THE EXTENT OF TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES PERFORMANCE AT AMANA REGIONAL REFERRAL HOSPITAL.

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ABSTRACT

The research aimed to evaluate the level of transparency and accountability in the administration of public health services at Amana Regional Referral Hospital in Dar es Salaam, utilizing a mixed-methods approach that incorporated both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The sample size consisted of 169 participants, including doctors and nurses from Amana Regional Referral Hospital. Data collection involved the use of questionnaires and interviews, while analysis employed Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22 software and thematic analysis. The results indicated that transparency and accountability were effectively implemented within the organization through established rules and regulations. These measures were designed to ensure that each staff member was accountable for their role, ultimately contributing to a reduction in the hospital's mortality rate. A majority of respondents strongly agreed that the organization adhered to rules and regulations governing the provision of public health services, which were formulated by the Ministry of Health. The organization also established additional rules to manage and regulate staff members. Challenges in implementing good governance at Amana Regional Referral Hospital included a shortage of hospital equipment and ambulances. The hospital's reliance on a single ambulance led to borrowing from other health facilities during emergencies with a high influx of patients. The study concluded that individuals were aware of good governance practices, which positively influenced service delivery. Furthermore, ethical considerations, such as doctors providing good patient care and counseling, played a significant role in the management of public health services.

Keywords: - *Transparency, Accountability, Mixed-Methods Approach, Thematical Analysis, Mortality Rate and Good Governance.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The study concentrates on the global application of good governance practices, specifically in managing the performance of public health facilities. These practices are utilized worldwide, in both developed and developing countries, to enhance the delivery of high-quality healthcare services to patients treated in public hospitals. Good governance in public health facilities centers on enforcing rules and regulations through accountable management and supervision [1]. This approach differs from the governance practices in privately managed hospital facilities, where governance systems are well-established compared to public hospitals in many developing countries in Africa.

Healthcare governance, defined as transparent rules and regulations administered by accountable management and strong supervision [1], embodies significant principles like transparency, accountability, and equity. WHO

characterizes governance for health in terms of stewardship, strategic policy frameworks, overall control, effective accountability, proper supervision, and inducements. Good governance has garnered public attention, becoming a vital factor in evaluating a nation's adherence to universally acceptable democratic standards [2]. It ensures that political, social, and economic priorities align with broad societal consensus, giving voice to the poorest and most vulnerable in decision-making concerning development resource allocation.

In the public sector, good governance aims to promote better service delivery and heightened accountability by setting standards for governance [3]. Effective governance in the public sector fosters improved decision-making, resource utilization, and accountability for resource stewardship [4]. Strong inspection, emphasized by [3], acts as a crucial element, exerting pressure to enhance public sector performance and address misconduct, ultimately leading to better outcomes.

The principles of good governance, including participation, rule of law, transparency, accountability, fairness, and efficiency, empower employees to provide transparent, high-quality services in line with the constitution and the national framework of good governance in Tanzania. Conversely, weak governance jeopardizes service delivery and tends to favor selected elites, contributing to global dissatisfaction with the quality of public institutions' services [5].

Currently, international institutions stress the importance of good governance in development, with health governance being crucial for effective public health functions globally. Health outcomes face challenges due to population growth, increasing demand, and gaps in the public healthcare system. The private healthcare sector has become a significant resource for various health services, emphasizing the increasing role of the private sector in delivering health services [6].

The private healthcare sector's prominence is evident in global hospital rankings, with the majority of top hospitals located in South Asia, particularly in India. Unfortunately, Pakistan's healthcare sector performance, especially in South Punjab, lags, and providing quality healthcare remains a low priority for policymakers [7]. Good health governance is crucial as health funds increase, and donors demand greater accountability, responsibility, and transparency from recipients [8].

The significance of good governance in health extends to addressing corruption, weak accountability, and transparency in public hospitals, which can lead to a high maternal mortality rate in developing countries [9]. Good governance also addresses inequalities in health service provision and promotes effective and efficient institutional performance [10, 11].

While decentralization efforts in Ethiopia have contributed to good governance and quality health service delivery, challenges persist due to weak government commitment to devolve power [12]. Similarly, in Tanzania, challenges in healthcare service delivery include money wastage, low revenue collections, low motivation among health servants, poor accountability, and overall poor performance [13, 14]

The study aims to assess the extent of transparency and accountability in managing public health services, focusing on Amana Regional Referral Hospital in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. It aims to bridge the existing gap in literature by exploring the impact of good governance practices on service delivery in this specific context.

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

2.1 Intuitionist Theory

The Intuitionist Theory, originating from the philosophy of intuitionism, as defined by Fox and Meyer [15], posits that moral and practical dilemmas can be resolved through intuitions or basic truths that are inherently known. This theory emerged in response to rationalism, asserting that individuals do not require logical or experiential processes to discern right from wrong, as everyone is born with an inherent understanding of ethical truths. According to intuitionism, one's natural intuition immediately recognizes what is wrong, transparent to natural moral laws influenced by external factors such as a healthy environment, robust political institutions, a favorable economic situation, sufficient education, and religious beliefs, all stemming from one's intuitive inner powers.

A valuable code of ethics plays a crucial role in instilling principles like transparency and accountability, essential for good governance. Hence, a code of conduct is instrumental in helping public officials reacquire their innate intuitive capacities, fostering transparency, responsibility, and accountability in their service to the community [16]. The theory guides the study in understanding how public officials should conduct themselves when delivering services, guided by an ethical code that contributes to the nation's social and economic development.

In accordance with this theory, the study aids the researcher in comprehending the expectations of customers and community members regarding the quality of services provided by Amana Regional Referral Hospital. It establishes a benchmark for the standards of service, determining the application of good governance practices within the hospital. Consequently, organizations and institutions must deliver services that exhibit a high degree of tangibility, reliability, credibility, responsiveness, and assurance to ensure customer satisfaction.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

A research design serves as the conceptual structure guiding the processes of data collection, data coding, and data analysis in research [17]. The chosen research design for this study is a descriptive cross-sectional design. As per Kothari [18], a descriptive cross-sectional design is designed to collect data at a specific point in time. Furthermore, it is highlighted that cross-sectional studies are comparatively cost-effective and require less time compared to other research designs. This justifies the selection of this design for the specific study conducted at Amana Regional Referral Hospital in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

3.2 Research Approach

The research approach encompasses paradigms and research frameworks, constituting a mixed approach [19]. This study employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches, as they are conducive to describing a specific problem rather than conducting a broad statistical survey. Additionally, this approach facilitated the researcher in comprehending how participants attribute meaning to their surroundings and how this meaning influences their behavior.

3.3 Data Processing and Analysis Techniques

The primary sources of data were nurses, doctors, and hospital leaders at Amana Regional Referral Hospital, who provided firsthand information on the variables under study. Under this method, the research instruments encompassed questionnaires and interviews, along with government publications, books, and journals as part of the secondary data collection process.

Demographic information from respondents, independent variables, and data for dependent variables underwent analysis through formatted tables presenting frequencies and percentages. This facilitated the execution of statistical tests and the drawing of conclusions. Descriptive statistics, including mean, variance, and standard deviation, were employed for a comprehensive analysis. Following each section, the data acquired through the questionnaire underwent summarization, coding, entry, cleaning, and analysis. The pivotal events and outcomes were derived through the utilization of the IBM SPSS 22 statistical software package, 2015 version. The choice of this software was based on its popularity and the ease it provides in conducting statistical analyses [20].

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 169 respondents were involved in the study, 89 (52.7%) were female, and 80 (47.3%) were male, majority of the respondents (94, 55.6%) were married, while 58 (34.3%) of respondents were single, 6 (3.6%) were widowed, 6 (3.6%) were separated, and 5 (3.0%) of respondents were divorced. Furthermore, the majority (86, 50.9%) were aged between 25 and 35 years old. Additionally, 51 (30.2%) of respondents were aged between 35 and 55 years old, 28 (16.6%) were below 25 years old, and 4 (2.4%) were above 55 years old. 61 (36.1%) held a first degree, 49 (29.0%) held a diploma, 18 (10.7%) held a certificate, 18 (10.7%) had advanced secondary education, 6 (3.6%) had primary education, and 1 (0.6%) had a PhD education level. This implies that the majority of the respondents were educated in various professions and levels of education, thus enabling them to deliver good health services within the hospital, as they are aware of the elements of good governance within institutions.

Table 1: Transparency and accountability in Management of public health services in Amana regional referral hospital (N=169)

ITEMS	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Transparency promotes easy access of information regarding health services	118	41	7	1	2	1.3905	.70805
2. Transparency has promoted efficient and effective services delivery in health sector	103	52	8	2	4	1.5325	.83833
3. All information is available on website of public hospitals	67	54	40	8	0	1.9349	.90726
4. All information is displayed on notice board due to transparency	64	67	25	11	2	1.9349	.94581
5. Transparency promotes easy access of results, process, sharing of information and knowledge at a level	97	52	11	4	5	1.6272	.93068
6. Transparency Promotes consumer satisfaction of health care services	91	55	14	7	2	1.6627	.88565
7. Due to accountability, there is efficiency and effectiveness on service delivery	100	55	10	3	1	1.5207	.74073
8. There is equity and quality in service delivery in public hospitals	65	62	28	10	4	1.9704	1.00253
9. Doctors practice good morals due to accountability when handling patients	74	60	30	4	1	1.8047	.85411
10. Due to accountability for public health service reduce the death rate of the patients in hospital	89	56	19	3	2	1.6568	.83842
Totals							

The results presented in table 1 above, concerning question number one, 118 respondents expressed strong agreement, 41 agreed, 7 were undecided, 1 disagreed, and 2 strongly disagreed. The respondents who strongly agreed exhibited a high mean value of 1.3905, with a standard deviation of 0.70805. This indicates that the majority of respondents strongly agreed with the statement. According to the study findings, the researcher noted that the organization exhibits good governance by ensuring transparency, facilitating easy access to information about health services offered. This information is made available through the organization's notice board, website, and social media platforms.

Findings from statement number two revealed that 103 respondents strongly agreed, 52 agreed, 8 were undecided, 4 strongly disagreed, and 2 disagreed. The respondents who strongly agreed exhibited a high mean value of 1.5325, with a standard deviation of 0.83833. This indicates that the majority of respondents strongly agreed that transparency enhances efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery within the health sector. This is attributed to the community's awareness of the rate of health services provided by public hospitals.

This discovery aligns with the assertion of Islam [21], which emphasizes that transparency involves providing clear and accurate information about the internal workings of an organization. Openness is the central element of transparency within an organization, necessitating access to information, freedom of the press, community participation, and the utilization of modern technology to provide essential services to customers and citizens. The focus of this study is to investigate transparency for a comprehensive understanding of quality health service delivery.

Moreover, the information presented in statement number four indicates that 67 respondents agreed, while 64 strongly agreed, 25 were undecided, 11 disagreed, and 2 strongly disagreed. The respondents who expressed agreement displayed a high mean value of 1.9349, with a standard deviation of 0.94581. This suggests that the majority of respondents concurred that all relevant information was effectively displayed on the notice board as a result of transparency. This approach aims to inform patients and the community about the details concerning health

services offered at Amana Regional Referral Hospitals. Notice boards have been strategically placed in various locations throughout the hospital, including hospital wards, departments, and the reception area.

This finding aligns with the study conducted by [22] in Uganda, focusing on public procurement in developing countries. The study revealed that a transparent procurement system is characterized by clear regulations and procedures, standardized tender documents, standardized tender contracts, and a fair process. The study emphasizes the necessity of complete transparency in relation to procurement decisions.

Moreover, the findings from statement five indicated that 97 respondents strongly agreed, 52 agreed, 11 were undecided, 5 strongly disagreed, and 4 disagreed. The respondents who strongly agreed exhibited a high mean value of 1.6272, with a standard deviation of 0.93068. This suggests that the majority of respondents strongly concurred that transparency facilitates easy access to results, processes, and the sharing of information and knowledge at all levels, attributing this to the practice of good governance within the public health sector.

This discovery aligns with the perspective of Song and Lee [23], who assert that public hospitals enhance transparency by actively disclosing information about their activities and decisions. This practice enables citizens to access, monitor, and evaluate such information. From the citizens' standpoint, government transparency is perceived when government information is publicly available. However, mere availability of information does not constitute government transparency unless citizens are effectively informed about government activities and decisions. Consequently, government transparency can be characterized by the extent to which citizens can access government agencies and officials and stay informed about the government's actions

The investigation into the assertion, "Transparency Promotes Consumer Satisfaction of Health Care Services," yielded results indicating that 91 respondents strongly agreed, 55 agreed, 14 were undecided, 7 disagreed, and 2 strongly disagreed. The respondents who strongly agreed demonstrated a high mean value of 1.6627, with a standard deviation of 0.88565. This suggests that the majority of respondents strongly supported the statement, as they had the opportunity to voice their opinions to the management regarding the quality of services offered by public health hospitals.

This finding aligns with the perspective of Manzoor et al. [24] in Pakistan, who assert that improved and high-quality healthcare services significantly contribute to patient satisfaction. In developing countries, healthcare centers and public hospitals must enhance their facilities and deliver superior services to meet the needs of the populace.

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The findings from the study's eighth question reveal that 65 respondents strongly agreed, 62 agreed, 28 were undecided, 10 disagreed, and 4 strongly disagreed. The respondents who strongly agreed exhibited a high mean value of 1.9704, with a standard deviation of 1.00253. This indicates that the majority of respondents concurred that equity and equality characterize service delivery in public hospitals. This implies that health services are provided within an organization without bias, ensuring that all individuals receive the same level of healthcare.

This discovery aligns with the perspective of Kuye and Akinwale [25], who emphasize that adhering to formal rules enhances opportunities for healthcare staff. This not only involves their active participation in formulating objectives and goals but also empowers them to exercise their initiative in determining the most effective means of performing their job tasks. Consequently, this significantly influences the quality-of-service delivery to the patients they attend to.

Results from question number nine indicated that 74 respondents strongly agreed, 60 agreed, 30 were undecided, 4 disagreed, and 1 strongly disagreed. The respondents who strongly agreed demonstrated a high mean value of 1.8047, with a standard deviation of 0.85411. This suggests that the majority of respondents strongly endorsed the notion that doctors and nurses uphold good morals, driven by accountability in their interactions with patients. This, in turn, fosters trust among patients in the healthcare services provided by public hospitals.

This finding aligns with the research conducted by Geis et al. [26], which highlights the crucial aspects of data ethics. These include informed consent, privacy and data protection, ownership, objectivity, transparency, and a moral obligation to utilize collected data to benefit patients and enhance the common good. The study underscores the responsibility of healthcare professionals to extract valuable information about patients and their illnesses, with the overarching duty to avoid using data in ways that may harm or adversely affect patients or lead to discrimination.

Simultaneously, the study's results reveal that 89 respondents strongly agreed, 56 agreed, 19 were undecided, 3 disagreed, and 2 strongly disagreed. The respondents who strongly agreed exhibited a high mean value of 1.6568, with a standard deviation of 0.83842. This indicates that the majority of respondents strongly concurred that the reduction of the patient death rate in public hospitals hinges on practicing accountability. This practice influences every staff member to be responsible in their role, working diligently to save the lives of patients within the hospital. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Dupas and Jain [27]. The provision of information empowers patients to exercise both choice and voice, potentially influencing the behavior of public hospitals. However, it's essential to note that previous findings on bottom-up accountability from public primary health care may not be universally applicable to private agents with different incentives or contexts involving higher-level, lifesaving care, where hospitals wield substantial power over patients. The study's results suggest that while patient-driven accountability interventions are crucial, they may be insufficient to fully enhance the effectiveness of public health insurance programs for hospital care.

In another development, an interview was conducted with the top management of the organization, including the Chief Medical Officer (CMO), public relations officer, human resource officer, director of finance, gender desk officer, chief procurement officer, and head nurse officer, on the efficiency of good governance in the management of public health services at Amana Regional Referral Hospital. Results from the study showed that transparency and accountability for public health services reduce the death rate of patients in hospitals.

Here is what Chief Medical Officer (CMO) said:

> *"It is the right of every patient to understand what they are suffering from and the kind of treatment they will receive to improve their health. Additionally, doctors and nurses should be accountable for informing patients about their health issues, as diseases are not secrets that patients should be unaware."* (CMO$_1$, 11th September, 2023)

The above findings from the human resource officer suggest that the organization practices good governance through transparency, accountability, and openness to patients. The findings align with those of [28], who stated that an open approach leads to insights into perceptions. A diverse range of elements (clinically competent nurses, collaborative relationships, autonomous nurse practice, adequate staffing, control over nurse practice, managerial support, and patient-centered care) are essential to providing high-quality care, as it results in a more positive patient experience of nursing care.

Furthermore, the informants were asked whether doctors and nurses practice good morals due to accountability and transparency when handling patients. This is what the human resource officer said:

> *"Thanks to the rules, regulations, and seminars provided by the hospital management teams,*
>
> *much assistance is given to shape the behavior of staff members and to instill good moral values.*
>
> *This includes the use of polite language towards patients and the importance of staff punctuality in*
>
> *their daily activities within the organisation"* (HR1, 11th September, 2023)

The conclusions drawn from the human resource officer's report indicate that a majority of the staff members adhered to ethical principles when dealing with their patients. This, in turn, played a significant role in rebuilding trust among community members regarding the quality of services offered by the hospital management. These findings are consistent with the observations made by Kieft et al. [28], who propose that individual moral responsibility for actions and behaviors is an indispensable aspect of professional practice. Moreover, the research provides empirical evidence that opportunities to 'be good' are institutionally organized and structured. Individuals play a crucial role in establishing and perpetuating normative conditions and criteria by which they and their actions are held accountable.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

Examining concerns related to transparency and accountability in the administration of public health services at Amana Regional Referral Hospital, the study reveals effective implementation of transparency and accountability within the organization. This success is credited to the rules and regulations established by the hospital, ensuring accountability for each staff member in their respective roles. In an effort to diminish the mortality rate, the organization disseminates a substantial amount of information on notice boards strategically positioned throughout the hospital. Furthermore, additional information is made available on the hospital website, contributing to community awareness.

The findings regarding transparency and accountability in the management of public health services align with the Intuitive Theory, proposing that both individuals and organizations naturally seek openness and responsibility in their actions. The observed positive outcomes, such as a decrease in patient mortality rates and enhanced community trust, indicate that when public hospitals prioritize accountability, there are tangible benefits in terms of improved healthcare quality and public perception.

The study reached the conclusion that individuals are cognizant of governance practices and recognize their positive impact on service delivery, along with the promotion of ethical behavior such as excellent patient care and counseling by doctors. These aspects played a crucial role in the management of public health services, fostering the implementation of good governance and consequently building trust within the community regarding the quality of services offered by public hospitals in Tanzania. Furthermore, the conclusion affirmed that good governance is instrumental in enhancing the overall quality of service delivery.

5.2 Recommendation

The study puts forward the following recommendations:
  i.   The management of Amana Regional Referral Hospital is advised to consistently adhere to all aspects of good governance within the organization, notwithstanding unfavorable decisions made by external parties. This approach is crucial for establishing trust with patients and contributing to the preservation of lives in Tanzania.
  ii.   The study urges politicians to refrain from making decisions for the community that may pose significant challenges for public hospitals to implement, especially regarding the provision of free services to the community when the government-allocated budget falls short of meeting the organization's needs.

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