



RESEARCH ARTICLE

PEER INFLUENCE AND SELF ESTEEM AS PREDICTORS OF SELF-MEDICATION AMONG THE YOUTH IN THE MIDDLE BELT REGION OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

Over the years, individuals have been visiting the drug stores intending to treat their respective illnesses without expert consultation. Self-medication has been defined as self-prescription and self-administration of drugs by an individual without consulting a medical expert. It is a public health concern. Research has established several predictor variables in self-medication. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the predictive role of peer influence and self-esteem on self-medication practice among the youth in the middle-belt region of Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey was adopted. Two hundred and sixteen youth pooled from four large public health institutions in Kogi and Benue State participated in the study. The participant completed a self-report measure, and a multiple regression model was used to test the hypothesis. The result showed that peer influence statistically significantly predicted self-medication practice, while self-esteem did not. The study recommends a robust anti-self-medication campaign.

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Introduction: -

Over the years, people have been visiting the drug stores intending to treat their respective illnesses without expert consultation. Self-medication is a global phenomenon (Araia et al., 2019; Bennadi, 2014; Gogazeh, 2020; Marwa et al., 2018; Mathias et al., 2020) and severe public health concern (Azami-Aghdash et al., 2015; de Sanctis et al., 2020; Karimy et al., 2019; Lam & Fresco, 2015; Scuri et al., 2019). Self-medication has been defined as self-prescription and self-administration of drugs by an individual without consulting a medical expert (Alshogran et al., 2018; Gogazeh, 2020; Ha et al., 2019; Paudel & Aryal, 2020). Self-medication is a form of self-care that encourages individuals to take care of specific minor health issues. It entails the use of non-prescription medicines with the primary purpose of curtailing perceived health challenges. However, consuming drugs without expert supervision and involvement in relation to dosage, duration, indications, and storage could lead to serious health problems (Behzadifar et al., 2020; Ebrahimi et al., 2017; Khatony et al., 2020; Shaghaghi et al., 2014). However, responsible self-medication has played an essential role in health care, such as saving cost and time (James et al., 2006; Khadka & Kafle, 2020; Onchonga et al., 2020). Conversely, inappropriate use of self-medication has been implicated in several health conditions (Akanbi et al., 2005; al Essa et al., 2019; Babatunde et al., 2016; Fekadu et al., 2020; Jember et al., 2019; Kassie et al., 2018; Mudenda et al., 2020; Tobón Marulanda et al., 2018; Torres et al., 2019). The most commonly self-prescribed drugs are antibiotics (Aslam et al., 2020; Donkor et al., 2012; Elden et al., 2020; Jamhour et al., 2017; Tuyishimire et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2016), and several over the counter drugs (Kanwal et al., 2018; Moreira de Barros et al., 2019; Ocan et al., 2014). Furthermore, many factors have been found to predict self-medication practice (Ayalew, 2017). For example, previous self-medication experience (Sisay et al., 2018),

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severe pains (Mehuys et al., 2019), income (Babatunde et al., 2016), emergency illness (Kajeguka & Moses, 2017), educational level (Hamdy Alfalogy, 2017), distance to health care provider (Elmahi et al., 2020), presence of drugs at home (Karimy et al., 2019). More so, (Mensah et al., 2019) and (Ibrahim et al., 2014) reported friends' influence on self-medication practices.

In Nigeria, individuals have taken to the responsibility of self-medication for various reasons to alleviate symptoms or control illness that is perceived as non-serious. The trend is pervasive across gender, age, education level, ethnicity, location, and socioeconomic status. Perhaps, prevalence, pattern, and consequences of self-medication have been widely discussed in the Nigerian context (Afolabi, 2008; Ajibola et al., 2018; Ayanwale et al., 2017; Ayodele, 2020; Esan et al., 2018; Fadare & Tamuno, 2011; Khalid et al., 2019; Okunola, 2020; Osemene & Lamikanra, 2012; Oshikoya et al., 2007; Oshikoya et al., 2009; Salami & Adesanwo, 2015; Yusuff & Omarusehe, 2011). However, the current study is concerned with self-esteem and peer influence on self-medication.

Self-esteem is a socio-psychological construct indicating an individual's positive or negative perception of one's self. Self-esteem could be high or low. However, people's beliefs about themselves shape their actions in many vital ways (Baumeister et al., 2003), including health care decisions. Peers refer to young individuals of the same age and social level. Peer influence in this study refers to doing something because friends and mates do the same. In this study, we assume that belief about oneself and compliance to what is considered normal within the friend's circle would be a potent mediator of risk factors in self-medication practice.

Purpose of the study

The primary purpose of the study is to provide an answer to the following questions:

1. Does peer influence predict self-medicating behavior among youth in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria?
2. Does self-esteem predict self-medicating behavior among youth in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria?

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was formulated in this study:

- a. Peer influence will predict self-medicating behavior among youth in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria (h^1).
- b. Self-esteem will predict self-medicating behavior among youth in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria (h^2).

Method: -

A cross-sectional survey was adopted for this study. Young people within the age range of 18-30 years constituted the population of the study. The participants were pooled from four public health institutions in two states in the Middle-belt region (Kogi and Benue states). The rationale for focusing on Nigeria's middle-belt region is due to the lack of evidence relating to self-medication in the region. The inclusion criteria were based on residency and age. A total of 266 males and females who visited the health care institutions between January and March 2021 were approached. The relevant inclusion criteria were determined. However, 245 persons were qualified for the study. They were asked to participate in the survey to understand better what makes people take drugs without professional consultation. In all, 228 consented to take part in the study and were given the study instruments. Unfortunately, out of the 228 questionnaires distributed, only 216 were filled correctly and were used for the analysis.

Measure: -

In this study, a self-developed instrument was used to assess respondent's self-medication practice: the 10-item, Linkert-type scale comprised three sections (A, B, C). Section A contains questions that elicit respondent's self-medication behavior. Section B assesses the peer's role, while Section C includes the embedded Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale. A Cronbach alpha .86 was recorded in the study.

Result: -

Table 1: - Table showing the percentage score of the respondent's self-medication practice. The result indicates that the majority of the participants (85.7%) have engaged in self-medicating behavior. In comparison, only (14.3%) of the participant have not practiced self-medication.

SM	Frequency	Percent
Never Self-Medicated	31	14.3
Self-Medicated	186	85.7
Total	217	100

To test the main hypothesis of the study. Multiple regression was carried out to investigate whether peer influence and self-esteem could significantly predict participants' self-medication practice. The regression results indicated that the variables explained 24.1% of the variation in SM practice, $F(2,214) = 35.35$, $p < .001$. However, while peer influence contributed significantly to the model ($B = 0.43$, $p < .05$), Self-esteem did not ($B = 0.21$, $p = .117$).

Multiple regression results for SM

	95% CI for B			SEB	β	R^2	t	Sig
	B	LL	UL					
Model						.241		
Peer Influence	-.43	-.54	-.33	.06	-.55		-8.374	.000
Self-Esteem	-.21	-.31	-.12	.05	-.28		-4.212	.117

Note. B = Unstandardized regression coefficient; CI = Confident Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit; SEB = Standardized error of the coefficient; β = Standardized coefficient; R^2 = Coefficient of determination, ΔR = Adjusted R^2 . * $P < .000$. ** $p > .117$

Discussion: -

The present study aimed to examine peer influence and self-esteem as predictors of self-medication among the youth in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria. The percentage score result showed that the majority of the participants (85.7%) have engaged in self-medicating behavior, while only (14.3%) of the participant have not practiced self-medication. Consistent with previous studies (Auta et al., 2012; Bello & Bello, 2013; Fidelis et al., 2018; Lawan et al., 2013; Nwagha & Babatunde, 2020), the finding affirms the prevalence of self-medication practice in the Middlebelt region of Nigeria.

Furthermore, it was hypothesized that peer influence and self-esteem would predict self-medication practice among the participants. A multiple regression model was carried out to test this assumption. The regression results indicated that the variables explained 24.1% of the variation in self-medication practice, $F(2,214) = 35.35$, $p < .001$. However, while peer influence contributed significantly to the model ($B = 0.43$, $p < .05$), self-esteem did not ($B = 0.21$, $p = .117$), based on this result, the first assumption (h^1) was confirmed. This means that peer influence is a crucial determinant in self-medication behavior. The probable explanation for this result may be the vital role of peer association in people's attitudes and behavior. The result is consistent with (Lee et al., 2017). For instance, (Adeusi et al., 2019) found a significant level of peer influence on self-medication activity. Thus, peer influence is an essential factor that could account for the variation in self-medication behavior among the youth.

However, the assumption that self-esteem would influence self-medication practice among the participants was found not to be significant ($B = 0.21$, $p = .117$). Thus, the second assumption of the study (h^2) is not supported. Hence, whether high or low self-esteem does not account for self-medication practice. The mechanisms by which health behavior is influenced by self-esteem are still unclear and could account for this result. Health conditions defy self-perception. Individuals with health challenges are motivated to seek health care regardless of their sense of self, especially when over-the-counter drugs are available. Irrespective of its importance in health protection (Mann et al., 2004), self-esteem is not significant in self-medication practice among the youth.

Conclusion: -

In line with existing evidence, the present study affirms the prevalence of self-medication among youth in the Middle-Belt Region of Nigeria. In the quest for exploration of relevant determining factors in self-medication. This study examined self-medication based on peer influence and self-esteem. Based on the result, it is concluded that peer influence is a significant predictor of self-medication among the youth. Also, self-esteem as a factor does not statistically significantly predict self-medication practice. Although, caution is advised in generalizing the result of the study due to the sampling method and self-report measure that may be problematic. However, the study contributes to health promotion literature by identifying peer influence as a scarcely explored variable that could account for youth's self-medication behavior. The study recommends that a robust anti-self-medication campaign effectively enlightens youth on the dangers of self-medication.

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