UTILIZATION OF UNIVERSITY HEALTH CARE SERVICES AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN GOMBE STATE UNIVERSITY-NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
The study examined the utilization of university health care services among undergraduate students in Gombe State University. The study employed accidental sampling technique to administer 601 copies of structured questionnaires to students that visited the university clinic for treatments. The findings of the study revealed that, the university clinic accommodate received more female students compared to male. The study found that most of the university staff are accommodative as showed by the majority respondents. The time given to students in the clinic always clashes with lectures. The study revealed the types of illnesses taken students to university clinic include indigestion/conspiration, cold fever, malaria fever, typhoid fever, headache and general body pain, feminal problems and antenatal services among pregnant women. The study shows that students indicated satisfaction with the treatment received. The study however revealed inadequate personnel, lack of drugs, unfriendly approach of staff, inadequate facilities and delay in administering health care services among the challenges students encounter in utilizing the university health care facilities. The study concluded by recommending the need for upgrading the university health care clinic with sophisticated medical equipment to enable diagnose of diseases mostly taken students to the university clinic. Also, more medical personnel should be employed to help the experienced and old medical staff mostly with increase in the population of students in the university. This research has further contributed to the literature on utilization of university health care services among undergraduate students. There was no any empirical research of this nature in the study area and on this note, the findings of the study differed from other previous related study in the university because it has showcased a new knowledge on perception, type of illnesses taken students to university clinic and level of satisfaction of the

treatment received and challenges students encounter in accessing the university health care clinic.

1.1: Introduction

Safe and effective health care is central to morbidity and mortality reduction and improving productivity of individuals, communities and societies generally. Organizations, institutions and governments strive to provide health care services for their people through delivery systems such as in-house clinics, primary health care centres or clinics, secondary and tertiary level facilities. Despite these efforts, insufficient access to health care services has remained a major barrier to utilization of public health care services which is attributed to inherent health systems weaknesses and inappropriate aligned health care policies (User & Mairiga, 2020).

In public organizations and institutions like universities in Nigeria, students are perceived to be exposed to a wide range of obstacles that affects their health care behaviour or need is increasing. As it is known that every university has its own health care clinic where students seek first hand health care services. Students in this respect largely encounter problems while making attempts to utilize the health care services. The challenges students encountered have implications on their level of utilization and hence tends to affect their perception. If students are well attended to and the administration system adjudged by the students to be efficient, it will influence their decision to visit the health care clinic again, otherwise, they seek health care services far away from the university (Tunde, Ishaq & Emeka, 2014).

Furthermore, most of the university health care clinics in Nigeria are underequipped or lack sophisticated equipment to treat chronic and degenerating diseases like diabetes, asthma and hepatitis among others. Some universities do not have sufficient drugs to treat infectious like malaria, typhoid and dysentery among others. Many studies conducted on students' utilization of university health care clinics have revealed that poor funding of most of the universities has affected the type of health care facilities available (Nasiru et al, 2023). Similarly, most of the health care facilities in universities especially the public ones are mere dispensary or first aid treatment centres. The universities does not have adequate drugs and health care instruments that can meet the emerging trends of health care crisis.

In Gombe State University, there are a number of factors that affect the utilization of health care clinic among students. These include inadequate bed space, inadequate personnel and delay in attending to patients who are mostly students. These factors have prevented students from utilizing the university health care clinic. Although, the university management has tried to address these challenges, but with increase in population of students coupled with poor access to water supply and electricity and the emerging relatively new health concerns such as AIDS and sexually transmitted infectious (STIs), these challenges still persist and pose health care challenges especially among the undergraduate students. It is on this note that this study examines the utilization of the university health care services among undergraduate students in Gombe State University.

1.2: Statement of problem

Health care services include a wide range of services in health promotion, illness prevention, early detection of diseases and management of health care problems. In this respect, health care services are designed to meet the health needs of the community through the use of available health facilities with health manpower carrying out their professional duties (Obiechina & Ekenedo, 2013). Globally, universities do have health care centres which are expected to provide adequate health care services to the university community and its environs. The university health care centres seems to provide students access to affordable and superior health care services. The evaluation of health care services among students across universities in the nation's states revealed that most students benefitted and utilized health care services.

In Nigeria, it has been noted that, cost of health care services, distance of health care facilities, waiting time and quality of health care

services were found to be contributory to the non-utilization of health care facilities among students in the universities. In a study of some factors affecting utilization of health care services in the University of Benin stated that easy accessibility to the medical centre, time spent in waiting for treatment, students-medical staff relationship and availability of drugs were among factors affecting the utilization of services (Alakija, 2000). In another study on access and utilization of health care services at the University of Jos health centre found that patterns of diseases treated at the health centre include malaria fever, respiratory tract infections, peptic ulcer, hypertension, diabetes, genitourinary infections, typhoid fever among others (Usar & Mairiga, 2020).

Furthermore, perceptions and patients level of satisfaction has received little research and it is unclear whether the issue is being addressed in university health care clinics. In Nigerian universities also, studies on students' utilization of health services are sparse. The aim of the study therefore is to determine the utilization of university health care services among undergraduate students in Gombe State University.

1.3: Theoretical framework

Anderson model of health care utilization was adopted and used as theoretical framework for this study. The theory was developed in 1968 as a model looks at three categories of determinants of health care utilization including predisposing characteristics, enabling characteristics and need based characteristics. The predisposing characteristics according Anderson represent the proclivity to utilize health care services. Individuals in this respect is more or less likely to use health care services based on demographic, position within the social structure and beliefs of health care services benefits. Similarly, the enabling characteristics includes resources found within the family and the community. Family resources comprises economic and the location of residence. Furthermore, community resources incorporates access to health care facilities and availability of persons for assistance. Finally, the need based characteristics includes perception of need for health care services, whether individual, social or clinically evaluated perception of need.

Anderson has further expanded the scope of the health care utilization model to include the health care system. In this respect, the health care system includes health policy, resources and organization, as well as the changes that affect them overtime. Resources comprises the volume and distribution of both labor and capital including education of health care personnel and available equipment. Organization also refers to how the health care system manages its resources which is ultimately influences access to and structure of health care services. The revised model looks at how organizations distributes its resources and whether or not the organization has adequate labor volumes to determine if an individual uses health care services. In addition, the revised model includes recognition that consumer satisfaction reflects health care use (Ahmad et al, 2019).

The Anderson model of health care utilization is relevant for this study because of its flexibility which provide a robust analytical framework for discussion. The theory examines the perception of individuals concerning utilization of health care services, level of satisfaction received from the treatment of illnesses as well as the challenges individuals encounter in accessing health care services. This is more relevant in explaining the conditions of the university health care services among undergraduate students who reported to the university clinic and received treatment for various illnesses by viewing their perceptions, level of satisfaction of the treatment they received and the challenges they encounter in accessing health care services.

1.4: Conceptual clarifications

- **Health care personnel:** These are health workers mainly physicians, nurses, physician assistants, emergency medical technicians and other authorized persons acting under the directions of an attending physician and administrators of university's health care clinics. These personnel work in the clinic and treat different kind of ailments or sicknesses.
- **Health care utilization:** Refers to the continuum that embeds measures such as the quantity of health care services used, the volume of services delivered or the number of clients served and the

percentage of occupancy or attendance at the health care clinic.

- **Undergraduate students:** Refers to students registered and undertake degree courses in different field of specializations in colleges and universities in Nigeria.
- **University health care clinic:** Refers to clinics sited in the university where health care services are provided to staff and students. The health care clinic in some universities in Nigeria are seen as hospitals or teaching hospitals where patients, students and staff received medical treatments whenever they are sick.

1.5: Purpose of the study

This study aims to investigate the utilization of the Gombe State University health care services among undergraduate students. Specifically, the study seeks to examined

i. Perception of students concerning the university health care clinic

ii. The types of illnesses taken students to university clinic and level of satisfaction of the treatments received

iii. Challenges students encounter in accessing the university health care clinic

2.1: Materials and methods

The study area is the Gombe State University Clinic situated within the main campus of the university. The university health care clinic has been in an existence since the establishment of the university in 2004. The main aim of establishing the university clinic is to: provide efficient health care services to the members of the university community including students and provide advisory health care services to individuals who are in need of health care counselling. Due to increase in population of students and high demand for health seeking solutions especially for students, most of the resources and facilities such as medical personnel, bed space, drugs and other facilities have overstretched and hence many students face difficulties accessing the health care services in the university clinic.

Therefore, from the population of 21,487 students in 2022/2023 academic session across all the faculties and medical college, 601 students represented the sample size for the research. The selection of the sample size was done with the aid of Krejcie and Morgan Sample Size Calculator for Research Activity with margin of error of 4% and 95% confidence level. Questionnaire was used and administered on the respondents. The study has further employed accidental sampling technique to collect data from the sampled population of the students who visited the university clinic during the period of the research study. The accidental sampling technique was employed to collect the information on perception of students concerning the university health care clinic, the type of illnesses taken students to university clinic and level of satisfaction of the treatment received and challenges students encounter in accessing the university health care clinic.

The data obtained from the administered questionnaire was analyzed using tables and percentage. The analysis was done with the aid of a statistical package for the social sciences (version 16).

3.1: Results

Table 3.2: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Age	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
16-20 years	132	22.0
21-25 years	360	60.0
26 years and above	108	18.0
Total	**600**	**100.0**
Sex	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Male	240	40.0
Female	360	60.0
Total	**600**	**100.0**
Marital status	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Single	528	88.0
Married	72	12.0
Total	**600**	**100.0**

Level of studies	Frequency	Percentage
100L	204	34.0
200L	156	26.0
300L	48	8.0
400L	168	28.0
500L	24	4.0
Total	**600**	**100.0**

The table 3.2 shows socio-demographic characteristics of the students including the age, sex, marital status and level of studies. The 22.0% of the students were aged between 16 to 20 years, 60.0% aged between 21-25 year and 18.0% aged 26 years and above. Similarly, 40.0% of the students were male and the remaining 60.0% were female. Also, 88.0% of the students were single and 12.0% were married. Furthermore, 34.0% of the students were in 100 Level, 26.0% were in 200 Level, 8.0% were in 300 Level, 28.0% were in 400 Level and 4.0% were in 500 Level.

Table 3.3: Perception of students concerning the university health care clinic

	Response				
	Excellent	**Very good**	**Good**	**Fair**	**Poor**
Administrative efficiency	120 (20%)	216 (36%)	144 (24%)	84(14%)	36 (6%)
			Agree	**Disagree**	**Undecided**
Most of the university clinic staff are not accommodating			108 (18%)	300 (50%)	192 (32%)
The university clinic is cheaper than outside clinics			468 (78%)	96 (16%)	36 (6%)
The time given to students for health care services always clashes with lectures			300 (50%)	228 (38%)	72 (12%)
Most of the staff of the university clinic are too old and need to be replaced			142(23.7%)	290(48.3%)	168 (28%)
University clinic uses Doctors who are not qualified			96 (16%)	396 (66%)	108 (18%)

The table 3.3 gives information on respondents' perception of the university health care clinic. It shows from the table that, the administrative efficiency of the health care clinic is appreciative and also good as indicated, where 20% viewed the administrative efficiency is excellent, 36% viewed also as very good, 24% opined that it is good and 14% indicated that, it is fair. Only insignificant proportion of the respondents were not satisfied with the administrative efficiency of the university clinic. In the same vein, the perception of students concerning the operation and general facilities as well as staff of the university clinic shown also in table 2, shows 18% of the respondents indicated that, most of the staff of the university clinic are not accommodating. The 50% of the respondents opposed to the assertion that, the university staff are not accommodating and the remaining 32% were undecided. This analysis implies that, most of the university clinic staff are accommodating and caring.

Furthermore, the perception of students on the assertion that, the university clinic is cheaper than the outside clinics indicated by the majority respondents (78%) believed that, treatment of illnesses in the university clinic is cheaper than the clinics outside the university. Also, 50% of the respondents opined that, the time given to students for health care services usually clashes with lectures, as they do left lectures to visit the university clinic, while 38% disagree with that assertion where they see problem with the time. Similarly, on whether staff of the university clinic are too old and need to be replaced with especially young and energetic staff to improve the efficiency of the health care clinic, while a negligible proportion of the respondents held the opinion that, the university clinic staff are too old and need to be replaced, majority of the respondents (48.3%) held the opinion that, there is no need for the staff to be replaced. This shows that, the staff in the university clinic are energetic and performing well by attending to students and staff of the university. Also, 28% of the respondents were undecided. Finally, majority of the respondents (66%) disagree with

the assertion of using students Doctors who are not qualified, they believed Doctors working in the university clinic have been screened and found capable of handling health related cases.

Table 3.4: Type of illnesses taken students to the university clinic and level of satisfaction of the treatments received

	Level of satisfaction			
Illness	**Highly satisfied**	**Satisfied**	**Not satisfied**	**Total**
Indigestion/conspiration	120 (29.4%)	216 (52.9%)	72 (17.7%)	408/600
Cold fever	120 (28.6)	240 (57.1%)	60 (14.3%)	420/600
Malaria fever	192 (39.0%)	216 (43.9%)	84 (17.1%)	492/600
Typhoid fever	192 (41.0%)	192 (41.0)	84 (18.0%)	468/600
Headache & general body pain	228 (46.3%)	204 (41.5%)	60 (12.2%)	492/600
Eye problem	72 (17.1%)	228 (54.3%)	120 (28.6%)	420/600
Cough & catarrh	168 (36.8%)	228 (50.0%)	60 (13.2%)	456/600
Stomach pain	156 (36.1%)	240 (55.6%)	36 (8.3%)	432/600
Feminal problems	108 (27.3%)	204 (51.5%)	84 (21.2%)	396/600
Antennal services	25 (50%)	20 (40%)	05 (10%)	50/600

The various illnesses that take students to the university clinic and level of satisfaction are shown in table 3.4 above. The table shows 29.4% of the respondents indicating highly satisfied with treatment of indigestion/conspiration from the university clinic, 52.9% viewed that, they satisfied with the treatment received and 17.7% viewed that, they are not satisified with the treatment of indigestion/conspiration they received from the university clinic. Similarly, 28.6% of the respondents viewed their high level of satisfaction from the treatment of cold fever, 57.1% viewed that, they are satisfied and 14.3% also indicated that, they are not satisfied with the treatment of cold fever from the university clinic. Also, respondents' opinions regarding the level of satisfaction they received from the treatment of malaria fever indicated majority opinions viewing their satisfaction with 43.9%.

The 41.0% of the respondents further viewed that, they are highly satisfied with the treatment received from typhoid, 41.0% also satisified and 18.0% were not satisfied with the treatment they received from typhoid fever. Also, with regard to the treatment of headache and general body pain, 46.3% of the students reported high level of satisfaction, 41.5% indicated that, the services given them is satisfactory, while the remaining 12.2% indicated not satisfaction from the treatment of headache and general body pain in the university clinic. Similarly, majority of the respondents were also satisfied with the level of treatment received from eye problem in the clinic with 54.3% and 28.6% indicated not satisfaction from the treatment of eye problem as well in the university clinic. The respondents also from the majority opinions observed that, they are satisfied with the treatment of cough & catarrh with 50.0% and also a very significant percent of the student indicated high level of satisfaction and 13.2% indicated no any satisfaction as well.

The analysis further shows respondents opinions regarding the level satisfaction from the treatment of stomach pain in the university clinic. The majority respondents (55.6%) indicated they are satisfied with the service rendered, while also a significant proportion of the respondents (36.1%) indicated high level of satisfaction and 8.3% viewed no any satisfaction from the treatment rendered. Finally, 51.5% of the majority respondents viewed their satisfaction with the services rendered to them on Feminal problems they face, 27.3% have also indicated that, they are highly satisfactory and the remaining 21.2% indicated no satisfaction.

Similarly, from the pregnant women who visited the university clinic for antenatal services, 50% of them viewed that, they are highly satisfied with the services they received, 40% indicated that, they are satisfied and 10% viewed that, they are not satisfied with the antenatal services received from the university clinic.

Table 3.5: Challenges students encounter in accessing the university health care clinic

	Frequency	Percentage
Inadequate personnel	130	21.7
Lack of drugs	115	19.2
Unfriendly approach of staff	93	15.5
Inadequate facilities	122	20.3
Delay in administering health care services	140	23.3
Total	**600**	**100.0**

The challenges students encounter in accessing the university health care clinic as shown in table 4 above indicated that, inadequate personnel, which is the cause of most of the delays complained from the students. Also, lack of drugs was also one of the challenge undergraduate students in the university encountered in accessing the health care services. This is also the reason why many students prefer to go home when they are sick in order to get better treatment. Inadequate facilities ranges from insufficient bed space was among the most problem identified and finally delay in administering health care services. These are the common challenges affecting students accessing the university clinic for the treatment of many identified illnesses mention in table 3.

4.0: Discussion

The study set out to investigate healthcare services utilization among undergraduate students of Gombe state university. The study revealed the majority age group that utilize the university's healthcare services are between 21-25 years of age 360(60%). The female gender 360(60%) utilize healthcare services more than their male counterpart. This is in agreement with the outcome of many researches in gender utilization of healthcare services (Abednego Nzyuko Masai et al 2021). There are more single students 528(88%) that utilize the university's healthcare services compared to married students 72(12%). This indicates the preference to complete tertiary education and training before marriage. 100 level students were found to be the majority of students that utilize the university's healthcare services.

The perception of students with regards to the administrative efficiency of the university's healthcare clinic is positive with 480(80%) response. The findings revealed that the staff of the clinic are accommodating to students with 300(50%) of the responses. A good number of the responses were undecided 192(32%) and 108(18%) were in agreement that the university clinic staff are not friendly and accommodating. The distribution clearly demonstrates the need for improvement in terms of patient – healthcare provider relationship. The students overwhelmingly agreed 468(78%) that the university clinical healthcare services are cheaper than outside clinics. Half of the responses 300(50%) are in agreement that clinic time usually clashes with their lecture time table except for Saturdays and Sundays. This is in the nature of illness as it occurs without prior notice. Therefore, the students and management are not to blame, according to Talcott Parson (1981).

The distribution on the need to replace some of the university clinic staff, 142(23.7%) supports the replacement of some of the clinic staff due to age, while 168(28%) were undecided. Majority of the responses 396(66%) disagreed that the university clinic employ unqualified medical personnel in healthcare service delivery. This supports the power of medicine and notion that it is a specialized profession that does not harbor quacks but well trained and skilled professionals in the science and art of healing. The findings on level of satisfaction with diagnoses and treatment received in the clinic revealed that patients with eye and feminine problems are less satisfied with diagnoses and treatment. Other diseases treated at the clinic include indigestion/constipation, cold fever, malaria, typhoid, headache and antenatal

services. The treatment of these diseases recorded between 80-90% levels of satisfaction. Antenatal services recorded the highest level of satisfaction. This rating is a good scorecard for the clinic. The distribution on challenges students encounter in accessing healthcare services at the university's clinic include inadequate healthcare personnel which results in long hours of waiting.

5.0: Conclusion

The study has shown that majority of undergraduate students indicated high level of satisfaction on the level of treatment received from the university clinic. The students have positive perception about the operation and general facilities as well as staff of the university clinic. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that inadequate personnel, delay in administering health care services and lack of drugs were the major factors that undermine the efficiency of health care service delivery among undergraduate students in Gombe State University. The study therefore recommended the need for upgrading of the university health care clinic with sophisticated medical equipments to enable diagnose of diseases mostly taken students to the university clinic. Also, more medical personnel should be employed to help the experienced and old medical staff mostly with the increase in the population of students in the university.

Author's contribution

HYB, NA, AU & FWE developed the study idea, designed, analyzed and interpreted the data. The authors also wrote the final draft of the article. Some staff of the university clinic were involved in the study with respect to the distribution of the questionnaires. All the authors have participated in critically reviewing the article and approved the final draft for publication.

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