

# IMPORTANCE OF HEALTH COMMUNICATION FOR WORKING WOMEN

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## ABSTRACT

Health Communication is the process of sharing information about health-related issues to promote understanding and positive health outcomes. It can be defined as a field that focuses on exchanging messages to raise awareness, educate, and encourage the masses to make healthier choices. It encompasses various forms like doctor-patient conversations, public health campaigns, and media messaging, all aimed at improving healthcare knowledge and behavior. Effective health communication plays a crucial role in preventing and managing health issues, especially during public health crises. The contribution of working women in society varies remarkably based on the nation, region, culture, economic conditions, etc. The participation of women in the various industries is increasing rapidly. In the present scenario, women are entering into every field of this universe like engineering, finance, mathematics, science, technology, and so on. The involvement of females is rapidly rising but on the other hand, the rate of health issues faced by working women is also escalating. They are facing major health issues like obesity, back ache, neck pain, arthritis, high cholesterol, heart problems, kidney issues, hypertension, gynecological, stress related issues etc. The preeminent motive of the study is to explore the major health issues faced by working women and to know that how much they are aware about such concerns.

**KEYWORDS:** Health communication, Health literacy, Health education and awareness, Socio-economic factors.

## INTRODUCTION

Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not just the absence of illness or disability. It is a dynamic and complex condition that differs from person to person and is influenced by a variety of factors, including a person's lifestyle, genetics, environment, and access to medical treatment. Communication fosters understanding, promotes cooperation, resolves conflicts, and allows people to connect with one another. Health is undeniably an essential factor that plays the most important role in every woman's social well-being (World Health Organization, 2024).

The term "health communication" is derived from the words "health" and "communication," and it refers to the dissemination of health values among the general public via the use of efficient communication techniques. The goal of healthy communication is to disseminate health information between individuals and society by improving health literacy. When it comes to women health issues, we need to understand that women's health awareness is much more essential because their health and well-being affect the family and society. Health communication is essential for working women for several reasons, as it plays a significant role in their well-being, productivity, and overall quality of life. Even though gender empowerment has become a widely discussed topic in development circles, its varied interpretations have led to ambiguity. Successful policy formulation necessitates a precise comprehension of gender issues within a comprehensive social context. To liberate gender from the poverty trap, it is essential to conduct poverty-independent gender analyses and

implement corresponding policies. Women's income-generating activities should not be transient, exploitative, or reversible. Education and technology ought to ensure liberation and freedom for all individuals, gradually dismantling the traditional constraints that confine women. In the tech oriented era, women workers are advancing in their workplaces and technological roles. Trade unions should strive to enhance conditions for women workers, addressing issues such as maternity leave and promoting opportunities for career advancement (Afsana Rashid, 2012).

In the face of societal expectations regarding the roles of men and women, the changing financial landscape in Indian families necessitates women's active participation in income generation. This requires a fundamental shift in the attitudes of employees, family members, and the public. Gender issues should be dissociated from narrow economic perspectives and insensitive politics. Rather than merely "adding women," a fundamental reevaluation of development concepts and practices through a gender lens is crucial. It is emphasized that addressing gender concerns requires a comprehensive analysis transcending class divisions and material definitions of deprivation. Despite existing rules and acts, women's rights continue to be violated, necessitating a concerted effort to establish women as independent human beings. Modernization should dispel myths and misconceptions about women, fostering a rational attitude towards their role in society. True advancement occurs when women become producers of their own welfare, not mere recipients of charity. Social transformation must start and end with women, recognizing that genuine progress originates from the ground up. Effective policy design mandates a precise understanding of gender issues within a broad social framework, emphasizing that women's development is a societal process, not merely a technological outcome dictated by policy triggers (Subhadeep Dutta, 2017).

Throughout history, men have often perceived women as less knowledgeable about the sexes, leading to a significant lack of self-esteem. However, today, women play vital roles in leadership, economics, household management, culture, and nation-building. The reserved women of the past have been replaced by vibrant, fashion-conscious, and intelligent individuals, actively competing with men in various fields. A few decades ago, women faced deteriorating conditions, relegated to lower social status and confined to household chores. Over time, women have broken free, gaining access to education and forming associations dedicated to their health and advancement. They now assert equal treatment with men, contributing significantly to their country and families. The narrative acknowledges the shift in the status of women, who are now considered courageous, possessing autonomy, and actively participating in various sectors. In the current climate, women contribute to their households economically and have diversified into traditionally male-dominated fields. Rural women, historically limited to specific roles, now engage in various economic activities and play crucial roles in society. In cultural spheres, women contribute to teaching, healthcare, counseling, and community activities. Their success is influenced by factors like financial situation, education, skills, and family background. The evolving roles of women in society are emphasizing their substantial impact on overall well-being across diverse fields and domains (Moushumi Mojumder, 2020).

This research paper investigates the paradoxical scenario in India, where the nation is advancing towards economic superpower status while simultaneously grappling with health challenges in human development, particularly among women. Despite the anticipated advantage in female life expectancy, India does not exhibit this phenomenon. The study aims to assess whether women can harness economic growth during the era of liberalization and scrutinizes women's health concerns in connection with their work environment, productivity,

and welfare. The analysis centers on gender-based disparities in economic productivity and the development of human capital. Acknowledging India's prominence in the cyber industry, especially in software, the study notes that women constitute about 21 percent of the total software workforce, surpassing their participation in the national economy. The industry's characteristics, including reduced physical labor and increased reliance on skills and knowledge, enable women to enter roles traditionally dominated by men. However, challenges such as long working hours and travel lead women to opt for lower-paid positions with regular working hours, contributing to a low representation of women at the top despite increasing participation. The paper cites studies on the Indian software labor market, revealing a concentration of women professionals at lower hierarchy levels, leading to the feminization of certain service activities. The impact of information technology on women's work is explored, highlighting the persistence of gender-based divisions despite technological advancements.

The primary goal of the research is to study the health issues faced by women working in IT and IT-enabled services, with a secondary objective of exploring the impact of these health issues on working women and emerging trends like work from home. A study was conducted over three months with a sample size of 149 that utilized questionnaires and incorporated secondary data from books and websites. The identified health issues among respondents include obesity, backache, neck pain, arthritis, high cholesterol, heart problems, kidney issues, hypertension, gynecological issues, and stress-related problems. Stress-related problems emerge as the most prevalent among the respondents. The research also sheds light on the health challenges confronting women in the Indian IT industry. Despite increased participation, obstacles such as health issues and workplace hierarchies impede women's progress in the sector. It also underscores the necessity for further exploration of these issues and emphasizes the crucial role of support from family, organizations, and government policies in promoting the well-being and development of working women in India (Bhattacharya and Lakshmi, 2021).

The involvement of women in the workforce is essential to the general development of a nation. An increasing number of Indian women are joining the workforce and frequently occupying tasks that have historically been filled by men due to financial strains on Indian families, growing living expenses, and the necessity to supplement household revenues. Working women confront a number of difficulties, such as the gender pay gap, sexual harassment, poor hygienic conditions, and discrimination based on gender. Women are frequently paid less than men for doing the same work and are subjected to sexual harassment at work, despite laws promoting gender equality. Gender equality and women's rights in the workplace are prioritized by organizations such as the International Labor Organization and the United Nations. Conventions and resolutions of all kinds serve as tools for defending women's rights (Aashank Dwivedi, 2022).

Effective communication in health care can make a life-or-death difference. Health administrators and other healthcare professionals should know the different types of communication, the barriers to effective communication, and evidence-based strategies for improvement. In addition, every person deserves to understand the medical care they receive. That means that healthcare organizations may need to train and hire interpreters so that patients can give their informed consent to treatment (Tulane University, 2021). Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the advance of information communication technology, including the widespread mobile devices and social media, has been changing the quality of life across the globe. Internet penetration can help in communicating information and messages across geographic boundaries and time. The emergence of social media has made

medical and health information more transparent and at the same time, medical and health organizations are expected to react in a faster mode. It has been trend for local governments to promote health information and campaign by means of social media. Mass media including the new media now transmit messages with high efficacy through advertising, entertainment, public relations and social experience (Fung & Lau, 2020).

## Objectives

1. To explore the major health issues faced by working women.
2. To evaluate the levels of awareness among women about different health issues.
3. To study the socio-economic factors which act as barriers in preventive health care.
4. To find out the media utilization by working women for health awareness.

## Methods and Techniques

The research paper aims to conduct an investigation and analysis of the various health issues faced by working women. This research utilizes a cross-sectional survey design. For this research study, a survey method is employed to collect primary data from a sample of 50 working women, performing their duties in several areas. A questionnaire was prepared in which 20 questions containing 15 close-ended questions and 5 open-ended questions were asked and the paper was written based on responses provided by the respondents.

## Literature Review

The study explores the challenges faced by women in the 21st century as they navigate the complexities of work and health. It begins by highlighting the symbolic association of women with the concept of "Mother India" and the societal expectations placed on them. Despite being considered the stronger biological sex and God's special creation, women often encounter difficulties, especially when pursuing careers. The paper acknowledges the discrimination women face from childhood, where preferences for male children are evident. Gender stereotypes persist, with women being associated with the color pink and engaging in unpaid household labor. Patriarchal attitudes and societal expectations limit women's control over their sexual and reproductive health. The study focuses on the entry of women into the information technology (IT) sector in India, emphasizing the challenges faced by women professionals. The concept of work-life balance is explored, with women adopting various strategies such as working from home, part-time employment, and maternity leave to harmonize professional and personal responsibilities.

The research outlines the aims and objectives, focusing on understanding the factors influencing the work-life balance and health of married working women. A cross-sectional comparative study was conducted among 70 women from Delhi, Ghaziabad, and Mumbai, including both housewives and working women in education and healthcare sectors. The findings reveal significant differences in age, education levels, and health outcomes between working and non-working women. The study highlights disparities in menstrual hygiene, marital age, and childbirth patterns. Working women demonstrate higher instances of chronic illnesses and accidents, yet they report greater financial independence and satisfaction in life. The conclusion suggests that working women face challenges in balancing their health and professional life, affecting their physical, emotional, and social well-being. The research

recommends adopting best practices from other countries to support women in maintaining a healthy work-life balance, emphasizing the importance of family and social support systems (Vaghela, Taneja & Mangal, 2017).

According to a report released by Apollo Hospitals (2023), women are leading all major sectors of the Indian economy; however, when it comes to managing numerous responsibilities related to both personal and professional life, health issues are frequently neglected by women. The report states that sleep disturbances, heart issues, gynecological issues, physical health issues, and mental health issues are the main health issues that working women encounter. Many muscle aches and pains, postural dysfunctions such as slouched posture, joint pain, arthritis, and a lack of fitness resulting in fatigue during everyday activities are examples of physical health issues. The inability to maintain a healthy work-life balance, decreased productivity at work, or a lack of "me time" are all contributing factors to mental health issues because they can cause anxiety, depression, a lack of enthusiasm, and feelings of loneliness. Sleep disruptions lower productivity and efficiency at work. Period-related problems, such as painful menses, discomfort, and heavy bleeding, have been observed in working women; the most prevalent problem is Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS). The study also emphasizes how uncommon it is for women to seek medical care for problems related to their physical or mental health. Additionally, the research indicates that a woman needs to realize that self-care and relaxation are just as important as work. Enhancing one's work-life balance can be significantly beneficial.

The news report published in The Economic Times, written by Dr. Rana Choudhary (2022) revealed that a working mother managing a career along with her responsibilities as a parent, is a challenging and demanding task. Many women become working mothers for various reasons, such as financial independence or material aspirations. The pressure to balance professional and family responsibilities, while also handling household chores, can lead to significant stress and health issues. In countries where domestic responsibilities primarily fall on women, the burden is even greater. Women in such situations often neglect self-care, leading to various health disorders, including anxiety, depression, heart disease, obesity, insomnia, and more. Cardiovascular diseases are particularly prevalent due to a sedentary lifestyle and poor eating habits. Chronic back aches are common due to long hours of sitting at work and insufficient rest at home. Thyroid issues, breast discomfort in new mothers, weight gain, and nutritional deficiencies are also reported among working mothers. Mental health problems, including burnout, are widespread due to the stress of balancing work and family responsibilities. This stress can manifest in both physical and emotional symptoms. To maintain good health, working mothers are advised to prioritize self-care through regular health check-ups, a balanced diet, exercise, frequent physical activity, and adequate rest. Seeking support from partners and family members is crucial to sharing the workload effectively. It is essential to recognize and support the vital role that working mothers play in their families and communities.

Health communication tools have demonstrated significant potential to improve health literacy which ultimately leads to better health outcomes. Digital communication tools such as mobile health apps, telemedicine and online health information resources can be very effective to promote health and digital literacy. Digital tools facilitate patient education, self-management and empowerment possibilities including the optimization of the potential for improved clinical decision-making, treatment options and communication among providers. Digital literacy is described as an individual's ability to find, evaluate and communicate information by using digital tools. Health and digital literacy play a vital role in promoting better health outcomes for individuals and communities. Therefore, efforts should focus on

improving health communication practices, developing culturally appropriate health information materials and strengthening healthcare systems to better meet the needs of individuals with varying health literacy levels (Patrick J Fitzpatrick, 2023).

## Results and Discussion

The combination of work, home, and personal obligations frequently presents a distinct set of health issues for working women. Some common health issues stated by the majority of 30% women included stress and mental health problems, which may be the cause of increased workload and societal expectations. Reproductive health issues including irregular menstrual cycles, fertility issues and pregnancy complications were mentioned by 20% respondents. Likewise, 18% women said blood pressure, 12% respondents referred to diabetes, 8% said bone ailments, 6% said heart diseases and remaining 6% said sleep disorders. The findings indicate that 29% respondents believed that excessive use of 'pesticides/fertilizers' are the major cause behind increasing health problems, 28% reported 'increasing pollution', 23% said 'tobacco/drugs' and 20% respondents replied 'degrading life style and eating habits'. Women do not go to the doctor until they are very sick, as they prioritize their families' wellbeing and health before their own.

According to the responses of working women regarding the major health awareness factor which can prevent health problems, 36% reaffirmed the need of regular health checkups, 33% believed in timely medical treatment, 21% respondents said healthy and nutritious diet and 10% stated maintaining good physical and mental health. If women wish to learn more about their health issues and how to prevent them, they should get screened more often. Going by the findings, most number of 64% respondents believed that health check-ups should be taken up only when it is needed, whereas 10% suggested six monthly and few 6% suggested that women should undergo yearly checkups. Meanwhile, some 20% believed that it depends on whenever you feel like. People can connect with others who are experiencing similar things in a therapeutic and encouraging setting during health awareness camps. Findings regarding health awareness engagement through health awareness camps show that large population under this study, nearly 82% women respondents had not shown any interest in attending health awareness camps, and only 18% had attended any health awareness camps, which show that they didn't prioritize it to understand their relevance.

Financial limitations and socioeconomic issues prevent many women from receiving timely and appropriate medical treatment. Findings show that 34% respondents believed that an individual's 'financial barriers' influence the preventive healthcare services in society. Likewise, 34% respondents viewed psycho-social factors, 22% respondents said general ignorance and 10% respondents replied lack of self-care, which comes in the way of maintaining good health. Self-care is crucial for maintaining mental and emotional well-being, so neglecting it can have a significant impact on one's health. It was also observed that majority of 34% respondents believed that financial barriers influence the preventive healthcare services in society. Similarly, 33% respondents viewed psycho-social factors like fear and stress as an important factor influencing preventive healthcare. Likewise, 18% respondents said general tendency of ignorance towards own health, 15% respondents replied lack of self-care which clearly shows their lack of interest and awareness about socio-economic factors.

Public perception of cancer is greatly influenced by the media. The findings related with general perception about the role of media in health awareness show that a good percentage of 40% working women believed that media largely plays an essential role in health awareness among women. Media outlets can be utilized to spread correct health information and increase public knowledge of a range of health concerns, treatment options, and preventative actions. With 35% respondents admitting the role of media to some extent and 25% admitting it to less extent also underlines the media utilisation on cancer awareness is certainly there, though the degree of dependence may vary. Findings show that 30% respondents find print media as the best media for cancer awareness, 38% respondents see media utility of internet/digital media, 12% respondents find television a best way, 11% respondents report radio as best media and 9% respondents see potential in traditional media. Newspapers are important as 34% respondents said they remember reading health awareness related content in a newspaper or magazine.

## Conclusion

Working women often face a unique set of health challenges due to the combination of professional, household, and personal responsibilities. It is true that women don't visit a doctor unless they become seriously ill. They frequently put the welfare and health of their families before their own health and well-being. Women should get screened more frequently if they want to get awareness about their disease and its preventive methods. Health awareness camps provide a supportive and therapeutic environment where individuals can connect with others who are going through similar experiences. Socio-economic factors and financial constraints devoid many of timely and adequate health care among women. As mentioned earlier, lack of self-care is a major factor that can affect health status as self-care is essential for staying mentally and emotionally healthy. Media is a significant factor in determining how the public views cancer, especially the digital media platforms can be used to disseminate accurate health information and raise awareness about various health issues, preventive measures, and treatment.

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