IMPACT OF TELEMEDICINE ON HEALTHCARE DELIVERY AND SERVICE QUALITY FOR PATIENTS: EXPLORING THE PATIENT VIEW IN QATAR.

BY

Nadia Aurora Behrtel-Hattingh[1], Rajashree.K.N[2], Dr. Noor un Nisa[3*]

[1,2,3]Exeed College, Westford Education Group, Sharjah, UAE

Abstract

Telemedicine, a rapidly evolving technology, holds the potential to revolutionise healthcare delivery and service quality. This study aims to investigate the impact of telemedicine on healthcare delivery and service quality from the patient's perspective in Qatar.

In order to obtain data, a quantitative methodology approach was utilised. A survey was conducted on 169 individuals who had used telemedicine services in Qatar.

According to the research, telemedicine has proven to benefit healthcare provision and service excellence for patients residing in Qatar. Most patients have conveyed great satisfaction with the telemedicine services, with convenience being the primary benefit. Furthermore, the patients have stated that they have experienced better access to medical care and have shown more involvement in their healthcare journey.

Some patients have raised concerns about the quality of telemedicine services, citing issues with privacy and a desire for greater appointment availability. Additionally, patients have expressed the need for clear guidelines and instructions to navigate telemedicine services better.

This study emphasises telemedicine's potential benefits and challenges in enhancing healthcare delivery and service quality for patients in Qatar. The findings offer valuable insights for policymakers and healthcare providers, enabling them to strengthen telemedicine services and address patient concerns, ultimately ensuring the successful implementation and widespread adoption of telemedicine in the healthcare sector.

Introduction

In Qatar, telemedicine has become an integral part of the healthcare system. This innovative technology enables patients to consult with healthcare professionals remotely without visiting a medical facility (Buvik et al., 2016). Telemedicine can improve healthcare accessibility, offer enhanced patient convenience, and ease the burden on traditional healthcare settings.

Recognising the potential benefits, the Qatari government has embraced telemedicine as a vital tool for expanding healthcare services, particularly in rural areas and for patients with limited mobility. The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has actively promoted telemedicine to enhance healthcare delivery in the country, launching various initiatives and programs, including regulatory frameworks and guidelines, to safeguard patients' safety and privacy.

It's crucial to delve into the current state of telemedicine in Qatar.

- Regulatory Framework: Qatar has established regulatory guidelines to govern telemedicine services. These guidelines specify the standards and requirements for healthcare providers who offer telemedicine services, ensuring patients' safety and maintaining quality.

- Infrastructure and Connectivity: Qatar boasts a robust digital infrastructure with advanced telecommunications networks and high-speed internet connectivity. This solid foundation is ideal for implementing and expanding telemedicine services.

- Telemedicine Services: In Qatar, telemedicine services include various healthcare activities like virtual consultations, electronic health records, telemonitoring, and telepharmacy. The primary objective of these services is to offer comprehensive healthcare solutions from a remote location.

- Adoption and Usage: In Qatar, the utilisation of telemedicine services has been on the rise due to several factors, including the convenience and accessibility they offer, as well as the ongoing digitalisation of healthcare.

The research/study highlights the crucial role of telemedicine in the healthcare sector. The focus of this research is to analyse the utilisation of telemedicine in Qatar between 2021 and 2022, specifically among patients who have received healthcare services through this platform. The purpose of this research is to fill a knowledge gap in understanding the patient's perspective on the impact of telemedicine on the delivery of healthcare and the quality of service.

The healthcare industry faces numerous challenges, such as rising healthcare costs, an ageing population, and a shortage of healthcare providers (WHO, 2020). To address these challenges, healthcare organisations increasingly rely on telemedicine to deliver healthcare services remotely, improve access to care, and reduce costs. A study by Hollander & Carr (2020) found that telemedicine can improve access to care and reduce costs. However, concerns have been raised regarding the impact of telemedicine on the quality of care and patient satisfaction. Telemedicine services may not be as effective as traditional in-person care for some patients (Yaghobian, Homaie, 2019). The patient perspective on telemedicine services and their impact on healthcare delivery and service quality should be explored (Hsieh et al., 2021).

This study aims to build on existing research by exploring the patient's perspective on telemedicine, a topic that has yet to be extensively examined. This research will solve a practical problem by providing insights into patients' telemedicine experiences and identifying improvement areas. This study will further contribute to the existing literature by providing insight into the impact of telemedicine on healthcare delivery and service quality in the Middle Eastern region.

Problem Statement

The field of telemedicine is rapidly expanding and is poised to revolutionise healthcare delivery by providing remote medical care. Telemedicine, however, needs to improve its effectiveness and sustainability. This study aims to identify the major obstacles to telemedicine implementation and adoption and propose solutions to overcome these obstacles by examining the impact of telemedicine on healthcare delivery and service quality in Qatar from the perspective of patients. This issue is important because understanding the patient's experience with telemedicine is crucial to improving its efficacy and ensuring that it meets the patient's needs.

Background

Technological advances and changing patient needs are constantly transforming the healthcare industry. Telemedicine uses technology to provide healthcare services remotely, such as consultations, diagnoses, and treatments. In recent years, telemedicine has gained popularity in healthcare delivery, with the potential to improve access to care, reduce costs, and improve patient-centered care (Kaliyadan et al., 2020). In

addition to increasing access to healthcare services, reducing costs, and improving patient outcomes, this technology can improve healthcare delivery. However, telemedicine faces several challenges, including technological, regulatory, and professional resistance. In addition, there are concerns regarding the impact of telemedicine on the quality of healthcare services, patient satisfaction, and outcomes (Yaghobian, Homaie, 2019).

By analysing previous research and literature, it's possible to understand how telemedicine can address various obstacles and enhance patient outcomes.

Telemedicine has gained popularity recently as a means of providing healthcare services due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is evident that the healthcare industry faces many challenges, including an increasing demand for healthcare services, a need for more resources, and a shortage of healthcare professionals. The adoption and implementation of telemedicine have been challenged in several studies. In a study by Bhavnani et al. (2021), several technological barriers were identified to the adoption of telemedicine, including inadequate internet connectivity, lack of interoperability between different telemedicine platforms, and security concerns. The implementation of telemedicine has been hindered by regulatory barriers, such as licensing and reimbursement policies, according to a study by Ohannessian et al. (2020). Another significant challenge to the adoption of telemedicine is the resistance of healthcare professionals. Elbert et al. (2021) found that healthcare professionals were resistant to telemedicine due to concerns about the quality of care, loss of face-to-face interactions with patients, and inadequate training on telemedicine platforms.

To overcome these challenges, several solutions have been proposed. Bhavnani et al. (2021) proposed the development of standardised telemedicine platforms that are interoperable and secure, while Ohannessian et al. (2020) suggested the need for regulatory reform to address licensing and reimbursement policies. Elbert et al. (2021) recommended providing adequate training for healthcare professionals on telemedicine platforms and using patient-centered approaches to telemedicine implementation. However, there still needs to be a greater understanding regarding the impact of telemedicine on healthcare delivery and service quality from the patient's perspective. Multiple studies have demonstrated the potential benefits of telemedicine. These improvements include improved access to care for patients with limited mobility, reduced appointment wait times, and improved care coordination for chronic conditions (Ghani & Jaber, 2022). By providing remote healthcare services, telemedicine can revolutionise healthcare delivery. Nevertheless, telemedicine services may raise concerns regarding their effectiveness and quality and potential disparities in access to care and outcomes based on demographic, social, and cultural factors (Elbert et al., 2021). However, significant challenges are associated with telemedicine implementation and adoption.

Research Aim

This study explores the patient's perspective on the impact of telemedicine on healthcare delivery and service quality in Qatar. It is also beneficial to consider the patient's point of view to gain a deeper understanding of the benefits of these services. These factors include their effectiveness, accessibility, and influencing patient satisfaction and adoption. It should be noted that the research focuses exclusively on patient perspectives and may not include perspectives from healthcare providers and administrators. Considering that the investigation is solely based on patients who have utilised telemedicine in Qatar, this study's results may only apply to a limited number of settings. It would be beneficial to conduct future research that examines the perspectives of healthcare providers and administrators regarding the use of telemedicine services in various adoptions in a worldwide region.

A second objective of this study is to examine how patients perceive Qatar's telemedicine services. Studies have found that patients are generally satisfied with telemedicine services (Bashir et al., 2021; Holtz, B. E., 2021). Based on demographic, social, and cultural factors such as age, gender, and language barriers, Hsieh et al. (2021) suggest that patient perceptions vary. The results of this study can provide insights into how telemedicine services can be tailored to meet the needs of diverse patient groups in Qatar. Thirdly, based on patients' perceptions, this study examines whether telemedicine improves healthcare delivery and service quality in Qatar. Numerous studies have shown telemedicine may improve healthcare outcomes, including reducing hospital readmissions and managing chronic diseases (Sibounheuang, Olson, Kittiboonyakun. 2020). Telemedicine quality may raise concerns regarding diagnostic accuracy and treatment efficacy (Raza, Nadeem, Amin. 2020). These studies provide insight into the effectiveness, limitations, and strategies for improving telemedicine services in Qatar.

As the patient perspective on telemedicine has yet to be extensively explored in the literature, this research fills a knowledge gap. Furthermore, the research findings contribute to a broader body of telemedicine literature. This study will highlight the importance of considering patient perspectives and experiences when developing and evaluating these services in a Middle Eastern region.

Literature Review

An analysis of the literature on telemedicine and its impact on healthcare delivery and quality is presented in this chapter. After the COVID-19 pandemic, telemedicine has gained significant importance (Keesara et al., 2020). Access to healthcare services can be improved, patient outcomes can be improved, and healthcare costs can be reduced (Mann et al., 2020). Although telemedicine is becoming more prevalent, some barriers to its adoption may exist due to concerns about privacy and trust in technology (Lluch, 2011).

Patient-Centred Care

Patient-centered care is crucial for telemedicine initiatives. Understanding the patient's perspective is essential in designing telemedicine programs that meet their needs and preferences (Yaghobian & Homaie, 2019). Research has shown that patient concerns about care quality can hinder telemedicine adoption (Singh et al., 2022). Therefore, educating patients about telemedicine benefits and addressing concerns is essential to successful adoption and acceptance.

Patient Satisfaction

In the delivery of healthcare, it is essential to maximise patient satisfaction. Telemedicine programs should aim to identify factors that contribute to patient satisfaction, such as convenience, accessibility, and quality of care (Hsieh et al., 2021). By understanding the patient's perspective, healthcare providers can tailor telemedicine services to meet patient expectations better and enhance overall satisfaction (Tinoco et al., 2021).

Equity

Telemedicine can improve access to healthcare, reducing healthcare disparities. Telemedicine programs, however, must be accessible to all patients, regardless of socioeconomic status. Researching the patient's perspective can help identify possible barriers to access and inform the development of strategies to overcome them (Perrin et al., 2019).

Systematical Review: A Patient's Perspective

This systematic literature review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of studies on the patient's perspective on telemedicine. Telemedicine offers convenient access to healthcare services, especially for patients with mobility issues or those residing in remote areas with limited access to healthcare facilities. However, concerns about care quality can hinder telemedicine adoption, particularly among patients who have not used telemedicine before. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that patients are well-informed about the benefits of telemedicine and that healthcare providers are trained to deliver high-quality care using information and communication technology (ICT) (Hamad Medical Corporation, n.d.).

Patient satisfaction plays a vital role in telemedicine adoption. Research has shown that telemedicine patients appreciate the convenience and improved access to medical care. However, it is essential to recognise that not all patient groups may be equally comfortable with telemedicine. Older patients and those with lower education levels may have lower telemedicine usage rates compared to younger and more educated individuals (Wade et al., 2021). Designing telemedicine programs that consider different patient groups' diverse needs and preferences is essential for promoting inclusivity and maximising patient satisfaction.

Telemedicine's benefits include improved access to healthcare services, particularly for patients in rural and remote areas. It has also demonstrated positive effects on patient outcomes, especially for chronic conditions like diabetes and hypertension. Furthermore, telemedicine can enhance care

coordination for patients with complex diseases, such as cancer (Hamad Medical Corporation, n.d.). Additionally, it can reduce healthcare costs by minimising hospitalisations and emergency room visits (Hsieh et al., 2019).

Despite its benefits, telemedicine faces several challenges. One significant challenge is the lack of reimbursement policies for telemedicine services, making it difficult for patients to access these services. Additionally, limited technological infrastructure and unreliable internet access can hinder the widespread adoption of telemedicine, particularly in rural areas (Krousel-Wood et al., 2021). Furthermore, the inability to conduct thorough physical examinations through telemedicine may limit its applicability for patients with complex medical conditions (Dorsey et al., 2017). Concerns about the quality and safety of telemedicine services also exist, requiring attention to ensure adherence to standards and minimise potential medical errors (Buvik et al., 2019).

Benefits of Telemedicine

Hamad Medical Corporation (n.d.) published a summary highlighting telemedicine services to facilitate remote access to healthcare, including virtual consultations, remote monitoring, and telerehabilitation, indicating that telemedicine has been associated with several patient benefits. Patient access to healthcare services in rural and remote areas is one of the primary benefits of telemedicine. This is because telemedicine can overcome geographical barriers and connect patients with healthcare providers regardless of location.

Due to factors such as distance, transportation, and limited healthcare facilities, patients living in these areas may need more access to healthcare services. Remote consultations with healthcare providers can help overcome these barriers by reducing the need for patients to travel long distances. Using telemedicine to receive medical care can also reduce travel expenses and time away from work or school for patients and their families. This is particularly beneficial for patients with mobility issues, those who live in remote locations, or those with a busy schedule.

The use of telemedicine has also been shown to improve patient outcomes. Based on a systematic review by Wade et al. (2021), telemedicine effectively enhances outcomes for chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension. In addition, telemedicine can facilitate communication between different healthcare providers to improve care coordination for patients suffering from complex diseases, such as cancer (Hamad Medical Corporation, n.d.). Telemedicine can also reduce healthcare costs and improve access to healthcare services and patient outcomes. Telemedicine lowers healthcare costs by reducing hospitalisations and emergency room visits, according to a study by Hsieh et al. (2019). However, many challenges associated with telemedicine must be addressed for it to become more effective and sustainable.

Challenges of Telemedicine

Telemedicine has many advantages, but several challenges exist in realising its full potential. One of the significant challenges is the need for a reimbursement policy for telemedicine services. According to Dorsey et al. (2017), the lack of reimbursement policies for telemedicine services is a significant obstacle to the adoption of telemedicine. Some insurance plans may not cover telemedicine services or may have limited coverage, making it difficult for patients to access healthcare services through telemedicine.

It is also worth noting that telemedicine is challenged by the need for more technological infrastructure to support it. Telemedicine relies on high-speed internet connections and specialised equipment, which may only be available in some areas. According to Krousel-Wood et al. (2021), unreliable internet access is a significant barrier to telemedicine adoption, particularly in rural areas. These technical difficulties can result in poor-quality audio or video connections, affecting the patient's ability to communicate with the healthcare provider effectively. Patients encounter an additional obstacle in telemedicine: the healthcare providers' restricted capability to perform physical examinations. Telemedicine cannot replace an in-person visit for patients with complex medical conditions or who require a thorough physical examination (Dorsey et al., 2017). Patients who value personal touch and face-to-face interaction with healthcare providers may also find telemedicine challenging. Due to this, it can be difficult for patients to establish a rapport with healthcare providers. A telemedicine platform might be uncomfortable for them to discuss sensitive medical issues.

As a final point, concerns have been raised regarding the quality and safety of telemedicine services. Buvik et al. (2016) found that the quality of telemedicine consultations varied widely, and some needed to meet the standards of in-person consultations. Remote consultations may also risk medical errors or misdiagnoses for healthcare providers. It is crucial to recognise the challenges and take necessary actions to ensure that telemedicine can deliver top-quality healthcare services to patients. There may be a need to improve internet connectivity, provide technical support, expand the range of services available through telemedicine, and increase insurance coverage for services provided through telemedicine.

In conclusion, telemedicine offers numerous benefits, including improved access to care, cost savings, and increased efficiency. However, addressing challenges related to reimbursement policies, technological infrastructure, physical examinations, and quality assurance is crucial to its successful integration into the healthcare system. Understanding the patient's perspective is vital in designing patient-centred telemedicine services that meet their needs and preferences. By researching patients' perspectives regarding telemedicine, healthcare providers can identify specific requirements, address concerns, and enhance the overall quality of care.

Research Methodology

This section presents the data collection process, analysis techniques, and critical findings obtained from the survey. Telemedicine, or remote healthcare services, is gaining significant attention in Qatar's evolving healthcare landscape.

As part of this study, a survey was conducted among individuals in Qatar to understand their experiences and thoughts regarding telemedicine better. The survey asked about demographics, trust in services, health outcomes, satisfaction levels, and suggestions for improving telemedicine quality. A total of 169 responses were received, with 140 deemed valid after screening for accuracy and used for data analysis.

The data analysis focused on factors affecting patient adoption of telemedicine in Qatar, comparing telemedicine versus in-person healthcare in Qatar, and evaluating the impact of telemedicine on healthcare outcomes for Qatar patients. The study used descriptive analysis to provide an overview of participant characteristics and opinions, including age, gender, education level, and country of origin. Results showed that the highest response rate came from the age group of 25-34, followed by the age group of 35-44. There were varying opinions on telemedicine among different age groups.

The data analysis provided valuable insights into Qatar's telemedicine services and patient satisfaction. The findings can help inform healthcare providers and policymakers in enhancing telemedicine services, addressing concerns and improving patient experiences.

Limitations and Recommendations

Acknowledging and addressing any potential limitations of the chosen research methodology is very significant. The sample size of only 169 respondents may not accurately represent the diverse patient population in Qatar. Future studies should aim for a larger sample size to reduce sampling bias and improve generalisability. Additionally, questionnaires to collect telemedicine data may introduce respondent bias due to personal experiences and attitudes. Future researchers should consider diverse participant pools and implement comprehensive data collection protocols to overcome this. It is essential to exercise caution when applying the study's findings to other regions, as differences in healthcare systems, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds may limit the generalisability of the results. Future researchers should contextualise their findings within the specific study context of Qatar to enhance research credibility and validity. Inferential statistics should be conducted to test the corelational effect of variables.

Data Analysis

The survey questionnaire covered various aspects of telemedicine and its impact on patients' perspectives. Following are the sections of the survey:

- Demographic Information: Questions 1 to 4 gathered data on the participants' demographic characteristics.
- Effectiveness and Efficiency: Questions 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 17, and 18 aimed to explore respondents' perceptions of effectiveness and efficiency. These factors are crucial in influencing patients' acceptance and adoption of telemedicine.

- Health Outcomes and Satisfaction: Questions 12, 13, 15, and 16 were designed to understand patients' views on telemedicine and its impact on health outcomes. These questions sought insights into the convenience, satisfaction, and reliability of telemedicine services.

To ensure validity, the researcher thoroughly screened the information collected from 169 survey participants. As a result, it provided 140 participants and their data to support reliable data analysis. The responses were obtained from respondents who have been involved with telemedicine.

Figure 2 illustrates the predetermined question: "Have you heard of telemedicine?" This question was used to determine the level of familiarity with telemedicine among the survey participants. To gauge patient satisfaction, efficiency, effectiveness, and health outcomes, participants who reported no knowledge of telemedicine were excluded from the study.
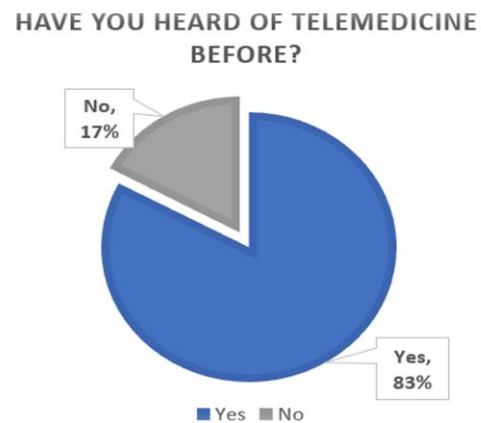

Figure 1: The Determined Question of the Survey (Source: Created by Researcher)

What do you think about telemedicine – Can it be a reliable medical care source?					
Age Group	Gender	Ethnicity	No	Yes	Total
18-24	Male	Arab (other than Qatari)		1	1
		Qatar	1	1	2
25-34	Female	African		1	1
		Qatar	1	1	2
		South Asian (e.g. Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi)		1	1
		Southeast Asian (e.g. Filipino)		1	1
	Male	Arab (other than Qatari)		1	1
		Qatar	2	4	6
		Southeast Asian (e.g. Filipino)		1	1
		Western ex-pat (e.g. European, North American, Australian)	1		1
35-44	Female	African		1	1
		South Asian (e.g. Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi)	1		1
		Southeast Asian (e.g. Filipino)		1	1
	Male	African		1	1
		Arab (other than Qatari)		1	1
		Qatar	1	1	2
		South Asian (e.g. Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi)		2	2
45-54	Male	African		1	1
		Qatar	1		1
65+	Male	Arab (other than Qatari)		1	1
		Grand Total	7	21	29

Table 1: The "No" Respondents - Whether Telemedicine Can Be A Reliable Medical Care Source (Source: Created by Researcher)

Nevertheless, it is essential to note that these individuals should not be overlooked entirely. Based on data analysis of the survey question, "What do you think about telemedicine? Can it be a reliable source of medical care?" it was discovered that opinions regarding telemedicine varied among different age groups, as illustrated in Table 1. To address concerns, it is

recommended that telemedicine services be enhanced, and individuals be educated about the benefits of such services. By doing so, accessibility will be ensured, and different age groups' needs will be met.

Demographic Analysis

The survey includes demographic questions to understand the patient's perspective better. These questions consider age, gender, education level, and country of origin. The inclusive approach to Qatar's diverse patient population is expected to provide valuable insights into patients' unique challenges and opportunities. This should ultimately lead to an improvement in the quality of healthcare services and a better patient experience.

a) Age Group: Understanding participant age ranges helps identify unique healthcare requirements, preferences, and experiences. This can reveal patterns specific to different age groups, such as healthcare concerns for younger adults or usage patterns for older individuals.

b) Gender: Analysing gender distribution can uncover differences in health behaviours, attitudes, and healthcare experiences. This helps identify gender-specific obstacles in accessing quality healthcare.

c) Education Level: Education is essential for health literacy and decision-making regarding healthcare. Higher education may lead to different expectations and preferences for healthcare services.

d) Country of Origin: Knowing a patient's country of origin in Qatar is crucial for understanding their healthcare needs, preferences, and cultural differences that may affect their treatment.

Ethnicity	Age Group	Gender	Education Completed	Have you heard of telemedicine before? "YES"
African	25-34	Male	Bachelor's degree	1
			Some college	2
		Female	Bachelor's degree	1
			Professional degree	1
	35-44	Male	Bachelor's degree	1
			High school diploma	1
			Master's degree	1
			Some college	1
	45-54	Female	Bachelor's degree	1
	55-64	Female	Bachelor's degree	1
			Master's degree	1
Arab (other than Qatari)	18-24	Female	Bachelor's degree	1
	25-34	Female	Bachelor's degree	3
			Bachelor's degree	4
		Male	High school diploma	1
			Master's degree	1
			Professional degree	1
			Some college	17
		Female	Bachelor's degree	1
			Master's degree	2
	35-44		Bachelor's degree	2
		Male	Master's degree	1
			Some college	8
	45-54	Male	Bachelor's degree	1

Ethnicity	Age	Gender	Education	Count
			Master's degree	1
Qatari	18-24	Female	High school diploma	1
		Female	Bachelor's degree	1
			Master's degree	4
	25-34		Bachelor's degree	10
		Male	High school diploma	1
			Professional degree	2
			Some college	13
	35-44	Female	Bachelor's degree	1
		Male	Master's degree	1
South Asian (e.g. Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi)	18-24	Female	Bachelor's degree	1
	25-34	Female	Bachelor's degree	3
			Doctorate degree	1
			Master's degree	1
			No degree	1
			Professional degree	1
		Male	Bachelor's degree	2
			Doctorate degree	1
			Master's degree	2
	35-44	Female	Bachelor's degree	1
			Master's degree	1
		Male	Bachelor's degree	6
			Master's degree	1
	45-54	Female	Master's degree	1
		Male	Some college	1
	55-64	Male	Bachelor's degree	1
Southeast Asian (e.g. Filipino)	25-34	Female	Bachelor's degree	3
		Male	Bachelor's degree	4
	35-44	Male	Bachelor's degree	2
			High school diploma	1
			Professional degree	2
	45-54	Female	Bachelor's degree	3
		Male	Bachelor's degree	2
	55-64	Male	Bachelor's degree	1
Western ex-pat (e.g. European, North American, Australian)	25-34	Female	Bachelor's degree	2
	35-44	Female	Bachelor's degree	1
			Master's degree	1
	55-64	Female	High school diploma	1

	Master's degree	1
Male	Doctorate degree	1
Grand Total		**140**

Table 2: Demographic Analysis (Source: Created by Researcher)

Based on the demographic analysis in Table 1 and Table 2, the results of the survey indicate the following:

- Age Group Analysis: Based on the data, the age range of 25-34 has the most significant number of participants with 41 individuals, followed by 35-44 with 30 participants, 18-24 with 16 participants, 45-54 and 55-64 with only 6 participants each. The 25-34 age group is well-represented across all ethnicities. There were mixed opinions about telemedicine in the 18-24 age group, with one person preferring in-person care and two expressing confidence in telemedicine. Meanwhile, the 25-34 age group has a higher number of participants (10) who believe in the reliability of telemedicine compared to those who prefer in-person care (4). Among the 35-44 age group, 9 out of 14 participants consider telemedicine reliable. The 45-54 and 55-64 age groups have fewer participants, and opinions on telemedicine vary more widely.

- Gender Analysis: The gathered data consists of answers from individuals of both genders. No distinct trend is noticed when it comes to gender-based preferences for telemedicine. Both males and females have varying viewpoints, with some preferring in-person medical attention while others trust telemedicine's dependability.

- Education Level Analysis: Individuals with varying levels of education, ranging from high school diplomas to professional degrees and doctorates, participated in the survey. The age group of 25-34 has the most significant number of participants with bachelor's degrees and some college education.

While individuals with advanced education levels like master's and doctorate degrees are present across different age groups, no distinct correlations between educational attainment and preferences for telemedicine can be inferred from the data.

3.1 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse a survey of patients in Qatar regarding their experiences with telemedicine. The findings provide valuable information for healthcare professionals and policymakers to improve service delivery and patient experience. The results will be further examined using central tendency, variability, and distribution measures to guide decision-making and drive advancements in telemedicine. A mixed-methods approach, including qualitative analysis techniques, will be used to identify recurring themes and commonalities in open-ended responses and recommendations.

3.2 Objective-driven Data Analysis: Extracting Insights and Patterns

3.2.1 Factors affecting patient adoption of telemedicine in Qatar, including demographics and/or culture.

The objective is to identify the factors impacting telemedicine acceptance among patients in Qatar, emphasising demographic and cultural aspects. Valuable insights can be gained about the adoption trends of telemedicine in Qatar's healthcare sector by analysing how comfortable diverse demographic groups are with using technology to receive medical care and their level of concern regarding the privacy and security of telemedicine services. This information can be derived from Question 8 and Question 10 of the survey.

On a scale of 1 to 5, how comfortable are you using technology for healthcare purposes?

Demographic	1 - Not at all comfortable	2 - A little comfortable	3 - A moderate amount	4 - Very comfortable	5 - Extremely comfortable	Grand Total
African		**2**	**3**	**3**	**4**	**12**
25-34		1	1	1		3
35-44		1	1	1	3	6
45-54					1	1
55-64			1	1		2
Arab (other than Qatari)	**1**	**4**	**4**	**7**	**28**	**44**
18-24		1				1
25-34		1	1	5	20	27

35-44	1	2	2	1	8	14
45-54			1	1		2
Qatari	**1**	**4**	**2**	**10**	**17**	**34**
18-24					1	1
25-34	1	3	2	10	15	31
35-44		1			1	2
South Asian (e.g. Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi)		**4**	**9**	**8**	**4**	**25**
18-24					1	1
25-34		1	6	3	2	12
35-44		3	2	3	1	9
45-54			1	1		2
55-64				1		1
Southeast Asian (e.g. Filipino)		**2**	**7**	**6**	**3**	**18**
25-34		1	3	1	2	7
35-44			1	3	1	5
45-54		1	3	1		5
55-64				1		1
Western ex-pat (e.g. European, North American, Australian)			**3**	**4**		**7**
25-34			1	1		2
35-44			1	1		2
55-64			1	2		3
Grand Total	**2**	**16**	**28**	**38**	**56**	**140**

Table 3: Comfort Level with Using Technology for Healthcare Purposes (Source: Created by Researcher)

The analysis found that the degree of comfort in using technology for healthcare purposes in Qatar varies across different demographics. The 'Age Group' 25-34 reported the highest comfort level, with 100% of respondents feeling at ease. The ages of 18-24, 45-54, and 55-64 all displayed a notable level of comfort. Comfort levels during telemedicine may be influenced by tech familiarity, internet access, and past experiences.

On a scale of 1 to 5, how concerned are you about the privacy and security of telemedicine services?

Demographic	1 - Not at all concerned	2 - A little concerned	3 - A moderate amount	4 - Very concerned	5 - Extremely concerned	Grand Total
African	**1**	**3**	**5**	**3**		**12**
25-34			2	1		3
35-44		3	1	2		6
45-54	1					1
55-64			2			2

Arab (other than Qatari)	**2**	**3**	**4**	**7**	**28**	**44**
18-24	1					1
25-34			1	6	20	27
35-44	1	3	2		8	14
45-54			1	1		2
Qatar	**2**	**2**	**4**	**11**	**15**	**34**
18-24		1				1
25-34	2	1	3	11	14	31
35-44			1		1	2
South Asian (e.g. Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi)	**4**	**5**	**9**	**6**	**1**	**25**
18-24		1				1
25-34	3	2	3	3	1	12
35-44	1	2	4	2		9
45-54			1	1		2
55-64			1			1
Southeast Asian (e.g. Filipino)	**1**	**2**	**7**	**4**	**4**	**18**
25-34	1	2	2		2	7
35-44			2	1	2	5
45-54			3	2		5
55-64				1		1
Western ex-pat (e.g. European, North American, Australian)	**2**		**4**	**1**		**7**
25-34			1	1		2
35-44	1		1			2
55-64	1		2			3
Grand Total	**12**	**15**	**33**	**32**	**48**	**140**

Table 4: Concern Level Regarding Privacy and Security of Telemedicine Services (Source: Created by Researcher)

It has been found through analysis that the level of concern about telemedicine privacy and security differs among various demographics in Qatar. Age Groups 45-54 reported the highest level of concern, with all respondents expressing concern. Other demographics that demonstrated relatively high levels of concern were Qatari, Age Group 25-34, and Arab (other than Qatari). It should be noted that various factors, such as past experiences with data breaches or privacy concerns, may influence anxiety levels. These factors include trust in technology and cultural attitudes towards sharing personal information. Recognising these concerns can help healthcare providers and policymakers address and alleviate them, paving the way for broader adoption of telemedicine services.

Qatar's demographics and culture significantly influence its willingness to use telemedicine. Different groups have varying levels of comfort with technology and concerns about privacy. Age substantially affects an individual's comfort level with healthcare technology. Specifically, those aged 25-34, 45-54, and 55-64 tend to be more comfortable using technology in healthcare. This suggests that younger and middle-aged individuals and older adults are generally more comfortable with technology in the healthcare industry.

Concerns surrounding telemedicine privacy and security vary across different demographics. Age group 45-54 consistently exhibits a high level of concern, while other age groups, such as 25-34 and Qatar's population, also express significant levels of concern. This indicates that protecting patient information is crucial for building trust and promoting

telemedicine adoption, especially among middle-aged individuals.

Although the data does not explicitly provide information on cultural factors, it is essential to consider Qatar's cultural context. A patient's beliefs, norms, and attitudes towards technology, healthcare, and privacy may influence a patient's adoption of telemedicine. The more significant concern about privacy and security among certain demographic groups could be affected by cultural factors or specific attitudes towards sharing personal information.

In light of these findings, it is crucial to consider demographic and cultural factors when implementing telemedicine initiatives in Qatar. Tailoring telemedicine strategies to address the specific comfort levels and concerns of different demographic groups can help promote the wider adoption of telemedicine services. This will ensure they align with the population's cultural values and expectations. Additionally, addressing privacy and security concerns through robust data protection measures and transparent communication can build trust and encourage patient adoption of telemedicine in Qatar.

3.2.2 The effectiveness and efficiency of telemedicine vs in-person healthcare in Qatar.

Based on responses to Questions 9, 14, 17, and 18, this study evaluates the effectiveness and efficiency of telemedicine compared to in-person healthcare in Qatar. A variety of factors are considered in the analysis, including healthcare accessibility, convenience in comparison to face-to-face consultations, as well as patient satisfaction. Additionally, open-ended questions were asked to get feedback on telemedicine's effectiveness and obtain recommendations.
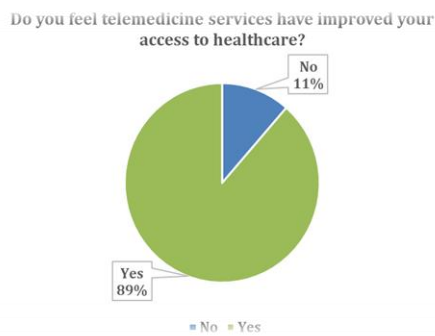

Figure 2: Access to Healthcare (Source: Created by Researcher)

According to the feedback from patients, telemedicine services have improved their access to healthcare. Out of 140 responses, 124 respondents reported a positive impact, while 16 individuals did not feel the same way.
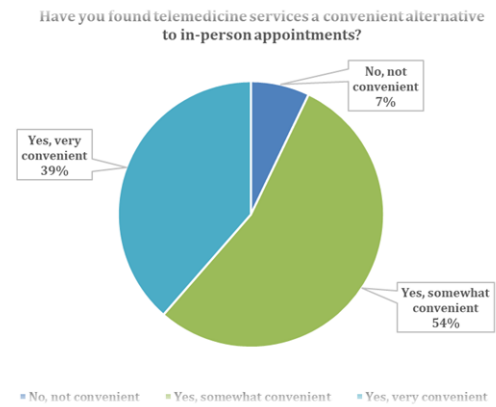

Figure 3: Alternative to In-Person Appointments (Source: Created by Researcher)

Participants were asked about their views on telemedicine versus traditional in-person healthcare in Qatar. 39% found it somewhat convenient, 54% found it very convenient, and 7% did not. Telemedicine is seen as a practical substitute for face-to-face consultations by most people in Qatar. Many find it convenient, but a minority disagree. It could be a valuable complement to traditional healthcare services, but improvements may be needed to address the needs of those who find it less convenient.
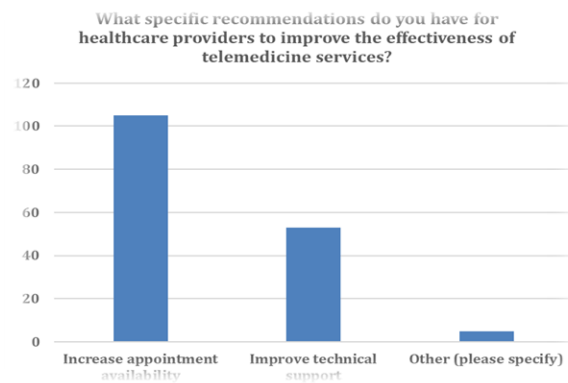

Figure 4: Recommendations for the Effectiveness of Telemedicine (Source: Created by Researcher)

Telemedicine effectiveness in Qatar and whether respondents had any feedback were evaluated. Patients have suggested increasing the availability of appointments, improving technical support, improving listening skills, making appropriate referrals, providing home testing kits, upgrading technological software/platform, and increasing knowledge of treatment to expand telemedicine services.

It can be concluded that based on the participant's responses, telemedicine is a viable and efficient alternative to traditional healthcare in Qatar. Most respondents found telemedicine services convenient and helpful in improving healthcare accessibility. This indicates that telemedicine can potentially enhance healthcare delivery, especially regarding accessibility and convenience. However, it is crucial to address the concerns raised by a few participants, such as the need for more appointment availability and better technical support. By

considering these recommendations, healthcare providers can further enhance telemedicine services in Qatar. This will provide a better healthcare experience for patients.

3.2.3 Assess the impact of telemedicine on healthcare outcomes for Qatar patients.

As part of this study, various factors, such as patient satisfaction and overall health outcomes, will be examined to determine how telemedicine affects healthcare outcomes in Qatar, especially for a diverse population. Participants in the study were asked whether they used telemedicine to treat their health conditions (Question 12) and whether they would recommend its use (Question 16) to improve patient outcomes (Questions 13 and 15) and enhance overall well-being. A summary of the data in Figure 6 shows the number of respondents who used telemedicine to manage a health condition, categorised by demographic characteristics.
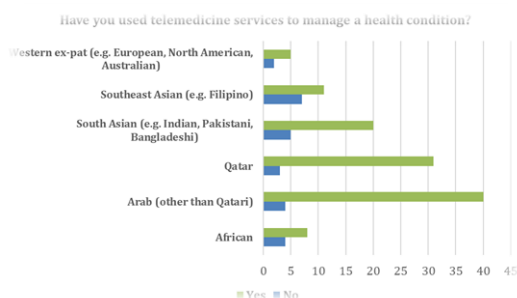
Figure 5: Utilisation of Telemedicine for a Health Condition (Source: Created by Researcher)

The survey results show that Arab (excluding Qatari) respondents had the highest number of individuals, 40, who use telemedicine services to manage their health conditions. Following closely behind were Qatari respondents, with 31 individuals, and South Asian respondents, with 20 individuals. Conversely, the demographic groups with the lowest response rates for telemedicine services were Western ex-pats (such as Europeans, North Americans, and Australians) and African respondents, with 5 and 8 individuals, respectively. These findings indicate that telemedicine services are gaining acceptance among various demographic groups, mainly Arab (excluding Qatari), Qatari, and South Asian populations. The lower response rates among Western ex-pats and African respondents may imply differences in healthcare preferences or accessibility to telemedicine services within these groups.

The data in Figure 7 provides information on the satisfaction levels of respondents with their experience using telemedicine services by demographic group.
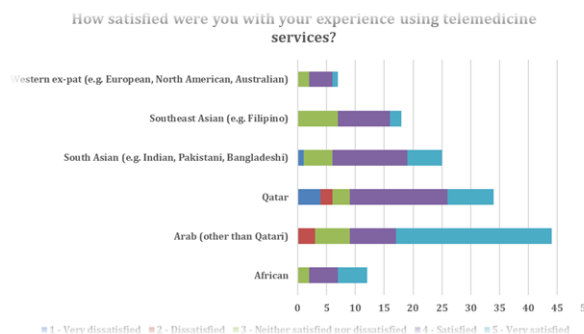

Figure 6: Satisfaction Rate Among Participants (Source: Created by Researcher)

According to the survey, Arab respondents (excluding Qataris) had the highest percentage of satisfied or very satisfied respondents, with 27 respondents. It was followed by Qatari respondents, with 17 individuals expressing satisfaction, and South Asian respondents, with 13 individuals expressing satisfaction. The African respondents had five dissatisfied individuals, while the Southeast Asian respondents had seven neutral respondents. The survey results indicate that the respondents generally received telemedicine services positively. Nevertheless, it is essential to address the concerns and dissatisfaction expressed by individuals to ensure higher satisfaction levels for all demographic groups.

The provided data in Figure 8 reveals responses about telemedicine services' recommendations and impact on healthcare outcomes across different demographic groups.
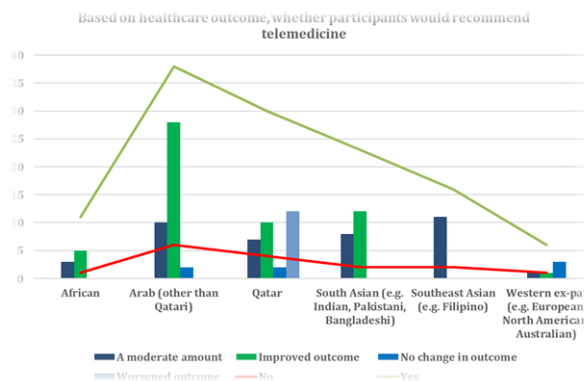

Figure 7: Healthcare Outcome for the Participants and Whether They Would Recommend Telemedicine (Source: Created by Researcher)

The findings indicate that most respondents, irrespective of their demographic, hold a positive view of telemedicine services, with many recommending them to others. Arab respondents (excluding Qataris) surpassed other groups with the highest recommendations, followed by Qatari and South Asian respondents. Regarding the impact on healthcare outcomes, most respondents indicated a moderate improvement due to telemedicine services. Arab respondents (excluding Qataris) reported the most improved outcomes, followed by Qatari and South Asian respondents. However, some respondents across different demographics reported no improvement or worsening outcomes.

Overall, the data suggest a favourable perception of telemedicine services and their impact on healthcare outcomes among Qatar respondents. Nonetheless, it is crucial to address the concerns of the subgroup of respondents who experienced no improvement or experienced worsening outcomes. Further research and investigation are necessary to identify the factors contributing to such varied outcomes. Providing this information will enable future studies and healthcare providers to improve the delivery of telemedicine services to ensure positive health outcomes for all patients.

In conclusion, the data analysis suggests telemedicine positively impacts patients' healthcare outcomes in Qatar. A wide range of demographic groups expressed satisfaction with telemedicine services and reported that their healthcare outcomes improved.

To further enhance the effectiveness of telemedicine services, healthcare providers should consider increasing appointment availability and improving technical support. It is also essential to address the concerns raised by a minority of respondents and ensure that all patients can access effective telemedicine services. More research and improvements are needed to maximise the impact of telemedicine on healthcare outcomes in Qatar.

Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter is to present the conclusion following the analysis of survey data collected in Qatar. The research objectives were successfully achieved, providing valuable insights into individuals' perceptions and experiences of telemedicine in Qatar.

The analysis of the data revealed several key insights that address these objectives. Respondents predominantly fell into the age groups of 25-34 and 35-44, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing patient acceptance and adoption of telemedicine across different age demographics. The research explored the influence of demographic, social, and cultural factors, shedding light on their varying impact on patient attitudes towards telemedicine.

Many patients see telemedicine services as a way to enhance healthcare accessibility, which coincides with the potential advantages of telemedicine, such as enhanced convenience and shorter waiting times for appointments. Patients consider telemedicine services effective and efficient, as demonstrated by their positive experiences and satisfaction with the convenience and reduced waiting times compared to in-person care. This comparison aimed to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of telemedicine services compared to traditional healthcare. Nevertheless, addressing some patients' privacy and security concerns is vital. Some respondents expressed moderate support, emphasising the importance of healthcare providers prioritising the protection of patient information and ensuring secure telemedicine platforms.

Furthermore, the results of the study indicated that telemedicine could be a positive contributor to the improvement of healthcare outcomes. Telemedicine was perceived by patients as a means of improving access to healthcare, thus aligning to investigate the potential impact of telemedicine on healthcare outcomes. Data from the survey provided insight into patient health status, clinical outcomes, and healthcare utilisation rates, demonstrating the perceived benefits of telemedicine. Analysing Qatar's patient population demographics offered valuable insights for healthcare providers and policymakers to understand unique challenges and opportunities for different groups. This helps explore factors affecting patient acceptance of telemedicine.

The research results indicate that the research objectives were met and that patients in Qatar have a positive attitude towards telemedicine services. These findings highlight the importance of tailoring telemedicine services to meet the specific needs of different patient groups. Despite this, some respondents reported no change or worsening outcomes, indicating the need for further investigation into particular conditions and telemedicine's suitability. Achieving these objectives has provided the framework for improving healthcare delivery, enhancing service quality, and optimising telemedicine practices in Qatar.

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