REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-55002

Title: Is the Implementation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes Affected by a Diverging Local Engine? A Case Study of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna.

Recommendation:

Accept after minor revision.

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality	✓			
Techn. Quality		✓		
Clarity		✓		
Significance		✓		

Reviewer Name: Dr. Bishwajit Rout

Reviewer's Comment for Publication.

(*To be published with the manuscript in the journal*)

The reviewer is requested to provide a brief comment (3-4 lines) highlighting the significance, strengths, or key insights of the manuscript. This comment will be Displayed in the journal publication alongside with the reviewers name.

1. **Significance**: The study contributes to debates on federalism, political congruence, and welfare scheme effectiveness in India. By analyzing PMJAY implementation across states, it provides empirical evidence on how political alignment influences health insurance coverage, funding, and outcomes. This fills an important gap in public policy literature, where political economy dimensions of flagship health schemes are underexplored.

2. **Strength**: The paper's strengths include strong grounding in political-administrative theory, extensive use of official datasets, multi-metric evaluation of PMJAY performance, and clear visual representation of trends. Its balanced interpretation and recognition of infrastructural and demographic variations add analytical depth. The study provides an important empirical entry into the double-engine hypothesis using one of India's largest welfare schemes.

3. **Key Insight**: The paper demonstrates that political congruence between state and central governments correlates with greater card issuance, higher fund allocation, and stronger settlement ratios under PMJAY. Utilization metrics like hospital admissions depend more on health infrastructure than political alignment. This nuanced finding highlights that while congruence influences administrative throughput, service delivery outcomes rely on deeper structural factors.

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The paper titled "*Is the Implementation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes Affected by a Diverging Local Engine? A Case Study of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna*" offers a timely empirical test of India's "double-engine" hypothesis using the AB-PMJAY health insurance scheme. It finds partial support: states with matching centre-state ruling parties perform significantly better in card issuance, claims settlement ratios, and fund allocation, while hospital admissions show no clear political alignment effect. The analysis is transparent, well-visualised, and draws on official data, though it could benefit from statistical significance tests and deeper controls for state capacity and pre-existing health infrastructure. Overall, a solid, policy-relevant contribution that tempers political rhetoric with evidence.

Suggestions for Improvement:

1. Add a clear research gap: "No state-wise comparative studies have empirically tested the double-engine hypothesis using health insurance scheme data.".

2. Avoid political or subjective phrasing; maintain academic neutrality.

3. Provide a conceptual framework diagram linking: Matching government status → Fund allocation → Card issuance → Utilisation → Settlement ratio.

4. Include more India-focused PMJAY research (2018–2024).

5. Develop a theoretical framework (bottom-up vs. top-down implementation).

6. Include statistical analysis (t-tests, Mann–Whitney U, correlation tests).

7. Explicitly mention inclusion/exclusion criteria (Delhi, Odisha, West Bengal non-participation).

8. Clarify whether data scraping followed any quality-check protocol.

9. Provide an analytical framework showing variable flows: Matching status → Funding → Enrollment → Admissions → Claims.

10. Add tables summarizing key metrics numerically. Use a clearer legend in graphs (colorblind-friendly).

11. Provide theoretical contributions (central–local coordination frameworks).

12. Add: Limitations (data bias, unobserved variables, absence of causal methods).

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This is a timely and analytically rich paper addressing the double-engine hypothesis through robust state-wise PMJAY performance metrics. The descriptive analysis is meaningful, but the study requires stronger methodology, clearer theoretical grounding, and inferential statistics to strengthen its claims. With improved data analysis, conceptual clarity, and cleaner academic structure, the paper has high potential for publication in IJAR. Addressing the identified weaknesses will make it suitable for publication in IJAR.

I recommend this paper for publication after minor revision.