

**PRIOR EXPECTATIONS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SERVICE SATISFACTION: THE CASE OF PERSONS WITH ORTHOPEDIC IMPAIRMENTS AND THEIR CARE GIVERS AT THE SALVATION ARMY REHABILITATION CENTRE AT AGONA DUAKWA IN GHANA.**

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**Abstract**

**Objective:** the aim of the study was to investigate the influence of prior expectations on service satisfaction for persons with orthopedic impairments at the Salvation Army Rehabilitation and Orthopedic Center in Ghana. **Design:** Prior expectations were explored using interview as a method of data collection and adopted the case study design with focus group discussions and in-depth methods defined the data collection process. **Method:** Ten (10) participants comprised of four caregivers of children with orthopedic impairments between 0-12 years old (M=11; S.D= 7.8) and six persons with orthopedic impairments between the ages of 12-20 years old (M=34; S.D= 0.71) were purposively selected for the study. **Findings:** Our study found that service provision at the Salvation Army Rehabilitation and Orthopedic Center was underpinned by prior expectations which influenced greatly on their satisfaction. **Recommendations:** We recommend that service providers should have more insights into the prior expectations of their users to enable them provide services that would cater for clients expectations. In addition, service providers must educate their users to keep their expectations for their children within what is achievable.

**Key words:** prior expectations, rehabilitation, clients, satisfaction.

## Introduction

Expectations as beliefs about the service delivery process serves as a standard against which performance can be assessed and satisfaction derived from the healthcare process. These expectations are classified into four different types namely, ideal expectations, practical or predicted expectations, normative expectations and unformed expectations (Thompson & Sunol, 1995). These classifications according to the authors are based on the fact that, expectations are not absolute but rather products of cognitive processes. They added that ideal expectations are those that users would like to happen and can be referred to as aspirations, desires, wishes, wants or the preferred outcomes. They commented further that practical or predicted expectations, on the other hand, expressed what the individual thought would happen during the encounter with the healthcare. They were also of the view that normative expectations on the other hand are those that users believe ought to happen based on what they believe they deserve and or on what is socially endorsed. Unformed expectations occur when users are unable or unwilling to articulate their expectations due to fear, anxiety, and conformity to social norms, or lack of knowledge or experience to formulate expectations. These expectations may be a temporary phenomenon, but quite common in the health care context.

A large body of literature exists, (Miles & Frizzell, 1990; Dew & Bickman, 2005) on the role of expectation in meeting the needs of persons with disabilities in a variety of contexts and its prominence cannot be overlooked. Salvation Army Rehabilitation and Orthopedic Centre at Agona Duakwa in the Central Region of Ghana is a religious organization motivated to provide medial, social and community services and programmes to elevate human suffering and enhancing healing and restoration of the body and spirit for the individual in the community. The Center is committed to providing quality primary healthcare and identifying the medical and

social needs by supplying basic human needs, personal, moral and physical rehabilitation of all persons who come within the sphere of their influence regardless of race, colour, creed, age or gender. It is their goal to provide integrated holistic health care, rehabilitation and social services that cares for the whole person- physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually- clearly likening services and care with the gospel of God and to facilitate the restoration of the person receiving healthcare, vocational training and rehabilitation to reach their potential so that they may obtain some economic independence and social inclusion. Although the services at the Center are highly patronized yet, not very much can be said about the influence of prior expectations on the satisfaction of persons with orthopedic impairments and their caregivers who patronize the Salvation Army Rehabilitation and Orthopedic Centre at Agona Duakwa.

McKinley, Stevenson, Adams and Manku-Scott (2002) in their study on client expectation in health care: the effect of expectation on satisfaction with care provided by out-of-hours primary medical services found that, patients who received the care they expected were more satisfied than those who did not. Even though several clients patronize the Salvation Army Rehabilitation and Orthopedic Center it is not clear whether services planned at the Center meets the satisfaction of the users. Since there is evidence highlighting increased expectation as relating to greater satisfaction in the healthcare encounter (Rosen, Heckman, Carro & Burchard, 1994). Our study focused on finding answers to the following critical questions:

Firstly, what are the prior expectations of Persons with Orthopaedic Impairments and their care givers in utilizing services at the Salvation Army Rehabilitation Centre at Agona Duakwa?

Secondly, how are these expectations being met and thirdly, are they satisfied with these services?

Crow, Gage, Hampson, Hart, Kimber, Storey and Thomas (2002) added that when ‘something satisfies, it sufficiently meets needs, expectations and desires and by that leaves no room for complaint’ (p.1). Conway and Willcocks (1997) also argued that, the means by which the patient evaluates the service throughout the healthcare process to its completion is influenced by the patient’s expectations of the process of care, their part in the process and the overall outcome of the treatment.

Powers and Bendall-Lyon (2003) are of the opinion that when seeking healthcare, patients have both cure expectations and care expectations that ultimately set the standard by which they measure their satisfaction with the healthcare encounter. This viewpoint of Powers and Bendall-Lyon often mirrors the case for most persons with orthopedic impairment and their care providers that used the services provided by the Salvation Army Rehabilitation and orthopedic center. The prior expectations of service users towards services received therefore impact strongly on the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the general healthcare process, as such could affect the overall compliance to the healthcare regime.

## **Method**

Ten (10) participants were involved in the study. This sample comprised of four (4) caregivers of children with orthopedic impairments aged between 0 -12 years and six (6) persons with orthopedic impairment between the ages of 12 – 20 years. The participants were purposively selected due to the kind of knowledge they had and the typicality of their views. This study adopted the case study design which enabled us to realistically investigate the phenomenon at hand. Data were collected using focus group interviews for the persons with orthopedic impairment while in-depth interviews were used for the care givers of the children with orthopedic impairment.

## **Results**

We found that Persons with orthopedic impairments that use the Salvation Army Rehabilitation and Orthopedic Center had some prior expectations in relation to how their needs are to be met and the anticipated innate satisfaction they would derive. These prior expectations of the clientele had a significant influence on their satisfaction as in the case of most, when their prior expectations were met, they were satisfied with the services they received. It was found also that there was a general feeling among the client that service provisions would meet their needs in a manner that reflects their initial expectations throughout the entire rehabilitation process.

### Discussions

The construct of the findings showed that, persons with disabilities at the Salvation Army Rehabilitation and Orthopedic Centre at Agona Duakwa came in with the unrealistic expectation of having their needs met as early as possible. This view was expressed by one care giver who remarked:

*'... I just wanted him to get help and be normal, just like his other siblings...'*

(Verbatim expression of caregiver 1)

This viewpoint was supported by another caregiver who also said:

*'... I strongly expect healing, complete healing for her...'*

(Verbatim expression of caregiver 2).

These expectations concur with the comment by Gabbott and Hogg (1994) that 'cure' or health is the ultimate expectation in the healthcare sector. These comments also tie in with the viewpoint of Dew and Bickman (2005) who indicated that expectation of success is an important stimulus on positive therapeutic outcomes and they are therefore of the view that it is not unusual service users have such expectations.

There was also some corroboration between the prior expectations of the caregivers and the persons with orthopedic impairments as they also commented that:

*‘...we want to be normal not be a burden unto anyone’.* (Persons with orthopedic impairment, focus group)

Given the fact that prior expectations seemingly influence service satisfaction and the entire rehabilitation process, service users still felt that their individual needs had to be met in order to attain satisfaction with the services. They expressed as follows:

*‘...I want to lead a normal life’*

(Person with orthopedic impairment, focus group)

This view point is supported by Powers and Bendall-Lyon (2003) who were of the opinion that the fulfilment of both the cure and care expectations by the healthcare encounter is the ultimate measure of how satisfied the patient is with the service. Kramer (1997), posited that satisfaction with service provision is an important determinant in the rehabilitation process as success in this field relies to a large extent on the patient's views, motivations as well as personal inclinations. Clearly, the service users who use utilize the services at the Salvation Army Rehabilitation and Orthopedic Center had clear prior expectations that reflected on their satisfaction with the services they are provided with.

Emphases on improvement and functional abilities of the rehabilitee are in most cases linked to independence therefore accounts for some extraordinary expectations and impractical hopes amid the persons with disabilities. These extra ordinary hopes were made bare by caregivers and persons with orthopedic impairment who both seem to agree that the services should:

“.....help them be normal...”

We conclude that there is a direct link between prior expectations of services users at the Salvation Army Rehabilitation Center and the satisfaction derived from the services they receive. However, this also is in line with the outcomes of a study conducted on parental experiences of a Cerebral Palsy clinic in a poor urban community in South Africa by Anderson and Venter (1997) in which parents' expectations' geared towards attainment of several levels of independence in different activities including walking in their children and be 'normal'. On the other hand, Parkes, Donnelly, Dolk and Hill (2002) who came out with similar findings in Northern Ireland added that, this expectations becomes unrealistic with severely disabling conditions in children. Garland et al., (2000) in a previously discussed study of multi-ethnic youths' satisfaction with mental health services found more positive expectation about treatment service at admittance was associated with greater satisfaction.

### **Conclusions**

Drawing from the above findings and discussions, we conclude that prior expectations of caregivers of children with orthopedic impairments and persons with orthopedic impairments who patronize the Salvation Army Rehabilitation and Orthopedic Center had for services met their needs greatly and as a result, they were satisfied.

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