

## **DETERMINANTS OF DOCTORS' PRESCRIBING BEHAVIOUR FOR PHARMACEUTICAL DRUGS: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM THE MEDICAL SECTOR IN ZIMBABWE.**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of our study is to interrogate the determinants of doctors' prescribing behaviour in developing countries using Zimbabwean medical sector as the testing ground. Positivism research paradigm and a cross section research design were adopted. The sampling frame was 656 medical practitioners out of which a sample size of 100 was used. Structured questionnaires were used as data collection tools. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze data. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was conducted and specifically Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to test the hypotheses. The study's key findings indicated a significant positive relationship between doctors' prescribing behaviour and medical representatives' information and marketing activities. The results also showed a positive influence of the doctor's specialisation on his/ her prescribing behaviour.

**Keywords:** *determinants, doctors' prescribing behaviour, pharmaceutical drugs, medical sector, developing nations*

### **Introduction**

Medical professionals such as doctors play an important role in the adoption of pharmaceutical prescription drugs. It is then imperative for research to understand the factors that influence these professionals' decision making when prescribing prescription drugs. Extant literature predominantly in western markets notes how medical marketing and pharmaceuticals' marketing activities influence the prescription behaviour of doctors (Aliyu, Umar, Kasim, & Martin, 2014; Hasan, 2016; Theodorou, Tsiantou, Pavlakis, Maniadaakis, Fragoulakis, Pavi, & Kyriopoulos 2009). For

our study, the term doctor is used inclusive of physicians. Doctors are a key determinant on the types of prescriptions that patients receive given their training and expertise and proximity to information from pharmaceutical companies. Whilst the patient is the ultimate receiver and benefactor of the prescription medicine, they are not necessarily the target audience of the marketing messages developed by the pharmaceutical companies (Napit, 2018). In essence, the doctor plays a middleman role which makes them the key decider and gatekeeper in the decision-making process of whether a prescription is used or not.