

EFFECTS OF SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS ON COMMUNITY PHARMACIST'S DECISION MAKING

Muhammed Anwar T. T.^{1*} and Rajalakshmi G. R.²

¹Department of Pharmacy Practice, College of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Government Medical College, Kozhikode, Kerala, 673008, India.

²Assistant Professor of Pharmacy, College of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Government Medical College, Kozhikode, Kerala, 673008, India.

Article Received on
30 August 2020,

Revised on 20 Sept. 2020,
Accepted on 10 October 2020

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr202013-18994

*Corresponding Author

Muhammed Anwar T. T.

Department of Pharmacy
Practice, College of
Pharmaceutical Sciences,
Government Medical
College, Kozhikode, Kerala,
673008, India.

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Community pharmacists are facing so many ethical dilemmas in their day to day life. These issues are questioning their aptitude and attitude towards their profession. Community pharmacies are the link between the physician and pharmaceutical companies. So they have to face many ethical issues to fulfil both of their desires.

Materials and methods: Data are collected from various reviews and research articles regarding ethical dilemmas of community pharmacists and the effect of social and demographic factors on ethical decision making. **Discussion:** Factors regarding ethical decision making divided into two categories, personal factors and establishment factors. Personal factors include age, gender, work experience, educational qualification. Establishment factors include location of the pharmacy

and the number of pharmacists in the community pharmacy. **Conclusion:** Community pharmacists are involved in various ethical dilemma situations in their day to day life. The major ethical problems are due to fulfil the physician's request and employer's intrusion into the activities of the pharmacist. They have to face these problems at least once in a day in their professional career.

KEYWORDS: Community pharmacist; ethics; personal factors; establishment factors.

INTRODUCTION

Pharmacists, who are working in the community pharmacies are known as "community pharmacists" and they are directly linked with the people of the community. The traditional

role of a community pharmacist is mainly entrapped in compounding and dispensing drugs for the patients. But nowadays the role of community pharmacists extrapolated to various pharmaceutical care activities such as patient counselling and drug information services.^[1] They are experts in giving information regarding dose, dosage form, route of administration, adverse drug reactions and contraindications of drug. They are involved in offering the details of over the counter medications and other medical devices dispensed in community pharmacy settings. They can provide knowledge about seasonal diseases and lifestyle changes for chronic diseases. Moreover, they are the major link between the prescriber and the community.^[2]

Community pharmacists are facing so many ethical dilemmas in their day to day life. These issues are questioning their aptitude and attitude towards their profession.^[3] The ethical dilemmas of community pharmacists are mainly due to Behaviour of patients and physician's attitude towards the pharmacist.^[4] Their principles are challenged by trespassing of the pharmacy owner in their activities and it will cause compromising their ethical values. Their understanding of ethics, reliability, dependability, confidentiality and responsibility have a great role in the decision making at the time of ethical dilemmas.^[1] Community pharmacies are the link between physician and pharmaceutical companies.^[5] So, they have to face many ethical issues in order to fulfil both of their desires. Both physician and pharmaceutical companies make the pharmacy sector more and more ethically challenging.^[6] Community pharmacies are mainly running by independent persons and they are forced to compromise ethical values for increasing their profit. One of the major ethical compromise is giving the patient costly drug rather than a cheaper one in order to fulfil the aspiration of both prescriber and pharmaceutical companies.

Some studies found that age and work experience have a significant role in ethical decision making.^[7] Factors regarding ethical decision making can be divided into two categories, personal factors and establishment factors. Personal factors include age, gender, work experience and educational qualification. Establishment factors include location of the pharmacy and number of pharmacists in the community pharmacy.^[3]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data were collected from various review and research articles regarding ethical dilemmas of community pharmacists and the effect of social and demographic factors on ethical decision

making. Data were collected by using some electronic databases such as Google Scholar and PubMed.

DISCUSSION

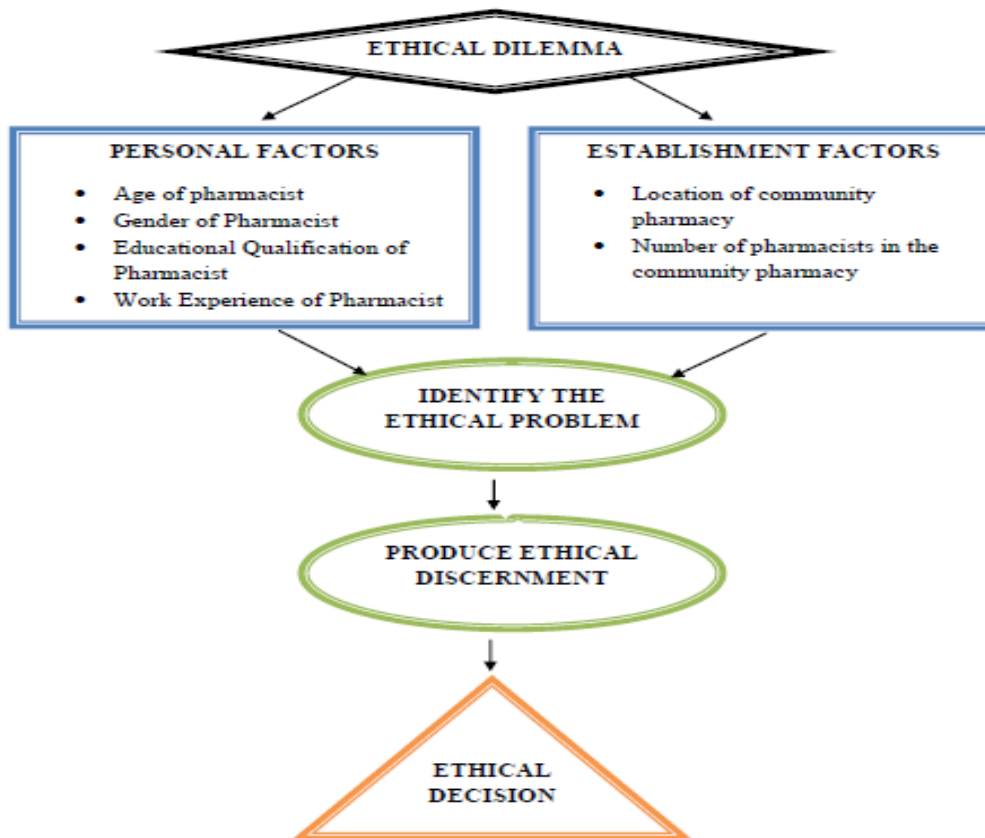


Fig. 1: How socio-demographic factors helps in ethical decision making.

Various studies showed that personal and establishment factors have a significant role in decision making of ethical dilemma situations. Their importance is given below.

I. Personal factors

➤ Age of the pharmacist

Age has a significant role in ethical decision making. The older pharmacist dispenses drugs without hesitation if there is any confusion. The younger ones have more hesitation and they are more ethically concerned about patient health. Younger pharmacists are given more importance to the confidentiality of the patient information than older ones.^[3] It may be due to their freshness in their career and in their starting days they tend to do more services to the patient and they are more dedicated to their profession. But as the age increases the day to day routine fed up them and they will abstain from these services.

➤ **Gender of the pharmacist**

Gender has a big role in ethical decision making. Both men and women are approaching the dilemma situation in similar ways. But their ethical decision making is in different ways.^[8] Men are approaching the decision making process as task oriented. He has to finish his task and move on. But women pharmacists are more relationship oriented as every problem they are relating to their life situations and they are thinking these situations are in their life.^[9] The institutional or organisational policies have a big role in the decision making of both genders.^[10]

➤ **Educational qualification of the pharmacist**

The educational qualification has a big role in ethical decision making.^[11,12] But some studies showed that its impact is insignificant.^[13,14] A study in Ireland by Doyle E et al concluded that education increases ethical reasoning and there by improves the decision making ability.^[15] It showed that good moral education can make the personnel mature enough to face these ethical issues In their life. In Indian field of education, students are learning pharmaceutical jurisprudence as a subject in both diploma and degree courses of pharmacy.^[3] The teachers are giving moral lectures about ethics in these classes and it will increase the ethical reasoning ability of the student and also get more information about ethics in inter professional relationship, behaviour with patients and in their day to day life as a legal drug lord who is handling lifesaving drugs for the society.

➤ **Work experience of the pharmacist**

Work experience increases the ethical decision making skills of pharmacists. The pharmacist with more experience makes decisions without any hesitation than pharmacist with experience of less than 5 years.^[3] It is due to an increase in the quality of a person by experience and makes it mature enough to take decisions in these situations. As an experienced pharmacist, he passed through all ethical situations in his younger life and it will make him more capable of overcoming these situations. The personal values of pharmacists improved as the experience acquired in their work environment and it will improve their ethical aspects.^[16]

II. Establishment factors

➤ **Number of pharmacists in the community pharmacy**

The pharmacist number in the community pharmacy also has a significant role in ethical decision making. The number of pharmacists vary according to the size of pharmacy. In big

pharmacy there are lot of pharmacists. As the number increases the ethical decision making is found to be easier.^[17,18] Because pharmacists get more chances to share his thoughts and problems with others than in a small pharmacy with a limited number of pharmacists. The work environment in big and small pharmacies are different. It also influences the decision making in these conditions. Larger pharmacies are more profitable than smaller ones. So for making more profit to withstand the pressure in the market and the pressure of the owner, pharmacists are forced to make unethical decisions in these conditions.^[3]

➤ **Location of the community pharmacy**

Location of the pharmacy, it means located in a rural or urban area influenced ethical decision making. The pharmacist has to interact with different kinds of people in his practice.^[3] In the urban area he has to communicate with more educated people. It will make his work easier than communicating with comparatively uneducated people. The chances of ethical dilemma situations are more when pharmacists working in a rural area because it is very difficult to handle those people and their ailments as they do not have knowledge about it. The change of geography to a rural area make cultural changes, lack of funding and resources also influence these ethical dilemma situations.^[19]

CONCLUSION

Community pharmacists are involved in various ethical dilemma situations in their day to day life. The major ethical problems are due to fulfil physician's request and employer's intrusion into the activities of the pharmacist. They have to face these problems at least once in a day in their professional career.

REFERENCES

1. Rajiah K, Venkataraman R. Community pharmacists' perceptions and experiences towards values, ethics and decision making: A qualitative study. *Indian J Pharm Educ Res*, 2018; 52(4)(2): 164-73.
2. Harvey J, Avery AJ, Ashcroft D, Boyd M, Phipps DL, Barber N. Exploring safety systems for dispensing in community pharmacies: Focusing on how staff relate to organizational components. *Research in Social & Administrative Pharmacy*, 2015; 11(2): 216-27.
3. RajiahK, Venaktaraman R. The effect of demographic and social factors on the decision-making of community pharmacists in ethical dilemmas. *J Res Pharm Pract*, 2019; 8(3): 174-77.

4. Kruijtbosch M, Göttgens-Jansen W, Floor-Schreudering A, van Leeuwen E, Bouvy ML. Moral dilemmas of community pharmacists: A narrative study. *Int J Clin Pharm*, 2018; 40(1): 74-83.
5. Mazhar F, Ahmed Y, Haider N, Ghamdi FA. Community pharmacist and primary care physician collaboration: The missing connection in pharmaceutical care. *J Taibah Univ Med Sc*, 2017; 12(3): 273-5.
6. Donohue J. A History of Drug Advertising: The Evolving Roles of Consumers and Consumer Protection. *The Milbank Quarterly*, 2006; 84(4): 659-99.
7. Crnjanski T, Krajnovic D, Savic M. Pharmacists' assessment of the difficulty and frequency of ethical issues encountered in community pharmacy settings. *Sci Eng Ethics*, 2019; 25(4): 1017-36.
8. Mujtaba BG, Cavico FJ, Sungkhawan J. Business ethics of government employees and future lawyers in Thailand: A study of age, gender, management experience, and education. *Int Bus Res*, 2011; 4: 16-27.
9. Dawson LM. Women and men, morality and ethics. *Bus Horiz*, 1995; 38(4): 61-8.
10. Kidder D. The influence of gender on the performance of organizational citizenship behaviors. *J Manage*, 2002; 28(5): 629-48.
11. Ruegger D, King EW. A study of the effect of age and gender upon student business ethics. *J Bus Ethics*, 1992; 11(3): 179-86.
12. Dubinsky AJ, Ingram TN. Correlates of sales peoples ethical conflict: An exploratory investigation. *J Bus Ethics*, 1984; 3(4): 343-53.
13. Pauly BM, Varcoe C, Storch J. Framing the issues: Moral distress in health care. *In HEC Forum*, 2012; 24: 1-11.
14. Fritzsche D, Oz E. Personal values' influence on the ethical dimension of decision making. *J Bus Ethics*, 2007; 75(4): 335-43.
15. Doyle E, Oflaherty J. The impact of education level and type on moral reasoning. *Irish Educ Stud*, 2013; 32(3): 377-93.
16. Glover J, Champion D, Daniels K, Dainty A. An institutional theory perspective on sustainable practices across the dairy supply chain. *Int J Prod Econ*, 2014; 152: 102-11.
17. Marques PA, Azevedo-Pereira J. Ethical ideology and ethical judgments in the Portuguese accounting profession. *J Bus Ethics*, 2008; 86(2): 227-42.
18. Dubinsky AJ, Loken B. Analyzing ethical decision making in marketing. *J Bus Res*, 1989; 19(2): 83-107.

19. Nelson W, Pomerantz A, Howard K, Bushy A. A proposed rural healthcare ethics agenda. *J Med Ethics*, 2007; 33(3): 136-9.