



EXPLORING FACTORS INFLUENCING INDEPENDENT DRUG UTILIZATION LEADING SELF-HARM AMONG ADULT POPULATION IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Objective: The concept of Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm is becoming more common across the globe. The purpose of the present study was to explore the psycho-social predictors contribute towards the Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm among adults.

Method: The qualitative study was conducted through purposive sampling by selecting the participants aged between 18 to 25 years. The focus group (N=4) has been conducted with the participants (N=33) with the history of taking Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm living in the catchment area (*Quetta*) of the study. All the focus groups were conducted face to face by the researcher after completion of the demographic information. The groups were audio-recorded after getting the written informed consent. The focus groups have been transcribed by independent researchers. The transcripts were analyzed using a systematic approach that incorporates thematic analysis.

Results: The themes that emerged after analyses were combined under the main three headings: Psychological, Social, and high Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm illnesses. The main results indicated that to get instant relief, time saving due to hectic routines, negligence from the doctors and often lack of money were the factors who can be addressed through awareness campaigns. Thus, the present study supports in the understanding of predictors which strengthen culturally trends of Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm behavior in Pakistan.

Keywords: self-medication, Predictors, factors, Adults, Youth, Psychosocial factors

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic became the cause of significant and dramatic changes in the life of the individuals across the globe (Ayosanmi et al., 2022). While adapting the behaviors of the self-care during the pandemic, the practice of Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm also being increased which involves the possessions and usage of the medicinal products without the consultation of the professional among adults (Behzadifar et al., 2020). Although the practice of Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm is usually common before the COVID-19. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 11.2 to 93.7% of the population preferred for the Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm across the globe depending on the target population of the country (Abdi et al., 2018; Kassie et al., 2018; Lei et al., 2018; Tesfamariam et al., 2019). Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm affected both developed and developing countries (Noone., 2018) such as Pakistan. Due to the lack of infrastructure of healthcare in rural areas of Pakistan the prevalence of Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm increased as neither medicine nor medical professionals are easily available for approximately 70% of the population (Malik et al., 2020).

Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm involves the consumption of drug or medicine based on the different physical symptoms (Moonajilin et al., 2020), it also involves the repetition of self-medicated behavior from mild to acute symptoms (Paudel & Aryal., 2020). Different researches suggested that the individuals who has been involved in the practice of the self-medication, also found to advise the medication to their family members, relatives and friends (Jember et al., 2019). Due to the excessive practice of this behavior, professionals also reported their concern in the form of misdiagnosis of the illness, harmful drug interaction of drugs, antimicrobial resistance or in some cases delay in the diagnosis of a serious medical illness (Saha et al., 2022).

Adolescent is the age of self-development and continuous learning process, majority of our adult's behavior is the clear prediction of our specific culture or environment (Janatolmakan et al., 2022). The transition from childhood towards the adolescents is associated with the parental control where administration of medication has been consulted by them for minor disease or symptoms (Shabani & Redican., 2018). It has been evident that the individuals from the age of 17 years or above start practicing Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm are common in most of the cultures (Del Toro et al., 2020). Considering the excessive practice of self-medication, it has been determined in the present study to explore the Psychosocial predictors of Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm among adults in Pakistan, so the appropriate strategies will devise according to the problem

Objective of the study:

In the recent few years, the usage of Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm has become very common in Pakistan. Different studies highlight the different aspects of self-medication such as; ease of availability and lack of professionals for the relevant field. So, the purpose of the present study was to explore the psycho-social predictors contribute towards the Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm among adults in Pakistan.

Material and Methods:

The present study was conducted to explore the psycho-social predictors contribute towards the Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm among adults in Pakistan.

Research Design & Sampling Strategy

The qualitative study was conducted through purposive sampling by selecting the participants who met the inclusion area from the Quetta of Pakistan. Total 33 Participants (M=17; F=16) were recruited for the sample who has the history of Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm behavior with the age range of 18 to 33 years. The participants were divided into four (N=06) focus

group equally distributed participants among groups. The participants recruited from the study belongs to the different educational backgrounds and academic departments both colleges and universities.

Procedure

Ethical approval was sought from Research Ethics Committee of University. A Participant Information Leaflet was provided to all the participants at the time of recruitment and queries were addressed. After providing a detailed description of the study, written informed consent was obtained from all the eligible participants. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. A detailed demographic information sheet which includes; age, gender, residence, education and family system has been prepared for the participants. The topic guide has been developed and reviewed from the senior researchers before implementation to the focus group. The duration of each focus group ranged from 35-45 minutes.

Data Analysis

The focus group was conducted in the native language of Urdu with the participants by asking open-ended questions so detailed opinions and a behavior has been explored. The data was analyzed by using inductive approach. The eight steps of content analysis (Harris, 2001) were followed for data analysis. Initially, the gathered information was transcribed by and translated into English. The translated original transcription data files were shared with language expert to ensure the quality of translation and to grasp the exact meanings which the participants communicated.

The inductive thematic analysis approach was used for the data analysis, aimed to categorize a set of central themes that captured participants' diverse views and feelings. The thematic analysis used in the summarization of the key features of large data sets. This approach direct researchers to implement a well-structured approach while dealing with the data which eventually produce a clear and organized final report. The conceptual themes were extracted from the highlighted points in the next stage. The coding/highlighting themes was carried out for all the interviews. In the final stage, the similar themes were grouped under the main or major categories. Inter- coder reliability improves when the coders used the analysis code book independently and a discussion was held between the coders and expertise to resolve disparities in coding. At the end, a final file was being prepared in which categories and themes were constructed.

Results

The present study aimed to explore the to explore the psycho-social predictors contribute towards the Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm among adults in Pakistan. All the verbatim the interviews were gathered, and then themes were generated using thematic analysis.

Table 1.1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=33)

Characteristics	<i>f</i>	%
Gender		
Male	17	48.0
Female	16	4.0
Areas of Specialization		
Psychology	6	33.0
Biomedical Engineering	8	32.0
English Linguistic	1	4.0
Software engineering	9	36.0
Family system		
Joint/ Extended	4	16.0
Nuclear	20	80.0
Independent Drug Utilization leading self harm		
Yes	22	88.0
No	2	8.0
Age	M=19.87	SD=1.42

Note = f for frequency; % for percentage

According to demographic information, the mean age of participants was 19.87 ± 1.42 , out of which 12 (48.0%) participants were male and other 12 (48.0%) were female. Six (33.0%) participants belong to Psychology department, 8 (32.0%) were related to Biomedical Engineering, 9 (36.0%) were student of Software Engineering and 1 (4.0%) participant studied English Linguistic. There were 20 (80.0%) participants belonged to nuclear family system and 4 (16.0%) were from joint or extended family system. Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm behavior was reported by 22 (88.0%) participants.

Table 1.2 Table shows the major themes merged from the analysis of interviews

Major Themes	Subordinate themes	Sub themes
Psychological Predictors	Psychological Predictors associated with the Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm among adults	To get instant relief, for time saving, choose easy way to get relief, assumptions to get relief from common medicines like Panadol, to get relief from stress, knowledge of parents and from previous experiences.
Social Predictors	Role of social Predictors of Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm among adults	Elders and siblings, Parents, Friends, Pharmacists, Social predictors of self-medication, Knowledge from internet, WhatsApp, twitter, Negligence of doctors on minor illnesses, Easy availability of medicines on stores, Doctors experimental behavior by assigning different tests.
Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm illnesses	Role of Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm illness among adults	Seasonal allergy, flu, throat infection and fever, Stomach upset, nausea, vomiting, hair fall, to fair color, body shaping, weight loss & gain,

Description of Themes

Theme 1: Psychological Predictors

In this theme our main purpose is to explore those psychological factors which can be analyzed in an individual which can be led towards the self-medicated behavior. According to the participants, instant

relief was found to be the most common predictor of self-medication. As one the participant reported;

“we are badly stuck with our lives, we even don’t have time for our self and need immediate relief from symptoms”

Similarly, majority of the emerging adults instead of going to doctor and wait for many hours for their turn, preferred Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm because it saved their time. As reported;

“Proper professional’s appointment took a lot of time”

Other predictors include laziness, use of previous doctor’s prescription, minor illnesses, previous knowledge and emergency situations are also the psychological factors which bound them to maintain their comfort zone and strengthening this self-medicating behavior.

Theme 2: Social Predictors

The social predictors which play role in performing Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm behavior was also described by the emerging adults. Majority of the participants admitted that their parents recommend them to do Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm in discomfort. As one participant reported;

“In collectivistic culture, parent’s suggestion is the more influencing thing due to their experience, we give them priority”

Other participant reported that those elders, siblings, friends and pharmacist also advised them to take medicine instead to consult a field expert or doctor. Other social predictors mentioned by the participants were negligence of doctor, lack of money, doctor’s recommendation on advertisements, negligence of doctor on minor illnesses, information regarding medicines obtained from social

media like Facebook, Instagram, What's-App and twitter, easy availability of medicines. As reported:

“It's a digital world all things are far from us only of on click”

It has been also belief that doctor does a lot of experiment and extra tests which cannot afford a finically unstable person.

Theme 3: Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm illnesses

It has been also highlighted by the adults about the common motivating ailments for self-medication. Throat infection was reported by most of the participants for which Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm is preferred. Other ailments include stomach upset, flu, nausea, vomiting, hair fall, body shaping, weight loss, weight gain and fairing color. Some emerging adults also revealed that there is no need of doctor in the state of anxiety, confusion and stress. As one of the participants reported;

“It is now a common trend to take aspirin and Panadol for headache and I also give instant relief”

Discussion

The present study was conducted to get in depth understanding about the predictors of Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm in emerging adults in Pakistan. Majority of the participants reported that the most common attitude for preferring Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm was instant relief. A research conducted in South India also revealed that medicines were used in order to get instant relief from minor illnesses (Balamurugan & Ganesh, 2011). Other causes of taking medicines include time saving, mildness of illness, emergency situation and use of previous doctor's prescription. in different studies on Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm conducted in Tanzania, Mumbai (India), Haiti and Uganda also described same reasons of practicing Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm (Horumpende et al., 2018; Kumar, Vandana, & Aslami, 2016; Moise, Bernard, & Henrys, 2017; Ocan et al., 2014).

It was also highlighted by participant that belief developed from previous beneficial experience about medicine also play important role in preferring Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm again in future when suffering from same discomfort. Similarly, research conducted in Asmara (Eritrea) and Nigeria also reported that prior experience was considered as main factor of practicing Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm (Araia et al., 2019; Ehigiator et al., 2010). The psychological predictors include attitudes, beliefs and thoughts of an individual about a particular behavior. Therefore, the above thoughts, beliefs and attitudes were considered as psychological predictors of Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm behavior.

In the same way social predictors is effect of societal norms, opinions of people, cultural values and other things like family status, rules at work place, income level and so on. All these factors play an important role in performing a behavior. The majority of participant in the present study admitted that parents and siblings suggested them to practice self-medication. A research conducted in Northeast, Ethiopia also showed that parents and siblings preferred and suggest Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm (Kassie, Bifftu, & Mekonnen, 2018). The other predictors described by the participants were negligence of doctor, lack of money or high charges of doctors and advertisements. Various studies conducted in North India, Uganda, Sokoto Nigeria and New Zealand which reported the same factors as reasons of Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm (Attahiru et al., 2018; Parakh et al., 2013; Tang et al., 2018; Zadeh, Robertson, & Green, 2019). Other social predictors that were frequently explained by the participants include suggestion of medicines from friend circle, pharmacists and availability of medicines on medical store without any doctor's prescription. Research conducted in Iraq and a systematic review from Middle East also explained the friend's suggestion and easy availability of medicines without prescription as causes of Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm (Al-Iman et al., 2020).

Conclusion

The present study explores the predictors of Independent Drug Utilization leading self-harm among adults, it supports us to prepare awareness sessions in different universities, colleges and how to convey to different media applications so our youth behavior will not reinforce and became eradicated from Pakistan. Policy makers also developed the policies while keeping in view the explored factors.

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