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MANAGERS' ATTITUDE AND PERCEIVED BARRIERS TOWARDS EVIDENCE-BASED MANAGEMENT COMPETENCY IN HEALTHCARE

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ABSTRACT

Evidence-Based Management (EBMGT) has emerged as a vital approach in healthcare organizations to enhance decision-making quality, improve patient outcomes & ensure organizational efficiency. However, its effective implementation largely depends upon the attitudes and competencies of healthcare managers. The aim of this study was to investigate the attitude and perceived barriers of evidence-based management among healthcare managers in the public and private sector primary healthcare centers and hospitals of Saudi Arabia. The cross-sectional data using non-probability convenience sampling technique was used to collect the data. The target populations were executives and frontline managers working in public and private sector healthcare organizations. Total 384 complete questionnaires were used in the analysis. SPSS was used for statistical data analysis. The results provide significant information in reaching desired conclusion and making decisions in particular context. The findings show that healthcare managers exhibit positive attitude towards evidence-based management practice while identified some perceived barriers such as lack of interest, time, training, research as well as application of EBMGT is not rewarded in healthcare organizations.

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INTRODUCTION

The evidence got implemented in numerous fields like social sciences, behavioral sciences, health sciences, medicine, nursing, politics, economics, business administration and health administration (Janati, Hasanpoor, Hajebrahimi & Bazargani, 2017). The scholars, researchers and health policy makers are trying their best to develop and introduce a new model in the healthcare. In healthcare management evidence is applied using new model which is called evidence-based management.

Healthcare managers and administrators used this model for managing primary healthcare centers (PHCCs) and hospitals. Due to rapid advancement in healthcare management, cost, technological advancement, quality, safety, high expectations and pressure from clients, makes it more complex and difficult (Janati, Hasanpoor, Hajebrahimi & Sadeghi-Bazargani, 2018). That is why healthcare managers are required to benefit from the evidence-based management (EBMGT) to improve their effectiveness and timely decision making in addition to culture that significantly impact the level of the evidence-based competency (Sanaeifar, Houshmand, Moghri, Vejdani & Tabatabaee, 2025). The healthcare management provides direction and leadership while healthcare managers are the professionals who lead and direct the diverse organizations (Barends, Villanueva & Rousseau, 2017; Mughal, 2025).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The positions in healthcare organizations exist at unlike levels higher, middle (executive) and front line (lower levels). The higher position holders possess more authority and power and focus on the organizational level management, while executive and frontline managers focus on management of others to get effective work. This study focuses on executive and frontline managers. The reason for focusing on these two levels is that most people are appointed at these two levels. The managers are given authority to make decisions, and these decisions directly influence organizational efficiency and effectiveness. The decision for cost, safety, quality managers must consider EBMGT model (Guo, Berkshire, Fulton & Hermanson, 2018). EBMGT enables healthcare managers to adopt scientific techniques for the decision making (Criado-Perez, 2021). It is essential for managers to consider the significance of EBMGT model while making decisions. For instance, EBMGT model could be used for decision support system and clinical guidelines. However, healthcare managers gradually adopt the EBMGT system while physicians and other healthcare professionals have adopted evidence-based medicines principles and guidelines. The perceived barriers could be a result of limited use of EBMGT by practitioners.

The barriers could be lack of time, lack of research support by the management, lack of interest etc. healthcare managers are expected that they could incorporate the best available evidence into practice with a positive attitude towards evidence-based practice as well as scientific evidence. For this purpose, it is crucial to investigate the healthcare managers' attitude and perceived barriers towards EBMGT. There is little empirical evidence available, and little is known about the EBMGT model & managers attitude toward perceived barriers and EBMGT practices. In today competitive business environment where organizations and technology are rapidly transforming, management practices are not getting upgraded with demand of data driven world (Wright, Zammuto, Liesch, Middleton, Hibbert & Burke, 2016). Even today organizations make decisions only on intuition or experience without taking benefit from evidence-based management practices available. In this connection, the evident-based management practices provide health managers with most reliable and accurate information for making decisions. Due to lack of coordination and cooperation amid healthcare managers and stakeholders, managers are unable to collect, analyze and interpret data for decision-making.

To successfully implement EBMGT organization should assess the capabilities and potential of their managers and the readiness to utilize the EBMGT up to optimum level (Sahakian, 2020). Adoption of such system and practices into the organizations help to handle difficult situations, solve complex problems and obtain efficient and effective outcomes via informed decisions based upon available evidence. The evidence-based management is a five-step process in which it starts with "problem identification, followed by compiling internal evidence and literature review, then reformulation of problem, fourth step is engagement of stakeholders and last one is commitment to evidence-based solution and its execution". One can face difficulty while using EBMGT (Zare, Khanifar, Yazdani & Azarm, 2019). One of those difficulties is resistance to change. People working in organizations resist leaving their comfort zones and sticking with traditional methods of decision making like decision based on experience and intuition. This fight is due to unawareness about benefits of new system. Managers must get awareness, knowledge, training and interest to get benefits of EBM system, since decision made by health managers carry weight in organizations, since individuals' well-being is at stake (Yang, 2020).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is quantitative in nature and cross-sectional descriptive design was adopted. According to Ministry of Health, 2023 data available on its website there are 4884 health managers (male & female) Saudi and Non-Saudi working in Saudi Arabia in public and private sector organizations. According to Krejci and Morgan (1970) 357 is required sample size. Total 400 questionnaires were distributed among executive, frontline managers in PHCCs and public and private sector hospitals. Non-probability convenience sampling was used for sample selection. Total 384 questionnaires were used in analysis. Managers belonging to numerous departments like finance, human resources, information technology, radiology, OPD, quality unit, safety, nursing, medical records participated in survey. The study location includes public and private Hospitals and PHCCs located in different cities of Saudi Arabia.

Measures of Study

The questionnaire was adopted from past study of Alsubaie and Bugis (2021). It has three sections, first section consists of demographic information, second section includes five items of attitude, and third section includes five items on perceived barriers that were measured over diverse statements. All items were measured on five-point Likert scale 1 to 5, 1 stands for strongly disagree and 5 stands for strongly agree. Similarly, systematic procedure was used for data collection & analysis to reach desired conclusion.

Data Collection & Analysis

Online questionnaires were distributed using links through social media platforms. Respondents were assured that data would be kept confidential and would be used only for academic purposes. They were also given freedom to withdraw from survey any time. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for analysis of statistical data. Frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used.

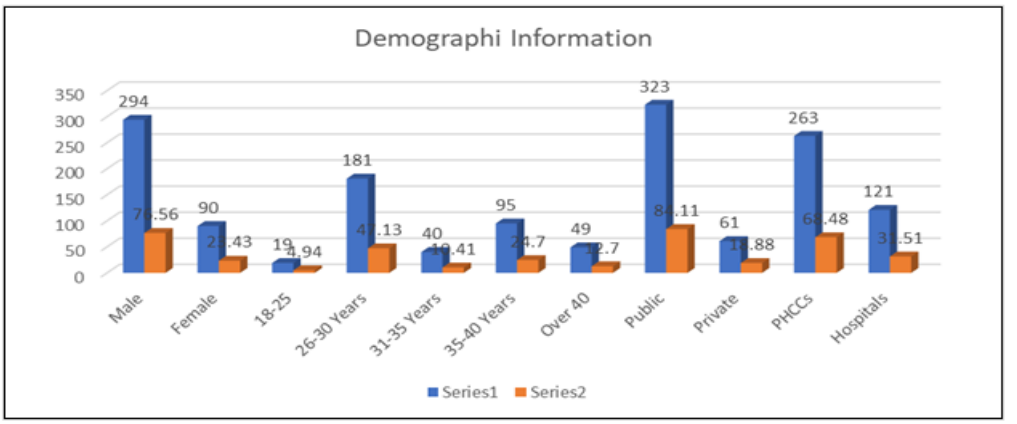
RESULTS OF STUDY

Table 1 presents the personal information of the respondents, from the healthcare managers 76.56% were male and 23.43% were females, regarding the age 4.94% belong to age group of 18-25 years, 47.13% belong to group of 26-30 years, 10.41% belong to 31-35 years, 24.7% belong to 35-40 years and 12.7% belong to over forty years. In addition, majority of them, i.e., 84.11% work in public sector healthcare organizations followed by 18.88% who work in private sector healthcare organizations. Out of which 68.48% work in primary healthcare centers and 31.51% work in hospitals (general & specialist hospitals).

Table 1 Demographic Information

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	294	76.56
	Female	90	23.43
Age	18-25	19	4.94
	26-30 Years	181	47.13
	31-35 Years	40	10.41
	35-40 Years	95	24.7
	Over 40	49	12.7
Sector	Public	323	84.11
	Private	61	18.88
Organization Type	PHCCs	263	68.48
	Hospitals	121	31.51

Figure 1 Demographic Information



Managers of healthcare organizations were asked about their attitude toward EBMGT model. Table 2 presents findings of their responses for each item, for item 1 most of managers strongly agree with the statement that decision should be based on best evidence followed by agree option, for item 2 most of the managers agree with this statement, and 49 strongly agree, for item 3 majority of them strongly agree, followed by 149 who stayed neutral and 54 agree. Item 4 got highest score on the agreed option i.e., 180, while 130 remained neutral and 64 stayed strongly agreed. The last item

support of adoption of EBMGT in healthcare score higher on strongly agreed trailed by 69 responses who stayed neutral and 59 said yes agree to adopt EBMGT model. While 55 strongly disagree and 37 disagree with this statement. Majority of respondents show positive attitude towards evidence-based management.

Table 2 Managers' Attitude towards EBMGT

SN	Attitude items	SA	AGR	NEU	DIS	STD
1	It is important for managers to make decisions based on the best evidence	245(63.8%)	132(34.4%)	6(1.6%)	1(0.3%)	0
2	Employing EBMGT improves an organization's performance	49(12.8%)	303(68.95)	16(4.25)	12(3.1%)	4(1%)
3	I am interested in learning, improving EBMGT skills	175(45.6%)	54(14.1%)	149(38.8%)	6(1.6%)	0
4	EBMGT increases the quality of my management decisions	64(16.7%)	180(46.87%)	130(33.85%)	5(1.3%)	5(1.3%)
5	I support the adoption of EBMGT in healthcare management	164(42.7%)	59(15.36%)	69(17.96%)	37(9.6%)	55(14.3%)

Table 3 Managers' Perceived Barriers towards EBMGT

SN	Perceived Barriers items	SA	AGR	NEU	DIS	STD
1	Time constraints	105(27.34%)	160(41.66%)	39(10.15%)	80(20.83%)	-
2	Limited Resources	121(31.55)	140(36.5%)	56(14.6%)	67(17.4%)	-
3	Lack of scientific research	122(31.8%)	153(39.8%)	78(20.3%)	-	31(8.1%)
4	Lack of interest and training	110(28.6%)	95(24.7%)	118(30.7%)	6(15.9%)	-
5	Application of EBMGT is not rewarded in the healthcare organization	131(34.1%)	121(31.5%)	62(16.1%)	70(18.25)	-

Table 3 presents the findings of perceived barriers towards evidence-based management. Majority of the respondents score high on the strongly agree and have identified that time limits, lack of resources, and scientific research, lack of interest and application of EBMGT are the barriers towards EBMGT in study.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that managers of the public and private sector organizations show positive attitude towards evidence-based management practices, however, on the other side they have identified the barriers as well such as lack of time, resources, research, interest and application for EBMGT nor rewarded by hospital. The findings of this study got support from Atakro, Akuoko, Aboagye, Blay Ansong, Boni, Sallah and Sarpong (2020) and in line with study of Sanchez, Molina, Medina and Hidalgo (2019). Regarding attitude, healthcare managers agree that decision should be made on best evidence and it also enhances organizational performance as well. Further, analysis of results revealed that managers are interested in learning new skills regarding EBMGT model and exhibit their opinion that use of EBMGT increase the quality of their decisions (Abelsson, Karlsson & Morténius, 2022). They further support the adoption of this new model in healthcare organizations.

Regarding the perceived barriers they highlighted the factors such as time, interest, resources, and scientific research as barriers. Most high score is given to application of EBMGT & are not rewarded in organizations.

The respondents show positive attitude towards adoption of evidence-based management practices but due to barriers they are unable to take benefits from this new system. Which could result in compromise of quality, safety and better decision making. Management of healthcare organizations could consider findings of this study and make policy recommendations and guidelines available for implementation of EBMGT practices in public and private hospitals. Healthcare organizations' management should also involve the patients because their views are also very important and have significant place in policy making. These findings of positive attitude are consistent with findings of (Alsubaie & Bugis, 2021). In this linking, their findings also stated that managers in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia shows positive attitude towards evidence-based management practices in healthcare organizations. It concludes that fostering a culture of continuous learning, integrating EBMGT into professional development programs, and providing organizational support systems can strengthen evidence-based competencies among healthcare managers. Furthermore, the findings of perceived barriers are also in agreement with findings of previous studies Atakro et al. (2020) and Hagiins et al. (2019).

Several other studies have also reported barriers towards evidence-based management (Shayan et al., 2019; Harvey, et al., 2019). The EBMGT is challenging and difficult task. Even some hospital managers do not possess adequate knowledge about this model (Daouk-Öyry, Sahakian & Vijver, 2021). In addition, the managers the process to initiate and implement this practice is also unknown to managers. Benefits of implementing this EBMGT practice in hospitals & healthcare organizations are increasing the job satisfaction, patient safety, improvised quality, and quality decision making. Instead of knowing the fact that EBMGT practice is quite beneficial, some managers have exhibited negative attitude about EBMGT practice. For successful execution of these practices, healthcare managers have to overcome the barriers identified in this study (Leming-Lee & Watters, 2019). The findings reveal that while most managers hold a positive attitude towards the principles of EBMGT, significant barriers—such as limited access to reliable data sources, lack of training and awareness, time constraints, resistance to change, and inadequate institutional support—impede its practical adoptions. The study offers practical implications for the healthcare policymakers and administrators to design the interventions that promote evidence-informed decision-making across healthcare institutions.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicated that managers have exhibited positive attitudes towards implementation of evidence-based management, but they must overcome those barriers such as training, interest, time constraints and must exert extra time off duty hours to implement this new model. Regional and national policies could be formulated to enhance the quality and healthcare performance to shape evidence-based management practice. To implement this EBMGT it requires mixture of facilitative and managerial leadership. The current study findings have provided insights for all stakeholders,

such as healthcare managers, policy makers, in health sector of Saudi Arabia. Policy makers could take benefits from these findings and overcome these barriers for successful implementation of the EBMGT practice in hospitals and PHCCs. Provide the necessary training, to managers and awareness for significance of such practices so that they are driven to learn this new management model and start taking its benefits. This study includes executives & frontline managers from public & private sector hospitals and PHCCs. One must be careful in generalizing results to other sectors, second this study includes executive, frontline managers from hospitals so in future studies senior managers could be included to have more in-depth understanding of attitudes and barriers to EBMGT. Third, future studies could also focus on registered nurses to get their opinion regarding evidence-based management practice.

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