

**INFLUENCE OF ECONOMIC AND CONVENIENCE FACTORS ON SELF-  
MEDICATION PRACTICE AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF UYO**

By

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**ABSTRACT**

*The study examined the influence of economic and convenience factors on self-medication practice among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo. Two research questions and three null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. A survey research design was adopted for the study and the population of the study consisted 623 Year Three (300L) students in the Faculty of Education, University of Uyo. A simple size of 200 undergraduate students was selected through a simple random sampling technique. A self-structured questionnaire titled 'Factors Influencing Self Medication Questionnaire (FISMQ)', was developed and used as instrument for data collection. The instrument was subjected to a validation and reliability test. A reliability coefficient index of .87 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha statistics. Means was used to answer research questions while chi-square statistics was used for testing null hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The results of the study revealed that there is a significant influence of economic and convenience on the practice of self-medication among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that the University of Uyo administration, in collaboration with government and health providers, should implement a student-friendly health financing policy that subsidizes basic medical consultations and treatments for undergraduates to reduce the financial burden that drives students to self-medicate and promote equitable access to professional healthcare services on campus.*

**KEYWORDS: Economic Factors, Convenience Factors, Self-medication Practice,  
Undergraduate University of Uyo**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Self-medication is defined as the act of using drugs, herbs, or home remedies on one's own initiative or on the advice of another person without consulting a qualified health professional. Self-medication refers to the practice of individuals treating self-diagnosed ailments or symptoms using medicines without professional medical advice or prescription. This behaviour often includes the use of over-the-counter drugs, herbal remedies, or previously prescribed medications to manage recurring health conditions (Eze and Okafor, 2021). Self-medication practice has increasingly become prevalent among university students across the world, especially in developing countries like Nigeria. According to Oguejiofor *et al.*, (2021), self-medication is commonly seen among undergraduates who attempt to treat perceived illnesses

due to various personal or environmental influences. While self-medication may offer short-term relief and perceived cost-effectiveness, it also poses serious health risks, such as incorrect self-diagnosis, drug abuse, adverse drug reactions, and the emergence of drug-resistant pathogens. It is particularly concerning in university environments where students, often away from home and independent for the first time, face academic pressure, limited finances, and easy access to medications without prescriptions.

University students are more likely to engage in self-medication due to a combination of social, academic, and environmental pressures. Their belief in self-efficacy, awareness of drug types, and access to health information often reinforce this behavior (Adepoju *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, inadequate health services on campuses and long waiting times at university clinics contribute to students' decisions to medicate themselves without professional guidance. The tendency is further heightened by exposure to peers who normalize the behavior, social media influence, and advertisements promoting over-the-counter drugs. Despite efforts to promote rational drug use, self-medication continues to rise, particularly among students in health-related fields who often feel confident in their ability to diagnose and treat illnesses themselves (Ogundipe *et al.*, 2020). Among the factors influencing self-medication practices, this study explored the influence of economic, convenience and social norms factors.

Economic factors are the economic conditions that influence individuals' behaviours, opportunities, and access to resources. It refers to financial elements that affect an individual's ability to access goods and services, including income level, employment status, and overall financial capacity. These factors play a significant role in shaping health outcomes, lifestyle choices, and access to healthcare services. Economic factors play a critical role in determining health behaviours, including the practice of self-medication among university students. Many students, especially those from low-income backgrounds, often resort to self-medication as a cost-saving strategy to avoid consultation fees, laboratory tests, and expensive prescriptions from professional health practitioners. According to Ibrahim *et al.*, (2021), financial constraints significantly influence students' choices to self-diagnose and purchase drugs over the counter rather than visiting a healthcare facility. For many students, the costs associated with professional medical care are simply unaffordable, leading them to self-treatment as an alternative. Alabi and Chukwuma (2022) indicated that financial hardship has a strong connection with self-medication among university students in Nigeria. Convenience is another major factor driving self-medication among university students.

Convenience refers to the ease and accessibility associated with a particular behaviour or decision, which influences individuals to choose options that save time, effort, or resources. Osemene and Lamikanra (2020) define convenience as the perceived ease and speed with which individuals can access and use medications without the need for professional consultation, often driven by busy schedules and the desire to avoid the bureaucracies of formal healthcare systems. The increasing practice of self-medication among university students can be largely attributed to the convenience surrounding access to medications and perceived ease of managing common health issues. The presence of numerous pharmacies and drug vendors in and around university campuses makes it easy for students to obtain medications without prescriptions, thus bypassing

the need for professional medical consultation. Eze *et al.*, (2023) revealed that students residing closer to pharmacies were more likely to engage in self-medication practices. Furthermore, the rise of mobile health applications and online symptom checkers has fostered a sense of autonomy among students, allowing them to self-diagnose and treat ailments without professional guidance. This convenience is further reinforced by the belief that common or recurring conditions such as headaches, colds, or menstrual cramps can be effectively managed without medical input. Supporting this, Musa and Ogbonna (2021) found that over 70% of university students had self-medicated for minor symptoms within the past six months, often relying on previous experiences and the ease of drug access as justification. Another factor that influence self-medication practice among students is social norms.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Self-medication has become an increasingly common practice among undergraduate students in Nigerian universities, including the University of Uyo. While this practice may offer perceived benefits such as saving time and money, it poses serious health risks such as misdiagnosis, drug resistance, harmful drug interactions, and masking of underlying illnesses. This situation may not only compromise students' health but also undermine the role of qualified healthcare professionals. In addition, the lack of accurate information about potential side effects, drug interactions, and medical restriction exposes students to the risk of adverse drug reactions, which can result in complications or hospitalization. The problem is further intensified by insufficient regulatory enforcement on drug sales and the absence of targeted health education programs within university campuses. This unchecked practice of self-medication among students poses significant risks to individual health, public safety, and the effectiveness of national healthcare systems despite the widespread nature of the practice, there is limited empirical data that specifically explore the interplay of economic status, convenience, and social influence on self-medication practices among undergraduates in the University of Uyo. This gap in knowledge makes it difficult to develop targeted health education programs or policy interventions to address the issue effectively. Therefore, this study seeks to fill the existing gap by investigating the factors influencing the practice of self-medication among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The main purpose of the study was to examine the prediction of economic and convenience factors on self-medication practice among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo. Specifically, the study examined:

- i) The influence of economic factor on self-medication practice among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo.
- ii) The influence of convenience on self-medication practice among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study

- i) What is the influence of economic factor on self-medication practice among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo?
- ii) What is the influence of convenience on self-medication practice among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo?

## **RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

Three research hypotheses were formulated for the study

- i) There is no significant influence of economic factor on self-medication practice among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo.
- ii) There is no significant influence of convenience on self-medication practice among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

A survey research design was adopted for the study. According to Udoh and Joseph (2005), survey research design is one in which the entire population or representative sample is studied by collecting and analyzing data from or the use of questionnaire. This design was considered suitable to this study because it allowed information to be generated through questionnaire and responses analyzed as they appear.

## **POPULATION OF THE STUDY**

The population of the study consisted 1623 Year Three (300L) students in the Faculty of Education, University of Uyo. According to the Students' Affairs Department of the University, there are 1623 estimated Year Three (300L) students in the Faculty of Education during the 2025/2026 academic session.

## **SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE**

The sample of the study consisted of 200 undergraduate students selected through a simple random sampling technique. Five departments were randomly selected, in each department, 40 students were selected through balloting method.

## **INSTRUMENTATION**

A self-structured questionnaire titled 'Factors Influencing Self Medication Questionnaire (FISMQ)', was developed and used as instrument for data collection. The respondents were required to tick the correct options on the boxes provided that represents them. The items are constructed to gather information about economic, convenience and social norms factors, the options ranges from SA (Strongly Agreed) A (Agreed) D (Disagreed) and SD (Strongly Disagreed).

## **VALIDATION OF INSTRUMENT**

The instrument is given for face validation by experts drawn from the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, University of Uyo and another from Psychological Foundations of Education who majored in measurement and evaluation from Faculty of Education in the same University. They helped to examine the arrangement of the items and the subject matter, their spellings and sentences. Their final corrections were used in producing the final instrument.

### **Reliability of Instrument**

The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha and internal consistencies of .87. This figure showed highly reliable instrument. The items used to determine the reliability of instrument were administered to the students who actually did not take part in the study.

## **METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS**

Data were analysed using statistical mean and chi-square. Statistical mean was used in answering research questions with 2.50 real limit while Chi-square was used in testing the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance

## **RESULTS**

**Research Question One:** What is the influence of economic factor on self-medication practice among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant influence of economic factor on self-medication practice among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo.

**Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation and Chi-square Analysis of influence of economic factor on self-medication practice among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo**

s/n	Statement	Responses						X <sup>2</sup> cal.	X <sup>2</sup> crit.
		SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.		
1	I often self-medicate because visiting a hospital is too expensive for me.	103	95	2	-	3.50	1.14		
2	I prefer to buy over-the-counter drugs rather than pay for medical consultations.	62	59	79	-	2.91	1.10		
3	Limited financial support from my family influences my decision to self-medicate.	77	82	29	12	3.12	0.98		
4	I choose to treat myself because professional healthcare services are not affordable.	107	76	4	13	3.38	1.12		
5	The cost of laboratory tests and prescriptions discourages me from seeking professional help.	99	69	10	22	3.22	1.03		
<b>Total</b>		345	288	217	150	3.22	1.07		
<b>Expected Frequencies</b>		29	57.6	43.4	30			90.1	21.03

*Df=12; 0.05 level of significance.*

The analysis in table 1 shows that all the items recorded mean score above 2.50 criterion mean score. Furthermore, aggregate mean score of 3.22 and a standard deviation of 1.07 which implies that economic factors has a high influence on self-medication practice among undergraduate students. The result also shows a calculated X<sup>2</sup> value of 90.1 which is greater than the critical X<sup>2</sup> value of 21.03 at 0.05 level of significance with 12 degree of freedom. Based on this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there is a significant influence of economic factor on self-medication practice among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo.

**Research Question Two:** What is the influence of convenience on self-medication practice among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo?

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant influence of convenience on self-medication practice among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo.

**Table 2: Chi-square Analysis of influence of convenience on self-medication practice among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo**

s/n	Statement	Responses				Mean	Std.	X <sup>2</sup> cal.	X <sup>2</sup> crit.
		SA	A	D	SD				
1	I self-medicate because it saves me time compared to visiting a clinic.	100	100	-	-	3.50	1.04		
2	I find it easier to buy medicine from a nearby pharmacy than to wait at the university health center.	62	50	79	9	2.82	1.01		
3	I treat myself because I am familiar with the symptoms and medications I've used before.	77	82	29	12	3.12	1.02		
4	I use previous prescriptions or leftover drugs because it is more convenient.	107	76	7	10	3.40	1.01		
5	I self-medicate to avoid missing lectures or school activities due to long clinic procedures	100	68	10	22	3.23	1.12		
<b>Total</b>		448	376	125	53	3.21	1.04		
<b>Expected Frequencies</b>		89.6	75.2	25.0	10.6			92.7	21.03

*Df=12; 0.05 level of significance.*

The analysis in table 2 shows that all the items recorded mean score above 2.50 criterion mean score. Furthermore, aggregate mean score of 3.21 and a standard deviation of 1.04 which implies that convenience has a high influence on self-medication practice among undergraduate students. The result also shows a calculated X<sup>2</sup> value of 92.7 which is greater than the critical X<sup>2</sup> value of 21.03 at 0.05 level of significance with 12 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there is a significant influence of convenience on self-medication practice among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo.

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant influence of economic factors on self-medication practices among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo. This implies that students' financial limitations and their perceived inability to afford professional medical care contribute significantly to their decision to self-medicate. This finding aligns with the work of Ibrahim *et al.*, (2021), who reported that students from low-income backgrounds were more likely to treat themselves without medical consultation due to financial constraints. Similarly, Okoro and Umeh (2020) found that family economic conditions and limited health literacy among parents contribute to students' self-reliant healthcare decisions.

The findings of this study revealed that there is a significant influence of convenience on self-medication practices among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo. This implies that undergraduate students in the University of Uyo choose to self-medicate because it is perceived as a faster, easier, and more efficient alternative to visiting formal healthcare facilities. This finding is consistent with the work of Okafor and Musa (2021), whose findings revealed that the majority of students engage in self-medication as a way to save time and avoid the long queues and bureaucratic processes associated with campus health centers. Similarly, Eze *et al.*, (2023) found that the proximity of pharmacies and patent medicine stores to university campuses significantly contributes to students' choice to self-treat illnesses. Furthermore, Musa and Ogbonna (2021) reported that students are more likely to self-medicate for common illnesses such as headaches, colds, and menstrual pains, particularly because they believe these conditions are familiar and do not require formal medical evaluation.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that economic, convenience and social norms are significant factors that influenced practice of self-mediation among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The University of Uyo administration, in collaboration with government and health providers, should implement a student-friendly health financing policy that subsidizes basic medical consultations and treatments for undergraduates to reduce the financial burden that drives students to self-medicate and promote equitable access to professional healthcare services on campus.
- The university health centre should be adequately staffed, equipped, and digitized to minimize waiting time and improve service delivery. Beside, introducing e-health systems for appointment booking and follow-up services would make formal healthcare more accessible and convenient, reducing students' reliance on self-medication.

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