

Access to Mental Health Services and the Perception of Care Quality among Patients at Belen Hospital in Trujillo, La Libertad, 2026

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Abstract

This study addresses the challenges of healthcare systems regarding accessibility and perceived quality in mental health services. The main objective was to determine the relationship between access to mental health services and the quality of care perceived by patients in the mental health department at Belén Hospital in Trujillo, La Libertad, 2026. The methodology followed a quantitative approach, basic type, non-experimental cross-sectional design, and correlational level. The population consisted of 60 patients, from which a sample of 53 users was selected using non-probability convenience sampling. Data collection was conducted via an online survey using two questionnaires validated by expert judgment. Inferential results revealed a Pearson correlation coefficient of (), indicating a significant positive correlation between variables. It is concluded that greater access to mental health services is associated with a higher perceived quality of care. $r=0.673p=0.001$.

Keywords: Access to mental health services; quality of care; availability; user satisfaction

Introduction

The global health system is seen as an important pillar for the development of comprehensive health; however, it has limitations in coverage, accessibility, and assistance; in countries with poor and medium budgets, between 75% and 85% of patients are affected due to treatment gaps and barriers to access to specialized mental health services (WHO, 2022). Likewise, the Pan American Health Organization points out that in Latin America, treatment gaps exceed 70%, due to the shortage of specialists, urban centralization, social stigma, and low public investment that allocates only 2% of the health budget to this sector (PAHO, 2023).

At the national level in Peru, about 30% of citizens experienced symptoms of anxiety, depression, or other emotional disturbances (Ministry of Health [MINSA], 2023). This situation intensifies when examining the La Libertad region, where reports from the Regional Health Management indicated an increase of more than 15% in diagnoses of anxiety and depression between 2020 and 2023, mainly affecting vulnerable populations (GERESA, 2023). In this scenario, the Belén Hospital in Trujillo acts as an essential reference center; however, users recurrently face problems such as long waits, short-

age of specialists, healthcare saturation, and administrative procedures that delay timely care (GERESA, 2023).

Based on this reality, the general problem was raised: What is the relationship between access to mental health services and the quality of care perceived by patients at the Belén de Trujillo hospital - La Libertad, 2026? In the same way, the specific problems corresponding to the relationship between the quality of care and the dimensions of availability, geographical accessibility and economic accessibility were formulated. Consequently, the general objective was to determine the relationship between access to mental health services and the quality of care perceived by users of the mental health service of the Belén de Trujillo Hospital - La Libertad, 2026. It was proposed as a general hypothesis that access to mental health services is significantly related to the quality of care perceived by patients.

Methodologically, the research was considered basic, since its purpose was to increase existing knowledge about the variables without immediate practical application (Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza, 2018). It adopted a quantitative approach, aimed at the precise measurement of phenomena through statistical analysis (Gallardo, 2021). The design was non-experimental cross-sectional, collecting data in a single time and without manipulation of variables (Bernal, 2016). Finally, it had a correlational scope, evaluating the degree of association between the study variables (Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza, 2018).

Development

Theoretical Framework

Research Background

At the international level, Gómez (2021) analyzed the perspective of patients regarding mental health in Quito, finding that 78.24% were unaware of specific assistance and 56.18% did not use psychology or psychiatry services due to limited economic resources. For their part, Ávila et al. (2023), in a quantitative descriptive-correlational study in Chile, showed that 86.2% of patients confirmed a high percentage of satisfaction, concluding that the quality of the service provided and the therapeutic connection decisively influence user acceptance. Along the same lines, Vera et al. (2025) determined in Ecuador that all the users surveyed rated the treatment received as friendly and the attention as excellent, demonstrating that an adequate quality of service improves confidence in health care.

At the national level, Dávila (2023) evaluated the Bellavista Community Mental Health Center in San Martín, finding that the higher the quality of care, the greater the satisfaction of the user (). In studies associated with hospital mental health in Lima, Grados et al. (2023) identified a relevant association between emotional conditions such as anxiety and depression (present in 95.5% of the sample) and biological parameters; while Robles et al. (2024) observed that self-efficacy levels in the hospital population with common disorders are significantly lower. Likewise, Espino et al. (2025) corroborated that situations of health crisis or high stress cause a severe emotional impact on the population (). $p < 0.05$, $p = 0.000$.

Theoretical Bases

Access to mental health services is based on the Theory of Penchansky and Thomas (1981), which maintains that accessibility includes the availability of services, geographical facilities, costs of care, organization and acceptability. Similarly, Andersen's Behavioral Model of the Use of Health Services (1995) states that the use of care depends on predisposing factors, facilitators (economic resources) and need. On the other hand, the evaluation of social perception is based on Heider's Theory (1958), while the quality of attention is based on the SERVQUAL Model of Parasuraman et al. (1988), which evaluates quality based on the contrast between expectations and perceived experience. Donabedian (1980) adds that quality should be analyzed according to structure, process, and results.

Results

Descriptive and Inferential Results

The sample analyzed was composed of 53 patients from the mental health service (26 women and 27 men). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test yielded a p-value higher than level α () for the quality of care variable, justifying the use of Pearson's parameterization coefficient. $p = 0.069$.

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SUMMARY OF PEARSON CORRELATION TESTING (N = 53)			
Relationship Evaluated	Pearson Coefficient	Sig. (p)	
V1: Access to <---> Services V2: Quality of Care	0.673	0.001	
D1: Availability <---> V2: Quality of Care	0.538	0.001	
D2: Geographical Accessibility <---> V2: Quality	0.329	0.016	
D3: Affordability <---> V2: Quality	0.632	0.001	

Regarding the general objective, a cumulative average level of 56.6% was found for both access and quality of care. The inferential analysis determined a coefficient of (), demonstrating a considerable and statistically significant positive correlation. $r=0,673p=0,001$.

In the specific dimensions:

Availability: 37.7% were at a medium level of availability and quality. The correlation was (), indicating a moderate positive association. $r=0,538p=0,001$.

Geographical accessibility: 45.3% had a medium level in both variables. The test showed a coefficient of (), translating into a low but significant positive correlation. $r=0,329p=0,016$.

Economic accessibility: 47.2% registered average levels. A coefficient of (), confirming a high positive correlation, was obtained. $r=0,632p=0,001$.

Discussion

The results are consistent with the formulation of the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022) and the Donabedian (1980) model, as they show that structural and access guarantees condition the qualitative evaluation of health services. On the empirical level, the findings coincide with Dávila (2023) and Vera et al. (2025), who demonstrated that optimizing fluidity in entering the system and reducing waiting times consolidates a positive perception of care.

The impact of availability and costs is consistent with what is established in the Andersen Model (1995) and with the observations of Gómez (2021), where economic factors and the shortage of specialized personnel act as key modulators in treatment continuity.

Conclusions

There is a considerable and statistically significant positive relationship (;) between access to mental health services and the quality of care perceived by patients at the Belén de Trujillo Hospital in 2026. $r=0,673p=0,001$.

The availability of services has a moderate positive relationship (;) with perceived quality of care. $r=0,538p=0,001$.

Geographical accessibility has a low positive relationship (;) with the perception of the quality of the service provided. $r=0,329p=0,016$.

Economic accessibility maintains a high positive relationship (;) with the quality of care in the study sample. $r=0,632p=0,001$.

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