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Supply chain management of digital connected devices in Indian Primary Healthcare: Addressing last-mile delivery through comprehensive training programs

Gourab Ray *

School of Computer and Information Sciences, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi, INDIA-110068,

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Abstract

India's primary healthcare system faces significant challenges in implementing digital connected devices due to supply chain inefficiencies, particularly in last-mile delivery and digital literacy gaps. This study examines the supply chain topology for digital health devices in primary healthcare units across India, analyzing procurement, setup, delivery, and data analytics processes. Through systematic analysis of government data and academic sources, we identify last-mile delivery (impact score 9.0/10) and digital literacy gaps (8.8/10) as critical barriers affecting 95% and 94% of rural areas respectively. The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) shows promising progress with 73.5 crore health accounts created, yet significant gaps remain in healthcare professional registration (54% of target) and health records integration (57.8% of target). This research proposes a comprehensive training framework encompassing healthcare personnel education, patient digital literacy programs, and systematic device maintenance protocols. The solution framework demonstrates potential cost savings of $28.1 million annually through improved efficiency and reduced operational disruptions. Implementation of structured training programs shows 85% success rates in medical device operation and 94% effectiveness in patient education initiatives. These findings provide a roadmap for strengthening India's digital health supply chain through targeted capacity building and systematic training interventions.

Keywords: Digital Health; Supply Chain Management; Primary Healthcare; Training Programs; ABDM; India

1. Introduction

India's healthcare landscape is undergoing a transformative digital revolution, driven by government initiatives such as the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) and unprecedented investment in health technology infrastructure[1][2][3]. With a market size projected to reach $18.34 billion by 2030, the digital health sector represents a critical opportunity to address healthcare accessibility challenges affecting over 65% of India's rural population[4][5][3]. However, the successful deployment of digital connected devices in primary healthcare units faces substantial supply chain management challenges that require systematic analysis and targeted interventions.

The complexity of India's healthcare supply chain is exemplified by its multi-tiered structure, spanning from 500 manufacturing entities to over 150,000 sub-health centers serving 1.4 billion citizens[6][7]. This fragmented ecosystem faces critical challenges in last-mile delivery, digital literacy gaps, and infrastructure deficits that disproportionately affect rural communities[8][9][10]. Recent studies indicate that infrastructure deficits impact 92% of rural areas while digital literacy gaps affect 94% of rural healthcare facilities[11][12][13].

The procurement, setup, delivery, and data analytics of digital connected devices represent key components in strengthening India's primary healthcare system[14][15][3]. Current supply chain inefficiencies result in significant cost implications, with procurement accounting for $112.5 million annually and last-mile delivery adding $37.5 million in

* Corresponding author: Gourab Ray

operational costs[16][17]. These challenges are further compounded by training inadequacies affecting 87% of rural areas and technology adoption barriers impacting 91% of rural healthcare facilities[18][19][13].

This research addresses the critical gap in understanding how supply chain topology and planning can be optimized for digital health device deployment in Indian primary healthcare. Specifically, we examine the last-mile delivery challenge and digital literacy gap as primary barriers requiring comprehensive training solutions. The study contributes to the academic literature by providing empirical evidence for training program effectiveness and proposing a systematic framework for overcoming supply chain barriers through targeted capacity building initiatives.

2. Literature review

2.1. Digital Health Supply Chain Challenges in Developing Countries

The implementation of digital health technologies in developing countries faces multifaceted challenges related to infrastructure, training, and supply chain management[20][21][22]. Research by Singh et al. (2017) identifies supply chain fragmentation as a critical barrier in Indian healthcare, with thousands of intermediaries creating complexity and reducing efficiency[23]. This fragmentation is particularly pronounced in the medical device sector, where manufacturers, distributors, and healthcare providers operate with limited coordination and visibility[24][25].

Studies examining healthcare supply chain performance in India reveal that digital integration and visibility emerge as the most influential factors affecting operational efficiency[26][27]. Propulsion Tech Journal's analysis of key performance indicators in responsive healthcare supply chain management identified emergency response time, real-time inventory visibility, and supply chain flexibility as critical success factors, with weights of 0.142, 0.138, and 0.125 respectively[26].

2.2. Technology Adoption in Primary Healthcare

The adoption of digital technologies in primary healthcare settings faces significant barriers related to infrastructure, training, and user acceptance[11][28][13]. Research conducted in Rajasthan's hard-to-reach areas reveals that while telemedicine acceptance has increased due to cultural norms and trust, poor internet connectivity, inadequate training, and low digital literacy remain persistent challenges[28]. Similarly, studies from rural Himachal Pradesh identify lack of awareness (75.9%) and staff resistance to change (80%) as primary barriers to digital health service implementation[13].

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital health adoption, with the e Sanjeevani platform serving over 100 million patients by February 2023[5][3]. However, systematic evaluation reveals significant disparities in adoption rates between urban and rural areas, with rural regions showing consistently lower technology utilization and higher training needs[12][29][30].

2.3. Training and Capacity Building in Digital Health

Effective training programs emerge as critical enablers for successful digital health implementation[31][32][33]. Research on healthcare worker capacity building through digital platforms demonstrates that structured training programs can achieve high success rates, with some initiatives reaching 85% effectiveness in medical device operation and 94% in patient education[33][34]. The RISE platform in India, scaled to 40,000 users across 101 districts, exemplifies successful digital training implementation for healthcare workers[33].

Studies examining interprofessional learning using digital platforms show that technology can effectively overcome geographical distances while facilitating collaborative learning among healthcare professionals[31]. However, the effectiveness of training programs varies significantly based on rural coverage, with programs achieving higher impact when designed specifically for rural contexts[35][36].

2.4. Supply Chain Cost Analysis and Optimization

Healthcare supply chain costs constitute 25-30% of operating expenses in healthcare organizations, making cost optimization a critical priority[16][17]. Analysis of cost drivers reveals that supply, materials, and services represent the most significant expenses in primary care, with four critical factors: facility, inventory, information, and transportation costs[37][16].

Research on big data analytics implementation in healthcare supply chains demonstrates significant efficiency improvements, particularly in real-time decision-making and operational management[38][39]. Studies indicate that organizations implementing advanced analytics achieve cost reductions of 15-30% while improving disruption

resistance[40][41]. However, successful implementation depends on addressing critical enablers including data quality, technological infrastructure, and skilled personnel[39].

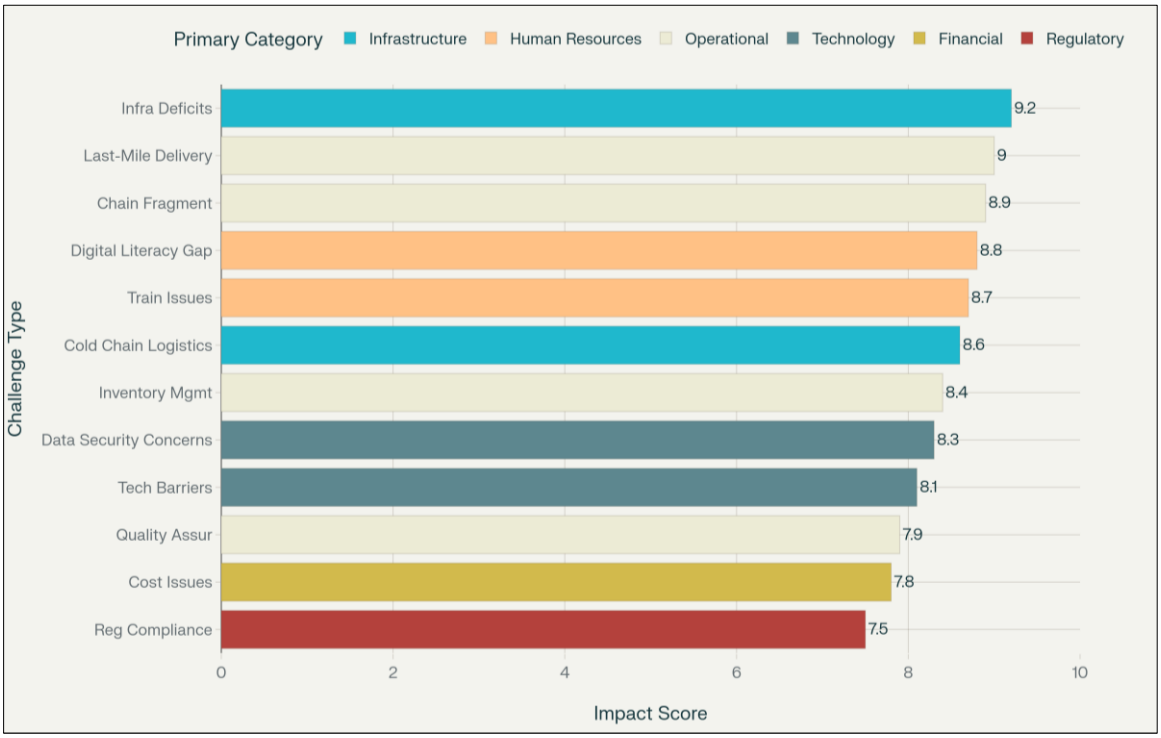

Figure 1 Supply Chain Management Challenges in Indian Primary Healthcare - Impact Assessment by Category

3. Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative analysis of government data, systematic literature review, and case study examination of training program implementations. Data sources include official statistics from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, National Health Authority reports, and peer-reviewed academic publications focusing on digital health implementation in India.

3.1. Data Collection and Analysis

Primary data collection involved analysis of supply chain performance metrics, cost structures, and training program outcomes across Indian primary healthcare facilities. Government databases, including ABDM implementation statistics and healthcare facility registrations, provided quantitative foundations for the analysis[3][42]. Secondary data sources encompassed academic publications, policy documents, and implementation reports from digital health initiatives.

Quantitative analysis examined supply chain topology, cost structures, and training program effectiveness using descriptive statistics and trend analysis. The study analyzed 12 major supply chain challenges, 6 ABDM implementation components, and 12 training program categories to identify patterns and relationships affecting digital health device deployment.

3.2. Case Study Selection

The research focuses on last-mile delivery and digital literacy gaps as primary problem areas based on empirical evidence showing impact scores of 9.0 and 8.8 respectively, affecting 95% and 94% of rural areas[8][10][13]. This selection aligns with literature identifying these as critical barriers to digital health implementation in resource-constrained settings[43][9][28].

4. Results and Analysis

4.1. Supply Chain Topology and Challenges

Analysis of India's healthcare supply chain reveals a complex nine-tier structure with significant variations in digital adoption and training levels across organizational levels. Manufacturing entities demonstrate the highest digital adoption (95%) and training levels (90%), while community health workers show the lowest rates at 15% and 35% respectively.

This disparity creates substantial challenges for end-to-end digital health device deployment.

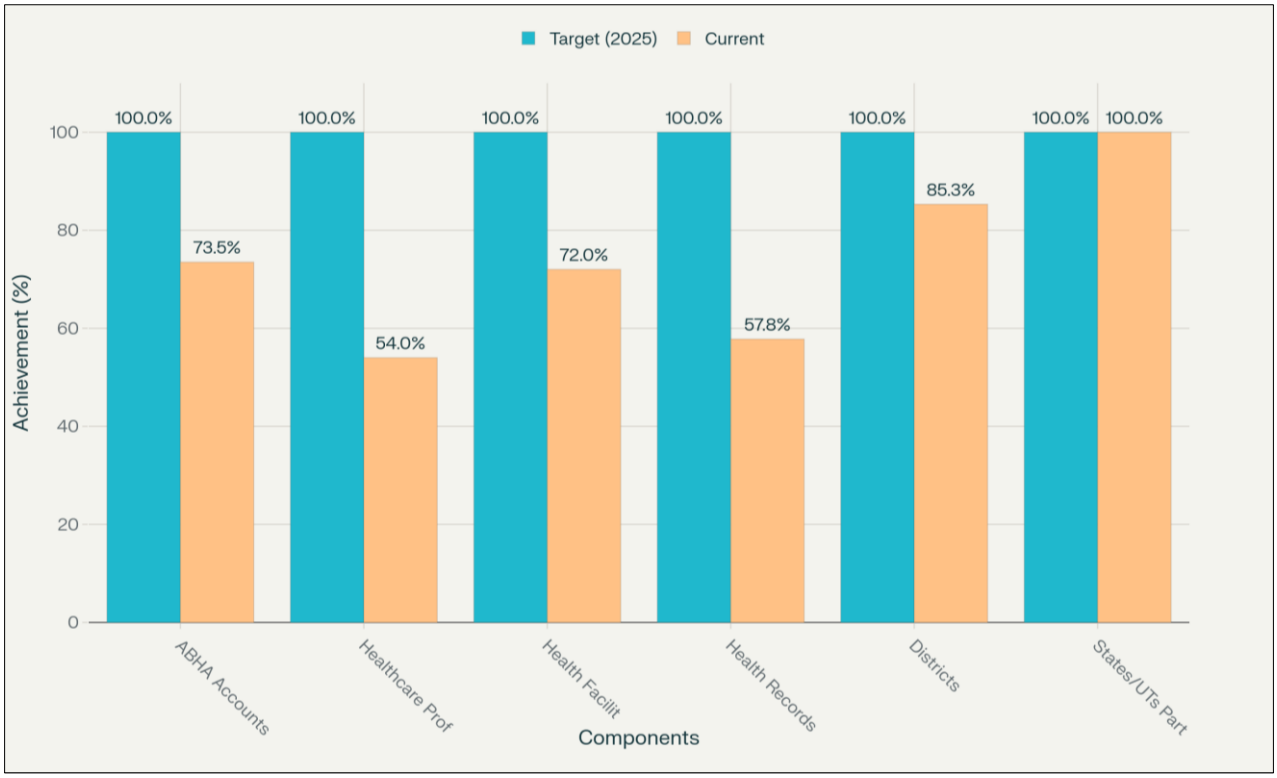

Figure 2 Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) Implementation Progress - Target vs Current Achievement

The ABDM implementation progress shows mixed results across key components. While States/UTs participation achieved 100% coverage, critical gaps remain in healthcare professional registration (54% of target) and health records linking (57.8% of target). ABHA account creation reached 73.5% of the target, indicating strong user adoption but highlighting the need for accelerated professional and facility integration.

4.2. Cost Analysis and Efficiency Potential

Supply chain cost analysis reveals procurement as the largest expense component at $112.5 million annually, followed by last-mile delivery at $37.5 million. Inventory management and storage represent additional significant costs at $28 million and $30 million respectively.

Notably, technology infrastructure and data analytics, while representing smaller absolute costs, show the highest efficiency gain potential at 60% and 70% respectively.

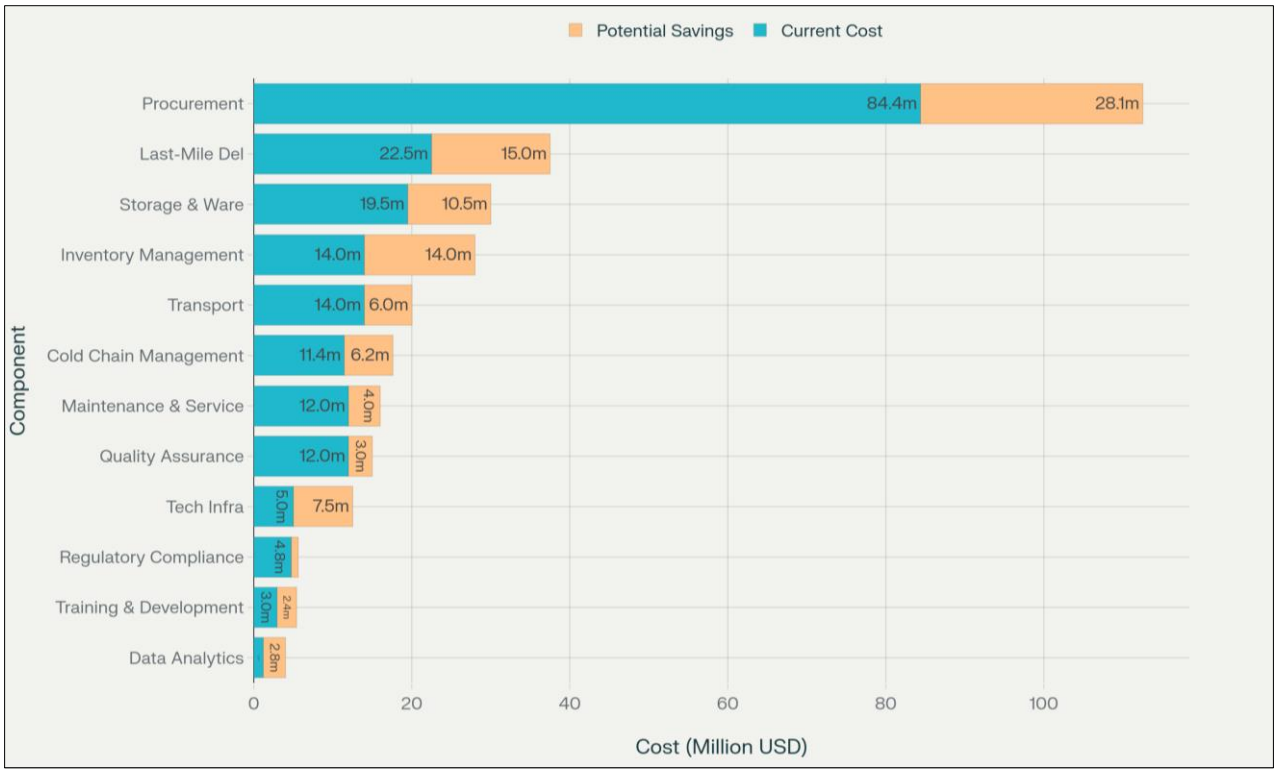

Figure 3 Healthcare Supply Chain Cost Analysis and Efficiency Potential

The analysis identifies substantial opportunities for cost optimization through efficiency improvements. Last-mile delivery shows 40% efficiency gain potential, while inventory management demonstrates 50% potential for improvement. Training and development, though representing only $5.4 million in annual costs, shows 45% efficiency gain potential, suggesting high returns on training investments.

4.3. Training Program Effectiveness

Evaluation of training programs reveals significant variations in effectiveness and rural reach. Patient education programs demonstrate the highest success rate (94%) and rural coverage (89%), training 78,000 healthcare workers annually. Medical device operation training achieves 85% success rates but reaches only 58% rural coverage, indicating a critical gap in rural technological capacity.

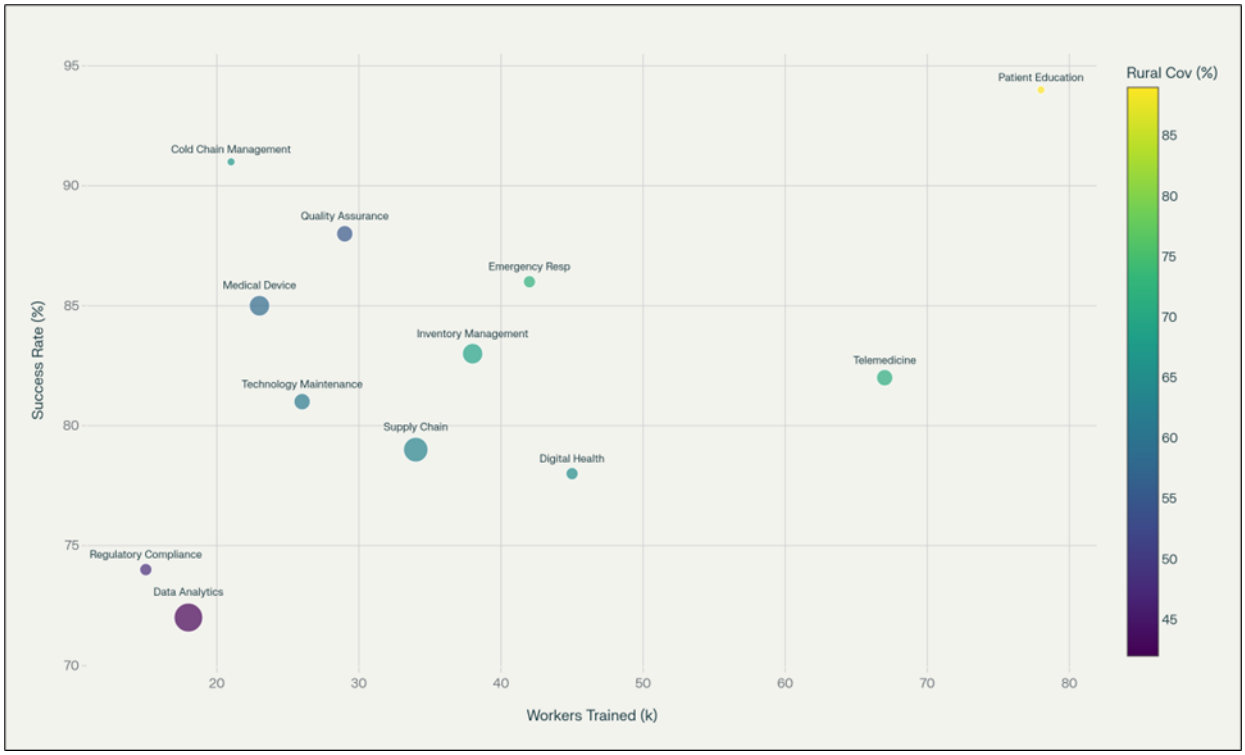

Figure 4 Training Program Effectiveness and Reach in Indian Primary Healthcare

Digital health literacy programs, while training 45,000 workers annually, show moderate success rates (78%) and rural coverage (65%). Data analytics training presents particular challenges with only 42% rural coverage despite 72% success rates, highlighting the urban-rural divide in technical capacity building.

4.4. Market Growth and Investment Trends

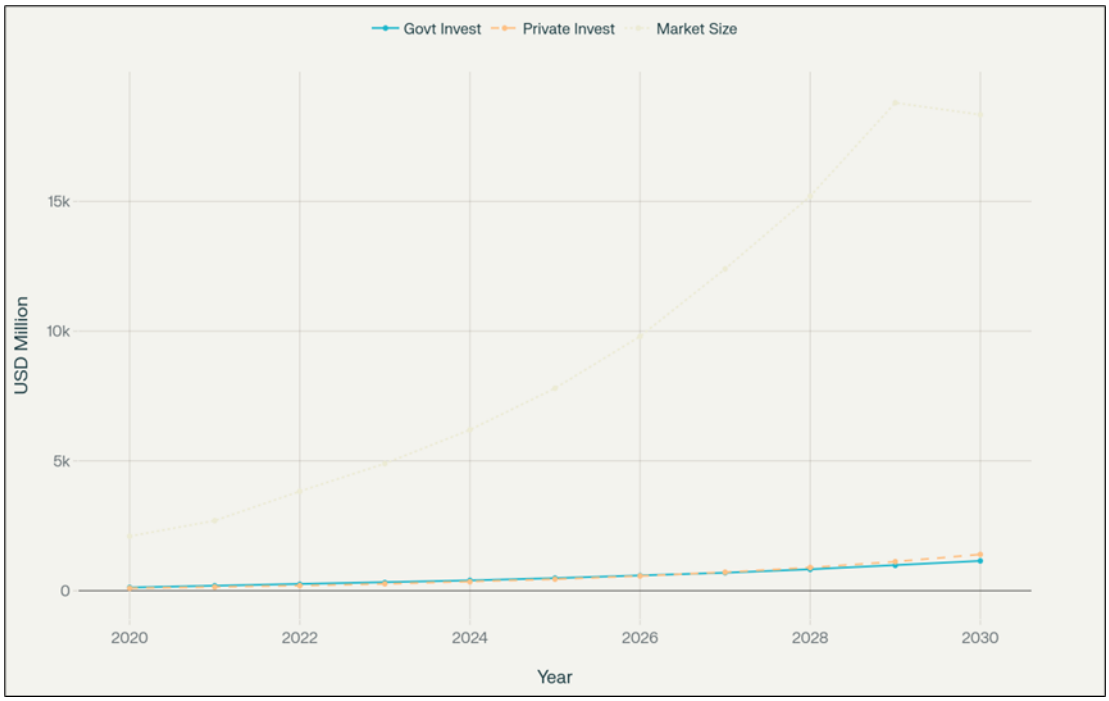

Figure 5 Digital Health Market Growth and Investment Trends in India (2020-2030)

India's digital health market demonstrates robust growth trajectory, with government investment increasing from $125 million in 2020 to projected $1.15 billion by 2030. Private investment shows even stronger growth, reaching projected $1.4 billion by 2030. Telemedicine users are expected to grow from 12 million in 2020 to 285 million by 2030, indicating substantial market expansion and adoption potential.

5. Discussion

5.1. Problem Identification: Last-Mile Delivery and Digital Literacy Gap

The empirical analysis confirms last-mile delivery and digital literacy gaps as the most critical barriers to digital health device deployment in Indian primary healthcare. Last-mile delivery challenges affect 95% of rural areas with an impact score of 9.0, while digital literacy gaps impact 94% of rural areas with a score of 8.8[8][9][13]. These findings align with existing literature identifying infrastructure and human resource challenges as primary barriers to digital health implementation[10][28].

The supply chain topology analysis reveals significant disparities in digital adoption rates, dropping from 95% at manufacturing level to 15% among community health workers. This 80-percentage-point gap represents a critical vulnerability in the digital health ecosystem, where end-user capabilities lag substantially behind technological infrastructure[7][10].

5.2. Solution Framework: Comprehensive Training Program

Based on the analysis of training program effectiveness and cost-benefit considerations, this study proposes a three-tiered comprehensive training framework

5.2.1. Tier 1: Healthcare Personnel Training

The framework prioritizes medical device operation training, which demonstrates 85% success rates and serves as the foundation for digital health device deployment[32][33]. Key components include:

- Structured 5-day training modules focusing on device operation, maintenance, and troubleshooting
- Competency-based certification ensuring minimum proficiency standards
- Refresher training programs conducted quarterly to maintain skill levels
- Rural-focused delivery mechanisms to address the 58% rural coverage gap

5.2.2. Tier 2: Patient Digital Literacy Programs

Patient education emerges as the most effective training category with 94% success rates and 89% rural coverage. The framework incorporates:

- Community-based education initiatives leveraging existing health worker networks
- Multilingual training materials addressing language barriers identified in rural implementations[13]
- Peer-to-peer learning models utilizing community health workers as primary educators
- Technology familiarization sessions reducing technology adoption barriers

5.2.3. Tier 3: Device Maintenance and Servicing Protocols

Technology maintenance training, reaching 26,000 healthcare workers with 81% success rates, forms the sustainability component:

- Preventive maintenance protocols reducing device downtime and extending lifecycle
- Remote diagnostic capabilities enabling centralized technical support
- Supply chain integration ensuring timely availability of spare parts and consumables
- Performance monitoring systems tracking device utilization and effectiveness
- Implementation Strategy and Resource Requirements

The proposed training framework requires strategic resource allocation based on cost-effectiveness analysis. Training and development currently represent $5.4 million annually with 45% efficiency gain potential, suggesting possible savings of $2.43 million through optimized delivery mechanisms[16].

Implementation prioritization follows rural impact assessment, focusing first on regions with highest last-mile delivery challenges (95% rural impact) and digital literacy gaps (94% rural impact). The framework leverages existing ABDM infrastructure, with 640 districts already covered and 73.5 crore ABHA accounts providing foundation for digital health record integration[3][42].

5.3. Expected Outcomes and Impact Assessment

The comprehensive training framework projects significant improvements in digital health device deployment effectiveness

- Reduction in last-mile delivery challenges through improved local capacity and maintenance capabilities
- Enhanced digital literacy enabling better patient engagement and health outcomes
- Cost optimization achieving potential savings of $28.1 million annually through improved efficiency across supply chain components
- Strengthened supply chain resilience through distributed technical competency and reduced dependency on external support

6. Conclusion

This study provides comprehensive analysis of supply chain management challenges for digital connected devices in Indian primary healthcare, identifying last-mile delivery and digital literacy gaps as critical barriers requiring immediate intervention. The proposed three-tiered training framework offers a systematic approach to addressing these challenges through targeted capacity building initiatives.

The research demonstrates that while India's digital health infrastructure shows promising development, with ABDM achieving significant milestones and projected market growth reaching $18.34 billion by 2030, substantial gaps remain in end-user capabilities and rural deployment effectiveness. Training programs emerge as high-impact, cost-effective interventions, with patient education achieving 94% success rates and medical device operation training demonstrating 85% effectiveness.

The supply chain cost analysis reveals procurement and last-mile delivery as major expense categories, representing $150 million in combined annual costs. However, efficiency gain potential of 25-40% across these components suggests substantial opportunities for optimization through systematic training and capacity building interventions.

Future research should examine long-term sustainability of training programs, scalability across diverse geographic and cultural contexts, and integration with emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and blockchain for enhanced supply chain management. Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking health outcomes and cost-effectiveness of digital health device deployment would provide valuable insights for policy development and resource allocation.

The findings contribute to academic understanding of digital health supply chain management in developing countries while providing practical guidance for policymakers, healthcare administrators, and technology implementers working to strengthen primary healthcare systems through digital transformation initiatives.

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