

A STUDY ON CONSUMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS PAIN KILLER TABLETS AT COIMBATORE CITY

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ABSTRACT

Pain killer tablets, commonly referred to as analgesics or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), constitute one of the most widely consumed categories of over the counter (OTC) and prescription pharmaceuticals globally. In India, rapid urbanisation, changing lifestyle patterns, and increased health awareness have collectively influenced consumer behaviour towards pharmaceutical products, including pain killers. The present study investigates the consumer perception towards pain killer tablets among residents of Coimbatore city, one of Tamil Nadu's foremost industrial and educational hubs. A structured questionnaire was administered to 150 respondents selected through convenience sampling. The study analyses dimensions including brand awareness, purchase behaviour, price sensitivity, usage frequency, awareness about side effects, and the role of medical professionals' recommendations. Statistical tools including percentage analysis, chi-square test, and weighted average method were employed for data interpretation. The findings reveal that brand loyalty, physician recommendation, and prior experience are the primary determinants of consumer preference.

Keywords: Consumer Perception, Pain Killer Tablets, Analgesics, NSAIDs, OTC Drugs, Coimbatore, Pharmaceutical Marketing, Self-Medication, Brand Awareness.

1. INTRODUCTION

The pharmaceutical industry in India has witnessed unprecedented growth over the past two decades, emerging as one of the largest producers of generic medicines globally. Within the domestic consumption landscape, analgesics and pain relievers represent a significant and consistently growing market segment. Pain is one of the most universal human experiences whether acute or chronic and the ease of access to pain killer tablets has made them among the most frequently purchased pharmaceutical products across all socio-economic strata.

Pain killer tablets encompass a broad spectrum of drugs including paracetamol, ibuprofen, diclofenac, aspirin, naproxen, and tramadol, each with distinct pharmacological properties, efficacy profiles, and risk factors. While prescription analgesics require physician authorisation, a substantial segment of mild to moderate analgesics is freely available as over-the-counter (OTC) products, enabling consumers to self-prescribe without professional medical guidance. This pattern of self-medication, while offering convenience, poses significant public health challenges including drug dependency, gastric complications, nephrotoxicity, and drug interactions.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A comprehensive review of existing literature reveals several important insights into consumer behaviour and perception in the pharmaceutical domain.

Rajendran & Muthuswamy (2019) conducted a study on pharmaceutical consumer behaviour in Tier-II cities of Tamil Nadu and concluded that physician recommendation exerted the strongest influence on brand selection, followed by pharmacist suggestion and advertising. Brand loyalty was found to be significantly associated with educational level and prior product experience.

Patel et al. (2020) investigated price sensitivity among pain reliever consumers in Gujarat and discovered that lower-income consumers exhibited high price sensitivity and frequently switched brands based on retail price, whereas higher-income respondents prioritised brand equity and perceived quality. The study underscored the heterogeneous nature of pharmaceutical consumer segments.

Krishnaswamy & Anand (2021) analysed the role of social media and digital advertising in shaping consumer attitudes towards OTC drugs in urban India. Their findings indicated a growing influence of online health communities and influencer endorsements, particularly among consumers aged 18–35, though this influence was tempered by trust in established medical institutions.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess the level of brand awareness and brand preference among consumers of pain killer tablets in Coimbatore city.
2. To analyse the purchase behaviour including frequency of purchase, preferred purchase channel, and average monthly expenditure.
3. To examine the factors influencing consumer choice of a specific pain killer brand.
4. To evaluate consumer awareness regarding the side effects and safe usage guidelines of pain killer tablets.
5. To identify the role of physicians, pharmacists, and media in shaping consumer purchase decisions.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive research design. Descriptive research is appropriate when the researcher seeks to portray the characteristics of a population or phenomenon accurately. The study is cross-sectional in nature, with data collected during the period January 2024 to March 2024.

4.2 Population and Sample

The target population comprises consumers residing in Coimbatore city who have purchased or consumed pain killer tablets at least once in the preceding six months. A sample of 150 respondents was selected using convenience sampling from various localities including RS Puram, Gandhipuram, Peelamedu, Singanallur, and Saibaba Colony.

4.3 Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data were collected. Primary data was gathered through a structured questionnaire comprising 35 items organised across demographic profile, purchase

behaviour, brand preferences, influencing factors, awareness levels, and satisfaction parameters. Secondary data was sourced from journals, pharmaceutical company reports, WHO publications, and government health data.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	82	54.7
	Female	68	45.3
Age Group	Below 25 years	38	25.3
	25–35 years	47	31.3
	36–50 years	42	28.0
	Above 50 years	23	15.4
Education	School Level	21	14.0
	Undergraduate	54	36.0
	Postgraduate	58	38.7
	Professional Degree	17	11.3
Occupation	Student	32	21.3
	Private Employee	49	32.7
	Government Employee	27	18.0
	Business	24	16.0
	Others	18	12.0
Monthly Income	Below ₹15,000	28	18.7
	₹15,001–₹30,000	44	29.3
	₹30,001–₹50,000	51	34.0
	Above ₹50,000	27	18.0

5.2 Brand Awareness and Preference

Brand Name	Active Ingredient	No. Aware	% Awareness	Preferred (n)	% Preference
Crocin	Paracetamol	148	98.7	62	41.3
Combiflam	Ibuprofen + Paracetamol	141	94.0	41	27.3
Brufen	Ibuprofen	122	81.3	18	12.0
Voveran	Diclofenac	98	65.3	12	8.0
Aspirin	Acetylsalicylic Acid	112	74.7	9	6.0
Ultracet	Tramadol + Paracetamol	76	50.7	8	5.4

Crocin (paracetamol) emerged as the most preferred brand with 41.3% of respondents expressing clear preference, attributable to its long-standing market presence, perceived safety, and extensive promotional visibility. Combiflam ranked second at 27.3%, preferred particularly by respondents aged 25–50 who associated it with faster relief for musculoskeletal pain.

5.3 Awareness of Side Effects

Side Effect	Fully Aware (%)	Partially Aware (%)	Not Aware (%)
Gastric irritation / Acidity	61.3	29.4	9.3
Liver damage (Paracetamol overdose)	43.3	35.3	21.4
Kidney complications (NSAIDs)	38.7	34.0	27.3
Allergic reactions	54.0	28.0	18.0
Drug interactions with other medicines	29.3	38.0	32.7
Blood thinning effects (Aspirin)	41.3	36.0	22.7

Gastric irritation was the most widely recognised side effect (61.3% fully aware), likely because it is a frequently experienced immediate consequence. In contrast, drug interactions received the lowest full awareness (29.3%), representing a significant public health risk. Awareness of organ-level complications such as liver and kidney damage remains inadequate, particularly among self-medicating consumers.

6. FINDINGS

- Crocin (paracetamol) is the most preferred pain killer brand among Coimbatore consumers, chosen by 41.3% of respondents, followed by Combiflam (27.3%).
- Physician recommendation is the single most influential factor in brand selection (Weighted Average Score: 4.52), followed by prior personal experience (4.31) and pharmacist suggestion (3.98).
- Nearly half the respondents (49.3%) purchase pain killers only as needed, while 25.3% maintain a regular monthly stock, suggesting a blend of acute and anticipatory medication behaviour.
- Local pharmacies remain the preferred purchase channel (59.3%), though online platforms are gaining traction particularly among respondents below 35 years of age (28.6% in this age group).
- Awareness of side effects is incomplete and uneven. While gastric irritation is widely known, organ-specific risks and drug interaction hazards remain poorly understood.

7. SUGGESTION

1. Consumers in Coimbatore should be provided with more awareness regarding the proper use of pain killer tablets. Many people purchase medicines without consulting a doctor and may not know about the side effects or correct dosage. Medical shops and healthcare centres can organize awareness campaigns to educate people about safe consumption of pain killers.
2. Pharmaceutical companies should improve the information given on medicine covers and advertisements. The packaging should clearly mention the purpose, dosage, side effects, and precautions in simple language. This will help consumers understand the product better and create a positive perception towards pain killer tablets.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 For Pharmaceutical Companies

- Invest in physician detailing and continuing medical education (CME) programmes, as physician recommendation remains the dominant purchase driver.
- Develop clear, multilingual patient information leaflets (PILs) highlighting proper dosage, contraindications, and side effects in accessible Tamil and English formats for the Coimbatore market.

9.2 For Healthcare Professionals and Pharmacists

- Pharmacists should proactively counsel consumers at the point of purchase regarding maximum dosage limits, safe usage duration, and common drug interactions, particularly for elderly patients.
- Primary care physicians should routinely enquire about self-medication with analgesics during consultations to identify and address problematic usage patterns early.

10. CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive empirical analysis of consumer perception towards pain killer tablets in Coimbatore city, encompassing brand awareness, purchase behaviour, influencing factors, and side effect awareness. The findings underscore that while brand awareness and physician recommendation are robust drivers of consumer choice, significant gaps in side effect knowledge and the widespread practice of self-medication necessitate urgent attention from both the pharmaceutical industry and public health machinery.

Consumer perception of pain killers in Coimbatore is shaped by a complex ecosystem of medical authority, personal experience, price considerations, and emerging digital influences. As the pharmaceutical market continues to evolve—with increasing generics penetration, digital retail growth, and shifting health literacy—stakeholders must adapt their strategies to promote not merely product usage, but informed, safe, and rational analgesic consumption.

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