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Review Article

KAP Study on OTC Drugs and Drugs Abuse Among Community

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ABSTRACT

This study, titled "KAP Study on OTC Drugs and OTC Drug Abuse Among Community," aimed to assess the knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding the use and misuse of over-the-counter (OTC) drugs among 200 community participants using a structured questionnaire. The findings showed that although many participants understood that OTC drugs can be purchased without a prescription, awareness about their risks and adverse effects was limited. Unsafe practices such as self-medication and improper use were observed, with easy availability and lack of awareness contributing to misuse. The study emphasizes the need for public awareness, stronger regulations, and greater involvement of healthcare professionals to promote safe and rational use of OTC medications.

Keywords: Over-the-Counter (OTC) Drugs, Self-medication, Drug Misuse, Drug Abuse, Knowledge Attitude Practice (KAP), Community Health, Public Health Awareness, Medication Safety, Pharmacists, Healthcare Education, Risk Awareness, Drug Utilization.

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INTRODUCTION

In modern healthcare, Over-the-Counter (OTC) medicines play an important role by allowing people to treat common health problems without a prescription. Their easy availability makes them convenient and widely used. However, this accessibility also increases the risk of misuse and abuse, which can create serious public health concerns.

This research project, titled "KAP Study on OTC Drugs and OTC Drug Abuse Among Community," focuses on assessing the community's knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to OTC drug use. It aims to understand how well people know about OTC medicines, their correct usage, dosage, side effects, and possible drug interactions. Lack of awareness can lead to overuse, harmful reactions, and delayed medical treatment.

The study also explores people's attitudes, as many assume OTC drugs are completely safe because they are available without prescription. Such beliefs may encourage unsafe practices like taking higher doses, using medicines for long periods, or avoiding professional consultation. In addition,

factors like advertising and weak regulations may further influence misuse.

Overall, this study aims to identify gaps in awareness and behaviour, highlight the role of pharmacists and healthcare providers, and support the development of strategies to promote safe and responsible use of OTC medicines in the community.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

• Study Setting

The study was conducted in a community setting.

• Study Participants

Participants were community members with experience in using OTC drugs. A diverse group was included to represent different demographic categories within the community.

• Study Design: Cross-sectional Study

• A cross-sectional design was used to assess the prevalence of outcomes and identify associations between

variables at a single point in time. This design helped evaluate knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to OTC drug use within the community.

Data Collection Tool

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to participants. To ensure reliability and authenticity, confidentiality and privacy were maintained during data collection.

Plan for Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out using MS Excel, mainly through descriptive statistics to summarize demographic details and key variables related to knowledge, attitudes, and practices.

Sampling Technique

Random sampling was used to select participants, ensuring the sample was representative of the community.

Sample Size

The sample size was 200 participants.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly followed, including informed consent, non-maleficence, confidentiality, and the use of data only for research purposes.

RESULT

The study aimed to assess the community's knowledge, attitudes, and practices concerning Over-the-Counter (OTC) drugs, with a particular focus on their misuse and abuse. A survey was conducted with 200 participants, and the findings reveal key insights into how the community interacts with OTC drugs, the level of awareness regarding their risks, and the factors influencing misuse.

Demographic

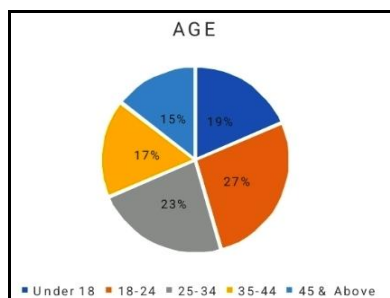


Figure 1: Age

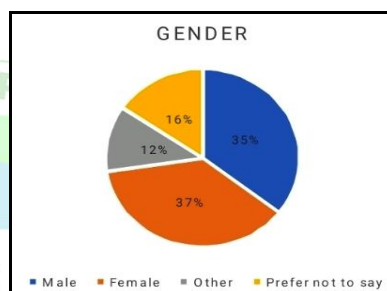


Figure 2: Gender

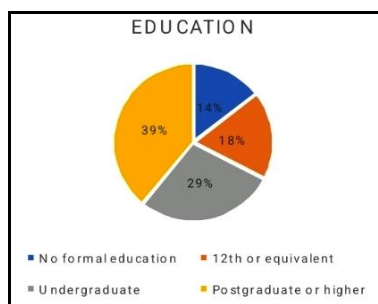


Figure 3: Education

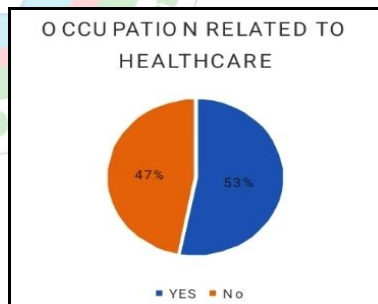


Figure 4: Occupation Related to

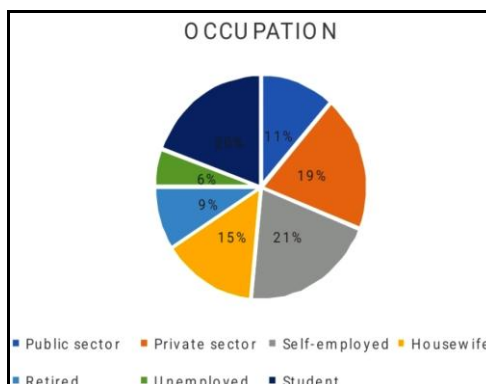


Figure 5: Occupation Related of Healthcare

Interpretation:

- **Age:** The largest proportion of respondents were aged 18-24 (27%) and 25-34 (23%), suggesting that young adults are more likely to engage with OTC medications.
- **Gender:** The gender distribution was fairly balanced, with 37% identifying as female and 35.5% as male, while 12% and 15.5% identified as "Other" and "Prefer not to say" respectively.

- **Education:** A significant portion of participants had postgraduate (39%) or undergraduate (28.5%) education, indicating that the sample generally had a high level of educational attainment.

Occupation: The most common occupational categories were self-employed (20.5%) and students (19.5%), indicating diverse employment statuses among the respondents. Notably, 53% of participants or their families were employed in healthcare-related professions.

Knowledge of OTC Drugs and Their Abuse:

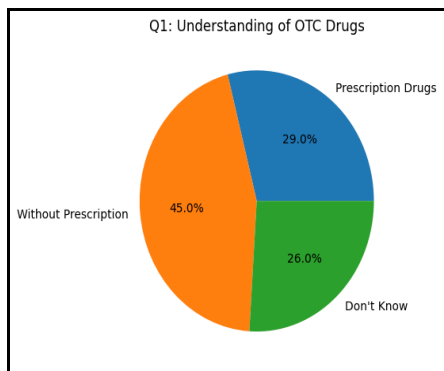


Figure 1: Understanding of OTC Drugs

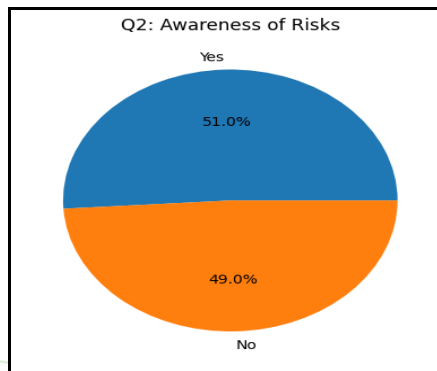


Figure 2: Awareness of Risks

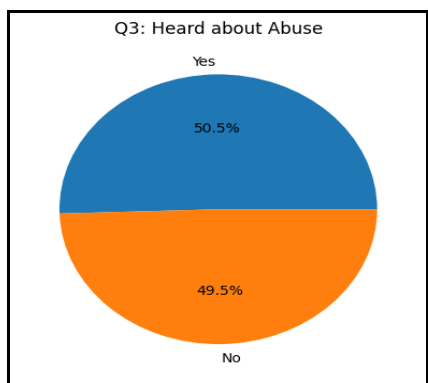


Figure 3: Heard about Abuse

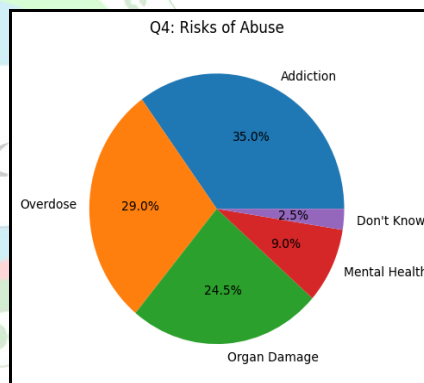
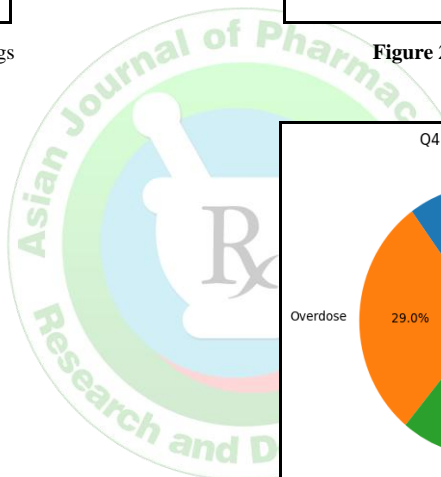


Figure 4: Risks of Abuse

Q5: Source of Knowledge

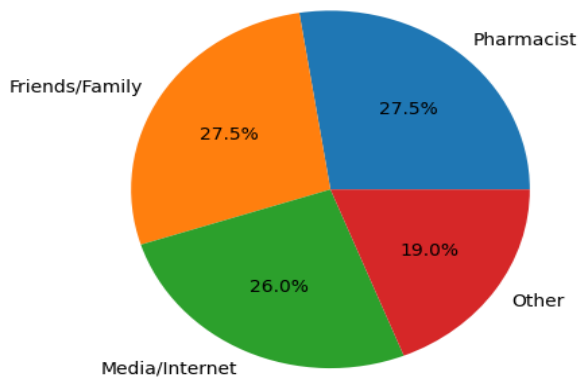


Figure 5: Source of Knowledge

Interpretation:

- Definition of OTC Drugs: Most participants (45%) correctly identified OTC drugs as those that can be purchased without a prescription, though 26% were unsure about this definition.
- Awareness of Risks: Over half of the respondents (51%) were aware of the potential health risks of OTC drug misuse, while 49% were not, pointing to a significant knowledge gap.

- Risk Perceptions: 35% of participants recognized addiction as a risk of misuse, while 29% identified overdose and 24.5% pointed to organ damage (e.g., liver, kidney). Surprisingly, only 9% recognized mental health issues like anxiety or depression as potential risks.
- Sources of Knowledge: The primary sources of information on OTC drugs and their risks were pharmacists and friends/family (both 27.5%), followed by the media/internet (26%).

Attitudes Toward OTC Drugs and Self-Medication:

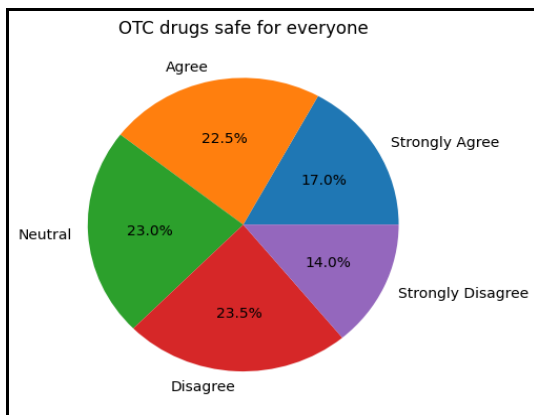


Figure 1: OTC drugs safe for everyone

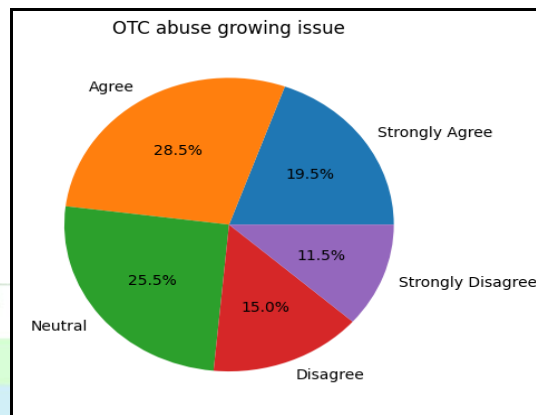


Figure 2: OTC abuse growing issue

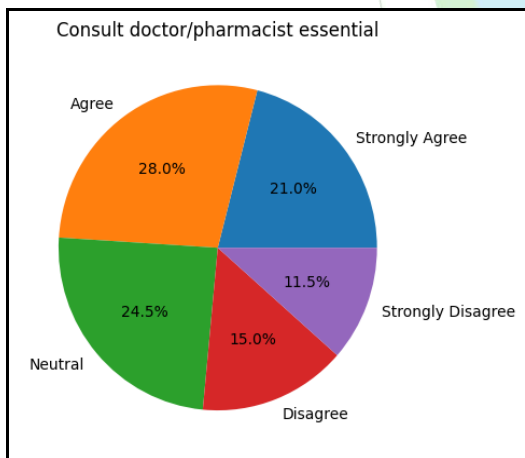


Figure 3: Consult doctor /pharmacist essential

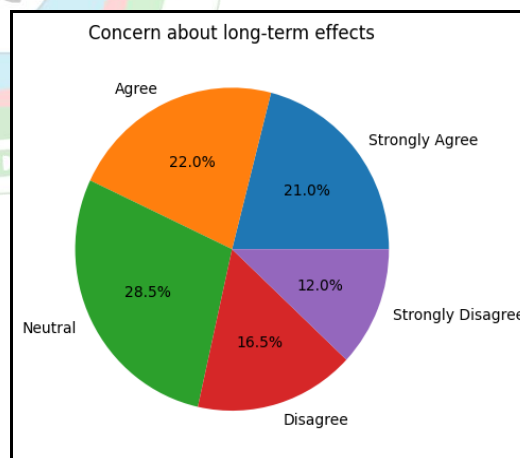


Figure 4: Concern about long-term effects

Interpretation:

- Safety of OTC Drugs: Only 17% strongly agreed that OTC drugs are universally safe for everyone to use, while 23.5% disagreed, highlighting concerns about the safety of OTC drugs.
- Concern About OTC Drug Abuse: Nearly half of the respondents (48%) believed that OTC drug abuse is a growing issue in their community, reflecting heightened concern about the increasing misuse of these drugs.

- Consultation with Healthcare Professionals: A majority (49%) agreed or strongly agreed that consulting a healthcare professional before using OTC drugs is essential, which indicates an understanding of the importance of expert guidance.
- Long-term Effects of Self-Medication: 43% of participants expressed concern about the long-term effects of self-medication with OTC drugs, suggesting that many recognize the potential risks associated with prolonged use.

Practices Related to OTC Drugs and Abuse:

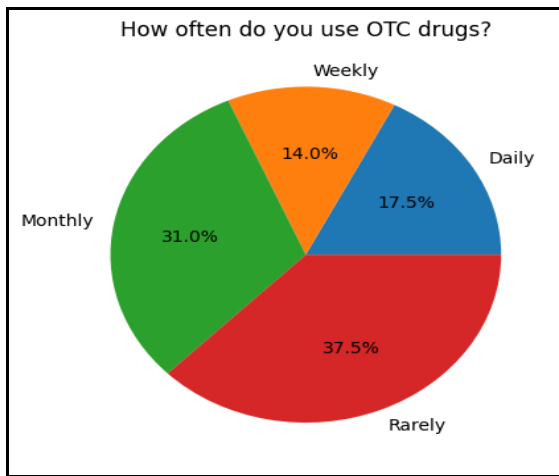


Figure 1: How often do you use OTC Drugs?

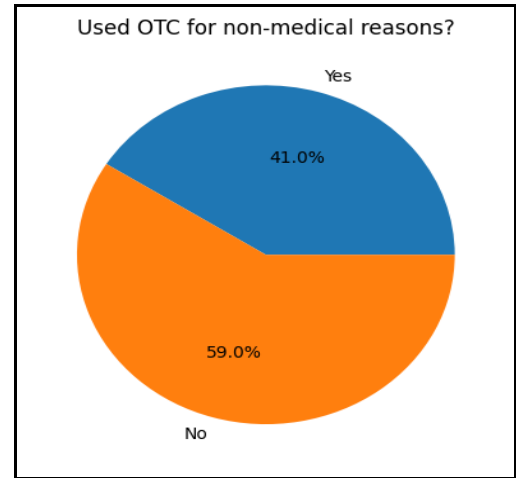


Figure 2: Used OTC for non-medical reason

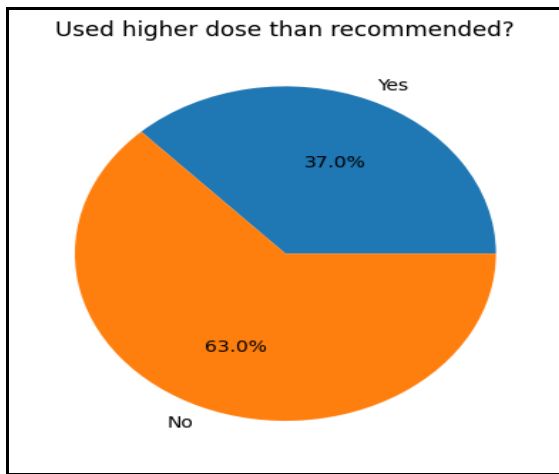


Figure 3: Used higher dose than recommended?

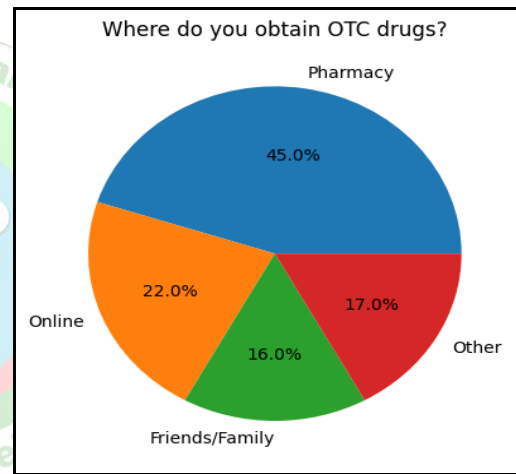


Figure 4: Where do you obtain OTC drugs

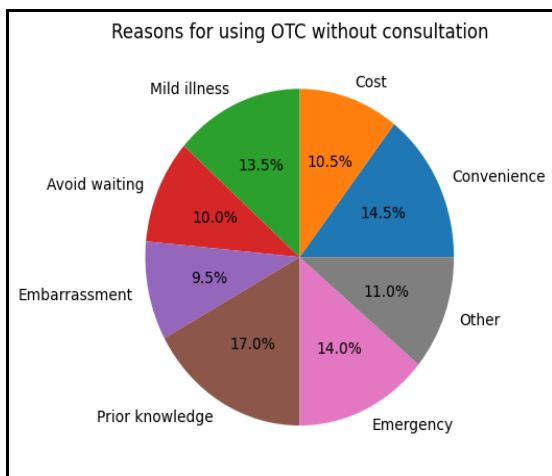


Figure 5: Reasons for using OTC without consultation

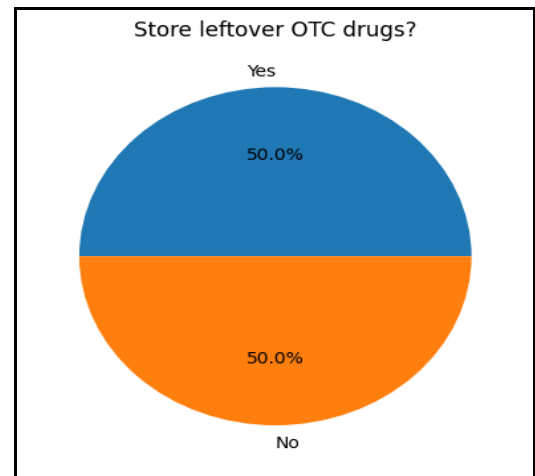


Figure 6: Store leftover OTC drugs

Interpretation:

- Usage Frequency: A significant number of participants reported using OTC drugs either rarely (37.5%) or monthly (31%). A smaller proportion used them daily (17.5%), while 14% used them weekly.
- Excessive Dosage and Non-medical Use: 37% of participants admitted to using OTC drugs in higher doses than recommended, and 41% reported using OTC drugs for purposes other than treating illness, such as staying awake or recreational use.
- Sources of OTC Drugs: OTC drugs were most commonly

obtained from pharmacies (45%), followed by online platforms (22%) and friends/family (16%).

- Self-medication Reasons: The primary reasons for using OTC drugs without consulting a healthcare professional were convenience (14.5%), prior experience (17%), and mild illness (13.5%).
- Storage of Leftover Drugs: Half of the respondents (50%) reported storing leftover OTC drugs for future use, which poses a potential risk for misuse or abuse.

Misuse and Abuse of OTC Drugs:

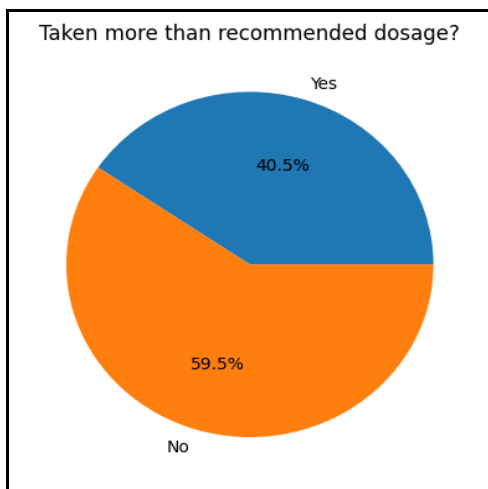


Figure 1: Taken more than recommended dosage

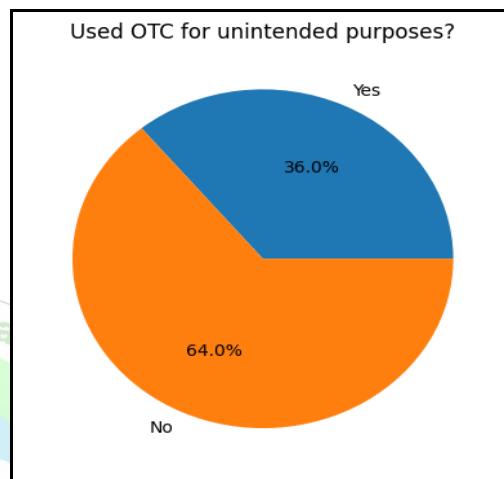


Figure 2: Used OTC for unintended purposes

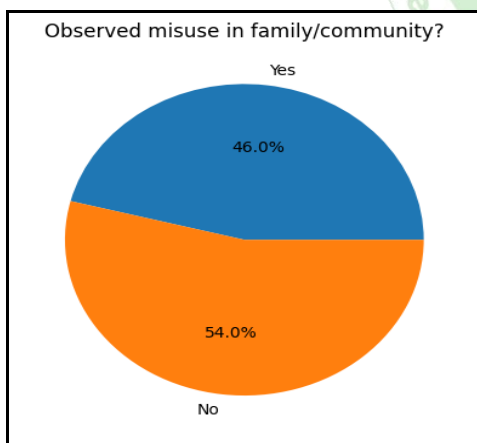


Figure 3: Observed misuse in family/community

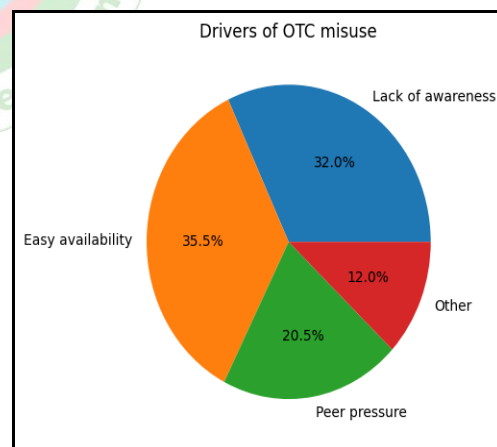


Figure 4: Drivers of OTC misuse

Interpretation:

- Fig 1 & 2: Overdose and Non-intended Use: 59.5% of participants admitted to taking more than the recommended dosage of an OTC drug, and 36% reported using OTC drugs for non-medical purposes, such as recreation.
- Fig 3: Observation of Misuse: 46% of respondents had observed someone in their family or community

misusing OTC drugs, highlighting that this issue extends beyond individual behaviours.

- Fig 4: Factors Driving Misuse: The main factors driving OTC drug misuse in the community were easy availability (35.5%) and lack of awareness (32%), with peer pressure (20.5%) also contributing to misuse.

DISCUSSION

This study assessed the community's knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding Over-the-Counter (OTC) drugs, with emphasis on misuse and abuse. Data from 200 participants revealed several concerning patterns related to awareness, behaviour, and contributing factors.

- **Knowledge and Awareness of OTC Drugs**

Although many participants understood the basic meaning of OTC drugs, major gaps were found in awareness of associated risks. While 51% recognized health risks of misuse, 49% were unaware. Awareness of mental health risks was extremely low, with only 9% identifying issues such as anxiety or depression. Pharmacists and friends/family were the most common sources of information, while media and the internet also played an important role.

- **Attitudes Toward OTC Drugs and Safety**

Participants showed mixed attitudes regarding OTC drug safety. While some believed OTC drugs were safe for everyone, 23.5% disagreed, indicating safety concerns. Nearly half (48%) felt that OTC drug abuse is increasing in the community. Many respondents acknowledged unsafe behaviour, as 59.5% reported taking higher doses than recommended. In addition, 49% agreed that consulting healthcare professionals before using OTC drugs is essential, and 43% expressed concern about long-term effects of self-medication.

- **Practices Related to OTC Drug Use**

OTC drug use was reported as rare (37.5%) or monthly (31%) by many participants. However, misuse was common: 37% admitted taking higher doses than recommended and 41% reported using OTC drugs for non-medical purposes. Key reasons for using OTC drugs without professional consultation included prior experience (17%), convenience (14.5%), and treatment of mild illness (13.5%). Additionally, 50% reported storing leftover OTC drugs, which increases the risk of future misuse.

- **Misuse and Abuse of OTC Drugs**

Misuse and abuse were widespread in the community. A large proportion (59.5%) reported exceeding recommended dosages, and 36% used OTC drugs for non-medical reasons such as recreation. Nearly half (46%) had observed OTC drug misuse among family or community members. The main contributing factors were easy availability (35.5%), lack of awareness (32%), and peer pressure (20.5%).

- **Implications for Public Health**

The findings indicate a strong need for public education on OTC drug misuse, especially regarding lesser-known outcomes such as mental health effects. Regulation and monitoring of OTC drug availability are also necessary, as easy access was a major driver of misuse. Promoting consultation with healthcare

professionals before OTC use is important. Finally, since many participants store leftover drugs, awareness on safe storage and disposal programs could help reduce future misuse.

CONCLUSION

This study on the Use of Over-the-Counter (OTC) Drugs Among the Community has shed light on some important issues related to how people use OTC medications, particularly their potential for misuse and abuse. OTC drugs, while providing easy access for managing everyday health issues, come with significant risks. Many participants in the study showed gaps in their understanding of these risks, especially when it comes to less obvious dangers like mental health problems, addiction, and overdose. These findings make it clear that more education is needed to inform the public about the full range of risks associated with OTC drugs.

The study also revealed that while some people believe OTC drugs are safe for everyone to use, there is a growing concern in the community about their misuse. Many respondents admitted to taking OTC drugs in ways they weren't intended for, like using them in higher doses or for recreational purposes. This highlights the need for stronger regulations around OTC drug sales and more guidance on safe usage. Healthcare professionals, especially pharmacists, have an important role to play in educating the public, and they should be better equipped with the knowledge and resources to help people make safe choices when using these drugs.

Overall, the study shows that OTC drug misuse is a broader issue, influenced by things like easy access, lack of awareness, and peer pressure. To address this, it's important to focus on raising awareness, encouraging people to consult healthcare providers, and regulating OTC drug sales. It's also vital to promote better disposal practices and healthier ways to manage pain or stress to reduce the temptation to self-medicate. By working together, healthcare providers, policymakers, and communities can help ensure that OTC drugs are used responsibly and safely, benefiting everyone without putting their health at risk.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

The author declares no conflict of interest

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