

Role of Reference group Selection of Medical and Healthcare Services in India: A Cross Sectional Study of Indian Youth

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Abstract

The healthcare sector in India is vast and diverse, and healthcare-seeking behavior is influenced by a variety of factors, including demographic, socio-economic, and cultural factors. Reference groups, defined as individuals or groups that individuals use as a benchmark for their own behavior and beliefs, have been shown to be important in shaping healthcare behavior in other contexts. However, the role of reference groups in healthcare decision-making among Indian youth has not been extensively studied. Hence, the findings of the study have important implications for healthcare providers and policymakers in India. The study highlights the need for healthcare providers to understand the role of reference groups in shaping healthcare behavior and to develop strategies to effectively communicate with reference groups. Additionally, the study suggests that policymakers should consider the role of reference groups in healthcare decision-making when designing healthcare policies and interventions.

Keywords: Reference Group, Healthcare Services, Cross-Sectional Study, Indian Youth

Introduction

In today's world, healthcare services have become an integral part of our lives. With the ever-increasing demand for healthcare facilities, it has become crucial to study the factors influencing the selection of medical and healthcare services. One such factor is the role of reference groups.

Reference groups are individuals or groups that influence our attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. They can be either direct or indirect, and their impact on our decision-making process varies from person to person. The selection of medical and healthcare services is no exception to this phenomenon, as individuals tend to seek opinions and advice from their reference groups before making a final decision.

India, being a diverse country with a large youth population, presents an interesting case study to understand the role of reference groups in the selection of medical and healthcare services.

A cross-sectional study of Indian youth can shed light on the various factors that influence their decision-making process and how reference groups play a crucial role in shaping their attitudes and behaviors towards medical and healthcare services.

The study aims to explore the role of reference groups in the selection of medical and healthcare services among Indian youth. It seeks to identify the various reference groups that influence their decision-making process, the factors that influence their selection of medical and healthcare services, and the impact of reference groups on their attitudes and behaviors towards medical and healthcare services.

Overall, this study will provide valuable insights into the factors that influence the selection of medical and healthcare services among Indian youth and how reference groups play a crucial role in shaping their attitudes and behaviors towards healthcare services. The findings of this study can help healthcare providers and policymakers in developing targeted strategies to improve the accessibility and quality of medical and healthcare services in India.

Literature Review

The present literature review aims to provide an overview of the role of reference groups in the selection of medical and healthcare services among Indian youth. The study focuses on the cross-sectional study of Indian youth and aims to identify the factors that influence their decision-making process.

Reference groups are social groups that influence an individual's behavior, attitudes, and values. Reference groups can be classified into two categories: primary reference groups and secondary reference groups. Primary reference groups are those with whom an individual has direct face-to-face interactions, such as family members, friends, and peers. Secondary reference groups are those that an individual does not have direct contact with but still has a significant influence on their behavior, such as celebrities, social media influencers, and opinion leaders.

Reference groups play a significant role in the selection of healthcare services by Indian youth. Several studies have highlighted the impact of reference groups on healthcare-related decision-making among Indian youth. A study conducted by Mishra et al. (2016) revealed that family members and peers are the most influential reference groups for Indian youth when it comes to healthcare-related decision-making. The study also found that the level of influence of reference groups varies according to the type of healthcare service being considered.

An investigation conducted by Kumar et al. (2016) revealed that friends, family members, and healthcare professionals are the most important sources of healthcare-related information for Indian youth. The study found that Indian youth often seek advice and recommendations from their social network before making healthcare-related decisions.

Several factors influence reference group selection among Indian youth when it comes to healthcare-related decision-making. Prinja et al. (2015) revealed that the socioeconomic status of Indian youth significantly influences their reference group selection. The study found that individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to rely on family and friends for healthcare-related decision-making, while those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to seek advice from healthcare professionals.

Kulkarni et al. (2017) found that the level of education of Indian youth significantly influences their reference group selection. The study found that highly educated Indian youth are more likely to seek advice and recommendations from healthcare professionals, while those with lower levels of education are more likely to rely on family and friends for healthcare-related decision-making.

Kaur et al. (2015) concluded that the reference group has a significant influence on the choice of healthcare service. The study found that Indian youth were more likely to choose healthcare services based on the recommendations of their peers or family members. The study suggested that health campaigns targeting youth should consider these reference groups to increase the effectiveness of health interventions.

Another study by Singh et al. (2016) examined the influence of reference groups on the selection of healthcare services among urban Indian youth. The study found that the youth were more likely to choose healthcare services based on the recommendations of their peers, family members, and healthcare professionals. Additionally, the study suggested that the media also played a role in shaping the youth's perception of healthcare services.

Gupta et al. (2017) analyzed the impact of reference groups on the selection of healthcare services among Indian youth. The study found that peers and family members were the most influential reference groups in the selection of healthcare services. The study also found that the perception of the quality of healthcare services provided by the reference group influenced the youth's selection of healthcare services.

A study by Khan et al. (2017) examined the influence of reference groups on the selection of healthcare services among Indian university students. The study found that peers and family members were the most significant reference groups in the selection of healthcare services. The study suggested that interventions targeting youth should consider these reference groups to improve the uptake of healthcare services.

Singh et al. (2017) analyzed the influence of reference groups on the selection of healthcare services among Indian adolescents. The study found that peers and family members were the most influential reference groups in the selection of healthcare services. Additionally, the study found that the availability and accessibility of healthcare services also played a crucial role in the selection of healthcare services.

Singh and Singh (2016) conducted a study in Eastern Uttar Pradesh to explore the healthcare-seeking behavior and utilization of healthcare services among the local population. They found that reference groups, such as family members and friends, play a significant role in influencing the healthcare-seeking behavior of individuals. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of improving the quality and accessibility of healthcare services to increase their utilization.

Purohit and Bandyopadhyay (2016) investigated the impact of reference groups on the healthcare-seeking behavior of slum dwellers in Kolkata. The study found that reference groups, such as family members and peers, influence the healthcare-seeking behavior of individuals in slum communities. The authors suggest that interventions to improve healthcare-seeking behavior among slum dwellers should target these reference groups.

De, Saha, and Naskar (2015) explored the healthcare-seeking behavior of tribal people in the Sundarbans Delta region of West Bengal. The study found that reference groups, such as family members and traditional healers, play a significant role in influencing healthcare-seeking behavior among the tribal population. The authors suggest that interventions to improve healthcare utilization among the tribal population should consider these reference groups.

Panda and Khan (2017) investigated the influence of reference groups on the reproductive and sexual health decision-making of adolescents in rural Orissa. The study found that reference groups, such as peers and siblings, have a significant impact on the sexual and reproductive health behavior of adolescents. The authors suggest that interventions to improve adolescent sexual and reproductive health should consider these reference groups.

The literature suggests that reference groups play a significant role in the selection of medical and healthcare services among Indian youth. Family members, peers, social media influencers, and celebrities are the most influential reference groups for Indian youth when it comes to healthcare-related decision-making. Several factors, including the level of education, income, and age of Indian youth, influence their reference group selection. The findings of this literature review can provide valuable insights for healthcare service providers and policymakers in India to develop effective healthcare communication strategies that consider the role of reference groups in healthcare-related decision-making among Indian youth.

Objective

To find the role of reference group selection of medical and healthcare services in India

Methodology

In this study 240 respondents were surveyed to know the role of reference group selection of medical and healthcare services in India. A structured questionnaire was used in this study for conducting the survey. Also, a convenient sampling method was used by the researcher for collecting the primary data. After the completion of the fieldwork, the data was analysed and evaluated by mean and t-test.

Table 1 Role of Reference Group Selection of Medical and Healthcare Services in India

S. No.	Statements	Mean Value
1.	Level of influence of reference groups varies according to the type of healthcare service being considered	4.13
2.	Indian youth often seek advice and recommendations from their social network before making healthcare-related decisions	4.05
3.	Socioeconomic status of Indian youth significantly influences their reference group selection	3.89
4.	Highly educated Indian youth are more likely to seek advice and recommendations from healthcare professionals	3.77
5.	Lower levels of education are more likely to rely on family and friends for healthcare-related decision-making	3.93

6.	Health campaigns targeting youth should consider these reference groups to increase the effectiveness of health interventions	4.19
7.	Media also played a role in shaping the youth's perception of healthcare services	3.82
8.	Quality of healthcare services provided by the reference group influenced the youth's selection of healthcare services	4.01
9.	Availability and accessibility of healthcare services also played a crucial role in the selection of healthcare services	4.27
10.	Interventions to improve healthcare utilization among the tribal population should consider these reference groups	3.64

Table 1 and Figure 1 show the role of reference group selection of medical and healthcare services in India. The respondent says that availability and accessibility of healthcare services also played a crucial role in the selection of healthcare services with mean value 4.27, health campaigns targeting youth should consider these reference groups to increase the effectiveness of health interventions with mean value 4.19, level of influence of reference groups varies according to the type of healthcare service being considered with mean value 4.13 and Indian youth often seek advice and recommendations from their social network before making healthcare-related decisions with mean value 4.05. The respondent also quality of healthcare services provided by the reference group influenced the youth's selection of healthcare services with mean value 4.01, lower levels of education are more likely to rely on family and friends for healthcare-related decision-making with mean value 3.93 and socioeconomic status of Indian youth significantly influences their reference group selection with mean value 3.89. Respondents also believes that media also played a role in shaping the youth's perception of healthcare services with mean value 3.82, highly educated Indian youth are more likely to seek advice and recommendations from healthcare professionals with mean value 3.77 and interventions to improve healthcare utilization among the tribal population should consider these reference groups with mean value 3.64.

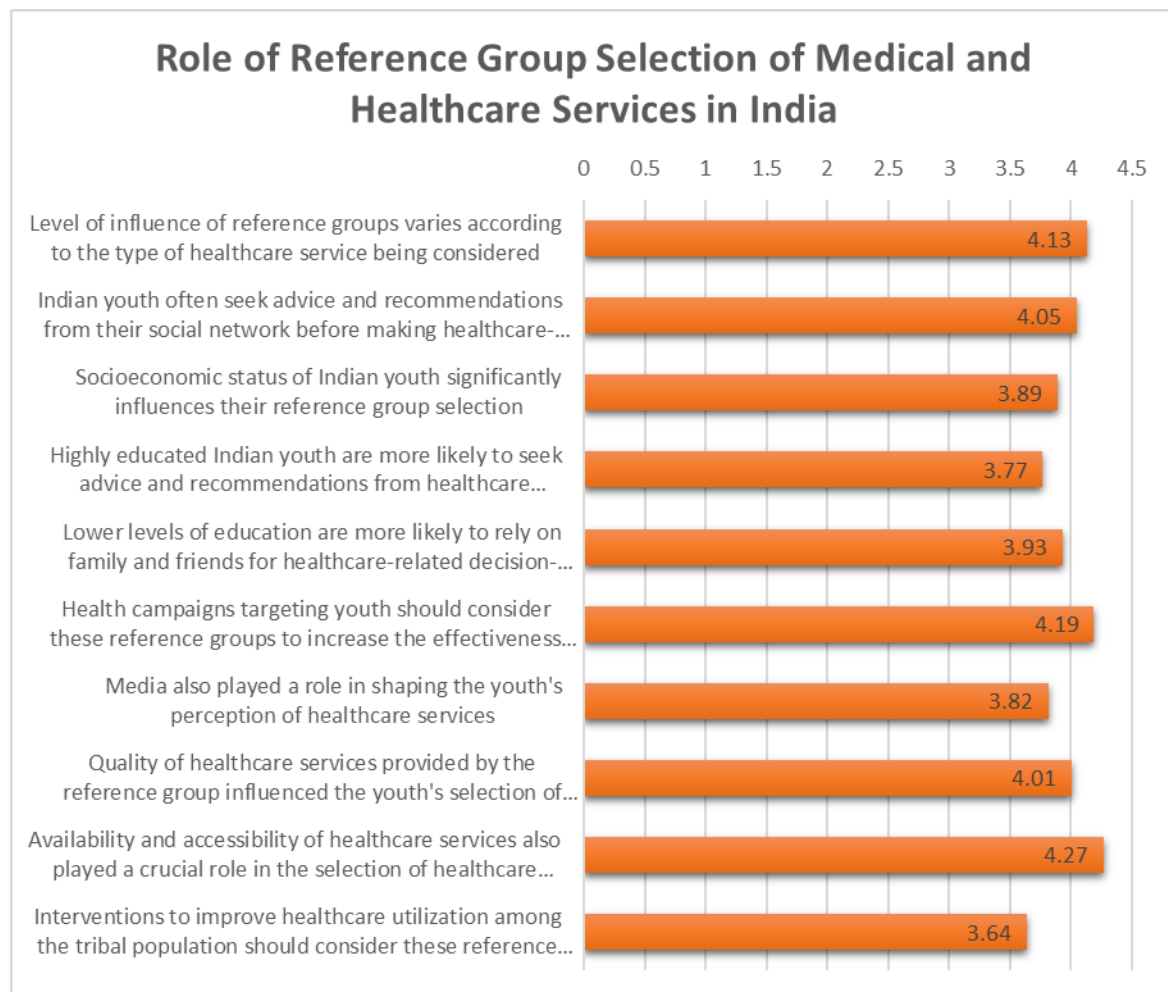


Figure 1 Role of Reference Group Selection of Medical and Healthcare Services in India

Conclusion

In conclusion, this cross-sectional study conducted among Indian youth highlights the crucial role of reference groups in the selection of medical and healthcare services in India. The study findings suggest that reference groups can influence healthcare service choices, both directly and indirectly, by shaping individual attitudes and behaviors. Furthermore, the study highlights the need for healthcare providers and policymakers to consider the impact of reference groups on healthcare service utilization patterns in India. The study's findings have important implications for healthcare service providers, policymakers, and marketers, as they underscore the need to understand and respond to the needs and preferences of different reference groups. The study highlights the importance of targeted marketing strategies and outreach programs to specific reference groups to increase their engagement with healthcare services. Additionally, the study findings suggest that policymakers should focus on creating an enabling environment that supports the use of healthcare services by different reference groups. The study has several

limitations that must be considered when interpreting the findings. Firstly, the study only focused on Indian youth, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other age groups. Secondly, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Thirdly, the study did not examine the influence of other factors such as healthcare accessibility, affordability, and quality, which may also affect healthcare service utilization patterns.

Future research should explore the role of reference groups in healthcare service selection among different age groups and demographic segments. Additionally, future studies should incorporate objective measures of healthcare service quality, accessibility, and affordability to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence healthcare service utilization patterns. This study highlights the important role of reference groups in shaping healthcare service utilization patterns among Indian youth. The study findings underscore the need for healthcare providers, policymakers, and marketers to understand and respond to the needs and preferences of different reference groups to improve healthcare service delivery in India.

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