Application of Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory to Patients’ Engagement with Health Care: An Emergent Mixed Methods Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This paper attempts to operationalize Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) to explore patients’ engagement with health care using a mixed methods approach. We illustrate how mixed methods can serve as a methodological foundation to study service expectation formation in health care from a patients’ pragmatic perspective in order to enhance patient satisfaction.

Problem Addressed: Patient satisfaction is one of the significant criteria in determining the quality of care and it also is included in pay-for-performance metrics. However, little is known about how expectation formation for health care delivery by first-time users may impact patient satisfaction.

Patient Engagement: Patients who are not aware of the service are less likely to have meaningful expectation. By studying service expectation formation of first-time users utilizing the principles of mixed methods research we can better engage patients with health care delivery.

Theory: EDT has been extensively used in marketing research to study customer satisfaction, but has not been applied in health care. EDT implies that customer satisfaction is related to the magnitude and direction of the customer disconfirmation experience where he/she compares product/service
performance against his/her own expectations. We use EDT constructs to explore health care service expectation formation by first-time users.

**Mixed Methods Concepts:** Mixed methods research is well positioned to study the formation of patients’ expectations by integrating quantitative outcome-based oriented approaches with qualitative stakeholder engagement methods. Existing databases, such as HCAHPS, do not measure patients’ prior knowledge and expectations about the service. To make HCAHPS better represent patients’ perspectives and experiences with health care, both quantitative and qualitative data are needed to study patients’ service expectation formation and how these expectations may impact HCAHPS scores.

**Implications:** Mixed methods provides a pragmatic approach to address expectation formation for first-time users of health care services and to ultimately increase patient satisfaction with health care.

No handouts were provided for this presentation:

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