



### RESEARCH ARTICLE

## AYUSHMAN BHARAT YOJANA: A PARADIGM SHIFT IN INDIAN HEALTHCARE PUBLIC POLICY

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### Abstract

“Health is wealth” this has been proven true quite literally now. Health is a very important indicator of development in a nation. It is unfair to label development exclusively as economic growth. Development is an all inclusive mode of progress for a country. Merely judging a country’s progress based on economic factors like GDP and GNP will not reflect an accurate image of development. Development requires both income growth and improvement in healthcare. India in the past few decades had major problems in the healthcare system, such as lack of awareness and access, affordability and accountability. India is a developing nation with a highly educated workforce in the healthcare sector, yet the inefficient management of the Covid-19 pandemic revealed gaps in India’s various healthcare programs. The solution to all these issues was to aim for a healthy nation where each citizen is aware of their health and has equitable opportunity to access affordable healthcare with increased emphasis on prevention, early diagnosis and assured minimum quality of care supported by an ecosystem of private and public players. In this paper I have given an indepth analysis on a public policy which was formulated to combat these challenges called Ayushman Bharat Yojana.

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### Introduction:-

In the pursuit of comprehensive development, healthcare stands as a pivotal aspect, often overshadowed by economic indicators. Acknowledging health as integral to prosperity, nations worldwide have aimed to bolster their healthcare systems. India, a burgeoning economy, has grappled with multifaceted challenges in its healthcare landscape. From accessibility and affordability to accountability, the need for a robust healthcare policy framework became paramount, particularly highlighted during the tumultuous times of the Covid-19 pandemic. In response to these exigencies, India initiated the Ayushman Bharat Yojana, a seminal public policy endeavor aimed at addressing these entrenched issues and ushering in a paradigm shift towards equitable healthcare for all.

Understanding the genesis of healthcare challenges in India elucidates the imperative for transformative policy interventions. Historically, India's healthcare system has been plagued by systemic deficiencies, ranging from inadequate infrastructure and healthcare workforce to rampant socio-economic disparities. Despite commendable strides in medical education and research, translating these advancements into accessible and affordable healthcare for the masses remained elusive.

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**Emergence of Ayushman Bharat Yojana**

Against this backdrop, the Ayushman Bharat Yojana emerged as a watershed moment in India's healthcare trajectory. Launched in 2018, this ambitious public policy initiative sought to rectify the longstanding disparities and inefficiencies plaguing the healthcare sector. Central to its ethos was the dual-pronged approach of Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centers (HWCs) and the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY), collectively aimed at extending comprehensive healthcare coverage to the marginalized sections of society.

A meticulous examination of the Ayushman Bharat Yojana unravels its multifaceted components and strategic interventions. PMJAY, the flagship component, epitomizes the commitment to universal healthcare coverage by providing health insurance to over 500 million vulnerable individuals. By leveraging technology and strategic partnerships with private healthcare providers, PMJAY endeavors to bridge the accessibility chasm and mitigate the financial burden associated with healthcare expenses.

Complementing the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY), the establishment of Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) represents a pivotal shift towards prioritizing preventive and primary healthcare services. These centers serve as the cornerstone of India's healthcare infrastructure, emphasizing proactive measures to prevent diseases and promote wellness among the population.

At the forefront of healthcare provision, Ayushman Bharat HWCs offer a comprehensive array of services designed to address prevalent health concerns at the grassroots level. From conducting preventive screenings for conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, and cervical cancer to facilitating essential diagnostics and treatment, these centers play a crucial role in early detection and management of health issues. Moreover, they serve as community hubs where individuals can access essential healthcare services in a convenient and accessible manner.

One of the key strengths of Ayushman Bharat HWCs lies in their decentralization approach, which brings healthcare services closer to the people. By establishing these centers in rural and urban areas alike, the initiative aims to bridge the gap in healthcare access and reduce disparities in health outcomes across different segments of society. Furthermore, by empowering local communities and involving them in decision-making processes, HWCs foster a sense of ownership and accountability, ensuring that healthcare services are tailored to meet the specific needs of the population they serve.

In essence, Ayushman Bharat HWCs epitomize the democratization of healthcare access in India, marking a significant departure from the traditional model of healthcare delivery. By shifting the focus from curative to preventive care and promoting wellness at the grassroots level, these centers play a vital role in building a healthier and more resilient nation. Through their concerted efforts, Ayushman Bharat HWCs are paving the way for a future where healthcare is not just a privilege but a fundamental right for all citizens.

**Impact and Challenges**

Despite its widespread acclaim for its visionary approach to healthcare reform, the Ayushman Bharat Yojana is not immune to challenges and criticisms that have arisen during its implementation. While the overarching goal of the scheme is to provide universal health coverage and financial protection to millions of vulnerable citizens, several hurdles have hindered its seamless rollout across the country.

One significant challenge that the Ayushman Bharat Yojana faces is the presence of implementation bottlenecks, which have slowed down the pace of execution and delivery of healthcare services to the intended beneficiaries. Bureaucratic hurdles and administrative inefficiencies have often resulted in delays and red tape, hampering the timely disbursement of benefits and access to medical facilities for eligible individuals. Additionally, infrastructural deficiencies, particularly in remote and underserved areas, pose significant obstacles to the effective functioning of the program, limiting the reach and impact of its interventions.

Moreover, concerns have been raised regarding the quality of care provided under the Ayushman Bharat Yojana, with critics highlighting instances of substandard treatment, inadequate facilities, and lack of accountability within the healthcare system. Ethical issues such as overbilling, unnecessary procedures, and kickbacks have also been reported, raising questions about the integrity and transparency of the program. Furthermore, disparities in the equitable distribution of resources and services have exacerbated existing inequalities, particularly among

marginalized and disadvantaged communities, highlighting the need for greater attention to equity and social justice in healthcare delivery.

In light of these challenges and criticisms, continual vigilance and course corrections are essential to address the shortcomings of the Ayushman Bharat Yojana and ensure its effectiveness and sustainability in the long run. Efforts to streamline implementation processes, reduce bureaucratic red tape, and strengthen infrastructure must be prioritized to enhance the efficiency and reach of the program. Similarly, measures to improve the quality of care, enforce ethical standards, and promote equitable distribution of resources are imperative to build public trust and confidence in the healthcare system. By addressing these challenges head-on and fostering a culture of accountability and transparency, the Ayushman Bharat Yojana can fulfill its promise of providing affordable and accessible healthcare for all.

### **Prospects and Policy Recommendations:-**

Looking ahead, the efficacy of Ayushman Bharat Yojana hinges on proactive policy interventions and stakeholder collaboration. Strengthening the healthcare ecosystem demands sustained investments in infrastructure, human resources, and technology. Additionally, fostering a culture of accountability, transparency, and community engagement is imperative to realize the overarching goal of universal healthcare coverage. Moreover, fostering innovation and research in healthcare delivery models can catalyze transformative changes and position India as a global healthcare leader.

In conclusion, the Ayushman Bharat Yojana epitomizes India's unwavering commitment to inclusive and equitable healthcare. By addressing the root causes of healthcare disparities and prioritizing preventive care, this transformative public policy initiative holds the promise of catalyzing a paradigm shift in India's healthcare landscape. However, realizing this vision necessitates sustained political will, resource mobilization, and stakeholder engagement. As India embarks on its journey towards a healthier and more prosperous future, the Ayushman Bharat Yojana stands as a beacon of hope and progress in the annals of public policy interventions.

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