

DIGITALIZED INDIAN HEALTH CARE SECTOR: A BOON TO WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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ABSTRACT

Pandemic and global medical crises had an impact on the health of every citizen. Women are apparently, known to be prone to medical syndrome-like psychological, biological, sexual, and behavioral. Technology entered almost everyone's life amidst pandemic be it commerce, trade, education, health care, or employment. The health sector gained prominence in using e-devices and blockchain during this period of a medical emergency as per medical reports across the world. The health of all the citizens is of utter priority by the national medical agencies and personnel engaged in this sector. The health of women in any society played a pivotal role in a healthy nation. Hence, women's health is given due attention in every planning for family, or economy by the Indian health sector. In this current paper, the upliftment and advancements in digitization in the health sector are studied with special emphasis on women's health. Women's health is primarily the focus of this study, as women are the focal point of all the family activities and chores, and later they are integral contributors to national economic development. In the evolving scenario of different urban and rural cultures, the commonality of the central character of women is taken as a hypothesis in the paper. The objectives of the paper are, to assess the intense contribution of digitalization in the health care sector in India, which further proved to be a boon and a step toward women empowerment. Women empowerment is measured qualitatively on various parameters like literacy, entrepreneurial tasks, financial independence, decision-making skills and abilities, leadership role, etc. in their offices and home. The benefaction of digital health care & schemes for women and their accessibility and preventive measures in the post-pandemic phase is the centerpiece of the current study. Women are contacted telephonically to secure details for this study. Medical and psychological reports and articles relating to post-pandemic digitalized transitional & behavioral changes in women's physical and mental health shall be studied. The informed and conscious choice of participating in health awareness, precautionary steps, and early signs of diseases lead to health and longevity among women which motivates this gender to contribute significantly in parity with males towards economic growth and development. Empowered women contribute and constitute an empowered nation.

Keywords: Digitalized Health Care, Women Empowerment, Post-Pandemic, Technology.

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Introduction

The outbreak of an unprecedented medical crisis brought numerous challenges to the global economies. The downfall of the major industrial sector brought a significant decrease not only in production but the income and investment cycle of any economy is reportedly affected, the battered economies are leaving no stone unturned to get the economic and financial routes fixed. The health of the citizens is a vital concern of any government in the world. A healthy nation essentially can only bring the economy back on track. Pandemics contended the health of people at the center of all the activities. The digital medium and technological advancement apparently come to the rescue in crisis as a morale booster.

In India, the crisis was handled strategically with due deliberation, and meetings and coordinated efforts from medical personnel, scientists, engineers, bureaucracy, and pharma sectors. Looking after the COVID-19 infected patients, medicines, equipment, hospitalization and later, vaccination to the huge population with planning and coordination is appreciated worldwide.

With the announcement of Demonetization in 2016, the Indian economy had begun its preparations to set the stage for financial digitalization. It is well said that this could be seen as the preparing the stage for digitalization and further expansion was underway, and about to roll out in due course. The outburst of the pandemic in early 2020, left the strategists, and officers to come out with formal plans to get the economy to move during the lockdown, which was initially imposed for a few days and later went on for a few months. The surge in corona infections and cases forced the authorities to go for long closures and there come up with substitutes so that the activities could reportedly contribute in order to keep the economy mobilized in the midst of said crisis.

Paper Design

The paper is designed to deliberate on women's empowerment in the digitalized health care sector. The enrolment and issuance of medical and health cards to the marginalized and poor strata of society is a pro-poor approach of the authorities. The same is seen in compliance with Article 15 and Article 21, of the Constitution of India. Every citizen has a Legal and constitutional right to have equal medical facilities without discrimination on the income, and level of society they are coming from.

Objectives

- To assess the intense contribution of digitalization in the health care sector in India, which further proved to be a boon and a step toward women empowerment.
- To gauge the outcome of the NFHS-5 National Family Health Survey 2019- 2021, wherein the respondents were from 11 states and 3 UTs participated, the report submitted has a few eye-opening outcomes, which are treated as the basis for this study.

Methodology

The benefaction of digital health care and schemes for women and their accessibility and preventive measures in the post-pandemic phase is the centerpiece of the current study. Women who participated in the study were contacted telephonically to secure details. Medical and psychological reports and articles relating to post-pandemic digitalized transitional and behavioral changes in physical and mental health are studied.

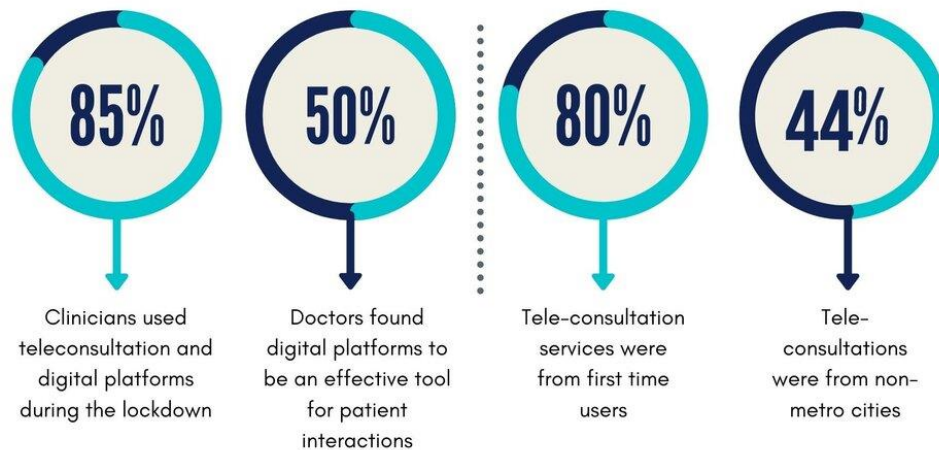
Limitations of the Study

The current study on women's empowerment through digitalize health care sector in India is essentially seen as a progressive sign. Women's empowerment is measured qualitatively based on various parameters like literacy, entrepreneurial tasks, financial independence, decision-making skills and abilities, leadership role, etc. both in their offices and at home.

Digitalized Health Care Sector

In the Economic Survey 2021 – 2022, development is the theme and center of all the economic and financial activities in the nation. Here, comes the vital role of health of every citizen in India. Digital techniques and data analysis, not only played important factors but also focus on the weak areas which required immediate concerns and attention.

According to a recent report released by BCG and FICCI, here's a breakup of clinicians who used teleconsultation during the lockdown.



Source: BCG FICCI report, Leapfrogging to a Digital Health System

Atmanirbhar Bharat: A Determination

Women are determined to be self-employed, in the 21st century. They are no more dependent on aid and/or any assistance largely from society. Various instances have verified that modern women even from, smaller areas or rural regions have decided, sometimes revolt not only against their immediate family members but other extended relatives. Media, be it social, digital, web, print or cinema played pivotal roles in shaping the mindset of women across the globe. Data from Avatars in January, 2022, Bengaluru, 2 showed that employable women job-seekers will go up to two crores in the upcoming five years under the aegis of 'Workforce Participation in India'.

Atmanirbhar Bharat in the pandemic gave a boost to this new thought of self-reliance amongst Indian women for their better livelihood and earnings. Lots of opportunities and options in skills enhancements, upskilling, and reskilling are being opted by women as per reports.

Constitutional Shield and Support

Indian Constitution is the holy book of the nation, which ensures equality and sustainability of all the citizens irrespective of their caste, gender, creed, religion, and region. The nation and national resources shall belong to all without discrimination, hence the opportunities. But in the post-independence phase, the share of contribution of women had lacked due to several reasons. The social fabric, conservatism, and family outlook are a few causes for women which forced them to sacrifice for their male members in the family. Now, the early twentieth century brought a breath of sigh of relief, as the overhauling of the education sector and economic scenario contributed significantly to bringing women out of their domestic boundaries onto the global platform. The role of global cinema, art, and advancement in technology and smart devices are responsible for this progressive & pleasant change in Indian society. Urban, semi-urban and rural areas have noticed the revolutionary changes in uplifting the social, economic, and financial status of women in India.

Assorted Reportage

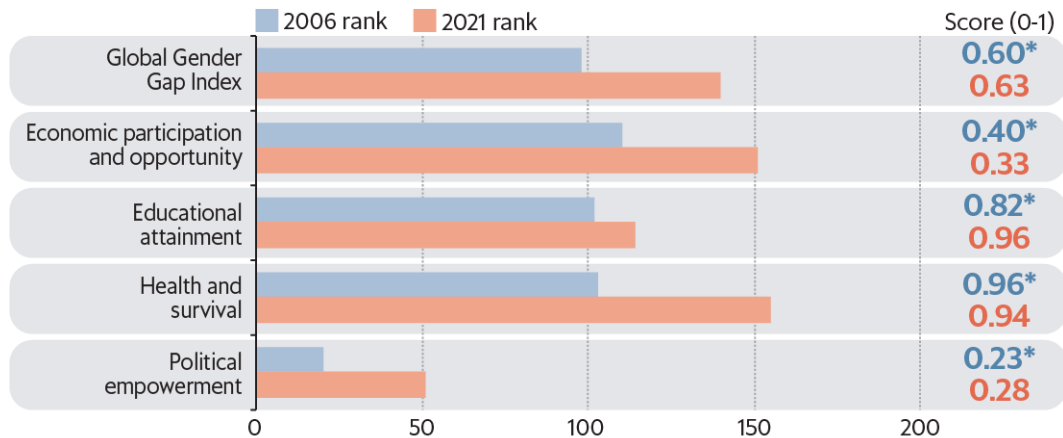
Agencies engaged in organizing surveys, collecting data, and compiling responses have been analyzing in setting the information gathered for required actions from the policymakers and service providers.

In July 2022 WHO's mental health report underlined the number of people who suffered and are left untreated is billion in numbers, which may be responsible for premature deaths and reduced economic productivity. Anxiety and depression are the most common mental illnesses. Women and the working-age population are more susceptible, depression and anxiety are about 50% more common for women, at the same time it is reportedly mentioned that severe mental illness can cut lifespan by ten to twenty years of age.

NSE DATA ANALYSIS, in its June-July, 2022 edition, highlighted the gender disparity and male-to-female ratio between FY16 and FY22 despite the vowed commitments of boards and higher officials to improve diversity and inclusion through the ranks.

Mind the gap

India has slipped 28 places in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021, and is now one of the worst performers in South Asia. It is now ranked 140th among 156 nations.



* Figures closer to 1 indicate greater parity between men and women.

Source: World Economic Forum

Impact of Technology and Digitalization in the Health Care Sector

With the intrusion of smart devices and wi-fi connectivity, the up-gradation of smart living is inevitable. As discussed, the art, movies, OTT, web series and social media, web-media, etc are collectively contributing to addressing the social issues prevailing in Indian society especially the status and aspirations of Indian women are brought to the relevant daises for discussion. Social campaigns and building the net groups followed by collective expression of opinions are having a substantial impact on the social norms. The attitude, aspirations, and intricacies are noticeably shifting for betterment.

Here, the role in spreading awareness among women regarding their health and taking preventive medical measures under professional supervision is commendable. In a pandemic, telephonic consultancy and digital mobilization are worth mentioning here. In this practice, the women are motivated to keep an eye on their health and later take professional guidance while advancing age. This is a remarkable move for economic growth as well. When the economy is struggling to get back on track after the derailment and contraction during a pandemic, opportunities are coming up abundantly for women aspirants.

NFHS – 5 National Family Health Survey 2019- 2021: Women's Health Essentials

An overlook of the NFHS-5 helps in understanding the key issues in the health sector, wherein the healthy lifestyle and constant determining factors relating to the health of women are given the basis to the policymakers and officials to work upon laying down the substantial plans for gaining the national health with the objective of improvement in economic performances.



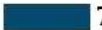








Child marriages, early pregnancy, anemia, school dropping out, c-sec deliveries, infertility, domestic violence, abusive behavior, judgmental comments etc prevailed in society showed the survey done in eleven states and three UTs. Digital health cards, Suraksha maitratva, midday meals, enrolment in schools, nutritional meals, etc are recommended in the report. Plans, schemes, and yojana are underway to improve the prevailing health issues.

TFR (Total Fertility Rate) has declined to 0.2% from 2015-2016 to 2019-2021. It has also come to light that Indian woman from all religion has fewer children compared to the past.

It is revealed from the survey that among teenagers' girls drop out more than boys owing to vulnerability, household work, and parents' priorities. Although at the time of enrolment, the girls outnumbered boys, later in coming years, social and economic factors actively contributed to the surge in girls dropping out in their adolescence.

S.No.	Indicator	NFHS-4 (2015-16)			NFHS-5 (2019-21)		
		Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
Population and Household Profile							
1.	Sex ratio of total population (females per 1000 males)	956	1009	991	985	1037	1020
2.	Sex ratio at birth for children born in last 5 years (females per 1000 males)	899	927	919	924	931	929
3.	Children under age 5 years whose birth was registered (%)	88.8	76.1	79.7	93.3	87.5	89.1
4.	Female population age ≥6 years who ever attended school (%)	80.6	63.0	68.8	82.5	66.8	71.8
5.	Households with improved drinking water source ¹ (%)	91.1	89.3	89.9	98.7	94.6	95.9
6.	Households using improved sanitation facility ² (%)	70.3	36.7	48.4	81.5	64.9	70.2
7.	Households using clean fuel for cooking ³ (%)	80.6	24.0	43.8	89.7	43.2	58.6
8.	Households with any usual member covered by a health scheme or health insurance (%)	28.2	28.9	28.7	38.1	42.4	41.0
Characteristics of Adults (age 15-49)							
9.	Men who are literate (%)	90.8	82.6	85.7	89.6	81.5	84.4
10.	Women who are literate (%)	81.4	61.5	68.4	83.0	65.9	71.5
11.	Women with 10 or more years of schooling (%)	51.5	27.3	35.7	56.3	33.7	41.0
Marriage and Fertility							
12.	Women age 20-24 years married before age 18 years (%)	17.5	31.5	26.8	14.7	27.0	23.3
13.	Men age 25-29 years married before age 21 years (%)	14.1	24.4	20.3	11.3	21.1	17.7
14.	Women age 15-19 years who were already pregnant or mothers at the time of the survey (%)	5.0	9.2	7.9	3.8	7.9	6.8
15.	Total fertility rate (children per woman)	1.8	2.4	2.2	1.6	2.1	2.0
Current use of Family Planning Methods (currently married women age 15-49 years)							
16.	Any method ⁴ (%)	57.2	51.7	53.5	69.3	65.6	66.7
17.	Any modern method ⁵ (%)	51.2	46.0	47.8	58.5	55.5	56.5
18.	Female sterilization (%)	35.7	36.1	36.0	36.3	38.7	37.9
Unmet Need for Family Planning (currently married women age 15-49 years)⁶							
19.	Total unmet need (%)	12.1	13.2	12.9	8.4	9.9	9.4
20.	Unmet need for spacing (%)	5.1	5.9	5.7	3.6	4.3	4.0

¹ National Family Health Survey 5 (NFHS-5)

EXCERPTS FROM NFHS SURVEY		
WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT (WOMEN AGE 15-49 YEARS)		
	2020-21	2015-16
Participation of married women in household decisions	 92%	 73.8%
Women who worked in last 12 months and paid in cash	 24.9%	 21.1%
Women owning a house and/or land (alone or jointly)	 22.7%	 34.9%
Women having a bank or savings account that they use	 72.5%	 64.5%
Women having a mobile phone that they themselves use	 73.8%	 66.6%
NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF ADULTS (AGE 15-49 YEARS)		
	2020-21	2015-16
Women whose Body Mass Index (BMI) is below normal	10%	14.9%
Men whose Body Mass Index (BMI) is below normal	9.1%	17.7%
Women who are overweight or obese	41.3%	33.5%
Men who are overweight or obese	38%	24.6%
Average out-of-pocket expenditure per delivery in a public health facility (in Rs)	2,548	8,518
Women who have ever used the internet	63.8%	NA
Men who have ever used the internet	85.2%	NA
Households with any usual member covered under a health insurance/financing scheme	25%	15.7%

Proclams of Women Empowerment in India in the Post-Pandemic Phase

In laying down the four labor codes on wages, social securities, industrial relations, and occupational safety, health (OSH) & working conditions, in the current economic survey the above areas are underlined.

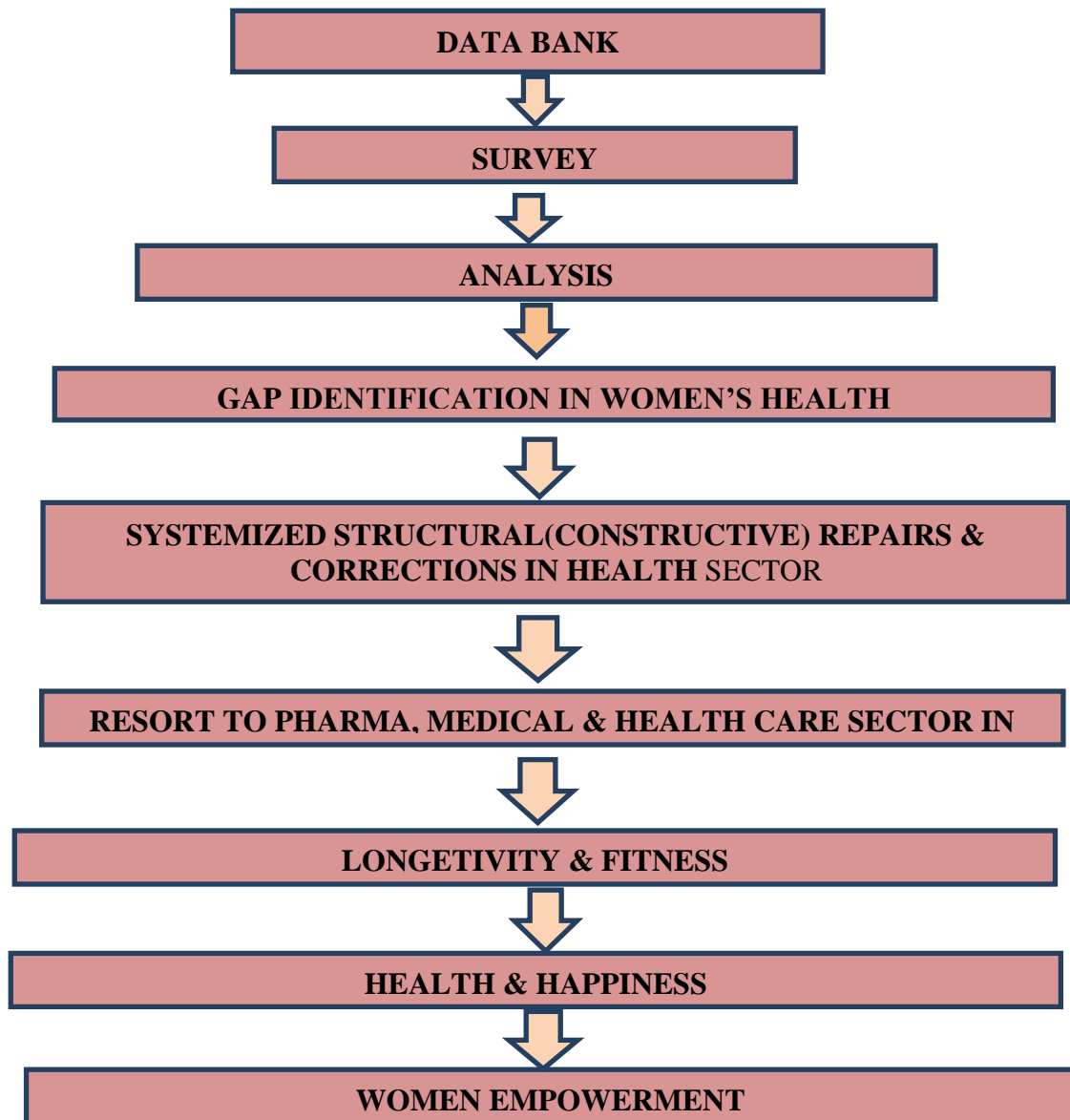
Women empowerment in India can only be achieved by improvements in the health care sector. Advance claims and objectives to cope with the external economies can only attain with the planned, concerted, and digital health care sector. All the medical history be noted and contained in a chip to refer further while the follow-up process takes place in the future.

Digitalization in the healthcare sector is beneficial to all citizens. In post-pandemic, it is not less than a blessing as it not only saves time but opens doors for several auxiliaries for support to run the health sector smoothly. The data analysis and blockchain techniques come as a lifeline to the health sector. Women form a significant part of the population, whereas a healthy nation has healthy mothers and children. Here, it includes marriage not below the age of twenty-one years, as passed by the Indian parliament, taking it to the equal age of their male counterpart. Healthy and normal pregnancy can be attained through taking care of a few significant steps and precautions.

The economic contribution of women in India has increased manifold during the pandemic owing to several reasons like job loss in male members, pay cuts, and victims of domestic violence during a pandemic. The digital record includes the data analysis, telephonic conversation, use of social media, and health-awareness e-campaign with a paperless and cashless health structure. Women now may spend more time on their careers while digitalize healthcare sector transforms the lives of women to their best

Summary and Conclusion

The informed and conscious choice of participating in health awareness, precautionary steps, and early signs of diseases lead to health and longevity among women which motivated this gender to contribute significantly in parity with males towards economic growth and development. Empowered women contribute and constitute an empowered nation.

Digital India

The corporate sector has come up with the provisions of flexi-hours, work from anywhere, maternity leaves, medical care, and preferences in rejoining after sabbatical are a few initiatives for working women in order to respect their dignity and maintain their financial independence. Digitalization and use of smart technology in pharma and medical sections are not only providing the base for the data bank about health wellness and diseases but are helpful in maintaining a record of the recipients and beneficiaries, who have availed of these services at any point in time. The same may further be analyzed for policy-making and census purposes. Economic growth and development are derived from the study of factors through which the per section and sector contributed significantly to society.

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