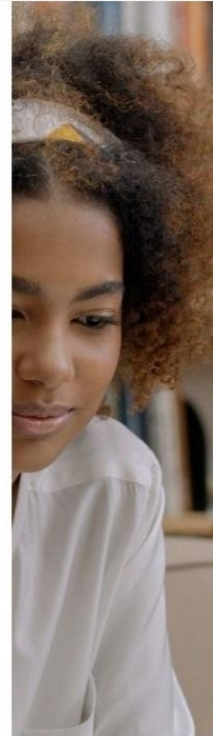




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EMPLOYEES' ATTITUDES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON CONSUMER PATRONAGE IN GOVERNMENT-OWNED HOSPITALS IN BENIN CITY, EDO STATE

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ABSTRACT

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Employee attitudes in healthcare settings significantly influence patient safety, service quality, and healthcare outcomes. Government-owned hospitals in Nigeria face increasing challenges with low patient trust, poor service quality perceptions, and complaints regarding employee behavior, discrimination, and inadequate care standards. This study investigated the relationship between employee attitudes (job commitment, interest, innovative idea exchange, and enthusiasm) and consumer patronage in government-owned hospitals in Benin City, Edo State. A cross-sectional survey design was employed using clustered convenience sampling. Eighty questionnaires were distributed to full-time medical employees in government hospitals, with 60 completed responses (75% response rate). The sample included doctors (16.7%), nurses (58.3%), and other medical staff (25%). Data were collected using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis via E-views 8.1. The correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between all employee attitude variables and consumer patronage. Employee enthusiasm demonstrated the strongest correlation ($r = 0.962$, 96.2%), followed by job commitment ($r = 0.601$, 60.1%), innovative idea exchange ($r = 0.488$, 48.8%), and employee interest ($r = 0.351$, 35.1%). While 66.7% of respondents reported high commitment and interest levels, only 41.7% expressed fair job satisfaction, and innovative idea exchange remained low with 50% disagreement on its prevalence. Employee attitudes significantly influence consumer patronage in government-owned hospitals. Employee enthusiasm emerged as the most critical determinant. The study recommends management investment in attitude development training, enhanced quality service programs, and fostering innovative idea exchange to improve consumer patronage and restore public confidence in government healthcare facilities.

Keywords: Employee attitude, consumer patronage, government hospitals, healthcare quality, job commitment, employee enthusiasm, Benin City, Nigeria

Introduction

The attitudes of doctors and nurses toward patient safety represent significant factors in hospital safety climates and medical error rates. In professional clinics, hospitals, and other workplace settings, negative attitudes can adversely affect physicians and other healthcare professionals in terms of patient treatment.

Healthcare organizations operating in the public sector are experiencing increasingly low trust from patients regarding the quality of care provided. Today, people hoping to receive high-quality services tend to prefer private hospitals or even travel abroad for medical treatment (Karassavidou, Glaveli, & Papadopoulos, 2008; Alharbi, 2014). Consequently, National Health System Hospitals are under pressure from governments and the general public to improve quality and compete effectively. Furthermore, many research studies have reported that the public healthcare sector is perceived to have lower service quality compared to the private healthcare sector. This perception has been supported by other researchers who have conducted studies on healthcare service quality. Moreover, government-funded health services have frequently been reported to provide poor-quality care. Studies have found that services provided by private hospitals are superior to those provided by public hospitals.

Health is a fundamental human right recognized in the World Health Organization's Constitution (1946), which states that the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, or economic or social condition. Patient satisfaction with proposed services is one of the important objectives of medical care, which can have substantial impact on patients' health status. Deprivation of patients' rights creates significant strain for patients and their families and may cause damage to the social esteem of the health system.

Caring is essential in nursing (Gray, 2008). Finfgeld-Connett (2008) explains caring as an interpersonal process characterized by expert nursing, interpersonal sensitivity, and intimate relationships. Nursing encompasses both technical or medical aspects and emotional aspects of care. Brilowski and Wendler (2005) acknowledge emotional and technical dimensions of caring, listing attributes such as attitudes, actions, relationships, acceptance, and

variability. The opposite of caring is uncaring. Wiman and Wikblad (2004) describe uncaring attributes as being disinterested, insensitive, cold, and inhuman. Providing high-quality care involves doing the right thing at the right time and improving health outcomes for patients, families, and communities (Uys & Naidoo, 2004). Unfortunately, this does not always occur. Some researchers have identified dissatisfaction among patients with the quality of care they receive (Uys & Naidoo, 2004) and with uncaring nurses (Wiman & Wikblad, 2004). Health workers' attitudes affect behavior, quality of care, and health outcomes (Dias et al., 2012). Negative attitudes adversely affect care for elderly patients (Jacelon, 2002) and other vulnerable patients, such as those with Hepatitis C (Frazer et al., 2010).

This study explored employee attitudes and consumer patronage in Nigerian health institutions.

Statement of the Problem

Some health institutions in Nigeria have received complaints about employee attitudes regarding low service quality that patients receive, unqualified employees, poor standards of nursing care, and discrimination toward certain patients, such as those with HIV/AIDS and other patients with minor health issues. The health sector has been identified as one of the areas in which discrimination occurs (Mahendra et al., 2007). Physicians and nurses have been reported to be uncomfortable when administering medical procedures to HIV-infected patients (Oyeyemi, Oyeyemi, & Bello, 2006; Oyeyemi, Oyeyemi, & Bello, 2008).

Poor nursing care: According to Ion et al. (2016a; 2016b), poor nursing care involves acts of neglect, abuse, or incompetence that occur for any reason other than error.

Direct discrimination: This occurs when a patient is treated differently and worse by a healthcare or care provider because of who they are. The reasons for this may include age, disability, religion, or belief. Direct discrimination is unlawful under the Equality Act (2010).

If these issues are not properly addressed, these health institutions will lose their reputation. Therefore, nurses' and doctors' attitudes in this

study need to be explored so that strategies can be implemented to improve the quality of care and address problems experienced by patients.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To investigate the relationship between employee job commitment and consumer patronage.
2. To investigate the association between employee job interest and consumer patronage.
3. To determine the extent to which innovative ideas are exchanged between employees and its influence on consumer patronage.

To determine the level of employee enthusiasm in the workplace and its influence on consumer patronage.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between employee job commitment and consumer patronage?
2. What is the association between employee job interest and consumer patronage?
3. Does the extent to which innovative ideas are exchanged between employees influence consumer patronage?
4. How does the level of employee enthusiasm in the workplace influence consumer patronage?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated by the researcher:

H₁: There is no relationship between employee level of commitment and consumer patronage.

H₂: There is no association between employee level of interest in the job and consumer patronage.

H₃: The extent to which employees have and exchange innovative ideas does not influence the level of consumer patronage.

H₄: Employee enthusiasm does not significantly influence consumers' level of patronage.

Methodology

The target population for this study consists of full-time medical employees in government-owned hospitals in Benin City, Edo State.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

Due to the large size of the target population, the researcher used the Taro Yamane (1967) formula to arrive at a sample size of 80 participants. This study adopted clustered convenience sampling techniques to arrive at its sample. The choice of this sampling procedure was premised on the fact that the number of full-time medical employees in government-owned hospitals in Benin City, Edo State varies from one facility to another. A well-structured five-point Likert scale questionnaire was the main instrument used to collect evidence.

Data Analysis

The data collected from respondents were analyzed in tabular form with simple percentages for easy understanding. A total of 80 questionnaires were distributed, and 60 questionnaires were returned. The study found that 41.7% of respondents were male, while 58.3% were female. Moreover, 15% of respondents were aged 15-20 years, 15% were aged 21-30 years, 20% were aged 31-40 years, and 10% were aged 41 years and above.

Furthermore, 10 respondents representing 16.7% were doctors, 35 respondents representing 58.3% were nurses, and 15 respondents representing 25% were other categories of medical employees.
Employee Commitment to the Job

Table 1: Extent to which employees are committed to the job

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	30	50.0	50.0	50.0
Agree	10	16.7	16.7	66.7
Fairly agree	10	16.7	16.7	83.4
Strongly disagree	5	8.3	8.3	91.7
Disagree	5	8.3	8.3	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey: 2025

The table above shows that 30 respondents, representing 50% of the sample, strongly agreed that employees are committed to their jobs to a high extent. Additionally, 10 respondents (16.7%) agreed, 10 respondents (16.7%) fairly

agreed, while 5 respondents (8.3%) strongly disagreed and 5 respondents (8.3%) disagreed. The researcher therefore concludes that employees are highly committed to their jobs

Table 2: Employee commitment to the job is highly encouraged

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	25	41.7	41.7	41.7
Agree	15	25.0	25.0	66.7
Fairly agree	10	16.7	16.7	83.4
Strongly disagree	6	10.0	10.0	93.4
Disagree	4	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey: 2025

The table above shows that 25 respondents (41.7%) strongly agreed that employee commitment to the job is highly encouraged, 15 respondents (25%) agreed, 10 respondents (16.7%) fairly agreed, while 6 respondents

(10%) and 4 respondents (6.7%) strongly disagreed and disagreed, respectively. The researcher therefore concludes that employee commitment to the job is highly encouraged. Employee Interest in the Job

Table 3: Level of employee interest in the job

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very high	30	50.0	50.0	50.0
High	10	16.7	16.7	66.7
Fairly high	10	16.7	16.7	83.4
Low	5	8.3	8.3	91.7
Very low	5	8.3	8.3	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey: 2025

The table above shows that 30 respondents (50%) indicated that the employee level of interest in the job is very high, 10 respondents (16.7%) indicated it is high, 10 respondents (16.7%) indicated it is fairly high, while 5 respondents (8.3%) indicated very low and 5 respondents (8.3%) indicated low. The

researcher therefore concludes that the employee level of interest in the job is very high.

Table 4: Measurement of employee interest in the job and its association with consumer patronage

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very high	40	66.7	66.7	66.7
High	15	25.0	25.0	91.7
Fairly high	5	8.3	8.3	100.0
Low	-	-	-	-
Very low	-	-	-	-
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey: 2025

The table above shows that 40 respondents (66.7%) indicated that the employee level of interest in the job and its association with consumer patronage is very high, 15

respondents (25%) indicated it is high, while 5 respondents (8.3%) indicated it is fairly high. The researcher therefore concludes that the relationship between employee level of interest in the job and consumer patronage is very high.

Table 5: Current level of customer patronage in the organization

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very high	30	50.0	50.0	50.0
High	20	33.3	33.3	83.3
Fairly high	10	16.7	16.7	100.0
Low	-	-	-	-
Very low	-	-	-	-
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey: 2025

The table above shows that 30 respondents (50%) indicated that the current level of customer patronage in the organization is very high, 20 respondents (33.3%) indicated it is

high, while 10 respondents (16.7%) indicated it is fairly high. The researcher therefore concludes that the current level of customer patronage in the organization is very high.

Employee Innovative Ideas in the Workplace

Table 6: Extent to which employees exchange innovative ideas

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	15	25.0	25.0	25.0
Agree	10	16.7	16.7	41.7
Fairly agree	5	8.3	8.3	50.0
Strongly disagree	20	33.3	33.3	83.3
Disagree	10	16.7	16.7	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey: 2025

The table above shows that 15 respondents (25%) strongly agreed that employees exchange innovative ideas to a high extent, 10 respondents (16.7%) agreed, 5 respondents (8.3%) fairly agreed, while 20 respondents

(33.3%) and 10 respondents (16.7%) strongly disagreed and disagreed, respectively. The researcher therefore concludes that the exchange of innovative ideas among employees is low.

Table 7: Employees are encouraged to be innovative and creative to meet customer expectations

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	15	25.0	25.0	25.0
Agree	30	50.0	50.0	75.0
Fairly agree	10	16.7	16.7	91.7
Strongly disagree	3	5.0	5.0	96.7
Disagree	2	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey: 2025

The table above shows that 15 respondents (25%) strongly agreed that employees are encouraged to be innovative and creative to meet customer expectations, 30 respondents (50%) agreed, 10 respondents (16.7%) fairly agreed, while 3 respondents (5%) and 2

respondents (3.3%) strongly disagreed and disagreed, respectively. The researcher therefore concludes that employees are encouraged to be innovative and creative to meet customer expectations.

Employee Enthusiasm in the Workplace

Table 8: Employees have a high level of enthusiasm in the workplace

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	15	25.0	25.0	25.0
Agree	25	41.7	41.7	66.7
Fairly agree	10	16.7	16.7	83.4
Strongly disagree	5	8.3	8.3	91.7
Disagree	5	8.3	8.3	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey: 2025

The table above shows that 15 respondents (25%) strongly agreed that employees have a high level of enthusiasm in the workplace, 25 respondents (41.7%) agreed, 10 respondents (16.7%) fairly agreed, while 5 respondents

(8.3%) strongly disagreed and 5 respondents (8.3%) disagreed. The researcher therefore concludes that employees have a high level of enthusiasm in the workplace.

Table 9: The level of enthusiasm employees have in the workplace is motivated

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	10	16.7	16.7	16.7
Agree	30	50.0	50.0	66.7
Fairly agree	10	16.7	16.7	83.4
Strongly disagree	4	6.7	6.7	90.1
Disagree	6	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey: 2025

The table above shows that 10 respondents (16.7%) strongly agreed that the level of enthusiasm employees have in the workplace is motivated, 30 respondents (50%) agreed, 10 respondents (16.7%) fairly agreed, while 4 respondents (6.7%) and 6 respondents (10%)

strongly disagreed and disagreed, respectively. The researcher therefore concludes that the level of enthusiasm employees have in the workplace is motivated.

Table 10: Current level of customer patronage in the organization

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very high	30	50	50	50
High				
Fairly high	20	33.3	33.3	83.3
Low				
Very low	10	16.7	16.7	100.0
Total				
	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	
	60			
		100.0	100.0	

Field Survey: 2025

The table above shows that 30 respondents (50%) indicated that the current level of customer patronage in the organization is very high, 20 respondents (33.3%) indicated it is high, while 10 respondents (16.7%) indicated it is fairly high.

The researcher therefore concludes that the current level of customer patronage in the organization is very high.

Table 11: Level of job satisfaction working with the organization

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Highly satisfied	10	16.7	16.7	16.7
satisfied				
Fairly satisfied	10	16.7	16.7	33.4
Dissatisfied				
Highly dissatisfied	25	41.7	41.7	75.1
Total				
	10	16.7	16.7	91.8
	5	8.3	8.3	100.1
			100.0	
	60	100.0		

Field Survey: 2025

The table above shows that 10 respondents (16.7%) indicated that their level of job satisfaction working with the organization is highly satisfied, 10 respondents (16.7%) indicated they are satisfied, 25 respondents (41.7%) indicated they are fairly satisfied, 10 respondents (16.7%) indicated they are dissatisfied, while 5 respondents (8.3%) indicated they are highly dissatisfied.

The researcher therefore concludes that the level of job satisfaction working with the organization is fairly satisfied.

Correlation Matrix

Table: Co-efficient of Correlation

	CP	ELC	ELI	EID	EE
CP	1.000000				
ELC	0.601020	1.000000			
ELI	0.351254	0.521250	1.000000		
EID	0.488080	0.853020	0.345210	1.000000	
EE	0.961930	0.110415	0.723190	0.110150	1.000000

Source: Author's Compilation Using E-views 8.1, 2025

Key: CP = Consumer Patronage; ELC = Employee Level of Commitment; ELI = Employee Level of Interest; EID = Employee Innovative Ideas; EE = Employee Enthusiasm

The table shows that the coefficient of correlation of a variable with respect to itself is 1.000, indicating a perfect correlation between a variable and itself. The correlation coefficients between the dependent variable and independent variables are discussed below:

Hypothesis Testing

H₁: There is no relationship between employee level of commitment and consumer patronage.

Decision rule: When the correlation figure is negative or tends toward zero, we accept the null hypothesis. However, if it is positive and tends toward 1, it means there is a correlation between both variables, and the null hypothesis should be rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Decision: Since the correlation coefficient is 0.6010 (60.1%) as shown in the E-views output, it means the correlation coefficient is greater than 0 and tends toward 1. We therefore reject the null hypothesis, which implies that there is a significant relationship between employee level of commitment and consumer patronage.

H₂: There is no association between employee level of interest in the job and consumer patronage.

Decision rule: When the correlation figure is negative or tends toward zero, we accept the null hypothesis. However, if it is positive and tends toward 1, it means there is a correlation between both variables, and the null hypothesis should be rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Decision: Since the correlation coefficient is 0.3513 (35.1%) as shown in the E-views output, it means the correlation coefficient is greater than 0 and tends toward 1. We therefore reject the null hypothesis, which implies that there is a significant association between employee level of interest in the job and consumer patronage.

H₃: The extent to which employees exchange innovative ideas does not influence the level of consumer patronage.

Decision rule: When the correlation figure is negative or tends toward zero, we accept the null hypothesis. However, if it is positive and tends toward 1, it means there is a correlation between both variables, and the null hypothesis should be rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Decision: Since the correlation coefficient is 0.4881 (48.8%) as shown in the E-views output, it means the correlation coefficient is greater than 0 and tends toward 1. We therefore reject the null hypothesis, which implies that the extent to which employees exchange innovative ideas does influence the level of consumer patronage.

H₄: Employee enthusiasm does not significantly influence consumers' level of patronage.

Decision rule: When the correlation figure is negative or tends toward zero, we accept the null hypothesis. However, if it is positive and tends toward 1, it means there is a correlation between both variables, and the null hypothesis should be rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Decision: Since the correlation coefficient is 0.9619 (96.2%) as shown in the E-views output, it means the correlation coefficient is greater than 0 and tends toward 1. We therefore reject

the null hypothesis, which implies that employee enthusiasm does significantly influence consumers' level of patronage.

Summary of Findings

Based on the analysis, the researcher made the following findings:

1. There is a significant relationship between employee level of commitment and consumer patronage.
2. There is a significant association between employee level of interest in the job and consumer patronage.
3. The extent to which employees exchange innovative ideas influences the level of consumer patronage.

Employee enthusiasm significantly influences consumers' level of patronage.

Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence that employee attitudes significantly influence consumer patronage in government-owned hospitals in Benin City, Edo State. The findings validate concerns raised in existing literature about service quality challenges in public healthcare facilities (Karassavidou et al., 2008; Alharbi, 2014).

The research demonstrates that employee enthusiasm emerges as the most critical determinant of consumer patronage ($r = 0.962$), followed by job commitment ($r = 0.601$) and innovative idea exchange ($r = 0.488$). These findings align with established research showing that health workers' attitudes affect behavior, quality of care, and health outcomes (Dias et al., 2012). The moderate correlation between employee interest and patronage ($r = 0.351$) suggests that while interest matters, it may be mediated by other organizational factors.

Particularly concerning is the relatively low level of innovative idea exchange among employees, with 50% of respondents disagreeing that such exchanges occur regularly. This deficiency, coupled with only fair job satisfaction levels (41.7%), indicates systemic challenges within government healthcare facilities that require urgent management attention. As Gray (2008) and Finfgeld-Connett (2008) emphasize, caring relationships and interpersonal sensitivity are fundamental to nursing practice, yet these

qualities may be compromised when employees lack enthusiasm or organizational support.

The study's findings underscore the urgent need for healthcare management in Nigeria to prioritize employee attitude development, moving beyond technical competence to emotional intelligence and patient-centered care. Without addressing these attitudinal dimensions, government hospitals risk continued erosion of patient trust and preference for private healthcare alternatives, as documented in comparative studies (Uys & Naidoo, 2004; Wiman & Wikblad, 2004).

In conclusion, transforming employee attitudes through systematic training, motivation, and organizational culture reform represents a critical pathway toward improving consumer patronage and restoring public confidence in government-owned healthcare facilities in Nigeria. The World Health Organization's (1946) recognition of health as a fundamental human right can only be realized when healthcare providers demonstrate the commitment, interest, innovation, and enthusiasm that patients deserve.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have become necessary:

1. Management should invest in improving employee attitudes through comprehensive training programs focused on providing high-quality service to consumers in order to increase consumer patronage in health organizations in Nigeria.
2. Management should encourage the exchange of innovative ideas among employees, as this would be of great benefit to the organization and directly impacts consumer satisfaction and patronage.
3. Healthcare facilities should implement regular employee motivation programs to sustain and enhance workplace enthusiasm, given its strong correlation with consumer patronage.
4. Organizations should conduct periodic assessments of employee job satisfaction and address identified concerns to improve overall service delivery and organizational performance.
5. Government health institutions should develop and implement comprehensive

strategies to address discrimination and ensure equitable treatment of all patients regardless of their health condition or demographic characteristics.

6. Healthcare administrators should establish formal mechanisms for employees to share innovative ideas and best practices, creating a culture of continuous improvement and patient-centered care.

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