

Core Competencies for Effective and Efficient Hospital Administrators in Nigeria: Implications for Quality Healthcare Delivery

Athanasius Emeka Agbo

Department of Health care Administration and hospital management.

*Corresponding Author: Athanasius Emeka Agbo

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21932736>

Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<i>Good hospital administration is essential for quality healthcare, especially in Nigeria where resources are limited. Administrators need leadership, management, technical, and people skills to coordinate resources and improve patient care. However, many Nigerian hospitals continue to face challenges related to inadequate administrative capacity, inefficient resource management, workforce shortages, and increasing demands for quality healthcare services.</i> <i>This paper examines the core competencies required for effective and efficient hospital administrators in Nigeria and discusses their implications for quality healthcare delivery which includes: leadership competence, communication and interpersonal competence, financial management competence, human resources management competence, decision making competence, quality improvement and patient care competence, digital health and health information competence, ethical and professional competence, change management competence, risk and crisis competence, emotional intelligence competence, stakeholders and community engagement competence.</i> <i>The paper concludes to make real and lasting progress in healthcare in Nigeria, it is important to focus on developing strong leadership skills in hospital administrators. Government agencies, healthcare organizations, professional groups, and training centers should support ongoing education, mentorship, and training programs that give current and future administrators the knowledge and skills they need to lead today's healthcare organizations well. Investing in these areas can help support lasting health system reforms and improve healthcare quality in Nigeria.</i> Keywords: Hospital administration, hospital administrators, core competencies, healthcare management, quality healthcare delivery.
Received: 13-06-2026	
Accepted: 16-07-2026	
Published: 14-08-2026	
Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited. Citation: Athanasius Emeka Agbo. (2026). Core competencies for effective and efficient hospital administrators in Nigeria: Implications for quality healthcare delivery. UKR Journal of Medicine and Medical Research, 2(4), 122-133.	

Introduction

Healthcare is changing fast as systems work to provide more accessible, safe, and high-quality services. New technology, changing disease patterns, population growth, and higher patient expectations have made hospital management more complex. Hospitals now need not just skilled clinicians but also effective administrators to manage resources, set policies, and guide strategy. Strong leadership from administrators is crucial for efficient operations, better patient outcomes, and long-term sustainability (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021).

Hospital administrators are key to making sure healthcare organizations run well and keep high standards of patient

care. They plan, organize, staff, budget, monitor, and supervise hospital operations to improve quality and performance. Good administrators also encourage teamwork, boost staff productivity, support ethical practices, and make sure hospitals follow national policies and regulations. Studies show that hospitals with skilled administrators have better patient outcomes, more satisfied staff, stronger finances, and greater resilience (Liang et al., 2021; Stefl, 2023).

Nigeria's health sector urgently needs skilled hospital administrators because of ongoing problems like limited funding, staff shortages, weak management, poor

infrastructure, and more cases of infectious and chronic diseases. While clinical care has improved, management and leadership skills have not gotten enough attention. This gap has caused inefficiencies, poor coordination, low staff morale, and worse patient outcomes (Federal Ministry of Health, 2022; WHO, 2023). Today's hospital administrators need skills beyond traditional roles. They should be skilled in strategic planning, financial management, health informatics, quality improvement, change management, stakeholder engagement, crisis response, emotional intelligence, and evidence-based decision-making. These skills help administrators handle new healthcare challenges, use limited resources well, improve patient safety, and support ongoing learning in their organizations (Lega et al., 2022; World Bank, 2023).

Nigeria's health sector is making changes to improve governance, expand access to quality care, and reach Universal Health Coverage (UHC). These changes rely on skilled hospital administrators who can turn policies into real improvements. But many hospitals still lack strong leadership development, professional training, succession planning, and ongoing management education. Solving this needs a competency-based approach to give administrators the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to manage today's complex healthcare organizations. There is little research on what skills hospital administrators in Nigeria need. Knowing these skills is important for better leadership, governance, and health reforms. This paper reviews the main skills needed for effective hospital administration in Nigeria and how they can improve performance and care quality. It argues that skill-based education, ongoing development, and leadership training are essential for building strong hospitals that serve Nigerians well.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Hospital Administration

Hospital administration refers to the systematic management of a healthcare institution to ensure that clinical and support services are delivered efficiently, safely, and according to the organization's goals. It involves coordinating staff, finances, facilities, technology, and other resources to provide quality care and keep operations running smoothly. By planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and evaluating, hospital administration helps healthcare professionals deliver patient-centered care (Longest & Darr, 2021). Financial oversight, effective workforce management, quality improvement, and compliance with healthcare policies and professional standards. Hospital administrators are expected to respond to emerging challenges such as digital transformation, changing disease patterns, increasing patient expectations, and limited healthcare resources while ensuring that

services remain accessible and sustainable (Buchbinder et al., 2021).

In Nigeria, effective hospital administration is especially important because many facilities face financial limits, staff shortages, and poor infrastructure. Skilled administrators help make better use of resources, improve governance, boost staff performance, and deliver quality care. As the health sector changes, administrators' ability to give strategic direction and manage change is key to improving hospital performance (Federal Ministry of Health, 2022; World Health Organization [WHO], 2023).

Concept of Hospital Administrator

A hospital administrator is a healthcare management professional responsible for directing the administrative and operational activities of a hospital to ensure that healthcare services are delivered efficiently, safely, and in accordance with established standards. The position requires overseeing the coordination of personnel, financial resources, infrastructure, technology, and institutional policies to support the delivery of quality patient care. Rather than providing direct clinical services, hospital administrators create the organizational framework within which healthcare professionals can perform effectively (Swayne et al., 2020).

The responsibilities of hospital administrators extend beyond routine management functions. They are expected to provide strategic leadership, formulate and implement organizational policies, manage healthcare finances, supervise human resources, monitor institutional performance, and ensure compliance with legal, ethical, and professional standards. In addition, they facilitate collaboration among multidisciplinary teams, promote innovation, and guide healthcare organizations through periods of change and uncertainty. These responsibilities require sound managerial judgment, effective communication, and the ability to make evidence-informed decisions that enhance organizational performance (Daft, 2022).

Within the Nigerian healthcare system, hospital administrators play a crucial role in strengthening service delivery despite persistent challenges such as inadequate funding, workforce shortages, and limited infrastructure. Their ability to use available resources efficiently, strengthen institutional governance, foster staff engagement, and support continuous quality improvement directly influences healthcare outcomes. As healthcare systems become increasingly complex, the effectiveness of hospital administrators will continue to be a critical factor in achieving sustainable improvements in hospital performance and quality healthcare delivery (World Health Organization, 2022).

Concept of Competency

Competency is broadly understood as the ability of an individual to apply relevant knowledge, practical skills, professional attitudes, and personal attributes to perform assigned responsibilities effectively. It reflects not only what a person knows but also how well that knowledge is translated into action to achieve expected results. Therefore, competency is demonstrated through consistent performance, sound judgment, ethical behaviour, and the capacity to adapt to changing work environments (Boyatzis, 2008).

Within healthcare organisations, competency is a vital attribute for effective management and leadership. Healthcare managers are expected to possess a balanced mix of technical expertise and interpersonal skills that enable them to coordinate resources, solve organisational problems, make informed decisions, and lead multidisciplinary teams. These capabilities contribute significantly to improved organizational performance, efficient service delivery, and better patient outcomes (Calhoun et al., 2008).

Competencies are generally grouped into technical and behavioural categories. Technical competencies include knowledge and skills related to planning, budgeting, human resource management, health policy, and information systems, while behavioral competencies encompass leadership, communication, teamwork, emotional intelligence, integrity, and adaptability. Together, these competencies enable healthcare administrators to respond effectively to organisational challenges and changing healthcare demands (Stefl, 2008).

In Nigeria, strengthening managerial competencies has become increasingly important as hospitals strive to improve service quality amid financial constraints, workforce shortages, and rising healthcare needs. Hospital administrators who possess the appropriate competencies are better positioned to utilize resources efficiently, promote accountability, support innovation, and create an environment that enhances both staff performance and patient care. Consequently, competency development remains a critical investment for improving hospital management and advancing quality healthcare delivery.

Concept of Core Competencies

Core competencies are the fundamental capabilities that enable individuals to perform their professional responsibilities effectively and contribute meaningfully to organizational success. They represent a combination of knowledge, practical skills, attitudes, values, and behaviours that distinguish high-performing professionals from average performers. These competencies serve as a guide for selecting, developing, and evaluating employees,

ensuring they possess the abilities required to meet both present and future organizational demands (Spencer & Spencer, 1993).

In healthcare organizations, core competencies define the capabilities that hospital administrators need to manage increasingly complex health systems. They include not only technical expertise in areas such as planning, budgeting, and human resource management, but also leadership qualities, sound judgment, communication skills, ethical conduct, and the ability to work effectively with diverse stakeholders. Together, these competencies enable administrators to make informed decisions, coordinate healthcare services efficiently, and respond proactively to organizational challenges (National Center for Healthcare Leadership [NCHL], 2022).

The changing nature of healthcare has further broadened the competency profile expected of hospital administrators. The growing use of digital technologies, the emphasis on quality improvement, and the demand for greater accountability require administrators to think strategically, embrace innovation, and lead organizational change. They must also be able to build productive relationships, manage limited resources responsibly, and promote a culture of continuous improvement that enhances both staff performance and patient care (American College of Healthcare Executives [ACHE], 2023).

In the Nigerian healthcare system, strengthening these core competencies is essential for improving hospital management and addressing persistent challenges such as inadequate funding, workforce shortages, and inefficient service delivery. Administrators equipped with the appropriate competencies are better positioned to provide effective leadership, improve organisational performance, and support the delivery of safe, efficient, and patient-centred healthcare services. Consequently, developing these competencies should remain a priority for healthcare institutions, training programmes, and policymakers seeking to strengthen the country's health system.

Core Competencies for Effective and Efficient Hospital Administrators in Nigeria

A hospital's success depends not just on its clinical staff but also on the skills of its administrators. As healthcare becomes more complex, administrators need a broad set of abilities to lead strategically, manage resources well, coordinate teams, and maintain high service standards. These skills help hospitals adapt to changing health needs and work within their available resources (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023).

In Nigeria, skilled hospital administrators are more important than ever because of ongoing issues like limited funding, staff shortages, old infrastructure, fast-changing

technology, and higher public expectations. To tackle these problems, administrators need to think strategically, make good decisions, manage change, and encourage accountability and improvement. Their mix of management skills and leadership directly affects hospital performance, staff motivation, patient safety, and the quality of care (American College of Healthcare Executives [ACHE], 2023).

Studies show that effective hospital administration relies on a mix of technical, managerial, and people skills. Key areas include leadership, planning, communication, financial and human resource management, quality improvement, digital skills, ethics, emotional intelligence, and working with stakeholders. These skills work together to help administrators handle the many challenges in today's healthcare organizations (National Center for Healthcare Leadership [NCHL], 2022). The next sections will look at each core competency and how it supports better hospital management and healthcare in Nigeria.

Leadership Competency

Leadership is a key skill for hospital administrators and shapes how well healthcare organizations perform. Administrators do more than manage daily tasks—they set direction, build trust, and encourage everyone to work toward common goals. Good leadership creates a culture of teamwork, accountability, innovation, and high-quality patient care, which are all needed for lasting improvements in healthcare (Northouse, 2022).

Hospital administrators work with many different professionals, each with their own roles and skills. Because of this, leadership is crucial for bringing teams together, encouraging good communication, solving conflicts, and making sure everyone works toward shared goals. Strong leaders motivate staff, support their growth, and build a workplace where employees feel valued. This positive environment leads to better staff performance and safer, more efficient, patient-focused care (West et al., 2022).

Leadership skills are especially important in Nigeria, where hospitals face tough challenges like limited funding, staff shortages, old facilities, and growing demand for care. Administrators need to make smart choices, set priorities, use resources wisely, and guide their teams through uncertain times. Being adaptable and keeping staff engaged helps maintain service quality and stability (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2023).

Modern healthcare leadership focuses on empowering staff and encouraging ongoing improvement. Administrators who involve employees in decisions, value their input, and support new ideas help build strong organisations that can adapt to change. Leadership skills are the foundation for

other management abilities and are key to running effective hospitals and delivering quality care.

Communication and Interpersonal Competency

Good communication is essential for hospital administrators because it helps with teamwork, coordination, and making informed decisions at every level. Hospitals include many professionals with different roles and skills. Administrators need to communicate clearly, listen well, and build strong relationships to make sure care is delivered smoothly and without delays (Lunenburg, 2010).

Hospital administrators talk every day with staff, patients, government officials, regulators, community members, and others. How they communicate is just as important as what they say. Open and respectful communication builds trust, encourages teamwork, and makes processes more transparent. This helps staff share ideas, raise concerns, and take part in decisions that improve hospital performance and patient care (Robbins & Judge, 2023).

Interpersonal skills go hand in hand with good communication. Administrators who show empathy, respect, emotional awareness, and cultural sensitivity can manage diverse teams and keep working relationships positive. These qualities help resolve conflicts, find solutions, and encourage teamwork. When staff feel respected and included, they are more committed to the hospital's goals and to providing quality care.

In Nigeria, poor communication often leads to misunderstandings, weak coordination, unhappy staff, and delays in care. Administrators who focus on clear communication can boost teamwork, improve information sharing, and reduce conflicts that harm patient care. Regular meetings, helpful feedback, open channels, and involving stakeholders also build accountability and help the hospital keep improving.

As hospitals use more digital tools and work across different fields, communication and people skills are still essential for administrators. Those who communicate clearly and professionally can build strong teams, make the organization run better, and create a culture focused on quality care.

Financial Management Competency

Financial management is one of the most important competencies expected of hospital administrators because every healthcare organization depends on the prudent use of financial resources to achieve its goals. Regardless of whether a hospital is publicly or privately owned, administrators must ensure that available funds are used responsibly to provide quality healthcare services while keeping the institution financially stable. Sound financial

decisions help hospitals meet daily operational needs, invest in new technologies, maintain essential equipment, and improve patient care without unnecessary financial strain (Gapenski & Reiter, 2020).

An effective hospital administrator should possess practical knowledge of budgeting, financial planning, expenditure control, procurement processes, revenue generation, and financial reporting. Budgeting is particularly important because it guides how financial resources are distributed across different units within the hospital. A carefully prepared budget allows administrators to prioritize spending, anticipate future financial needs, and allocate resources where they will have the greatest impact. It also provides a framework for monitoring financial performance and ensuring that spending remains within approved limits (Finkler et al., 2022).

Managing costs is another key aspect of financial competence. Hospitals operate in an environment where the demand for quality healthcare continues to rise while financial resources often remain limited. Administrators therefore need to identify ways to reduce avoidable expenses without affecting the quality or safety of patient care. This may involve improving the use of available resources, reducing waste, strengthening inventory management, and negotiating better prices with suppliers. Careful cost management enables hospitals to operate more efficiently and remain financially sustainable over the long term (Nowicki, 2022).

A hospital administrator must also be able to understand and interpret financial information. Reports such as income statements, balance sheets, and cash flow statements provide valuable insight into the financial position of the organisation. By analysing these reports, administrators can identify financial strengths, recognize potential challenges early, and make informed decisions regarding future investments, staffing, and service expansion. Regular financial evaluation also promotes accountability and supports evidence-based management practices (Gapenski & Reiter, 2020).

Another important responsibility is overseeing the hospital's revenue cycle. This includes ensuring that patient billing, insurance claims, reimbursements, and payment collections are handled accurately and efficiently. Delays or errors in these processes can reduce hospital income and disrupt service delivery. Administrators who understand revenue cycle management are better positioned to improve cash flow, minimize financial losses, and strengthen the organization's ability to meet both short-term and long-term financial obligations. As healthcare financing becomes increasingly complex, keeping up with changing reimbursement policies and regulatory requirements has

become an essential part of this competency (Cleverley et al., 2023).

Ethical financial leadership is equally important. Hospital administrators are entrusted with managing resources that directly affect patient care and organizational performance. For this reason, financial decisions should always reflect integrity, openness, and accountability. Transparent financial practices reduce opportunities for fraud and misuse of funds while building confidence among patients, staff, government agencies, donors, and other stakeholders. Responsible financial stewardship also ensures compliance with legal and professional standards governing healthcare organizations (American College of Healthcare Executives [ACHE], 2024).

The growing adoption of digital technologies has further expanded the financial responsibilities of hospital administrators. Many healthcare organizations now rely on electronic financial management systems, enterprise resource planning (ERP) software, and data analytics tools to support budgeting, monitor expenditures, and generate accurate financial reports. These technologies improve efficiency, provide timely financial information, and strengthen strategic planning. Administrators who are skilled in using digital financial tools are therefore better equipped to manage modern healthcare institutions and respond quickly to changing financial conditions (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021).

Human Resource Management Competency

Human resources are the driving force behind every healthcare organization, making their effective management a critical responsibility of hospital administrators. The quality of healthcare services depends largely on the competence, motivation, and commitment of healthcare workers. For this reason, administrators must possess the knowledge and skills needed to build, support, and sustain a workforce capable of meeting the health needs of the population. Effective human resource management ensures that hospitals have the right mix of professionals, working in an environment that promotes productivity, collaboration, and high standards of patient care (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023).

The role of hospital administrators extends beyond supervising employees. It includes planning workforce needs, recruiting qualified personnel, coordinating orientation programmes, evaluating staff performance, identifying training needs, and creating opportunities for career development. Administrators are also expected to establish fair workplace policies that encourage accountability, recognize outstanding performance, and promote equal opportunities for all employees. These

practices contribute to improved staff motivation and organizational effectiveness (Dessler, 2020).

Healthcare professionals frequently work under demanding conditions that expose them to physical and emotional stress. Heavy workloads, workforce shortages, and limited resources can reduce morale and affect service quality if not properly managed. Hospital administrators therefore have a responsibility to foster a supportive work environment where employees feel respected, listened to, and encouraged to perform at their best. Maintaining open communication, addressing workplace concerns promptly, and investing in staff welfare can strengthen employee commitment and reduce turnover.

The importance of this competency is particularly evident in Nigeria, where many healthcare institutions continue to experience shortages of skilled personnel, migration of healthcare workers, and unequal distribution of the health workforce. These challenges require administrators to adopt practical strategies that improve staff retention, strengthen professional development, and make the best use of available human resources. Hospitals that invest in their workforce are better positioned to deliver consistent, safe, and patient-centred healthcare services despite prevailing resource constraints.

An effective human resource management system also promotes teamwork and mutual respect among different professional groups. By encouraging collaboration and creating opportunities for continuous learning, hospital administrators help build a workforce that is adaptable, motivated, and committed to organizational goals. Strengthening this competency is therefore essential for improving hospital performance, enhancing patient satisfaction, and supporting sustainable healthcare delivery in Nigeria.

Decision-Making Competency

The ability to make sound decisions is one of the defining competencies of an effective hospital administrator. Administrative decisions influence nearly every aspect of hospital operations, from the management of financial and human resources to the quality of patient care and the achievement of organizational goals. Because hospitals operate in an environment where circumstances can change rapidly, administrators must be able to assess situations objectively, identify appropriate solutions, and take timely actions that support the best interests of both the institution and its patients (Daft, 2022).

Sound decision-making is built on careful analysis rather than assumptions or personal preference. Hospital administrators are expected to collect relevant information, examine available options, consider possible consequences, and select solutions that are practical, ethical, and evidence-

informed. This systematic approach improves transparency, reduces unnecessary risks, and strengthens confidence in administrative decisions. It also ensures that organizational resources are directed toward activities that improve efficiency and healthcare outcomes (Marquis & Huston, 2021).

The dynamic nature of healthcare means that administrators regularly face complex decisions involving workforce deployment, budget priorities, procurement of medical supplies, emergency response, and service improvement. These decisions often have to be made within tight deadlines and under resource constraints. Administrators who possess strong analytical and critical-thinking abilities are better equipped to balance competing demands while maintaining the continuity and quality of healthcare services.

The importance of effective decision-making is particularly evident in Nigeria, where hospitals continue to contend with inadequate funding, shortages of skilled personnel, ageing infrastructure, and increasing demand for healthcare services. Under these conditions, poor administrative decisions can lead to inefficient resource utilization, operational disruptions, reduced staff motivation, and compromised patient care. Conversely, well-informed decisions promote efficient hospital management, strengthen institutional accountability, and improve the overall performance of healthcare organizations.

Advances in health information systems and digital technologies have also transformed the decision-making process. Access to reliable organizational data enables hospital administrators to monitor performance, identify emerging challenges, evaluate service outcomes, and make informed management decisions. Consequently, decision-making competency remains an indispensable attribute for hospital administrators seeking to improve organizational effectiveness, strengthen healthcare delivery, and support sustainable health system development in Nigeria.

Quality Improvement and Patient Safety Competency

The ability to promote quality improvement and patient safety is a fundamental competency for hospital administrators. The effectiveness of a healthcare institution is measured not only by the services it provides but also by its capacity to deliver care that is safe, reliable, and responsive to patients' needs. Hospital administrators are therefore expected to establish systems that support continuous evaluation, encourage best practices, and strengthen the overall quality of healthcare delivery. Their leadership is essential in creating an organizational culture where patient safety remains a shared responsibility across all departments (Institute of Medicine, 2001).

Quality improvement is an ongoing process aimed at enhancing healthcare services through regular assessment and systematic changes in practice. Hospital administrators contribute to this process by developing quality standards, monitoring organizational performance, and encouraging the adoption of evidence-based interventions. They also promote continuous learning by supporting staff training, performance reviews, and the use of quality indicators to identify areas requiring improvement. These initiatives help healthcare institutions deliver services that are more effective, efficient, and responsive to patient expectations (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality [AHRQ], 2023).

Patient safety is closely connected to quality improvement because preventing avoidable harm is a core responsibility of every healthcare organization. Administrators play an important role in strengthening patient safety by implementing policies that support infection prevention, medication safety, clinical risk management, incident reporting, and compliance with established standards of care. They are equally responsible for ensuring that healthcare workers have access to the training, equipment, and institutional support needed to provide safe and dependable services.

Within the Nigerian healthcare system, improving quality and patient safety remains a major concern due to persistent challenges such as limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, workforce shortages, and weak quality assurance mechanisms. In response, hospital administrators must adopt practical strategies that encourage accountability, strengthen performance monitoring, and promote the use of reliable data to guide service improvement. Establishing a culture of continuous quality improvement enables hospitals to reduce preventable errors, improve patient experiences, and make better use of available resources.

As healthcare delivery continues to evolve, hospital administrators must view quality improvement and patient safety as continuous organizational priorities rather than isolated initiatives. Their commitment to monitoring performance, supporting innovation, and encouraging staff participation in improvement efforts strengthens institutional effectiveness and enhances public confidence in healthcare services. Developing this competency is therefore essential for achieving sustainable improvements in hospital performance and advancing quality healthcare delivery in Nigeria.

Digital Health and Health Information Management Competency

The greater the use of technology in healthcare, the more hospital management and service delivery have changed.

Today's hospital administrators require not only conventional management skills but also a understanding of how digital systems and health information can be employed to enhance both hospital operations and patient care. It is therefore essential for modern hospital administration that the ability to obtain, interpret, manage and make use of reliable health information (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021).

Health information enables administrators to base their important management decisions on evidence. If records are accurate, they can be used to establish staffing requirements, track the use of hospital resources, assess service performance, and identify areas in which improvements are needed. Where the information is incomplete, late, or poorly managed, administrative decisions may have to rely on assumptions rather than on evidence. Administrators who are competent therefore ought to know the procedures involved in collecting, storing, analysing, retrieving, and protecting health information.

Digital technologies including electronic health records, telemedicine, hospital management systems, and electronic reporting systems are being used more and more in healthcare. They improve the flow of information between departments, reduce paperwork, help ensure continuity of care, and make hospital operations more efficient. Yet the fact that technology is used does not mean that healthcare will be better. It is up to the administrators to make sure that staff are given adequate training, that the systems are properly maintained, and that patient information is kept safe from unauthorized access.

The implementation of digital health in Nigeria is hindered by a number of problems, such as insufficient technological infrastructure, unreliable electricity and internet services, limited funding, poor interoperability between information systems, and a lack of digital skills among healthcare workers. Because of this, hospital administrators have an important role to play in identifying practical technological solutions, obtaining institutional support, and developing their staff's ability to use the existing systems effectively.

One also needs to be aware of confidentiality, data protection, and the responsible use of health information to be competent in the fields of digital health and health information management. It is the administrators' responsibility to ensure that information is handled properly and that patients' privacy is respected at all stages of the information management process. Effective information governance helps to build trust and promotes responsible decision-making.

For Nigerian hospitals, improving the digital and health information management skills of administrators will lead

to better planning, greater accountability, more effective communication and improved service monitoring. It will also lay a more solid foundation for evidence-informed management and for quality improvement. It follows that the development of this ability should make an important contribution to the professional training and ongoing development of hospital administrators as Nigeria progresses towards a more digitally enabled healthcare system.

Ethical and Professional Competency

Ethical and professional competence is a fundamental attribute of effective hospital administrators because it shapes the credibility of healthcare institutions and influences the quality of administrative decisions. Hospital administrators are entrusted with responsibilities that affect the welfare of patients, healthcare professionals, and the broader community. Fulfilling these responsibilities requires a strong commitment to integrity, fairness, accountability, and respect for professional and ethical standards. Administrators who consistently demonstrate these values help establish a culture of trust and responsibility within their organizations (Beauchamp & Childress, 2019).

Professional conduct in hospital administration extends beyond compliance with institutional policies and legal requirements. It involves making decisions that are transparent, impartial, and consistent with the principles of justice and respect for human dignity. Administrators are expected to safeguard patient confidentiality, uphold patients' rights, manage organizational resources responsibly, and ensure that healthcare services are provided without discrimination. Adherence to these principles strengthens institutional governance and reinforces public confidence in the healthcare system (American College of Healthcare Executives [ACHE], 2023).

Hospital administrators are often confronted with ethical dilemmas arising from limited resources, competing organizational priorities, staff welfare issues, and patient care decisions. Addressing these challenges requires sound judgment, objectivity, and the ability to balance organizational interests with ethical obligations. Administrators who encourage ethical practices, support transparent decision-making, and model professional behaviour create an environment where accountability and mutual respect become part of everyday practice.

In Nigeria, ethical and professional competence has become increasingly important as healthcare institutions strive to improve governance, accountability, and public trust. Concerns relating to resource management, equitable access to healthcare services, and institutional transparency

highlight the need for administrators who consistently demonstrate honesty and professionalism. Their actions not only influence organizational performance but also shape the confidence that patients, employees, and the public place in healthcare institutions.

As the healthcare environment continues to evolve, ethical leadership remains essential for sustaining organizational integrity and promoting quality healthcare delivery. Hospital administrators who uphold professional values, demonstrate accountability, and make fair and responsible decisions contribute to stronger institutions, improved staff commitment, and better patient experiences. Strengthening ethical and professional competence should therefore remain a key priority in developing capable hospital administrators for Nigeria's healthcare system

Change Management Competency

The healthcare environment is continually changing due to advances in technology, evolving government policies, shifting disease patterns, and increasing expectations for quality healthcare services. These developments require hospital administrators who can guide their organizations through change while maintaining efficient operations and uninterrupted patient care. Change management competency enables administrators to respond proactively to these developments and position their institutions for long-term improvement and sustainability (Burnes, 2020).

Leading organizational change involves more than introducing new systems or procedures. It requires careful planning, clear communication, staff engagement, and continuous monitoring to ensure that proposed changes achieve their intended outcomes. Hospital administrators must be able to explain the reasons for change, address employees' concerns, and create opportunities for staff to participate in the implementation process. When employees understand the purpose of change and feel included in the process, they are more likely to support new initiatives and adapt successfully to changing organizational demands (Kotter, 2012).

Hospitals regularly experience changes arising from healthcare reforms, technological innovations, revised clinical standards, accreditation requirements, and organizational restructuring. Such transitions may create uncertainty and resistance if they are not managed effectively. Administrators who demonstrate flexibility, strategic thinking, and effective leadership are better equipped to manage these transitions while maintaining staff morale and organizational stability. Their ability to anticipate challenges and respond appropriately contributes to smoother implementation of new policies and improved institutional performance.

The relevance of change management is particularly evident in Nigeria, where healthcare institutions continue to adapt to policy reforms, digital transformation, workforce shortages, and increasing pressure to improve service quality. Hospital administrators who can embrace innovation, review existing practices critically, and introduce practical solutions are more likely to strengthen organizational efficiency and improve patient care. Their leadership also helps healthcare institutions remain resilient in the face of economic pressures, public health emergencies, and other unexpected challenges.

Building an organization that can adapt successfully to change requires a culture of learning, innovation, and continuous improvement. Hospital administrators who encourage creativity, support professional development, and regularly evaluate organizational performance create institutions that are better prepared to respond to future healthcare challenges. Strengthening change management competency is therefore essential for improving hospital administration and ensuring sustainable healthcare delivery in Nigeria.

Risk and Crisis Management Competency

The ability to manage risks and respond effectively to crises is an indispensable competency for hospital administrators. Healthcare institutions operate in an environment where unforeseen events can interrupt routine operations, compromise patient safety, and place significant pressure on available resources. Public health emergencies, equipment breakdowns, cyber threats, industrial disputes, and financial uncertainties are among the challenges that hospital administrators may encounter. Their preparedness and response to such situations play a crucial role in maintaining the continuity and quality of healthcare services (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022).

Effective risk management begins with identifying potential threats before they escalate into serious problems. Hospital administrators are expected to develop practical strategies for assessing risks, reducing vulnerabilities, and strengthening institutional preparedness. This includes establishing emergency response plans, monitoring operational processes, conducting regular safety assessments, and ensuring that appropriate preventive measures are in place. A proactive approach enables hospitals to minimize disruptions, protect patients and staff, and maintain essential services during periods of uncertainty (International Organization for Standardization [ISO], 2018).

Crises often require hospital administrators to make important decisions within a short period of time. Their ability to remain composed, communicate effectively, coordinate multidisciplinary teams, and deploy available

resources efficiently can significantly influence how well a hospital responds to emergencies. Strong leadership during a crisis also helps maintain staff confidence, promotes coordinated action, and reassures patients and the public that the institution is capable of managing difficult situations.

The experience of the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of this competency across healthcare systems worldwide. In Nigeria, the pandemic exposed gaps in emergency preparedness, supply chain management, workforce capacity, and healthcare infrastructure. These challenges demonstrated the need for hospital administrators who can anticipate emerging risks, strengthen institutional resilience, and develop contingency plans that enable healthcare facilities to respond effectively to future emergencies.

Risk and crisis management should be regarded as a continuous component of hospital administration rather than an activity reserved for emergencies. Administrators who prioritise preparedness, invest in staff training, regularly review emergency procedures, and evaluate organisational risks create healthcare institutions better equipped to withstand unexpected events. Strengthening this competency will enhance organizational resilience, improve patient safety, and support the consistent delivery of quality healthcare services in Nigeria.

Emotional Intelligence Competency

Emotional intelligence is a vital leadership competency that enables hospital administrators to relate effectively with people while managing the emotional demands of the healthcare environment. Hospitals bring together professionals from different disciplines who work under pressure to provide timely and quality care. In such settings, administrators must be able to understand their own emotions, appreciate the feelings of others, and respond to workplace situations with empathy, patience, and sound judgment. These qualities help foster healthy working relationships and create an atmosphere that supports collaboration and high-quality service delivery (Goleman, 2020).

Effective hospital administration requires more than technical and managerial expertise. Administrators must also possess the interpersonal skills needed to motivate employees, build trust, and maintain positive relationships across the organization. Emotional intelligence enables leaders to communicate with sensitivity, manage stressful situations calmly, and provide constructive support to staff during periods of uncertainty. Employees who feel respected and valued are generally more committed to their responsibilities and more willing to contribute to organizational goals (Mayer et al., 2016).

The demanding nature of healthcare often exposes workers to emotional exhaustion, workplace stress, and interpersonal conflicts. Hospital administrators who demonstrate empathy and emotional awareness are better able to recognize signs of stress, address concerns promptly, and promote a supportive work environment. By responding to challenges with fairness and understanding, they strengthen teamwork, reduce workplace tension, and encourage open communication among healthcare professionals.

The importance of emotional intelligence is particularly evident in Nigeria, where healthcare institutions frequently contend with workforce shortages, heavy patient workloads, and limited resources. Under these conditions, administrators who lead with empathy, respect, and emotional maturity are more likely to inspire confidence among staff and maintain organizational stability. Their ability to understand individual and team needs contributes to improved staff morale, stronger collaboration, and better patient experiences.

Emotional intelligence also complements other essential managerial competencies, including leadership, communication, conflict resolution, and change management. Administrators who combine professional knowledge with emotional awareness are better equipped to manage complex workplace relationships and lead healthcare organizations effectively. Strengthening this competency will therefore enhance organizational performance and support the delivery of quality healthcare services in Nigeria.

Stakeholder and Community Engagement Competency

The success of every healthcare institution depends not only on its internal operations but also on the strength of its relationships with individuals and organizations that influence or benefit from its services. For this reason, stakeholder and community engagement has become an important competency for hospital administrators. Hospitals function within communities and rely on effective collaboration with patients, healthcare professionals, government agencies, traditional leaders, professional associations, non-governmental organizations, and development partners to achieve their objectives. Administrators who build and sustain these relationships are better positioned to improve service delivery and strengthen institutional effectiveness (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021).

Developing meaningful partnerships requires active communication, mutual respect, and genuine involvement of stakeholders in organizational activities. Hospital administrators should create opportunities for key stakeholders to participate in planning, policy

implementation, programme evaluation, and quality improvement initiatives. When people are consulted and their views are considered, they are more likely to support institutional decisions and contribute to the achievement of organizational goals. This participatory approach strengthens transparency, encourages accountability, and promotes trust between healthcare institutions and the communities they serve (Bryson, 2018).

Engaging with the community also enables hospital administrators to better understand local health challenges, cultural values, and barriers that affect access to healthcare services. Such knowledge is valuable for designing services that reflect the needs and expectations of the population. Regular interaction with community members further creates opportunities for health education, disease prevention, and early identification of emerging public health concerns, thereby improving the responsiveness of healthcare institutions.

In Nigeria, where access to quality healthcare remains uneven across many communities, strong partnerships with local stakeholders are essential for improving health outcomes. Hospital administrators who work closely with community leaders, government agencies, civil society organizations, and development partners can mobilize additional resources, strengthen public health programmes, and improve coordination during disease outbreaks and other health emergencies. These partnerships also support the implementation of national health policies and contribute to more equitable healthcare delivery.

Sustained engagement with stakeholders and communities fosters shared responsibility for improving healthcare services. Administrators who maintain open dialogue, encourage collaboration, and respond to community concerns help build public confidence in the health system while strengthening institutional performance. Developing this competency is therefore essential for hospital administrators seeking to deliver accessible, people-centred, and sustainable healthcare services in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The way hospitals are managed plays a major role in how well healthcare systems perform and how patients fare. As healthcare becomes more complicated, hospital administrators need skills that go beyond everyday management. This paper has identified key areas such as leadership, strategic planning, communication, financial and human resource management, decision-making, quality improvement and patient safety, digital health and information management, ethical and professional practice, change management, risk and crisis management, emotional intelligence, and engaging with stakeholders and

the community as essential for effective hospital administration in Nigeria.

These skills work together to strengthen organizations, improve staff performance, increase accountability, use resources more efficiently, and ensure healthcare is safe, accessible, and focused on patients. Administrators with these abilities can better handle new healthcare challenges, carry out reforms, and encourage ongoing learning and improvement.

To make real and lasting progress in healthcare in Nigeria, it is important to focus on developing strong leadership skills in hospital administrators. Government agencies, healthcare organisations, professional groups, and training centres should support ongoing education, mentorship, and training programs that equip current and future administrators with the knowledge and skills they need to lead today's healthcare organisations effectively.

References

1. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. (2023). *Patient safety primer*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
2. American College of Healthcare Executives. (2023). *ACHE healthcare executive competencies assessment tool*. American College of Healthcare Executives.
3. Armstrong, M., & Taylor, S. (2023). *Armstrong's handbook of human resource management practice* (16th ed.). Kogan Page.
4. Beauchamp, T. L., & Childress, J. F. (2019). *Principles of biomedical ethics* (8th ed.). Oxford University Press.
5. Boyatzis, R. E. (2008). Competencies in the 21st century. *Journal of Management Development*, 27(1), 5–12.
6. Bryson, J. M. (2018). *Strategic planning for public and nonprofit organizations: A guide to strengthening and sustaining organizational achievement* (5th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
7. Buchbinder, S. B., Shanks, N. H., & Kite, B. J. (2021). *Introduction to health care management* (4th ed.). Jones & Bartlett Learning.
8. Burnes, B. (2020). *Managing change* (8th ed.). Pearson.
9. Calhoun, J. G., Dollett, L., Sinioris, M. E., Wainio, J. A., Butler, P. W., Griffith, J. R., & Warden, G. L. (2008). Development of an interprofessional competency model for healthcare leadership. *Journal of Healthcare Management*, 53(6), 375–389.
10. Cleverley, W. O., Cleverley, J. O., & Song, P. H. (2022). *Essentials of health care finance* (9th ed.). Jones & Bartlett Learning.
11. Daft, R. L. (2022). *Management* (14th ed.). Cengage Learning.
12. Dessler, G. (2020). *Human resource management* (16th ed.). Pearson.
13. Federal Ministry of Health. (2022). *National strategic health development plan II: 2018–2022*. Federal Ministry of Health.
14. Finkler, S. A., Jones, C. B., & Kovner, C. T. (2022). *Financial management for nurse managers and executives* (6th ed.). Elsevier.
15. Gapenski, L. C., & Reiter, K. L. (2020). *Healthcare finance: An introduction to accounting and financial management* (7th ed.). Health Administration Press.
16. Gapenski, L. C., & Reiter, K. L. (2023). *Healthcare finance: An introduction to accounting and financial management* (8th ed.). Health Administration Press.
17. Ginter, P. M., Duncan, W. J., & Swayne, L. E. (2022). *Strategic management of health care organizations* (9th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
18. Goleman, D. (2020). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ* (25th anniversary ed.). Bantam Books.
19. Institute of Medicine. (2001). *Crossing the quality chasm: A new health system for the 21st century*. National Academies Press.
20. International Organization for Standardization. (2018). *ISO 31000:2018: Risk management—Guidelines*. International Organization for Standardization.
21. Kotter, J. P. (2012). *Leading change*. Harvard Business Review Press.
22. Lega, F., Prenestini, A., & Spurgeon, P. (2022). Is management essential to improving the performance and sustainability of health systems and organizations? A systematic review and research agenda. *BMC Health Services Research*, 22, Article 130.
23. Liang, Z., Howard, P. F., Leggat, S. G., Murphy, G., & Hughes, C. (2021). Competency requirements for healthcare managers: A

- systematic review. *International Journal of Health Planning and Management*, 36(5), 1572–1591.
24. Longest, B. B., & Darr, K. (2021). *Managing health services organizations and systems* (7th ed.). Health Administration Press.
 25. Lunenburg, F. C. (2010). Communication: The process, barriers, and improving effectiveness. *Schooling*, 1(1), 1–10.
 26. Marquis, B. L., & Huston, C. J. (2021). *Leadership roles and management functions in nursing: Theory and application* (10th ed.). Wolters Kluwer.
 27. Mayer, J. D., Caruso, D. R., & Salovey, P. (2016). The ability model of emotional intelligence: Principles and updates. *Emotion Review*, 8(4), 290–300.
 28. National Center for Healthcare Leadership. (2022). *National Center for Healthcare Leadership competency model*. National Center for Healthcare Leadership.
 29. Northouse, P. G. (2022). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (9th ed.). Sage Publications.
 30. Nowicki, M. (2021). *Introduction to the financial management of healthcare organizations* (8th ed.). Health Administration Press.
 31. Robbins, S. P., & Judge, T. A. (2023). *Organizational behavior* (19th ed.). Pearson.
 32. Spencer, L. M., Jr., & Spencer, S. M. (1993). *Competence at work: Models for superior performance*. John Wiley & Sons.
 33. Stefl, M. E. (2008). Common competencies for all healthcare managers: The Healthcare Leadership Alliance model. *Journal of Healthcare Management*, 53(6), 360–374.
 34. Swayne, L. E., Duncan, W. J., & Ginter, P. M. (2020). *Strategic management of health care organizations* (9th ed.). Wiley.
 35. West, M., Bailey, S., & Williams, E. (2022). *The courage of compassion: Supporting nurses and midwives to deliver high-quality care*. The King's Fund.
 36. World Health Organization. (2021a). *Global strategy on digital health 2020–2025*. World Health Organization.
 37. World Health Organization. (2021b). *Global strategy on human resources for health: Workforce 2030*. World Health Organization.
 38. World Health Organization. (2021c). *WHO community engagement framework for quality, people-centred and resilient health services*. World Health Organization.
 39. World Health Organization. (2022). *Strengthening health systems governance for universal health coverage*. World Health Organization.
 40. World Health Organization. (2023). *Global report on health systems governance and leadership*. World Health Organization.