

How Do Professional Skills Compare to Employee Behaviour in Influencing the Choice of Hospital by Patients in North -West Region of Nigeria?

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to examine the roles of the Business environment (professional skills) and Business etiquette (employee behaviour) in influencing the achievement of organizational goals (health improvement, patient satisfaction and demand for hospital services) in the North West region of Nigeria. Organizational success depends to a large extent on the strengths of its business environment, the codes of behaviour that guide its actions and the effectiveness of its management decisions. This study tried to understand what exerts the most influence between professional skills and employee behaviour when patients decide to visit a hospital in the North West region of Nigeria.

Online and paper-based survey questionnaire were used to collect data. All individuals (consumers of hospital services) living within the North West region of Nigeria were invited to join the survey. Out of the 300 responses analysed 147 were from online survey and 153 from paper-based questionnaire which were completed and returned directly or through email. The largest number of participants in the survey (34.9%) is between the ages of 35 – 44 years old followed by those between the ages of 25 – 34 years old (31.9%).

The results have confirmed that professional skill of employees is the main influence to choice of hospital in that region of Nigeria. It has also been confirmed that most of the patients are satisfied with the services rendered to them in the hospitals.

Keywords: *etiquette, skills, behaviour, hospital, choice, patients*

Introduction

The business environment has been defined as all the factors that have influence on the business (BE notes, 2018; Worthinton & Brtton, 2006). If the environment is favourable the business prospers and vice versa. This means a business organisation depends on its environment to succeed. The environment not only provides resources for the day to day activities of a business organisation it also provides the opportunity to sell the products or services the organisation is producing.

Business Etiquette is expected behaviours for individuals within a group, society or an organisation (Etiqu notes, 2018; Fox, 2008). Business etiquette is related to organisational culture or norms as well as what the society accepts as right or wrong behaviour. Etiquette is a French word for code of behaviour and it defines the expectations for behaviour within a certain group or organisation (Etiqu notes, 2018; Fox, 2018).

Organizational success depends to a large extent on the strengths of its business environment, the codes of behaviour that guide its actions and the effectiveness of its management decisions (Worthinton & Brtton, 2006; Akram, Lei & Haider, 2016; Fox, 2008). The quality of services and products of a company is related to its business environment, its business etiquette as well as the effectiveness of its management decisions. Also quality is an influence of demand for services and products. The choice of hospital by patients is influenced by quality and studies have shown a positive association between quality and demand for hospital (Howard, 2005; Gutacker et al. 2016; Burns & Wholey, 1992). Hospitals compete for patients by raising the quality of their services and products (Gutacker et al. 2016; Hodgkin, 1996).

The purpose of this study is to understand what exerts the most influence between professional skills and employee behaviour when patients decide to visit a hospital in the North West region of

Nigeria. The study tried to answer following research question: In what ways and to what extent is the proportion of the number of patients who choose a hospital due to professional skills of its employees differ from that of those who choose a hospital due to its employee behaviour?

Literature review

Critical evaluation of the business environment of business organizations

A business organization has been defined as a group of individuals working together to achieve the ultimate goals of a business (Child, 2005; Worthington & Britton, 2006). The business organization is created with the main purpose of coordinating and motivating the activities of all the members of the group so as to meet the objectives of the company (Worthington & Britton, 2006). Also all business organizations have a similar feature of transforming inputs (resources) into outputs (goods or services) (Worthington & Britton, 2006). On the other hand, the business environment is made up of all those factors that have relevance on the business (Worthington & Britton, 2006). The success of the business firm is determined by the business environment because a favourable environment leads to growth and development while an unfavourable environment leads to destruction of the firm (Brooks & Weatherston, 2000).

The business environment is divided into the external and the internal environment (Worthington & Britton, 2006; Brooks, & Weatherston, 2000). The internal environment is broadly made up of two components: the strengths and the weaknesses of the organization. The strengths and weaknesses depend on the following factors: the value system; mission and objectives; organizational structure; corporate culture; quality of human resources; labour union; physical resources; and technological capabilities (Worthington & Britton, 2006). The external environment is however composed mainly of business opportunities and threats (Daniels, Radebough & Sullivan, 2004; Worthington & Britton, 2006). The internal and external environments are intricately interrelated and depend on each other. Also, the environment is volatile with sudden unexpected changes (Worthington & Britton, 2006) which could lead to changes in inputs, in the transformation process and in output as well as in other aspects of the organization's business environment ((Daniels, Radebough & Sullivan, 2004; Worthington & Britton, 2006). Factors such as the value system, set objectives of the company, quality of human resources and corporate culture that made up the internal environment have been found to influence success. The characteristic of human resources is critical for the success of the business because it contributes to the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation. Factors such as professional skills, commitment to achievement of organisational objectives and attitudes all influence the success of the business (Worthington & Britton, 2006). It has been shown that organisations that invest in professional skills and professional development of employees gain competitive advantage over their competitors (Worthington & Britton, 2006).

Critical evaluations of the concepts, basic principles and importance of business etiquette

Etiquette means code of behaviour therefore business etiquette is defined as the expected behaviours and expectations for people within an organisation, group or society (Etiq notes, 2018; Fox, 2008; Ryabova, 2015). Etiquette is all about the norms of human conduct. It is how an employee is expected to relate to their colleagues and to their employer. Etiquette describes behaviours that lead to development of a happy work environment.

The importance of treating other people with respect and courtesy can never be overemphasised in today's globalised world (Okoro, 2012). The behaviour of an individual as well as their appearance to others shows who they really are (Fox, 2008; Okoro, 2012). The way a person looks, talk, walk, sit, stand and eat describe their real nature as well as create an impression that others remember whenever the person is mentioned either in personal or professional life (Fox, 2008; Ryabova, 2015).

Business etiquette is about promoting relationships in business with co-workers as well as with outsiders. It helps the firm to achieve its business goals and foster good relationship among its workers (Okoro, 2012). Etiquette ensures that gender, race and sexual orientation issues are properly handled in the workplace as well as many other issues of co-interaction in business. An employee must have a mixture of intelligence and etiquette to make a good impression on customers as well as

business associates (Fox, 2008). Many employers consider an individual that interacts well with colleagues and clients as a better employee than that with professional qualifications and intelligence (Fox, 2018). Good manners at work such as courteous treatment of people, respecting others and being kind are important attributes that lead to success in business (Fox, 2008; Okoro, 2012).

An organisation with good strategic planning ensures good (professional) behaviour among its employees for this leads to achievement of organisational objectives. Lack of good character and behaviour makes an individual useless no matter their level of intelligence and experience. Business organisations have some set standards in behaviour that an employee or any representative of the company is expected to conform to. How an individual behaves in the board room or business parties is being observed by the stakeholders of the company and this may be used for or against the individual (Etiq notes, 2018). The workplace environment today requires that an employee should have good interpersonal relationships and communication to succeed in addition to their qualifications, experience, professional skills and good productivity (Etiq notes, 2018; Okoro, 2012).

Team work is necessary in the day to day activities of companies in order to achieve common goals therefore an employee must get along with their team or group and cooperate. Any employee that cannot cope with such arrangement of team work may end up out of the organization.

Below are important rules of business etiquette

1. Introduction – nothing makes people feel valued than being introduced to others. It is highly recommended if there is a chance people should be introduced to each other (Fox, 2008).
 2. Handshake shows politeness, openness and confidence as well as creates a professional relationship.
 3. Saying 'please' and 'thank you' is courteous.
 4. Interrupting others while they speak is not only rude but disrespectful and should be avoided.
 5. Language should always be professional whether in verbal or written communication. Offensive language and slang should be avoided.
 6. Double checking a written communication for errors, spelling, meaning and appropriate tone is vital before sending.
 7. An unannounced intrusion into someone's office is disrespectful.
 8. Avoid workplace gossip for it damages reputation.
 9. Avoid intrusion into the privacy of another people's conversation.
 10. Other people should be acknowledged not ignored even when busy.
 11. Talking about politics and religion should be avoided at work place
 12. Always be on time as this shows how you value another peoples time.
 13. Phone calls should be avoided during meetings because other people attending the meeting may feel disrespected and it prolongs the meeting.
 14. Business card should not be pushed to others but with their permission.
 15. Listening attentively to others and keeping eye contact shows genuine interest to what they are saying.
- (Fox, 2008).

Critical evaluations of the relationship between business environment and business etiquette

The importance of the relationships between the business environment and business etiquette can never be overemphasized and is also well recognised. To start with business etiquette is one of the components of the internal business environment of the organization (Worthington & Britton, 2006). Etiquette is one of the characteristics of human resource of the organization for it is all about the norms of human conduct and the behaviours that bring about a happy work environment. Organizations that achieve their goals and set objectives have been shown to have adapted to their business environment, take advantage of their strength and significantly improve their performances (Sharma, 2014; Razzak & Kellermann, 2012; Render, Stair & Hanna, 2012; Worthington & Britton, 2006). These factors or attributes of a business organization translates into the quality of services and products it provides to the society and ultimately leads to high demand for these services or products by the consumers (Gutacker et al. 2016; Worthington & Britton, 2006).

The business environment and business etiquette in the north west region of Nigeria

Many African countries are faced with a critical shortage of health workers (Olu-Abiodun & Abiodun, 2017). This is in part due to emigration to Europe, America as well as other regions of the world. This leads to challenges such as recruitment and retention problem of health workers, development of an unhealthy work environment and an unending demand for client-focused services (Olu-Abiodun & Abiodun, 2017). Previous studies have shown that successful healthcare organizations have effective leadership, provide high quality care leading to client satisfaction as well as improved health outcomes (Olu-Abiodun & Abiodun, 2017). These qualities are directly or indirectly related to the business environment and business etiquette. However, there is paucity of knowledge about the application of these subjects (as mentioned above) in the North West region of Nigeria.

Summaries of key influences on choice of hospital

The literature review has revealed the factors that influences demand for services from a specific hospital. These include

1. Customer satisfaction with services rendered due to the quality of human resources, technological capabilities, and efficient management process of the organization.
2. Good behaviour of employees of the organization.

Methodology

The research has selected survey research design for this project to seek answers to the research question. The study seeks to find out the influence of the business environment and business etiquette in decision making on the demand for hospital services from healthcare organizations within the North West region of Nigeria.

Online and paper-based survey questionnaire were used to collect data. The questionnaire with the same set of questions was provided to respondents. Simple questions that explored the personal opinions of respondents were used.

People living within the North West region of Nigeria were invited to join the survey without any sampling to ensure that a sample size with similar characteristics as the population was used. Complete anonymity was ensured in the data collection. All respondents were assured that their responses are confidential. Responses were collected continuously over a period of two weeks. The data collected was analysed. That is the information gathered through data collection was transformed into a format that simplifies it or makes sense out of it (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012).

Results and discussion

Three hundred (300) people responded to the questionnaire legibly and these are mainly users of hospital services in the North West region of Nigeria. The responses were coded, and no participant names were included. Out of the 300 responses analysed 147 were from online survey and 153 from paper-based questionnaire which were completed and returned directly or through email. A total of 150 of the respondents were female while 149 were male only one prefers not to say their gender. Also 174 of the respondents were educated to the postgraduate level. And the largest number of participants in the survey (34.9%) is between the ages of 35 – 44 years old followed those between the ages of 25 – 34 years old (31.9%).

The results will be discussed in the following format: Customer satisfaction with the services rendered; employee behaviour; comparing the main influences to choice of hospital in North West region of Nigeria.

Table 1.1

Figure 1

Customer satisfaction with the services rendered by the hospitals

The research results have shown that customers (patients) of hospitals are satisfied with the services they are provided by hospitals in the North West region of Nigeria. This is probably related to the quality of services they receive since it has been shown that successful healthcare organizations

provide high quality care leading to client satisfaction as well as improved health outcomes (Olu-Abiodun & Abiodun, 2017). However, it could also be due to lack better options as well as to the monopoly of government hospitals over private hospital in terms of human resources, technological capability and cost of services. Poverty may also be a reason why many people cannot afford to go to private hospitals so will have to be contented with what the public hospitals offer them.

Good behaviour shown by employees of the organization

Respondents have confirmed their expectations in terms of the behaviours of employees of hospitals towards them (patients/clients). The greater majority of the respondents expect hospital employees to receive them with a smiling face while some expect a form of introduction and greetings as well as saying 'please' and 'thank you' whenever they interact with the hospital employees. As have been explored in the literature review good (professional) behaviour among employees leads to achievement of organisational objectives. On the other hand, lack of good character and behaviour makes an individual employee useless no matter their level of intelligence and experience. The respondents have also shown in the results of this research that bad behaviour is generally disliked by clients.

Table 1.2

Table 1.3

Comparing the main influences to choice of hospital in north west region of Nigeria

The respondents were almost unanimous (67%) in indicating professional skills of employees as their main influence to choosing a hospital to visit for healthcare services. Although some showed that their main influence is employee behaviour however the proportion of such group of clients is far below that of those influenced by professional (clinical) skills. This has answered the research question which seeks to understand in what ways and to what extent is the proportion of the number of patients that choose a hospital due to professional skills of its employees differ from the proportion of those that choose due to employee behaviour in North West region of Nigeria? To a large extent the proportion of the number of patients that choose a hospital due to professional skills is different to that of those who choose due to employee behaviour in terms of its quantity.

As surprising as this result may seem it could also be related to the monopoly of public hospitals in owning the best quality human resources as well as technological capability making public hospitals synonymous to good results in terms of health outcomes. Private hospitals can't compare with public hospitals even if they have good behaved employees because of the above reasons.

Table 1.4

Figure 2

Conclusion and recommendations

Summary of the findings

The study investigated how professional skills compare to employee behaviour in influencing the choice of hospital by patients in the North West region of Nigeria. This investigation was achieved through seeking an answer to the following question:

'In what ways and to what extent is the proportion of the number of patients that choose a hospital due to professional skills of its employees differ from the proportion of those that choose due to employee behaviour in North West region of Nigeria?

The literature review and the analysis of the research results have answered the question above. The results have confirmed that professional skill of employees is the main influence to choice of hospital in that region of Nigeria. It has also been confirmed that most of the patients are satisfied with the services rendered to them in the hospitals.

The implication for management however is that the hospitals still need to take action to improve quality of care through maintaining high standards in quality of human resources as well as improving employee behaviour through ensuring the availability of code of behaviour for its employees. Also management of organizations should make effort to adapt their organizations to the business environment, take advantage of their strengths, improve business etiquette, use scientific approach in

decision making so that management processes are more efficient and significantly improve their performances.

Recommendations

In the future further research in focus area could be conducted especially with a focus on the management and employees of hospitals within the same region as this may give another perspective to the business environment, business etiquette and the use of quantitative techniques in management of these hospitals.

Tables and figures legend

Table 1.1 Overview of the results. Patients' satisfaction with services of hospitals in north west region of Nigeria.

Level of Satisfaction	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Total
Number of patients	10	96	188	6	300
%	3.3	32.0	62.7	2.0	100
Interpretation	Few patients	Many patients	Most of the patients	Few patients	-
Implication	Important	Very important	Important	Important	-
Recommendation	Action required	Action required	No action required	No action required	-

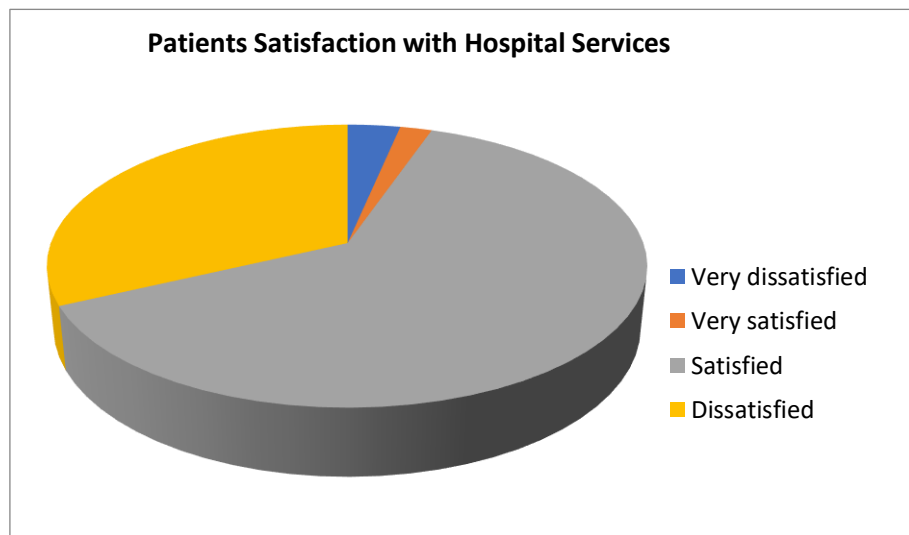


Figure 1

Table 1.2 Overview of the results. Good behaviour shown by employees as expected by clients (patients) of hospitals in north west region of Nigeria

Issue code	Behaviour	x	%	Interpretation	Implication	Recommendation
A1	Introduction& greetings	29	9.67	Frequently expected	Important	Some action required
A2	Smiling face	241	80.33	Mostly expected	Very important	Action required
A3	Warm handshake	10	3.33	Not expected	Not important	No action required
A4	Saying 'please' & 'thank you'	20	6.67	Frequently expected	Important	Some action required
Total		300	100			

Key x = number of clients that expects the good behaviour from hospital employees.

Table 1.3 Overview of the results. Behaviour of hospital employees disliked by Clients (patients) in the north west region of Nigeria

Issue code	Behaviour	x	n	%	Interpretation	Implication	Recommendation
B1	Interrupts when client is speaking	192	300	64	Disliked by most	Very important	Action required
B2	Show lack of interest	151	300	50.33	Disliked by many	Important	Action required

Key x = number of clients who disliked a behaviour of the hospital employees
n = total number of respondents

Table 1.4 Overview of the results. Comparing the main influences to choose a hospital by clients (patients) in the north west region of Nigeria

Influences	x	%	Interpretation	Implication	Recommendation
Professional skills	201	67.00	Main influence	Very important	Action required
Employees behaviour	56	18.67	Frequently influence	Important	Action required
Other reasons	43	14.33	Weak influence	May be important	No action required
Total	300	100			

Key x = number of patients influenced by the factor

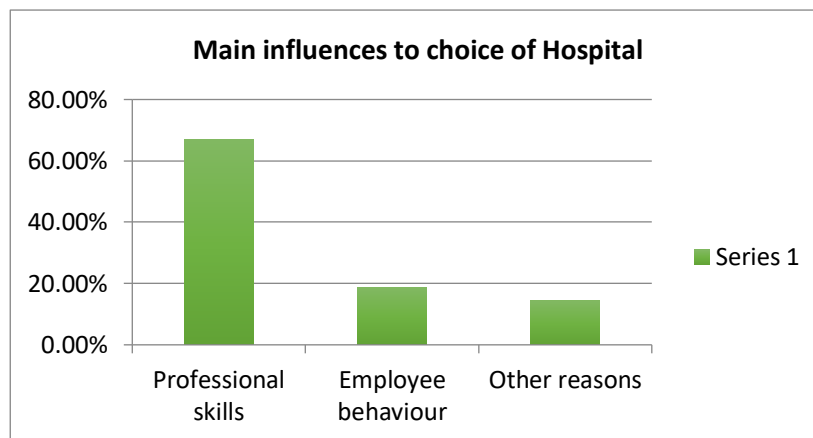


Figure 2

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