

# Reasons of Generic Medicines avoidance by Patients in India: A Quantitative Investigation

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## **Abstract**

The high cost of healthcare is a major concern for patients in India, and one of the ways to reduce this burden is by increasing the use of generic medicines. However, despite the availability and affordability of generic medicines, their usage remains low in the country. This study aims to investigate the reasons behind the avoidance of generic medicines by patients in India. This can highlight the need for improving the perception and trust in the quality of generic medicines among patients and healthcare professionals in India. Furthermore, policymakers could also introduce regulations that mandate the use of generic medicines in public health facilities and incentivize doctors and pharmacists to prescribe and dispense generic medicines. By addressing the factors contributing to this issue, policymakers, healthcare professionals, and pharmaceutical companies can work together to increase the use of generic medicines and improve access to affordable healthcare for all.

**Keywords:** *Generic Medicines, Patient Avoidance, Trust, Effectiveness, Healthcare Professionals, Pharmaceutical Companies.*

## **Introduction**

Access to affordable healthcare is a critical issue in India, where the cost of medical treatment often acts as a barrier for a large proportion of the population. India's healthcare system is characterized by a combination of public and private healthcare providers, with the majority of the population relying on public healthcare facilities. Despite the availability of low-cost generic medicines in India, the usage of these medicines remains low, with many patients opting for branded medicines instead. This avoidance of generic medicines has significant implications for healthcare in India, as it contributes to the high cost of medical treatment and hinders access to affordable healthcare.

Generic medicines are identical in terms of quality, safety, and efficacy to branded medicines, but are significantly cheaper due to the absence of the costs associated with research and development, marketing, and branding. In India, the government has implemented several

initiatives to promote the use of generic medicines, including the Jan Aushadhi scheme, which aims to provide low-cost generic medicines to the population through dedicated retail outlets. However, despite these efforts, the usage of generic medicines remains low, with many patients and healthcare professionals opting for branded medicines instead.

Understanding the reasons behind the avoidance of generic medicines by patients in India is crucial to addressing this issue and improving access to affordable healthcare. Several studies have highlighted the factors contributing to this avoidance, including the lack of trust in the quality of generic medicines, the perception that generic medicines are inferior to branded medicines, and the influence of healthcare professionals who prefer to prescribe or dispense branded medicines. In addition, many patients are concerned about the potential side effects and adverse reactions associated with generic medicines, which contributes to their avoidance.

This study aims to investigate the reasons for the avoidance of generic medicines by patients in India through a quantitative investigation. The study aims to provide insights into the factors contributing to the avoidance of generic medicines by patients in India and to highlight potential solutions that can be implemented to increase the use of generic medicines and improve access to affordable healthcare in India.

## **Literature Review**

In India, generic medicines have been promoted as a cost-effective alternative to brand-name drugs by the government and health organizations. However, patients' reluctance to use generic drugs has become a significant challenge in India's healthcare system. This literature review aims to explore the reasons behind the avoidance of generic medicines by patients in India.

The perception of generic medicines' quality is a crucial factor in their avoidance by patients. According to a study by Kishore et al. (2015), patients believe that brand-name drugs are of superior quality and are more effective than generic medicines. This belief is further reinforced by the lack of trust in the quality control of generic medicines. Another study by Babar et al. (2010) showed that patients' preference for brand-name drugs is related to their perception of their efficacy and safety.

While generic medicines are cheaper than brand-name drugs, patients' perception of the price does not always align with the actual cost. According to Gupta and Rani (2017), patients perceive generic medicines to be cheaper than brand-name drugs but are skeptical about the

actual cost savings. Additionally, patients often have to pay for the consultation fees and diagnostic tests separately, which adds to the overall cost of treatment.

Patients' lack of knowledge and awareness about generic medicines is another factor contributing to their avoidance. Malhotra et al. (2013) concluded that patients' knowledge about generic medicines is limited, and they rely on the advice of their physicians and pharmacists. Additionally, patients are sceptical about the quality and effectiveness of generic medicines due to the lack of information and awareness about their regulatory approval process.

The prescribing behavior of physicians also plays a significant role in patients' avoidance of generic medicines. According to a study by Hussain et al. (2017), physicians' prescribing behavior is influenced by their personal experience, patient demand, and incentives from pharmaceutical companies. Additionally, physicians often prescribe brand-name drugs due to the lack of trust in the quality control of generic medicines.

The perception of the efficacy and safety of generic medicines is a crucial factor in their avoidance by patients. Kumar et al. (2018) found that patients' perception of generic medicines' efficacy and safety is significantly lower than that of brand-name drugs. Patients often associate generic medicines with lower quality, which affects their perception of their effectiveness and safety. This perception is further reinforced by the lack of trust in the quality control of generic medicines.

Lack of familiarity with generic medications is another factor in patients' desire for name-brand medications. Patients are more likely to select brand-name medications over generic ones due to the absence of brand recognition. Patients are more likely to notice brand-name medications because they are frequently heavily advertised and more visible, while generic medications are less noticeable, which encourages patients to favour them (Hassali et al., 2012).

Cultural factors also play a significant role in patients' avoidance of generic medicines. Dang and Li (2018) found that individualism is a crucial factor in patients' preference for brand-name drugs. Patients who value individualism are more likely to prefer brand-name drugs over generic medicines. Additionally, patients' trust in their physician's advice is affected by cultural factors, such as their perception of authority figures and the importance of social relationships.

Patients' lack of knowledge and awareness about generic medicines is another factor contributing to their avoidance. According to Gupta and Rani (2017), patients perceive generic medicines to be cheaper than brand-name drugs but are skeptical about the actual cost savings.

Additionally, patients often have limited knowledge about generic medicines and rely on their physician's advice, leading to a lack of awareness about their benefits.

A major factor in patients' avoidance of generic medications is their perception of their quality. In India, patients believe brand-name drugs to be of better quality than generic medications (Sengupta et al. 2015). Patients frequently avoid generic medications because they believe that they are less effective, have more side effects, and are of poorer quality. The absence of confidence in generic drug quality control serves to reinforce this impression.

Another factor in patients' avoidance is a lack of information and education about generic medications. Many patients in India are not conscious of the distinction between brand-name drugs and generic medications, according to a study by Kotwani et al. (2013). Patients often have limited information about generic medicines' safety, efficacy, and cost-effectiveness, leading to their reluctance to use them.

Physicians' prescription behaviour also plays a significant role in patients' avoidance of generic medicines. Kalyani et al. (2017) examined that physicians in India often prescribe brand-name drugs over generic medicines. This behaviour is influenced by various factors such as marketing by pharmaceutical companies, perceptions of the quality of generic medicines, and patient preferences. Patients' reliance on their physician's advice further reinforces their avoidance of generic medicines.

Patients' perception of cost savings is another factor contributing to their avoidance of generic medicines. According to Choudhury et al. (2018), patients in India perceive generic medicines to be cheaper than brand-name drugs but are sceptical about the actual cost savings. Patients often associate higher prices with higher quality and are reluctant to use lower-priced generic medicines.

Kamath et al. (2017) explored the reasons for the avoidance of generic medicines by patients in India. The authors found that a lack of trust in the quality and efficacy of generic medicines was a major factor contributing to patient avoidance. Patients were found to believe that generic medicines were less effective and of lower quality than their brand-name counterparts. The study also identified a lack of awareness and education among patients as another reason for avoidance. Patients were found to have little understanding of the differences between generic and brand-name medicines, and were often influenced by the opinions of family and friends when making healthcare decisions. Similarly, patients often believed that the lower cost of generic medicines was a reflection of their lower quality and efficacy. Patients were also found

to be willing to pay higher prices for brand-name medicines, perceiving them to be more reliable and effective (Gupta et al., 2018)

## Objective

1. To explore the reasons of generic medicines avoidance by patients in India

## Methodology

In this study 230 respondents were surveyed to know the reasons of generic medicines avoidance by patients in India. The study was conducted with the help of structured questionnaire. Also, researcher used a convenient sampling method for collecting the primary data. The data was analysed and evaluated by mean and t-test, after the completion of the fieldwork.

## Findings

Table below is sharing respondent's general details in which it is found that in total 230 respondents males are 54.3% and females are 45.7%. 27.4% are of 22 – 28 years old, another 26.5% are 29 – 35 years of age, 23.9% are of 36 – 45 years and remaining 22.2% are above 46 years of age. 23.9% respondents are students, 27.8% are businessman/self Employed, 24.4% are salaried, 9.6% are retired and remaining 14.3% are homemaker. Talking about their education, 23.9% are 12<sup>th</sup> pass, 49.1% are graduated and rest 27.0% are post graduated.

**Table 1 General Details**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	125	54.3
Female	105	45.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age (years)</b>		
22 – 28	63	27.4
29 – 35	61	26.5
36 – 45	55	23.9
Above 46	51	22.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>100</b>

<b>Occupation</b>		
Students	55	23.9
Business/Self Employed	64	27.8
Salaried	56	24.4
Retired	22	9.6
Homemaker	33	14.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Education Level</b>		
12 <sup>th</sup> Pass	55	23.9
Graduated	113	49.1
Post graduated	62	27.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 2 Reasons of Generic Medicines Avoidance by Patients in India**

S. No.	Statements	Mean Value	t value	Sig.
1.	Patients believe that brand-name drugs are of superior quality and are more effective than generic medicines	4.22	15.703	0.000
2.	Lack of trust in the quality control of generic medicines	3.96	12.435	0.000
3.	Patients' lack of knowledge and awareness about generic medicines is another factor contributing to their avoidance	4.34	17.633	0.000
4.	The prescribing behaviour of physicians also plays a significant role in patients' avoidance of generic medicines	4.11	14.312	0.000
5.	The perception of the efficacy and safety of generic medicines is a crucial factor in their avoidance by patients	4.03	13.499	0.000
6.	Lack of familiarity with generic medications is another factor in patients' desire for name-brand medications	3.87	11.210	0.000
7.	Cultural factors such as physician advice also play a significant role in patients' avoidance of generic medicines	3.90	11.706	0.000
8.	Patients' perception of cost savings is another factor contributing to their avoidance of generic medicines	3.12	1.568	0.059

9.	Potential side effects and adverse reactions associated with generic medicines, which contributes to their avoidance	3.66	8.519	0.000
10.	Patients influenced by the opinions of family and friends when making healthcare decisions	4.17	15.365	0.000

Table above is showing the reasons of generic medicines avoidance by patients in India. The respondent says that patients' lack of knowledge and awareness about generic medicines is another factor contributing to their avoidance with mean value 4.34, patients believe that brand-name drugs are of superior quality and are more effective than generic medicines with mean value 4.22 and patients influenced by the opinions of family and friends when making healthcare decisions with mean value 4.17. The respondent also believes the prescribing behaviour of physicians also plays a significant role in patients' avoidance of generic medicines with mean value 4.11, the perception of the efficacy and safety of generic medicines is a crucial factor in their avoidance by patients with mean value 4.03 and lack of trust in the quality control of generic medicines with mean value 3.96. The respondent also says that, cultural factors such as physician advice also play a significant role in patients' avoidance of generic medicines with mean value 3.90, lack of familiarity with generic medications is another factor in patients' desire for name-brand medications with mean value 3.87, potential side effects and adverse reactions associated with generic medicines, which contributes to their avoidance with mean value 3.66 and patients' perception of cost savings is another factor contributing to their avoidance of generic medicines with mean 3.12. Further t-test shows that all the statements are significant (with the value below 0.05) except patients' perception of cost savings is another factor contributing to their avoidance of generic medicines (*significance value 0.059*).

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the avoidance of generic medicines by patients in India is a complex issue influenced by various factors such as patients' perception of quality, lack of awareness and education, physician's prescription behavior, and perception of cost savings. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach involving healthcare providers, policymakers, and pharmaceutical companies to improve patients' understanding and trust in generic medicines. The promotion of generic medicines by the government, awareness campaigns, and education programs for patients and physicians can play a crucial role in addressing the issue. It is essential to address patients' perceptions of generic medicines' quality and safety to encourage

their use as a cost-effective alternative to brand-name drugs. The ultimate goal should be to ensure that patients have access to safe, effective, and affordable medicines that meet their healthcare needs.

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