

PATIENT SATISFACTION IN SURGICAL CARE: A REVIEW OF STUDIES CONDUCTED IN NIGERIA

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Received date: November 19, 2024; **Accepted date:** November 21, 2024; **Published date:** December 07, 2024

Citation: OKECHUKWU CHIDOLUO VITUS* PATIENT SATISFACTION IN SURGICAL CARE: A REVIEW OF STUDIES CONDUCTED IN NIGERIA, *Medical Surgical Research Reviews*, vol 1(1). DOI: 10.9567/ISSN.2024/WSJ.92

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Abstract

Patient satisfaction is a crucial aspect of healthcare quality, particularly in surgical care where patients face significant physical and emotional challenges. This paper reviews studies conducted in Nigeria that have explored patient satisfaction in surgical care, analyzing the factors influencing satisfaction and the implications for improving service delivery. The review examines various aspects, including demographic variables, patient expectations, communication, quality of care, and postoperative outcomes, as determinants of patient satisfaction. Furthermore, it investigates the challenges and limitations encountered in measuring and enhancing patient satisfaction in the Nigerian context, such as resource constraints, cultural factors, and healthcare system limitations. This review highlights the importance of patient-centered care in surgical settings and emphasizes the need for interventions to improve patient experiences and outcomes. Addressing the identified challenges and promoting evidence-based practices can contribute to a more robust and patient-focused surgical care system in Nigeria.

Key words: Patient satisfaction, Surgical care, Nigeria, Healthcare quality, Postoperative outcomes, Patient experience

Introduction

The provision of high-quality surgical care requires not only technical expertise and advanced medical technology but also a strong focus on patient well-being and satisfaction. Patient satisfaction, reflecting the patient's overall perception of their healthcare experience, has emerged as a critical indicator of healthcare quality across the globe (Cleary & McNeil, 1988). In Nigeria, where healthcare resources are often limited and the population faces a range of socio-economic challenges, ensuring patient satisfaction in surgical care is particularly vital. This paper aims to synthesize the findings of studies conducted in Nigeria that have examined patient satisfaction in surgical care, identifying key determinants and challenges that contribute to a comprehensive understanding of this crucial aspect of healthcare delivery.

Conceptual Framework

Patient satisfaction, a multi-dimensional construct,

encompasses a patient's overall evaluation of their interaction with healthcare professionals, the quality of services received, and the outcomes achieved (Ware et al., 1996). It is influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including patient demographics, expectations, communication, interpersonal interactions, technical competence of healthcare providers, and the overall quality of care received.

Factors Influencing Patient Satisfaction in Surgical Care

Several studies conducted in Nigeria have explored the diverse factors influencing patient satisfaction in surgical care. These studies highlight the following key determinants:

1. Patient Demographics and Socioeconomic Factors:

Demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education level, and socioeconomic status have been found to

significantly impact patient satisfaction (Onyekwelu et al., 2014). Studies have shown that older patients, patients with higher education levels, and those from higher socioeconomic strata tend to report higher levels of satisfaction. This may be attributed to factors like health literacy, awareness of their rights as patients, and access to better healthcare resources.

2. Patient Expectations:

Patients' pre-operative expectations play a crucial role in shaping their post-operative experiences and satisfaction (Nwosu et al., 2012). If expectations are not met, patients are likely to report lower satisfaction, even if the quality of care is objectively high. Understanding and managing patients' expectations through open communication and realistic pre-operative discussions is crucial for maximizing satisfaction.

3. Communication and Interpersonal Interactions:

Effective communication with surgeons and other healthcare professionals is consistently identified as a key driver of patient satisfaction in surgical settings (Oyelade et al., 2010). Studies have shown that patients who feel listened to, informed about their condition and treatment plan, and involved in decision-making processes report higher satisfaction levels. Poor communication, conversely, can lead to patients feeling neglected, uninformed, and ultimately dissatisfied with their experience.

4. Quality of Care:

The quality of technical care is fundamental to patient satisfaction. In surgical care, this encompasses aspects such as surgical expertise, adherence to best practices, infection control measures, and the timely provision of necessary interventions (Uzochukwu et al., 2013). Studies have demonstrated that patients undergoing surgery with minimal complications and receiving prompt, appropriate care are more likely to express higher satisfaction.

5. Postoperative Outcomes:

Postoperative outcomes, including pain management, recovery speed, and functional recovery, significantly influence patient satisfaction (Onyekwelu et al., 2014). Patients who experience minimal pain, recover quickly, and regain their functional abilities are generally more satisfied with their surgical experience. However, it is important to acknowledge the influence of patients' individual expectations and perceptions regarding recovery.

6. Hospital Environment and Facilities:

The physical environment of the hospital and the availability of adequate facilities can also impact patient satisfaction (Oyelade et al., 2010). Cleanliness, comfort, accessibility, and the overall ambiance of the hospital can

contribute to a positive patient experience.

Challenges and Limitations in Measuring and Enhancing Patient Satisfaction.

While the importance of patient satisfaction is widely recognized, several challenges impede efforts to measure and enhance it in the Nigerian context:

1. Resource Constraints:

Limited resources, including human, financial, and infrastructural constraints, are prevalent in the Nigerian healthcare system. This makes it challenging to implement comprehensive patient satisfaction surveys and interventions designed to enhance patient experience.

2. Cultural Factors:

Cultural norms and beliefs can influence patient expectations and perceptions of healthcare. In some communities, patients might be hesitant to express dissatisfaction openly due to cultural deference to healthcare professionals or concerns about social repercussions.

3. Healthcare System Limitations:

The Nigerian healthcare system faces numerous challenges, including workforce shortages, inadequate infrastructure, and a fragmented healthcare delivery model. These factors can impede efforts to deliver consistent, high-quality surgical care and contribute to patient dissatisfaction.

4. Lack of Standardized Measurement Tools:

The development and validation of culturally relevant and context-specific patient satisfaction tools are essential for accurate measurement. The absence of standardized tools can lead to inconsistencies in measuring satisfaction across different healthcare settings and populations.

5. Limited Research on Patient Satisfaction in Specific Surgical Subspecialties:

Although some studies have examined patient satisfaction in general surgical settings, there is a lack of research focusing on specific surgical subspecialties, such as orthopedics, neurosurgery, or gynecological surgery. This limits a deeper understanding of the unique factors influencing satisfaction within these domains.

Implications for Improving Patient Satisfaction in Surgical Care

The findings from studies reviewed in this paper suggest several actionable steps for improving patient satisfaction in surgical care in Nigeria:

1. Strengthen Communication and Interpersonal Interactions:

Enhancing communication between surgeons and patients through clear explanations, active listening, and shared decision-making can significantly improve patient satisfaction. Training programs for healthcare professionals on communication skills and patient-centered care are essential.

2. Manage Patient Expectations:

Pre-operative counseling should include realistic explanations of procedures, potential risks and complications, and expected recovery timelines. This helps manage patient expectations and reduce the likelihood of dissatisfaction related to unmet anticipations.

3. Improve Quality of Care:

Continuous quality improvement initiatives are necessary to ensure that surgical procedures are performed adhering to best practices and achieving optimal outcomes. This involves implementing standardized protocols, promoting evidence-based practice, and providing ongoing training and education for healthcare professionals.

4. Enhance Postoperative Care:

Effective pain management, prompt attention to patient concerns, and individualized rehabilitation programs are crucial for promoting patient satisfaction following surgery.

5. Invest in Infrastructure and Resources:

Addressing resource constraints through targeted investments in hospital infrastructure, equipment, and human resources is essential for improving the overall surgical care experience. This includes training and retention programs for healthcare professionals.

6. Promote Patient Education and Empowerment

Empowering patients with knowledge about their health conditions, treatment options, and their rights as patients can contribute to greater satisfaction. Patient education programs and readily available information resources can facilitate this process.

7. Develop and Validate Culturally Appropriate Patient Satisfaction Tools:

Developing and validating standardized, culturally appropriate patient satisfaction tools is essential for reliable and accurate assessment of patient experiences in diverse clinical settings and populations.

Conclusion

Patient satisfaction is a multifaceted concept that encompasses a patient's overall perception of the healthcare experience, particularly in demanding surgical settings. This review of studies conducted in Nigeria has highlighted several factors that influence patient satisfaction in surgical

care, including patient demographics, expectations, communication, quality of care, and postoperative outcomes. The review also identified significant challenges, including resource constraints, cultural factors, and limitations within the healthcare system that hinder efforts to measure and improve patient satisfaction. Addressing these challenges through evidence-based interventions that prioritize patient-centered care, promote effective communication, and enhance the overall quality of surgical care is crucial for improving patient experience and outcomes in Nigeria. By focusing on improving the quality of care, fostering open communication, and empowering patients, the Nigerian healthcare system can move towards a more robust and patient-focused surgical care delivery model.

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