



Professionalization of Homecare Services in Nigeria: An Entrepreneurial Perspective

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Abstract

This article explores Professionalization of homecare services as recipe for employment creation in Nigeria: an entrepreneurial perspective. The focus of the study was to create awareness on the enormous potential of professional homecare services in job creation as an entrepreneurial activity. In consideration of lack of legislation to professionalize the services of home caregivers and near absence of entrepreneurial interest by the people, this study utilized the theoretical foundations of Planned Behaviour by Ajzen (1991) which harnessed the conceptualization and development of new strategies to enhance and promote nascent behaviours. Thus, in relation to high unemployment rate in Nigeria, the theory provides the desirability, feasibility, and a propensity to act upon opportunities or given circumstances such as one created by lack of professional home care services in Nigeria to promote an entrepreneurial home care services which will yield multiple chains of direct and indirect employments. This will give individuals opportunity to explore this area for wealth and job creation.

Keywords: Homecare service, employment creation, entrepreneurship, poverty,

Introduction

The industrialization and evolution of Information Communication Technology (ICT) has put the world in an unprecedented speed. This has mounted a lot pressure on the work environment; people are indeed struggling to manage family-work conflict. Thus they spend more time in their workplace, thereby making the home care front suffer less attention and needed cares. This further exposed some members of special populations (infants, young children, mentally and physically challenged, elderly) to many avoidable dangers and gross neglect. However, if handled well these trend according to Nwanguma, Arabo and James (2012) could turn into source of creating new employment and reducing the chain of poverty.

Home care service is a type of care that allows a person with special needs to be taken care of in their private residence or home. Home care (also referred to as domiciliary care, social care, or in-home care) is supportive care provided in

the home (Charlesworth, 2010). The authors conceptualizes homecare service as professional home services which are domesticated for the comfort of the family in the presence of constraints of time, absence of family members or in the need to reduce home front challenges occasioned by the inability of the family members to provide these cares by themselves. Homecare services are usually targeted at the elderly people, nursing mothers, children who have lost either one or both parents or guardian, the sick, the mentally challenged, people with autism etc. In some cases, homecare services may be required to take care of other things other than the human beings, e.g. library, garden, automobile/machineries, building infrastructure, janitorial services, furniture etc. the most important thing in professional home care service is that it can be anything legitimate in the country or state of practice.

Clearly, as suggested by researchers (Erickson, 1975; Wallin, Harjumaa, Pussinen & Isomursu, 2015) individuals at different human developmental stage could be taken care of by their parents or children who are in age-working years (usually in their early or middle ages). However, Wallin, et al. (2015) also emphasized that the mounting demand for effective solutions to home care for dependent population stemming from increasing newborns and aging and sick population have necessitated that employee work longer hours in hope of neutralizing the high cost of resources needed to provide homecare. This has further increase the number of hours away from home. Hence, in the developed countries, significant investments have been made to stimulate the growth of professional home care services deploying ICT windows and gateways to make them reachable and accessible. Although, these advances in professional homecare have yielded tangible fruits, there are significant challenges yet (Brown & Korczynski, 2015).

Despite this huge success made in advanced countries of Europe such as Austria, Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Britain the in in-house-healthcare and homecare; apparently, there appears to be little or no awareness of professionalization of homecare service in Nigeria just as in other developing countries albeit the growing need to take care of a number of issues daily in peoples' home fronts. This negligence has made homecare service undeveloped, unattractive and unproductive. In certain instances, local homecare service providers have either been ridiculed or associated with some kind of degradation, poverty or something which belittles their ego and esteem. Homecare services in Nigeria is seen by many as dehumanizing enterprise, instead of utilizing its potentials for employment, most of our youths have travelled ashore to take up homecare services in developed countries for the satisfaction of being "abroad" and away from the eyes of the people. Such has



been the fate of homecare service in Nigeria and the very reason it has remained undeveloped, untapped, and unprofessionally practiced as contended by (Christensen and Grönvall, 2011). These are the antecedents why the sector has not been attractive and lucrative, in essence, losing its potential for creating millions of jobs for the unemployed Nigerians especially in this time of recession and high unemployment rate (Umar, Mohamed & Ratnaria, 2016; Njoku & Ihugba, 2011).

Unemployment or joblessness is a situation when people are without jobs and they have actively sought for work within the past five weeks (International Labour Organization, 1982; Fajana, 2000). Surplus of labour supply as against the low labour demand is the major cause of unemployment. Umar, Mohamed & Ratnaria (2016) asserted that all cases of unemployment have unequal impact but a common effect is poverty which is the bane of human and material resource utilization, capacity enhancement and national development.

In view of the above, and considering the unprecedented high unemployment rate especially in this moment of recession in Nigeria, stimulating the enterprising spirits of Nigerians on the potentials of professional homecareservices is a step deemed timely. In support to this raw potential, there are theoretical linkages that certain entrepreneurship models which recommend that government, organized private sector and entrepreneurs take advantage of available enterprising opportunities for wealth creation is applicable to the unique opportunity provided by professionalizing homecare industry to harvest countless chains of employment. Such employment creation will reduce the soaring rate of unemployment, help to alleviate poverty in Nigeria and curb the radicalism threatening our nationhood due to youths' idleness and apparent lack of physical and psychological engagement. Against this backdrop, this study has conceptualized that the introduction (both in legislation and practice) of professional homecare service in the job market of Nigeria will lead to reduced unemployment and the same time alleviate poverty and the sufferings of the people of Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

Professional Homecare Services

Professionally, home care services may be categorized underactivities of daily living (ADL) referring to; activities, including bathing, dressing, transferring, using the toilet, eating, and walking, that reflect the patient's incapacity for self-care and Instrumental activities of daily living (IADL)referring to; daily tasks, including light housework, preparing meals, taking medications, shopping for groceries or clothes, using the telephone, and managing money, that enables the

patient to live independently in the community (Livestrong, 2012). Equally, the term home health care is used to distinguish it from non-medical care, custodial care, or private-duty care which refers to assistance and services provided by persons who are not nurses, doctors, or other licensed medical personnel. For terminally ill patients, home care may include hospice care. For patients recovering from surgery or illness, home care may include rehabilitative therapies (Caregiver, 2012).

Home health services (a category of home care services) help adults, seniors, and pediatric clients who are recovering after a hospital. The largest segment of home care consists of licensed and unlicensed non-medical personnel, including caregivers who assist the individual. Care assistants may help the individual with daily tasks such as bathing, eating, cleaning the home and preparing meals. Caregivers work to support the needs of individuals who require such assistance. These services help the client to stay at home versus living in a facility which is deemed friendlier and cheaper (Buchanan, Huang & Zheng, 2013). Non-medical home care is paid for by the individual or family. These traditional differences in home care services are changing as the average age of the population has risen (Brown & Korczynski, 2015). Individuals typically desire to remain independent and use home care services to maintain their existing lifestyle. In developed economies, government and Insurance providers are beginning to fund this level of care as an alternative to facility care. Generally, in-home care is often a lower cost solution to long-term care facilities which offer numerous benefits to the economy e.g. reduction of unemployment and its associated vices namely; cultism, armed robbery, kidnapping, restiveness, militancy and national sabotage.

Unemployment

Unemployment remains caused by surplus labour supply as against the low labour demand (Umar, Mohamed & Ratnaria, 2016; Njoku & Ihugba, 2011; Fajana, 2000). Consequentially, most unemployment situations usually have negative effects leading to human and material resource under-utilization, and unhealthy national development (Umar, Mohamed & Ratnaria, 2016). In the views of Nwanguma, Araboh and James (2012) unemployment indices in percentage to the population of any country could be calculated by a measure of the prevalence of unemployment by dividing the number of unemployed individuals by all individuals currently available as the labour force of a given labour market.

Globally, unemployment is the leading cause of poverty and the rate is a measure of poverty as it is directly linked to the purchasing power, cost of living and



standard of living of the people. The higher the unemployment rate in an economy the higher would be the poverty level and the associated welfare of the people (Doreo, 2013; & Nwanguma, Araboh and James, 2012). Apart from known forms of unemployment, under employment which is predominantly found in Nigeria is equally regarded as a subtle form of unemployment with both personal and national consequences. An empirical research carried out by Nwanguma, Arabo and James (2012) on the causes of unemployment in Nigeria revealed the following as causes of soaring unemployment in Nigeria:

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Rural-urban Migration	30	11.1
Rapid Population Growth	20	7.4
Corruption	50	18.5
Outdated School Curriculum	20	7.4
Leadership/Managerial Problems	70	25.9
Poverty	20	7.4
Lack of Employable Skills	8	3
Increase in Supply of Educated Manpower	12	4.4
Lack of Adequate Youth Development Programs	40	15
Total	270	100

Source: Nwanguma, Arabo and James(2012)

From the above, there is evidence (Njoku & Ihugba, 2011) that since Nigeria's independence, successive government administrations have all failed in attempts to reposition the economy as a capitalist economy where the private sector is the largest employer of labour as obtainable in most capital model economy. Unfortunately, this has not been the case in Nigeria. In view of the obvious consequences of unemployment in Nigeria's economy currently, there is need for pragmatic and legislative effort by Nigerian Government to professionalize homecare services to help reduce unemployment. This legislative effort will stimulate the entrepreneurship mindset of the people to take advantage of this unique opportunity offered by professionalizing homecare services.

Entrepreneurship

Schumpeter (1934) defined the entrepreneur as "an innovator who develops untried technologies" in line with the French literal meaning of the word which means "between-taker" or "go-between." Gartner (1988) saw it as "the creation of new organizations". However, for proper conceptualization, Hisrich and Peters

(2002) contended that “entrepreneurship is the process of creating something new with value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychic, and social risks, and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction and independence”.Consequent upon the above, four things are salient of an entrepreneur;

- i. Entrepreneurship involves the creation of something new with value to the entrepreneur and to the audience (any individual that is concerned with the new product or service).
- ii. Entrepreneurship requires the devotion of the necessary time and effort. This is because making a new idea operational and bringing it to market is a process with which most entrepreneurs have many difficulties.
- iii. The assumption of the necessary risks which take many forms e.g. financial, psychological or social nature.
- iv. Entrepreneurial rewards for efforts. Monetary rewards are frequently identified as the indicator for success of the entrepreneur, although, most entrepreneurs indicate independence (autonomy) and personal satisfaction as the most important personal rewards.

Against this backdrop, entrepreneurship no doubt is globally recognized as strategic mechanism or the driving force of any sustainable economic growth; through innovation, creativity and job creation, as well as its welfarian effects on poverty across cultural, geographical and economic boundaries (Herrington & Kew 2014). Kareem (2015) also contended that entrepreneurship takes the center stage in promoting prosperity by creating new jobs, reducing unemployment and poverty as well as increasing economic growth of a nation. He argued that entrepreneurship boosts productivity by introducing new innovations and fast-tracking structural changes thereby forcing existing businesses to reform and increase competition. This position buttressed Dempsey (2009), who asserted that entrepreneurship promotes the growth and development of the economy, social and economic competitiveness, job creation as well as the enhancement of social welfare and poverty reduction.

Hansson (2010) contended that in the developed and the developing countries, entrepreneurship is a key index of economic growth. There is evidence from a good number of academic studies that entrepreneurial endeavors have the capability of pulling people out of poverty, whether they start their own business or being employed by another entrepreneur (Silvinski, 2012). Silvinski (2012) also asserted that the consistent experience of being self-employed is the most effective strategy for economic mobility.



In line with the thrust of this paper, the authors opine that there is a theoretical linkage supporting that professionalization of homecare services will ignite the entrepreneurship mindset of Nigeria to explore the sector for wealth and job creation. This, in compliment to **Umar's (2016)** contention will significantly reduce poverty – the major index of underdevelopment in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991)

Ajzen (1991) drew insights from the theory of reasoned action (TRA); which harnessed the conceptualization and development of new strategies to enhance and promote entrepreneurial behavior. Planned behavior theory emanates from perceptions of desirability, feasibility, and a propensity to act upon opportunities or given circumstances. In the context of promoting professionalization of homecare services in Nigeria, Ajzen (1991) theory of planned behaviour provides the needed framework for launching new ventures which ought to be driven by desire, feasibility and propensity to act upon the given opportunities. These three conditions are met for professionalizing homecare services: providing theoretical explanation for the possibility of successful implementation of professionalization of homecare services as an enterprising venture. Drawing strength from the theory, Lee, Wong, Foo, and Leung's entrepreneurial study (2011) further highlighted three major constructs which ought to be taken into consideration in application of Ajzen theoretical framework, they are; behavioural intention, subjective norms and attitudes.

The systematic combination of stronger positive attitudes toward a behaviour (eg. desire to professionalize and practice homecare service); and stronger ethical and social norms approach to the behaviour (removing the social stigma inhibiting homecare services and discovering the wealth potential of the sector) will most likely increase intention to be involved in such a behaviour. In other words, if the intention is high, the individual is likely to perform the specified behaviour. Behavioural intention (BI) measures the strength of the intention to execute a specified behaviour. Subjective norms (SN) describe the pressure from peers or friends to comply with specific norms. If, for example, entrepreneurship is seen as too risky by parents and friends, then the individual is less likely to perform entrepreneurial behaviour. Attitudes consist of expectations about the consequences of performing a specified behaviour.

Applying this theoretical model to explain the rot in labour sector and the current unemployment crises in Nigeria, it is obvious that both the government of Nigeria and her unemployed population have not explored wasting

opportunities in homecare services as one of the solutions to poverty reduction both in principle and action. There may be no proper entrepreneurship education, sensitization policy, and legislation which have demonstrated intent to professionalize home services in Nigeria.

Ajzen (1991) model helped to understand the expected roles of stakeholders in the promotion of entrepreneurship education both collectively and individually. In terms of, norms as described by Ajzen (1991), parents, guardians and government at large need to implement and sensitize the golden opportunity in professional homecare service in Nigeria with capacity for millions of employment and wealth creation. This may involve taking advantage of necessary entrepreneurial information readily provided by government, utilizing the soft financial assistance that may consequentially be provided and working hard and diligently to break even.

The adequacy of Ajzen (1991) theory of planned behaviour in explaining the relationship among professionalization of homecare services, entrepreneurship, unemployment and poverty is that the model in practice also integrated Bird's (1988) Econ-psychological entrepreneurship model which highlights the influence of different factors on the desire and ability to launch new entrepreneurship ventures. Bird's (1988) model included contextual factors of entrepreneurship such as; social, political and economic variables which influence displacement, changes in markets and government deregulation. In the case of Nigeria, social, political and economic variables, changes in markets are in places and government deregulation is all that remains in creating a professional homecare service sector for creation of wealth and employment.

Suggestions

The purview of professional homecare services is somewhat alien to Nigeria professional business environment. This undeveloped sector has impacted negatively on employment and wealth creation in Nigeria. The status-quo is caused by Governments ineptitude to lead the Private sector into developing the sector by legislating on relevant laws which will encourage the thriving of the sector. Consequently, homecare services have remained unskilled and unattractive, losing its employment potential to quackery.

Ajzen (1991) model used as framework of the study has succinctly created lines of actions and responsibility for stakeholders whose primary objective should be to direct entrepreneurial interest to professional homecare service through legislation, empowerment and policies. These will increase enterprising spirit in the sector leading to national harvest of employment, and poverty reduction.



Conclusion

This paper emerged as a result of the pressing need to stimulate awareness on the potentials of professional homecare services in Nigeria. This is also a call against the current status-quo in the sector which is due to lack of legislation, near absence of sensitization on the potentials of the sector, lack of interest and enterprising vision among the stakeholders; the government and the people. Consequently, the article defined home care service as a type care that allows a person with special needs stay in their home and be taken care of while professional home care services were categorized under activities of daily living (ADL) referring to; activities, including bathing, dressing, transferring, using the toilet, eating, and walking, that reflect the patient's incapacity for self-care and Instrumental activities of daily living (IADL) referring to; daily tasks, including light housework, preparing meals, taking medications, shopping for groceries or clothes, using the telephone, and managing money, that enables the patient to live independently in the community. Unemployment (occasioned by rural-urban migration, rapid population growth, corruption, leadership challenges, lack of employable skills, increase in supply of educated manpower and lack of adequate and effective blueprint for youth development) was also identified as one of the reasons to tap into the potentials of homecare service sector.

Ajzen (1991) model used as theoretical framework of the study conceptualized that with increasing entrepreneurship education and the interest of the people supported by government legislation, the homecare service sector may be professionalized leading to chains of employment potential, wealth creation and poverty reduction. It is the hope of the authors that stakeholders take bold steps towards this entrepreneurial goldmine in order to better the lots of Nigerians and reduce dependency rate occasioned by employment and poverty.

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