

Indian Economy and Women's Health: An Interlinked Analysis

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Abstract

Women's health is a fundamental pillar of economic development and social well-being. In India, the relationship between the economy and women's health is deeply interlinked, where economic conditions influence health outcomes and women's health, in turn, affects productivity, labor force participation, and long-term growth. Despite notable economic progress, Indian women continue to face serious health challenges such as malnutrition, anemia, maternal mortality, and the rising burden of non-communicable diseases. This article examines the current status of women's health in India, the economic determinants affecting it, and the impact of women's health on the Indian economy. It also highlights the role of public and private healthcare systems, rural–urban disparities, and policy measures needed to achieve inclusive and sustainable development.

Keywords: Indian economy, women's health, economic development, healthcare access, gender inequality

Introduction

The health of women is an important measure of a country's economic and social development. In India, women play an important role not only in family management and caregiving, but also in agriculture, industry, and services. However, gender inequality, poverty, and unequal access to resources continue to harm women's health. Economic growth cannot guarantee better health outcomes unless it is inclusive and gender-sensitive. Understanding the interlinkage

between the Indian economy and women's health is vital for the formulation of effective development programs.

Objectives of the Study

- Investigate the link between the Indian economy and women's health.
 - Analyze the economic factors influencing women's health in India.
 - To investigate the influence of women's health on economic growth and development.
 - Evaluate how public and private healthcare systems improve women's health.
- To propose appropriate policy initiatives for improving women's health outcomes.

Methodology

The study draws on secondary data from a variety of published sources, including government papers, the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), the National Sample Survey (NSS), World Health Organization (WHO) publications, research journals, books, and official websites. To better understand the relationship between the Indian economy and women's health, a descriptive and analytical method was used. Simple qualitative analysis was done to interpret trends and patterns.

Status of Women's Health in India

According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS 5), more than half of Indian women aged 15 to 49 are anemic, indicating long-term nutritional deficiencies. The Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR), while decreasing over time, remains a concern in several states due to unequal access to quality maternal care. Institutional deliveries have increased significantly, although regional disparities still persist. Indian women also face a double burden of illness. While communicable diseases and undernutrition remain widespread among poor and rural women, noncommunicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, breast cancer, and cervical cancer are rapidly rising, especially among urban women. Women's mental health issues are becoming more common, but they continue to be underdiagnosed and undertreated.

Indian women encounter numerous health concerns throughout their lives. Malnutrition and anemia are still prevalent among adolescent girls and women of reproductive age, limiting physical capability and production. Maternal health concerns such as poor prenatal care, high-risk pregnancies, and unequal access to institutional delivery continue to increase maternal

morbidity and mortality, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, breast cancer, and cervical cancer have become more prevalent in women in recent years. Mental health disorders, such as stress, sadness, and anxiety, are frequently overlooked owing to social stigma and a lack of awareness.

Economic Determinants of Women's Health

Poverty and Income Inequality

Poverty is a significant predictor of ill health among women in India. Low income reduces access to nutritious food, clean housing, sanitation, and high-quality healthcare. In many households, women's health needs are not prioritized, resulting in delayed treatment and worsening health issues.

Employment and Working Conditions

A high number of Indian women work in the informal sector, which is characterized by low pay, job insecurity, a lack of social protection, and hazardous working conditions. Long working hours and physical strain have a negative impact on women's physical and reproductive health, and the lack of maternity benefits makes them even more vulnerable.

Education and Awareness

Education dramatically improves women's health outcomes. Educated women are more likely to seek medical attention, practice good hygiene and diet, and make educated reproductive decisions. Economic and health awareness also assist women in efficiently utilizing government assistance and health programs.

Analysis of the Interlinkage between Indian Economy and Women's Health

The relationship between the Indian economy and women's health is mutually reinforcing. Economic growth boosts government revenue and household income, potentially improving women's access to healthcare, nutrition, education, and sanitation. However, unequal income distribution and continuing gender gaps hinder all women from benefiting equally from economic progress.

Data from the NFHS and NSS suggest that states with higher per capita income, more female literacy, and stronger public health infrastructure had better women's health indicators, such as lower maternal mortality, higher institutional delivery rates, and lower anemia rates. This underscores the importance of inclusive economic development in determining health outcomes.

At the micro level, women's ill health lowers labor supply, productivity, and earning potential. Anemic and malnourished women feel weariness and lower job efficiency, which have a direct impact on household income and national output. At the macro level, widespread ill health among women raises public healthcare costs and lowers the quality of human capital formation. The data also shows that informal employment and unpaid care duties disproportionately affect women, leaving less time and resources for health-seeking behavior. Despite economic growth, inadequate investment in preventive healthcare and nutrition threatens long-term economic viability.

Thus, economic policies that fail to incorporate gender and health considerations risk delaying growth. Investments in women's health should be considered as productive investments with substantial social and economic benefits, rather than consumption expenditures.

Impact of Women's Health on the Indian Economy

Women's health has both direct and indirect effects on the Indian economy. Healthy women boost labor force participation, productivity, and household income. Better mother and child health outcomes promote human capital formation while lowering future healthcare expenses. Poor women's health, on the other hand, leads to decreased productivity, increased absenteeism, increased healthcare costs, and the transmission of poverty between generations. Anemia and malnutrition alone are anticipated to cost the government enormous economic losses each year.

Role of Public and Private Healthcare Systems

Public Healthcare System

The Indian government has established various programs to enhance women's health, such as the National Health Mission, Janani Suraksha Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, Integrated Child Development Services, and Ayushman Bharat. These projects prioritize

maternity care, nutrition, institutional delivery, and financial protection. Despite these efforts, problems such as limited infrastructure, a dearth of healthcare personnel, and regional variations in service delivery continue to influence outcomes.

Private Healthcare System

The private healthcare sector is increasingly involved in delivering specialized and advanced medical services. While it increases access to quality care for middle- and upper-income groups, the high out-of-pocket costs make private healthcare expensive for many women, particularly those from low-income families.

Rural–Urban Disparities

There are significant inequalities in health outcomes for rural and urban women. Rural women have limited access to healthcare services, inadequate transportation, low income, and a lack of awareness. Urban women, although having improved access to healthcare, are increasingly affected by lifestyle-related diseases, job stress, and mental health difficulties.

Policy Implications and Suggestions

- Boost public health spending, with a focus on women's health.
- Strengthen primary healthcare centers in rural and remote areas.
- Improve nutrition programs for adolescent girls and pregnant women.
- Promote women's education and economic empowerment.
- Expand affordable health insurance coverage.
- Raise awareness of preventive healthcare and regular health screening.

Conclusion

The relationship between the Indian economy and women's health is deep and multifaceted. Women's health and well-being are essential for long-term economic development. Investing in women's health is more than a welfare measure; it is a smart economic investment with long-term social and economic rewards. Addressing gender inequality, boosting healthcare access, and empowering women via education and work are critical for India's inclusive prosperity.

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Author Biographies



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S.Balasundari is a Research Scholar in Economics with a strong academic background. She has completed her M.A. Economics and B.Ed., reflecting her combined interest in economics and education. Her research interests focus on women's health, health economics, and socio-economic development. She is keen on analyzing economic issues related to public health and women's empowerment. She has actively participated in seminars and academic conferences. Her work aims to contribute to policy-oriented and socially relevant economic research.