

Health Politics and Development in Nigeria

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DOI: [10.56201/jpslr.vol.11.no3.2025.pg84.93](https://doi.org/10.56201/jpslr.vol.11.no3.2025.pg84.93)

Abstract

The study was focused on Health Politics and Development in Nigeria. The central objectives were to evaluate the effective functionality of Nigeria's Healthcare system, examine the attitudinal behaviour of health workers in Nigerian Hospital, assess the availability, accessibility and affordability of healthcare services in Nigeria and lastly, evaluate the role of the state government and her policies in enhancing adequate and sustainable healthcare service delivery system in Nigeria. The theoretical framework adopted were governance theory and political process theory as complimenting theory. However, propounded by Goran Hyden, (2007) and Francis Fukuyama, (2013), as well as James Q. Wilson, (1980) and Merilee Grindle and John Thomas, (1991), respectively. The research methodology adopted was the secondary method of data sourcing. Findings showed that there has not been proper nor adequate healthcare service delivery system in Nigeria, which is absolutely caused by the type of health politics, policies and lack of political will to improve the health care delivery system in Nigeria, among others. Hence, the study recommended that Nigerian federal, state and local governments should have the political will to formulate health policies and monitor, as well as supervise its implementation or execution to ensure that healthcare services are adequately delivered to reduce death rate and improve manpower productivity in Nigeria, etc.

Keywords: *Health, Politics, Health Politics, and Development.*

Introduction

Healthcare system is one of the most important aspect of life existence that any state government ought to pay utmost attention to for the citizens welfare. This can be easily achieved through some health insurance policies that capture all kinds of sicknesses and categories of beneficiaries, in a very subsidized rate or outrightly free of those citizens. However, it is the duty or responsibility of the government to ensure that the citizens are viewed to be healthy enough, as to be highly productive inclined in a bit to promote the economic growth that will herald to development in all ramification.

In this regard, the health policy is profoundly expected to be at the fore front during policy

formulations because, even the political leaders health conditions equally matters in their governance abilities and capacities for service deliveries. Meanwhile, millions of Nigerian citizens are having health aches, challenges or problems in different degrees, not healthy enough to compare with other states citizens in the international area. This is abysmal in the midst of the Nigeria's endowments in minerals, as well as materials and human resources, unlike other states of the world.

On the contrary, the health sector has been politicized to the extent that, the health sector in Nigeria is nothing to proudly write or discuss about because, even the governing bodies and their personnels do seek for proper healthcare services abroad. The reason being that the health sector in Nigeria is been relegated, ignored and treated with levity or less concern. Although, there are some good health policies that the Nigerian government have formulated to enhance the activation of Nigerians health conditions to be functional as expected.

However, the implementations of the policies as to be highly effective and efficient is the biggest challenge. This is coupled with the attitudinal conducts of the health service operators, which include; the doctors, nurses and wardmaids, as well as the administrative workers. These set of health workers have been far away from the ethnical standard of operations, tacticalities, destructive tone of relating to patients or health-seekers and standard procedures, that are globally accredited, approved and operated in their various health sectors.

In consideration of these conditions and situations, the problem of study is clearly centred on the lack of political will to make healthcare available, accessible and affordable by Nigerians. Again, on the attitudinal behaviour of healthcare workers in relation with the functionality of healthcare service delivery system, which has exacerbated the worst conditions of healthcare services in the Nigeria's health sector.

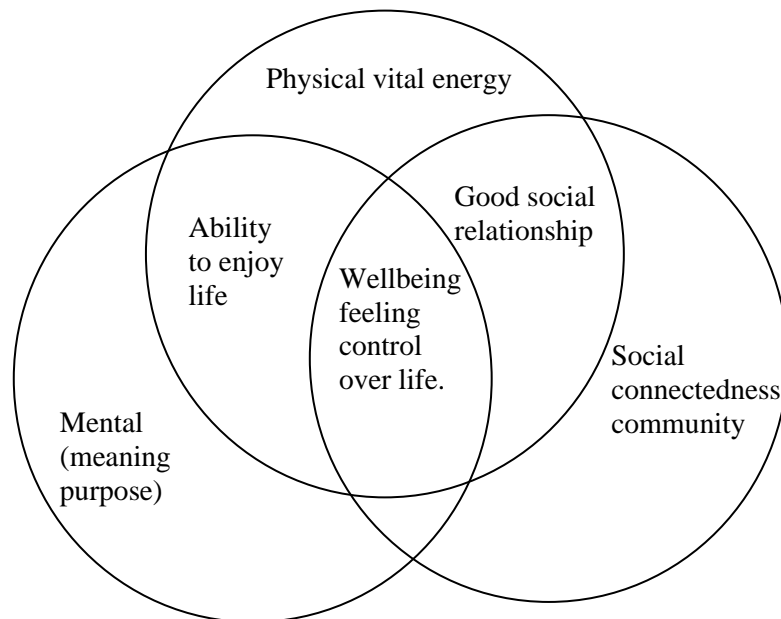
Furthermore, there are four objective of the study, which are to; evaluate the effective functionality of Nigeria's healthcare system, examine the attitudinal behaviour of health workers in Nigerian hospitals, assess the availability, accessibility and affordability of healthcare services in Nigeria and lastly, evaluate the role of the state government and her policies in enhancing adequate and sustainable healthcare service delivery system in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

Health: It is the solidity and solvency of the entire human body, as well as the mind of that individual. When there is sturdiness of a person, with dependable capacity that is durable, such person is affirmed to be a healthy individual. Hence, health is said to be the general "soundness of body and mind"; therefore, to be healthy one had to get the better and prevail over the physical, mental and emotional challenges of life (Lorig, Holman, Sobel, Laurent, Gonzalez and Minor, 2014).

However, health can be conceptualise to be absence of any disease and any form of disability that will affect an individual's physical conditions, mental stability/ability, as well as the person's social wellbeing in relationship with others. This fall in line with WHO's (1947) emphasis on the three major concerns, which are physical, mental and social. Emphatically, to achieve good health, one must be health literate enough to know what to do and how to go about it. To this extent, health literacy implies the level of understanding and access to health data help to promote healthy living in an individual's life time or groups existence. It helps one to adequately make decisions concerning the health status, as to ensure maintenance of good healthy life style, based on what was learnt. This help also to promote health control mechanisms that are prone to guarantee improvement in one's health condition in line with WHO's (1986) assertion (Ekenedo, 2024).

Figure 1: Dimension of Health and Wellbeing



Source: Ekenedo, (2024)

Politics: Politics is ubiquitous can be viewed or conceptualized from different point of view or perspective. However, politics in this regard, is the governmental processes of formulating policy decisions and strategically ensuring it's implementation to be adequate for the welfare of the citizens, with regards to healthcare service delivery system in Nigeria. Again, it is the process of decision-making on the health sector and the political will to execute the decision as to create the accessibility, availability and the affordability of healthcare services by the citizens, particularly in Nigeria. it can also be viewed as the process of policy-decisions to guarantee the provisions of adequate required instruments, apparatuses, drugs and injections, trained health personnels with sufficient and attractive salary scale, as well as conducive environment that is well planned with adequate infrastructures that are good enough to facilitate the delivery system of the healthcare sector services, especially in Nigeria which is the area of focus that is found lacking in this regard.

Moreover, politics can equally be viewed from other perspectives in the state and to that extent, politics in a bargaining process of handling and managing governance, and providing for the citizens of the state. It can be viewed as dialoguing and sharing of resources within and outside of a given state, as to improve the quality of the people's standard of living, as well as ameliorating the rate of poverty, unemployment rate and the widening gap of inequality in a particular sovereign state (MacAlex-Achinulo, 2021).

Furthermore, politics is the process of interacting with neighbouring states for synergy and considerable mutual collaboration and understanding on modalities and means of relationship that have the capacity to cut across all spheres of political, economical, social and environmental aspects, for the benefit of their citizens, as well as development in general. In addition, politics is a process of determining influential powers, citizens' welfarism and political system for the sustainability of the state's continuous existence (MacAlex-Achinulo, 2021).

Interestingly, politics is the influential suppression of others to be in agreement with the suppressor's agenda, intentions, proposals and submissive stand on a matter under contest, or moves intended to embark on, or sanctionable decisions made seeking for support. And

lastly, it is clear that the dynamics of power rest on political position, which made it a die-hard struggle for some people by all possible means to get political positions and reign supreme; particularly in African States and specifically in Nigerian State (MacAlex-Achinulo, 2021).

Health Politics: Health politics is a process that defines the interest of political heads over the healthcare system and the attendant values it adds and contribute in the developmental drive in a state. It is the flex of political power over the valued interest of health policies, as well as programmes that are beneficial interest to both the people and the state economy. The interplay between political power and the vested interest of politicians that determine their values attached to healthcare system, as a drive to influence their policies and programmes that have the capacity to enhance healthcare service delivery in a state. Equally, the vested political will to ensure that such policies and programmes are adequately monitored and inspected during implementation stage is the focus and concerns of health politics, to guarantee the people's wellbeing, standard of life existence and effectiveness/efficiency of healthcare service delivery (Mbachu & Uzochukwu, (2019); WHO, (20020) and Federal Ministry of Health, (2019).

Development: Development stands for improvement, advancement and growth in all ramifications in a particular state. Development is a qualitative and standardized improvement measured in a globally advanced level on man at different stages of man's life time, which requires a prerequisite provision that are managed by man. In this regard, development stands for all aspect of improvement and advancement on the healthcare system in the state. Those policies and programmes formulated to enhance the delivery of health services to the citizens as to safeguard them healthwise and increase in productivity of goods and service. Development is been championed by man and it can only be a healthy man that can be able to indulge in training and retraining, enhance manpower production and be able to render services creditably as a healthy man. Development has to do with creative and critical thinking that will result to innovative inventions, however, it is only a healthy man that can purely engage in constructive critical thinking. In addition, economic growth can only be achieved by a healthy community or state, while human capacity development cannot be achieved in an unhealthy environment nor by unhealthy citizens. Therefore, good health is of a necessity which can easily be achieved through the intake of human essential nutrition's to enable them achieve energetic body system. In case there is any health challenge as humans, there should be a plethora of good finished or equip hospitals at affordable cost that is easily accessed for body treatment in the state. Health is affluency because it preludes wealth and should be seriously updated to the global standard and not what we face in Nigeria over the years, which is still felt feasible in this current dispensation, as a major flaws in the entire country.

Theoretical Framework

This study made use of two theories traingulatively, they are Governance Theory and Political Process Theory complementing the first theory; with regards to governance theory, the theory views the institutional systematic synergies, as well as their processes that determine and define the power and authority operations. The proponents of the theory are Goran Hyden, (2007) and Francis Fukuyama, (2013). Their assumptions are that governance, institutions and systems are necessary for development, subject to reformation and very essential for advancement outcomes. This theory is centred on building solutions to collective challenges or problems (Ostrom, 2005). There is need for a compass with which to steer the

engine of governance that is based on setting objectives, coordinating policy, strategically implementing it, as well as being accountable in the feedback process (Peters, 2011). Governance is an active process in a hierarchical entity politics that is authoritative and responsible for the administrative flow that is in a top-down approach of command and control as to ensure orderliness and ameliorate disarrangement.

Whereas, the political process theory that is complementing the (GT) is concerned on the power changes, as well as the institutional patterns that determine the resultant effects of any policy. The proponents of this theory are James. Q Wilson (1980), Merilee Grindle and John Thomas (1991). Their assumptions are that the power dynamics are caused by the different interests of the different political actors in the various institutions, which in their power struggles, influence different policy decisions, as well as their end result (Grindle and Thomas, 1991).

Moreover, this theory glaringly explains social involvement success in their set goals to be based on the conditions, the political actor's mindset, as well as their actions. These, they do through their analysis and reflections on the contemporary political challenges and the impact of these processes that reflect as change in the society, their culture and their institutions in the state and on individuals. These methods and procedures reflect on the style of governance and the outcome of the decision-making in the state (Crossman, 2019).

These two theories are justified adequate because, both viewed the complex interplay that are exhibited by the political actors in the cause of their power struggle and their various policy-decision's interest in their various institutions, that are quite different, and have resulted to the dilapidation of the healthcare sector and thereby causing their ineffective and inefficient and service delivery system, particularly in Nigerian State.

Methodology

The study adopted a secondary method of sourcing for data, which is done through the used of text books, online materials, published journals, magazines, among others as a base-line information gathering. It is a qualitative study which will be analyzed, using content analysis as a method of analysis.

Furthermore, the study was anchored on these two research questions; Does Nigeria have an outstanding quality healthcare system, that is one of the best in the world? And is Nigerian healthcare system recorned as a mess in the world?

Nigeria's Healthcare System: Nigeria's healthcare system has been a major challenge and concern to almost every Nigerian, with little exceptions to those political class in governance, who can have the privilege to travel /fly abroad for their medicals. From time imemorial, it has been a huge problem, hence, the central focus of almost all the political administrative governance do have high level of concern on the health sector. Although, their policies may sound germane, but, it lacks effective and efficient implementation process, due to lack of political will, monitoring and periodic inspections.

For instance, Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar, a one time Nigeria's Head of State in his military regime signed into Law Decree 35 of the 1999 constitution on establishment of National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS). The NHIS actually took about six years (6yrs) to gain momentum and started operation on the 06th June, 2005 when it was formally launched. Specifically, NHIS started the medical service delivery by September, 2005 (Obalum, 2012). Inaddition to the above, there were some collaborative health bodies that were assisting in the health services delivery, such as; Healthcare Providers (HCP), the Health Management Organizations (HMO) and the Community Pharmacists Nationwide (CPN). Coupled with over 1,500 healthcare providers across Nigeria, 26 accredited Health Management

Organization Nationwide, and 719 community pharmacists that also been accredited all over Nigerian State (Agbor, 2007).

However, with all these establishments set up and their ten (10) main goals to accomplish, together with the low cost of service delivery on medical healthcare, Nigeria still does not have an outstanding quality healthcare system, that is one of the best in the world. This situation is caused by various factors such as; lack of political will to take action, less interest of political actors and lack of implementation monitoring, as well as supervision, among other things. This is the reason why Dundon, (2002: p. 157) assert that, *“there is a big difference between deciding to do something and actually doing it”* and that *“great ideas are not innovative unless they are successfully implemented”*.

Again, due to the failures of NHIS in accomplishing the set goals of healthcare provisions for both public and private workers, the Nigerian Government enacted a new Act, National Health Insurance Act (NHIA) 2022. NHIA was actually signed into law to start operations on 19th May, 2022, so as to incorporate NHIS because, NHIS was not able to enroll basically 10% of Nigerians into the scheme. Equally, in 2018 about 97% of Nigerians were not able to have access to any health insurance scheme to be healthy enough as to increase productivity of goods and competent service deliveries that will launch development swiftly in Nigeria (Ahmad and Lucero-Prisno, 2023).

Interestingly, Nigeria is a well endowed state filled with both natural and material resources but, Nigerians are still suffering, with particular reference to the proletariat/working peasants who do work all day to eck out for their subsistence that is far below the expected. The status of many Nigerians are in conformity with the postulations of Morone, Litman, and Robins, (2008: p.38).

“An economy can be [Pareto] optimal...even when some people are rolling in luxury and others are near starvation as long as the starvers cannot be made better off without cutting into the pleasures of the rich. In short, a society or an economy can be Pareto-optimal and still be perfectly disgusting”.

The standard of healthcare system in Nigeria amidst the enormous wealth of Nigerian state is not commensurate. The Nigerian healthcare system has not been anything to recorne with, when compared with other international healthcare system of other countries, particularly the developed categorized states of America, European States, some parts of Asian continent. Hence, the second research question; is Nigerian Healthcare system recorned as a mess in the world? The answer is very simple, YES! Nigerian healthcare system is still a mess in the globe and it is getting worst on a daily basis. There are good policies to accelerate the health sector in Nigeria but, there are series of distortions, misappropriations, and all kinds of corruption practices, during the implementation or the execution stage of those policies. It is a glaring situation that very many government political office holders often time travel abroad for all kinds of body health challenges; which ordinarily would have been taken care of in the country, if there were good healthcare. In this regard, according to UNICEF, (2018) maternal morality rate in Nigeria was 576 per 100,000 live births, which implies to be recorded as the fourth (4th) highest on Earth. While, 262,000 babies also die at birth, which stands as the world's second highest in national summation. Whereas, recently infant Mortality was 69 per 1,000 live birth, and that of under five years of age has risen to 128 per 1,000 live births. And all these deaths are known to be caused by malaria, pneumonia or diarrhea, etc.

Table 1: Nigeria-Historical Death Rate Data And Speculative Projection of United Nations (1995 – 2025)

Year	Death Rate	Growth Rate %
2025	10.672	-1.490%
2024	10.833	-1.460%
2023	10.994	-1.730%
2022	11.188	-1.700%
2021	11.382	-1.680%
2020	11.577	-1.650%
2019	11.771	-1.620%
2018	11.965	-2.520%
2017	12.274	-2.460%
2016	12.583	-2.400%
2015	12.892	-2.340%
2014	13.201	-2.290%
2013	13.510	-2.330%
2012	13.833	-2.270%
2011	14.155	-2.230%
2010	14.478	-2.180%
2009	14.800	-2.140%
2008	15.123	-2.800%
2007	15.558	-2.720%
2006	15.993	-2.650%
2005	16.428	-2.580%
2004	16.863	-2.510%
2003	17.298	-1.040%
2002	17.479	-1.020%
2001	17.660	-1.020%
2000	17.842	-1.000%
1999	18.023	-0.990%
1998	18.204	-0.310%
1997	18.261	-0.310%
1996	18.317	0.310%
1995	18.374	-0.300%

Source: Macro Trends, (2019); United Nations, (2019)

The interplay between political office holders and the health workers in the political struggle of selfish interest have culminated to high rate of death percentages, caused by poor healthcare service deliveries, lack of political will to see through the peoples lack of prudential implementation, Corruption, lack of monitoring executions and performance, as well as supervision, among others. Thereby resulting to loss of professionals, talented youths who have good potentials, etc to move Nigeria from less developed status to developed status that is proven advanced and technological prone status of the Nigerian state, with quality and standardized living in a conducive environment.

An Improved Endogenous Effective Health Politics Benefits

- There will be infant mortality decrease when ones there is access to adequate healthcare as a fundamental entitlement to Nigerians as citizens.
- Maternal Healthcare will improve resulting to maternal mortality decrease in the rate

of death rate in Nigeria.

- There will be good health policies that will enhance longevity increase and a decline in premature death rate in parts of Nigerian State.
- It will enhance the essential aspects of health system and strengthen their delivering serving qualities with the help of trained manpower and good health information systems.
- There will be an incremental advancement in the number of healthy manpower which will increase productivity and participatory involvement in community development, as well as economic growth and entire state aspirations, development.
- Effective health politics will bring about better outcomes in healthcare service delivery system, it will drastically ameliorate poverty rate, promote and foster social group harmony for relationship belongingness and common good, as well as improved human capital development that compliments economic growth to bring about increase in per capita income and development in the end.
- Effective health politics will address the ineffective roles of medical health professionals which include; the doctors, nurses (both registered and the auxiliary nurses), pharmacists and wardmaid cleaners, as well as medical laboratory scientists.
- There would be an enhancing programmes and retrainings for medical health practioners/ professionals, as to be able to render effective and efficient healthcare services to the people, especially Nigerians (FMH, 2019), WHO, (2020) and Mbachu, & Uzochukwu, (2019).

Major Problems of Healthcare System in Nigeria

Due to ineffective and inefficient healthcare system in Nigeria caused by lack of political will to enhance the sector, coupled with poor unmotivational salary scale of health workers and unconducive environment, there is prevalence of viral health problems such as HIV/AIDs which has gotten up to 1.3% increase. The shortages of medicinal drugs for curative purposes of ailments, diseases, etc have led to increase in sicknesses, for instance; malaria is seen as the highest health problem particularly in Nigeria thereby culminating to be the cause of increased death and illnesses that many Nigerians suffer from. The same thing is about tuberculosis, which is predominantly highest in Africa generally and Nigeria in particular.

Moreover, the inability of Nigerian government to boost the potency of the healthcare system, both in equipments, medicinal drugs and trained proficient personnels have resulted to continuous high death rate of pregnant mothers and infant children against the millennium and sustainable development goals/agenda. Maternal healthcare and that of the children are in jeopardy, especially in Nigeria (Abimbola, (2018); Oleribe & Taylor-Robinson, (2016).

Conclusion

Glaringly, health politics has a lot to do, as to determine the status of Nigerians health conditions, economic productivity growth, increase in manpower ability to be actively participatory in the enhancement of Nigeria's economy. With the realization that man develops his environment, it can only be possible when the man is properly cared for healthwise, through good food nutrition, adequate prescription of medical drugs and accessibility, availability, as well as affordability of healthcare services.

However, the state government must be interested and responsible to the provision of these facilities, transparently and accountable in all things to showcase having the political will for the good and welfare of the people of Nigeria, generally. In this regard, that is the only way health politics, through effective health policies, as well as programmes, can result to development by addressing health conditions, poverty rate, human capital development,

economic productive growth, as well as social/group harmony, among others.

Recommendations

At the end of the study, the findings obviously defines the way forward to achieve development through health politics in Nigeria. To that extend, the study recommends as follows:

- The state government (federal, state and local governments) should have the political will be formulate, make decisions on effective health policies, as well as ensure effective monitoring, supervisions during implementation or execution process of policies on projects, programmes, etc as to ensure adequate end results for the benefit and welfare of Nigerians.
- There should be adequate supply of health equipments, medicinal drugs and injections, professionals, trained and retrained health workers, should equally be encouraged and seen as one of the yardsticks or prerequisites for promotions in the healthcare system/sector.
- There is need for accountability and transparency in the health sector, as well as offenders meant to be penalized punitively, as a mechanism to expunge corrupt practices in the health system.
- There is every need to encourage, as well as promotion of research that is evidence-based for the achievement of standard medical healthcare in Nigeria.
- There is need to promote technological advancement as to innovate different and better ways of health service delivery in Nigeria. This will inturn save lives and cost of travelling abroad for medical healthcare.
- There is need to emulate the comparative difference in health workers salaries as to motivate professional healthcare service delivery, to adequately put in their expertise because of the incentives that are motivational.
- There should be housing allowances, recreational and vacation scheme for health workers, that will lessen stress and frustrations at workplace.

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