Exploring the Dual Effects of Waiting on Satisfaction with Health Service

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Abstract Waiting is a major course of service dissatisfaction in most health literature. However, are the effects of waiting all negative? This research aims to explore the dual effects (i.e., both the positive and negative effects) of waiting on health service satisfaction. We expect the relationship between waiting time and satisfaction is “inversed U-shape” and to find that under certain circumstances waiting can positively correlate to satisfaction. We also want to understand the moderating roles of service attributes and patient characteristics. We conduct a survey with 334 patients in three large hospitals and in-depth interviews with 20 participants. The results reveal that the relationship between waiting and satisfaction is “U-shape,” the left arm curve which shows the negative correlation between waiting and satisfaction indicating that the longer the waiting, the lower the satisfaction. However, the decrease rate of satisfaction slows with the increase of waiting and satisfaction reaches the lowest point at 2.6 h waiting. After this point, satisfaction positively correlates with waiting. Sociability plays a moderating role as that waiting has stronger effects on satisfaction among high-sociability patients. Furthermore, waiting has positive contribution to satisfaction through social interaction and signaling service quality, but these effects may occur in the later stage of waiting.

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