

A Study on Consumption of Medicine Without Medical Prescription

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Abstract:- Self-Medication in India has always been an issue and with the COVID-19 spread self-medication of antibiotics, immune boosters and vitamins among the laymen have also increased. This drastic increase has led to buying medications without a prescription (over the counter medication). Consumption of medication without a prescription leads to adverse consequences such as antimicrobial resistance. Economic conditions in India encourage the increase of inappropriate medicine consumption. The number of pharmacists prescribing medication to the patient like a doctor has increased as some of the patients do not have sufficient money to approach a doctor and have minimal money to buy their medication therefore this void act occurs. Neither a registered pharmacist nor an unregistered pharmacist can suggest medication to a patient under the Pharmacy Act, 1948. Convenient sampling method is used to collect the samples. 226 samples-sample size. Independent variables are age, gender, education, place of residence and marital status. It is found that there is an immediate need for amending the Pharmacy Act, 1948 as it does not prevent pharmacists from prescribing over the counter medications. Finally, this paper analyses, suggests and concludes that India can also consider establishing an act for protecting patients from pharmacists like Canada and Texas which have particular laws to protect its citizens from such mishaps and have proper methods to govern over the counter medicines.

Keywords:- India, Self-Medication, Misuse, Over the Counter Medication, Pharmaceutical.

I. INTRODUCTION

Medicines that are available without a prescription are known as over the counter (OTC) medicines/ drugs. These OTC medicines include antibiotics, tonics, iron tablets, vitamins, herbal medicines, laxatives etc. such medication allows people to self treat themselves for minor health issues as it reduces the cost of getting treated by a doctor. In India many rely on self medication or medication prescribed by friends or relatives or a pharmacist as the fee of a good physician is unaffordable and for some people their busy schedule makes it impossible to wait for a doctor's appointment. OTC medicines are not always harmful but in India there is a lack of proper definition for Over the Counter medicines nor is there a proper regulation for the same. The prescription medicines are under schedule H & X of Drug and Cosmetic Rules, 1945 and any medicine that is not mentioned in these schedules are considered Over the

counter medicine. Schedule G medicines come with a caution on it. This concerns a major misuse of such medication and its adverse effects as sedatives or laxatives etc. Might create a dependence and worse, it might cover a disease that is life threatening which can lead to delayed diagnosis therefore consumers must be protected from the pharmacist and there must be proper regulations to govern OTC medication. Considering COVID medication it was a regulated medication provided with the supervision of the government. Other OTC drugs must also be under one guideline therefore like Canada, India also requires a valid DIN (Drug Identification Number) and following that, the Non prescribed medicines must be sold. In New Zealand ibuprofen is sold as OTC medicine for 200 mg which cures headache and 400-800 mg of ibuprofen is sold as a prescription drug as it is prescribed for curing arthritis. Such a distinction must be provided as guidelines in India as the lack of the guidelines and regulations lead to mishaps. Japan, UK, Australia and USA have their own guidelines, classifications and regulations for OTC drugs. The World Health Organisation also states that it is necessary for a medicine to be on prescription for 5 years after which it should be an over the counter medication. As the majority of the population is into self medication or over the counter medication it is better to set a proper guideline to prevent mishaps. This study aims to identify methods to protect consumers from over the counter / self medication.

➤ Objectives:

- To identify if medical stores provide medication without a prescription.
- To identify if pharmacists have the authority to provide medication without a prescription.
- To identify if self medication is taken in order to avoid economic issues of the consumer.
- To identify whether the consumers take unprescribed medication assuming medication is not harmful.
- To identify adverse effects of unprescribed medication.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

(Mathew et al. 2022) define Self medication as use of medication by a consumer on their own or on the advice of a pharmacist or shop owner or any known persons such as family or friends instead of a medical practitioner. Self medication is a major problem in a developing country like India. (World Health Organization 2022) discourages the use of nimesulide and aspirin, as it causes severe damage to the liver, brain of children suffering from chicken pox and flu. Nimesulide is easily available all over India without a

prescription. (Kotwani et al. I2021) found that 20.3% of the respondents in their study reported to take antibiotics as long as they do not recover. Self medication of antibiotics is one of the main research reasons for antibiotic resistance in India. (Zawahir et al. 2021) from their study found that the main reason for self medication among 68% of the respondents was the common intention of not consulting the doctor for minor illness. Convenience of buying medicines over the counter from nearby medical stores was the second most common reason for self medication. ("Pharmacists Able to Dispense COVID-19 Treatments without a Prescription under Government Protocols 2020) states that a similar medication for COVID 19 was prescribed all over due to which the pharmacist provided consumers the medication without a prescription. (Fogel and 2019) found that the majority (77%) of the respondents sought advice from chemists or druggists to take medicines for minor issues. (Minr2019) found that minor reasons such as cough and cold are the major reasons why consumers approach the pharmacist without a prescription as the consumers feel they are minor reasons to go to a doctor and the unprescribed medication can be harmless. (Ashok et al 2018) aim to study, describe and evaluate the self medication practices, reason behind self medication, use of antibiotics without prescription and the economic compulsion of consumers to approach a pharmacist instead of a medical practitioner. (Flanigan 2017) aims to study the pattern and practices of self medication among pharmacists in India and how patients have a right to self medicate. (Ruiz 2016) has one important finding in this study, it was that 56.1% of the respondents used the medication without prescription and gave the same medication brought without prescription to their family members also for similar kind of ailments. This practice may lead to adverse drug reactions as doses prescribed in children and adults are always different. (T and Mahalakshmy 2014) found that only 12.3% of pharmacists or chemists ask for a doctor's prescription before selling the medicines, while 51% pharmacists never ask for a prescription. (Sharif and Sharif) (2013) found that most of the respondents (39.2%) received the knowledge about the medicines for self medication from their pharmacist or druggist. (Witry 2013) found that 24.7% of the respondents, used a medical practitioner's prescription for prior illness as a source of information for self medication for similar issues. (NFI: National Formulary of India 2011) found that Nimesulide tablets are banned in western countries and in India in children below 12 years due to its well known adverse effects and is still found to be used by 22.3% of the respondents from their study. (Ibrahim et al 2007) state that with the developing countries' weak laws the pharmacists are prescribing medication to the consumers and there are pharmacists who are not even registered properly. (Institute of Medicine et al.) (2007) states that in a developed country, the medicines which are available in a pharmacy are only when there is a prescription of a medical practitioner. In short, without a prescription the pharmacist does not provide medication to the consumer. (Mandell 2007) states that the serious issues concerned with self medication are wastage of resources, microbial resistance, adverse drug reactions and drug-drug interactions. (Saradamma et al. 2000) found that Crocin or

Dolo 650 was used by a maximum number (67%) of respondents for fever without a prescription. The use of Crocin by the maximum number of respondents was identified in this study. (Kamat and Nichte 1998) state that there have been many studies and surveys conducted on self medication among rural population, educated youth population etc. The attitude and practices regarding self medication among pharmacists in India is still unknown. To the best of their knowledge, there was no study conducted among pharmacists on self medication. (Greenhalgh 1987) concluded that pharmacists have sound knowledge about medicines but not in diagnosis of a disease. It is better to consult a medical practitioner for a better diagnosis.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study is based on empirical research. It consists of the scientific frame of research. It began with the finding of research problems based on the review of literature. The major contribution of the study is to collect the legal facts of a particular area and to test the hypothesis of a cause and effect relationship between variables. The research design is exploratory and experimental. It explored the problem tested with hypotheses and provided the solution from the analysis. Convenient sampling method is used (Non probability sampling). The sample size is 226. Data is collected through online sources. Questionnaire is used as the primary data collection and the articles, journals, reports, newsletters are considered as the secondary sources. The analysis is carried out for demographic statistics (Age, Gender, Educational Qualification, Place of Residence and Marital Status) and graphs are used.

❖ *Analysis:*

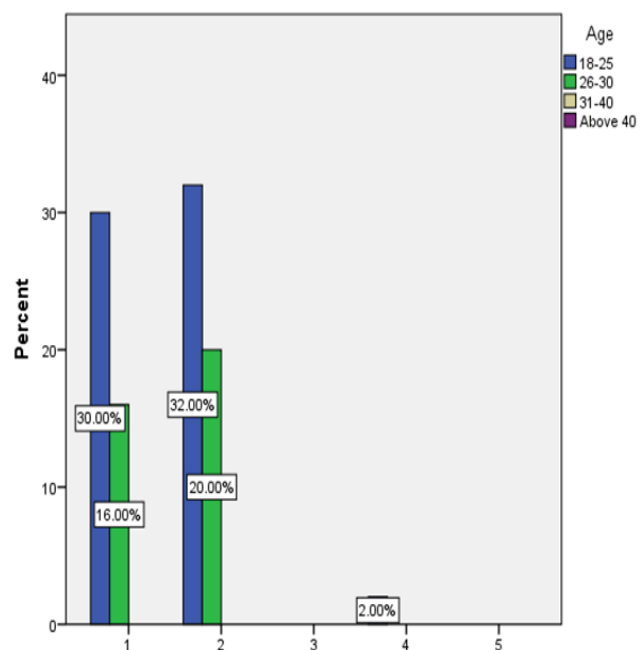


Fig 1 Pharmacist can prescribe medicine without a doctor's prescription

➤ *Legend:-* Figure 1 shows the majority percentage of the respondents rated to the question pharmacist can prescribe medicine without a doctor's prescription.

➤ **Result:-** The result of fig 1 proves that the pharmacist cannot prescribe medicine without a doctors prescription. Sometimes it may ends up in a any health issues. It is also considered as a dangerous because when the medicine is wrongly taken it affects the mental health.

➤ **Discussion:-** From the above result it's observed that respondents from the age group of 18-25 are 62% and age group of 26-30 are 38%. According to The Drug (contro) Act 1950, a person who is registered pharmacy council can prescribe medicine to the patient even without a doctor's prescription. If the person gives medicine without doctors prescription who is not registered under the pharmacy council is considered as a criminal offences.

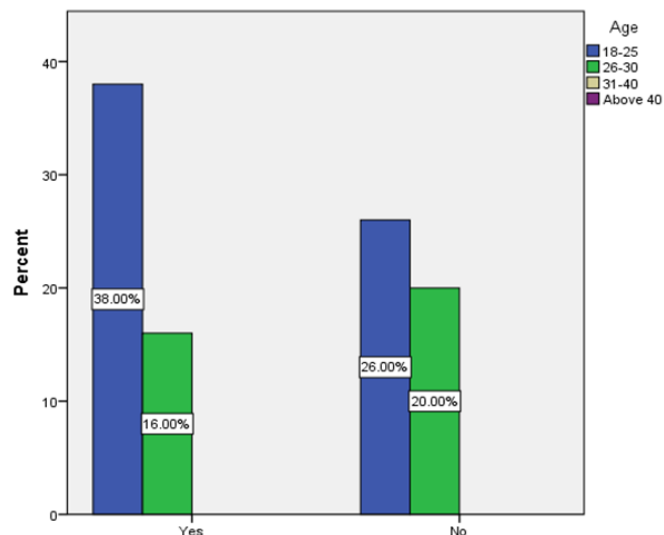


Fig 3 Do you think unprescribed medication will cause adverse effect on the person consuming it?

➤ **Legend:-** Figure 3 shows the majority percentage of the respondents on do you think unprescribed medication will cause adverse effects on the person consuming it.

➤ **Result:-** The result of fig 3 proves that 54% of the respondents say unprescribed medication will cause adverse effects on the person consuming it.

➤ **Discussion:-** from the above result it is observed that age group of 18-25 years are 38%. Age group of 26-30 years are 16%. It can cause serious adverse effects, leading to allergic reactions and interactions with other drugs. They may also produce physical and psychological dependence and have the potential to mask serious medical disorders that might require immediate attention. Any drug has the potential to cause an allergic reaction. Symptoms of adverse drug reactions include cough, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and headaches. Skin reactions are the most common form of allergic drug reaction.

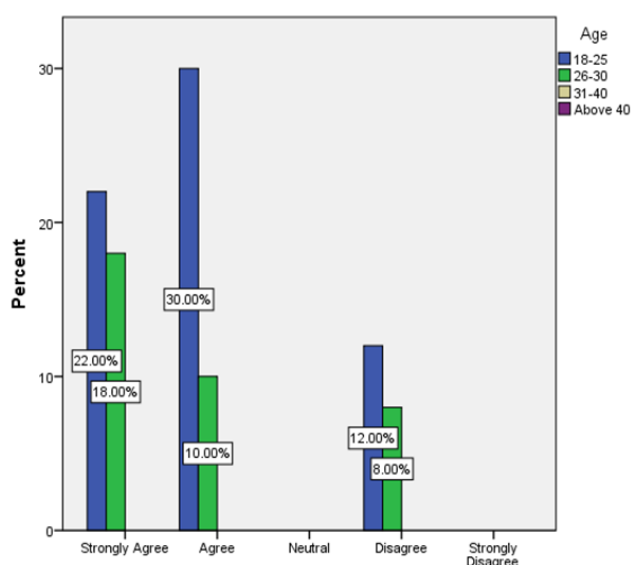


Fig 2 “Self medication is taken in order to avoid economics issues”

➤ **Legend:-** Figure 2 shows the majority percentage of the respondents rated to the question self medication is taken in order to avoid economic issues.

➤ **Result:-** The result of fig 2 proves that the majority of the respondents strongly agree that mostly people take self medication in order to avoid economic issues. The analysis indicates the most important effects of self-medication in relation to the health economy. These include cost reductions in the field of outpatient medical care and medicine costs.

➤ **Discussion:-** From the above result it is understood that age group of 18-25 years 22% strongly agreed. Age group of 26-30 years are 18% strongly agreed. Major problems related to self-medication are wastage of resources, increased resistance of pathogens and causes serious health hazards such as adverse reaction and prolonged suffering. They are understandably unwilling to submit to the inconvenience of visiting a doctor for what they rightly feel they can manage for themselves, given adequate information.

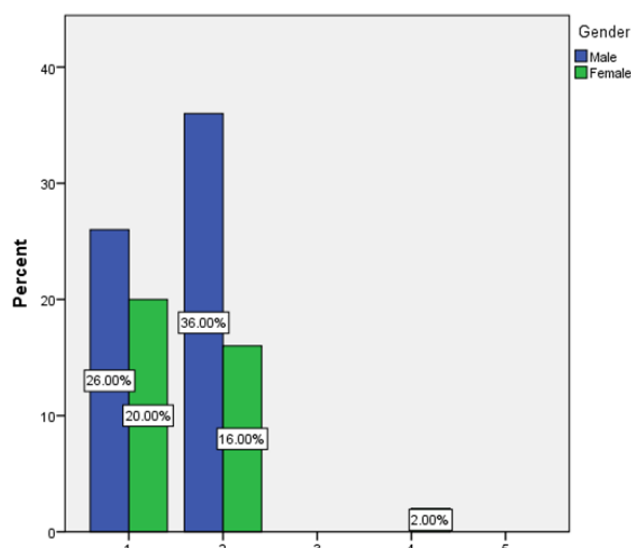


Fig 4 Pharmacist Can Prescribe Medicine Without a Doctor's Prescription

➤ *Legend:-* Figure 4 shows the majority percentage of the respondents rated to the question pharmacist can prescribe medicine without a doctor's prescription.

➤ *Result:-* The result of fig 4 proves that the pharmacist cannot prescribe medicine without a doctor's prescription. The respondents of both the gender rated 2 mostly and it is 52%.

➤ *Discussion:-* from the above result it is observed that the gender group of male are 36% and the gender group of females are 16%. Many pharmacy owners in rural areas also dispense medicines to patients without a doctor's prescription. Most of these drug stores are not managed by pharmacists, though it is mandated by law. A pharmacist should check that all the drugs prescribed by a physician are carrying a proprietary formula and clear name. If the person gives medicine without doctor's prescription who is not registered under the pharmacy council is considered as a criminal offences.

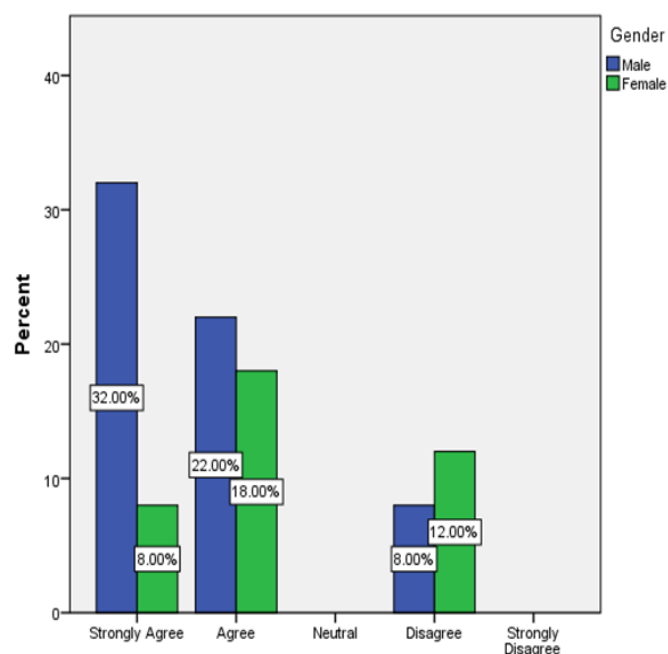


Fig 5 “Self medication is taken in order to avoid economic issues”

➤ *Legend:-* Figure 5 shows the majority percentage of the respondents rated to the question self medication is taken in order to avoid economic issues.

➤ *Result:-* The result of fig 2 proves that the majority of the respondents strongly agree that mostly people take self medication in order to avoid economic issues.

➤ *Discussion:-* from the above result it is clear that the gender group of male strongly agreed are 32% and gender group of female strongly agreed are 8%. The analysis indicates the most important effects of self-medication in relation to the health economy. These include cost reductions in the field of outpatient medical care and medicine costs. Major problems related to self-medication are wastage of resources, increased

resistance of pathogens and causes serious health hazards such as adverse reaction and prolonged suffering. They are understandably unwilling to submit to the inconvenience of visiting a doctor for what they rightly feel they can manage for themselves, given adequate information.

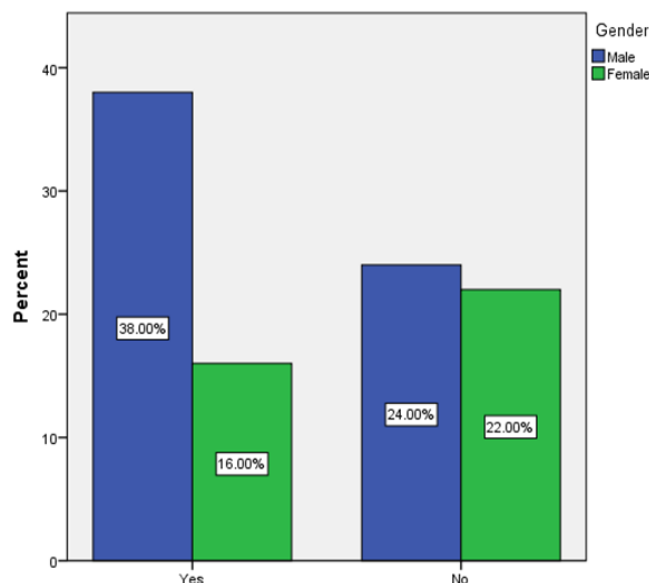


Fig 6 Do You Think Unprescribed Medication Will Cause Adverse Effect On The Person Consuming It?

➤ *Legend:-* Figure 6 shows the majority percentage of the respondents on do you think unprescribed medication will cause adverse effects on the person consuming it.

➤ *Result:-* The result of fig 6 proves that 54% of the respondents say unprescribed medication will cause adverse effects on the person consuming it.

➤ *Discussion:-* from the above result it is clear that gender group of male responded yes are 38% and gender group of female responded yes are 16%. Some medications can cause confusion, low blood pressure, and falls in older adults. Others can cause constipation, dry mouth, and blurry vision. It can cause serious adverse effects, leading to allergic reactions and interactions with other drugs. They may also produce physical and psychological dependence and have the potential to mask serious medical disorders that might require immediate attention. Any drug has the potential to cause an allergic reaction. Symptoms of adverse drug reactions include cough, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and headaches. Skin reactions are the most common form of allergic drug reaction.

❖ *Limitations*

This study has a small sample size that does not represent the whole population.

IV. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

From the findings of this paper it can be suggested that India can also consider establishing an act for protecting patients from pharmacists or provide regulations on Over the Counter Medication like Canada which has particular regulations to protect its citizens from any mishaps. Self-medication is prevalent among pharmacy graduates prescribing at least an antipyretic. Crocin and other such antibiotics were the medication most commonly prescribed for self medication. The common sources of information about medicine for minor ailments were the pharmacist or store owner, sedatives are also taken without consulting a doctor. It is the moral duty of all pharmacists to avoid self medication. Pharmacy graduates have sound knowledge about medicines but do not know how to diagnose a disease. It is also suggested that the Government should insist and ensure that drugs being supplied by the pharmacist are only provided with a valid prescription and to frame regulations for over the counter medication. These measures will help to achieve a goal where a patient is safe with a prescribed medication or is safely handling over the counter medicines.

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