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Total Quality Management Practices and Service Quality at Federal Medical Centre, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *The study examined the effect of total quality management practices on service quality at the Federal Medical Centre, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria. Total quality management practices was measured by customer focus, employee empowerment, continual service improvement, fact-based decision making, and top management commitment while service quality was measured by service quality tangibility, empathy, responsiveness, tangibility, and assurance. The primary data methodology was adopted through the aid of a well-structured questionnaire. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was used to analyze the sourced data from the field. Although, copies of 291 questionnaire were administered to the core medical personnel, health workers, and others, only 272 were returned and used to run the regression analysis. The study revealed that, customer focus, employee empowerment, continual service improvement, fact-based decision making, and top management commitment are positively related with service quality and that such relationship is strong and statistically significant. Hence, the study concludes that, total quality management (continual service improvement, fact-based decision making, and top management commitment) are major service quality predictors.*

INTRODUCTION

The idea of overall quality management has been seen as one of the key policy techniques used by business practitioners to improve their market share and service quality in today's fiercely competitive business climate. It is important to remember that providing high-quality commodities is crucial for a business to grow its clientele and keep hold of its current clientele. This is because subpar commodities raise waste expenses and frequently cause customers to become dissatisfied, which can result in lost future business and a company's withdrawal from a certain sector. Furthermore, technical advancements have spread beyond national borders, enabling consumers to get more information about the quality of the products they purchase (Mahmoud, 2022).

Rahman (2017) post that zero error, process improvements, the development of causal relationships, capacity assessments, and the tracking of behavioral deviance over a predetermined time horizon is the essential elements of a well-organized and effective TQM program. Thus, the goal of the TQM approach is to significantly lower the cost of quality while simultaneously improving the production/operation process, employee happiness, customer-supplier relationships, lead times, and overall quality. From Qui and Tannock (2020) perspectives, TQM involves managing quality of suppliers, staff, and consumers/customers. Thus, top management commitment, strategic planning, employee involvement, multidisciplinary design of goods, assurance of quality, relationship management with customers, customer focus, continuous enhancement, process oversight, and supplier quality control include TQM techniques.

The ultimate goal of TQM is to prevent performance issues in the industrial and service industries. As a result, offering top-notch products and services will lower production costs and help businesses establish and preserve their competitiveness in their respective markets. This explains, in part, why empiricists view TQM as a strategy to enhancing businesses' service quality, particularly in the current dynamic corporate climate (Mahmoud, 2022). While it is generally accepted that an organization's efficacy is based on how much it implements TQM, there are other factors to consider, such as the consequences of non-participation in TQM implementation by all management levels, obstacles to TQM implementation within an organization, and failure.

Although, it is believed that a company's level of effectiveness is dependent on the extent to which such company adopt TQM, yet health care service providers are yet to fully implement total quality management. It has also been observed that health care service providers are avenues to meet the dynamic needs of the general public. This is justified on the ground that, even till date, there are still endless cases of customer dissatisfaction as to the services which medical personnel provides especially those working in the public health care sector.

Even when avalanche studies exist on TQM in and outside the Nigerian context, most TQM studies linked TQM to financial performance with less attention to service quality (see the studies of Mahmoud, 2022; Vaidya, Malik, & Ali, 2022; Shafiq, Lasrado, & Hafeez, 2019; Harimurti & Suryani, 2019). Again, the current study is novel as it focused on the health care sector as against the studies stated above. Hence, the study's main goal is to find out how the Federal Medical Center in Asaba Delta State, Nigeria's service quality is affected by TQM management approaches such as staff empowerment, customer focus, fact-based decision making, and top management commitment.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Total Quality Management Strategies

The phrase "TQM" refers to an organization's whole dedication to quality across all domains. Put another way, TQM is a quality-focused management style that relies on the involvement of all of its members and aims to achieve long-term success via client happiness and advantages to the company's and society's members (Ittner & Larcker, 2016). Furthermore, it is the widely accepted method of raising quality. In order to meet and beyond customer expectations, it entails the company's long-term commitment to the continual development of quality, throughout the organization, and with the active engagement of all members at all levels. According to Simranjeet and Syed (2020), this top-down, management-driven philosophy is accepted as the norm for organizational life.

TQM, according to Victor and Rosemarie (2017), is the condition in which every function's operations are planned and executed so as to satisfy the needs of all external customers while cutting down on internal time and expenses and improving the atmosphere at work. In a similar vein, Leonard and McAdam (2020) said that TQM entails consistently attempting to ascertain the customer's periodic preferences and figuring out how to satisfy them. This is predicated on the understanding that consumer requirements, wants, and desires often evolve over time in response to potential changes in important facets of the environment, including social, political, economic, and technical developments.

TQM is specifically an incessant culture that is built on ongoing learning and adaptability to shifting client demands, product specifications, and operational procedures.

According to Bollaert (2019), TMQ places a strong emphasis on improving service quality and product quality, and all organizational functions should be focused on achieving these objectives. TQM is a paramount part of each worker's accountability and performance. TQM managers place a strong emphasis on new, improved methods of doing things. To successfully manage change, managers and all employees within the firm must be willing. Every level of management needs to be prepared to consider and evaluate recommendations for raising the standard from subordinates.

Summarily, TQM is essentially emphasizes generating high-quality commondities to satisfy consumers. Put differently, TQM is centered on making sure that all employees uphold high standards of work throughout the whole business. In the meanwhile, obtaining a competitive edge requires using the word "service quality" strategically. Differentiating a firm's goods is challenging.

2.1.2. Service Quality

Service quality therefore becomes one of the characteristics that set one company apart from another. Grossu-Leibovica and Kalkis (2022) define service quality as an organization's ability to provide services in relation to the expectations of its clientele. Clients buy services in order to meet certain demands. People have expectations and criteria for how a company's service delivery meets those, whether they are aware of them or not.

Fernandes and Esteves (2016) argued that high quality of services enables firms in achieving competitive advantage (Shayestehfar & Yazdani, 2019). When customers perceive about many kinds of service attributes, it means that they evaluate about quality of services. Fernandes and Esteves (2016), identifying SERVQUAL dimensions into five (5) aspects as follows: Reliability, Tangibility, Empathy, Responsiveness (Grossu-Leibovica, & Kalkis, 2022); and assurance (Vaidya, Malik, & Ali, 2022).

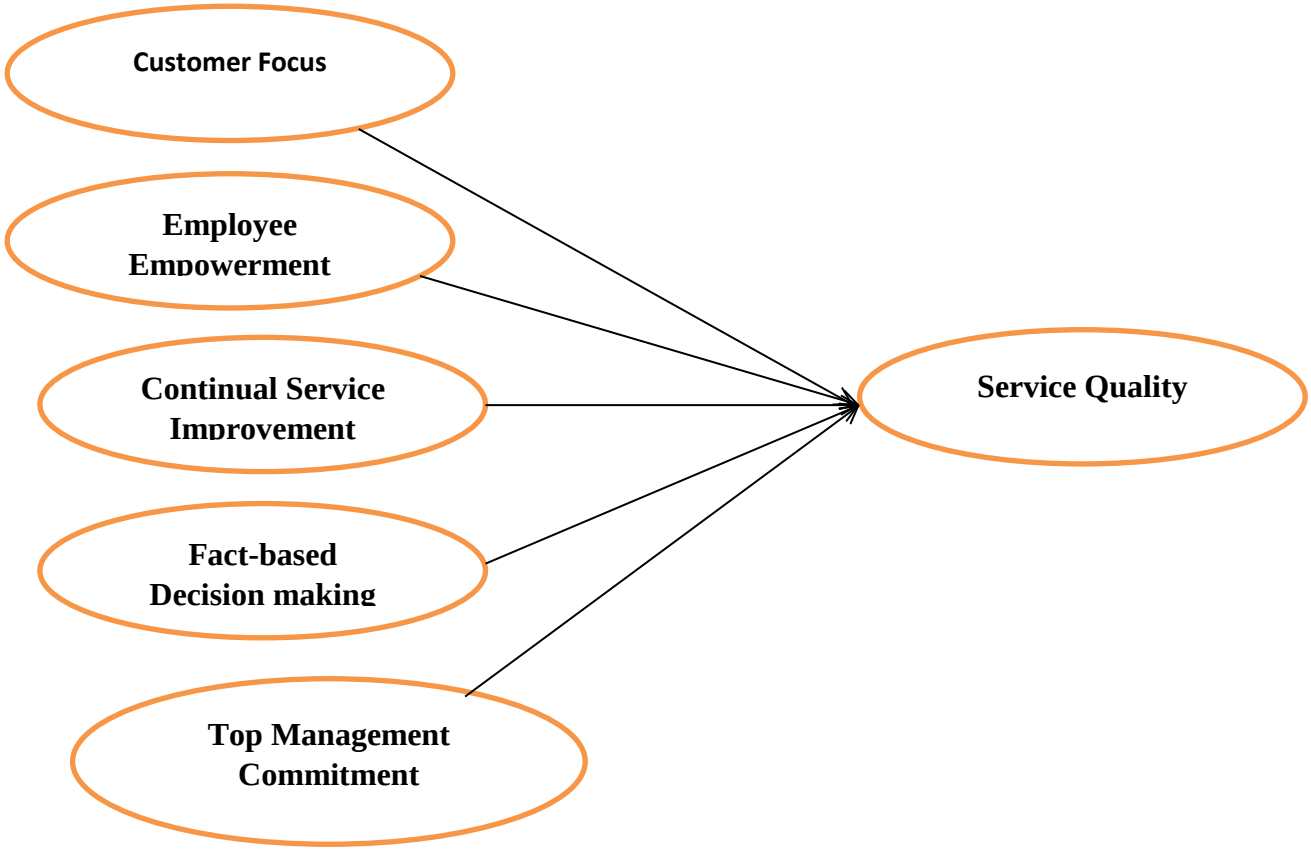

Figure 1: TQM and Service Quality Model
Source: Researcher's Conceptualization (2023)

2.3. Theoretical Review

This study's foundation was the stakeholder theory. This theory tackles morals and values in managing an organization. It is a theory of corporate ethics and organizational management (Kaynak, 2018). Edward Freeman first described it in full in his book Strategic Management. Stakeholders include shareholders, employers (management), workers, suppliers, government political organizations, creditors, potential customers, consumers, trade unions, rival businesses, associations, and the general public. A stakeholder approach recognizes these groups.

Application-wise, the idea tackles the TQM tenets of whoever or what truly matters (Rahman 2017). Furthermore, the theory contends that because stakeholders—customers—expect high-quality commodities from SMEs that serve a sizable consumer base, TQM practices are more closely linked with stakeholders' theories. Additionally, the general public demands high-quality commodities that are worth the money spent. In conclusion, consumers' requirements, wants, and desired items are so vital to them that it is impossible to methodically separate their interest in a business that fulfills their aspirations from business operations.

2.4. Empirical Review

Mahmoud (2022) investigated how TQM affected organizational performance through a study of the service industry in Nigeria. Data are gathered from the chosen service sector company using the questionnaire approach. The study confirmed that TQM improves organizational effectiveness significantly. As a result, any business that ignores quality will inevitably have disgruntled consumers. This will lead to lost business and possibilities for competitors to capitalize on market demands, therefore addressing customer needs has elevated quality to a top priority.

Through a thorough qualitative evaluation, Vaidya, Malik, and Ali (2022) examined the impact of overall quality management tools for enhancing customer happiness and service quality in hospital settings. The Web of Sciences (WOS), Scopus, EBSCO, PubMed, and Medline were used to gather the data. Out of all the sources, the researchers initially discovered 573 articles. However, only 24 articles were deemed suitable for publication after the irrelevant pieces were removed. In addition, twelve pieces dealt exclusively with TQM, service excellence, and customer happiness. According to the study's findings, TQM procedures and instruments raise customer happiness and service quality in healthcare settings. Excellent management and practical insights are offered by this study.

To increase customer happiness and service quality, managers should put TQM tools into practice. In this approach, there is an increase in patient and customer satisfaction, which raises overall and operational performance.

Mudassar, Paul, Umair, Junaid, Rizwan, and Nosheen (2020) investigated how the implementation of TQM affected the financial development of small hotels. In order to help managers implement the best TQM techniques and optimize revenue through quality improvement and the achievement of targeted objectives, they designed an efficient and workable quality system. The researcher used a quantitative strategy to accomplish the study's overall purpose and aims by enrolling 141 participants. The results showed that a number of TQM strategies, including staff empowerment, training and education, technology innovation, top management participation, quality improvement, and continuous improvement, positively impacted small hotels' bottom lines.

Empirical data from a developing South Asian country was provided and used for a study by Shafiq, Lasrado, and Hafeez (2019). The study was carried out in Pakistani textile firms. Questionnaire was used to gather data from members of the All-Pakistan Textile Mills Association, which was administered on 210 textile firms, with quality and production managers serving as respondents. Data gathered were used to examine the connection between TQM procedures and organisational performance using structural equation modelling (SEM). The findings showed that TQM had a strong beneficial impact on organisational performance.

Harimurti and Suryani (2019) examined the impact of TQM implementation on Service Quality and Customer Loyalty in banking industry. They confirmed that, TQM practices improves customer loyalty and service quality.

Ehsan and Najla (2019) in their study of Malaysian hotels and performance found that Malaysian hotels had an adequate degree of TQM adoption. Furthermore, the regression analysis revealed that all of the selected TQM practices (customer focus, continuous improvement, and staff participation) had substantially linked with firm performance in Malaysian hotels. It was however observed from the result that the most significant TQM components in terms of its effect on business performance were continuous improvement.

In addition, Ghazi, Bandar, Fathi, Metri, and Manar (2018) investigated the extent to which private service businesses use TQM methods and their influence on organisational excellence. Their Finding showed that TQM is highly applied and had a significant and favorable influence on organisational excellence.

Ramatu, Kura and Kabiru (2018) evaluated the moderating role of competitive intensity on the link between TQM implementation and SME performance with focus on 357 respondents. They confirmed that, TQM implementation improves SMEs' performance.

In Jordanian private airlines, Adnan (2018) examined the association between overall quality management and firm performance. The findings demonstrate that overall quality management methods had a favorable and significant influence on Jordanian private airlines' quality, business, and firm performance. Specifically, the study's result revealed that successful adoption of comprehensive quality management methods improved the Jordanian private airlines performance.

Deka and Muslim (2018) using employee and management perception, empirically explore the nexus between TQM's Critical Success factors (CSF) and performance results in Indonesian public service sector. A literature study yielded twenty-four hypotheses on the relationship between TQM's CSF and performance results, which were then examined using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach. A total of 310 people (employees and managers) took part in the survey. The findings showed that leadership is an important component of improved performance. The study also showed that continuous improvement, customer attention, and operational performance were the other important success elements that could be used to promote service quality.

Faris (2018) investigated the nexus between TQM and organisational performance. In the study, organisational culture was used as a moderating factor. A total of 163 managers from all levels of government participated in the survey. The result showed that TQM and organisational performance had a favorable and statistically significant link. The hierarchical regression analysis & structural equation modeling revealed that TQM and organisational culture interaction was statistically significant and favorably connected to firm performance.

In a similar vein, Alfred, Reuben, and James (2018) in their study of Kenya Revenue Authority, found a link among staff training, continuous improvement, and system automation and operational performance in Kenya. The study indicated that attaining operational excellence was challenging until Kenya Revenue Authority embraced TQM techniques through staff training, system automation, and continuous improvement in the changing and challenging business environment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. Information from the human resource department, there are 1200 medical personnel and health workers as at October, 2022. However, a sample size of 291 was used based on the Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination table. The study adopted the cconvenience sampling technique as it allows researchers to gather useful data in the most possible time. The study constructed a questionnaire. The questionnaire has two sections: Section A tagged 'Demographic Section' contains the personal data of respondents basically to enable us determine the level of experience and education, and Section B contains the questions and answer options. The answer options on the questionnaire which ranges from 'Strongly agree, Agree, Uncertain, Disagree to Strongly Disagree' and were weighted 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Meanwhile, the frequency of responses to the answer options was presented first in percentages**.** The Cronbach Alpha was to check if the research instrument (questionnaire) is reliable or not. The result as stated in table 1 shows that the instrument is reliable.

Table 1: Cronbach Alpha

S/N	Variable	Items	Cronbach Alpha
1	Customer Focus	4	0.794
2	Employee Empowerment	4	0.781
3	Continual service improvement	4	0.866
4	Fact-Based Decision Making	4	0.710
5	Top Management Commitment	4	0.724
6	Service Quality	4	0.964

Source: Authors' Computation (2023)

The Pearson's product-moment correlation co-efficient (r) was used for the analysis via SPSS version 23.0.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Questionnaire Administration and Retrieval

A total of 291 responses were retrieved, 19 were detected to be incomplete or with errors. Out of the 291 questionnaires shared, 272 of the questionnaires were correct and defect free (See table 2). These formed the basis for this analysis.

Table 2: Questionnaire Retrieval Analysis

Questionnaire Distributed and Retrieved	Score Card	Percentage (%)
Numbers of Questionnaire Retrieved	272	93.47
Numbers of Questionnaire Not Retrieved	19	6.53
Numbers of Questionnaire Distributed	291	100

Source: Authors' Computation (2023)

Respondents' Demography

In administering the questionnaire particular attention was paid to the respondents' responses with the objective of minimizing the missing values, the practices where people refuse to respond to questions because they do not understand a phrase or the intention of a question. Evidently, the response from the field survey revealed that, there were more female health care practioners than male health care practioners. Also, most respondents are core medical personnel, health workers, and others are aged between 31-40 years since it accounted for 40.07% of the total numbers of responses while the least are aged between 51-60 years as it accounted for 16.18% of the total numbers of responses. Meanwhile, those aged 21 to 30 years accounted for 31.99%. This revealed that, most of the study populations are younger generation.

More so, majority of our respondents are married (40.81%), followed by those that are single (33.46%), followed by those that are divorced/single parents (21.69%) while those that are widows and widowers scored the least (4.04%). Accordingly, 29.04% of the total respondents are holders of Postgraduate/College of Surgeon/ Pediatrics/Nigerian Nursing Council followed closely are those with higher national diplomas (HNDs) alongside those that badged Bachelor of Science in different field of human endeavour coupled with those with Bachelor of Medicine, Surgery, and Bachelor of Nursing (23.90%). The rest are those with other qualifications (ICAN, ANAN, etc.), OND and O' level. This suggest that, most respondents are literate and also have fair knowledge of the correlation between TQM and service quality

Table 3: Respondents' Demography

Gender	**Frequency (F)**	**Percentage (%)**		
Male	125	45.96		
Female	147	54.04		
Total	**272**	**100**		
Age Bracket	**Frequency (N)**	**Percentage (%)**	**Valid Percentage**	**Cumulative Percentage**
21 – 30	87	31.99	31.99	31.99
31 – 40	109	40.07	40.07	72.06
41 – 50	32	11.76	11.76	83.82
51 – 60	44	16.18	16.18	**100.00**
Total Numbers of Responses	**272**	**100.00%**	**100.00%**	
Marital Status	**Frequency (N)**	**Percentage (%)**	**Valid Percentage**	**Cumulative Percentage**

Single	91	33.46	33.46	33.46
Married	111	40.81	40.81	74.26
Divorced	59	21.69	21.69	95.96
Widow/Widower	11	4.04	4.04	100.00
Total	**272**	**100.00**	**100.00%**	
Educational Status	**Frequency (N)**	**Percentage (%)**	**Valid Percentage**	**Cumulative Percentage**
O' Level	39	14.34	14.34	14.34
OND	47	17.28	17.28	31.62
HND/BSc./ Bachelor of Medicine, Surgery, and Bachelor of Nursing	65	23.90	23.90	55.51
Postgraduate/College of Surgeon/ Pediatrics/Nigerian Nursing Council	79	29.04	29.04	84.56
Other Qualifications	42	15.44	15.44	100.00
Total Numbers of Responses	**272**	**100.00**	**100.00**	

Source: Authors' Computation (2023)

Data Analysis

The correlation result estimate is presented in table 4. Justifiably, the PPMC reported that, customer/patient centeredness has a correlation coefficient value of .876 (87.6%) and a p-value of 0.000. This reveals that, customer/patient centeredness has a positive and strong correlation with service quality. By implication, with the steady rising in the overall operating costs incurred by management of most hospitals in Nigeria (Federal Medical Centre, Asba, Delta State, Nigeria inclusive) coupled with high rate of dissatisfaction recorded by both employees and customers over the years, customer-centeredness is highly critical to achieving higher service quality. The study further stressed that, as more people gain access to insurance coverage and care, if the flows of patients in and out of the targeted hospital can help to reduce the patients' waiting periods, prevent poor handoffs, and avoids delays. This in turn has the capacity to improve the quality of services which the management of the targeted hospital renders. This is in tandem with Mahmoud (2022); Vaidya, Malik, and Ali (2022); Mudassar, Paul, Umair, Junaid, Rizwan, and Nosheen (2020); Shafiq, Lasrado, and Hafeez (2019); Harimurti and Suryani (2019); Ramatu, Kura and Kabiru (2018); Deka and Muslim (2018); Faris (2018); Alfred, Reuben, and James (2018); Farish, Anu, and Satish (2017); Osotimehin, Ekpudu, and Agorzie (2016) findings.

Additionally**,** employee empowerment has a positive yet strong correlation with the quality of the services provided by the managements of the federal medical centre. Evidently, it reported a correlation coefficient of 72.39%. In terms of statistical significance, it has a p-value of 0.000. This affirmed that, employee empowerment has a high statistical significance effect on the quality of services provided by Federal Medical Centre, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria. By implication, the more the management team of the Federal medical centre empowers its employees, the more the services which the render to the general public has more quality in terms of the services becoming more reliable, tangible, emphatic, responsive, and has high assurance as well. Furthermore, the result stressed that, the more the management team of the Federal Medical Centre Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria empowers their employee through regular staff training, implementation of staff safety programmes, greater access to information, employee recognition and awards, clear career advancements, access to soft loans, etc., the higher the quality of the services delivered. This further suggests that, high responsiveness and good attitude portrayed by management team of the Federal Medical Centre Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria, being reliable, emphatic, and assuring the patients of their state best enhance patients' and employee satisfaction. This is in tandem with Mahmoud (2022); Vaidya, Malik, and Ali (2022); Mudassar, Paul, Umair, Junaid, Rizwan, and Nosheen (2020); Shafiq, Lasrado, and Hafeez (2019); Harimurti and Suryani (2019) findings.

Furthermore, continual service improvement has a positive yet strong correlation with the quality of the services provided by the managements of the federal medical centre. Evidently, it reported a correlation coefficient of 72.39%. In terms of statistical significance, it passed the test of significance since its p-value estimated at 0.027 is below 5% level of significance but is greater than 95% confidence level. Hence, this result reaffirmed that, continual service improvement has a high statistical significance effect on the quality of services provided by Federal Medical Centre, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria. By implication, continual service improvements enhance customer experience, boost service quality, lower costs and make processes more effective and efficient.

Lastly, the paper reaffirmed that, top management commitment is a critical predictor of service quality. This is in tandem with Mahmoud (2022); Vaidya, Malik, and Ali (2022); Mudassar, Paul, Umair, Junaid, Rizwan, and Nosheen (2020); Shafiq, Lasrado, and Hafeez (2019); Harimurti and Suryani (2019) findings.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation among Variables under Study

	SERQ	CUFS	EMP	COSI	FBDM	TOMC

Pearson Correlation	SERQ	1.000					
	CUFS	0.876	1.000				
	EMP	0.724	0.454	1.000			
	COSI	0.843	0.438	0.438	1.000		
	FBDM	0.795	0.155	0.050	0.342	1.000	
	TOMC	0.851	-0.081	-0.203	0.464	0.796	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	SERQ	.	.000	0.000	0.006	0.027	0.016
	CUFS	0.000	.	0.000	0.027	0.257	0.367
	EMP	0.000	0.000	.	0.027	0.416	0.196
	COSI	0.006	0.027	0.027	.	0.070	0.020
	FBDM	0.027	0.257	0.416	0.070	.	0.000
	TOMC	0.016	0.367	0.196	0.020	.000	.
N	SERQ	272	272	272	272	272	272
	CUFS	272	272	272	272	272	272
	EMP	272	272	272	272	272	272
	COSI	272	272	272	272	272	272
	FBDM	272	272	272	272	272	272
	TOMC	272	272	272	272	272	272

Source: Authors' Computation (2023)

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The vast body of literature on TQM often suggests that it is a solution to addressing customer/patient dissatisfaction. This study was therefore conducted to test if such assertion is true to life. The study therefore concludes that, TQM (continual service improvement, fact-based decision making, and top management commitment) are major service quality predictors. Arising from the findings, the following recommendations have been made:

i. The chief medical director of the FMC Asaba should ensure that, all patients that need immediate attentions are attended to without dilly-dally.
ii. To ensure that, the quality of the services which he staff of the FMC renders to the public is either sustained or improved upon, the chief medical director should on regular basis empower its staff through regular staff training, and must also ensure that they access soft loans with ease.
iii. The management team of the FMC Asaba, Delta State should ensure that it improves on its software on regular basis.
iv. To ensure that the services provided to the general public is of high quality, the management team of the FMC Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria should on regular basis develop, manage, improving optimal key figures.
v. The top levels of management are encouraged to be fully involved in the day to day running of the FMC Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria.

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