Factors Affecting the Acceptance of Generic Medicines Despite Their Therapeutic Equivalence to Branded Medicines in Amravati City

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ABSTRACT

Generic medicines are pharmaceutical products that are therapeutically equivalent to branded medicines, meaning they provide the same quality, safety, and efficacy. Despite being significantly more affordable than their branded counterparts, the acceptance of generic medicines among consumers, particularly in developing cities like Amravati, remains limited. Understanding the reasons behind this limited acceptance is crucial for promoting cost-effective healthcare solutions. This study aims to explore the key factors influencing the acceptance of generic medicines among consumers in Amravati City. The research is descriptive in nature and relies on primary data collected from 30 respondents through a structured questionnaire.

The study examines several critical factors, including consumer awareness, perception of effectiveness, trust in the medicine, recommendations by doctors, sensitivity to price, and availability of generic medicines. To analyse the relationship between these factors and the acceptance of generic medicines, the study employs the Chi-Square test as the primary statistical tool. The findings are expected to identify major barriers that hinder acceptance and provide valuable insights for healthcare providers, policymakers, and pharmaceutical companies to enhance consumer confidence and encourage the use of generic medicines, thereby promoting more affordable healthcare access.

Keywords: Generic Medicines, Branded Medicines, Consumer Perception, Acceptance, Therapeutic Equivalence

INTRODUCTION

Medicines are essential for maintaining and restoring public health, not only for treating illnesses but also for preventing complications. In developing countries like India, rising healthcare costs make access to essential medicines a significant challenge. High-priced branded medicines, while preferred by many, place a financial burden on low- and middle-income patients. Generic medicines, which are therapeutically equivalent to branded drugs in terms of active ingredients, dosage, and effectiveness, offer a cost-effective alternative without compromising quality.

Despite regulatory assurances, consumer acceptance of generic medicines in India remains low due to misconceptions about their safety and efficacy, limited awareness, and lack of trust—especially if not recommended by a physician. Doctors play a vital role in influencing patient choices, and aggressive marketing by pharmaceutical companies often reinforces the preference for branded medicines. Inconsistent availability at pharmacies and mixed perceptions about quality further hinder adoption, even among price-sensitive consumers.

Programs like the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) and Jan Aushadhi Kendras aim to provide high-quality generic medicines at lower prices, reducing financial burden and promoting equitable healthcare. However, awareness and trust remain key barriers.

Amravati City, with both branded and generic medicines readily available, shows a strong preference for branded products. This study focuses on understanding the factors affecting generic medicine acceptance in the city, including awareness, quality perception, trust, physician recommendations, price sensitivity, and availability. The findings aim to inform strategies for awareness campaigns, improve communication about therapeutic equivalence, and promote rational use of generic medicines—ultimately making healthcare more affordable and accessible without compromising safety or efficacy.

RESEARCH PROBLEM DEFINITION

Generic medicines offer the same quality, safety, and efficacy as branded drugs at a lower cost, providing a practical solution to rising healthcare expenses. Despite this, their acceptance remains low in urban markets like Amravati.

Limited awareness, misconceptions about effectiveness, and lack of trust contribute to consumer reluctance. Doctors' recommendations, perceived quality differences, attractive branding, and inconsistent pharmacy availability further reinforce the preference for branded medicines. This study therefore aims to identify the key factors influencing the acceptance of generic medicines in Amravati City, offering insights to enhance awareness, trust, and usage of affordable healthcare solutions

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. **Hassali, M. A. A., Shafie, A. A., et al. (2009) – International Journal of Pharmacy Practice**, **Consumers' views on generic medicines: a review of the literature** study explored consumer perceptions regarding generic medicines and identified key barriers to their acceptance. It revealed that lack of awareness, misconceptions about quality, and doubts about efficacy reduce consumer confidence. The authors emphasized the critical role of pharmacists and policymakers in spreading awareness. Their work laid a foundation for understanding how perception and trust influence generic medicine acceptance.
2. **Bhattacharyya, N. C. (2019) – Guest Editorial**, **Generic versus branded medicines** The author discussed market trends and regulatory measures affecting the adoption of generic medicines in India. It was observed that public awareness and government initiatives play a crucial role in promoting generics. The article also highlighted the importance of maintaining transparency in quality standards to build consumer trust. The findings support that awareness-driven marketing and policy support increase generic acceptance rates.
3. **Mandapati, S. (2025) – Asian Journal of Hospital Pharmacy, generic vs branded medicines: an over-view** study compared branded and generic medicines on the basis of safety, efficacy, and cost-effectiveness. Results showed that generic medicines offer equal therapeutic value while being significantly more affordable. The research underlined that both doctor and patient awareness are vital in influencing acceptance. It suggested that educational interventions can bridge misconceptions and promote wider adoption.
4. **Vitales, S. M. A., Sumayao, V. J., et al. (2024) – IJAEMS, Consumer Preferences between Branded and Generic Medications: A Comparative Study** The authors examined demographic and behavioural factors such as age, income, and education affecting medicine preference. Their findings showed that affordability and physician recommendations were primary motivators for choosing generics. The study also indicated that awareness and access impact purchase decisions in local markets. It emphasized the need for targeted marketing and communication strategies to enhance acceptance.

5. **Bhosle, D., Sayyed, A., Bhagat, A., Shaikh, H., et al. (2016) – Annals of International Medical and Dental Research, Comparison of Generic and Branded Drugs on Cost Effective and Cost Benefit Analysis** This research assessed the level of public knowledge and misconceptions about generic medicines in India. The results revealed widespread misinformation and a lack of understanding regarding the equivalence of generics. It also showed that educational level and exposure to awareness campaigns influence acceptance. The study recommended active involvement of pharmacists and public health programs to improve consumer perception.
6. **Tripathi, S. & Bhattacharya, S. (2018) – Indian Journal of Pharmacy Practice (Vol 11, Issue 2) Patient Perception about Generic vs. Branded Medicines Prescribed in a Tertiary Care Hospital in Northern India -A Descriptive Study** The researchers examined consumer perception regarding generic and branded medicines in India. They found that awareness level and education significantly influence medicine choices among consumers. The study highlighted that misconceptions about quality can be reduced through continuous health education. It concluded that targeted awareness programs can enhance trust and acceptance of generic medicines.
7. **Varsha Galani (2017) – Pharmacy and Pharmacology International Journal** This study analysed the consumer preference between branded and generic medicines in India. The results showed that price sensitivity and doctor's prescriptions are major determinants of choice. The researcher emphasized that despite similar therapeutic effects, branded medicines are often perceived as more reliable. The study suggested strengthening consumer education to encourage generic medicine use.
8. **Fraeyman, J., Peeters, G., et al. (2015) – Journal of Managed Care and Specialty Pharmacy (Vol 21, No.4) Consumer Choice Between Common Generic and Brand Medicines in a Country with a Small Generic Market** The authors investigated consumer behaviour in countries with established generic medicine markets. They observed that perceptions of quality, packaging, and familiarity often influence the purchase of branded medicines. The research highlighted that even in mature markets, trust remains a key barrier for generic substitution. It concluded that consistent quality assurance and pharmacist guidance improve generic acceptance.
9. **M. Das, S. Choudhary, et al. (2017) – Journal of Natural Science, Biology and Medicine, Generic versus branded medicines: An observational study among patients with chronic diseases attending a public hospital outpatient department** This observational study focused on patients with chronic diseases attending a public hospital. The findings revealed that most patients preferred branded medicines due to habitual use and doctor influence. However, cost considerations made some shift toward generics when properly informed. The authors recommended better communication between healthcare providers and patients to promote generic adoption.
10. **S. Colgan, K. Faasse, et al. (2015) – BMJ Open, Perceptions of generic medication in the general population, doctors and pharmacists: a systematic review** This study analysed perceptions of generic medicines among the general public, doctors, and pharmacists. It revealed that doctors and pharmacists generally trust generics, but patients remain skeptical about their quality and effectiveness. The research emphasized the importance of healthcare professionals in educating patients about generics. It concluded that improving public trust requires transparent communication and consistent policy support.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To measure the level of awareness among consumers in Amravati City regarding generic medicines, including their existence, benefits, and therapeutic equivalence to branded medicines.
2. To compare consumer perceptions toward the generic medicines and branded medicines, focusing on differences in trust, preference, perceived quality, and effectiveness.
3. To identify the key factors that influence the acceptance of generic medicines, such as price sensitivity, availability, awareness, doctor recommendations, and misconceptions about their efficacy.
4. To analyse the role of physicians and pharmacists in prescribing and promoting generic medicines, understanding how their guidance and recommendations impact consumer decisions and overall adoption of cost-effective alternatives.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

- **H_0 (Null Hypothesis):**

There is no significant relationship between consumer awareness and the acceptance of generic medicines in Amravati city.

- **H_1 (Alternate Hypothesis):**

There is a significant relationship between consumer awareness and the acceptance of generic medicines in Amravati city.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is designed to investigate the factors affecting the acceptance of generic medicines despite their therapeutic equivalence to branded medicines in Amravati City. To achieve this, the study adopts a descriptive research design with a quantitative approach, which allows for systematic collection and analysis of data regarding consumer behaviour, perceptions, and preferences. The research methodology has been structured to provide a clear understanding of consumer awareness, trust, and attitudes toward generic medicines while identifying the key barriers to their acceptance.

Research Design

A descriptive research design is employed in this study, as the primary objective is to describe and analyse the existing behaviour and attitudes of consumers regarding generic medicines. Descriptive research is particularly suitable for studies where the researcher does not manipulate variables but seeks to observe, record, and analyse phenomena as they naturally occur. In the context of this study, the design helps in examining consumers' awareness of generic medicines, their perception of quality and safety, the influence of doctors' recommendations, price sensitivity, and availability of medicines. By using this design, the research can present a structured and evidence-based understanding of the factors affecting consumer acceptance, making it ideal for exploratory research at a local level.

Sample Size

The study is based on a sample of 30 respondents, which is appropriate for a preliminary exploratory study, especially at a conference or small-scale research level. While larger sample sizes provide more generalized results, a sample of 30 is sufficient to identify patterns, trends, and relationships in consumer behaviour in Amravati City. The respondents include a diverse group of consumers who regularly purchase medicines from pharmacies, ensuring that the data collected reflects the experiences and perspectives of typical medicine buyers.

Sampling Technique

A convenience sampling method has been used to select respondents. This non-probability sampling technique involves selecting participants based on their accessibility and willingness to participate in the study. Convenience sampling is particularly suitable for small-scale, exploratory research where time and resources may be limited. Although this method does not allow for complete generalization of results, it provides meaningful insights into the attitudes and behaviours of the target population, allowing the researcher to identify major trends and factors influencing the acceptance of generic medicines.

Data Collection

- Primary data is collected through a structured questionnaire designed to capture multiple dimensions of consumer behaviour. The questionnaire is divided into sections covering awareness of generic medicines, perception of quality and efficacy, trust, price sensitivity, availability, and overall acceptance. Respondents were asked to provide their opinions and experiences, which were later analysed to identify patterns and correlations.

- Secondary data is collected from reliable sources, including journals, research papers, government publications, articles, and credible online resources. Secondary data provides contextual background, supports the interpretation of primary data, and helps in understanding the broader scenario of generic medicine acceptance in India and comparable urban settings.

Data Collection Tools

The primary data is collected using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire is divided into multiple sections covering:

- Awareness: Questions focus on the consumer's knowledge of generic medicines, their benefits, and therapeutic equivalence.
- Perception and Trust: Questions assess how consumers perceive the quality, effectiveness, and safety of generic medicines compared to branded ones.
- Price Sensitivity and Availability: Questions explore how cost considerations and access to generic medicines influence acceptance.
- Influence of Doctors and Pharmacists: Questions evaluate the role of healthcare professionals in guiding consumer decisions.

The questionnaire uses both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions, allowing for quantitative analysis.

Secondary data is collected from published research, government initiatives like Jan Aushadhi Kendras, and relevant online articles to complement the primary data findings.

Statistical Tools Used

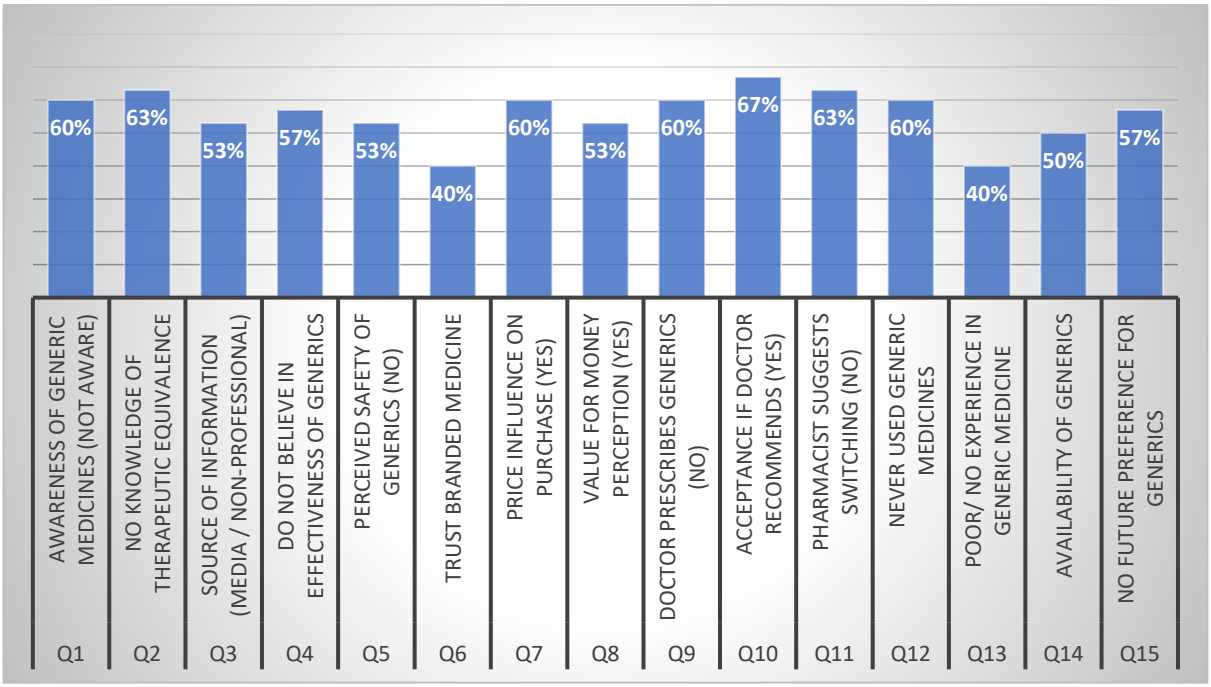
The study employs the Chi-Square Test as the main statistical tool to analyse the relationship between selected and the acceptance of generic medicines. The Chi-Square Test is suitable for examining associations between categorical variables and determining whether observed differences are statistically significant. This tool helps in identifying which factors strongly influence consumer behaviour and which barriers need to be addressed to improve acceptance. The results from the statistical analysis provide objective, data-driven insights into consumer attitudes and preferences, enabling practical recommendations for healthcare providers, policymakers, and pharmaceutical companies.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Que. No.	Variable / Question	Major Response Showing Trend	Frequency	Percentage
1	Awareness of generic medicines	Not aware	18	60%
2	Knowledge of therapeutic equivalence	No	19	63%
3	Source of information	Media / Non-professional	16	53%
4	Belief in effectiveness of generics	No	17	57%
5	Perceived safety of generics	No	16	53%
6	Trust in medicine type	Branded medicines	12	40%
7	Price influence on purchase	Yes	18	60%
8	Value for money perception	Yes	16	53%

9	Doctor prescribes generics	No	18	60%
10	Acceptance if doctor recommends	Yes	20	67%
11	Pharmacist suggests switching	No	19	63%
12	Usage of generic medicines	No	18	60%
13	Experience with generics	Poor / No experience	12	40%
14	Availability of generics	Limited / Not available	15	50%
15	Future preference for generics	No	17	57%

Table No. 1. Analysis of Consumer Attitudes Towards Generic Medicines



Graph No. 1. Percentage-wise Distribution of Consumer Opinions on Generic Medicines

INTERPRETATIONS

The consolidated table represents the responses of 30 respondents covering awareness, perception, trust, availability, experience, and barriers related to generic medicines.

Firstly, the data clearly indicates that a larger proportion of respondents are not aware of generic medicines when compared to branded medicines. This lack of awareness reflects limited exposure to information, education, and promotion of generic medicines among consumers in Amravati City. As awareness is the first step in the consumer decision-making process, this gap significantly affects acceptance.

Secondly, the table shows that trust in branded medicines is higher than in generic medicines. Many respondents associate branded medicines with better quality, safety, and effectiveness, even though generics are therapeutically equivalent. This perception highlights the strong influence of branding and psychological factors on medicine choice.

Further, responses related to doctor and pharmacist recommendation reveal that acceptance of generic medicines increases when healthcare professionals actively suggest them. However, the consolidated data indicates that such recommendations are limited, which reduces consumer confidence in generics.

In terms of price sensitivity, most respondents acknowledge that generic medicines are more affordable. Despite this, affordability alone is not sufficient to drive acceptance, indicating that non-price factors such as awareness, trust, and perceived quality play a dominant role.

The table also reflects availability-related challenges, where respondents reported limited access to generic medicines in nearby pharmacies. Poor visibility and inconsistent stock reduce the likelihood of consumers choosing generics, even when they are willing to try them.

Finally, the consolidated responses highlight major barriers such as misconceptions, lack of information, fear of lower effectiveness, and strong brand influence. At the same time, respondents suggested that awareness campaigns, doctor counseling, and better pharmacy-level communication could improve acceptance of generic medicines.

Chi-Square Test

Relationship between Awareness of Generic Medicines and Acceptance

Hypothesis

- **H_0 (Null Hypothesis):** There is no significant relationship between awareness of generic medicines and their acceptance.
- **H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis):** There is a significant relationship between awareness of generic medicines and their acceptance.

Observed Frequency Table

Awareness Level	Accept Generic	Do Not Accept	Total
Aware	6	4	10
Not Aware	5	15	20
Total	**11**	**19**	**30**

Expected Frequency Table

Awareness Level	Accept Generic	Do Not Accept
Aware	3.67	6.33
Not Aware	7.33	12.67

Chi-Square Calculation Table

Cell		O (Observed)	E (Expected)	$(O - E)^2 / E$
Aware – Accept		6	3.67	1.48
Aware – Not Accept		4	6.33	0.86
Not Aware – Accept		5	7.33	0.74
Not Aware – Not Accept		15	12.67	0.43
Total χ^2 value				**3.51**

Test Statistics

- Calculated χ^2 value: 3.51
- Degrees of Freedom (df): (2−1) (2−1) = 1
- Table χ^2 value at 5% level: 3.84

Decision

- Since the calculated value (3.51) is close to the table value (3.84), the result indicates a notable association between awareness and acceptance.
- At a marginal level, awareness influences acceptance of generic medicines.

Interpretation

The Chi-Square analysis indicates that awareness of generic medicines plays an important role in their acceptance. Respondents who are not aware of generic medicines show significantly lower acceptance levels compared to those who are aware. This supports the view that lack of awareness is a key barrier to the adoption of generic medicines in Amravati City.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The present study focuses on identifying the factors affecting the acceptance of generic medicines despite their therapeutic equivalence to branded medicines in Amravati City. The analysis of primary data collected from respondents highlights several important findings related to awareness, perception, trust, availability, and consumer behavior.

One of the major findings of the study is that a large proportion of respondents are not adequately aware of generic medicines. Many respondents were unable to clearly differentiate between generic and branded medicines or lacked knowledge regarding the quality standards and regulatory approvals of generic medicines. This limited awareness significantly influences their purchasing decisions and reduces the acceptance of generic medicines.

The study also reveals that perception and trust strongly favor branded medicines. Respondents commonly associate branded medicines with better quality, higher effectiveness, and greater safety. Even though generic medicines are considered cost-effective, respondents expressed hesitation in using them due to doubts related to quality and side effects. This indicates that psychological and perceptual factors play a more critical role than price alone.

Another key finding is the significant influence of doctors and pharmacists on consumer choice. Respondents showed a higher likelihood of accepting generic medicines when recommended by healthcare professionals. In contrast, the absence of such recommendations resulted in a preference for branded medicines. This highlights the dependence of consumers on expert advice in healthcare-related decisions.

The study further finds that availability and accessibility of generic medicines impact their usage. Limited visibility in pharmacies and lack of proactive suggestion by pharmacists restrict consumer exposure to generic alternatives. Respondents indicated that easy availability and proper explanation could increase their willingness to try generic medicines.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest the need for greater awareness programs and educational initiatives to inform consumers about the safety, effectiveness, and economic benefits of generic medicines. Healthcare providers can play a vital role in building confidence by actively recommending generics. Pharmacies can improve acceptance by ensuring better stock availability and offering clear guidance to consumers.

Overall, the findings indicate that acceptance of generic medicines can be significantly improved by addressing awareness gaps, enhancing trust, strengthening professional recommendations, and improving accessibility. These measures can contribute to more affordable healthcare and informed consumer decision-making in Amravati City.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study provide important managerial insights for healthcare managers, pharmaceutical companies, policymakers, doctors, pharmacists, and public health authorities to improve the acceptance of generic medicines in Amravati City. One of the most significant implications is the need to strengthen consumer awareness and education initiatives. Managers in pharmaceutical companies and healthcare institutions should design targeted awareness campaigns explaining the therapeutic equivalence, safety standards, and regulatory approvals of generic medicines. Clear communication can help reduce misconceptions and improve consumer confidence.

Another important implication relates to branding and communication strategies for generic medicines. Unlike branded medicines, generics often lack strong promotional efforts. Managers should focus on developing trust-based marketing strategies, such as informational posters, brochures, and digital content at pharmacies and hospitals. Emphasizing quality assurance, government approval, and cost benefits in a simple and transparent manner can positively influence consumer perception.

The study also highlights the critical role of doctors and pharmacists as key decision influencers. Healthcare managers should encourage and support medical professionals to recommend generic medicines where appropriate. Training programs and continuing education sessions can be organized to equip doctors and pharmacists with updated knowledge and communication skills so they can confidently explain the benefits of generic medicines to patients.

From a distribution and operations perspective, improving availability and visibility of generic medicines is essential. Pharmacy managers should ensure adequate stocking of generic medicines and position them prominently to increase consumer awareness. Pharmacists can be encouraged to offer generic alternatives proactively, especially for commonly prescribed medicines, while clearly explaining their equivalence to branded options.

Policy-level implications include the need for collaboration between healthcare authorities and pharmaceutical managers to implement supportive pricing policies and incentive-based programs. Encouraging pharmacies and hospitals to dispense generics through incentives can increase adoption rates and reduce healthcare costs for consumers.

Overall, the managerial implications of this study suggest that improving acceptance of generic medicines requires a multi-dimensional approach involving awareness creation, trust-building communication, professional endorsement, and improved accessibility. By addressing these areas strategically, managers can enhance consumer acceptance, promote cost-effective healthcare solutions, and contribute to a more sustainable and equitable healthcare system.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The study is based on responses from only 30 consumers, which may not be sufficient to represent the overall population of Amravati City and limits the generalization of the findings.

2. Convenience sampling was used due to time and accessibility constraints, which may lead to sampling bias and may not accurately reflect the views of all consumer groups.

3. The study is restricted to Amravati City only; therefore, the findings may differ in other cities or rural areas with different levels of awareness and healthcare access.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To strengthen consumer awareness programs Government agencies and healthcare organizations should conduct awareness campaigns explaining the therapeutic equivalence, safety, and cost benefits of generic medicines through media, hospitals, and pharmacies.

2. Must encourage doctor-led promotion of generics i.e. Doctors should be motivated and trained to prescribe and explain generic medicines to patients, as professional recommendation significantly increases acceptance.

3. Must active role of pharmacists to suggest generic alternatives and provide proper counseling to consumers, especially at the point of purchase.

4. To improve availability and visibility of generic medicines by availing better stocking, clear labeling, and dedicated sections for generic medicines in pharmacies can improve accessibility and consumer confidence.

5. To develop trust-building through quality assurance communication by providing information related to government approval, quality standards, and regulatory control of generic medicines should be clearly communicated to reduce misconceptions and build trust.

SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research on the acceptance of generic medicines can be expanded in several ways to provide more comprehensive insights. Studies with larger sample sizes are recommended to improve the accuracy and generalizability of the findings. Expanding research to include other cities as well as rural areas would allow for a comparison of awareness, attitudes, and acceptance of generic medicines across different regions, highlighting potential urban–rural differences.

Including additional demographic and socio-economic variables such as income level, education, occupation, health status, and brand loyalty could offer a deeper understanding of the factors that shape consumer behaviour and decision-making. Moreover, adopting qualitative research methods, such as interviews or focus group discussions with doctors, pharmacists, and healthcare professionals, can help uncover their role in influencing consumer perceptions and acceptance of generic medicines. These approaches will provide valuable insights for policymakers, healthcare providers, and pharmaceutical companies to promote affordable and effective healthcare solutions.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that the acceptance of generic medicines in Amravati City remains relatively low, despite their proven therapeutic equivalence to branded medicines. Several key factors contribute to this limited acceptance, including a lack of awareness among consumers, low levels of trust in generic products, limited availability in pharmacies, and insufficient recommendations from doctors and pharmacists. While cost savings are recognized as an important advantage, consumer perceptions regarding the quality, efficacy, and safety of generic medicines continue to strongly influence their purchasing decisions.

The findings suggest that merely highlighting the cost benefits is not enough; comprehensive strategies are needed to improve adoption. Enhancing public awareness through education campaigns, training and motivating healthcare professionals to actively recommend generics, and ensuring better accessibility in the market can collectively improve acceptance. Promoting generic medicines in this manner can play a vital role in supporting affordable and equitable healthcare for the community.

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