

Factors Influencing the Purchasing and Consumption of Unprescribed Pharmaceutical Products in Africa.

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Abstract

The proliferation of pharmaceutical shops, licensed chemical sellers with it attendant over-the-counter-drugs, the limited availability of health facilities and the high cost associated with the fee for attending a hospital has necessitated the readily preference for majority of people in Africa to buy unprescribed medicines for use. The researchers sought to find out why majority of people in Africa buy medicines from medical shops for use without prescription, an issue destroying the youth as a result of abuse and in some cases putting the health of many in danger due to lack of product knowledge. Productivity, fertility and the health of the African you this in danger in the future due to the use of unprescribed medicines for reasons of prolonged sex, learning and increased physical work output. The researchers identified the need for cost reduction for treatment to encourage hospital attendance and about a 200 bed capacity hospital per thousand household should be a policy in Africa to encourage accessibility. That a mandated prescription form from a licensed medical officer should be inspected by both the pharmaceutical shops and other retailers prior to sale of pharmaceutical products or medicines to consumers.

Keywords: pharmaceutical shops, medicines, self-medication, consumption, unprescribed

Introduction

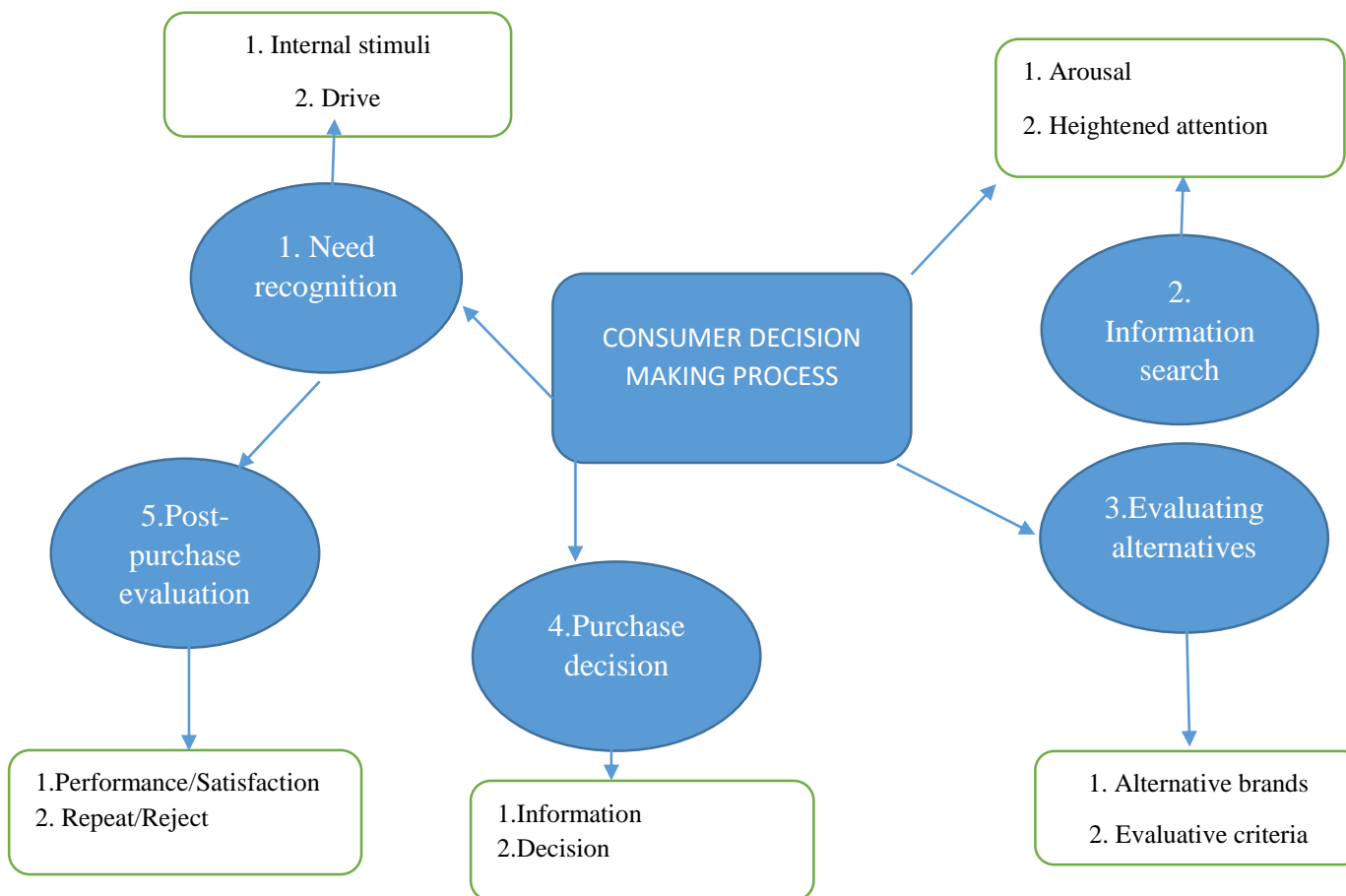
It is a normal practice in almost all parts of Africa that people do buy medicines for their personal use without prescription from any medical officer, a practice which is absurd in many advance countries. Because of limited health Personnels in Africa, many turn themselves quack doctors in less educated communities prescribing medicines for people who are unwell. Familiarity of some sicknesses such as malaria, typhoid, headache, bodily pains, stomach ache, cold, flu, diarrhoea among a few others may not require a visit to any health post but personal treatment with a known medicine without considering the degree of the sickness. Pressure on health facilities in some places in Africa, discourages a higher proportion of the population from attending hospitals due to the long hours they spend at the health facilities. It is perceived that the medical officers in some cases give the same drugs to many patients that enters a particular consulting room. This trend which is perceived to have been seen by the people, makes them to buy and use some particular medicines without visiting the health posts when they themselves or their relatives experience some known symptoms of some illness. These practices makes the people believe that it is a waste of time to attend hospital since they can perceive the medicines that would be given to them. This phenomena is very dangerous and claiming many lives and maiming several others and thus will cause many economies to under perform in the near future. The absence of health insurance policies in many countries pushes the cost of health care to the patient, a situation which discourages many to see a medical officer due the low incomes of majority of people in countries with poor economies. The health of every country is the backbone for effective performance of its

economy and thus, it is expedient for the Governments to institute policies and programmes aiming at encouraging frequent visit to the hospitals.

Literature Review

Consumer behaviour is a widely studied field and thus understanding it completely is very difficult, because it is linked closely to the human mind. “Attempting to forecast how human behaves in purchasing situations can be determined through previous buying decisions. Consumers make buying decisions every day and many people do not actually know the factors that drive them to this decision”(Tanja L., 2014). According to Stankevich A., (2017), over the past years, research into the behavioural aspect of the consumer and the process of the consumer decision making has advanced and is presently critical to marketers. Consumer behaviour, has always been an all-time important aspect of marketing due to the fact that establishing why, how, and when often consumers put up buying behaviours and actions is critical (Kotler, 2012). Knowing this permit marketing management of a firm to become effectively competitive through the development of marketing programmes and strategies in the market. Key issues confronting marketing management is about influencing the purchasing decisions of consumers towards one company’s goods and services. The marketer needs to understand the steps involved in the consumer decision making to be able to properly move the consumer to buy the company’s product or service, communicate effectively to consumers and closing the sale (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

Figure 1:A figure illustrating the five-stage consumer decision-making model with their key indicators.



Source: Authors work

The diagram indicates two critical indicators that should be considered at each stage of the buying decision process in that it’s the internal stimuli that raises to the level of a drive thus creating the need. The second stage begins when the consumer becomes aroused and gets to a heightened attention that the consumer begin to seek for information in an effort to satisfy the need. In this same sense, alternative brands and the establishment of selection criteria forms the basis for evaluating alternatives. Decision and information are required for purchasing decision to be taken and consumers’ expectation on performance of the brand or the product forms the basis for either satisfaction or dissatisfaction which may result in either continuous purchase

or brand rejection. Kotler & Keller (2012), indicates that the buying process starts prior to the consumer's purchase and continues after the purchase. Marketers understanding this process, encourages repeat purchase rather than one-time buy. The model states the buyer passes through the 5 stages with almost all purchases particularly if it is a first time or complex purchase. In a more routine purchase however, the consumer often skips some of the stages. A consumer that buys a brand of pharmaceutical product due to the delight it offers regularly uses the routine purchase and thus skips some stages of the buying process (Jung, Kim and Lee, 2014). Notwithstanding the above, the process is critical in showing consideration that happens when a consumer faces a new and complex purchase situation (Sahar Karimi (2013). "Frequently a distinction is made between high and low involvement purchasing". Marketers must ensure strategic positioning of their products through consumer learning to encourage routine purchasing and limiting the complex buying behaviour for the first time buyers by providing product information through the various marketing communication tools (Belch G. & Belch M. 2009).

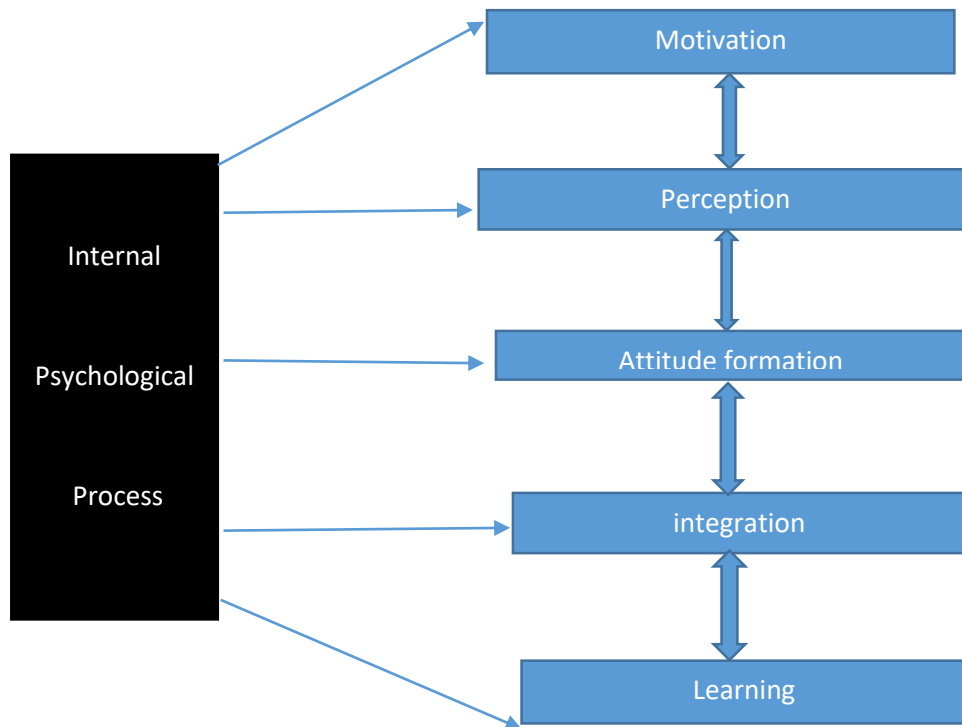
Table 1: Illustrating the different types of purchase behaviour and type and their characteristics

Different types of purchase behaviour Purchase type	Characteristics
Variety-Seeking Buying Behaviour	Low involvement by the customer Customer has a knowledge on brand difference There is a high brand switching
Habitual Buying Behaviour	There is a low involvement by customer Customer has s brand difference with brands There is a level of repeat purchase No time wasting in terms of product information search.
Complex Buying Behaviour	Consumer involvement is high Major brand differences Possibility of product been expensive Purchases are not frequent Customer needs much help in seeking for information.
Dissonance-Reducing Buyer Behaviour	Consumer's involvement is very high Little brand difference Product is very expensive Purchases are not frequent Consumers respond quickly to a good price

Source: Sahar Karimi (2013) university of Manchester business school: cdm3

Belch G. & Belch M. (2009) further discussed the relevant psychological processes that are internal for each stage of the process.

Figure 2: illustrates the internal psychological process.



At each of the model stages is a “moment that matter” and the details of the factors influencing them are discussed. Paying attention to the model and in-depth examination of the elements goes a long way to assist marketers to ascertain how messages to the targets should be encoded, which medium is appropriate in reaching the target effectively so they can learn about the company’s offer, get the required perceptual image desired of the marketer, get them to form the right attitude for the offer, and integrating the offer well into the lives of the targets to get them motivated (Kotler, 2016; Shimp T., 2003). Understanding the model and working it out from the customers’ perspectives will cause the marketers offer to be included into the product choices to influence purchase and continuous consumption.

I. Psychological Factors

Psychological factors, considers the internal psychological processes which influence customer decision making into purchasing a firm’s offering include,

a) Motivation

A person at any point in time will have many and differing needs and wants. Some are described as biological, which may result out of a state of tension that builds up from within the individual and may include hunger, thirst amongst others. The need for affiliation, belongingness, membership which constitute psychological needs partly motivate consumers. The need for security, or safety, self- esteem including self-actualisation serve as a drive that influences the consumer to seek for a product to satisfy the drive (Sarmah, Islam & Rahman, 2015). Identifying group behaviours, the role of age groups, the role of family in the society and the gender of a target market serves a better means to develop a marketing mix that directly hit on the target’s desires which has been aroused strongly to satisfy with the marketers offer.

b) Perceived usefulness

An individual who is motivated will act. The manner with which the individual acts will be influenced by how the situation is perceived. “Perception is the process by which people select, organize and interpret information to form a meaningful picture of the world” Kotler & Keller (2012); Davis, (1989) the authors suggests that the relevance of a product in providing solution to the consumer’s need influences the attraction and retention of a user to a product. The perceived usefulness of a pharmaceutical product has a high propensity of influencing the drug stores and pharmacies to continue to stock and to devise means such as traditional or possible conventional methods which can be relied on to serve potential and prospective customers. “Davis

stresses that the degree of perceived usefulness is an important predictor of one's intention of using a new product" in this case the pharmaceutical product (Venkatesh, et al, 2003). Looking at the use of pharmaceutical products among the youth generally, "perceived usefulness deals with the individuals conception involving the degree to which a drug or medicines would improve the individuals performance" (Park & Kim, 2003). Meanwhile, from the perspective of other scholars on college students' perception and evaluation of the purchase and use of pharmaceutical products showed that the impact of perceived usefulness of products in this case pharmaceutical products is connected with peer influence (Chen & Mei, 2017).

c). Perceived ease of use

It involves the degree to which an individual believe that the purchase and consumption of a pharmaceutical product to personally treat an ailment or disease is easier than having to attend to a medical facility for professional treatment (Stankevich, 2017; Vankatesh & Bala, 2008). The perceived degree of ease of self-medication is owed to the fact that there is limited availability, and in some cases absent of health facilities in major parts of Africa. The use of prescribed medicines may be very costly especially for some classes of the youth, the majority poor in Africa and others in the hinterlands where health posts are scarce. However, there is a negative perception associated with the use of unprescribed medicines above its perceived benefits. If there is a perceived advantage of self- medication to the use of prescribed medication then potential drug users are likely to join the act of self- medication and thus stop using prescribed medicines or seeking for professional advice. Many factors influence consumers on the consumption of unprescribed pharmaceutical products included are absence of health facilities, high cost of seeking professional advice, long distances involved in having to travel several kilometres to access a health facility, poverty, shyness of having to disclose some sensitive personal health information to health professionals, and familiarity due to frequent use of pharmaceutical products. But among the youth though these factors play critical role to their use of unprescribed pharmaceutical products (self-medication), major factors encouraging the youth into using unprescribed drugs are peer influence and promotional campaigns on various social media platforms, television and radio (Ofori & Appiah, 2019, Hsu et al, 2006). The literature reveals that many scholars in their papers found a significant relationship between perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness in their study. (Grob, 2015; Kotler & Keller, 2012).

© Perceived risk

"The assessment of product uncertainties, as a result of absence of knowledge about the unexpected potential outcomes of a product, and the individual's inability to control the potential outcome" is considered by marketing scholars as perceived risk Vlek & Stallen, (1980). Hence, it is regarded "an important concept of consumer behaviour and it is mostly used to explain both perception of risks and risk reduction approaches implemented by consumers" McOmish & Quester, (2005). King & He, (2006) defined "perceived risk as a user's subjective expectation of suffering a loss in relation to the expected outcome". From other school of thought, perceived risk can be considered to be the "degree to which an individual expresses uncertainty about a product or service" Dai, Forsythe, & Kwon, (2014). According to Li & Zhang, (2002), "perceived risk deals two (2) major elements that help determining consumers' behaviour concerning the purchase and consumption of pharmaceutical products"(Chen, Hsu & Lin, 2010). "The indicators of the first element deals with financial risk, product risk, and time risk while the other element consists of e-transactions concerning security and privacy"(Chen, 2008; Li & Zhang, 2002). Due to globalization of firms, most of the youth have started buying goods such as medicines using online shopping payments such as visa and credit cards hence, e-transactions security and privacy are widespread. Due to this new practice of buying medicines online, it is becoming difficult to determine who uses the medicine purchased and thus promoting drug abuse among the educated class particularly the youth (Choudhury & Dey, 2014; Dai, 2014). However the preference for shopping for pharmaceutical products online is much higher than as compared to traditional shopping because time and energy are saved as the consumers enjoy the comfort of shopping from their private residents.

d.) Perceived cost

Choudhury & Dey, (2014), states that cost of consuming products of all forms and types deals with possible expenses incurred to include other costs such as the cost of accessing the product, the fees for transaction and costs of having to spend time and efforts looking for product or brand information. Sometimes, these

costs are almost absent as compared to self-medication since the user has personal product familiarity or the medicine is been used by friends and family. Wu et al, (2014) added that “perceived costs associated with (products such as unprescribed medicines) generally arise from information asymmetry and investment in specific assets which may hinder consumers from engaging in relational exchanges”. In their perspective, “perceived costs of using products in this case unprescribed medicines include transportation, price comparisons and product searches done easily online, family members and through peers; individuals engaging in self-medication most of the time compare the costs and benefits” associated with having to travel over several kilometres in several parts of Africa due to absence of health facilities in most areas Wu et al, (2014), Chang & Wang, (2011), Chiou, (2010), and Chiou & Droge, (2006). It is suggested by Mizanur & Sloan, (2017) that “perceived cost plays an important role on the intention to seek professional advice by visiting the hospital as compared to the cost of self-medication”.

e.) Purchase intention

Research indicates that “a purchase intention is an actual behaviour that determines a person’s behavioural intention in the sense that whilst attitudes clearly impact on beliefs, intentions impact on attitudes and behaviour impact on intentions Fishbein & Ajzen, (1975). A school of thought has it that “purchase intention deals with “the degree to which a person has formulated conscious plans to perform, or not perform some specified future behaviour” (Davis, 1989). In the view of Hsu, et al, (2006), “purchase intention has a strong causal relationship with actual behaviour”. This therefore suggests that individuals who do not have access to health facilities engage themselves with the use of unprescribed medicines. Even in the future, self-medication remains a resort for attempting to seek for good health unless there is a provision of health facilities. “It is evident that an increase in purchase intention reflects an increase in the chance of making actual purchase. Anytime a consumer has a positive purchase intention, then a positive brand engagement will promote the actual usage”(Fishbein & Ajzen,1975). Unprescribed drug usage, in most situation is a critical decision taken by consumers to make a purchase in attempt to satisfying their health need Wu, Yeh, & Hsiao, (2011); Chen, Hsu, & Lin, (2010). Whereas self-medication is expected to be a last resort in attempting to seek one’s health needs, it has become a norm in Africa and has becomes dangerous when out of peer influence, one abuse the medicines.

f.) Actual usage

Ariff, et al (2013), states that the “actual usage is the frequency of product use and the approximate number of times a user purchase within a given time period”. According to Muda, Mohd, & Hassan, (2016) “there are three (3) major factors influencing actual usage of products, in this case unprescribed medicines and they include brand image, self-efficacy and social brand communication Aghekyan-Simonian, et al, (2012); Kwon & Lennon,(2009) and Keller, (1993). The argument put forward by Muda et al, (2016) makes it evident from the review that the efficacy and brand image as well as social brand communication (word-of-mouth) influences the purchase and usage of unprescribed medicines or drugs both in areas with limited health facilities and among groups and societies where peer influence is very high.

II. Culture

The key to understanding the consuming public for any product they purchase, in an attempt to satisfying their needs and wants has to do with the marketer having in-depth knowledge of the role played by the buyer’s culture, subculture and social class. The wants, desires, beliefs, language, religion, material culture among others of a group of people is normally referred to as the core culture” (Kotler P., Armstrong G 2012). From childhood one learns the societal values and beliefs about what they buy, how they buy, where they buy, and when they buy in moments that is critical in seeking for health care etc., held by the society in which they are(Wu, 2014). This however has a major influence on the individuals purchase and consumption of unprescribed medicines that is, if that is what the individual grew to see in the society(Chen, Hsu & Lin, 2010). For instance, the almost acceptable norm is to use certain medicines as Paracetamol to take care of pains, Amoxycillin for infections and Flagyl for internal sores. They are used without prescription and thus it is self-medicated

III. Groups

Ivancevich et al, (1994) define a group as” two or more people who act together to accomplish a goal. It may be formal or informal. While not directly related to work, groups are found in all organisations and a person’s ability to join one or more groups is greatly enhanced when they regularly interact with diverse groups of people”. The existence of groups (usually called reference groups) exerts a great influence on the behaviour and purchase patterns of an individual be it associative group or aspirational group (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). It is an almost acceptable behaviour that groups who engage in jobs that demands much strength such as labourers (masons, carpenters) including commercial drivers use pain killers or energy related medicines that are un-prescribed to stay on their jobs and to perform better.

IV. Personal Factors

An individual’s purchasing decision to buy and consume a company’s products partly has to do with his or her personal influences and characteristics including the age, whether married or unmarried, adolescent, divorced, young adult in a relationship amongst others Kotler & Armstrong (2012). Quantity demanded, quality, kind of medicines, and the price of the medicines an individual patronises for use, is largely dependent upon the personal factors. In other sense, Heilman, Bowman & Wright (2000) states that these factors as indicated, especially the large family sizes and the low economic conditions, influences self-medication in low income countries since the perception has to do with the high cost of visiting the health centres.

Methodology

The researchers used a non-probability sampling method as well as focus group interviews to solicit for information that aided the research. A population sample of two hundred (200) were used for the study, 20 pharmaceutical shops and drug stores were contacted by way of interviews. Some thirty-five (35) articles in the related field were also reviewed for the study. Descriptive analysis as well as bar charts were used to represent the findings of the research.

Results

Table 2: Illustrating the key indicators influencing the purchase and consumption of un-prescribed drugs.

	N	Range	Mini	Maxi	Mean		Std. Deviation	variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
1.Familiarity with drugs	197	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.9492	.08166	1.14618	1.314	1.353	.173	1.155	.345
2. Cost of self-medication	200	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.9350	.08771	1.24035	1.538	1.321	.172	.754	.342
3. Long hours spent in health facilities	196	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.0051	.07535	1.05489	1.113	.943	.174	.321	.346
4. Absence of health professionals	200	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.3650	.07407	1.04750	1.097	.469	.172	-.483	.342
5. Economy	198	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.8535	.07489	1.05376	1.110	1.322	.173	1.230	.344
6. Distance to health facilities	200	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.1600	.08431	1.19227	1.422	.909	.172	.036	.342
7. Comparing cost of treatment	200	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.0500	.08704	1.23088	1.515	1.162	.172	.330	.342
8. People’s perception	200	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.0300	.07599	1.07465	1.155	1.118	.172	.791	.342
9. Self-medication is by friends	200	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.4650	.08354	1.18142	1.396	.380	.172	-.819	.342
10. African’s abuse drugs	200	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.7250	.09770	1.38164	1.909	.424	.172	-1.039	.342
Valid N (listwise)	192											

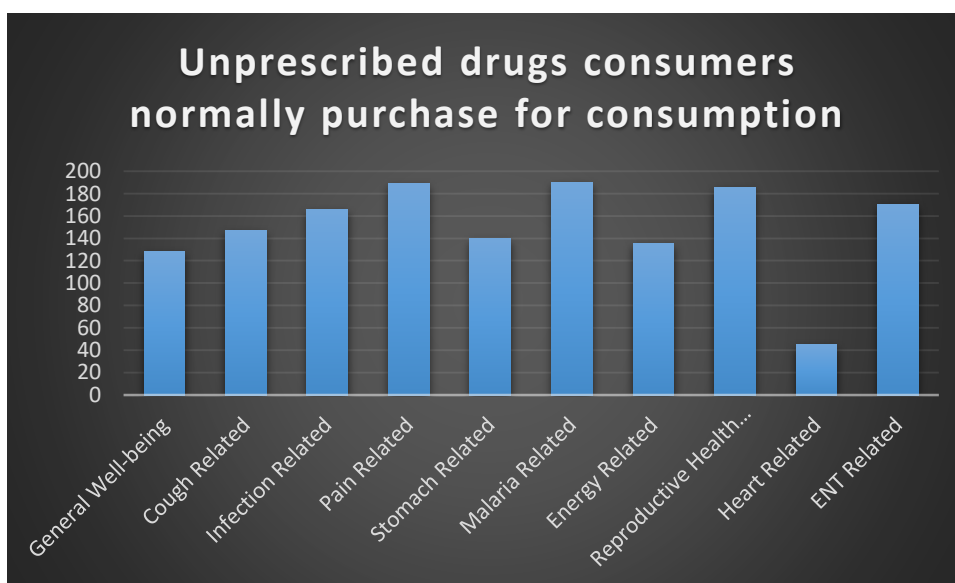
Source: Field survey, 2021

“ Kurtosis and Skewness values were used to check the normality of each variable used in the research. Skewness values larger than (+1) or smaller than (-1), as suggested by Hair et al (2003) indicate a substantially skewed distribution. Besides Hair et al (2005) added that a curve is too peaked when the Kurtosis exceeds (+3) and is too flat when it is below (-3). This means Skewness values within the range of (-1) to (+1) and

Kurtosis values within the range of (-3) to (+3) indicate an acceptable range. As shown in Table 2, the values of Skewness and Kurtosis for each variable indicate that the research constructs fell within the acceptable range”.

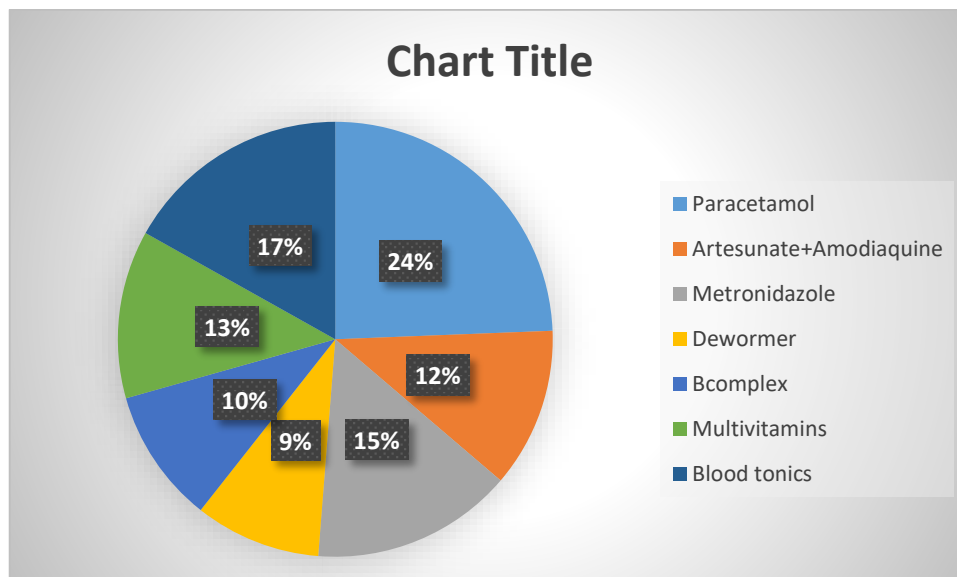
Out of the twenty-two (22) questions that the researchers posed to the respondents, there were ten (10) questions that stood up as been key in influencing consumers purchase and consumption of medicines without prescription, with about eighty percent (80%) strongly agreeing to the issue that familiarity to a pharmaceutical product influences its consumption without necessarily obtaining a prescription from the health professionals. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of the respondents strongly agreed to the issue that the economy (poor) influences the consumption of unprescribed medicines. Lack of health facilities influencing the use of unprescribed medicines was seventy-five (75%). Seventy-six percent (76) of the respondents indicated that self-medication is cost effective than seeking for medical attention professionally. Seventy-two percent (72%) indicated that they use self-medication due to the long hours they have to endure at the health facilities. Sixty percent (60%) alluded to the fact that the absence of health professionals in the few health facilities available encourages their use of unprescribed drugs. Familiarity of disease and inattentiveness of some health workers influencing self-medication were sixty-five (65%) and fifty-eight percent (58%) respectively. Sixty-seven percent (67%) indicated that the distance involved in accessing health centres influences self-medication and seventy-seven percent (77%) indicated that they are influenced to use unprescribed medicines because they perceive to know the medicine that will be given to them by the medical officers in the health centres.

Fig.3: Illustrating usually purchased unprescribed drugs for consumption.



Many people in the low income countries particularly Africa will buy unprescribed medicines self-medication) from the pharmacy shops and drug stores for use any time they feel unwell. From the figure above out of the 200 population sampled, 128 will buy medicines for their general well-being, 147 will buy cough related drugs, 166 will buy medicines any time they have infections be it internal or external for use, 189 will buy pain killers, 140 will buy stomach related medicines, 190 will buy medicines any time they suspect they have malaria, 135 will buy medicines for use to boost their energy whenever they feel short of strength, 185 will buy over-the-counter drugs to meet their reproductive health needs, 40 respondents will buy medicines that are heart related and 170 will buy medicines to take care of Eye, Nose and Throat. It was discovered that the youth are abusing tramadol and cough syrups to satisfy their sexual pleasures and to feel hyper whereas commercial drivers and labourers abuse pain killers in their quest for energy for work.

Fig 4: Illustrating frequently purchased over-the- counter drugs



Many interviewees do not have first aids in their homes but purchase these over-the-counter drugs when the need arises. From the diagram, 195 out of the 200 interviewees buy Paracetamol. 95 buy Artesunate Amodiaquine, 120 buy metronidazole, 75 buy Dewormer, 80 buy Bcomplex, 100 buy multivitamin and 135 buy blood tonics for use.

Discussion

In fig.2, most of the low income countries children grow to see parents buying drugs from the pharmaceutical shops when one is unwell and thus become familiar to these drugs and their purposes, combined with the economy in these areas, many generations do not see the benefits to attend to the health post for health treatment but rather repeat the actions seen and practice by the parents or family members. The absence of health facilities in some communities and the possibility of having to travel long distances to attend to hospital for treatment is a disincentive to majority of the people and thus necessitating the need for over-the-counter drugs and thus see the need for professional attention when the situation becomes serious. Due to the low incomes of the majority of the people, the cost of seeking for professional assistance for good health becomes almost impossible thus, promoting self-medication since they are familiar with the disease coupled with the perception that they may be given the same prescription from the consulting room due to previous experience of relatives and friends. Sometimes people are discouraged from attending hospital because of the attitude of some health attendants. Health professionals such as nurses chats among themselves and fidget their mobile phones at post both in the outpatient department and in the wards, is of the greatest worry to patients since it has led to loss of lives in some cases, a factor which influence the thoughts of patients that self-medication is better than having to go to the hospital to waste one's time because nurses don't pay attention to their health needs properly and on time.

From fig.3, it is established that people buy unprescribed medicines (self-medication) for many reasons ranging from reasons of headache to reproductive health as well as energy restoration. The dimension has changed slightly from parents having to buy these medicines for various reasons to the youth buying these drugs sometimes for reasons unknown by many. The Interior Ministry upon the direction of the President of Ghana conducted a survey on drug abuse in Basic and Senior High Schools in Ghana. Published on the 19th February 2021, the research was conducted in 176 Basic and Senior High Schools, 10 psychiatric institutions, 72 guidance and Counselling units in various schools and 138 Heads of Schools; it was revealed that "54.1% of boys in Junior and 59.9% of boys in Senior High Schools according to the study uses cigarettes, 36.4% of them have used two or more drug substances. 88.6% of the students sampled undergo stress in various schools and drugs are the major influences. 36% of boys and 32.1% of girls have used alcohol in schools whilst 34.3 of girls use shisha in schools. 72.7% of girls use pain relievers in schools". The youth bought more aphrodisiacs more than condoms to boost their sexual performance without prescription from their doctors which according to the report will have serious health implications in the future (myjoyonline.com and TV3

News 360). The outcome of this research commissioned by the Ministry of Interior upon the direction from the President of Ghana is in tandem with the findings of this research in the areas where 185 out of 200 interviewees buy unprescribed reproductive health products with emphasis on aphrodisiacs for the young men and oral pregnancy prevention drugs (post pills). The study also identified 189 interviewees buying pain relievers to take care of pains, stress and abuse it to feel hyper. Another 130 part of whom were manual workers such as carpenters and masons uses energy drinks together with drugs to regain their strength to do their works with others just abusing it because they want to feel hyper. It was discovered that a combination of cough syrups and tramadol were being abused by the youth particularly the males to enable them have long period of sex.

Conclusion

This research studied the use of unprescribed pharmaceutical products from the African perspectives. It is evident from the study that psychological factors, culture and personal factors all have influence on the consumption of unprescribed drugs. Familiarity of disease and illness, the economy of the place, absence or inadequate health facilities and personnel, long distances involved in accessing health facilities and the cost of accessing health needs from the experts are among some major factors influencing the use of unprescribed pharmaceutical products in Africa. More seriously is the use of tramadol from 100mg to 1000mg being used by students to enable them to stay long hours to study. Commercial drivers and petty traders to enable them work for long hours. The health and fertility of the African youth stands the danger of deterioration in the near future if self-medication (use of unprescribed drugs and abuse) is not checked. There is a disputed fact from the research that it is not all the time that first time or complex buyer may go through all the five stages of the consumer decision making process. That a first time or complex buyer who is strongly influenced on product performance, efficacy, and durability amongst others by friends or family members may skip some of the stages in the decision making process. Reduction in the cost of seeking medical care through effective health insurance system will go a long way to curb the purchase and consumption of unprescribed drugs. Promoting science education and increasing the intake for students with interest to read medicine will be a direction to reduce the consumption of unprescribed medicines. In Ghana however, there is a serious shortage of medical officers owing to high cost of science education especially medicine and an antiquated method of having to establish the fact that a family member read and practiced medicine as an evaluative criteria for screening students to read medicine.

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We do pledge and declare that there is no existing or potential conflict of interest regarding the study, authorship and the publication of this paper.

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