Relationship Marketing Dimensions and Quality Service of Selected Public Teaching Hospitals in Southwest, Nigeria

[1]Smith Oluwafolakemi Miriam,
[2]Kabuoh Margret Nma,
& [3]Onu Christopher Ajah

[1,2&3]*Department of Business Administration and Marketing, School of Management Sciences, Babcock University, Ilishan –Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria*

Keywords:
Relationship marketing, Commitment, Communication, Competence Empathy, Conflict handling, Quality service

Corresponding Author:
Smith Oluwafolakemi Miriam

A b s t r a c t

R elationship marketing is critical for any organisation aspiring to capture large customer base and remain sustained. However, some organisations pay little attention in relationship marketing dimensions such as trust, commitment, communication, competence, empathy, Conflict handling, resulting to an overall poor performance. This study examined the effect of relationship marketing dimensions on quality service of selected public teaching hospitals in SouthWest, Nigeria. This study adopted the positivism philosophy and *Quantitatitive* approach. Survey research design was used via a structured questionnaire. The population comprised 6,464 outpatients as at the time of study from six (6) selected public teaching hospitals in Southwest Nigeria. Sample size of 471 was determined via Cochram method including 30 % attrition rate. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the constructs ranged from 0.725 to 0,927. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential (multiple and hierarchical regression) statistics. Findings revealed that relationship marketing dimensions have significant effects on Quality service of public teaching hospital in South-West, Nigeria [Adj R^2=0.695; $F(6, 464)$ = 179.203 at p = 0.000 (p<0.05). The study concluded that relationship marketing dimensions have significant effect on quality service of public teaching hospital in South-West, Nigeria. The study recommended that public teaching hospitals should make use of the benefit of relationship marketing dimensions in order to improve service quality of public teaching hospitals in South-West, Nigeria. There is a need for the government to increase funding and support for public teaching hospitals in the region, to enable them to invest in relationship marketing strategies.

Background to the Study

The healthcare sector is traditionally recognized as an essential field of healthcare management capable of improving the overall physical, mental, and social well-being of people all over the world. Public teaching hospitals play a crucial role in the healthcare sector as they provide healthcare services to the general public at affordable rates. However, the poor performance of the public teaching hospital evidence through decline in quality service of the hospital workers. The global health sector achieved a remarkable valuation of $8.45 trillion in the year 2020, as meticulously documented by the World Health Organization. This valuation is instrumental to the sector's significant influence, and summaries the vast array of healthcare activities, innovations, and services that contribute to the overall well-being of individuals and communities worldwide. As public healthcare continues to evolve, by the close of the subsequent year, 2022, global healthcare expenditure surpassed the monumental threshold of $10 trillion. This remarkable step-up in spending underscores the increasing commitment to addressing health-related needs, investing in medical advancements, and fortifying healthcare systems across diverse regions. Azogu et al (2019), Wang et al (2020) and Zaid et al (2020) noted a decline in the quality of service, erosion of patient loyalty, reduced patients' inclination to engage in repeat interactions, low dimension of customer referral, customer lifetime value, a discernible shortfall in the allocation of crucial resources in the health care sector. The complexities of maintaining high-quality healthcare services within these variables underscore the various nature of healthcare management (Isimoya & Olaniyan, 2020).

In North America, particularly in the United States of America (USA), where healthcare spending per capita is the highest globally at $10,224 and double the global average, challenges persist within public hospitals despite substantial financial investments. The USA's total healthcare expenditure reached $3.65 trillion in 2021, consisting 17.8% of the nation's GPD. Notably, despite this significant financial investment, public hospital in the USA grapple with ongoing issues, including a decline in service quality, erosion of patient loyalty, reduced engagement for repeated interactions and a noticeable deficiency in crucial resource allocation. This highlights the critical performance variables affecting hospital, such as, patient dissatisfaction, lack of loyalty, high employee turnover, slackness in patient referrals, and a decline in customers' lifetime values (WHO, 2022).

Public hospitals in Europe are grappling with the challenge of maintaining consistent quality service due to factors such as resource constraints and staffing. The decline in quality service within European public hospitals has raised concerns about the overall patient experience and outcomes, patient dissatisfaction has become a pressing issue for many public hospitals in the United Kingdom, as extended waiting time and communication gaps contribute to a less than satisfactory healthcare journey. The struggle to retain patients has become evident in United Kingdom (UK) public hospitals, has challenges in service quality and patient satisfaction impact the hospital's ability to keep its patient base intact (Kalei, 2021). Ensuring customer retention has become a focal

point for hospitals aiming to secure their financial stability and maintain consistent patient volumes (Darmayasa & Yasa, 2021). The erosion in service quality and experience has contributed to reduced patient loyalty, with referral rates plunging by nearly half, posing hurdles for customer retention as patients increasingly seek alternatives outside the strained public system (Adomah-Afari & Maloreh-Nyamekye 2019). Moreover, the precipitous 48% drop in referral rates underscores the imperative for German public hospitals to urgently address service gaps and restore patient trust (Caliskan & Esmer 2020). Simultaneously, public hospitals grapple with optimizing their customer lifetime value, encompassing issues such as funding limitations, medical technology accessibility, and recruiting skilled healthcare staff (Baashar et al., 2020).

Africa is facing different healthcare problems and healthcare service delivery challenges are more often seen in countries with a very High Human Development Index (HDI), human resource challenges attract more attention within those with a low HDI. Healthcare systems in Africa have over the years, suffered from man-made issues which cut across institutional, human resources, financial, technical and political developments. Public hospitals in Morocco and Algeria, are serving as reflections of broader trends in Africa, and grapple with an array of challenges, including the potential for declining quality service and consequent patient dissatisfaction (Adomah-Afari et al., 2019). These issues are often shaped by resource constraints and the dynamic landscape of evolving healthcare needs.

In Nigeria, the healthcare sector has faced several challenges in providing quality healthcare services, particularly in public hospitals (Ali et al., 2021). Issues such as inadequate funding, outdated medical equipment, inadequate training for healthcare professionals, and poor service delivery have been identified as factors that hinder the effective performance of public hospitals in Nigeria (Adesina et al., 2023). Relationship marketing has been suggested as a possible solution to address some of the challenges faced by public hospitals in Nigeria, particularly in improving 3patient satisfaction and loyalty (Olumoko, 2021). Thus, it has become imperative for public teaching hospitals in the region to adopt relationship marketing strategies to improve their performance and remain competitive. However, despite the growing importance of relationship marketing in the healthcare industry, there is a paucity of empirical research on the relationship between relationship marketing and the performance of public teaching hospitals in Southwest Nigeria (Ahmad et al., 2020; Salem, 2021; Upadhyai et al., 2020).

The challenge of relationship marketing and its impact on hospital performance in Nigeria encompasses a range of issues (Sleiman, et al., 2021). Inconsistent implementation of relationship marketing dimensions of trust, commitment, communication, competence, empathy, and conflict handling hinders efforts to enhance patient experiences and satisfaction (Haque & Mazumder 2020; Imbayani et al., 2021). The quality of service in public hospitals in Nigeria is impeded by various pressing issues such as inadequate infrastructure and outdated facilities which compromise the ability to deliver modern and effective healthcare (Adomah-Afari & Maloreh-Nyamekye 2019;

Ganaie & Bhat, 2020; Hamdan et al., 2019). Shortages of skilled healthcare professionals, including doctors and nurses, result in stretched resources and hinder timely and efficient care (Adomah-Afari et al., 2019). Insufficient government funding leads to shortages of essential medical supplies and equipment, impacting the overall patient experience (Caliskan & Esmer 2020). Additionally, cases of corruption and mismanagement divert resources away from patient services, further deteriorating the quality of care provided (Heiens et al., 2019). These combined challenges result in suboptimal quality service and undermine public trust in the healthcare system (Affran et al., 2019; Baral & Shrestha 2019).

Following the aforementioned, this study examined the effect of relationship marketing dimensions on quality service of selected Public Teaching Hospitals in Southwest, Nigeria.

Research Hypothesis
To achieve the objective of the study and the research interest, the following hypothesis was formulated.
H_0:   Quality service is not significantly affected by Relationship marketing dimensions of selected public teaching hospitals in South-west, Nigeria.

Review of Literature
This section deals with the review of conceptual, empirical, and theoretical reviews of both independent variable and its sub variables as well as the dependent variable.

Quality Service
Quality service refers to consistently meeting or exceeding customer expectations by delivering products, experiences, or solutions that satisfy their needs and preferences (Caliskan & Esmer, 2020). Quality service encompasses the delivery of accurate, efficient, and personalized solutions that enhance customer satisfaction and build lasting relationships (Sun, et al., 2020). Quality service involves the provision of reliable, responsive, and empathetic assistance that addresses customer concerns and contributes to a positive overall experience (Nguyen et al., 2022). Quality service is characterized by delivering value-added solutions, exceptional responsiveness, and a customer-centric approach that consistently delights and retains customers (Heiens et al., 2019).

Quality service denotes the delivery of consistent and exceptional experiences that align with customer preferences, building trust and loyalty over time (Hamdan et al., 2019). Quality service encompasses the ability to fulfill customer needs efficiently, communicate effectively, and exceed expectations, resulting in enhanced customer loyalty (Kamra, 2021). Quality service involves a customer-focused approach that ensures every interaction is tailored to meet individual needs, contributing to satisfaction and long-term loyalty (Makhitha, 2019). Quality service signifies the consistent delivery of accurate, timely, and respectful assistance that reflects an organization's commitment to customer well-being (Salam & Hoque, 2019). Quality service includes the provision of

solutions that not only resolve customer issues but also leave a positive impression, contributing to a strong brand reputation (Affran et al., 2019). Quality service entails a continuous effort to understand, anticipate, and exceed customer needs through effective communication, responsiveness, and personalized interactions (Adomah-Afari et al., 2019).

In light of the diverse definitions found in literature, quality service is defined by the researcher as the consistent and exceptional delivery of products, processes, or interactions that meet or exceed customer expectations and needs. It encompasses attributes such as accuracy, reliability, efficiency, responsiveness, and customer-centricity. Quality service is not only a reflection of meeting technical specifications but also entails creating positive experiences, building trust, and fostering long-lasting customer relationships through effective communication, personalized attention, and exceeding customer satisfaction.

Relationship Marketing
Relationship marketing is an aspect of customer relationship management (CRM) that focuses on promoting customer loyalty and long-term customer engagement instead of shorter-term goals like customer acquisition and individual sales. Relationship marketing basically entails establishing long-term relationships with customers. Instead of attempting to achieve a single one-time purchase by customers, relationship marketing promotes customer retention by offering high quality and valuable products and services (Abekah-Nkrumah et al., 2021). Relationship marketing primarily involves the improvement of a company's internal operations, because customers may be lost not due to a dislike of the company's products or services; but because they were frustrated with the quality of its customer service. It is also mentioned that knowledge and the application of relationship marketing will help firm better understand customer acquisition, increased customer commitment, foster collaboration, increase profitability, new product development which is a result of information gathered from customer, improve selling systems and pricing (Ratnasari & Gumanti, 2019).

Considering the diverse definitions found in literature, relationship marketing is defined by the researcher as a strategic approach that emphasizes building and nurturing long-term relationships with customers, stakeholders, and partners. It goes beyond transactional interactions, focusing on creating meaningful connections and delivering value over time. Relationship marketing involves fostering customer loyalty, trust, and satisfaction through personalized communication, understanding customer needs, addressing concerns, and offering tailored solutions. It encompasses dimensions such as trust, commitment, communication, competence, empathy, and conflict handling to enhance customer experiences, drive customer retention, and ultimately contribute to Organisational success. For the purpose of this study, relationship marketing is measured by trust, commitment, communication, competence, empathy and conflict handling. These variables are discussed below.

Trust

Trust is a concept closely related to the nature of the interactions among the patients, healthcare institutions, and systems while laying the foundation for a healthy society and maintaining the health of society (Aburayya et al., 2020). In other words, patient trust denotes the belief of the patient that their physician will tend to their needs in the best way and that they will provide the proper medical care (Maduabuchi et al., 2020). Furthermore, it signifies the way that the patient has faith in the services that they receive in order to regain their health Trust exists when one party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity and is a central component in all relational exchanges (Durmus & Akbolat, 2020). Trust is based on repeated interactions with a service provider, and mutual trust between stakeholders may result in tacit information sharing behavior, non-opportunistic behavior and the fostering of long-lasting partnerships. Consumer trust has also been identified as important in fostering ongoing relationships with customers in the financial services industry. In light of the diverse definitions found in literature, trust is defined by the researcher as the belief, confidence, and reliance that individuals or entities have in the integrity, reliability, and credibility of another party. It is built over time through consistent and transparent actions, effective communication, and the fulfillment of promises and commitments.

Commitment

Mubarak and Ali, (2021) defines commitment as reinforcing the strength of a marketing relationship and is a useful construct for predicting Customer Loyalty. Commitment denotes a readiness to initiate and carry out operations that ensures continuous viability of a commercial relationship. Furthermore, commitment is a necessity to sustain a relationship with a company. Customers who are engaged give value and benefits to service providers while also assuring long term sustainability, hence, commitment is an essential component of any long-term success of relationships. Commitment is a willingness to give time and energy to something that is believed in, or a promised to do something and an act of binding oneself intellectually or emotional to a course of action. Health professionals' commitment to the professional rather than organization could affect their behavior. Professional commitment is beyond a commitment for a particular organization and implies individuals' perspective towards their profession and the motivation that they have to stay in their job that refers to one's loyalty to the profession and willingness to strive and uphold the values and goals of the profession (Fong & Goh, 2021). In the context of relationships, commitment reflects a long-term perspective, indicating a party's intention to maintain and sustain the connection through challenges and changes. In business, commitment can manifest as a provider's determination to deliver consistent quality service, meet customer needs, and create lasting customer loyalty.

Communication

Communication is defined as the formal as well as informal exchanging and sharing of meaningful and timely information between buyers and sellers (Haghkhah et al., 2020). Communication in Relationship Marketing means keeping in touch with valued

customers, providing timely and trustworthy information on service and service changes, and communicating proactively if when a delivery problem occurs (Hasan, 2019). Characteristics of communication: communicator, receiver, clarity, concise, concrete, coherent, complete, courteous and response. Advantages: Commey and Adom, (2020) states that communication in healthcare builds trust between patients and providers and allows providers to find better opportunities to improve service quality through feedback. Immediate understanding of a patient's condition and needs; understand the emotional state of patients; and identifying specialized needs. Helps to ensure patients and family caregivers can participate effectively in their care and make informed decisions (Makhitha, 2019). In light of the diverse definitions found in literature, communication is defined by the researcher as the exchange of information, ideas, thoughts, and emotions between individuals, entities, or groups using vertical, written, or nonvertical methods.

Competence
Competence involves the factors of knowledge, skills, abilities, and traits, which determine healthcare worker's ability and readiness to provide high-quality services. The department managers, experienced staff members, and educators are the key personnel involved in competence. The application and demonstration of appropriate knowledge, skills behaviors, and judgment in a clinical setting Competence is one of the most important resources in organizations; competence factor is a key element in achieving high levels of performance; it is the use of information in evaluating and then organizing it to be applied by specialists in order to satisfy the needs and desires of their customers and to enhance their loyalty. Competence is defined by Mubushar et al., (2020) as the buyer's perception of the supplier's technological and commercial competence. They operationalized competence in four ways: the supplier understands about the market of the buyer, the capability to give good advice on the operating business, the ability to help the buyer plan purchases, and the ability to provide effective sales promotion materials. Sun et al., (2020) mentioned that within banking/service providers' competence could mean deploying knowledgeable employees with the capability of providing accurate and first-class banking services. In light of the diverse definitions found in literature, competence is defined by the researcher as the possession of knowledge, skills, expertise, and capabilities required to perform tasks, fulfill responsibilities, and achieve desired outcomes effectively.

Empathy
Empathy is the capacity to understand and share the feelings, perspectives, and emotions of others, demonstrating a genuine concern for their well-being (Harmoko & Shihab, 2019). Empathy refers to the ability to step into someone else's shoes, perceive the world from their viewpoint, and respond with compassion and understanding. Empathy is the skill of connecting emotionally with others, recognizing their emotions, and responding in a way that acknowledges and validates their feelings (Krataithong & Rakrachakarn, 2020). Empathy is the practice of actively listening, observing, and acknowledging the emotions and experiences of others, fostering a deeper connection and mutual

understanding (Oluwabiyi et al., 2022). Empathy is the cognitive and emotional skill that enables one to recognize, understand, and respond to the emotions of others, fostering a sense of connection and unity (Amoako et al., 2019). Empathy is the capacity to engage with others on an emotional level, demonstrating compassion, sensitivity, and a genuine desire to share in their experiences (Tehci & Şenbursa, 2021). Empathy is the practice of actively engaging with others' feelings and experiences, showing understanding, support, and a willingness to stand alongside them (Fong & Goh, 2021). In light of the diverse definitions found in literature, empathy is defined by the researcher as the ability to understand and share the feelings, perspectives, and experiences of others.

Conflict Handling

Conflict handling is defined as a firm's Service Provider's skill in handling potential conflicts that have a great impact on customer satisfaction since it serves as an assurance that providers of services are interested in their customer's welfare (Commey & Adom, 2020). Insight foresight ability, tactful, ability to resolve any conflicting issues before they arise, and they arrive. When a marketing manager has the ability to avoid potential conflicts and find solutions to conflicts before they degenerate into problems and discuss solutions openly when problems do occur. According to Anabila, (2019) conflict handling is a key element of relationship marketing. Conflict management refers to the provider's ability to avoid conflicts, resolve overt conflicts before they create problems, and discuss solutions openly. Characteristics of conflict occurs when two or more employees pursue incompatible goals that is the behavior of employee in order to prevent the other in achieving goals, when there is mismatch between the actual and expected; unresolved conflicts and frustrations as a result of carrying out responsibilities (Mubarak & Ali, 2022). In light of the diverse definitions found in literature, Conflict handling is defined by the researcher as the process of managing disagreements, disputes, or differences that arise between individuals, parties, or entities. It encompasses strategies and approaches used to address conflicts constructively, aiming to find solutions that satisfy all parties involved.

Relationship Marketing Dimensions and Quality Service

Ali et al (2021) on hotel service quality: the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in hospitality revealed that four of service quality dimensions (empathy, responsiveness, assurance and tangible) have positive significant effect on customer satisfaction, except reliability which had a negative significant effect on customer satisfaction. Boadi et al. (2019) on Impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in Ghana hospitals: A PLS SEM approach reveal from the analysed data that four dimensions of service quality except assurance have positive significant effect on customer satisfaction. (Assurance had negative and insignificant direct effect on customer satisfaction; Tangibility had positive and significant direct effect on customer satisfaction; Reliability has a positive and significant direct effect on customer satisfaction; Responsiveness has a positive and significant direct effect on customer satisfaction; Empathy has a positive and significant direct effect on customer satisfaction). Likewise, patient satisfaction had a positive significant effect on hospital financial

performance, but no significant effect on hospital utilization. Utor & Ugba (2020) in their study found that flextime had a significant positive relationship with four dimensions of service quality namely, reliability, responsiveness, empathy and assurance. Flextime showed significant negative relationship with tangibility, another dimension of service quality. Overall, the study demonstrated that flextime significantly impact service quality of medical employees; the study validates and strengthens view that health systems studies are emerging as factual interdisciplinary fields of investigation knowledge on the consequence of employee support through the use of flexible practices such as flextime in the work place to boost the performance of medical employees in terms of serviceHospital utilization is found to have positive significant effect on hospital financial performance.

Relationship Marketing Theory
Relationship marketing theory propounded by Berry, (1983) and Jackson, (1985), suggests that successful relationship marketing results from certain aspects of cooperative relationships that characterize successful relational exchanges. Relationship Marketing Theory assumes that long-term relationships with customers are more valuable than short-term transactions. It emphasizes that building and sustaining customer relationships over time is a key driver of success. This assumption recognizes that long-term customers are more likely to be loyal, provide repeat business, and offer higher lifetime value. Relationship marketing theory centers around the customer (Berry, 1983). It assumes that businesses should prioritize understanding and meeting the unique needs and preferences of individual customers (Chesula, 2021). This assumption acknowledges that customers are not homogeneous and that tailored marketing efforts are more effective (Berry, 1983).

The works of Gronroos, (2004), Payne, (1997), and Christopher, (2001) have also added significant credibility to relationship marketing theory. Gronroos, (2004) emphasized the role of service quality and relationship marketing in the services sector. Payne, (1997) has been a key advocate for the shift from transaction-focused marketing to relationship-focused marketing. Christopher et al, (2001) have contributed to the theory by emphasizing the importance of supply chain relationships and collaboration with business partners. The support and advocacy of these authors and scholars have helped solidify Relationship Marketing Theory as a valuable and widely accepted framework for businesses seeking to build strong and enduring customer relationships (Salem, 2021).

In as much as the Relationship marketing theory has gained significant support and recognition, it has not been without its critics. Several authors and scholars have raised concerns and criticisms related to this marketing approach. Notably, Sheth et al, (2015), who was previously mentioned as a supporter of the theory, has also been a critic. He argued that relationship marketing theory tends to oversimplify customer behavior and ignore the dynamic and complex nature of markets, emphasizing the need for a more balanced approach. Another critic of Relationship Marketing Theory is Gummesson, (2002) who challenged the theory's applicability to certain industries, particularly

services, arguing that it may not fully address the unique aspects of service marketing and customer relationships. The Relationship Marketing Theory is highly relevant to a study on relationship marketing dimensions and hospital healthcare performance. It provides a robust framework for understanding the importance of long-term patient-provider relationships, trust-building, engagement, reputation management, and customer satisfaction within the healthcare context. Relationship marketing theory places a strong emphasis on building and maintaining long-term relationships with customers or clients (Salem, 2021).

Methodology

This study adopted the positivism philosophy and Quantitative approach. Survey research design was used for primary data collection via a structured questionnaire. The population comprised 6,464 outpatients as at the time of study from six (6) selected public teaching hospitals in Southwest Nigeria. Sample size of 471 was determined via Cochram method including 30 % attrition rate. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the constructs ranged from 0.725 to 0.927. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential (multiple and hierarchical regression) statistics.

Analysis

Restatement of Research Objective

Objective: Examined the effect of relationship marketing dimensions on quality service of selected public teaching hospitals in South-west Nigeria. Descriptive analyses were done on all the independent sub variables table by table as well as the quality service analysis table basing on percentage, mean and standard deviation. Thereafter, the summary table of the multiple linear regression for the hypothesis testing was done as seen below:

Restatement of Research Hypothesis

H_{01}: Quality service is not significantly affected by Relationship Marketing Dimensions.

Table 1: Summary of multiple regression between relationship marketing dimensions and quality service of selected public teaching hospital South-West, Nigeria.

N	Model	B	Sig.	T	ANOVA (Sig.)	R	Adjusted R^2	F (6,464)
	(Constant)	-.175	.212	-1.248				
	Trust	.284	.000	6.191				
	Relationship Commitment	.152	.003	2.995	0.000^b	$.836^a$	.695	179.203
	Communication	.032	.255	1.139				
471	Competence	.272	.000	7.196				
	Empathy	.200	.000	4.144				
	Conflict Handling	.114	.024	2.268				
	Predictors: (Constant), Trust, Relationship Commitment, Communication, Competence, Empathy, Conflict Handling							
	Dependent Variable: Quality Service							

Source: Authors' computation, 2024 underlying data from Field Survey

Interpretation

The Table shows the multiple regression analysis results for the relationship marketing dimensions on quality service of selected public teaching hospitals in South-West Nigeria. The results showed that trust ($\beta = 0.284$, $t = 6.191$, $p<0.05$), relationship commitment ($\beta = 0.152$, $t = 2.995$, $p<0.05$, competence ($\beta = 0.272$, $t = 7.196$, $p<0.05$), empathy ($\beta = 0.200$, $t = 4.144$, $p<0.05$) and conflict handling ($\beta = 0.114$, $t = 2.268$, $p<0.05$) have a positive and significant effect on the quality service of selected public teaching hospital in South-West Nigeria while communication ($\beta = 0.032$, $t = 1.139$, $p>0.05$) have a positive but insignificant effect on quality service. This implies that trust, relationship commitment, competence, empathy and conflict handling are important factors in the public teaching hospitals which in turn yields an increase in quality service.

The R-value of 0.836 supports this result and it shows that relationship marketing dimensions have a strong positive relationship with the quality service of selected public teaching hospital in south-west Nigeria. The coefficient of multiple determination Adj R^2 = 0.695 indicates that about 69.5% of the variation that occurs in the quality service in selected public teaching hospital in South-West Nigeria can be accounted for by the relationship marketing dimensions while the remaining 30.5% changes that occur is accounted for by other variables not captured in the model. The predictive and prescriptive multiple regression models are thus expressed:

QS= -0.175+0.84TR+0.152RC+0.032CM+0.272CP+0.200EP+0.114CH+U$_i$ --- (Predictive Model)
QS =0.84TR+0.152RC+0.272CP+0.200EP+0.114CH+U$_i$ --- Prescriptive Model)

Where:

    QS = Quality Service
    TR = Trust
    RC = Relationship Commitment
    CM = Communication
    CP = Competence
    EP = Empathy
    CH = Conflict Handling

The regression model shows that holding relationship marketing dimensions to a constant zero, quality service would be -0.175 which is negative. In the predictive model, it is seen that the variable communication is positive and insignificant so the management of the hospital can downplay the variable which is why they are not included in the prescriptive model. The results of the multiple regression analysis as seen in the prescriptive model indicate that when all other variables of relationship marketing (trust, relationship commitment, competence, empathy and conflict handling) are improved by one unit quality service would also increase by 0.284, 0.152, 0.272, 0.200 and 0.114 respectively and vice-versa. This implies that an increase in trust, relationship commitment, competence, empathy and conflict handling would lead to an increase in the rate of quality service in selected public teaching hospitals in south-west Nigeria. Also, the F-statistics (df = 6, 464) = 179.203 at p = 0.000 (p<0.05) indicates that the overall model is significant in predicting the effect of relationship marketing dimensions on quality service which implies that relationship marketing dimensions except for communication are important determinants in the quality service rate of selected public teaching hospitals in South-West Nigeria. The result suggests that public teaching hospitals should pay more attention towards relationships marketing practices developing the components of relationship marketing, especially trust, relationship commitment, competence, empathy and conflict handling. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) which states that relationship marketing has no significant effect on the quality service of selected public teaching hospitals in South-West Nigeria was rejected.

Discussion of Findings
The test of this hypothesis reveals that relationship marketing dimensions have significant effect on service quality of public teaching hospital in South-West, Nigeria. This is supported conceptually by the view of Abekah-Nkrumah et al (2021) that relationship marketing promotes customer retention by offering high quality and valuable products and services. This finding is also supported by the conceptual perspective of Caliskan and Esmer (2020) who defined quality service as the ability to consistently meet or exceed customer expectations by delivering products, experiences, or solutions that satisfy their needs and preferences.

Empirically, the findings from this study supported that of Ali et al (2021) and Boadi et al (2019) as these studies found that empathy, responsiveness, assurance and others significantly affect service quality of an organization. In same perspective, Utor & Ugba

(2020) found that flextime had a significant positive relationship with four dimensions of service quality namely, reliability, responsiveness, empathy and assurance. Flextime showed significant negative relationship with tangibility, another dimension of service quality. Overall, the study demonstrated that flextime significantly impacts service quality of medical employees; the study validates and strengthens view that health systems studies are emerging as factual interdisciplinary fields of investigation knowledge on the consequence of employee support through the use of flexible practices such as flextime in the workplace to boost the performance of medical employees in terms of service quality.

Theoretically, the findings of this study are in tandem with the Relationship marketing theory which places a strong emphasis on building and maintaining long-term relationships with customers or clients (Salem, 2021). Another supporter of RMT, Gronroos (2004) emphasized the role of service quality and relationship marketing in the services sector. This theory helped in explaining the relationship between organizations and customers via commitment, empathy, and communication with service quality. The theory provided a relevant framework that explains how organization can improve their service quality through relationship marketing dimensions of trust and competence. Hence, findings of this study suggested that public teaching hospitals in South-west Nigeria should pay more attention to the development of trust, relationship commitment, competence, empathy and conflict handling to attain and improve service quality.

Conclusion and Recommendations
Findings revealed that relationship marketing dimensions (trust, relationship commitment, competence, empathy and conflict handling) have a significant effect on the quality service of selected public teaching hospitals in south-west Nigeria [Adj R^2=0.695; F (6, 464) = 179.203 at p = 0.000 (p<0.05). The research findings suggest that the relationship marketing is a critical factor in enhancing the performance of public teaching hospitals. The study revealed that staff competence and expertise are vital factors in the implementation of relationship marketing strategies in public teaching hospitals. The research findings revealed that service quality is a critical factor in enhancing the effectiveness of relationship marketing strategies in public teaching hospitals.

The study therefore recommends the following:
1. The adoption of relationship marketing strategies will lead to better patient satisfaction, which ultimately translates into improved healthcare outcomes.
2. Hospital management should prioritize patients' needs and satisfaction as a key performance indicator to improve overall performance.
3. There is a need for the government to increase funding and support for public teaching hospitals in the region, to enable them to invest in relationship marketing strategies.
4. The hospital management should regularly review and evaluate their relationship marketing practices ensuring they align with patients' changing

needs and expectations.

5. Hospital should invest in the training and development of their staff on relationship marketing strategies to ensure effective quality service.

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