

The Antecedent of Clinician Engagement in Business Excellence

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ABSTRACT

Problem statement: Clinician engagement has been a very important area of work in this era of healthcare. The healthcare organization realizes the importance of the clinician in successful reform & continuous quality improvement in the area of patient care, employee welfare & hence contributing to the business[1]. The feedback from healthcare leadership mentioned clinician engagement to be a challenge in the area of a robust business model[2,5].

Objective: The objective of the study is to find the antecedent for clinician engagement & also fit in the business excellence model mentioned by the European Foundation for quality management (EFQM).

Methodology: Articles in this area of work were reviewed & developed the framework for the studies. The step used to conduct the review were referred from Walker and Avant's model of review. A huge qualitative data were coded to quantitative to measure & study the outcome from review & survey processed through ADANCO software.

Findings: This study has defined clinician engagement in the healthcare organization. The study also concluded that engagement activities are performed highest in the pillar of Process (39 percent) followed by People (32 percent) and partnership & resources (16percent). Whereas the pillar of strategy & leadership has less engagement seven percent & six percent respectively. The survey was designed, and reliability & validity were checked with help of ADANCO software. The outcome of the survey mentioned the importance of the leadership role in engaging the clinicians, 70 percent of responders felt the need for the leadership's role to be critical for engaging the clinicians. Feedback from the middle management

highlighted the governance structure as a significant contributor to engaging clinicians.

Conclusion: Leadership awareness & appropriate governance structure are the key antecedents for clinician engagement across all the pillars of EFQM.

Keywords: Clinician, Engagement, EFQM, Physician, Healthcare, Systematic Review

INTRODUCTION

Healthcare organization in the 21st century has achieved the cutting edge in the technological advancement of healthcare. Engaging the clinicians in this era of healthcare is a key to a successful efficient organization. Business excellence is another term that is the outcome of an efficient healthcare organization, touching all the points of the EFQM (European Foundation of Quality Management) model of Business excellence [3].

In the field of healthcare, a clinician plays a crucial role in a facility. A clinician is a qualified individual or practitioner of medicine in the field of healthcare [4]. This includes practicing doctors, nurses, physician assistants, therapists, optometrists, pharmacists, dentists, etc are some of the examples. The main function of this individual is to manage the sick individuals, treat them and bring them back to normal living.

Engaging individuals play a vital role in today's VUCA world i.e., volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in post-cold war, the US army found the acronym VUCA, as the presentation of

future challenges & difficulties. Engaging the stakeholder can refer to the impact & activities of an individual's relation in a moral, strategic, and/or pragmatic manner. Clinician engagement may differ from organization to organization, leadership & at the individual level. This research defines "Clinician engagement" as engaging the clinicians which include doctors, nurses, technicians, therapists, etc... anyone involved in direct patient care. Engaging includes the involvement of clinicians in administration, decision making, organizational reviews & developing a future of the organization (this may include a business plan, QI plan, marketing plan, operational plan, etc...). This definition is the outcome of the comprehensive review of articles on clinician engagement mentioned in the literature review.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Clinician engagement is very critical when it comes to improvement in patient care & organizational reforms for excelling in business indicators. Feedback from the healthcare business executives mentioned "Clinician engagement" as a challenge. During the interview with the executive leadership, it was understood that there is scope for development in this area, as there is very limited work & there is a need for further development, this may include the model, which will further enhance the business.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study by (Perreira et al., 2019) define clinician engagement as the participation of the clinician in designing the goals & performance indicator, monitoring data as processes, structure & outcome, planning & action[5]. The outcome indicators of the engagement can be quality of care, patient experience, lesser attrition, work satisfaction, and also impact on top-line & bottom-line indicators. The author mentioned the non-evaluation of the quality of the study since it's not a meta-analysis as well as a systematic review. In this study,

the authors have reviewed 439 articles out of 175 that were selected for review and concluded with a definition and conceptual model for clinician engagement. Also, the study mentioned the use of a conceptual model in further quantifying the model, this may further help the healthcare administrator with appropriate resource allocation & development. The author (Pannick et al., 2016) mentions the contradictory statement on clinician engagement and says it's not a challenge universally. The author mentions the role of mid-level managers as the key to achieving the quality measure⁶. Adding to that, the author mentions that managers and not the corporate leadership with a clinician can give better success in achieving quality. He also feels it's more about behaviour, attitude & outcome of staff.

The antecedents: The study mentioned by (Fischer et al., 2021). focuses on the behavior part of the administration. It mentions the influence of team dynamics which include leadership at all levels, individualized motivation & empowerment are crucial for clinician engagement, which will further result in improvement in safety & quality [7]. Interestingly this study also mentions the cultural effect on engagement as it is very closely related to the leadership style. The quality improvement efforts by (Soylu et al., 2021) mention ownership in practice which is very critical in healthcare where policymakers focus on a multi-disciplinary approach to care [8]. As mentioned by (Fischer et al., 2021) the behavior, the qualitative analysis by (Soylu et al., 2021) mentions some part of leadership behavior[9], which includes the involvement of the clinical team in the QI plan & ultimately all the QI efforts. These efforts result in maintaining quality & practice readiness. The author interestingly focused on the clinicians practicing in hospitals & those with individual practices and found the engagement levels low at hospitals. Lower engagement at hospitals may be the result of burnout, which is the

future scope of the study as well, as mentioned by the author. One more study mentioning leadership behavior by (Jorm et al., 2019) mentions the complete participation of clinicians in designing, planning, decision & all the other activities concerned to them. This may be a paid job & not on a discretionary basis [10]. This engagement may develop a healthy structure & safer care for the patient.

Now the measures taken to engage the clinical fraternity plays an important role. In the study mentioned by (Willard-Grace et al., 2021) a primary care setting mentions there is no effect of burnout or engagement in the outcome of quality or patient experience [11]. Although the author mentions the inpatient setting to be the future scope & measures for engaging the clinicians.

Documentation is one of the critical areas for clinicians, which acts as an important pillar in the care journey of the patient. If this qualitative data is used appropriately, it can be further used for clinical research & hence the development in the field of healthcare resulting from the benefits of patient care. The study mentioned by (Goldstein et al., 2021) focuses on electronic health records' contribution to engaging clinicians & researchers [12]. As per the author, this can be one of the engagements for clinicians but had the challenge to include community-based physicians, where leadership may chip in along with technological experts. A study by (Sieja et al., 2019) endorse the EHR optimization sprint mentioned the improvement in teamwork and satisfaction with the system¹³. Whereas the limitation mentioned is the user experience. Both the studies encourage the use of EHR which can be one of the modes to engage the clinicians by enhancing the research activities resulting from the improvement in quality & patient experience.

Two more studies mention the clinician's engagement in clinical research. (Ciemins et al., 2020) conducted the study in limited geography on united states, mentions the

about development the learning health system movement¹⁴. Also (McRae et al., 2018) recommend promoting a research-friendly culture, while minimizing the burden of data collection. This engagement was used to create a research-friendly culture to improve the quality of clinical care in the emergency department¹⁵.

Other initiatives for clinician engagement to improve the quality of care included clinicians' participation in ACO[16] (Markovitz et al., 2020), primary waiting room[17] (Williams et al., 2019) which primary sites education material electronically or in hard format; this study had a focus on the engagement of clinicians as well as patients. (Khanna et al., 2019) mentions the dashboard, which will engage clinicians with quality improvement while observing the data, cost of care & develop an improvement & sustenance model [18]. Also the study "A tale of 2 constituencies: exploring patient and clinician perspectives in the age of big data" mentions the big data research as a potential source of engaging clinicians & patients as well [19].

Feedback Informed Treatment, the interesting concept by²⁰ (Brown, n.d.) This feature monitor & gives continuous feedback to the clinicians on the effectiveness and the individual basis. Also, the perception of the system remains the question, but the continued communication may keep the clinicians informed & engaged.

The studies reviewed by the researcher mention the benefits of clinician engagement in improving the quality of care but there are very less studies that mention the top-line & bottom-line effect of clinician engagement. The study by (Pasik et al., 2020) mentions reducing overuse of the cost indicator by developing a culture of patient care, transparency, clinician-patient communication, and appealing to empathy [21].

Business Excellence: European foundation approved the excellence model European foundation for quality management (EFQM)

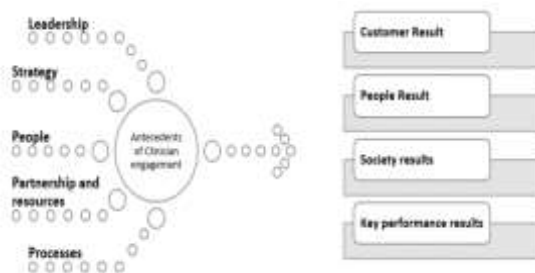
in the year 1988. European foundation on quality management (EFQM) uses RADAR (Results, Approaches, Deploy, Assess and Refine) to assess the current performance of the organization. It is a model with a multidimensional approach based on eight pillars of excellence on enablers & results. It is based on nine criteria using a non-perspective framework [22]; enablers include leadership & their strategy, people management, resources & partnership & process development & enhancement. The result includes perception survey outcomes from employees, customers & community, and other indicators such as business indicators & indicators in managing people, customers & community [23]. This business excellence model touches every aspect of the business & hence appeals to the researcher to use the same while developing the model for clinician engagement.

METHODOLOGY

Eight steps of Walker and Avant's are used to understand the term [24] "Clinician Engagement". While using this method, articles were reviewed from 2020 to 2022. All the relevant articles were framed in format to understand & compare major findings, variables, research model, limitation/future scope, gap variables, Authors (Year), Topic of the Article, Name of the Journal, Volume number & issue number. All the articles were funneled & brought down to independent variables with help of the EFQM model of business excellence.

Following is the research framework that was used to find the outcomes of the research.

Fig.1: A research framework



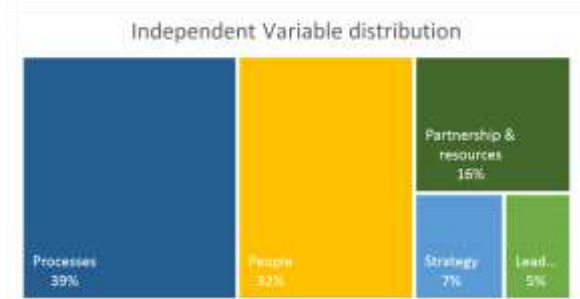
Ref: EFQM framework

The survey was conducted with an instrument developed & measured with help of ADANCO software.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Variables were classified into five pillars of Business excellence mentioned by EFQM. Graph 1 gives the distribution of variables.

Graph 1: Independent Variable Distribution



Leadership-related activities to engage the clinicians are found to be quite a few i.e. only five percent of total articles reviewed. Leadership plays a critical role in business excellence & is been defined in a wide range of textbook definitions. There are lots of personal attributes that define leadership, but when it comes to clinician engagement, the involvement of clinicians in the leadership is seen to be less. The governance model of the healthcare organization can involve the clinicians in the leadership, this can also be the scope for engagement & effective implementation of engagement activities. Clinicians can be involved in the development of the vision, mission, ethics of the organization, engaging external stakeholders, and also define monitor, review & driving the organization's performance. Just one study found in the literature mentioned the involvement of clinicians in all the aspects of leadership.

Engagement of clinicians in the strategy is also found to be very limited & was found in seven percent of studies. The strategy includes the development of policies, reviewing & implementation; this will need an understanding of the need of the stakeholder & expectations. Involving the

clinician in the strategy will give a robust plan, policies & implementation Leadership & strategy is very interlinked, engaging the clinician in leadership & further in the strategy can always be areas to work on for healthcare organizations.

16 percent of studies focused on partnership; this was mainly about engaging patients in the care & research. 90 percent of researchers mentioned about the engagement of patients correlated with clinician engagement. Also, 10percent of researchers mentioned engaging patients in research. There have been very effective ways of engaging the clinicians. While there are other areas in this field where clinicians can be engaged in technology, IT, managing facility & finances.

There has always been a conception that engagement & burnout correlate with each other. 83 percent of studies, mention burnout as one of the challenges in engaging the clinicians. While some studies do not accept this fact & mention the perceptions of the clinicians. Burnout can be the perception of the individual; hence capacity mapping becomes the vital point while operating the facility. Also as mentioned by scholars, culture plays an important role in engagement. An appropriate governance model functioning ethically is the best solution mentioned in the studies.

Involving the clinicians in the process has been a common trend, contributing to 39 percent of the reviews. 78 percent of the engagement activities included were in the research areas and the rest 22 percent in data management & analytics. Although this is the area where there is a need for innovation that will further help the community with better care & clinical outcomes engaging the individual in the leadership area can be a game-changer. As this can further help the effectiveness & enhancement of appropriate research activities.

The result of survey instruments was analyzed, to test the constructs of every antecedent. The structural model successfully passed all the reliability & validity. The survey was taken for around

400 participants in healthcare management & clinicians. The significant finding highlighted was the need for leadership voted by 70 percent of responders 95 percent confidence level. This included 89percent of all the clinicians & 70 percent of all the employees in the leadership role. The survey instrument also gave the significant findings from middle management i.e. an individual carrying the designation a level above the supervisory or professional worker and below the head of the department²⁵. The middle management highlighted the governance structure as a significant contributor to the clinician engagement, counted to 93 percent of respondents from mid-level managers.

A governance structure might be required where the clinician is engaged in every pillar of the excellence model. This can be also done with an area of interest of every clinician, but a clinician's contribution can further enhance the healthcare organization.

Research Implication:

This empirical analysis will give a foundation to the management practitioners to engage clinicians & also opens the scope for several future studies.

This research was able to develop an instrument measure that captures each construct accurately. It will help the leadership to find the area for engaging the clinicians. This instrument can also serve as theory-driven practice. Future studies can further break down the instrument into different categories for clinicians i.e. instruments for doctors, nurses, technicians, etc. respectively.

The antecedents of engaging clinicians are the major contribution to research & practical of the healthcare delivery system. Future research has scope to study the trend of antecedents with the era of the healthcare delivery systems & also contributions from different geographies.

This study was able to break down independent variables in the previous research into different pillars of the EFQM model. This will help the researchers &

practitioners to understand the area of work. The major focus of clinician engagement in previous research was on the process & people part of the model. But the engagement in leadership & strategy has been limited. Breaking down the variables in the pillars of EFQM is one of the rarest contributions to the research & practicing fraternity of the healthcare administration. Future studies can focus on balancing the weightage of contribution in each pillar of EFQM.

CONCLUSION

The engagement of clinicians is quite high in the area of research & people engagement. But the area of leadership has the scope & can be studied in the future. The perception of clinicians working in leadership roles needs to be studied. The engagement of clinicians in partnership, strategy & leadership will bring a competitive advantage to the healthcare organization. A model can be developed where clinicians are engaged in all the enablers of EFQM & outcomes can be monitored as the performance indicator.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

The authors of this study declare no conflict of interest & approved the manuscript being submitted for publication.

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