PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION IN THE PROVISION OF PRIMARY HEALTHCARE IN GHANA: A CASE OF SAVELGU / NANTON DISTRICT AND TAMALE METROPOLIS IN THE NORTHERN REGION

IBRAHIM SAYIBU

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

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To my parents and my family
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ABSTRACT

Governments making healthcare accessible and affordable to a majority of people contribute positively to the socioeconomic development of individual nations. It would also reduce vulnerability and inequalities which are common in societies. However, accessibility to health services by majority of the population in sub-Saharan Africa remains unmet. There is still less affordable healthcare coupled with poor quality of services. Infrastructure provision is unevenly distributed across regions while investment in the sector has not been favorable over the past decades. The rural people are negatively affected as a result of these problems. For these reasons, private health sector participation in the provision of healthcare become important.

Private health providers refer to those individuals or groups who provide health services outside the direct control of the government and they re mostly base on curative services. They are divided into for-profit and not-for-profit health providers. For-profit providers include those who charge fees for the services they provide while not-for-profit healthcare providers refer to individuals or organizations providing health services with either for free or for a relatively low fee. Private participation in the provision of healthcare became prominent in Ghana during the implementation of Economic Recovery and Structural Adjustment Programme (ERSAP) in 1983. They serve majority of the population in both rural and urban areas. Private health sector operations is accelerating in the southern part of the country, however, there is little information about their activities in the Northern part of the country.
This thesis investigates how private health sector supplement the government in the provision of primary healthcare in one of the deprived regions in the Northern part of the country, the Northern Region. The indicators used to examine their role are accessibility, affordability, efficacy, and quality healthcare. The study will contribute directly to the understanding of the contribution of private health sector to the socioeconomic development of the country. It will also be vital source of information for policy consideration.

The thesis found that the private health sector served patients at a relatively low cost and patients form remote areas do seek their services. Majority of people accessed private health services due to quality of care offered. However, there were shortage of medical doctors, nurses, and professional administrators which impacted negatively on efficacy and quality of their health delivery.

The thesis concluded by recommending that the government increase investment in the training of medical doctors, nurses, and administrators. It further suggested that government devise approaches to include all private health providers in the national payroll, and support them with equipment and infrastructure.
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