

Knowledge, Attitude and Perception of the General Public About Generic Medicines: A Study with Special Reference to Mangaluru City

Harsharani, Sindhu Rao

Department of Post-Graduate Studies in Commerce, Govinda Dasa College, Surathkal, Mangaluru.

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Abstract: Generic medicines are affordable alternatives to branded medicines, as they offer the same quality and effectiveness. They play a vital role in making healthcare accessible to all, especially for economically disadvantaged communities. By reducing treatment costs without compromising therapeutic value, generic medicines contribute significantly to public health sustainability. This study aims to assess the knowledge, attitude, and perception of the general public regarding generic medicines in Mangaluru city. The study was conducted on 100 individuals from urban and semi-urban regions of Mangaluru city. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire. The study revealed that public awareness of generic medicines is relatively low, primarily due to uncertainty regarding their quality and safety. The findings of the study highlight the need to raise awareness in rural areas to promote greater acceptance and use of generic medicines. Participants felt that guidance from healthcare professionals and government-led awareness campaigns could play a crucial role in building trust in generic medicines. The study recommends strengthening health campaigns and encouraging healthcare professionals to prescribe generic medicines to improve their availability and acceptance. The study emphasises the importance of enhancing public perception and knowledge of generic medicines to achieve better health outcomes and reduce healthcare costs in Mangaluru.

Key words: Generic medicines, branded medicines, public awareness, knowledge, attitude, perception, drug affordability, drug quality, prescription behaviour, patient trust

I. Introduction

Medicines play a crucial role in preserving health, treating illnesses, and enhancing the quality of life. In India, a large portion of the population faces financial constraints, which often prevent them from accessing the necessary medical treatment. Generic medicines offer a practical solution to this issue, as they contain the same active ingredients, dosage, and effectiveness as branded drugs, but at a significantly lower cost.

Despite approval from health authorities, many people remain hesitant to use generic medicines. This hesitation stems from the common misconception that lower cost implies lower quality, even though generic medicines meet the same standards of safety, efficacy, and quality as their branded counterparts. The primary reason behind this reluctance is a lack of awareness and understanding. Many individuals are unaware of the availability and benefits of generic medicines. Furthermore, factors such as brand loyalty, aggressive marketing of branded drugs, and the influence of healthcare professionals often lead people to choose branded medicines over generics.

In regions like Mangaluru city, which include both urban and semi-urban areas, healthcare choices are influenced by factors such as educational level, income and past experience with medicines. If healthcare professionals do not educate patients about generics, the public will continue using expensive branded drugs. Even past negative experiences and a lack of information can shape people's perception and discourage the use of generics.

The study evaluates knowledge, attitude and perception of the general public regarding generic medicines. By recognising areas with low awareness, the findings can help guide strategies to enhance public understanding. Promoting generic medicine usage can improve healthcare affordability and reduce the financial burden on people. Developing public trust and confidence in generic medicines is necessary to achieve their widespread acceptance.

Objectives of The Study

- ❖ To assess public awareness of generic medicines.
- ❖ To examine perceptions of quality, safety and efficacy of generic medicines.
- ❖ To evaluate the role of healthcare professionals in promoting generic medicines.
- ❖ To analyse consumer purchasing behaviour.
- ❖ To recommend strategies for improving public trust in generic medicines.

Statement of The Problem

Although generic medicines are promoted as affordable and equally effective as branded medicines, many people continue to have doubts about their safety, quality, and efficacy. These concerns often affect their willingness to purchase generic medicines, even

when recommended by healthcare professionals. This study aims to explore the knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of people regarding generic medicines and to identify the reasons behind their hesitation to use them.

By gathering insights into public opinions and concerns, the study highlights gaps in current awareness programs and offers recommendations to build greater trust, enabling people to confidently choose medicines that are both affordable and reliable.

II. Research Methodology

To evaluate people's knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions about generic medicines, the study employed a primary data collection approach. The objective was to gather first-hand information regarding public views on the quality, safety, and effectiveness of generic medicines. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire comprising both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was carefully designed using simple and clear language, covering topics such as awareness, trust in generic medicines, and factors influencing purchasing decisions.

Data was gathered from participants representing diverse age groups, educational backgrounds, and income levels to ensure a broad perspective. The study employed a convenience sampling method, collecting responses based on the availability and willingness of participants to take part in the survey. Statistical techniques, including percentage analysis and simple random sampling, were applied to analyse both quantitative and qualitative data.

Additionally, secondary data was sourced from research journals, government reports, and articles. These resources enabled the comparison of public opinions with existing literature. This combined methodology provided valuable insights into people's attitudes and helped identify key gaps that must be addressed to foster wider acceptance of generic medicines.

Scope of The Study

The study aims to evaluate people's knowledge and attitudes regarding the use of generic medicines. It was conducted based on responses collected from 100 randomly selected individuals residing in urban and semi-urban areas of Mangalore. The findings are intended to assist healthcare professionals, government agencies, and non-governmental organisations in designing effective educational campaigns about generic medicines. Additionally, this study serves as a preliminary foundation for more comprehensive research on the topic.

Limitations of The Study

- ❖ The sample size is small (100 respondents), so the results may not reflect the opinions of the entire Mangaluru population.
- ❖ Responses are based on personal opinions, which may be influenced by limited knowledge or personal experience.
- ❖ The study is limited to Mangaluru city and may not apply to people in other cities or regions.

III. Literature Review

Vinay Kumar Gupta (2022), in their thesis "A Study on knowledge practice and experience on use of generic medicines among patients' healthcare professionals and common people", aimed to evaluate the awareness, attitudes and experiences related to generic medicines among patients, healthcare professionals and the general public. The study was conducted among 605 respondents using a structured questionnaire and statistical tools like descriptive analysis, chi-square tests to assess the knowledge, practice and experience regarding the use of generic medicines. The study highlights important gaps in awareness and acceptance of generic medicines, showing the need for better education, promotion, and policy improvements.

Sneha Panigrahy and Sunetra Chaudhari (2022), in their study "knowledge and perceptions of generic drugs: a cross sectional study", examined awareness of generic drug among various age demographics and location factors. The objective of this study is to identify consumers in terms of their perceptions towards branded and generic medicines in the country. The survey confirmed that generic drug awareness was considerably high among younger age groups than older respondents. The study primarily used qualitative assessments, lacking detailed statistical analyses, which limits the depth of its conclusion.

Tapan Kumar Mahato and Durgeshwari Raulji (2021), in their work "present scenario of generic medicines in India: a comparative study", the authors conducted comparative analysis of prices of generic medicines and branded medicines. The study aimed to identify availability of generic medicines through Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendra (PMBJK) and private entities like DevaIndia and e-pharmacies which also contribute to the distribution of generic medicines. The findings highlight that generic medicines are cheaper than branded medicines while maintaining similar quality and efficacy.

S C Basak and D Sathyanarayana (2012), in their article "exploring knowledge and perceptions of generic medicines among drug retailers and community pharmacists", evaluated community pharmacists' and drug retailers' knowledge and perceptions about generic medicines. The study, based on responses from pharmacists and drug retailers in a few towns of Tamil Nadu, found that many holds negative views about generic medicines, and while the results cannot represent the whole state, they still point to the need for better education and supportive policies to encourage their use.

Nabanita Mondal et al., (2024), in their work "a study to assess the knowledge and practice of healthcare workers and the general public about generic and branded medicine in Bengaluru" aimed to assess the knowledge and practice of healthcare workers and

the general public about general and branded drugs. By using convenience sampling method, 150 members of the general public and healthcare professionals each responded to the questionnaire-based cross-sectional survey. The study revealed that healthcare workers had more knowledge about generic medicine than the general public, and the general public had better practice of generic medicine than healthcare workers.

IV. Findings of The Study

- ❖ A majority of respondents were young, female, well-educated, and from lower- to middle-income groups—with 70% aged 21–30, 77% female, 90% holding graduate or postgraduate degrees, and 69% earning below ₹40,000—indicating that awareness and interest in generic medicines are higher among educated young adults and women in need of affordable healthcare.
- ❖ A majority of respondents (66%) reported a moderate level of awareness about generic medicines, showing that while awareness exists, there is still room for improvement.
- ❖ A majority of respondents (78%) received information from healthcare professionals, confirming their trusted role in educating the public.
- ❖ A majority of respondents (71%) became aware through government campaigns, indicating the effectiveness of initiatives like the Jan Aushadhi Scheme.
- ❖ A majority of respondents (69%) considered pharmacists a key information source, though there is inconsistency in how often they recommend generics.
- ❖ A majority of respondents (89%) believed generic medicines are more affordable than branded ones, underscoring their value to cost-conscious consumers.
- ❖ A majority of respondents (83%) agreed that generic medicines are effective, showing confidence in their therapeutic value.
- ❖ A majority of respondents (65%) expressed moderate confidence in their safety, while none reported a lack of confidence, showing strong trust overall.
- ❖ A majority of respondents (64%) did not experience side effects from using generic medicines, supporting their safety and tolerability.

Suggestions

The government should implement simple and clear awareness campaigns to educate people that generic medicines are safe, effective, and affordable. Healthcare professionals, including doctors and pharmacists, need to actively discuss generic options with patients and recommend them whenever appropriate. To improve accessibility, especially in rural and remote areas, more generic medicine centers should be established. Additionally, authorities should provide easy-to-understand information about the manufacturing and testing processes of generic medicines to foster public trust. Organizing educational programs and short training sessions for both the general public and healthcare workers can further enhance understanding of the benefits and value of generic medicines.

V. Conclusion

In a country like India where many people belong to middle income groups and are not able to afford branded drugs for them generic medicines increase healthcare access. As compared to branded medicines generics are equally safe and effective but there is a mindset that lower price means lower quality because this people still hesitate to purchase generic medicines. There is a need for spreading awareness among people about generic medicines. It is possible when healthcare professionals recommend generic medicines and guarantees of their efficiency which can boost trust in the minds of people as they believe in doctor's suggestions. It is necessary to improve the availability of generic medicines especially in rural and underserved areas. To overcome the myths surrounding generic medicines it is possible only when government, healthcare professionals and community work together in spreading awareness about generic medicines.

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