

## An Overview on Pharmaceutical Sales and Marketing

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### ABSTRACT:-

This phenomenological study examines the ethical dilemmas of medical sales representatives MSRS [Market Settlement's Reporting System] in pharmaceutical sales and marketing in Laguna Province. This research specifically utilized transcendental phenomenology and triangulated three methods: observations, interviews, and group discussions. After identifying key statements, brackets, horizontality, and thematic groupings, the researcher revealed Ten Types. As to the ethical dilemmas experienced by MSRS in pharmaceutical marketing and sales, the concept branched out to nine thematic concepts of their shared reality. The consensus among participants' comments shows that there are certain elements, strategies and solutions that healthcare representatives consider effective in the pharmaceutical sector. MSRS have good communication skills and product expertise, which are essential for every MSR and help them achieve their sales goals, even when it is difficult to become an MSR due to failures and rejections. Additionally, effective marketing strategies and analytics must be used to achieve business goals. To better tailor their experiences and develop strategies to facilitate business relationships with them, future researchers in marketing and sales in the pharmaceutical industry should Investigate how health care professionals and their organizations perceive medical representatives and their organizations.

**KEYWORDS:-**Ethical dilemmas, Medical Sales Representative, Sales and Marketing .

### I. INTRODUCTION :-

The pharmaceutical sector is primarily responsible for the research, development, production and distribution of medicines. The sector has grown significantly over the past two decades, and in 2021, global pharmaceutical industry revenue reached \$1.42 trillion. The United States has the largest domestic pharmaceutical

market in the world, with many of the largest pharmaceutical companies headquartered there. China has emerged as a major player in the industry and the emerging pharmaceutical market has recorded strong annual growth rates in recent years (Mikulic, 2022). In the Philippines, the pharmaceutical industry is one of the fastest growing and in-demand industries, making it the third largest pharmaceutical market in the ASEAN region. There are three segments in which medicines are regulated: branded medicines, branded generics and non-branded generics. However, the growth may continue as new regulations require public hospitals to provide affordable medicines to Filipinos by making generics available to them (InCorp Philippines, 2021). Therefore, Dukart et al. Al (2022) states that pharmaceutical companies should change their marketing strategies to maintain profitable and dynamic operations, especially now that several factors are present. One of them is modernization through technology and social media, inflation, geopolitics and the current situation, especially the Covid-19 pandemic, which could affect their sales. The pharmaceutical industry follows almost the same marketing and sales methods as pharmaceutical companies and focuses its business resources on the marketing and sales department. The marketing department works intensively and systematically with the sales department and the human resources development and management (HRDM) department. HRDM then filters out the best selected candidate, guided by critical business thinking. At the same time, the HRDM department, in collaboration with marketing, creates the Training with more simulated and realistic programs that candidates go through to find the right salesperson for a pharmaceutical company. The most widely used, important and necessary strategic marketing program in the pharmaceutical industry is hiring and developing the best medical salespeople and training optimal salespeople in the medical industry

- **Pharmaceutical Sales and marketing:-**

Pharmaceutical marketing refers to offline and digital strategies designed to attract new patients and increase awareness of a particular drug or treatment plan. Drug marketing can be aimed at physicians or aimed at selling directly to consumers. Pharmaceutical companies are responsible for the design, discovery and development of drugs used to treat, prevent, diagnose or cure diseases and other medical problems. However, in the face of fierce competition, increasingly complex regulations and consumer losses, pharmaceutical companies are doing everything they can to ensure their products reach both healthcare providers and patients. And because of this, the role of drug sales and marketing is becoming increasingly important in the industry, so much so that pharmaceutical marketers and sales representatives now have huge budgets for R&D.

The pharmaceutical sales reps are the salespeople engaged by pharma, healthcare or biotech companies to sell their products to a variety of external stakeholders. These sales reps are also occupied in influencing and educating healthcare professionals and main opinion leaders on the advantages of the company's products. The pharmaceutical sales representatives educate physicians and other medication prescribing professionals on recent developments in the quickly advancing pharmaceutical industry. They connect providers with the drugs, treatment and knowledge necessary to provide cutting-edge care to their patients.

- **Objective of the Study:-**

The main objective of this study was to examine the ethical dilemmas associated with MSR in the marketing and sales of Pharmaceutical products. Specifically, the study examined the ethical dilemmas faced by MSR in marketing and sales using a Phenomenological and qualitative research design. Of Pharmaceutical products and how they addressed the ethical dilemmas identified.

## II. METHOD:-

The study adopted a phenomenological research design based on Creswell's ideas for understanding participants' experiences. "Viewpoint" (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Phenomenology is a form of qualitative research that focuses on the study of an individual's Experiences in the world. The phenomenological research method is appropriate and well suited for the study of difficult problems.

In particular, the researcher used transcendental phenomenology as a guide to carefully analyze the lived experiences of medical representatives from Laguna Province who face ethical dilemmas in the sale and marketing of pharmaceutical products. This type of phenomenological method requires the researcher to have access to the participants. Experience the phenomenon in a pre-reflective way, without resorting to categorizations based on conceptualizations that often take into account the obvious or common sense (Tuffour, 2017). MRTIANO (2019) argued that transcendental phenomenology provides a result that goes beyond narrative and analysis through demystification, which is achieved through two main processes or functions: epoché and bracketing. Both are essential to obtain unbiased information that reveals the real essence of queries on specific topics.

According to Qutoshi (2020), reporting the findings in phenomenological research must focus on a detailed Description of the phenomena before interpreting the description of the research participants. The researcher utilized key-informant interviews as the primary tool to document the First-hand experiences of the medical sales representatives. Streeferk (2018) explained sources provide first-hand information, such as interview transcripts, that give the researcher direct access to the research subject. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), the researcher should interview 5 to 25 individuals who have experienced a particular phenomenon to collect enough data to understand and describe rich details of the essence of the experience

The researcher sought permission to conduct the study from the medical sales Representatives through online platforms such as FB messenger, informing them about the Study's objectives and being part of the research participants. This was followed by a key- Informant interview with the medical sales representatives after the transmittal letters had been Sent and secured. This was done by tailoring questions according to the progress of the interview (Brinkman and Kwale, 2014; Ellis, 2016; Borja, 2021).

After that, the researcher conducted dependent analyses on their observational data and Pursued emergent themes after gathering the data (Creswell, 2017). After determining the Themes, the researcher met again with the participants to verify the verbatim accounts they Shared during the interview as the final step. The participants

clarified and rectified their Responses, making the essence of the study valid and credible.

The researcher utilized the purposive criterion sampling technique to determine the number of participants included in the study. As explained by Patton (2016), as cited in Gentles et al. (2019), the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn more about issues important to the purpose of the inquiry. The participants must comply with these two criteria to become a reliable source of needed information:

- 1.) Must be medical sales representatives handling the Laguna Province area, and
- 2.) Must be in the profession for two years and above. It was hoped that the trajectory of the significant experiences generated from the interview truly

Reflected the day-to-day life situation and stories of medical sales representatives. After following the set criteria, the researcher was able to select ten (10) participants.

The study utilized a researcher-developed questionnaire consisting of twenty (20) open-ended questions to uncover the extensive experiences of medical representatives in Laguna Province regarding ethical dilemmas in the sale and marketing of pharmaceutical products. Ten questions answer the “what” question of the study about the experiences of medical representatives. Ten additional questions answer the “how to” portion by explaining how to deal with ethical dilemmas in drug sales and marketing. A narrative interview technique was used to ask open-ended questions and additional questions were generated during the actual interview with the key informant. In addition, individuals were asked detailed follow-up questions using standard qualitative interview procedures.

The researcher sought permission from drug sellers through online platforms such as FB Messenger to conduct the study, informed them of the objectives of the study, and was one of the study participants. After the transmittal letters were sent and secured, a conversation took place between the key informants and the medical representatives. This was done by adapting the questions to the interview process (Brinkman and Kvale, 2014; Ellis, 2016; Borja, 2021).

During the interviews, the researcher asked the participants the same questions as

recommended by transcendental phenomenology. These interviews were conducted in a private room and confidentially. The participants were required to affix their signature on the "Informed Consent form" as a sign of approval and authorization to obtain the provision of using mobile phones for voice recordings. Approval for taking photos during interviews for documentation purposes was secured.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:-

The following factual and personal report forms the bracketed part of the article. Before starting this work, the researcher shared his personal and professional profile as well as a description of the objectivity of the process. The researcher holds a Master of Business Administration and a Bachelor of Science In Business Administration with a specialization in Marketing Management. As of 2013, he has worked in numerous pharmaceutical companies for. In this study, the researcher actively participated in the implementation of Study while being aware of his limitations as a researcher so as not to influence the results of Study. To evaluate the scope and depth of the MSR, he ignored all previous findings. Carefully followed the research guidelines, especially when the study involved subjects, to collect the necessary information in the most thoughtful and natural way possible. This helped him avoid making judgments about the results of the study. Then, considering several protocols that had to be strictly followed due to pandemic scenarios, he selected volunteers who met the Criteria and were willing to participate in the study. Ten IAS officers were interviewed as key informants. With participants' permission, the researcher used a voice recorder to record the conversation during the interview. Aside from their opinions on the study, the Researcher was actually able to record verbatim comments from each participant

The researcher gave noteworthy comments inferred from participant responses during The scheduled in-depth interviews to offer the horizontalization portion of the data analysis. The presentation highlighted phrases and quotes from the participants' exact comments to make The findings credible and evidence-based. To respond to the study's two main questions, the researcher made meaning of the participants' responses. There were 155 relevant statements extrapolated as a result, according to the study.

After determining the themes, the researcher interpreted the important quotes before Categorizing them into more comprehensive chunks of knowledge, known as Theme. The MSRs' pertinent assertions and related ideas led the researcher to identify (17) Type clusters. The themes were arranged chronologically as they emerged from The researcher's interpretation. As what the participants shared:

### **1. As to the ethical dilemmas experienced by MSRs in pharmaceutical Sales and Marketing**

#### **Types 1: Personal Growth and Professional Development:-**

This Type presents why the MSRs decided to work in the pharmaceutical sales industry. Most of them are staying in their jobs because of their salaries that serve as their bread and butter to provide for the needs of their families. Likewise, they also settle in pharmaceuticals because of the benefits and opportunities that may come along in their journey as they grow professionally by learning not just about the pharmaceutical industry but also about sales and marketing.

I choose this job in pharmaceutical sales because it provides high pay, benefits, and frequently rapid career progression. To provide for my family's needs and open my doors to countless opportunities. my family, take the chance to have that professionalism in a challenging environment. I want to be more knowledgeable in terms of sales.

#### **Types 2-Product Knowledge and Interpersonal Skills:-**

The second the Type me shows The specific knowledge and skills needed to succeed as MSR. Most participants mentioned During the interview that product knowledge is pivotal in the pharmaceutical industry. It was Also shared among the participants that they are undergoing training which hones them and to Have enough knowledge on the various products they are selling. In addition, it is common for Them to be a good communicator because they stated that having excellent communication skills Can help them to persuade their clients and come up with favorable negotiations. Aside from Being knowledgeable about the products and good communicators, MSRs must also be Determined, focused, and applies strategic planning since it is given that they handle vast areas And face enormous prominent people. Product knowledge, adaptivity , and time management . Excellent communication and presenting abilities are a must. A confident,

persuasive Demeanor and negotiation abilities, talents in sales and customer relations .Communication skills and strategic planning in areas.

Knowledgeable in terms of sales. Knowledge of your products and patience .Similar to the study of Limbu and Kay (2019), the results revealed that communication Skills and product knowledge are some of the most effective sales methods. These were Highlighted as part of the Personal Selling strategy, creating a better salesperson performance.

#### **Types 3-Be Knowledgeable, Friendly, and Patient:-**

On this topic, MSRs have identified three effective traits that serve as strategies for success in pharmaceutical marketing. Since the previous topic mentioned that product knowledge is essential, marketing knowledge, such as describing product details, is also important. It is also necessary to be informed about various diseases, ailments and ailments as the necessary medical supplies and equipment in the hospital depend on this . Likewise, a friendly approach to is effective, it makes customers feel comfortable, which leads to customer relationships. In addition, MSRs have to wait a long time because it is difficult to convince their customers, especially administrators and owners. Therefore, patience and perseverance are essential. That's why, when faced with numerous rejections, they always try to convince their customers with a friendly and competent attitude.

The strategy I find most effective in pharmaceuticals is content marketing. Product Detailing and Disease Knowledge. Knowing what meds are commonly used inside the hospital. Make rapport and be friendly.

You must have a positive perspective and patience with the accounts because of a lot Of rejections you may encounter. There are no specific strategies needed, but you must be patient.

#### **Types 4- Understanding the Clients' Needs, Preferences, and Interests.:-**

This Type reveals that the MSRs must discover and understand their client's needs, preferences, and interests. The clients can be enticed and hopefully create deals and agreements through this approach. The participants also shared that most clients want to receive something in return, such as rebates, dine-out, and other benefits. Rebates, dine-out, and other benefits .You must have a better understanding to know the needs of your client .The deals or promo of the product also

benefit them. A free present is appreciated by all. Your potential clients are the same as everyone else. With the premium sales strategy, sales representatives provide a giveaway or promotional item to their prospects to generate interest in their brand or product. Active listening to understand clients' needs. Good rebates to clients and consistent coverage. The proposals and rebates that we can offer to them.

**Types 5- Be Focused, Good Communicator, and Compassionate:-** Regarding the factors behind the success of the MSRs, the participants shared that they are focused on their goals, such as showing care to their clients and giving their best. Having good communication skills is an advantage, too, because it is the key to successfully persuading and gaining the trust of their clients. Through these, the clients will be able to feel the dedication of the MSRs as well as their compassion for other people. Focus, care about the customers. Dedication and good communication skills. A successful sales representative must be persuasive, trustworthy, and able to deliver accurate information. To make a client feel informed, your communication should be clear, concise, and straightforward.

**Types 6- Flexibility and Opportunity:-** Flexible time and make appointments directly with the doctor or client. Geographical exploration - moving and traveling for work are both rather frequent, as opposed to being desk-bound. Networking opportunities can help you build a successful, long-term career by interacting with a range of different professionals. You can go everywhere. Flexible time and the opportunity to interact with different kinds of people. No time in and time out. Going with your phase you encounter different kinds of respected individuals: Doctors, Presidents, Directors, etc.

You will expand your connection in the medical field.

**Types 7- Rejections and Failure :-** Rejection of accounts. Even some of the top sales representatives will admit that they did not make their initial sales objective, which is one of the hardest hurdles for new medical sales reps. Although this might initially seem discouraging, the most crucial thing you can do is plan and make sure you're using the right strategies to achieve your sales objectives. Treatment of the clients can make you feel uncomfortable. Failed to get your targets and rejections.

Since failure and rejections are innate in the pharmaceutical industry, Rafi and Saeed (2019) suggest that MSRs must be equipped with a skillset in customer behavior, adaptive selling, and customer orientation. Through these, they can foresee potential refusals they may avoid as they deal with their clients. Thus, MSRs will have a better chance of achieving growth in their sales and goals in their companies.

**Types 8- Satisfaction and Patientcare :-**

Flexibility and good satisfaction. Recognizing and attending to patient concerns shows that you view them as unique.

Individuals with specific needs. They may be more likely to respect their health journey and adhere to their care plan if they receive this kind of patient care. Providing them with proper medicine molecular structure and affordability.

The effective and affordable meds they can get. The results also confirm the findings from the study by Miller (2018), revealing that pharmaceutical companies aim not just for the success of the pharmaceutical business but also for patient health and safety. This is embedded in the proper ethical marketing standards for the pharmaceutical industry.

**Types 9- Effectivity and Affordability :-**

Bringing quality and effective medicine ensured the proper standard of health care. By developing and bringing new medicine that improved the lives of patients. We can help them to find a cheaper price for meds. Provide a wide range of medicine, research, and development that destroy and manage diseases. We can help in knowing new products or meds that can be cured some new kinds of viruses. Aside from the basic requirements that every medical drug must be checked and approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), pharmaceutical companies, through their MSRs, must provide balanced, objective, and accurate scientific information about the medicines they are selling to all health professionals (APEC, 2021). Likewise, they should offer deals and promos to make their products affordable to their consumers.

**2. As to how the MSRs face ethical dilemmas in pharmaceutical sales and marketing.**

**Types 10- Handling and Dealing with Various Aspects:-**

This type presents how the pharmaceutical sales industry differs from other

business sectors. Based on the responses of the MSRs, they handle territories like, in their case, they go around the province of Laguna, where they communicate and build good relationships with their clients. Most of the time, only one MSR handles a colossal territory, whether the whole province or a division of different cities. Every area they operate in needs a lot of money for investment, which is also part of getting the clients' attention and more confidence that you can support them in their clinics, hospitals, and even personal needs and wants. As also revealed from the study of Ghauri (2018), MSRs consider a lot of things, and They need to be more prepared to attain their target sales which is one of the significant Differences they may determine compared to other business sectors. As confirmed by Fadare et Al. (2019), the cost and expenditures of the pharmaceutical sales industry are incomparable to Other business sectors.

#### **Types 14-Building Good Relationships to Keep the Clients:-**

##### **Types 11 -Modernized and Research-Based :-**

The last Type that emerged after Analyzing the significant statements displays how the MSRs see the marketing strategies in the Future. They certainly believe that marketing strategies will be modernized as technological Advancements continue. Some participants mentioned that it is possible that Artificial Intelligence (AI) could be used as well in performing content marketing. Likewise, since social Media is becoming mainstream, influencer marketing would also be applied by the MSRs. Aside From modernization, research-based marketing could also be performed since people in today's Generation are becoming more critical and data-driven. People who tend to rely on the Consumers with proof of success, especially in healing, are one of the bases of the consumers. They do not just settle on what the doctors or experts are saying. Although this is critical, this Could be used as effective marketing combined with the experts' analysis done through research Or further studies.in long-term success. Although research and development must be present in every business, Kumar and Kavitha (2018) also disclosed that modern marketing must be applied as the pharmaceutical industries embrace technological advancements. In this study, the MSRs foresee that the presence of the technology would greatly help them improve their future marketing strategies. Moreover, digitalization has been reaching

industries; thus, similar to the study of Patwardhan et al. (2019), it is suggested that digital promotional tools must be applied in the pharmaceutical industry.

##### **Textural Description.:-**

The fundamental types revealed on the ethical dilemmas experienced by MSRs in pharmaceutical marketing and sales are as follows:

type 1. Personal Growth and Professional Development,

Type 2. Product Knowledge and Interpersonal Skills,

Type 3. Be Knowledgeable, Friendly, and Patient,

Type 4. Understanding the Clients' Needs, Preferences, and Interests,

Type 5. Be Focused, Good Communicator, and Compassionate,

Type 6. Flexibility and Opportunity,

Type 7. Rejections and Failure,

Type 8. Satisfaction and Patient-Care, and

Type 9. Effectivity and Affordability.

Although it is challenging to be an MSR because of contradictions and unending failures, the participants shared that they are staying because they are growing personally and professionally, considering the benefits and opportunities they are getting. It was evident among the participants that being knowledgeable about the products, promotional deals, and programs and being friendly, patient, and focused are effective ways in pharmaceutical marketing and sales. Furthermore, having excellent communication skills, compassion, and understanding of the client's needs, preferences, and interests would also help them to attain their goals as MSRs.

**Essence:-** The consensual statements of the participants pointed out that there are Certain factors, strategies, and remedies that medical sales representatives consider to become Successful in the pharmaceutical industry. Although it is not easy to become one because of the Failures and rejections, the MSRs have strong communication skills and product knowledge, Which are a must for every MSR, that help them to attain their target sales. Besides, suitable Marketing strategies, together with marketing analysis, must be employed to achieve the goals of the company. Once they can handle challenges and successfully deal with their clients, they can enjoy the benefits of being an MSR. Most importantly, part of the satisfaction is that they want to heal the patients by

providing the utmost care with effective and affordable medical supplies and equipment. Lastly, the MSRs are looking forward to more innovative pharmaceutical marketing sales that are research-based and technologically advanced

**Verification :-** At this point, the researcher revisited the participants to confirm that the transcription of their comments was accurate. To ensure that the topics discussed accurately reflect the general reality, the researcher also had to describe his or her own experiences and protect the integrity of the participants. Complaints at this stage. Finally, the participants checked the accuracy of the core of the phenomenon under study.

#### IV. CONCLUSION :-

The review of the participants' textual and structural reports led to the following conclusion MSRs in pharmaceutical marketing and sales face several ethical dilemmas. Although being an ISR is difficult due to the endless contradictions and failures, participants said they stick with it because it allows them to grow personally and professionally, especially given the benefits and opportunities they receive. Participants agreed that an effective approach to pharmaceutical marketing and sales is to be polite, patient, and focused, and to communicate merchandise, promotions, and programs. Additionally, exceptional communication skills, compassion, and knowledge of clients' needs, preferences, and interests would help them achieve their goals as an MSR.

The following advice in this respect, taking into account the research's findings: Pharmaceutical companies should consistently conduct training for medical sales Representatives focusing on product knowledge, interpersonal skills, and, most notably in today's generation, maintaining good mental health since they usually encounter rejection and failure in their field .For the MSRs, it is highly suggested to practice smart work rather than hard work Since competition among other companies is always given in the marketing and sales industry. Thus, possessing the skills such as being friendly, focused, patient, and the like, combined with Innovative strategies, would greatly help to augment sales and hopefully attain the target. In Addition, the MSRs must be aware of the trend, not just in business but also in society, Particularly in social media, to adapt to the digitization of marketing and sales in the Pharmaceutical sector. Moreover, to keep doing business with their accounts or clients, attention

Must be paid to digital techniques of monitoring the MSR, sales, and clients. For future researchers in the field of marketing and sales in the pharmaceutical Industry, conducting an investigation that will reveal the experiences of the healthcare personnel And their institutions toward the medical sales representatives and their companies would help To align both of their experiences and create strategies that would easily do business with them.

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