International Journal of Research and Review
[Indexed, Peer-Reviewed Journal]
Volume 12; Issue: 8; August 2025
Website: www.ijrrjournal.com
Research Paper *E-ISSN: 2349-9788; P-ISSN: 2454-2237*

The Impact of Comic Strips Creation Activity as a Potent Pedagogy for Enhanced Learning of Homoeopathic Materia Medica; A Student Perception Based Cross Sectional Observational Study

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.52403/ijrr.20250829

ABSTRACT

Undergraduate students often struggle to learn and effectively memorize the vast symptomatology of Homoeopathic Materia Medica. Traditional educational paradigms, heavily centered on passive information assimilation, commonly result in diminished student interest and an inability to retain complex subject matter effectively over time. This study explored the perceived benefits of an innovative extracurricular activity, comic strip creation, as an effective way to improve Materia Medica learning and recall. This activity capitalizes on the power of visual and narrative learning, offering students a more dynamic and memorable way to interact with Materia Medica, thereby fostering deeper understanding and more durable recall than traditional approaches.

Key words: Homoeopathic Materia Medica, Pedagogy, Extracurricular activity, Comic strip creation.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional pedagogy has long served as the backbone of education, typically involving a teacher-centric approach which often leads to passive student engagement, superficial understanding, and poor long-term retention due to its reliance on repetition-based learning and failure to accommodate diverse learning styles. Recognizing these limitations, the National Commission for Homoeopathy introduced the Competency-Based Dynamic Curriculum (CBDC) for UG and PG courses, fundamentally shifting towards student-oriented learning methods like case-based learning, problem-based learning, group discussions, and seminars. This current observational study similarly addresses this paradigm shift, investigating innovative learning methods that benefit students in improving their understanding and memorization, particularly of Homoeopathic Materia Medica subject.

METHODOLOGY

As an extracurricular initiative focused on enhancing learning engagement, a two-hour comic strip creation activity was conducted for second-year Bachelor of Homoeopathic Medicine and Surgery (BHMS) students. The study cohort comprised 62 second year BHMS students. For the purpose of the activity, these students were randomly divided into 12 groups, with each group consisting of 5 to 6 members. To ensure impartiality and mitigate bias, 12 distinct Materia Medica themes were prepared, and a single representative from each group then selected their theme through a random chit draw. After a one-week preparation period, students participated in a two-hour comic strip competition, conducted in a dedicated classroom under a strict mobile phone restriction. Subsequent to the competition, a panel of judges assessed the comic strips using established criteria to select winning entries. To assess the activity's pedagogical impact, students then completed a survey designed to obtain and record their perceptions of its influence on Materia Medica comprehension and recall.

The survey questionnaire is structured into four main sections to thoroughly assess the impact of the comic strip activity. It begins by exploring student engagement and their experience with the competition's process, including group work and motivation. The subsequent two sections directly measure the perceived impact on Materia Medica understanding (comprehension and conceptualization) and memorization (recall and retention). Finally, a section on overall learning experience and future utility captures broader benefits like enjoyment, stress reduction, and the potential for incorporating similar methods into formal education. An optional demographic section and an open-ended question are also included to gather contextual information and rich qualitative insights.

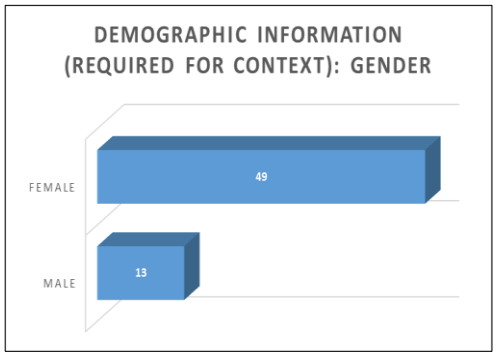
Themes given for the comic strip creation activity	
Post food fest scenario among Nux vomica and Ignatia	Nux vomica as husband to Ignatia wife
A forest trek with Apis, Ledum pal, Hypericum	A road accident between Symphytum, Calendula & Arnica
Pulsatilla as a mother of Cina and Chamomilla babies	Property dispute between Belladonna and Anacardium
A day before competitive exam featuring Gelsimium	Summer vacation between Natrum mur and Natrum carb
Arsenicum and Sulphur as room mates	Baryta carb and Silicea children in play school
Lycopodium superior with Nux vomica subordinate	Kali carb father at family get together

Fig 1: Student's comic strips creation on charts

OBSERVATIONS AND RESULTS

Demographic data: survey taken by males: 13 females: 49

Chart 1: bar diagram representing demographic information:

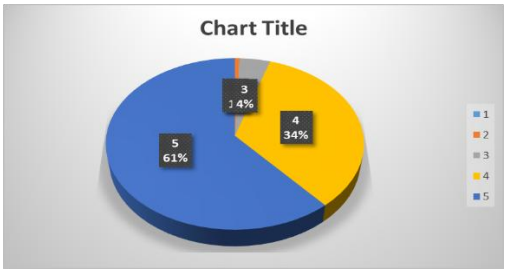


Section A- Engagement and Process:

Overall Responses on Likert Scale: TABLE 1:

Q. no	Likert Scale Rating from 1 – 5				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	0	0	1	10	51
2	0	0	3	14	45
3	0	4	11	19	28
4	0	1	6	19	36
5	0	0	2	17	43
%	0%	2%	7%	26%	65%

Chart 2: representing percentage of responses for section A:

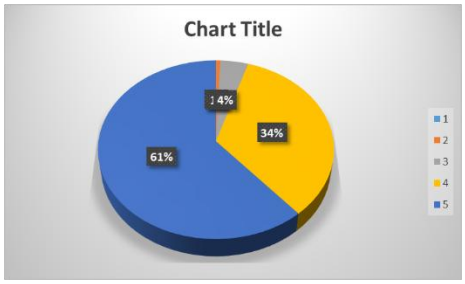


Section B - Impact on Materia Medica Understanding:

Overall Responses on Likert Scale TABLE 2:

Q. no	Likert Scale Rating from 1 – 5				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	0	0	2	17	43
2	0	0	1	17	44
3	0	0	6	17	39
4	0	0	2	22	38
5	0	0	2	21	39
%	0%	0%	4%	30%	66%

Chart 3: representing percentage of responses for section B:

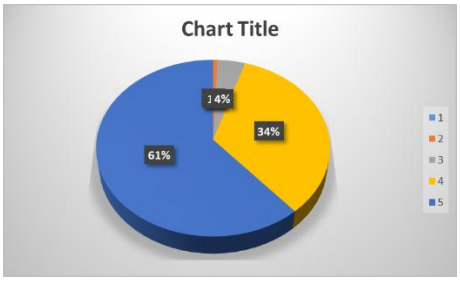


Section C- Impact on Materia Medica Memorization & Retention:

Overall Responses on Likert Scale TABLE 3:

Q. no	Likert Scale Rating from 1 – 5				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	0	0	1	23	38
2	0	0	2	20	40
3	0	0	3	16	43
4	0	0	3	23	36
5	0	0	1	24	37
%	0%	0%	3%	34%	63%

Chart 4: representing percentage of responses for section C:



Section D Overall Learning Experience & Future Utility:

Overall Responses on Likert Scale TABLE 4:

Q. no	Likert Scale Rating from 1 – 5				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	0	0	3	21	38
2	0	1	3	24	34
3	0	0	4	19	39
4	0	0	2	20	40
5	0	1	1	21	39
%	0%	1%	4%	34%	61%

Chart 5: representing percentage of responses for section D:

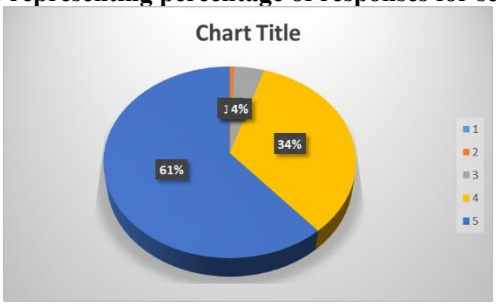


Chart 6: Difficulty in Memorizing Homoeopathic Materia Medica from Traditional Books on Likert Scale:

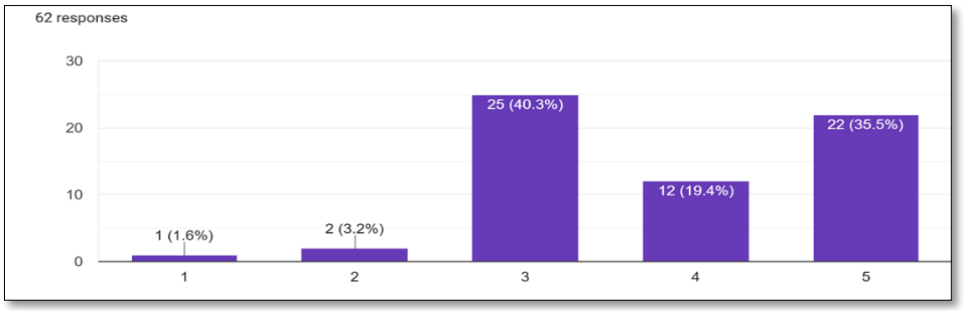
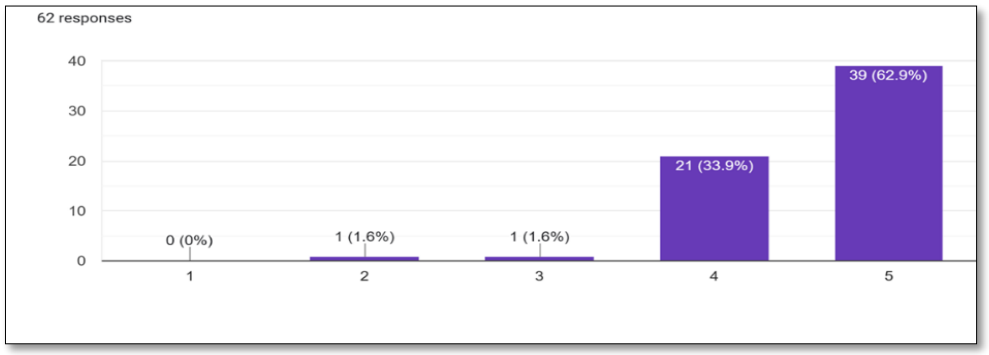


Chart 7: Overall Response for Comic Strip as an Effective Learning Method for Materia Medica:



DISCUSSION

Survey was conducted among all 62 students in the class (13 males, 49 females) to assess the effectiveness of a comic strip activity across several domains. The results from Section A, which focused on student engagement and the process of the comic strip activity, indicated a high level of satisfaction, with 65% of students providing a rating of 5 and 26% providing a rating of 4. Section B of the survey explored the activity's impact on students understanding of Materia Medica, where 66% of students gave a rating of 5, and 30% gave a rating of 4, suggesting a strong perceived positive influence on comprehension. Similarly, Section C, which evaluated the comic strip activity's role in memorization and retention of Materia Medica, demonstrated favorable outcomes, with 63% of students providing a rating of 5 and 34% providing a rating of 4. Collectively, these findings suggest that the comic strip activity was well-received by students and perceived as highly beneficial for both understanding and retention of complex medical knowledge. Section D, designed to evaluate the overall learning experience and future utility of the comic strip intervention, revealed strong positive perceptions among students, a total of 61% of students reported a rating of 5, while 34% reported a rating of 4.

Students rated the difficulty in memorizing Homeopathic Materia Medica from

traditional textbooks using a Likert scale, a total of 25 students gave a rating of 3, 12 students a rating of 4, and 22 students a rating of 5, indicating a perceived challenge with conventional learning methods. Conversely, when rating the overall effectiveness of the comic strip as a learning method for Materia Medica, 21 students gave a rating of 4, and 39 students gave a rating of 5.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The survey revealed a perceived challenge of 3.85 (SD=0.97) for traditional Materia Medica memorization, contrasting sharply with the comic strip activity's high overall effectiveness score of 4.56 (SD=0.67). These figures collectively indicate that students found conventional learning methods challenging, while perceiving the comic strip approach as a significantly more effective and well-received tool for both understanding and retention of complex medical knowledge.

Benefits of the Comic Strip Activity: Students identified several key advantages of incorporating the comic strip activity into their learning. Primarily, it enhanced comprehension and recall of information through the strategic use of visual elements and narrative structures. The approach was particularly effective for internalizing mental symptoms by allowing students to personify drug characteristics. Furthermore, the activity significantly fostered creativity and boosted engagement, contributing to a more dynamic and enjoyable learning atmosphere. It also promoted collaborative learning and teamwork, strengthening peer interactions. The creation of narratives facilitated relatable and practical application of knowledge, connecting theoretical drug profiles to real-life scenarios.

Drawbacks of the Comic Strip Activity: However, the activity also presented certain limitations. A recurring concern among students was the insufficient time allocation, which often impeded the full development of their creative concepts. There was also a perceived limited scope in comprehensively representing physical symptoms, suggesting an imbalance in the activity's versatility. Additionally, some students noted that not all drug symptoms could be effectively depicted within the comic strip format.

CONCLUSION

These findings collectively indicate that the comic strip activity was perceived as a highly effective pedagogical tool. This method significantly aided students in memorizing Homoeopathic Materia Medica more efficiently when compared to traditional book-based learning approaches.

Limitations of this study:

- **Subjective Perceptions:** Findings are based on self-reported student perceptions, not objective learning measures
- **Single Point in Time:** Cross-sectional design prevents establishing cause-and-effect or tracking long-term retention.
- **No Control Group:** Lack of a comparison group means effectiveness cannot be directly compared to other methods, nor can all benefits be definitively attributed.
- **Limited Generalizability:** Study conducted on a specific cohort from one institution; results may not apply broadly to all BHMS students or other settings.
- **Potential for Self-Report Bias:** Survey responses may be influenced by social desirability or inaccurate recall.
- **Absence of Objective Assessment:** No pre/post-tests or other quantitative measures were used to verify perceived learning gains.

Declaration by Authors

Ethical Approval: Approved
Acknowledgement: None
Source of Funding: None
Conflict of Interest: No conflicts of interest declared.

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How to cite this article: Ambala Sriharitha, Akkenapally Ajay Kumar, Silvia Sunderraj, N. Sumanth. The impact of comic strips creation activity as a potent pedagogy for enhanced learning of homoeopathic Materia medica; a student perception based cross sectional observational study. *International Journal of Research and Review*. 2025; 12(8): 250-255. DOI: *https://doi.org/10.52403/ijrr.20250829*

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