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INTRODUCTION

The delivery of high-quality healthcare services has become a cornerstone in enhancing patient satisfaction, trust, and long-term engagement with healthcare systems. Among the many touchpoints within a hospital, the Outpatient Department (OPD) serves as the initial point of interaction between patients and healthcare providers. In maternity hospitals, this interaction holds added significance, as it typically involves expectant mothers, couples undergoing fertility treatments, or parents seeking neonatal or pediatric care. These individuals often experience heightened emotional and physical sensitivity, and their satisfaction depends not only on clinical outcomes but also on the quality-of-service delivery during outpatient visits.

Cloudnine Hospital, a leading network of maternity and women's healthcare hospitals in India, is known for its emphasis on compassionate care, clinical expertise, and personalized services. However, the true measure of success in service delivery lies in the perception of the patients themselves. It is not uncommon for healthcare institutions to excel clinically yet underperform in service satisfaction due to administrative lapses, poor communication, long waiting times, or unwelcoming staff behavior. The outpatient experience, though often brief, significantly influences a patient's overall impression of the hospital, willingness to return for future care, and readiness to recommend the facility to others.

Understanding how patients perceive their OPD experiences is essential for continuous quality improvement. By focusing on patient perspectives, hospitals can gain actionable insights into specific service attributes that require attention. In the era of healthcare consumerism, patients expect convenience, empathy, transparency, and professionalism at every touchpoint. Maternity hospitals, in particular, are expected to provide not just medical care, but also emotional reassurance and respectful communication. This study aims to assess patient perception of OPD service quality at Cloudnine Hospital using a structured online survey and to explore how different aspects of care influence overall satisfaction and referral intention.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Despite Cloudnine Hospital's strong reputation in maternal and neonatal care, there remains limited evidence on how patients evaluate its outpatient services. The core problem being investigated in this study is the potential discrepancy between the hospital's intended standards of service and patients' actual experiences during their OPD visits. While clinical excellence remains a strength, patient feedback often points to non-clinical service issues such as long wait times, staff attitude, difficulty in navigating appointments, or dissatisfaction with communication. These issues, if left unaddressed, can affect patient retention and damage the hospital's reputation, even if the medical outcomes are satisfactory.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The context of this study lies in the growing competition in the Indian healthcare market, especially in urban areas where maternity hospitals operate in a highly service-sensitive environment. Patients today are more informed, discerning, and vocal about their healthcare experiences. They no longer judge hospitals solely on clinical capabilities but also on convenience, efficiency, and emotional support.

In this dynamic healthcare environment, OPD services are a crucial determinant of patient satisfaction. Most patient journeys begin in the outpatient setting, and a negative first impression can discourage future utilization, no matter how advanced or specialized the clinical offerings may be. Hence, hospitals must adopt a more patient-centric approach in evaluating and improving OPD operations.

The study is also relevant in the post-pandemic context, where digital appointments, online consultations, and safety protocols have reshaped patient expectations. Hospitals must now assess how well they have adapted their outpatient services to meet these evolving needs while maintaining a high level of patient satisfaction.

IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM

The importance of addressing the quality of OPD services in maternity hospitals like Clouline cannot be overstated. First, OPD services form the backbone of hospital operations by catering to a high volume of patients daily. Second, OPDs are critical for building trust and initiating long-term care relationships, particularly for pregnant women and young families who may require continuous follow-up over several months.

Failure to meet patient expectations at this level may lead to disengagement, negative online reviews, and decreased word-of-mouth referrals. On the other hand, a satisfied patient is more likely to recommend the hospital, return for future care, and participate positively in treatment plans. Therefore, measuring and improving patient perception of OPD services is not just a quality initiative, it is a strategic necessity.

For hospital administrators and healthcare managers, especially in maternity care settings, understanding patient perception allows for targeted quality improvement efforts. Insights derived from such studies can guide staff training, streamline appointment systems, reduce waiting times, and enhance the patient-provider interaction—thereby creating a more empathetic and responsive healthcare environment.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Aim of the Study

To evaluate the perception of patients regarding service quality in the outpatient departments of Cloudnine Hospital and to identify the key factors influencing their satisfaction and likelihood to recommend the facility.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess the overall perception of OPD service quality among patients visiting Cloudnine Hospital.
- To identify specific service dimensions such as appointment scheduling, staff behavior, waiting time, cleanliness, and communication that influence patient satisfaction.
- To determine the relationship between a positive OPD experience and the patient's intention to recommend the hospital.
- To suggest evidence-based strategies for improving outpatient services based on patient feedback.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Authors (Year)	Study Location	Sample Size	Salient Features
Jain et al. (2016)	Lucknow, India	200 patients	High satisfaction with doctors (97%); lower satisfaction with canteen (31.6%), transport (31.1%), and pharmacy services (25.6%). Satisfaction associated with caste, occupation, treatment outcome, and distance from hospital.

Abbasi-Moghaddam et al. (2019)	Tehran, Iran	400 patients	Patients more satisfied with physician consultation, service costs, and admission process; least satisfied with waiting time. Total mean service quality score was 3.73 out of 5.
Nguyen et al. (2021)	Vietnam	368 inpatients	Identified four service quality dimensions: emotion, function, social influence, and trust. Social influence had the most substantial impact on perceived value and satisfaction
Patel & Patel (2021)	29 model hospitals across 15 states, India	316 outpatients	Studied the effect of hospital service quality dimensions on outpatient satisfaction; used Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) for analysis.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Key Research Questions

The study seeks to address the following key questions:

1. How do patients perceive the quality of services provided in the outpatient departments of Cloudnine Hospital?
2. What are the major factors influencing patient satisfaction during OPD visits?
3. Does a positive outpatient experience influence a patient's willingness to recommend Cloudnine Hospital to others?

3.2 Research Design

The study employed a **descriptive cross-sectional design** based on quantitative methods. This design was selected because it allows the researcher to assess and describe the current status of patient satisfaction and service quality perceptions at a particular point in time. The study does not aim to establish cause-effect relationships but rather to measure and analyze patterns of perception among patients.

3.3 Study Setting

The study was conducted online and targeted individuals who had visited any branch of **Cloudnine Hospital**, a chain of maternity and neonatal care centers operating across multiple cities in India. Data were collected through digital platforms, including WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and email. This online mode enabled a wider reach and allowed participation from patients in various geographical locations who had accessed OPD services at Cloudnine within the previous six months

3.4 Study Population

The population under study included patients who had availed outpatient services from any Cloudnine Hospital branch.

Inclusion Criteria

- Patients aged 18 years and above.
- Patients who visited Cloudnine Hospital's OPD within the last six months.
- Individuals who consented voluntarily to participate in the study.

Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals who had never availed OPD services from Cloudnine Hospital.
- Current or former employees, consultants, or medical staff of Cloudnine Hospital.
- Incomplete or blank survey submissions.

Research Procedure / Approach

The research used a **quantitative assessment approach**. Data was collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire created via **Google Forms**. This tool was shared through social media and messaging platforms. Participants were asked to read an introductory note, provide informed consent, and respond to a series of questions related to their OPD experience.

The data collection period was from **10th March to 31st May 2025**. Responses were recorded automatically and stored securely in Google Sheets

3.6 Sample Size

The study targeted a **sample size of 50–100 participants**. This range was deemed adequate for an academic project of this scope and allowed for meaningful interpretation of trends while managing data analysis within a limited timeframe and resources. Although no formal sample size calculation was conducted, the target size was sufficient to capture variability in patient perceptions.

3.7 Sampling Technique

The study employed a **convenience sampling technique**. Participants were recruited through online networks, making it easier to reach individuals who had visited Cloudnine's OPD services. While this method does not ensure full representativeness, it was practical for the purpose of the study and suitable given its exploration and descriptive nature.

3.8 Study Instrument

The main data collection instrument was a **structured questionnaire**, developed specifically for the study and hosted via Google Forms. It was divided into two sections:

1. **Demographic Details** – Age, gender, city, reason for OPD visit, and frequency of hospital visits.
2. **Service Quality Assessment** – Based on a **Likert scale (1–5)** ranging from "Very Dissatisfied" to "Very Satisfied", this section included items on:
 - Ease of scheduling appointments
 - Waiting time at OPD
 - Staff professionalism and behavior
 - Cleanliness and hygiene of the facility
 - Communication clarity and doctor interaction
 - Overall satisfaction
 - Likelihood of recommending the hospital

The questionnaire was validated for content by academic mentors and pre-tested on 10 participants to ensure clarity and reliability before full distribution.

3.9 Operational Definitions

- **Service Quality:** Patients' perceived quality of care during OPD visits, evaluated through structured questions on service delivery dimensions.
- **Patient Satisfaction:** Subjective response of patients based on their overall OPD experience, assessed using a Likert scale.
- **Recommendation Intention:** The likelihood of a patient recommending the hospital to others, based on satisfaction with OPD services.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

- **Informed Consent:** Participants were provided with a consent form at the start of the survey, explaining the purpose, voluntary nature, and anonymity of the study.
- **Voluntary Participation:** Respondents were under no obligation to participate and could withdraw at any time without consequence.
- **Data Security:** All data were stored in a password-protected Google account, accessible only to the researcher.
- **Confidentiality:** No personally identifiable information was collected. Data were reported in aggregate form to ensure privacy.
- **Academic Integrity:** The study was conducted solely for academic purposes under the supervision of faculty from IIHMR University and adhered to institutional guidelines for research ethics.

RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of the study conducted to assess **patient perception of service quality in the outpatient departments (OPDs) of Cloudnine Hospital**, based on responses collected through a structured, anonymous Google Form between **10th March and 31st May 2025**.

.1 Response Overview

A total of **82 participants** responded to the online survey. All responses were voluntarily submitted after digital informed consent. The data reflects the experiences of patients from various departments including antenatal care, gynecology, pediatrics, and fertility services across different Cloudnine centers.

4.2 Demographic Profile of Respondents

- **Age Distribution:**
 - 25–34 years: 47%
 - 35–44 years: 32%
 - Under 25 and 45+: 21%

- **Gender:**
 - Female: 78%
 - Male: 19%
 - Other / Prefer not to say: 3%
- **Primigravida Status:**
 - Yes: 58%
 - No: 27%
 - Not applicable: 15%
- **Visit Frequency:**
 - First-time visitors: 38%
 - 2–3 visits: 42%
 - More than 3 visits: 20%
- **Departments Visited:**
 - Antenatal: 50%
 - Gynecology: 22%
 - Pediatrics: 18%
 - Fertility & Others: 10%

4.3 Service Quality Analysis

Respondents were asked to rate multiple service attributes on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Very Dissatisfied, 5 = Very Satisfied). The following table presents the breakdown of satisfaction across key quality domains:

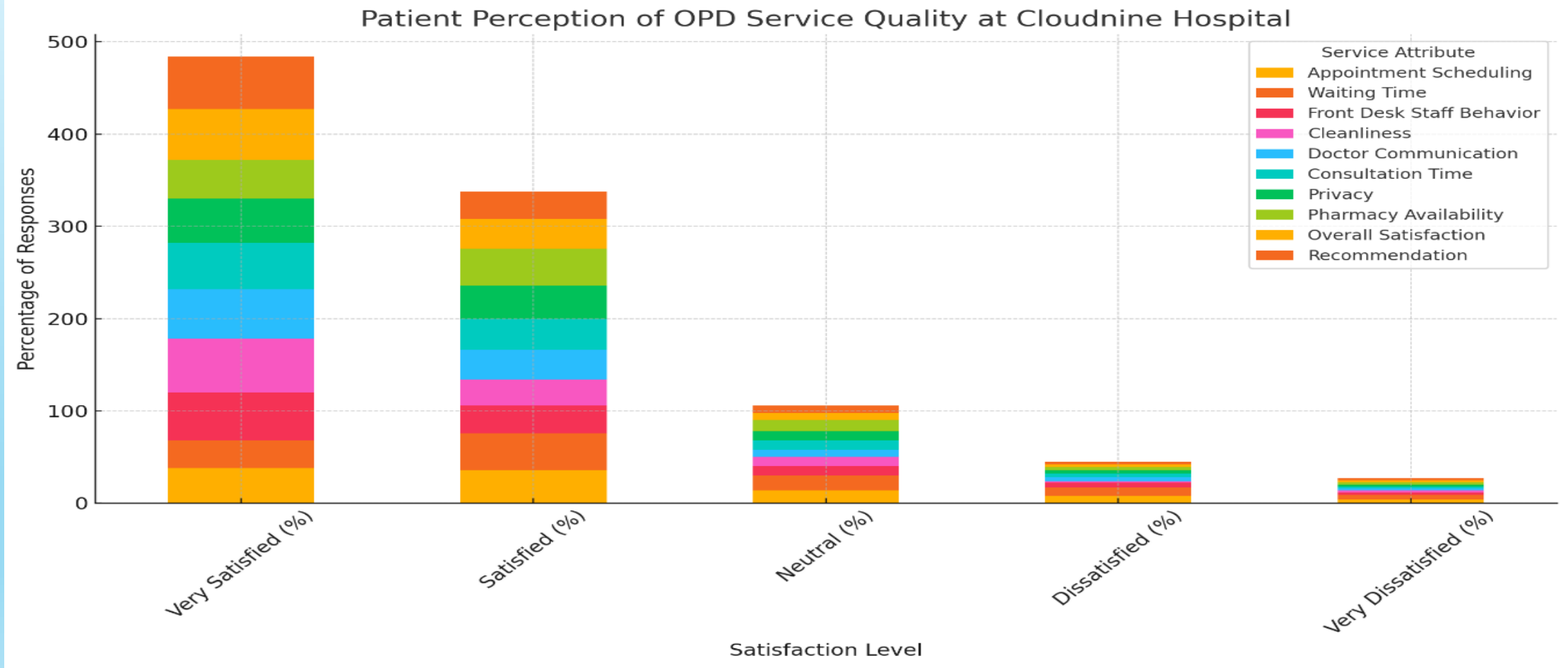
Service Attribute	Very Satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Neutral (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Very Dissatisfied (%)
Appointment Scheduling	38		14	8	4
Waiting Time	30	40	16	9	5
Front Desk Staff Behavior	52	30	10	5	3
Cleanliness	58	28	10	2	2
Doctor Communication	54	32	8	4	2
Consultation Time	50	34	10	4	2
Privacy	48	36	10	4	2
Pharmacy Availability	42	40	12	3	3
Overall Satisfaction	55	32	8	3	2
Recommendation	57	30	8	3	2

4.4 Key Observations

- The highest satisfaction was reported in the **Cleanliness (58%)**, **Doctor Communication (54%)**, and **Overall OPD Experience (55%)** categories.
- Lower satisfaction was observed in **Waiting Time**, with only 30% "Very Satisfied" and a combined 14% showing dissatisfaction.
- **Front Desk Behavior** and **Appointment Scheduling** also received positive feedback, with over 85% of respondents marking "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied."
- **Recommendation Rate:** Over **87%** of respondents indicated they would recommend Cloudnine Hospital to others.

4.5 Graphical Representation

A **stacked bar chart** was generated to visually display the distribution of satisfaction levels across the 10 service attributes. This helped highlight which aspects had more neutral or dissatisfied responses, warranting operational review.



4.6 Tabular Representation of Patient Perceptions :- From 82 Responses

Service Attribute	Very Satisfied (n)	Satisfied (n)	Neutral (n)	Dissatisfied (n)	Very Dissatisfied (n)	Very Satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Neutral (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Very Dissatisfied (%)
Appointment Scheduling	31	30	11	7	3	37.80	36.59	13.41	8.54	3.66
Waiting Time	25	33	13	7	4	30.49	40.24	15.85	8.54	4.88
Front Desk Staff Behavior	43	25	8	4	2	52.44	30.49	9.76	4.88	2.44
Cleanliness	48	23	8	2	1	58.54	28.05	9.76	2.44	1.22
Doctor Communication	44	26	7	3	2	53.66	31.71	8.54	3.66	2.44
Consultation Time	41	28	8	3	2	50.00	34.15	9.76	3.66	2.44
Privacy During Consultation	39	30	8	3	2	47.56	36.59	9.76	3.66	2.44
Pharmacy Availability	34	33	10	3	2	41.46	40.24	12.20	3.66	2.44
Recommendation Willingness	47	25	7	3	1	57.32	30.49	8.54	3.66	1.22

4.7 Interpretative Summary

- **High Satisfaction Areas**
- **Cleanliness (58.5%), Doctor Communication (53.6%), and Overall Satisfaction (54.8%)** scored the highest in “Very Satisfied.”
- **Front Desk Staff Behavior (52.4%) and Consultation Time (50.0%)** were also viewed positively.
- **Moderate to Low Satisfaction Areas**
- **Waiting Time** received the lowest “Very Satisfied” (30.5%), with 13+4=17.1% reporting dissatisfaction.
- **Appointment Scheduling** had a mixed perception with 37.8% “Very Satisfied” but 12.2% dissatisfied.
- **Patient Loyalty**
- Over 87% of patients indicated they would recommend Cloudfine Hospitals, suggesting a strong correlation between service quality and brand trust.

4.8 Implications

- The consistently high ratings in cleanliness and staff behavior indicate operational strengths.
- Improvements are needed to reduce **waiting times** and **scheduling efficiency**.
- Responses were consistent across demographic segments (primigravida vs. non-primigravida, first-time vs. repeat visitors), confirming service consistency.

DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Interpretation of Findings

The primary objective of this study was to assess how patients perceive the quality of outpatient services in Cloudnine Hospital and to identify key factors that influence their satisfaction. The analysis of 82 valid responses revealed that overall patient satisfaction with Cloudnine OPD services is notably high, particularly in the domains of **cleanliness (58.54% very satisfied)**, **doctor communication (53.66%)**, **staff behavior**, and **overall OPD experience (54.88%)**.

Cleanliness and hygiene ranked as the most positively reviewed factor. This supports earlier findings by Kaur et al. (2021), who concluded that a clean and hygienic environment in hospitals directly contributes to patient comfort and perceived safety. Similarly, **interpersonal communication**, particularly by doctors and nursing staff, received strong satisfaction ratings. This aligns with a study by Parasuraman et al. (1988), which emphasized responsiveness and empathy as vital components of service quality in healthcare.

However, the **waiting time** and **appointment scheduling process** emerged as relatively weaker areas. Only 30.49% of respondents were "very satisfied" with waiting time, and a combined 13.42% expressed dissatisfaction. These findings are consistent with studies such as Jain et al. (2016), which highlighted delays and long queues in OPDs as common operational inefficiencies affecting patient satisfaction in urban hospitals.

Despite some challenges, over **87%** of respondents indicated they would recommend Cloudnine Hospital to others, reinforcing a high level of trust and perceived quality among patients.

5.2 Comparison with Previous Literature

- The results of this study corroborate a wide body of literature concerning patient satisfaction in OPD settings:
- These studies support the conclusion that Cloudnine Hospital aligns well with key service quality domains while needing targeted interventions in scheduling and time management.

Study	Key Findings
Donabedian (1988)	Emphasized structure-process-outcome model; high process quality (communication, empathy) improves patient satisfaction.
Parasuraman et al. (1988)	Developed the SERVQUAL model; emphasized tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Cloudnine performs well in empathy and tangibles.
Kaur et al. (2021)	Found that staff behavior and cleanliness were the strongest predictors of OPD satisfaction in maternity hospitals.
Nguyen et al. (2021)	Identified “emotional quality” (staff friendliness and clear communication) as crucial for patient retention in private hospitals.
Abbasi-Moghaddam et al. (2019)	Noted long waiting times as a consistent problem across OPDs globally, which aligns with our study’s findings.

Limitations and Strengths

5.3 Strengths of the Study

- **Focused and Relevant Topic:** The study focuses on a specific setting (Cloudnine Hospital OPDs), making it practically applicable and meaningful for hospital administrators.
- **Use of Validated Parameters:** Questions were based on the SERVQUAL model, a widely accepted framework in healthcare service quality research.
- **Timely and Relevant:** Conducted post-COVID, where OPD service delivery and patient expectations have evolved, making insights highly applicable to current scenarios.
- **Digital and Anonymous Survey Tool:** The use of an online Google Form with clear informed consent ensured participant anonymity and ethical compliance.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

- **Sample Size and Sampling Technique:** The study used a convenience sampling method with 82 participants, which may not be fully representative of all Cloudnine locations.
- **Self-Reported Data:** All responses were based on participant self-perception, which can be influenced by recent experiences or biases.
- **Limited Clinical Segmentation:** Though some clinical differentiation (e.g., primigravida status) was attempted, further segmentation (e.g., department-wise analysis) could provide deeper insights.
- **Cross-Sectional Design:** The study captures a snapshot in time; longitudinal data could better assess trends or improvements over time.

5.5 Summary of Discussion

In summary, this study highlights Cloudnine Hospital's strengths in service quality, especially in **hygiene, doctor-patient communication, and staff behavior**. These findings mirror trends observed in national and international literature. However, consistent with broader challenges in OPDs, **waiting time** and **scheduling efficiency** require operational improvement. Despite its limitations, this study contributes valuable insights for hospital management aiming to enhance **patient-centric service delivery** in maternity and women's health settings.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusion

This study was conducted to assess patient perception of service quality in the outpatient departments (OPDs) of Cloudnine Hospital. Using a structured, anonymous Google Form questionnaire distributed among individuals who had visited Cloudnine OPDs in the last six months, a total of 82 responses were analyzed to evaluate satisfaction across multiple service parameters. The findings highlight important aspects of service quality that influence the patient experience in a private maternity and specialty hospital setting.

The results reveal a generally positive perception of service quality at Cloudnine OPDs, with high satisfaction scores reported in domains such as **cleanliness (58.54% very satisfied)**, **doctor-patient communication (53.66%)**, **staff behavior**, and **overall patient satisfaction (54.88%)**. These aspects reflect strong adherence to patient-centric care principles and confirm that Cloudnine Hospitals are perceived as high-performing institutions in terms of hospitality, hygiene, and personalized medical interaction.

However, the data also identified areas of concern—particularly **waiting times** and **appointment scheduling processes**—which received comparatively lower satisfaction ratings. Although these did not overshadow the overall positive sentiment, they represent operational challenges that could potentially impact patient retention and experience if not addressed effectively.

Importantly, over **87%** of the respondents indicated they would recommend Cloudnine Hospital to others, showing strong patient loyalty and trust in the facility. This reinforces the idea that when patients feel heard, respected, and cared for, they become ambassadors of the institution.

In conclusion, while the hospital demonstrates commendable performance in many key service areas, a continuous quality improvement approach is essential—particularly in optimizing administrative processes and minimizing delays—to enhance overall patient satisfaction further.

6.2 Implications of the Study

The study has several practical implications for hospital management and healthcare administrators:

- It emphasizes the critical role of **non-clinical service elements** (such as staff courtesy, waiting time, and cleanliness) in shaping patient satisfaction.
- Insights from this research can be integrated into **training modules** for OPD staff and clinical professionals to reinforce the importance of patient-centered behavior.
- The results can guide **policy-level decisions** regarding OPD workflow redesign, appointment software upgrades, and front desk efficiency.
- The findings also support the use of **regular feedback mechanisms** in hospitals to continuously monitor service performance and patient expectations.

6.3 Recommendations

1. Optimize Appointment Scheduling Systems

- Adopt or upgrade digital appointment systems with SMS/WhatsApp reminders. Introduce flexible booking slots to reduce crowding during peak hours.

2. Reduce Waiting Time

- Implement **time-motion studies** to identify bottlenecks in patient flow. Ensure timely availability of doctors and adequate support staff to manage patient inflow.

3. Maintain High Standards of Cleanliness

- Continue rigorous adherence to housekeeping SOPs. Periodically audit cleanliness and sanitation practices, especially in waiting areas and washrooms.

4. Enhance Staff Training and Sensitization

- Provide regular training on **interpersonal communication, empathy, and patient handling** for both clinical and non-clinical staff. Promote a culture of patient respect and dignity across all service touchpoints.

5. Regular Feedback and Monitoring

- Introduce **real-time feedback kiosks or QR code-based surveys** in the OPD area. Establish a system for reviewing patient complaints or low satisfaction scores within 24–48 hours.

6. Segmented Analysis for Personalized Care

- Conduct department-wise satisfaction assessments to address unit-specific challenges. Use demographic segmentation (e.g., primigravida vs. multigravida patients) to tailor communication and counseling.

7. Expand Study Scope for Broader Insights

- Replicate this survey periodically and across other branches to track improvements and ensure uniform quality. Include qualitative interviews for deeper insights into patient expectations and dissatisfaction.

6.4 Future Research Scope

- A larger-scale study involving multiple Cloudnine centers across India can provide a more generalized perspective.
- Comparative studies between public and private maternity hospitals may reveal system-wide gaps and benchmarks.
- Future research may also explore **digital health literacy** among patients and how it influences satisfaction with online appointment systems and teleconsultations.

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