

Industrial Social Workers' Variable as Predictors of Service Delivery in University Teaching Hospital in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examines the relationship between “industrial social workers variable as predictor of service delivery in University Teaching Hospital, Cross River State, Nigeria”. To achieve the purpose of this research, it was guided by one research question and one null hypothesis to guide the study. Related literature was reviewed in line with the sub variable under discussion. The study employed survey design. The population of the study comprised 104 industrial social workers from five units in university teaching hospital. A sample of 48 industrial social workers were drawn through purposively sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was self-modified Likert scale questionnaires design by researcher and validated by two experts from both Departments of Continuing Education and Development Studies, and Measurement and Evaluation. Data collected was analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis at 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed thus, there is a positive significant relationship between occupational status of industrial workers’ and its service delivery. It was recommended among others that, the issue of improving one’s occupational status in the job or before the job hunting should be encouraged to help them improved not just their services but the entire work ethics.

Keywords: industrial social worker, occupational status, service delivery, predictors, variable.

Introduction

The healthcare sector plays a critical role in promoting the physical, psychological, and social well-being of individuals and communities. Within healthcare institutions, particularly teaching hospitals, industrial social workers serve as essential members of multidisciplinary teams by providing psychosocial support, counselling, advocacy, discharge planning, and referral services

to patients and their families. Industrial social workers here by apply social work principles within organisational settings, contribute significantly to improving service delivery and enhancing the quality of healthcare services. (Anon, 2022).

Service delivery in teaching hospitals involves the provision of effective, timely, and patient-centred services that meet the diverse needs of patients. Edoho et al. (2024) opined that the effectiveness of service delivery is often influenced by the competence, commitment, and professional conduct of healthcare personnel, including industrial social workers. As healthcare challenges become increasingly complex, the role of industrial social workers has expanded beyond traditional counselling functions to include case management, crisis intervention, patient advocacy, and collaboration with other healthcare professionals.

Demographic variables such as marital status, educational qualification, and years of experience have been identified as important factors that may influence employees' performance and effectiveness in the workplace. These variables can affect workers' attitudes, interpersonal relationships, decision-making abilities, and overall productivity. In the context of teaching hospitals, the demographic characteristics of industrial social workers shall determine how effectively they interact with patients, colleagues, and organisational structures to achieve desired healthcare outcomes.

Similarly, Ani & Igwe (2018) are of the opinion that, variables such as professional length of service, professional training, job satisfaction, workload, and membership in professional associations are crucial determinants of service delivery. These variables shape the knowledge, skills, and capabilities of industrial social workers, thereby influencing their ability to provide quality services, continuous industrial social development and adequate work experience which are particularly important in equipping social workers with the competencies required to address the diverse psychosocial needs of patients and administrative tasks in healthcare settings.

Teaching hospitals serve as centres for patient care, medical education, and research. Due to the complexity of cases handled in these institutions, industrial social workers are expected to demonstrate high levels of professionalism and competence in delivering services. However, variations in demographic and professional characteristics among social workers may result in differences in service quality and effectiveness (Taylor & WasyIko, 2017).

Industrial social workers provide a wide range of services ranging from social services, career services, industrial services, within and outside hospitals, organisations, companies setting. The industrial social worker's responsibilities also include educating patients about various resources at their disposal and interviewing patients to understanding their uniqueness at some points. Ultimately, they also develop a comprehensive plan to help patient adjust to medical diagnosis and transition from one health system to normal life. (McGuire-Schwartz & McCabe, 2019) pointed out that, this set of workers also provide necessary support for each patient according to the health status, personal strength and weaknesses, emotional state and additional factors. (UNESCO, 2022).

The occupational status of social workers refers to their position or rank within the field of social work, often indicating their level of responsibility, expertise, and authority. Occupational status can vary depending on factors such as education, experience, specialisation, and the setting in which they work. Social workers with a master's degree in social work or equivalent experience often hold mid-level positions, such as clinical social worker, therapist, or program coordinator (Hoffer & Spiecker, 2021). Therefore, this study seeks to examine industrial social workers' variables as predictors of service delivery in university teaching hospitals.

Statement of the problem

Industrial social workers play a vital role in enhancing the psychosocial well-being of patients, supporting families, facilitating access to healthcare services, and promoting effective healthcare delivery within teaching hospitals. In university teaching hospitals, industrial social workers are expected to provide professional interventions that address patients' social, emotional, economic, and environmental challenges, thereby contributing to improved treatment outcomes and overall service delivery. Despite the importance of these responsibilities, quality and effectiveness of social work service delivery in many Nigerian healthcare institutions remain inconsistent and sometimes inadequate.

Several factors have been identified as influencing the performance of industrial social workers in healthcare settings. These include demographic variables such as age, gender, marital status, educational qualification, and years of work experience, as well as professional variables such as occupational status, professional training, workload, job satisfaction, and opportunities for career development. While these variables are believed to affect workers' competence, commitment, and productivity, there is limited empirical evidence on how they specifically predict service delivery among industrial social workers in university teaching hospitals.

Furthermore, healthcare service delivery in Nigeria have largely focused on medical personnel such as doctors and nurses, with relatively little attention given to industrial social workers and the factors that influence their effectiveness. Where studies on social workers exist, they often examine general job performance, professional challenges, or welfare issues without adequately investigating the predictive influence of demographic and professional variables on service delivery outcomes. This creates a significant gap in the literature, particularly within the context of university teaching hospitals in Cross River State.

In addition, university teaching hospitals in Cross River State continue to face challenges such as increasing patient demands, resource constraints, and complex psychosocial problems among patients. These challenges require highly effective industrial social work services; however, it remains unclear whether industrial social workers contribute significantly to differences in service delivery. The absence of such information makes it difficult for hospital management and policymakers to design evidence-based strategies for improving social work practice and healthcare outcomes.

It is against this background that this study seeks to investigate industrial social workers' professional variables as predictors of service delivery in university teaching hospitals in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study aims to fill the existing knowledge gap by examine the relationship between the extent to which these variables relate to the quality and effectiveness

of service delivery among industrial social workers. The findings are expected to provide empirical evidence that will guide personnel management, and policy formulation aimed at enhancing social work service delivery in healthcare institutions.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine industrial social worker variables as predictor of service delivery in university teaching hospitals, Cross River State. Specifically, this study seeks to;

1. investigate the relationship that exist between occupational status of industrial social worker and their service delivery in university teaching hospital, Cross River State.

Research question

In order to examine the issues raised in the study, the following research question was raised by the researcher.

1. To what extent does occupational status of industrial social worker relate to service delivery?

Research hypothesis

The following hypothesis was formulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between occupational status of industrial social workers' and their service delivery.

Theoretical framework

Role Theory: Role Theory was developed by Ralph Linton (1936) and further expanded by Bruce Biddle (1986). The theory posits that individuals occupy specific positions in society and organisations, and each position is associated with certain expectations, responsibilities, and behaviours. Performance is influenced by how clearly individuals understand and execute their assigned roles. In university teaching hospitals, industrial social workers are expected to perform professional functions such as counselling, patient advocacy, discharge planning, crisis intervention, and referral services. When their roles are clearly defined and recognised by other healthcare professionals, they are more likely to perform effectively. However, role ambiguity, role conflict, and lack of professional recognition may negatively affect their service delivery. This theory is relevant because it explains how occupational status and role expectations relate to industrial social workers and its service delivery.

Significance of the study

The result of this study will be of immense significance to industrial workers', social workers, public and private administrators, policy maker, government, patients, families, community and researchers.

Review of Literature

Occupational status of industrial worker and their service delivery

Occupational status is a central concept in industrial, and these refers to the position, rank, prestige, and level of authority an employee occupies within an organisation or profession. It encompasses the social recognition, responsibilities, remuneration, decision-making power, and opportunities for career advancement associated with a particular occupation. Occupational status influences

employees' attitudes toward work, job commitment, productivity, and overall performance in organisations (Kodom, 2022).

According to Max Weber (1922), occupational status is closely related to social stratification which reflects the degree of prestige and respect accorded to individuals based on their occupations. Weber argued that occupations differ in status because society assigns varying levels of esteem and recognition to different professions. In industrial settings, employees who occupy higher-status positions often enjoy greater authority, autonomy, and access to organisational resources than those in lower-status

Gray & Amadasun (2022) emphasised that the industrial social work profession in Nigeria continues to strive for greater professional recognition, regulation, and legitimacy, while Anderson & Christensen, (2019), base their contributions on inadequate recognition and unclear professional identity which often limit social workers' influence in organisational decision-making and service provision. The scholar argued that enhancing the professional status of industrial social workers through regulation, professional representation, and institutional recognition would improve their effectiveness and contribution to service delivery in any hospital sector.

From an industrial relations perspective, occupational status is viewed as an important determinant of workers' behaviour and organisational effectiveness. Edoho et al. (2025) maintained that employees derive a sense of identity and self-worth from the status attached to their jobs. Workers who perceive their occupational status as favourable are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of job satisfaction, commitment, and productivity. Conversely, employees who perceive their occupational status as low may experience reduced motivation and weaker organisational attachment

Professional identity is an important component of occupational status. A scoping review by Bark et al. (2023) found that industrial social workers with a strong sense of professional identity demonstrated greater confidence, role clarity, and effectiveness in multidisciplinary healthcare settings. McAuliffe (2019), also revealed that professional recognition enables industrial social workers to contribute more effectively to patient care and organisational outcomes. Conversely, ambiguity regarding professional roles often reduces the visibility and impact of social work services.

According to Michael (2023), employees who perceive their occupational status positively are more likely to exhibit organisational citizenship behaviours, professional commitment, and improved service delivery. Occupational status therefore serves as a motivational factor that influences employees' willingness to utilise their skills and competencies effectively in achieving organisational goals. Enemaku (2024) investigated the challenges faced by industrial social workers in hospital-based healthcare. A survey was carried out in three healthcare institutions in Benin City, Nigeria: the University of Benin Teaching Hospital, Faith Mediplex Hospital, and Uselu Psychiatric Hospital. The used 108 respondents as its sample. The findings revealed that industrial workers were poorly recognised, assigned duties outside their professional roles, inadequately remunerated, and often discriminated against by other healthcare professionals. These factors negatively affected their effectiveness and service delivery. The study concluded that improving the occupational status and professional recognition of social workers would enhance patient care and healthcare outcomes.

In healthcare settings, the occupational status of industrial social workers is closely linked to their integration within multidisciplinary teams. Kodom (2022) reported that although industrial social workers perform essential functions in healthcare delivery, they are often underutilised and inadequately recognised in many African healthcare institutions. The study emphasised that social workers play crucial roles in psychosocial assessment, patient advocacy, counselling, and community linkage where all of these contribute significantly to improved patient outcomes and service delivery. However, limited professional recognition may constrain their effectiveness. Similarly, Olorede and Oloruntoba (2022) noted that industrial social workers provide valuable services including emotional support, grief counselling, resource mobilisation, and patient referrals. A critical appraisal from different approaches by the medical commission shows that healthcare in university teaching hospitals sees occupational status as significantly influenced by the effectiveness of industrial social workers which is why higher occupational status may provide social workers with greater authority, access to resources, and opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration, all of which can enhance service delivery.

Conversely, lower occupational status may limit professional influence and reduce the effectiveness of social work interventions. Therefore, understanding the relationship between occupational status and service delivery remains an important area of inquiry within medical sector whereas, Robbins, & Judge, (2022) argued that social workers in many developing countries often experience challenges related to inadequate professional recognition, limited promotional opportunities, and unclear role definitions, which may negatively affect their occupational status and work performance. Nagaraju (2017) examined the impact of occupational status on industrial health workers service delivery. Two null hypotheses were used, the study adopted Expo-facto design. While 150 respondents were selected from the total of 410 being population size. A questionnaire was designed to collect data on factors related to rewards, like occupational status and health workers performance. The data collected were analysed in SPSS. Different analytical and descriptive techniques were used to analyse the data. It was observed from different results that occupational status has positive impact on health workers service delivery. There is a positive impact on performance. ANOVA results reveal that occupational status has impact on health workers performance in terms of service delivery.

In summary, the topic reveals two opposing viewpoints. One school of thought, represented by Dessler (2020), Robbins and Judge (2022), maintains that demographic and professional variables such as educational qualification, occupational status, professional experience, and training significantly predict service delivery. In contrast, Lipsky (2010), and Maslach (2018) argued that organisational factors including workload, institutional support, policies, motivation, and working conditions play a more decisive role in determining service delivery outcomes. This disagreement hereby creates a gap that necessitates empirical investigation into the extent to which industrial social workers' professional variables predict service delivery in teaching hospitals.

Method

The researchers opted for survey design as the appropriate design for the study. Idaka, and Anagbogu (2012) opined that survey design is a research approach specifically designed to systematically collect data about a group of individuals who have same characteristics, through the use of written or oral data collection instruments, interviews, questionnaires. Purposive

sampling technique was adopted for the study. Instrumentation; The instruments used for data collection was a questionnaire titled “Industrial Social Workers Variables and their Service Delivery Questionnaire” (ISWVSDQ). This questionnaire was developed by the researcher and it was made up of two sections namely: A and B. Section A contained information on demographic variables, while Section B contained 20 items arranged on four-point Likert rating scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). A pilot test was conducted with 30 industrial workers outside the subject area from teaching hospital who were not part of the main study sample and it yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.94, indicating that the instrument was highly reliable for the research. The population of this study consists of one hundred and four (104) industrial social workers from five units in teaching hospital.

Table 1
Population distribution of industrial social workers

S/N	Units	Male	Female	Total
1	Emergency	8	6	14
2	General administration	3	9	12
3	Family medicine	19	15	34
4	Community medicine	10	11	21
5	Lab	16	7	23
6	Total	56	48	104

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The population for the study consisted of 104 industrial social workers working in teaching hospitals in the study area. Due to limitations such as time, financial resources, accessibility of respondents, and the need to obtain information from participants with adequate knowledge and experience regarding service delivery, a sample size of 48 industrial social workers was selected. This sample represents approximately 47% of the total population ($48 \div 104 \times 100 = 46.15\%$, approximately 47%). The researcher adopted a purposive sampling technique to select respondents who met specific inclusion criteria, such as being professionally trained industrial social workers, having direct involvement in service delivery activities, and possessing sufficient work experience to provide relevant information for the study in their different units. The choice of 48 respondents was considered adequate because it constituted nearly half of the entire population, thereby ensuring substantial representation of the target population while maintaining manageability in data collection and analysis

TABLE 2
Sample of the study

S/N	Categories of industrial social workers	Male	Female	Total
1	Industrial Attachment Students	5	7	13
2	Part-time social workers	6	4	10
3	Adjunct social workers	8	3	11
4	Medical social workers	8	7	14
6	Total	27	21	48

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Results

Hypotheses one

There is no significant relationship between occupational status and industrial social workers variable and its service delivery. The independent variable of this study is occupational status of industrial social worker while the dependent variable is service delivery. In testing this hypothesis Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was used.

TABLE 3

Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis for the relationship between occupational status of industrial social workers and their service delivery (N=48)

Variables	$\bar{x}$	SD	r-ratio	p-level
Occupational status (X)	12.10	2.99	.409*	.004
Social workers service delivery	23.29	5.80		

*Significant at .05; df = 46 p<.05.

The result in Table 3 revealed that the mean score obtained by the subjects on occupational status was 12.10 with a standard deviation of 2.99 while the mean score obtained by the subjects about social workers service delivery was 23.29 with a standard deviation of 5.80. The result also showed that the correlation between occupational status of industrial social workers and their service delivery produced a statistically significant r-ratio of .409 with a p-value of .004, since the p-value is less than .05. Hence, the null hypothesis interprets that, there is no significant relationship between social workers occupational status and their service delivery which was rejected and that simple means that, the occupational status of social workers has a significant relationship with their service delivery in University Teaching Hospital, Calabar.

Discussion

Occupational status of industrial social workers and their service delivery

The null hypothesis was rejected. This result therefore signifies that there is a significant relationship between occupational status of industrial social workers and their service delivery. This result agrees with the findings of Burke (2018), who asserted that social workers with higher occupational status may be better positioned to advocate for policy changes, systemic reforms, and social justice initiatives that address the root causes of client issues. Their professional expertise, leadership roles, and access to decision-makers can amplify their advocacy efforts and impact service delivery at macro-levels.

The findings also agree with a study carried out by Bakan & Buyukbese (2023), which aimed to investigate the relationship between social workers occupational level and their service delivery. The results of the empirical study showed that there is a significant relationship between employees' social workers occupational level and their service delivery in hospitals.

Conclusion

Industrial social workers play a crucial role in promoting the psychosocial well-being of patients and supporting the overall healthcare delivery process in teaching hospitals. Through services such as counselling, advocacy, crisis intervention, discharge planning, and resource coordination, they contribute significantly to achieving holistic patient care. However, the effectiveness of these services is often influenced by the occupational status accorded to social workers within healthcare institutions. The literature reviewed indicates that occupational status, reflected in professional recognition, autonomy, role clarity, participation in decision-making, and institutional support, has a significant impact on service delivery. Social workers who enjoy higher professional status are more likely to demonstrate greater job commitment, professional confidence, and effectiveness in carrying out their responsibilities. Conversely, inadequate recognition, role ambiguity, poor working conditions, and limited professional opportunities may hinder their ability to provide quality services to patients and their families.

The study therefore concludes that occupational status is an important determinant of service delivery among industrial social workers in university teaching hospitals. Consequently, healthcare administrators, policymakers, and professional bodies should prioritise measures that strengthen the occupational status of industrial social workers to enable them to function optimally and contribute meaningfully to the achievement of healthcare goals.

Recommendations

Based on findings on industrial social workers' variables as predictors of service delivery in university teaching hospitals, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Enhance Professional Qualifications:** Hospital management should encourage industrial social workers to pursue higher academic and professional qualifications through sponsorship, scholarships, and continuous professional development programmes. Higher qualifications improve knowledge, competence, and service delivery outcomes.
2. **Promote Regular Training and Capacity Building:** Periodic workshops, seminars, conferences, and in-service training should be organised to update industrial social workers on emerging trends, policies, and best practices in healthcare social work.
3. **Improve Occupational Status and Recognition:** Teaching hospitals should recognise industrial social workers as essential members of the healthcare team by involving them in decision-making processes, multidisciplinary meetings, and policy implementation. Improved occupational status can enhance commitment and productivity.
4. **Strengthen Work Experience Development:** Mentorship programmes should be established to enable less experienced social workers to learn from senior colleagues. This will facilitate skill transfer and improve the quality of services rendered to patients and their families.
5. **Ensure Adequate Staffing:** Hospital administrators should recruit sufficient numbers of qualified industrial social workers to reduce workload pressures and enable efficient service delivery.

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