ASSESSING STRATEGIC THINKING AND TEACHING HOSPITAL PERFORMANCE POST-PANDEMIC: A SURVEY FROM NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT:
The coronavirus pandemic has also heightened these concerns; though, organizations continue to grapple for ways to improve performance. However inadequate strategic thinking is prevalent and has not received adequate attention post-pandemic, particularly in Nigeria the giant of Africa owning to the population. Therefore, this study aims to determine the association between strategic thinking and the long-term performance of organizations in Nigeria with a representative sample of selected teaching hospitals in Ogun State Nigeria. This is due to the peculiarity of teaching hospitals to live and well-being and the peculiar erratic business environment in Nigeria. The investigation utilized a survey research design comprising 339 medical doctors (Registrars, Senior Registrars, and Consultants) from teaching hospitals in Ogun State, Nigeria. The technique of total enumeration was used. A validated semi-structured questionnaire was utilized to collect data for the study. The constructs' Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients ranged from 0.88 to 0.92. The rate of response was 93.8%. For the analysis of the data descriptive and inferential statistics were employed (Pearson product-moment correlation and regression analysis). The data analysis revealed that strategic thinking had a significant positive effect on the organizational performance of teaching hospitals in Ogun State, Nigeria (Adj. $R^2 = 0.051$, $F(4, 313) = 5.295, p < 0.05$). The study concluded that strategic thinking affects the organizational performance of teaching hospitals in Ogun State, Nigeria, and can ensure long-term survival. Due to the correlation between strategic thinking and organizational performance, it is recommended that organizations adopt strategic thinking and ensure that they comprehend its significance to organizational performance. Strategic thinking can be a solution for hospital organizations to remain resilient in uncertain times.
Keywords: Business performance, Environment, Productivity, Teaching hospital, Nigeria, Strategy

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused disruptions and has had negative impacts on hospitals the world over. The hospitals have to survive by making various modifications in an effort to adapt to uncertain conditions, even transforming the hospital's strategic plan that has been made previously. More so hospital performance contributes to the quality of the state of health and wellness of the people in a given place, community or country at large, and without good health even the best economies of the world suffer greatly, just as it is rightly said ‘health is wealth’. Hospital performance deals with such indicators as the efficiency and effectiveness of the hospital and is also a key component to every healthy society concern. Critical to the expectation of every health institution concern is the performance of these institutions. This is because if the hospital's performance is not encouraging or impressive, the hospital will soon be out of service or business due to a lack of patronage. Also, strategic thinking is very important in any hospital setting whether at the primary, secondary, or tertiary level. This is because of its act of combining processes of intuition and creativity which turns out to become an integrated perspective of the institution. So, how strategic thinking plays out in an organization is very important.

Scholars have argued in favor of strategic thinking and organizational performance in settings other than hospitals as having positive (Al-Hawary & Hadad, 2016); (Goldman et al., 2017); (Ibrahim Olaniyi & Elumah Lucas, 2016). Also, some scholars have carried out studies on the relationship between strategic thinking and hospital (Ghanem et al., 2015); Rabbanikha et al., 2018) and they all showed a positive relationship between strategic thinking and hospital performance but these studies were carried out in the developed countries. Nair and (Nair & Ibrahim, 2015) also established that privacy and confidentiality of information have always been a concern in research and clinical settings as potential breaches of confidentiality involve the disclosure of health information without a patient’s consent, legal compulsion or legal authorization for its release may lead to patient lack of trust in the health system, reduced patient satisfaction and on the long run hampers the overall hospital performance. The practice of strategic thinking in every organization is very important, however in most cases, the health workers lack the required intelligence or tact to be discrete about such information and to keep such from non-consented
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individuals, they also lack the ability to discern the right strategy to be deployed, when to disclose such information and even the skill to communicate to their patients sensitive information about their health status therefore, according to Pattinson (2016) the situation thereby reveals their lack of intelligent opportunism which enables individuals to implement alternative strategies that appear to be more valid and relevant to certain situation or environment and also their lack of strategic thinking which is a tool that helps managers to accept improved work techniques by adapting (Kiaei et al., 2016). Hence, there is a need for studies on the relationship between strategic thinking and patient confidentiality within the health sector.

Studies on strategic thinking (Alatailat et al., 2019); Kalali, Momeni & Heydari, 2015; Kazmia and Naaranojab, 2015; Pourkiani & Pourroostaei, 2015; Shafiei & Fard, 2015) have so far yielded results, thereby contributing to the body of knowledge in the line of assessment that they were used such as in organizational intelligence on strategic thinking, management skills and strategic thinking, strategic thinking and supportive work environment, key elements of thinking strategically, high-performance work practices, organizational performance and strategic thinking but limited studies exist between strategic thinking and staff to patient ratio. Owoseni, Gbadamosi, Ijabadeniyi and Adekunle (2016) revealed that with the rapid growth in population and corresponding increase in health and medical needs, demand for health facilities has increased so much which has in-turn impeded the performance of the health facilities and the health personnel to patient ratios are quite low with an average of fifty (50) patients to one (1) health personnel per working day. In support of Owoseni et al. (2016), Osundina and Opeke (2017) found out that due to the imbalance in the doctor–patient ratio in Nigeria, patients wait longer in queues before seeing health providers and this act may continue if the situation is not addressed promptly.

(Nwaopara, 2015) asserted that staff to patient ratio has been a major challenge in the healthcare sector as findings from a study carried out by the researcher in a hospital setting revealed that the doctor-to-patient ratio in that hospital is 1:870 and as such is referred to as “Health Professional Shortage Area” (HPSA). This is a result of the inadequate number of nurses, psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, pharmacists, and other support staff available in the centre yet amidst the complex and ever-changing demands of a country such as Nigeria with an ever-increasing population and information availability and decreasing time to think, the need to develop sound strategic thinking in an organization is highly essential and critical hence, there is need to establish the relationship between strategic thinking and staff (doctors) to patient ratio as this study intends to examine. Scholars have focused on the relationship between strategic
thinking and hospital performance management (Ghanem et al., 2015); (Nair & Ibrahim, 2015); Kiaei et al., 2016; Rabbanikha, Moradi, Monafi & Kazemi-Bollboloy, 2018). Although all the studies reviewed showed a positive influence of strategic thinking on hospital performance but most of the studies were conducted in developed countries except for the study by (Ibrahim Olaniyi & Elumah Lucas, 2016) which was conducted in Nigeria but the study was done within Nigerian business environment other than the hospital setting. The observed lack of proper strategic thinking practice among medical doctors in teaching hospitals, therefore, calls for a proper investigation into the linkage between strategic thinking and the performance of teaching hospitals in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Various scholars have focused on the relationship between strategic thinking and innovative behavior, strategic thinking and transformational leadership, strategic thinking styles and enhancement of competitive capabilities, strategic thinking and entrepreneurial cognition, and strategic thinking and accounting (Aaltola, 2019); (Al-Hawary & Hadad, 2016); (Dutta, 2015); (Gross, 2016); Kazmi, Naaranoja & Kytölä, 2016). However, less attention in the literature reviewed has been given to strategic thinking and patient waiting time in hospital settings (Djelassi et al., 2018); (Elkomy & Cookson, 2020); Lot, Sarantopoulos, Min, Perales, Boin & Ataide, 2018; Xie & Or, 2017). However, (Gross, 2016) asserted that organizational performance based on a laissez-faire style of management from the strategic level showed a positive relationship with strategic thinking but was not significant. On this basis, the present study hypothesized that strategic thinking dimensions (systems perspective, intent focus, intelligent opportunism and thinking in time) have no significant effect on the teaching hospital performance in Ogun State, Nigeria.
RESEARCH METHODS

This paper relied on the prior study methodology of (Karatepe & Olugbade, 2009), Olubiyi, Adeoye, Jubril, Adeyemi, and Eyanuku, (2023), Adeyemi, and Olubiyi, (2023). Olubiyi, Egwakhe, and Akinlabi (2019), Olubiyi, Egwakhe, and Egwuonwu, (2019), Olubiyi, Egwakhe, Amos, and Ajayi (2019), Olubiyi, Lawal, and Adeoye, (2022). Olubiyi (2019), Olubiyi, Lawal, and Adeoye, (2022), Olubiyi, (2022a), Olubiyi, (2022b), Olubiyi, Jubril, Sojinu, and Ngari, (2022), Ukabi, Uba, Ewum, & Olubiyi, (2023) and Uwem, Oyede, and Olubiyi, (2021), Makinde, and Agu, (2018) and Uwem, Oyede, and Olubiyi, (2021). From the outset, it was clear to the researchers that given the time available for the study, an effective approach must be found to obtain data from the study population. The population of the study comprised three hundred and thirty-nine (339) medical doctors (resident doctors and consultants) drawn from the two (2) teaching hospitals in Ogun State, Nigeria. The two teaching hospitals in Ogun State accounted for 50% of the tertiary hospitals in the State. The choice of teaching hospitals for this study was because they are the highest tertiary health facilities in Nigeria and the presence of all the specialities will give a more robust assessment of the strategic thinking and hospital performance of tertiary health facilities in Ogun State Nigeria, unlike if the study was carried out in a hospital where some specialities are missing. Resident doctors (Registrars and Senior Registrars) and Consultants are also expected to think at the strategic level of healthcare.

A survey research design was used to elicit information from respondents. The target population for this study was three hundred and thirty-nine (339) medical
doctors consisting of the resident doctors (Registrars and Senior Registrars) and Consultants of the two teaching hospitals in Ogun State which are Babcock University Teaching Hospital (BUTH), Ilishan-Remo and Olabisi Onabanjo University Teaching Hospital (OOUTH), Sagamu. The 339 medical doctors constituted the sample size as the researcher used total enumeration for the study. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to obtain data for this study which was analysed using multiple regression analysis. The units of analysis for this study were the resident doctors (registrars and senior registrars) and consultants of the two teaching hospitals in Ogun State, Nigeria. In addition, data on the strategic thinking and hospital performance of teaching hospitals in Nigeria, particularly Ogun State are lacking at the moment, a gap that this study addressed. The study also gave an idea of the strategic thinking and hospital performance in a public teaching hospital such as OOUTH, and a private teaching hospital such as BUTH.

Table 1
List of teaching hospitals in Ogun State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Cadres of Medical doctors</th>
<th>Staff Strength</th>
<th>Year of Establishment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Babcock University Teaching Hospital (BUTH)</td>
<td>Babcock Road, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria.</td>
<td>Registrars Senior Registrars Consultants</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Olabisi Onabanjo University Teaching Hospital (OOUTH) (Kolade et al., 2016)</td>
<td>Hospital Road, Sagamu, Ogun State, Nigeria.</td>
<td>Registrars Senior Registrars Consultants</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>1986</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Staff Records as of the 31st of January- BUTH Administrative office [Human Resource], 2023; OOUTH Administrative office [Human Resource], 2023

On the question of ethics, the researchers accompanied the questionnaire with a cover letter, which explains the purpose of the research and solicits the respondents' support and time to complete the questionnaire.
The researchers ensured that only the hotel customers completed the questionnaire and assured anonymity by requesting that the completed questionnaire be enclosed in envelopes provided by the researchers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To ascertain the effect of strategic thinking dimensions (systems perspective, intent focus, intelligent opportunism, and thinking in time) on teaching hospitals’ performance in Ogun State, Nigeria. What is the effect of strategic thinking dimensions (systems perspective, intent focus, intelligent opportunism, and thinking in time) on teaching hospital performance in Ogun State, Nigeria?

The objective ascertained the effect of strategic thinking dimensions (systems perspective, intent focus, intelligent opportunism, and thinking in time) on teaching hospitals’ performance in Ogun State, Nigeria. On a six-point Likert scale, the respondents were requested to rate their perception of various items about strategic thinking dimensions and teaching hospital performance in Ogun State, Nigeria. The results of descriptive statistics of the teaching hospital performance in Ogun State, Nigeria were already presented in Table 2. The results showed that the respondents agreed with statements in relation to the teaching hospital performance in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Strategic thinking dimensions (systems perspective, intent focus, intelligent opportunism, and thinking in time) have no significant effect on teaching hospital performance in Ogun State, Nigeria. To test the hypothesis, a multiple linear regression was used. In the analysis, the dependent variable was teaching hospital performance while the independent variables were strategic thinking dimensions. The regression results are presented in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>R^2</th>
<th>Adj. R^2</th>
<th>F(df)</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>77.280</td>
<td>20.053</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>5.295(4, 313)</td>
<td>10.39861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intent Focus</td>
<td>0.346</td>
<td>1.173</td>
<td>0.242</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent Opportunism</td>
<td>-0.067</td>
<td>-0.222</td>
<td>0.825</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking Intime</td>
<td>-0.870</td>
<td>-3.742</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System Perspective</td>
<td>0.468</td>
<td>2.573</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Teaching Hospital Performance
The analysis in Table 2 presents the results of multiple regression analysis on the effect of Strategic thinking dimensions (systems perspective, intent focus, intelligent opportunism and thinking in time) on teaching hospitals' performance in Ogun State, Nigeria. The coefficient of multiple determination adjusted $R^2$ is 0.051 ($F(4, 313) = 5.295$, $p < 0.05$) indicates that Strategic thinking dimensions explained 5.1% of the changes in teaching hospital performance in Ogun State, Nigeria while the remaining 94.9% could be attributed to other factors not included in this model. Also, the F-statistics (df = 4, 313) indicates that the overall model is significant in predicting the effect of Strategic thinking dimensions (systems perspective, intent focus, intelligent opportunism and thinking in time) on teaching hospitals' performance. This implies that Strategic thinking dimensions have a significant effect on teaching hospitals' performance in Ogun State, Nigeria. Table 2 also presents the results of individual variables in multiple regression analysis. Based on the results of the analysis, Thinking Intime ($\beta = -0.870$, $t = -3.742$, $p < 0.05$) has a negative and significant effect on teaching hospitals' performance in Ogun State, Nigeria. The result further shows that System Perspective ($\beta = 0.468$, $t = 2.573$, $p < 0.05$) has a positive and significant effect on teaching hospitals' performance in Ogun State, Nigeria. More so, the result shows that Intelligent Opportunism ($\beta = -0.067$, $t = -0.222$, $p > 0.05$) has a negative and insignificant effect on teaching hospitals' performance in Ogun State, Nigeria, while Intent Focus ($\beta = 0.346$, $t = 1.173$, $p > 0.05$) have a positive and insignificant effect on teaching hospitals performance in Ogun State, Nigeria. The result inferred that out of all the dimensions of Strategic thinking, both thinking in time and systems perspective have a significant effect on teaching hospitals' performance in Ogun State, Nigeria.

The multiple regression model is expressed thus:

$$THP = 77.280 + 0.468SP - 0.870TIT$$

…………………………………………….. Eq. (1)

Where: $THP = Teaching hospitals' performance$

$$SP = Systems perspective$$

$$TIT = Thinking in time$$

The regression model above shows that holding the Systems perspective and Thinking in time to a constant zero, Teaching hospitals' performance would be 77.280. This means that without Systems perspective and Thinking in time, Teaching hospitals' performance would be positive at 77.280. The model also shows that when the Systems perspective is improved by one unit, Teaching hospitals' performance would increase by 0.468. This indicates that an increase in the Systems perspective would

**Source: Researchers' Field Results (2023)**
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lead to a subsequent increase in Teaching hospitals' performance in Ogun State, Nigeria. However, a unit change in Thinking in time would reduce Teaching hospitals' performance by 0.870. The results of the analysis indicate that to improve Teaching hospitals' performance, teaching hospitals in Ogun State, Nigeria should improve their Systems perspective, and improve their Thinking in time. Therefore, due to the fact that the model is significant in predicting effect of Strategic thinking dimensions on Teaching hospitals performance in Ogun State, Nigeria (Adj. $R^2 = 0.051$, $F(4, 313) = 5.295$, $p < 0.05$), the null hypothesis ($H_0$) which states that Strategic thinking dimensions (systems perspective, intent focus, intelligent opportunism and thinking in time) have no significant effect on the teaching hospital performance in Ogun State, Nigeria was rejected.

The findings indicated that Strategic thinking dimensions (systems perspective, intent focus, intelligent opportunism, and thinking in time) have a significant effect on teaching hospital performance in Ogun State, Nigeria. This study finding is in line with the submissions of (Dionisio, 2017); Rabbanikha et al. (2018), and Kiaei et al. (2016) who found strategic thinking dimensions to be linked with hospital performance. Conceptually, Tsai et al. (2015) and Veronesi et al. (2014) stated that strategic thinking dimensions aid doctors both clinically and professionally in discharging their duties which enhances the operational efficiency and effectiveness of the hospital thereby, leading to substantial improvement in the overall hospital performance.

This is also supported by a study finding by Juma et al. (2016) on the benefit of strategic thinking in organizational performance as it was found that organizational development and performance do not rely only on the decisions and thoughts of managers but also on an organization’s environments, characteristics and competencies of its employees. Empirically, in promoting better hospital performance, (Ghanem et al., 2015) stated that instead of waiting for challenges to confront hospital management, doctors and managers should act in advance to optimize and sustain value-based health care. In a bid to optimize and sustain value-based health care, the scholars’ submission supported the findings of earlier scholars who asserted that the existence and application of a suitable model to evaluate the performance of hospitals can lead to an increase in patients’ responsiveness and satisfaction and even the improvement of service quality (Taslimi & Zayandeh, 2013). This is also in line with the findings of this study as the strategic thinking model was used to evaluate the performance of teaching hospitals in Ogun State, Nigeria and the aggregated result showed that the strategic thinking dimensions had a positive and significant effect. Since the result was positively significant the strategic thinking model is a suitable model to evaluate the performance of hospitals which can also lead
to an increase in patients’ responsiveness and satisfaction and even improve service quality.

Theoretically, as suggested by the dynamic capability theory, hospital management’s ability to align strategic orientation such as strategic thinking dimensions with the hospital processes will lead to improved overall hospital performance (Tsai et al., 2015). More so, the theory supports the conception that achieving better hospital performance propels management to identify areas for performance improvements, plan systematic performance improvement initiatives, set targets, and continuously track performance metrics (Tyagi & Singh, 2017). The scholars also stated that the challenging issue of hospital performance management can be resolved by a system that can help managers make effective decisions to improve hospital performance. Hence, (Ghanem et al., 2015) posited that hospital management should apply strategic thinking dimensions for improved performance in the health system.

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that the dynamic capability theory aligns with both the study findings and findings by other scholars, hence revealing the extent to which hospital management and doctors incorporate strategic thinking dimensions in the course of discharging their duty affects the hospital performance. In line with the aforementioned, Tsai et al. (2015) found that hospitals with more effective management practices, strategic foresight and competencies provided higher quality care and service which in turn had a significant positive effect on the hospital's financial performance due to an increase in patronage. Conversely, hospitals that lack effective management strategies and competencies will only become inefficient and less effective in providing adequate care which would impair the hospital's financial performance due to low or no patronage at all.

The dynamic capability theory is appropriate in explaining the role of systems perspective and thinking in time on teaching hospital performance, hence there exists an agreement among these studies and the result of this present research that systems perspective and thinking in time have a significant effect on teaching hospital performance, as the various studies reviewed seem to have supported the positive association that exists between systems perspective, thinking in time and teaching hospital performance. Strategic thinking dimensions had a significant effect on teaching hospital performance in Ogun State, Nigeria. However, the system perspective had a positive and significant effect, while thinking in time had a negative and significant effect; intelligent opportunism had a negative and insignificant effect and intent focus had a positive and insignificant effect on teaching hospitals performance in Ogun State, Nigeria.
CONCLUSION

Critical to the expectation of every hospital is its performance. This is because if the hospital's performance is not encouraging or impressive, the hospital will soon be out of service or business due to a lack of patronage. Hence, there has to be a synergy between strategic thinking measures for doctors and hospital performance, meaning hospital management should ensure that doctors imbibe and implement systems perspective and thinking in time in the course of discharging their duty to improve the performance of the hospital. Also, when doctors experience heavy workflow that is when there are so many patients to be attended to, in order to ensure stability at work, the use of the strategic thinking dimensions will help doctors to be more likely productive and even perform better. This stability at work reflects the assumptions of dynamic capability theory which are absorptive, adaptive, and innovative capabilities as such doctors will perform better in challenging and dynamic environments which will give rise to better and improved hospital performance.

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