Behavior of Pharmacists and Satisfaction of Patients in Coronavirus Disease-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Objective: The aim of this study was to evaluate the behavior of the pharmacists and patients' satisfaction in coronavirus disease-19 pandemic in Pakistan. **Materials and Methods:** A total of 314 participants participated in the study by cross-sectional study design and convenient sampling technique. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. **Results:** Results revealed that significant number of respondents was not fully satisfied with behavior of the pharmacists. Around half of the respondents were agreed that pharmacists dispensed the same medication as prescribed by the prescribers. Around 38.9% of respondents noticed that pharmacists were not taking keen interest in resolving their health issues. Statistically, significant association ($P < 0.05$) was observed among patients' overall satisfaction with pharmacists' behavior and services, and precise dispensing of medications, medications counseling, interest in resolving patients' health problems, and general attention given by the pharmacists toward patients. **Conclusion:** The study concluded that pharmacists should pay more attention to deal with their patients, especially during such pandemics when there is a more need of empathy and good behavior to increase patients' satisfaction and decrease health-related problems.

Key words: Coronavirus disease-19, patients' satisfaction, pharmacist' behavior, severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2

INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pathogen was named as severe acute respiratory syndrome CoV-2 (SARS-COV-2) in December 2019.[1,2] The COVID-19, the novel CoV pneumonia, was caused by SARS-CoV-2.[2,3] The patient who was attacked by any ailments always comes out of home with worries, anxiety, and abnormal thinking to visit a health setup. Hence, it was the prime responsibility of a health care provider to make the patient calm and to start a counseling in such a way that patient forget all its problem and move with a hope for life.[3,4] In the book wrote by a famous cardiologist in 1996 with the

name "*The lost Art of Healing*" Bernard Lawn declares that behavior is the important part of a good medical care.[5,6]

The achievement of complete patient health is directly linked with the behavior and empathic nature of the health care professionals including doctors, pharmacist, and

nurses.[6,7] A professional behavior is extremely needed in health care organization dealing with patients not only improve the adherence with therapy but also increases the health outcomes and reduction in health care cost.[7-9] As a fact a good behavior, empathy and how to greet a patient in a way which is the step toward the achievement of health goals is deprived in almost all types of healthcare provider throughout the globe.[8-10] The lacking of essential training to the healthcare staff is not only the reason of failure in achieving the health outcomes but also increasing healthcare cost and associated with reduced patient satisfaction.[11] This study aimed to investigate the level of satisfaction of patients visiting community pharmacists in current COVID-19 pandemic.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted online using various platforms for from July to August 2020 using convenient sampling technique. The study participants were from different parts of the country. The research tool was comprised of various diverse questions regarding pharmacists' behavior and satisfaction of patients in current COVID-19 pandemic. The study participants were attending both public sector and private sectors. The targeted participants offered both general and specialized health-related services to their patients. Reliability of research tool was ascertained using Cronbach's alpha and face and content validity was attained by getting feedback and inputs from the content experts.

Statistical analysis

All data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 24. For categorical data, data were reported as frequencies and percentages. Pearson Chi-square test was used to associate the pharmacists' behavior and patients' satisfaction with various studied demographic characteristics. Besides, Spearman's correlation was used to correlate the pharmacists' behavior and patients' satisfaction among the participants. For all analyses, $P < 0.05$ was considered statistically significance.

RESULTS

A total of 314 participants participated in the study. The age of the respondents was in between 15 to 55.

In a total of 314 participants, male were 53.2% and female were 46.8%. In terms of age, around 69.4% had 15-25 years, 28.3% had 26-45 years, 1% were of 46-55 years and 1.3% were above 55 years. Percentage-wise distribution of education of the respondents was primary (0.6%), high school (1.3%), college (8.3%), graduate (68.9%), and postgraduate (20.8%) as shown in Figures 1-4.
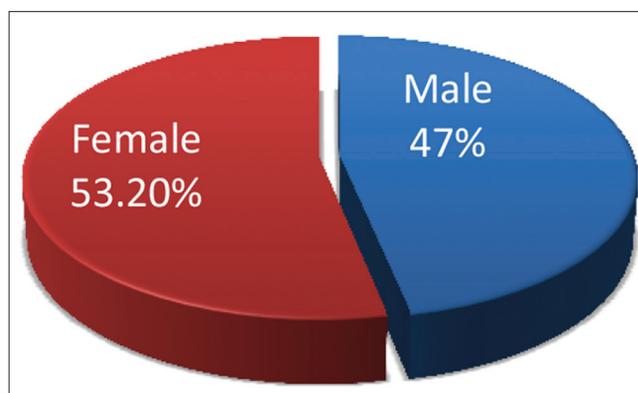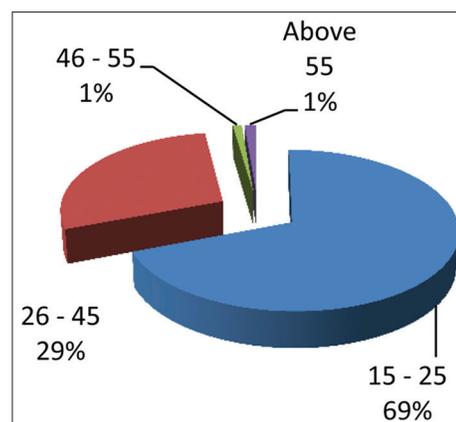

Figure 1: Gender distribution
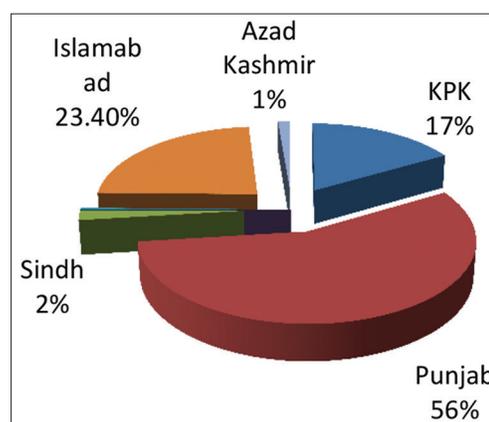

Figure 2: Age categories

Figure 3: Residence status

Pharmacists' behavior

Pharmacists' behavior was evaluated by asking questions about dispensing precisely as per prescription, counseling about medication usage, interest in resolving patients' health-related problems, and over all behavior (attention and guidance) in current pandemic situation. In total of 314 respondents, 17.20% declared that pharmacist need further improvement, 26.80% (satisfactory), 26.80% (moderate), and 31.50% (excellent) regarding behavior of pharmacist. The overall data are presented in Figures 4-8.

Patients' satisfaction

Table 1 lists the responses to questions about satisfaction of the patients toward pharmacist's behavior with them. Out of 314 respondents, 24.2% reported that pharmacist did not listen them carefully while discussing their medicine usage. On the other hand, 47.5% reported that pharmacist listened to them carefully and completely discussed their medicine usage pattern. In another question, regarding medication dispensing satisfaction 82.20% declared that pharmacist dispensed medication as per prescription while 17.80% of the patients' reported that pharmacists dispensed with alternates, that is, not as exactly prescribed. Regarding pharmacists' general behavior about medication counseling, 77.40% respondents declared that their pharmacists counseled properly while 22.60% were not satisfied with pharmacists counseling to their patients. In term of pharmacists interests in resolving general patient healthcare issues, 60.2% of the patients were satisfied while 39.8% were not satisfied.

As shown in Table 2, significant association ($P < 0.05$) was found between the patients' overall satisfaction with pharmacists' behavior and services, and precise dispensing of medications, counseling about medications, pharmacists' interest in resolving health problems, and pharmacists' general attention toward patients.
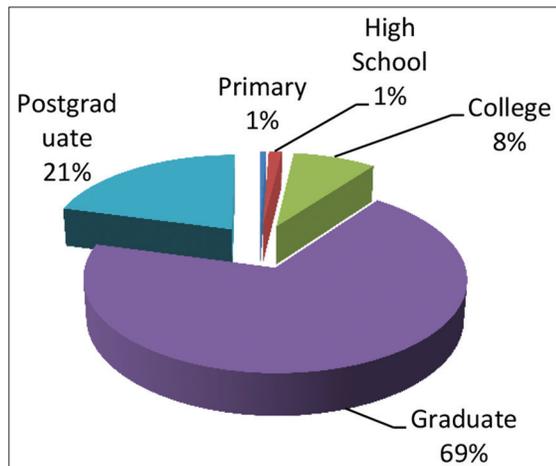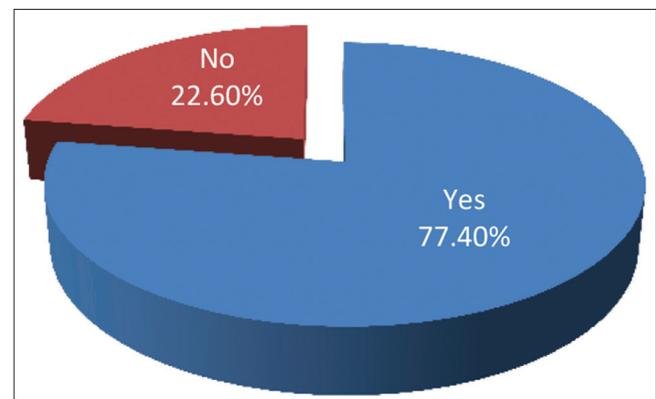
DISCUSSION

In all type of societies, it has been observed that whenever there is some health-related issue, self-treatment or self-care is adopted by many of the individuals to improve the quality of life and restoration health states.[12] The self-care is not always adopted for all types of ailments among patients especially when they are suffering from chronic diseases because it is not truly beneficial if the situation gets severe and needs optimum therapeutic care.[13] Hence, to cope up with severe health-related problems, the patient is always in need of an expert who can precisely investigate the root cause of an ailment and prepare a best pharmaceutical care plan.[14] Undeniably, the behavior of health care professionals is very important in dealing such patients. Avoiding jargons and proper patients' counseling can enhance patient understanding about their disease and its medication which, in return, improves their compliance. In a previous study, an interactive session and an appealing behavior with patients can greatly affect the treatment outcomes and cure of the diseases.[15,16]

Studies have shown that increasing healthcare provider-patient relationship in terms of behavior and patient's satisfaction is the key parameter to improve the patient quality of life and also helps in improving the adherence of the patient with designated therapeutic plans.[17,18]

Figure 4: Education level

Figure 6: Counseling about medications
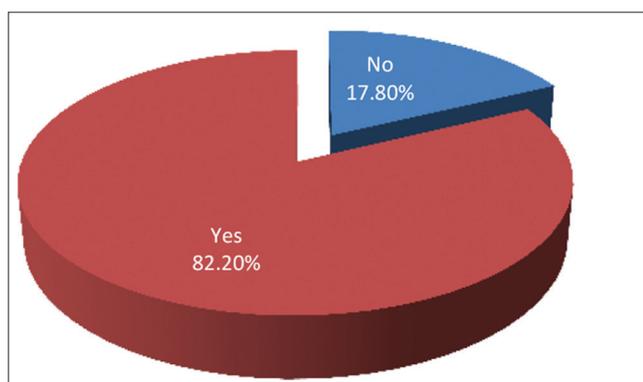
Figure 5: Precise dispensing of medications
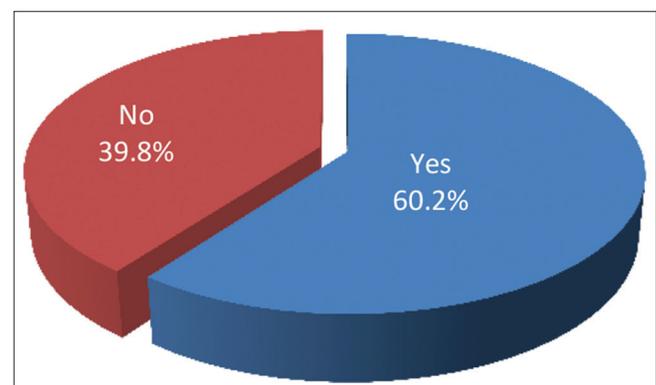
Figure 7: Interest in resolving health problems

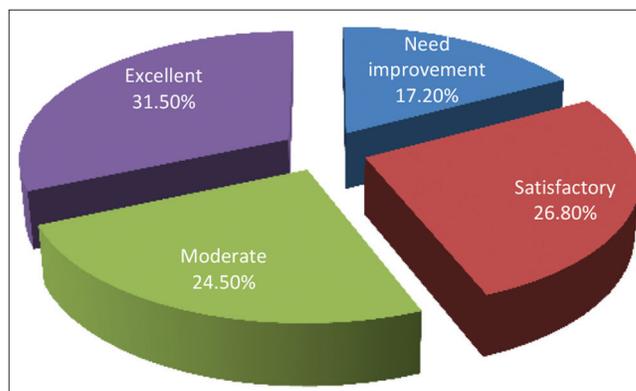| Table 1: Satisfaction of patients from pharmacists *n* (%)					
Statements	Extremely not satisfied	Not satisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Extremely satisfied
Did pharmacist listen you carefully when you were discussing about your medicine usage?	21 (6.7)	55 (17.5)	89 (28.3)	68 (21.7)	81 (25.8)
Did pharmacist inform you about your medicine taking time and pattern?	7 (2.2)	72 (22.9)	23 (7.3)	154 (49.0)	58 (18.5)
Did pharmacist explain you how much dose of medicine you need to take?	12 (3.8)	22 (7.0)	26 (8.3)	127 (40.4)	127 (40.4)
Did pharmacist guide you what to do if you missed a dose of a medicine?	58 (18.5)	69 (22.0)	75 (23.9)	42 (13.4)	70 (22.3)
Did pharmacist inform you about any potential side effects or/and drug-interactions of your medicine?	107 (34.1)	62 (19.7)	59 (18.8)	48 (15.3)	38 (12.1)
Did pharmacist dispense same medication as prescribed by the prescriber?	24 (7.6)	26 (8.3)	78 (24.8)	99 (31.5)	87 (27.7)
Did you feel that pharmacist was not paying needed attention in resolving your health-related problem?	83 (26.4)	83 (26.4)	15 (4.8)	67 (21.3)	66 (21.0)
How do you rate your experience while interacting with the pharmacist?	25 (8.0)	20 (6.4)	212 (67.5)	23 (7.3)	34 (10.8)
In general, are you satisfied with the pharmacist behavior and services provided?	22 (7.0)	32 (10.2)	77 (24.5)	84 (26.8)	99 (31.5)

Table 2: Association of behavior of pharmacists with patients' satisfaction		
Statements	r-value	*P*-value
Precise dispensing of medications versus Patients' overall satisfaction with pharmacists' behavior and services	0.341	0.048*
Counseling about medications versus patients' overall satisfaction with pharmacists' behavior and services	0.479	0.022*
Interest in resolving health problems versus patients' overall satisfaction with pharmacists' behavior and services	0.152	0.034*
General attention toward patients versus patients' overall satisfaction with pharmacists' behavior and services	0.673	0.039*

*Correlation was significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Figure 8: Pharmacists' overall behavior

The services provided to a patient by the pharmacists do not only include the interviewing, dispensing, and administration of the prescribed medicines but also include effective communication with patients in a way that is socially and behaviorally acceptable. Conversely, if patient feels that pharmacist is not giving a complete attention, and shares the information in anon-understandable form, he/she will definitely try to avoid to contact that pharmacist again which could badly affect patient satisfaction from pharmacists.[18,19]

In this study, the behavior of pharmacists was assessed through a research questionnaire and it was observed that the majority of the patients were not actually satisfied with the pharmacists in some of the questions which were similar to another study.[20] Like, regarding medication dispensing satisfaction, 82.20% declared that pharmacist dispensed medication as per prescription while 17.80% of the patients' reported that pharmacists dispensed with alternates, that is, not as exactly prescribed. Regarding pharmacists' general behavior about medication counseling, 77.40% respondents declared that their pharmacists counseled properly while 22.60% were not satisfied with pharmacists counseling to their patients. In term of pharmacists interests in resolving general patient healthcare issues, 60.2% of the patients were satisfied while 39.8% were not satisfied.

In terms of pharmacists counseling regarding what to do if a dose has been missed by the patient, that is, missing a dose, around 18.5% of the patients were "strongly not satisfied" with the pharmacists' behavior and believed that their pharmacists did not inform them at all. Around 22.0% of the patients were "not satisfied" with the pharmacists and around 23.9% remained "neutral." Approximately 13.4% of the patients were "satisfied" while just 22.3% were "extremely satisfied" with the pharmacists counseling and behavior.

Regarding potential side effects or/and drug-interactions of the medicines which patients were on, approximately around 34.1% of the patients were "strongly not satisfied" with the pharmacists' behavior and believed that their pharmacists did not inform them about any potential side effect or any drug-interaction. Around 19.7% of the patients were "not satisfied" with the pharmacists about this and around 18.8% remained "neutral." Approximately 15.3% of the patients were "satisfied" from their pharmacists while just 12.1% were "extremely satisfied" with the information they received regarding potential side effects and drug interaction of the medication they were on.

CONCLUSION

It is therefore concluded based upon the results that pharmacists' behavior and their communication skills, their knowledge about diseases is very important. They might in need for a special training of how to greet and meet the patients and how to address their healthcare issues.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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