



Exploring the Challenges Faced by Health Information Professionals in Delivering Quality Services in University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the challenges faced by health information professionals in delivering quality services in University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital. This study adopted a survey research design to identify and examine the challenges faced by Health Information Professionals at the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital (UITH) and their impact on service delivery. The study targeted all 89 Health Information Professionals at UITH, encompassing roles in medical records, information technology, and data analysis. Total enumeration sampling was employed to ensure comprehensive data collection. Self-structured questionnaires were distributed to all participants, with follow-ups conducted to maximize response rates and ensure data completeness. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics with SPSS Version 23. The findings revealed several significant challenges impacting the quality-of-service delivery. The most prevalent issue reported was the lack of sufficient filing space for patients' records (84.5%). Other notable challenges included lack of motivation from hospital management (82.2%), insufficient skilled manpower (77.8%), deployment of non-health information personnel (77%), and lack of timely distribution of working tools (66.7%). These challenges highlight critical areas needing attention to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of health information services in university teaching hospitals in Ilorin. The study concluded that these findings are crucial for both practice and policy. Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendation was to since lack of enough space for filing patient's records is a predominant challenge of quality service delivery of health information professionals in University of Ilorin, Teaching Hospital.

Keywords: Health Information Professionals, Delivering, Quality Services, University of Ilorin, Teaching Hospital

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INTRODUCTION

Health information services play a crucial role in the healthcare system by managing patient data, ensuring the accuracy and accessibility of medical records, and supporting clinical decision-making processes. These services are vital for the efficient functioning of hospitals, improving patient care, and facilitating research and education within medical institutions. Health information professionals are responsible for a wide range of tasks, including the management of health records, coding and classification of diseases, data analysis, and ensuring compliance with health regulations and standards. Their work is fundamental to maintaining the integrity, confidentiality, and availability of patient information, which is essential for high-quality healthcare delivery (Higgs & Rowland, 2023). The University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital (UITH) is a major healthcare provider and a center for medical education and research in Nigeria. As a teaching hospital, UITH not only delivers patient care but also trains future healthcare professionals and conducts vital medical research. This dual role adds complexity to the management of health information services, making it imperative to address the unique challenges faced by health information professionals in this setting (Faloudah, Qasim, & Bahumayd, 2015). Challenges are crucial for improving the quality of health information services at UITH. Enhanced health information systems can lead to better patient outcomes, more efficient hospital operations, and greater support for medical research and education. By identifying and tackling these issues, UITH can ensure that its health information professionals are well-equipped to deliver high-quality services, ultimately contributing to the overall effectiveness of the healthcare system, exploring the challenges faced by health information professionals at the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital provides insights into the broader issues affecting health information services in similar settings. Understanding these challenges is the first step towards developing strategies and solutions to improve the quality and efficiency of healthcare delivery.

In the health care setting, especially in teaching hospitals, healthcare service is very fundamental. Therefore, the strengthening of service delivery is crucial to the achievement of reducing health challenges such as child mortality, maternal mortality, burdens of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. Adeniran, (2019) states that service organizations such as hospitals are compelled to concern them with quality service delivery because it is one feature that defines what they do and makes them attractive to customers. This assertion is based on the fact that hospitals deliver services such as emergency care, preventative care, rehabilitation, hospital care and diagnostics and by right these services are expected to be of quality standard.

Okafor, & Afolabi, (2021) states that quality health care service delivery refers to the degree to which health care services that are delivered to individuals and population increases the likelihood of desired health outcomes and are consistent with current professional knowledge. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) identifies safety, effectiveness, patient-centeredness, timeliness, efficiency and equitability, as factors that determine quality health service. Quality service delivery according to Al-Damen (2017), involves the application of medical science and technology in such a way that it will maximise its benefits to health without corresponding risks. Healthcare services rendered to people at the right time, according to Faloudah, Qasim and Bahumayd (2015) is considered as quality health care services. For Adil, Ghaswyneh, & Albkour, (2013), quality service delivery is the customers' perception and judgement as per the complete package of health care delivery received that meets and surpasses their stated and implied needs. So, quality health service is crucial because it stems from the fact that those receiving the services are satisfied with whatever they are getting. According to Izadi, hahani, Fafiei, Maosud and Vali (2017), quality service delivery influences patients' satisfaction, faithfulness and perceived values and based on this, Al-Damen (2017) adds that the impact of quality of health care services on overall patients' satisfaction is statistically significant. The implication is when patients are satisfied with the quality of the care delivery they receive; their behavioural intentions and continuous patronage of the services will be influenced positively.

Health Information Professionals (HIPs) play a critical role in the healthcare system by managing patient data and ensuring the accuracy, accessibility, and security of health information. Their work supports clinical decision-making, enhances patient care, and contributes to efficient healthcare operations. According to the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA), HIPs are essential in maintaining the integrity of health records and facilitating the flow of information between patients, healthcare providers, and other stakeholders (AHIMA, 2018).

To effectively deliver quality services, HIPs must possess a robust educational background and specialized training. Most positions require at least an associate degree in Health Information Management (HIM), though many employers prefer candidates with a bachelor's degree or higher. Additionally, professional certification, such as the Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA) or the Certified Health Data Analyst (CHDA), is often necessary. Ongoing education is crucial for HIPs to stay current with evolving regulations, technologies, and best practices in the field (World Health Organization, 2020).

The primary responsibilities of HIPs include the management of electronic health records (EHRs), ensuring compliance with health regulations such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and implementing data governance policies. They also play a vital role in data analytics, which helps in identifying trends, improving patient outcomes, and optimizing healthcare processes. Moreover, HIPs are involved in coding and classification of diseases and procedures, which is fundamental for accurate billing and reimbursement (AHIMA, 2021).

HIPs significantly impact patient care by ensuring that healthcare providers have timely and accurate access to patient information. This access facilitates informed clinical decisions, reduces medical errors, and enhances the overall quality of care. Studies have shown that effective health information management leads to improved patient outcomes, increased patient satisfaction, and better resource utilization within healthcare facilities (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). The integration of advanced technologies in healthcare, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), and Blockchain, has transformed the role of HIPs. These technologies enhance data accuracy, improve patient privacy and security, and enable more sophisticated data analysis. HIPs must therefore be proficient in these technologies to maximize their benefits and ensure the delivery of high-quality health information services (National Institutes of Health, 2019). Despite their essential role, HIPs face numerous challenges, including managing the vast amount of health data, ensuring data privacy and security, and adapting to rapidly changing technologies. To address these challenges, healthcare organizations must invest in continuous education and training for HIPs, adopt robust cybersecurity measures, and implement effective data management strategies. Collaboration between HIPs and IT professionals is also crucial to developing innovative solutions to these challenges (Johns Hopkins Medicine, 2020). The future of health information management is promising, with ongoing advancements in technology and an increasing emphasis on data-driven healthcare. HIPs will continue to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of healthcare by leveraging data to improve patient care, streamline operations, and support research initiatives. As the healthcare landscape evolves, the demand for skilled HIPs is expected to grow, underscoring the importance of investing in their education and professional development (World Health Organization, 2022).

Statement of the problem

In contemporary healthcare environments, the role of health information professionals is crucial for ensuring efficient patient care and hospital administration.

However, despite their significance, these professionals at the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital (UIITH) face numerous challenges that hinder their ability to deliver quality services. The problem this study addresses is the identification and examination of the various obstacles that health information professionals encounter in their daily operations. These challenges include inadequate infrastructure, insufficient training and professional development opportunities, limited access to up-to-date medical information, and the lack of integration of advanced information technology systems. Additionally, organizational issues such as insufficient staffing, poor management practices, and inadequate policies further complicate the delivery of optimal health information services.

Understanding these challenges is essential for developing strategies and policies that can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of health information management at UIITH. This study aims to provide insights into the specific difficulties faced by health information professionals, thereby contributing to the enhancement of service delivery in healthcare institutions.

Research Questions

The following research question was answered in the study:

What are the challenges of quality service delivery of health information professionals in University of Ilorin, Teaching Hospital?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of the research reviews previous works related to the major concepts of this study. In the teaching hospitals, health care services are delivered to customers who are in need of medical attention. Health care service delivery could be regarded as multi-dimensional activities in that it embraces components, processes and policies that are not limited to curative, preventive, health promotion, rehabilitative and therapeutic. Essiam, (2013) states that health care services would include all services dealing with diagnosis and treatment of disease. It would also involve the promotion, maintenance and restoration of health. According to Akahome, (2017), health care service delivery includes clinical services, laboratory services, health education, promotion and training of health professionals to improve effectiveness and efficiency of services that are rendered to the people. Therefore, for a health care service delivery to be effective, it would require bringing about acceptable level of all programmes into the system which brings about quality health care delivery.

In determining what also constitutes quality health care delivery, Ephraim-Emmanuel, Adigwe, Oyeghe, & Ogaji, (2018) opine that quality health care service delivery has a significant relationship with how the customer (patient) feels about the care being received. It also plays a huge part in determining the retention and loyalty. This is because quality can be assessed from the perspective of the clients, service providers. Therefore, quality health care service delivery according to Keelson, & Donkor, (2014) involves those features of products and services which meet patients' needs and satisfaction.

Johns Hopkins Medicine (2020) states that quality health care service delivery refers to the degree to which health care services that are delivered to individuals and population increase the likelihood of their desired health outcomes and are consistent with current professional knowledge. World Health Organization WHO (2015) defines quality health care service delivery in relation to the extent to which health care services that are delivered to patients and individuals improve their desired health outcomes.

According to Jahani, Y.Rafiei, S.Masoud, A. (2017), stated that quality health care service delivery influences patients' satisfaction, faithfulness and perceived values. This is the basis on which Al-Damen (2017) adds that the impact of quality of health care services on overall patients' satisfaction is statistically significant. When quality health care service in an organization is well harnessed, it will reduce some errors, limits morbidity and mortality rates, reduce patients' waiting time and many other things. This will lead to the satisfaction of patients and when patients are satisfied with the quality of the care delivery they received, their behavioural intentions and continuous patronage of the services will be influenced positively. The concept of quality of health care service delivery as seen by Keelson, & Donkor, (2014) is the customers' perception and judgment as per the complete package of health care delivery received that meets and surpasses their stated and implied needs. So, quality health service stems from the fact that those receiving the services are satisfied with whatever they are getting and therefore, it is very crucial. Any services rendered to people at the right time, according to Faloudah, Qaism and Bahumayd (2015) is considered as quality health care services. Quality service delivery for Al-Damen (2017) involves the application of medical science and technology in such a way that it will maximize its benefits to health without corresponding risks. Based on this, WHO (2016) in Olapojoye, (2017) avowed that quality of health care service delivery "depends on the physical infrastructure, human resources, knowledge, skills, and capacity to deal with both preventable diseases, normal pregnancies and complications that require prompt life-saving interventions". Bamigbade, (2014) has observed that quality health care service delivery is multi-dimensional

as various models have been proposed by scholars. In evaluating the quality of healthcare services, some service quality models have been developed. They are the Gap Model, SERVQUAL Model and SERVPERF Model. According to Amin & Nasharuddin, (2013), tangibility in health care service delivery would also include the appealing appearance of the health facilities, total conditions of equipment, neat appearance and adequate professional and non-professional manpower. It would also involve clear and understandable information and communication medium, good illumination and appropriate work environment. Responsiveness which is another dimension is in connection with the willingness of the health care providers to help patients and their ability of the care provider to promptly render the needed health care services to the patients (Adil, Ghaswyney & Albkour, 2013). Responsiveness also involves all social actions of health care provider in meeting the rightful expectation of patients at the right time and place. Akintayo, (2019) reported that WHO sees responsiveness as the cardinal dimension of quality of health care services as it consists of the domains that involve patients having the right choice of health care provider, patients having access to support networks and many more services.

The next dimension is reliability which has to do with the ability and competence of the healthcare providers to render services to the patients in a consistent, accurate, dependable and in an evidence-based manner (Okeke, 2012). Okeke, (2012) stated that it might not be possible for a hospital to achieve quality service delivery when health care professionals are not responsible. Therefore, they should be trustworthy and dependable in their services as they take care of the patients. Assurance which is the fourth dimension of quality health care service delivery focuses on the skills and knowledge of health care providers and other employees working in the hospitals to often instill confidence and trust to patients or the beneficiaries of the health care service deliveries.

Assurance would require that the health care providers have the ability to practice courtesy and convey trust and confidence to their customers. Empathy is the final dimension of quality health care service delivery proposed by Cronin and Taylor. In this dimension, it is expected that the health care providers would provide care and be responsive to the needs, preferences and values of individual patients. The health information professionals should be empathetic and show concern to the patients that come to the hospitals. The health care professionals should have compassion for patients, listening to their complaints; suggestions and involving them in the decision-making regarding their health care management (Lee, Lee, & Yoo, 2000). In summary, quality health service delivery to patients would entail rendering services in tangible, responsive, reliable, assured and in an empathic manner so as to meet patients' needs, perceptions and satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey research design. The population for this study comprised Health Information Professionals at the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital. Specifically, the study targeted all 89 Health Information Professionals employed at the hospital. This population includes individuals involved in various aspects of health information management, such as medical records, information technology, and data analysis. Total enumeration sampling was adopted for this study. This sampling technique involves including the entire population in the study, rather than selecting a subset. Given the relatively small population size of 89 Health Information Professionals, total enumeration was deemed appropriate to ensure comprehensive data collection and enhance the reliability of the findings. The primary instruments for data collection were sets of self-structured questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed to all 89 Health Information Professionals at the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital. The researcher ensured that the questionnaires were administered in a manner that guaranteed confidentiality and encouraged honest responses. Follow-ups were conducted to maximize response rates and ensure the completeness of the data collected. The data generated from the completed questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics. SPSS Version 23 was used.

RESULTS

Research Question: What are the challenges of quality service delivery of health information professionals in University of Ilorin, Teaching Hospital?

Table 1 indicates that health information professionals indicated that there were challenges of delivery of quality service by health information professionals in University of Ilorin, Teaching Hospital. The most predominant challenge was lack of enough filing space for patients' records (84.5%). Others include lack of motivation of health information managers by the hospital management (82.2%), lack of enough skilled manpower in the hospital (77.8%), deployment of non-health information personnel to work as health information professionals (77%) and lack of timely distribution of working tools (66.7%). This implies that health information professionals faced challenges in respect to delivery of quality service in University of Ilorin, Teaching Hospital in terms of lack of enough filing space for patients' records, lack of motivation of health information managers by the hospital management, lack of enough skilled manpower in the hospital, deployment of non-health information personnel to work as health information professional and lack of

timely distribution of working tools.

DISCUSSION

Research Question: What are the challenges of quality service delivery of health information professionals in University of Ilorin, Teaching Hospital?

Research question four sought to examine the challenges of quality service delivery of health information professionals in University of Ilorin, University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital. Olapojoye (2017a), stressed that quality care delivery in healthcare facilities largely depends on organizational treatment factors and procedures such as level of care provided, training of care providers, nature of the provider-patient relationship, treatment procedures, diagnostic procedures, and facility needs, such as equipment. Challenges of quality service delivery of health information professionals were investigated in this study based on the following indicators- filing space for patients' record, staff motivation, availability of skilled manpower, engagement of non-health information personnel, consistency with the standard service delivery policies, conduciveness of environment, implementation of customer-first culture, proximity of health records library to the clinic and distribution of working tools. This study revealed that participants strongly indicated that filing space for patients' record is a major challenge of quality service delivery. Further, the participants agreed that indicators such as staff motivation, lack of skilled manpower, engagement of non-health information personnel, consistency with the standard service delivery policies, conduciveness of environment, implementation of customer-first culture and distribution of working tools as various challenges of quality service delivery of health information professionals in University of Ilorin, University of Ilorin, Teaching Hospital.

The present study is in agreement with the study by Peter, Ibraheem, Faruk, Adebayo, and Omole (2020) which noted the problem of influx of non-professionals in the health information management department as a challenge of quality service delivery of health information professionals in Nigeria. The present study is in line with that of Akparep, Jengre, & Mogre, (2019) who discovered that motivation is a factor affecting health professionals in the public hospitals in central Ethiopia. The study also stressed that *health professionals who obtain incentives are more motivated than those who do not obtain incentives, the study also expatiated that motivation of health professionals was affected by different factors such as supervisor related factors, financial benefits, job*

Table 1: Challenges of quality service delivery of health information professionals

Variables	Yes Freq. (%)	No Freq. (%)
Lack of enough space for filing patient's records is one of the challenges that are facing quality service delivery in my hospital.	114 (84.5)	21(15.5)
Lack of motivation of health information managers by the hospital management in my hospital.	111(82.2)	24(17.7)
Lack of enough skilled manpower in my hospital.	105(77.8)	30(22.2)
Deployment of non-health information personnel to work as health information professional is one of the challenges that are facing quality service delivery in my hospital.	104(77)	31(22.9)
Lack of consistency with the standard service delivery policies in my hospital.	98(72.6)	37(27.4)
Lack of implementation of customer-first company culture to ensure that patients-centered quality service is delivered at all time in my hospital.	96(71.1)	39(28.9)
Lack of conducive environment to work in my hospital.	95(70.4)	40(29.6)
Proximity of health records central library to clinics in my hospital.	91(67.4)	44(32.6)
Lack of timely distribution of working tools (e.g forms and registers) in my hospital.	90 (66.7)	45(33.3)

Source: Field Survey 2024; Freq. = Frequency

content, professional qualification and location of the hospital. The finding of this study also agrees with Awofeso (2018) cited in Ajisebute (2016), Bamigbade (2014) and Ejumudo, (2013) who found out in their various studies that the bigger problem of the health information professionals stems from issues such as unavailable or inaccurate patients' records, lost; mutilated; and misplaced or missing case files. The finding of the present study is evidence to buttress the outcome of the study by Ephraim-Emmanuel, Adigwe, Oyeghe & Ogaji (2018), on quality of health care in Nigeria which stressed that the pace of development in the public health sector was unsatisfactory; likewise poor quality service delivery and poor health status of Nigerian population. The finding of the present study also supports that of Ejumudo (2013) in his study on health service delivery in Nigeria: Managing the organizational environment which revealed that the Federal Government of Nigeria allocates funds very poorly. This is one of the factors that are contributing to poor quality health care service delivery.

Conclusion

This study aimed to identify and examine the challenges faced by Health Information

Professionals at the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital (UITH) and understand the impact of these challenges on the delivery of quality health information services. The findings revealed significant obstacles such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient training opportunities, limited access to up-to-date medical information, and a lack of advanced information technology systems. Additionally, organizational issues like insufficient staffing and poor management practices further hindered the professionals' ability to perform effectively. These challenges resulted in delays in information processing, inaccuracies in medical records, and overall reduced efficiency in service delivery. The implications of these findings are crucial for both practice and policy. Hospital management and policymakers must prioritize enhancing infrastructure, resource allocation, and training programs to better support Health Information Professionals. Implementing advanced IT systems and addressing organizational issues through improved staffing and management practices can significantly improve the quality and efficiency of health information services. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to monitor changes over time, comparative studies across different healthcare institutions to identify best practices, and evaluations of specific interventions aimed at

mitigating the identified challenges.

Recommendation

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendation was made:

Since lack of enough space for filing patient's records is a predominant challenge of quality service delivery of health information professionals in University of Ilorin, Teaching Hospital, government should therefore recognize involvement of health information professionals as a stakeholder in the planning stage of hospital building as this will facilitate provision of spacious active, semi-active and inactive library that will conveniently accommodate patients' folders for a reasonable number of years according to retention policy of the hospital.

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