

A STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LOBBY STRATEGIES FOR PHARMACY AS PERCEIVED BY FEDERAL LEGISLATORS IN NIGERIA.

By

OLAYIWOLA G. AND O.O. BABALOLA

FACULTY OF PHARMACY,
OBAFEMI AWOLowo UNIVERSITY,
ILE-Ife.

Abstract

This work is the first attempt in Nigeria at finding out which lobbying tactics is most suitable for pharmacy profession in getting favourable legislation from Government. A random sample of 300 legislators of the two houses of legislature - The Senate 14.3%, House of Representatives 85.6%, showed that constituency contact, expert witness and financial support are right mix of tactics to be employed by the Pharmacy Professional Organisation to elicit favourable legislation. Threat of harm, publication of voting records are the least favourable tactics. Ranking of the tactics by the two houses separately on ordinal scale showed that the legislation of both houses agree in their ranking of the lobbying tactics to be employed by the pharmacist ($r/s=0.97$). Lobbying apart from Direct Political Action is very important in impacting positive and effective legislation and regulation on Pharmaceutical Policies. A mix of these tactics is best depending on the situation.

Introduction

All professional practices are governed by rules and regulations. Some of these regulations are internal standards that enable professionals achieve some uniformity in their output to the general public. In some cases, it may be necessary for the professional bodies to be assisted by way of state legislation, so that apart from ensuring internal standards, the societal relationship with the profession will be controlled, protected or optimised. Pharmacy is a profession that is highly regulated (1). In spite of these seemingly tight regulations, quacks and other unscrupulous professionals take advantage of the loopholes in the regulations (2). The almost primordial nature of the Nigerian society also encourages the flouting of Pharmacy Regulations.

External regulations of professional practices may come in form of state legislation. Legislation may be generated within or outside the profession. Those initiated within the profession are usually to protect the profession and the practitioners as well as to maintain time tested standards and ethics. When the legislation is generated outside the profession, often-times, it is not desirable by the professionals. Such legislation are in form of governmental interference or control, ostensibly in public interest (3).

Lobbying is an effort to influence and/or facilitate the decisions of governmental policy makers in either the executive or legislative branch (4). The need for lobby or lobbyists arose from the fact that the professionals are not always in appreciable number in

the legislature or often without political clout, influence or contact in government circles to influence their wish or demand. In the second republic in Nigeria (1979-1983), only one Pharmacist was in the senate, while the population of pharmacist in the third republic (1990-93) in the Federal Houses was not better. The lack of interest in elective political offices by Pharmacists gives rise to the need for professional lobbyists who are politicians in the corridors of power. In advanced democracy, lobby is a serious business and professional lobbyists abound in every sphere of government endeavours i.e. Environmental protection Lobbyists, Food and Drug Administration Lobbyists, Antinuclear Weapons Lobbyists, etc.

Lobby thrives on information. In advanced democracies, lobbyists control a lot of information on the appropriate legislators. Such information may range from their electoral records, constituency demands and information on private and public life of the legislators (3). Detailed information is also sought by the lobbyist from the pressure group so as to apply the appropriate influence at relevant quarters.

Method

A survey of 300 Nigerian Federal Legislators in the Senate and the House of Representatives in the Third Republic was conducted in Abuja, Nigeria's political capital city. The legislators were selected at random from the registers of the two legislatures. A 20-item questionnaire was administered to each of the selected legislators after a plenary session. The sample population has more legislators from the house of representatives because this house has a higher numerical strength than the senate (7).

The questionnaire itemised twelve lobbying tactics to which responses were requested. Also, the tactics were asked to be ranked in order of perceived effectiveness. Other qualitative questions (open-ended) were designed to collect information on the perception of legislators on the variables of interest. The legislators were asked to indicate on a scale, (-10 to +10) the lobbying tactics with the greatest impact on legislators actions. The scores were computed by adding the points attached to each tactic and the averages were calculated. The average scores for all the legislators in the two houses were then ranked in order of importance. Independent separate ranking of each lobbying tactic by each of the legislators of the two houses was also requested. This was to be ranked in descending order of perceived importance by the legislators.

Results

The respondents were made of 14.3% of Senators and 85.6% of honourable members of the House of Representatives. Most of the legislators favoured financial support as an effective lobbying tactic (Table 1).

Table 1

Lobbying Tactics	Average Score
Constituency Contact	+8.15
Expert Witness	+7.05
Financial Support	+6.45
Specific Argument/Position Paper	+5.26
Personal Visit	+4.13
Technical Reports	+3.18
Colleagues Contacts	+2.62
Third Party Influence	+2.12
Latter Campaign	+1.16
Media Campaign	+1.34
Publication of Voting Records	+0.09
Threat of Harm	-1.85

The average score of the twelve possible influencing tactics as viewed by all legislators based on adapted LIKERT Scale (5) (-10 to +10) showed that constituency contacts, expert witness, financial support ranked highest while media campaign, publication of voting records and threat of harm ranked the least.

The SPEARMAN rank correlation ($r/s=0.973$) (8) of the comparative rankings by the two houses showed that the Senators and the members of the house of Representatives agreed in their ranking of the lobbying tactics to be employed in the passage of favourable legislation on pharmaceutical matters. The ranking also showed that negative tactics of lobbying was not favoured by the legislators. The two houses also agreed that threat in any form, including the publication of previous voting records would not positively motivate them to pass a bill of any lobbyist.

Discussion

The results of the analysis of the responses of the Federal Legislators give an insight into the legislative environment. According to the result, the legislators agreed that financial support positively affect lobbying efforts. However, it is unclear from the study whether this is a self reporting bias. The study has shown the importance of each lobbying tactic and its effectiveness in elucidating positive legislation. It can also be assumed that an appropriate mix of lobbying tactics may achieve the desired positive or favourable legislation. It is then suggested that the lobbyists are not limited to one or alternative tactics, rather a mix of the positive tactics identified in this study may be employed.

The Spearman rank correlation ($r/s=0.973$) showed that there is a nearly perfect correlation between the perception of the lobbying tactics for favourable legislation by the Honourable members of the two Houses. Based on the detailed interview of the respondents, it was observed that they supported or favoured a combination of constituency contact ($x=8.5$), expert witness ($x=7.05$) and financial support ($x=6.42$). These combination or mix was adjudged by the respondents as the most appropriate mix for effecting

major pharmaceutical policy changes in favour of the professions. The result also showed that most legislators viewed pharmacy profession as a very affluent one, hence their solicitation for financial support albeit informally.

Conclusion

The dictum in management which says there is no 'one best way' of achieving a goal, arising from the contingency approach in management, applies adequately to the situation of finding the best or most appropriate lobbying tactics (9). There is probably no one sure lobbying tactic for all situations. Tactics change with changing situation and time. It is however, necessary to find an appropriate mix of tactics for a particular legislation by monitoring the information need or otherwise of the legislators on a continuous basis.

Direct involvement in politicking or political processes is an additional potent option. This will entail pharmacists contesting for elective offices at the appropriate levels of desired influence i.e., Local Government, State or Federal in either legislative or executive branch. It is noteworthy that the number of pharmacists in direct political action is on the increase (7).

From the results, it is evident that the ranking by both the Senate and the House of Representatives together or separately does not change their perception of tactics that are favourable for passage of desired legislation by the pharmacy lobbyists. Therefore a mix of the first six tactics (constituency contact, expert witness, financial support, specific argument/position paper, personal visits and technical reports) as ranked, is recommended for future lobbying offensive on legislators.

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