

Knowledge, Attitude and Misuse of Topical Corticosteroid Among Adults in Daressalaam, Tanzania

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Abstract—Background: Topical corticosteroids are commonly used for the treatment of inflammatory skin conditions. However, their misuse, particularly for cosmetic purposes such as skin lightening and treatment of dark spots, has become a growing public health concern. Misuse may lead to adverse effects including acne, skin discoloration, skin thinning, and steroid dependence. **Objective:** To assess the knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding the misuse of topical corticosteroids among adults in Mchikichini Ward, Ilala District, Tanzania, in 2025.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 200 adults aged 18–45 years residing in Mchikichini Ward. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using Microsoft Excel. The study assessed participants' knowledge of topical corticosteroids, attitudes toward their use, and practices related to obtaining and using these products. **Results:** Among the 200 participants, 86.0% had heard about medicated skin creams, but only 28.0% were aware of their potential side effects. Friends/family (31.5%) and social media (30.0%) were the main sources of information. More than half (55.0%) did not know the conditions treated by these creams, and only 19.5% knew that some corticosteroid creams should be discontinued gradually. Regarding attitudes, 51.0% believed that using medicated creams without a prescription was unsafe, while many participants remained uncertain about regulation and safe use. In practice, the most common reasons for use were skin lightening (39.5%) and treatment of dark spots (35.5%). Most creams were obtained from pharmacies without prescription (39.5%) or cosmetic shops (28.5%). Only 12.0% read instructions before use, and 42.5% reported experiencing side effects. **Conclusion:** The study revealed insufficient knowledge, mixed attitudes, and unsafe practices regarding topical corticosteroid use among adults in Mchikichini Ward. Easy accessibility, reliance on informal information sources, and cosmetic motivations contribute to misuse. Public health education, stricter regulation of corticosteroid sales, and improved community awareness are recommended to promote safe and appropriate use.

I. INTRODUCTION

Topical corticosteroids were anti-inflammatory creams used to treat skin conditions like eczema and dermatitis. They helped reduce redness, swelling and itching when used correctly under medical advice.

Misuse happened when these creams were used without a prescription, for the wrong reasons (like skin lightening) or for too long.

This can cause side effects which were as follows.

- Acne — Pimples and breakouts caused by clogged pores and irritation.
- Telangiectasia — Tiny visible blood vessels on the skin.
- Skin thinning — Fragile, easily damaged skin.
- Hyper pigmentation — Dark patches or uneven skin colour.
- Hypo pigmentation — Light spots or loss of skin colour.
- Melasma — Brownish facial patches, worsened by steroids and sun.
- Rosacea-like rash — Redness and bumps similar to rosacea.
- Dependence — needing to keep using steroids to avoid flare-ups.

This study aimed to assess the knowledge, attitude and practices of the general population towards the misused of topical corticosteroids to help improve awareness and promote safe use.

1.1. Background of the study

Topical corticosteroids (TCS) were among the most widely prescribed dermatological medications globally, known for their effectiveness in managing a range of inflammatory skin conditions such as eczema, psoriasis, and dermatitis. However, in recent years, a growing concern had emerged regarding their misused

— especially when used without medical supervision or for non-medical purposes such as skin lightening or cosmetic enhancement. This misused had become a global issue, affected not only individual users but also burdened healthcare systems, particularly dermatology services.

Globally, the misused of TCS was on the rise, particularly in regions where over-the-counter access and limited public awareness contributed to improper used.

According to several international studies, people often applied potent corticosteroids for prolonged periods, on sensitive areas like the face, without understanding the consequences. The World Health Organization (WHO) and dermatology associations had warned about the Increasing trend of self-medication and cosmetic-driven used of steroids, particularly among the youth and women, who were more likely to be influenced by societal and media-driven beauty standards. (ILDS, 2025)

In Asia, the problem was well-documented in countries such as India and Saudi Arabia. A study conducted in India from November 2010 to October 2011 found that out of 6,723 new dermatology patients, 379 (5.63%) presented with complications related to the misused of topical corticosteroids. Notably, 78.9% of these cases were females, and more than 65% were between 10 and 29 years of age. The most common reasons for misused were skin lightening and treatment of melasma or suntan. The most frequently reported side effects included acne (37.99%) and telangiectasia (18.99%), indicating the deep impact this misused had on dermatological health (IDOJ, 2014).

In Saudi Arabia, a cross-sectional study showed that 65.2% of respondents had never used topical steroids, but among users, the majority had been influenced by non-medical sources such as friends and family (27.5%), while only 19.8% received advice from physicians. Worryingly, 54.6% were unaware of the side effects, and only 28.8% correctly identified skin thinning as a consequence of steroid used. These findings suggested not only low awareness levels but also a tendency to rely on informal advice rather than professional medical guidance (Bamerdah et al, 2023). In Africa, the misuse of topical corticosteroids also poses a serious public health challenge. A recent study conducted in southern Libya in January 2022 focused on females aged 16–45 years and reported a 77.5%

response rate from 155 participants. The majority (89%) were between 16–25 years old. The findings showed that 69% obtained corticosteroid products from pharmacies, while 23.2% purchased them from cosmetic shops. Daily used on the face was reported by 26.5%, primarily for acne (54.2%) and skin whitening (23.3%). Although nearly 48.4% were aware of the harmful effects, the ease of access and desire for fast cosmetic results still drove frequent used. Interestingly, 87.7% of respondents agreed that such products should only be sold through pharmacies, showed a disconnect between practice and perception (MJPPS, 2024).

Similar trends were observed in other African countries like Nigeria, Kenya, and Ghana, where studies had highlighted the role of social pressure, poor regulation, and lack of awareness as key contributors to steroid misused. In many of these countries, TCS products were sold in open markets without prescription, and advertising often promotes unverified cosmetic benefits. Dermatologists across the continent increasingly reported seeing patients with skin thinning, acne flare-ups, steroid-induced rosacea, and other complications related to unsupervised TCS used.

In East Africa, these issues were becoming more prominent, especially in urban areas where cosmetic used of steroids was common among young women. In countries like Kenya and Uganda, studies had found that people often used TCS-containing creams marketed for "skin toning" or "beauty enhancement," with little to no understanding of the ingredients. Regulatory enforcement was weak, and public education campaigns were limited, making it easy for misused to spread across communities, particularly among youth.

In Tanzania, the misused of topical corticosteroids was an emerging and underestimated problem. While these products were readily available in pharmacies, cosmetic shops, and even street vendors, many users were unaware they contain strong steroids. In urban centres such as Dar es Salaam, it was common to found individuals using steroid creams for non-medical purposes such as skin bleaching, acne, or simply to "improve" skin appearance. Public knowledge on the safe used of these products was limited, and some users rely entirely on peer advice, online sources, or sellers — many of whom had no formal medical training. Complications such as acne,

skin irritation, pigmentation changes, and steroid dependence were becoming more frequently seen in dermatology clinics, particularly among young women.

Despite existing guidelines from the Ministry of Health and the Tanzania Medicines and Medical Devices Authority (TMDA), enforcement remains a challenge, and public sensitization campaigns were minimal. There was also a lack of local research data on the extent of misused among the general population, which limits the ability of health authorities to respond effectively.

In light of this growing concern, it became essential to assess the knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) related to the used of topical corticosteroids among the Tanzanian population. Such information was critical to guide awareness efforts, regulatory improvements, and dermatological health planning, ensuring that these medications were used safely and effectively.

1.2. Problem statement.

Topical corticosteroids were widely used for treating skin conditions, but their misused had become a growing concern both globally and locally. In many countries, including India, Saudi Arabia, and Libya, people—especially young women—used these medications for cosmetic purposes like skin lightening, often without proper medical advice. This had led to side effects such as skin thinning, acne, melasma, and visible blood vessels.

In Tanzania, particularly in Ilala District, similar trends were observed. Many individuals access these products from pharmacies or cosmetic shops without prescriptions, often unaware of the risks involved. Despite the increasing use, little was known about how much the general public understands about these medications or how they were using them. This study aimed to assess the knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to the misused of topical corticosteroids among the general population in Ilala, to help guide public health education and policy.

1.3. Significance of the study

This study was important because it helped revealed how much the general population in Ilala knows about the safe used of topical corticosteroids. Many people used these medications without proper guidance, risking serious skin damage. By identifying gaps in knowledge and common misused patterns, the

findings can help health professionals, policymakers, and educators design better strategies to promote safe and informed used. It also adds valuable local data to support future research and public health interventions in Tanzania.

1.4. Objectives of the study

1.4.1. Main objective

To assess the knowledge, attitude, and misused of topical corticosteroids, among adults in Mchikichini ward, in Ilala District, Tanzania in 2025.

1.4.2. Specific objective

1. To assess the level of knowledge regarding the uses and side effects of topical corticosteroids among adults in Mchikichini ward, in Ilala District, in 2025.
2. To explore the attitudes of adults in Mchikichini ward, Ilala districts towards the used of topical corticosteroids, especially for cosmetic purposes in 2025.
3. To determine the extent of misused of topical corticosteroids among adults in Mchikichini ward, in Ilala districts, in 2025.

1.5. Research Question.

- What was the level of knowledge among the general population in Ilala about the use and side effects of topical corticosteroids?
- What were the community's attitudes toward the used of topical corticosteroids, especially for cosmetic reasons?
- What were the common practices related to the used and purchase of topical corticosteroids in Ilala District?
- What were the main sources of information that influence the used of topical corticosteroids among Ilala residents?
- How do demographic factors such as age, gender, and education relate to the misused of topical corticosteroids?

1.6. Research Variables

Independent Variables:

These were the variables that may influence the knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding topical corticosteroids:

- Age
- Gender
- Level of education

- Occupation
- Income level
- Place of residence (urban or rural)
- Source of information (e.g., internet, health workers, peers)

Dependent Variables:

These were the outcomes your study was aimed to assess:

- Level of knowledge about topical corticosteroids
- Attitudes toward the used and misused of topical corticosteroids
- Practices related to the used, purchase, and application of topical corticosteroids

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Global Perspective on Misused

Topical corticosteroids were increasingly used incorrectly worldwide, especially for cosmetic purposes like skin lightening. A study in India (2010–2011) found 5.63% of dermatology patients had complications from misused; 78.9% were female, primarily aged 10–29, and the most common side effects were acne (37.99%) and telangiectasia (18.99%).

The study documented a wide range adverse dermatological effects linked to misused:

- Steroid induced acne: pustular and comedonal eruptions triggered by steroid overused.
- Facial hypertrichosis: excessive, unwanted hair growth on the face.
- Telangiectasia and plethoric face: prominent, dilated small blood vessels and facial redness.
- Cutaneous atrophy: Thinning, fragile skin prone to easy injury and delayed healing.
- Striae (stretch marks): Linear atrophic bands, especially over large areas.
- Dyspigmentation: Both hyper pigmentation (dark patches) and hypo pigmentation (light spots)
- Tinea incognito: Fungal infections with atypical presentations due to suppressed immune response.
- Perioral dermatitis: Clusters of small, red papules localised around the mouth and nasolabial folds.
- Other which were rare conditions such as infantile gluteal granuloma and pyoderma.

Importantly, only 3.43% of patients had any awareness of the potential adverse effects and none understood proper dosage or safe application practises. Nearly all patients had relied on advice from informal sources or non- medical providers and most had never read the package insert or received guidance from healthcare professionals. Applications ranged from once daily to as many as four times a day, underscoring the lack of knowledge about appropriate used. ((IDOJ, 2014)

A 2021 Saudi Arabian study revealed that of the users, only 19.8% received guidance from doctors, while 27.5% relied on friends and family. Alarmingly, 54.6% were unaware of risks, and only 28.8% identified skin thinning as a side effect as a consequence of steroid used.

The reported adverse effects among users reflected a lack of medical supervision and misused of potent corticosteroids:

- Skin thinning (cutaneous atrophy): fragile skin susceptible to tearing and poor wound healing.
- Dyspigmentation: Including hyper pigmentation (dark spots) and hypo pigmentation (light spots) particularly on the face.
- Steroid-induced acne: Increased breakouts and pustules on areas of application.
- Rosaceous-like erythema and telangiectasia: Persistent redness and visible dilated blood vessels.
- Steroid dependence and rebound flare-ups: worsening of the original condition or new symptoms upon cessation (Bamerdah et al, 2023)

In Nepal, a hospital-based descriptive study conducted at a tertiary care centre over three months investigated the misused of topical corticosteroids, associated adverse effects, and contributing factors. The study enrolled 216 patients, with a slight male predominance (54.5%) and a mean age of 28.7 years, most commonly in the 21–30-year age group. The findings revealed widespread misused, with beclomethasone dipropionate (27.3%) and clobetasol propionate (26.9%) as the most frequently abused corticosteroids. The most common indications for misused were inappropriate treatment of fungal infections (66%), followed by pigmentary disorders (15%), including used as fairness creams and for acne.

Notably, over-the-counter (OTC) sales accounted for 62% of cases, underscoring the lack of regulation and

medical oversight. The adverse effects documented in this cohort included aggravation of fungal infections (61.6%), acneiform eruptions, striae (stretch marks), and steroid-induced dermatoses, demonstrating the harm caused by unsupervised and prolonged steroid used.

The study concluded that topical corticosteroids remain one of the most commonly misused dermatological drugs in Nepal due to easy OTC availability and poor public awareness. It strongly recommended regulatory action to curb unethical dispensing practices and called for public health education campaigns to promote rational used of these potent medications. These findings were pertinent to the present study as they reinforce the global and regional pattern of misused and its dermatological consequences, further justifying the need for similar research and interventions in Tanzania. (J Nepal Health Res Counc.2021)

Studies from Africa

Libya, a cross-sectional study conducted in January 2022 focused on the misused of topical corticosteroids among women aged 16–45 years, with a response rate of 77.5% from 155 participants. The majority of respondents (89%) were between 16–25 years old, reflecting the heightened susceptibility of young women to social and cosmetic pressures. The study highlighted the widespread availability of topical corticosteroids, with 69% obtaining these products from pharmacies and an additional 23.2% purchasing from cosmetic shops, indicating poor regulation of sales channels.

The most common indications for misused were for cosmetic purposes, with daily application on the face reported by 26.5% of respondents, primarily for acne (54.2%) and skin whitening (23.3%). Despite nearly half of the respondents (48.4%) acknowledging awareness of the harmful effects, many continued inappropriate used, suggested a disconnect between knowledge and behaviour. Reported adverse effects included acne form eruptions, skin irritation, pigmentary changes, and steroid-induced dependence, highlighting the dermatological harm associated with misused. Notably, an overwhelming majority (87.7%) agreed that corticosteroid-containing products should only be sold through pharmacies, suggested public support for stricter regulation.

These findings were directly relevant to the present study, underscoring similar trends in the African context where accessibility, cosmetic motivations, and insufficient awareness contributed to misused and its adverse outcomes. The Libyan experience reinforces the need for targeted public health education, better regulatory oversight, and further research into knowledge, attitudes, and practices surrounding topical corticosteroids in settings such as Tanzania. (Alkilane et al. 2024)

In Nigeria, Olukole and Fuludu (2024) conducted a descriptive study examining the misused of over-the-counter (OTC) topical corticosteroid triple creams. The study highlighted a significant trend of misused among young adults, particularly women, reflecting similar findings from other regions. Of the participants surveyed, 81.9% of OTC triple-cream users were female, with the majority falling in the 21–30 years age group, demonstrating the cosmetic motivations driving corticosteroid misused in this demographic.

The most commonly reported purposes for misused were for the treatment of acne (41.7%) and hyper pigmentation (17.5%), showed a clear inclination towards cosmetic enhancement rather than medical indications. This inappropriate used resulted in a wide range of dermatological adverse effects, including skin sensitivity (63.2%), hyper pigmentation (37.1%), erythema (29.8%), and steroid-induced acne (21.5%). These findings illustrate the harmful consequences of unsupervised and prolonged used of topical corticosteroids, with users often unaware of the risks or failing to seek proper medical advice. The study emphasized the urgent need for public education campaigns and stricter regulation of OTC corticosteroid sales in Nigeria to curb these harmful practices.

These results were particularly relevant to the present study in Ilala, Tanzania, as they mirror the cosmetic-driven misused patterns, lack of awareness, and resultant adverse effects observed in other African settings. The Nigerian data further strengthen the case for interventions targeting knowledge gaps and regulating steroid availability to protect dermatological health. (OJBR, 2024)

Another Lagos survey by Onuchukwu & Osahon (2022) found 70.1% of users were unaware of long-term harm. Key motivations were faster results (60.9%) and fairer skin (58.6%) (NJP, 2022)

Corticosteroid misused was common across Africa, with over 27% of dermatology patients affected in countries like Ethiopia and South Africa, often leading to skin issues such as melasma and rosacea (Hengge et al., 2006). 2024 study at Injibara General Hospital, Ethiopia, reviewed 422 dermatology outpatient prescriptions and found a high rate (94.1%) of topical corticosteroid used, mainly moderate- to super potent agents like mometasone furoate (34.6%) and clobetasol propionate (26.7%). Most users were young adults, predominantly women. Inappropriate prescribing practices and lack of patient guidance contributed to adverse effects such as skin atrophy, acneiform eruptions, telangiectasia, and hypopigmentation. The findings highlight the urgent need for rational prescribing, patient education, and regulatory control to reduce misused and its harmful consequences (Tegegnie et al., 2025).

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Local Context: Tanzania

Though research in Tanzania was limited, informal reported from Dar-es-Salaam suggested widespread OTC use of potent creams for skin bleaching, acne, and enhancement. Many users were unaware they contain steroids, rely on non-medical sources, and experience side effects such as acne, skin thinning, pigmentation issues, and steroid dependence. This highlights a gap in knowledge, attitudes, and practices in Ilala, underscoring the need for local data.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Study design

This research adopted a descriptive cross-sectional design aimed at assessing the knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to the misused of topical corticosteroids among the general population. A cross-sectional approach was considered suitable because it allows for the collection of data from a diverse group of participants at a single point in time, offering a snapshot of current trends and behaviours. This design also supports efficient comparison across different demographic groups without requiring long-term follow-up, which made it both practical and time-conscious for the scope of this study.

3.2. Study Area

This study was conducted in Ilala Municipality, one of the five districts in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania's largest and most urbanized city. Ilala was a busy and densely populated area that brings together people from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. It had a high concentration of pharmacies, health facilities, cosmetic shops, and informal vendors—factors that make it a relevant setting for exploring how topical corticosteroids were accessed and misused. The area's accessibility and diverse population offer an ideal environment for assessing public knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to corticosteroid use.

3.3. Study population

The study population was adults aged between 18 to 45 years living in Ilala Municipality, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania.

3.4. Sampling procedure

A multistage sampling technique was used to select study participants from Ilala Municipality. First, several wards within Ilala were randomly selected to represent the municipality's diversity. Then, households within these wards were chosen using systematic random sampling. From each selected household, one eligible adult aged 18 to 45 years were invited to participate. If there was more than one eligible person in the household, one individual was randomly selected. This approach ensures that the sample represents different areas and demographics within Ilala, reducing selection bias.

3.5. Sample size

For this study, a total of 200 participants aged 18 to 45 years living in Ilala Municipality were included.

Sample Size Determination

The sample size was determined using the single population proportion formula:

Formulae,

$$N = \frac{Z^2 \cdot P \cdot Q}{d^2}$$

Where:

N = Minimum sample size

Z = Constant, Standard normal deviate (1.96 for 95% Confidence level)

P = Population proportion with characteristic of interest Q = 1 – P

d = Acceptable Margin of error

Therefore, from the formula above

$$N = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{(0.05)^2} = 50$$

N = 384.16~384

However, due to resource limitations and the community-based nature of the study, the sample size was practically adjusted to 200 participants, which was still sufficient to provide valuable insights into corticosteroid misused in Ilala Municipality.

3.6. Data collection methods and tools

The study was quantitative research approaches. In quantitative approach the data collection was by using questionnaire with close ended questions.

3.7. Data Processing and Analysis

The data were collected manual by using pen, pencil, questionnaire list and then to analyse using Microsoft excel.

3.8. Dissemination of Results

The findings of this study were shared with relevant stakeholders, including local health authorities in Ilala Municipality and academic supervisors at the university. A summary reported may also be shared with community leaders to raise awareness about the misused of topical corticosteroids.

3.9. Ethical Considerations

Approval to conduct this study were obtained from the appropriate ethical review committee. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their rights, and the voluntary nature of participation. Verbal or written consent were obtained before data collection. Confidentiality was strictly maintained—no names were recorded, and data were used solely for research purposes.

3.10. Limitations of the Study

- Unwillingness of the respondents was one of the among challenges that may be encountered on this study.
- Although 200 participants were included, the findings may not fully represent the broader Ilala population.
- Self-reported responses may be affected by recall or social desirability bias.
- The cross-sectional design limits the ability to determine caused-and-effect.
- The study was limited to Ilala Municipality and may not reflect other regions.
- Lack of local studies made comparison and context-setting difficult.

3.11. Inclusive and exclusive criteria

Inclusion Criteria:

- Adults aged 18 to 45 years living in Ilala Municipality.
- Those who had used topical corticosteroids in the past 12 months or currently used them.
- Individuals willing to participate and provide informed consent.

Exclusion Criteria:

- People younger than 18 or older than 45 years.
- Those who had never used topical corticosteroids.
- Individuals who were seriously ill or unable to respond to the questionnaire.

IV. RESULTS

4.1. Socio-demographic Characteristics

A total of 200 participants were included in the study. Among them, 160 (80.0%) were female while 40 (20.0%) were male.

Regarding age distribution, the majority of participants 105 (52.76%) were aged between 18–28 years, followed by 66 (33.17%) aged 29–38 years, and 28 (14.07%) aged 39–45 years.

4.2. Knowledge of Topical Corticosteroids

The study revealed that 172 (86.0%) participants had heard about medicated skin creams, while 28 (14.0%) had not.

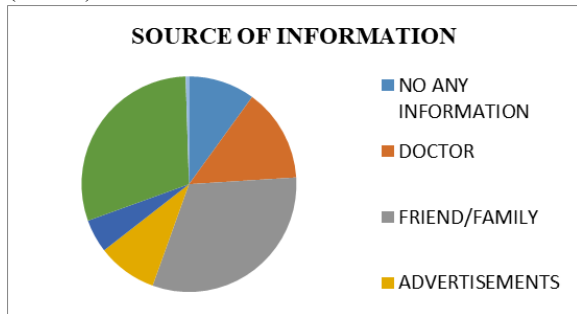
The main sources of information were friends/family 63 (31.5%) and social media 60 (30.0%), followed by doctors 28 (14.0%) and advertisements 18 (9.0%).

Only 90 (45.0%) participants knew the skin conditions treated by medicated creams, while the majority 110 (55.0%) did not.

Awareness of side effects was low, with only 56 (28.0%) participants aware, while 144 (72.0%) were not aware.

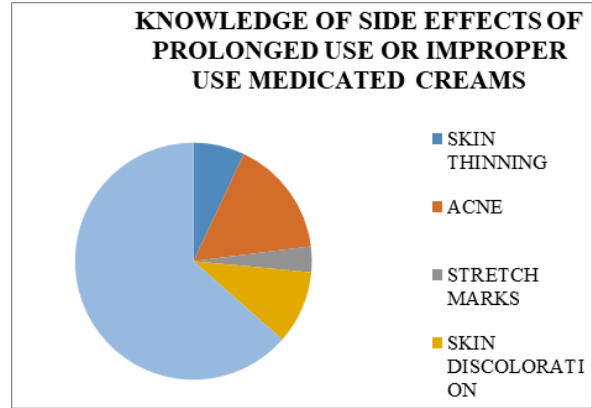
Among those who knew side effects, acne 32 (16.0%) and skin discoloration 20 (10.0%) were the most commonly identified, while 127 (63.5%) participants did not know any side effects.

Regarding discontinuation, only 39 (19.5%) participants knew that medicated creams should be gradually stopped, while 102 (51.0%) did not and 59 (29.5%) were not sure.



KNOWLEDGE OF SKIN CONDITIONS TREATED WITH MEDICATED SKIN CREAMS AMONG RESPONDENTS

| RESPONSE | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGE |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| YES | 90 | 45.00% |
| NO | 110 | 55.00% |
| TOTAL | 200 | 100.00% |

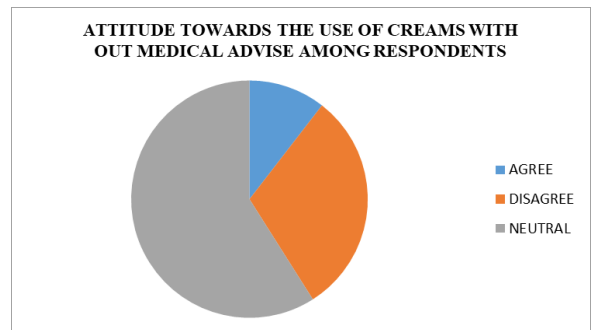
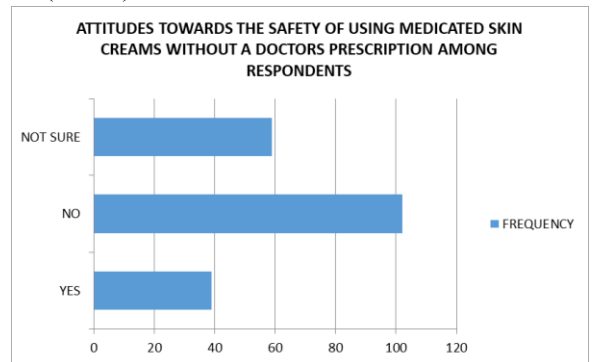


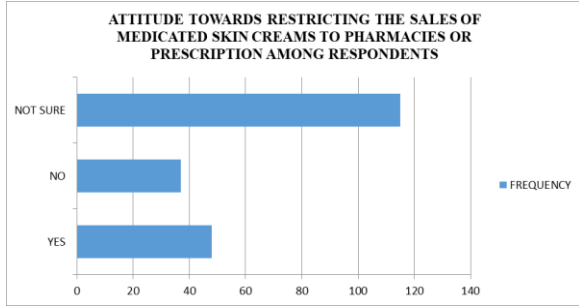
4.3. Attitudes toward Corticosteroid Used

Regarding safety without prescription, 39 (19.5%) participants believed it was safe, 102 (51.0%) believed it was not safe, while 59 (29.5%) were not sure.

Most participants were neutral 118 (59.0%) regarding the use of creams without medical advice, while 61 (30.5%) disagreed and 21 (10.5%) agreed.

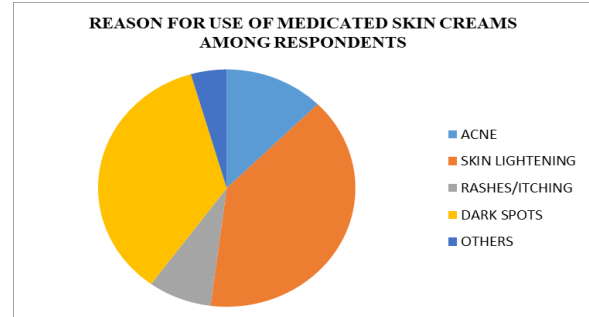
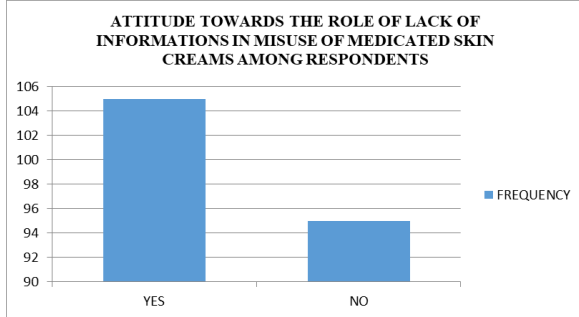
On restricting sale, 48 (24.0%) supported restriction, 37 (18.5%) opposed, while 115 (57.5%) were not sure. More than half of participants 105 (52.5%) believed that lack of information contributed to misused, while 95 (47.5%) did not.





AWARENESS OF STEROIDS CONTENTS IN MEDICATED SKIN CREAMS USED BY RESPONDENTS

| RESPONSE | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGES |
|----------|-----------|-------------|
| YES | 34 | 17.00% |
| NO | 136 | 68.00% |
| NOT SURE | 30 | 15.00% |
| TOTAL | 200 | 100.00% |



4.4. Practices of Corticosteroid Used

The most commonly used creams were Skderm 98 (49.0%), followed by Betaderm 68 (34.0%) and Baclogen 17 (8.5%).

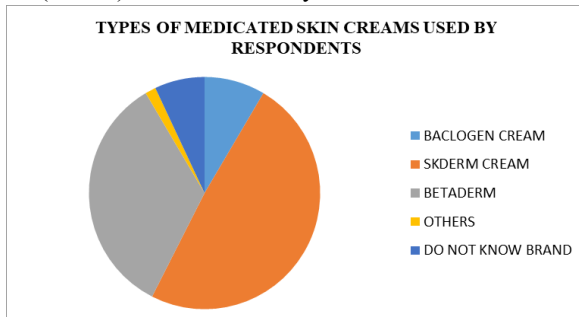
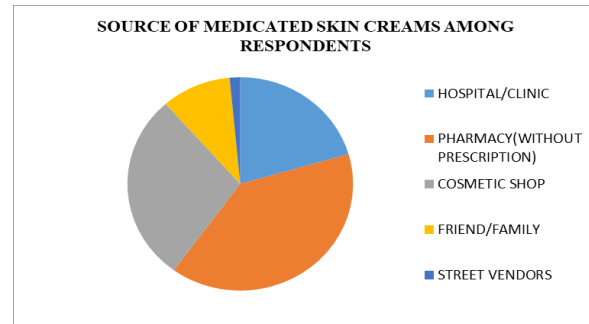
Only 34 (17.0%) participants were aware that the creams they used contained steroids, while 136 (68.0%) were not aware and 30 (15.0%) were not sure. The main reasons for used were skin lightening 79 (39.5%) and dark spots 71 (35.5%), followed by acne 25 (12.5%).

Most participants obtained creams from pharmacies without prescription 79 (39.5%), followed by cosmetic shops 57 (28.5%) and hospitals 41 (20.5%).

Only 24 (12.0%) participants reported reading instructions before used, while 176 (88.0%) did not.

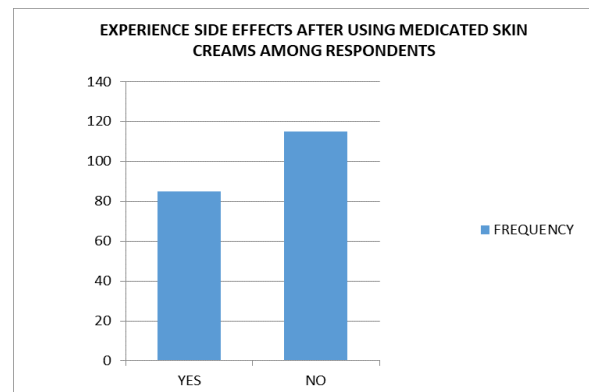
A significant proportion 85 (42.5%) experienced side effects, while 115 (57.5%) did not.

Regarding duration of used, 73 (36.5%) used creams for 1-4 weeks, 59 (29.5%) for more than a month, and 55 (27.5%) for more than a year.



PRACTICE OF READING INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE USING MEDICATED SKIN CREAMS AMONG RESPONDENTS

| RESPONSE | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGES |
|----------|-----------|-------------|
| YES | 24 | 12.00% |
| NO | 176 | 88.00% |
| TOTAL | 200 | 100.00% |



DURATION OF USED OF MEDICATED SKIN CREAMS AMONG RESPONDENTS

| DURATION OF USED | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGES |
|--------------------|-----------|-------------|
| LESS THAN 1 WEEK | 1 | 0.50% |
| 1-4 WEEKS | 73 | 36.50% |
| MORE THAN A MONTHS | 59 | 29.50% |
| MORE THAN A YEAR | 55 | 27.50% |
| STILL USING | 12 | 6.00% |
| TOTAL | 200 | 100.00% |

V. DISCUSSION

This study assessed the knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding the use of topical corticosteroids among adults in Mchikichini ward, Ilala District. The findings revealed important gaps in knowledge, mixed attitudes, and unsafe practices, which were consistent with trends reported in other developing settings.

5.1. Knowledge of Topical Corticosteroids.

The present study found that a high proportion of participants (86.0%) had heard about medicated skin creams. This suggested that awareness of such products was widespread in the community. However, despite this high level of awareness, detailed knowledge was found to be inadequate. Only 28.0% of participants were aware of the side effects associated with prolonged or improper use, indicating a significant knowledge gap.

This discrepancy between general awareness and specific knowledge had been reported in other studies, where individuals were familiar with the existence of topical corticosteroids but lack understanding of their potential risks. The low level of awareness of side effects observed in this study may contribute to the misused of these medications, as individuals may not anticipate adverse outcomes.

Furthermore, more than half of the participants (55.0%) did not know the conditions treated by medicated skin creams, and a large proportion (63.5%) could not identify any side effects. Among those who reported knowledge of side effects, acne and skin discoloration were the most commonly mentioned, while other important effects such as skin thinning and dependence were rarely identified. This indicated

incomplete and selective knowledge among respondents.

In addition, only 19.5% of participants were aware of the need for gradual discontinuation of corticosteroids, while the majority either lacked this knowledge or were unsure. This finding is important because improper

Discontinuation may lead to rebound effects and worsening of skin conditions.

The main sources of information identified in this study were friends/family (31.5%) and social media (30.0%), with fewer participants obtaining information from healthcare professionals. This reliance on informal sources may explain the poor quality of knowledge observed, as such sources may provide inaccurate or incomplete information.

5.2. Attitudes toward Corticosteroid Used.

The findings of this study indicated that attitudes toward the used of topical corticosteroids were varied and, in some cases, uncertain. While 51.0% of participants believed that it was unsafe to used medicated skin creams without a doctor’s prescription, a considerable proportion (29.5%) were not sure, and 19.5% believed it was safe.

This uncertainty suggested that although some participants recognize potential risks, a large segment of the population lacks confidence in their understanding of safe usage. Such ambiguity in attitudes may contribute to inappropriate decision-making regarding the use of these medications.

In relation to the used of creams for acne or skin-lightening purposes without medical advice, the majority of participants (59.0%) were neutral, while 30.5% disagreed and only 10.5% agreed. The high level of neutrality further highlights uncertainty and possible lack of awareness about the implications of unsupervised used.

Regarding regulatory measures, more than half of the participants (57.5%) were not sure whether the sale of medicated creams should be restricted to pharmacies or require a prescription. Only 24.0% supported restriction, while 18.5% opposed it. This again reflects limited awareness of the need for regulation and control.

However, it was noteworthy that 52.5% of participants acknowledged that lack of information contributed to misuse. This suggested that many individuals were aware of the role of inadequate knowledge in driving

improper used, even if their personal understanding remains limited.

5.3. Practices of Corticosteroid Used.

The study revealed several unsafe practices regarding the use of topical corticosteroids. A significant proportion of participants obtained medicated skin creams from pharmacies without prescription (39.5%), followed by cosmetic shops (28.5%). Only a smaller proportion obtained these products from hospitals or clinics (20.5%).

This finding indicated easy accessibility of these medications without proper medical supervision, which was a major contributing factor to misuse. The availability of corticosteroids over the counter or through informal channels increased the likelihood of inappropriate used.

The most common reasons for using medicated skin creams were skin lightening (39.5%) and treatment of dark spots (35.5%), followed by acne (12.5%). This suggested that cosmetic motivations play a major role in the used of these products, which may not always be medically justified.

Another important finding was that only 12.0% of participants reported reading instructions before using medicated creams, while the majority (88.0%) did not. This lack of attention to usage guidelines significantly increased the risk of incorrect application, overused, and adverse effects.

Furthermore, 42.5% of participants reported experiencing side effects after using medicated skin creams. This relatively high proportion supports the finding of poor knowledge and unsafe practices, as misused were likely to result in adverse outcomes.

In terms of duration of used, a considerable number of participants reported prolonged used, with 29.5% using creams for more than a month and 27.5% for more than a year. Long-term used without medical supervision was particularly concerning, as it increased the risk of serious side effects such as skin thinning, dependence, and systemic absorption.

Additionally, only 17.0% of participants were aware that the creams they were using contained steroids, while the majority were either unaware or unsure. This lack of awareness about the nature of the product further contributed to misuse.

5.4. Overall Interpretation

Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate a pattern of high exposure to topical corticosteroids combined with insufficient knowledge, uncertain attitudes, and unsafe practices. While many participants were aware of medicated skin creams, their understanding of proper used, potential risks, and regulatory aspects was limited.

The combination of easy accessibility, reliance on informal information sources, and cosmetic motivations appears to drive the misused of these medications. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to improve public awareness and promote safe practices.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study assessed the knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding the use of topical corticosteroids among adults in Mchikichini ward, Ilala District. The findings revealed that although a large proportion of participants were aware of medicated skin creams, detailed knowledge regarding their proper used and potential side effects was inadequate. Only a small percentage of participants demonstrated awareness of adverse effects and correct discontinuation practices. Attitudes toward the used of these medications were mixed, with many participants expressing uncertainty regarding their safety and regulation. While some recognized the risks associated with unsupervised used, a considerable number were unsure or held neutral views, indicating gaps in understanding and awareness.

In terms of practices, the study identified widespread unsafe behaviors, including obtaining creams without prescription, failure to read usage instructions, and prolonged used. A significant proportion of participants also reported experiencing side effects, further highlighting the consequences of improper used.

Overall, the study demonstrates that despite high exposure to topical corticosteroids, there was insufficient knowledge, inconsistent attitudes, and inappropriate practices among the study population. These factors collectively contributed to the misused of medicated skin creams and underscore the need for targeted interventions.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Health education programs should be implemented to improve public awareness regarding the proper use and potential risks of topical corticosteroids.
- Regulatory authorities should strengthen control over the sale of medicated skin creams to ensure they were dispensed only with appropriate medical guidance.
- Healthcare providers should play a more active role in educating patients about correct usage, side effects, and the importance of adherence to instructions.
- Further research should be conducted to explore factors influencing misuse and to evaluate the effectiveness of intervention strategies.

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