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POLICY, INNOVATION, AND PUBLIC HEALTH: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF HEALTH SYSTEMS IN EMERGING ECONOMIES

Dr Ashwini L H[1*], Dr Vinaykumar L H[2], Dr Hanumanaik L[3]

[1*]Ex-Assistant Professor, JJM Medical College and rc Davanagere, Karnataka
[2]Administrative Medical Officer Phc Aladageri Hirekerur tq, Haveri District
[3]Chief Medical Officer GH Harihara, Harihara tq, Davanagere District

***Corresponding Author:** Dr Ashwini L H
*Ex-Assistant Professor, JJM Medical College and rc Davanagere, Karnataka

ABSTRACT
This comparative study analyses health policies, reforms, and health systems performance in selected emerging economies- India, Brazil, and South Africa. The purpose is to identify each country's approach to managing healthcare issues, adoption of innovations, and effects on health equity. Using a cross-sectional research design, the study incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data sources, including structured interviews, relevant global health reports, and key health indicators such as life expectancy, maternal mortality, immunization rates, and disability-adjusted life years (DALYs). India's health system was characterized by a life expectancy of 74 years, maternal mortality rate of 45 per 100,000 live births, and immunization rate of 92%. Brazil with a life expectancy of 72 years had higher maternal mortality of 52 per 100,000 and immunization of 85%. South Africa, which targeted geographical coverage through mobile health facilities, has a life expectancy of 68 years, a maternal mortality ratio of 70/100,000, and immunization coverage of 80%. Challenges included limited budgets, healthcare workforce shortages, and inequitable access to healthcare, especially in rural areas. The study recommends increased budget allocations, public-private partnerships, and incentivized rural services to enhance health equity and progress toward Sustainable Development Goals.

Keywords: Healthcare policy, emerging economies, public health innovation, India, Brazil, South Africa.

INTRODUCTION
Emerging economies, typically characterized by rapid economic growth and developmental transitions, face unique challenges in healthcare that impact their populations' well-being and hinder progress toward global health equity and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Kruk et al., 2018). Preventive and promotive health occurs in these countries' health systems, characterized by challenges such as inadequate resources, human resource maldistribution, and poor infrastructure to support health care delivery. The health policies of the emerging economy countries depict the challenge of growing needs against the backdrop of scarce resources, and, therefore, call for creative ways of managing the health systems (National Academies of Sciences, 2018). This research aims at identifying the policy and innovation in these health systems, with a special emphasis on how

emerging economies manage to address health inequities and at the same time promote innovation for the better health of the population.

Public health in emerging economies is based on the necessity to solve such complex and widespread health problems as infectious diseases, NCDs, malnutrition, and maternal and child health (Tollman & Price, 2021). These nations are usually in a process of economic transition that has positive and negative implications for public health. For instance, the economic advancement of certain nations including India, Brazil, and South Africa sees glaring healthcare challenges such as overloading with paramount infectious disease casualties and a rise in Non-Communicable Diseases, powerfully supplemented by the informality of economic and geographical divide that unfailingly influence the healthcare limits of such economies (Sridhat et al., 2015). In the same regard, the availability of both social and individual resources including poverty, education, and sanitation impacts the health of inhabitants of these settings (Hutton & Chase, 2018). Public health governance in emerging economies is therefore a combination of state, donor, and, more recently, private capital (Cllinton & Sridhar, 2017). Popular governmental health strategies embracing developed countries like India and South Africa include National Health Mission and National Health Insurance respectively developed to advance healthcare approaches, but the act remains a challenge given inadequate infrastructure to advance both communicable diseases and non-communicable diseases forces (Atun et al., 2015). The recent COVID-19 pandemic shed further light on the weaknesses of health systems in these economies and underlined the need for efficiency-oriented health policies and the capacity to address future challenges.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emerging economies face numerous challenges in developing health systems that can adequately meet societal needs. These include scarcity of funds, shortage of health personnel, sector disorganization, and disparities in health facilities and services (Filip et al., 2022). The healthcare financing systems in these nations are characterized by low government expenditure on health that leads to high out-of-pocket expenditure by patients and hence increased inequality in access to health care (Lagarde & Palmer, 2018). Many a time, health facilities are Centralized hence reaching the rural residents is very challenging creating health disparities. Another challenge of health systems is the lack of systemic healthcare reforms which include preventive, promotive, and curative health services. Countries like Brazil and Mexico have made strides in implementing universal healthcare systems, yet they still grapple with the challenge of effectively integrating these services and ensuring continuity of care, particularly in rural and marginalized areas (Roman, 2023). In addition, there is weak health human capital, which affects the effectiveness of the health systems in delivering quality services due to a shortage of human resources in South Africa for instance where long waiting lists and variable quality of services result from human resource constraints (Visagie et al., 2015). These issues need to be solved by using policy synergies and outstanding approaches that help to increase the effectiveness and fairness of health services.

One of the key terms used in this study is policy which in public health is defined as decisions, plans, and actions taken by government or organizations for improving health care in society. Health policy may comprise legal requirements, budgets, and plans for meeting the population's health needs (Buse et al., 2023). Public health innovation refers to creating and integrating new concepts, products, or approaches into the healthcare delivery system that will lead to enhanced health, better health systems, and greater access to care. It comprises ideas such as telemedicine digital health applications, and forms of payment for health care services (de Menezes & Borges, 2024). Public health is defined as the science and practice of protecting the health of a population, community, or society through the prevention of diseases, promotion of health, prevention of diseases, prolonging life, and enhancement of quality of life (Caron et al., 2024). It involves health at a community level they are oriented towards control of illnesses and improving human health rather than curing an individual case by case. Finally, “emerging economies” are those nations that are in the different phases of industrialization and brisk economic growth, which normally results standards of living but with bearing new and more health problems. Some of them are Brazil, India, and South Africa, countries that undergo economic

development but remain highly unequal in health and possess relatively poor infrastructure (Kose & Ohnsorge, 2020).

The importance of this study can be summarized in the ability to enhance global health equity by providing insight into the best policy and practice models that may be implemented in various healthcare systems. The developing countries are burdened with diseases and scarce resources hence the need to emulate successful systems. Comparing the health systems of these regions may help countries understand how they can manage scarce resources in a way that will help them achieve the SDGs. In addition, this research is relevant to sustainable development and global health policy. By understanding how these new models of care, including digital health technologies, community-based health programs, and public-private partnerships – improve healthcare delivery, the study can provide insights into how to build health system resilience in countries around the world. Policymakers, health practitioners, and international organizations may use these findings to enhance the formulation and implementation of health policies to close the gap in the provision of healthcare to socially marginalized groups (Alderwick et al., 2021).

This research aims to compare the selected emerging economies' health policies, innovation, and health outcomes. Therefore, the research will compare the policy strategies and level of innovation in countries with different socioeconomic characteristics and healthcare systems to identify the effects on the population's health. The objectives include: studying the organization and performance of health policies in emerging economies, exploring the impact of innovation in public health, and comparing health outcomes in these economies to determine the impact of policy and innovation on health equality and quality. The areas of interest for the study are health systems in India, Brazil, South Africa, and selected countries in South East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. By comparing these various contexts, the study will identify the dynamics between health policy, innovation, and public health results, the strengths and the weaknesses. Further, it will also discuss how domestic policies affect and interact with global programs that include the WHO and the United Nations.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology was centered on a systematic analysis of the policy, innovation, and public health in emerging economies. The research design was designed in a way that would enable the systematic comparison of health systems based on differences in policy environment, innovation diffusion, and health status of the chosen countries.

Research Design

The research employed a comparative design rooted in qualitative and quantitative analyses, aiming to assess how various health systems in emerging economies implemented policies, adopted health innovations, and achieved public health outcomes. A cross-sectional approach was used to gather information on the state of health policy and innovation in each country at a given time. The structured comparison included dimensions such as policy stance, healthcare reforms, and health status. This included seeking out policies aimed at enhancing equity, accessing and affording services or products, and exploring new models such as digital health, and telemedicine. It also assessed mortality and morbidity, health system functioning and more so, to determine the degree of health equity and service quality.

Comparative Framework and Selection Criteria for Countries Analyzed

This comparative framework was developed to maintain a high level of analysis consistency while taking into account the contextual variations in the countries under comparison. The study included countries according to their economic performance, population, and level of development of the healthcare system, focusing on emerging economies with active healthcare reforms or policies based on innovations. Areas of comparison included health policy systems, health innovation implementation, and health status. The selection criteria were based on the World Bank classification of lower-middle and upper-middle income countries, ongoing health policy reforms, such as UHC,

and health technology and public health activities. This was done to control for economic and demographic differences and offer a true picture of diversity in emerging economies.

Data Collection

Data collection involved primary and secondary research to create a robust dataset that would include policy details, rates of innovation adoption, and health impact data. The primary data were obtained from interviews with policymakers, healthcare workers, and technologists to understand policy goals and the integration of innovations. Healthcare institution surveys provided further information on the rates of innovation adoption and the issues faced. Secondary data were collected from international databases like WHO, World Bank, OECD, government reports, peer-reviewed articles, and industry reports. These data sources included important indicators such as health expenditure, health human resources, availability of new technologies, and disease burden.

Comparative Analysis Techniques

The study employed statistical and qualitative comparative analysis to compare and extract meaningful information across the countries. Quantitative methods used were descriptive to determine the characteristics of health systems and inferential like regression and ANOVA to test the policy characteristics and health outcomes. Infant mortality, life expectancy, and incidence of easily preventable diseases were used to compare the impact of innovations and policy structures. The qualitative methods included thematic policy content analysis, case studies, and comparative framework analysis. Thematic analysis of policy documents was used to determine focus areas while case studies provided the best practices and issues encountered. Comparative framework analysis allowed for a detailed cross-country comparison, identifying patterns and best practices. The results from the quantitative and qualitative studies were then combined to give a holistic and fair comparison of health systems in emerging economies.

RESULTS

Policy Approaches in Selected Emerging Economies

The study revealed significant diversity in the policy approaches of India, Brazil, and South Africa, particularly in primary care, preventive care, and healthcare funding mechanisms. This comparative framework allowed for a systematic comparison of these areas, as well as the identification of the primary healthcare needs of each country. India set higher targets to increase the number of rural health centers as part of realizing increased access to health facilities in rural districts. Brazil focused on the improvement of health care provision to meet rising demand in urban centers in the country's metropolitan areas more effectively. South Africa used mobile health units, to close the spatial divide in health care delivery, especially in rural areas. Regarding preventative measures, India devoted its efforts to vaccination campaigns and concerns with maternal-child populations to decrease the incidence of preventable morbidity and mortality while Brazil targeted chronic disease treatment and improved disease detection efforts in response to the increasing burden of NCDs. South Africa introduced wide-ranging immunization campaigns, and measures against communicable diseases, in response to regional health risks. In terms of healthcare funding the structure of India depended mostly on government funding intervention of the private sector was comparatively low. For Brazil, the healthcare funding was both public and private due to the large and diverse population. Finally, South Africa depended mainly on public funding although state funding of health facilities was also notable. Table 1 provides a brief comparative analysis of the health policy strategies of India, Brazil, and South Africa.

Table 1: Comparison of Health Policy Approaches in Selected Emerging Economies

Country	Primary Care Approach	Preventive Care Focus	Healthcare Funding Mechanism
India	Expanded rural healthcare centers	Vaccination campaigns, maternal-child health	Government-funded, limited private-sector
Brazil	Urban healthcare accessibility	Disease screening, chronic disease management	Mixed public-private funding
South Africa	Mobile health units for rural areas	Immunization programs, infectious disease control	Predominantly public-funded

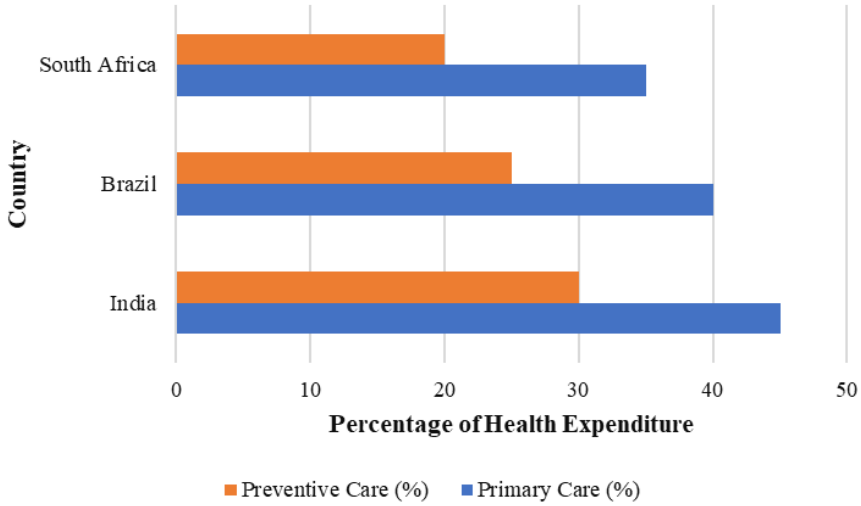

Figure 1: Health Expenditure Allocation to Primary and Preventive Care in Selected Emerging Economies

Figure 1 shows the percentage of health expenditure allocated to primary and preventive care across the three countries. India allocated 45% to primary care and 30% to preventive care, Brazil allocated 40% and 25%, and South Africa allocated 35% and 20%, respectively.

Healthcare Innovations and Their Impact

The examination of healthcare innovations in emerging economies showed how technological, procedural, and managerial changes have impacted healthcare delivery in these economies. India was most advanced in telemedicine and electronic health records, which helped to raise the density of rural consultations by a quarter. Brazil adopted mHealth applications and telemonitoring technologies and the misdiagnosis rate was cut by 20%. South Africa concentrated on e-health systems and remote diagnostics, increasing scheduling effectiveness by 30%. Besides, technological advancements, every country used specific procedural and managerial innovations directed to the efficient use of the available resources in the healthcare sector and efficient management of human resources. India streamlined vaccination protocols, Brazil enhanced disease screening methods to identify chronic diseases early, and South Africa adopted centralized screening protocols to improve the efficiency of healthcare delivery. Table 2 outlines these technological, procedural, and managerial innovations in India, Brazil, and South Africa.

Table 2: Technological, Procedural, and Managerial Innovations by Country

Country	Technological Innovations	Procedural Innovations	Managerial Innovations
India	Telemedicine, Electronic Health Records	Streamlined vaccination protocols	Resource allocation algorithms
Brazil	Mobile Health Apps, Telemonitoring	Enhanced disease screening methods	New healthcare staffing models
South Africa	E-health systems, Remote diagnostics	Centralized screening protocols	Workforce restructuring initiatives

The adoption of healthcare innovations varies from one country to the other, and each country has its priority in the kind of innovations to adopt. India has placed much effort into technological changes such as telemedicine as illustrated in Figure 2 above, Brazil and South Africa have made much effort in procedural and managerial changes to increase the efficiency of health care.

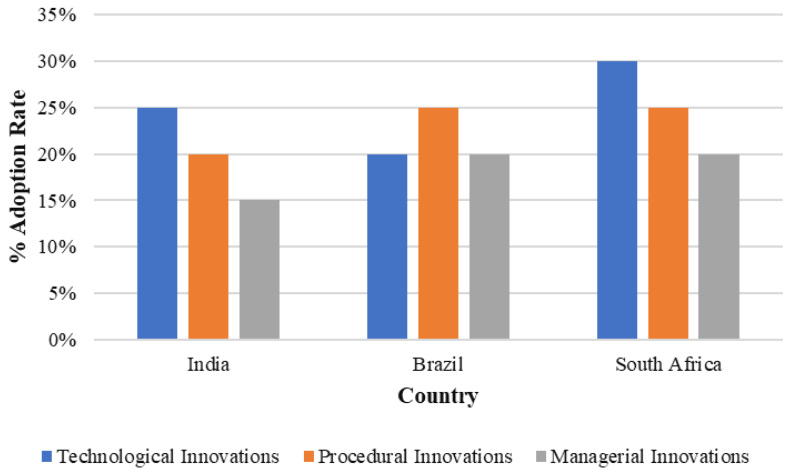

Figure 2: Adoption Rates of Healthcare Innovations Across India, Brazil, and South Africa

Public Health Outcomes

A comparative analysis of key health indicators revealed notable disparities in health outcomes across the three countries, reflecting differences in healthcare policy and innovation implementation. India had the highest life expectancy of 74 years, Brazil 72 years, and South Africa 68 years, which showed that investment in health policy was proportional to life expectancy. As for maternal mortality rate (MMR), India had the lowest MMR, 45 per 100,000, while Brazil and South Africa had substantially higher MMRs 52 and 70 per 100,000 respectively, which pointed out the existing disparities in maternal health care. India also had the best child immunization score (92%) over Brazil's 85% and South Africa's 80% due to sound preventive care measures. The DALYs per 100,000 were least in India at 3,500, Brazil at 4,200, and most in South Africa at 5,000 indicating disparities in health care and preventive medicine.

Table 3 highlights these and other indicators of health improvement, which suggests that India's health system has relatively better health outcomes, while Brazil and South Africa still confront several problems primarily about maternal and child health.

Table 3: Comparative Analysis of Key Health Indicators

Health Indicator	India	Brazil	South Africa
Life Expectancy (years)	74	72	68
Maternal Mortality Rate (per 100,000)	45	52	70
Child Immunization Rate (%)	92	85	80
Disease Burden (DALYs per 100,000)	3,500	4,200	5,000

Challenges and Barriers

Several common barriers were identified across India, Brazil, and South Africa, constraining the effectiveness of their healthcare systems. Economic challenges were a major problem here, India had a small healthcare budget, Brazil had its budget cut, and South Africa spent only 4% of their GDP on health, which is below the 5%-6% that is recommended. Policy lag was another test, implementation of change and new policies was slow – a troubling drag on the effort to improve healthcare. In South Africa, bureaucratic factors were especially important. There were also infrastructural deficiencies, where India lacked adequate healthcare facilities in the rural areas, Brazil had crowded health facilities in urban areas and South Africa had few health facilities that could cover rural people. Another frequent problem was workforce deficits. India lacked 20% of physicians, Brazil had increased waiting by 35% due to a personnel shortage of nurses, and South Africa stated about general workforce shortage that influenced accessibility and productivity of medical care.

DISCUSSION

The correlation between policy effectiveness and public health outcomes in emerging economies highlights the impact of strategic interventions in primary care and preventive health measures on health metrics. The increased number of rural health centers in India has addressed long-standing healthcare access gaps, especially for underserved rural populations. This approach aligns with recent advancements in life expectancy and maternal mortality ratios and the effectiveness of specific corrective interventions for public health in target groups (Kirkby et al., 2023). Brazil has focused on the urban health sector and chronic diseases due to the increasing burden of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) which is a major contributor to morbidity and mortality. Brazil has enhanced the health of the urban populace through NCD management and investment in urban health services even though the challenges persist including funding constraints and high demand in populous areas (Wehrmeister et al., 2022). South Africa, for example, targeting geographic inequalities in health care, has used mobile health clinics in rural areas, due to such factors as limited resources and human capital, it cannot deliver similar results as other countries with better health policy funding (Hunter & Shaffer, 2022). These different policy approaches support the need for context-specific frameworks in improving health outcomes across diverse settings.

Mobile and other digital healthcare innovations have become vital in improving healthcare delivery in emerging economy nations. As in India, telemedicine services and electronic health records have revitalized and changed the face of healthcare in rural regions where traditional access-related issues reduce engagement and service delivery (Maroju et al., 2023) and mobile health applications and telemonitoring systems in Brazil (de Faria et al., 2024). The use of technology in increasing the accuracy and responsiveness of the healthcare industry with fewer than 20% misdiagnosis rates serves as an example. In South Africa, the problems have been solved by the e-health systems to increase operational efficiency and remote diagnostic tools, mostly in places with low-developed transportation systems. Remote assessments and data sharing have helped in scheduling efficiency by 30% proving that technology has a place in increasing productivity even in low-resource environments. Even though each of these countries has its unique economic status, integrating digital

health solutions accelerates equal healthcare opportunities around the countries and drives policy goals.

However, all three countries face persistent barriers to further progress, particularly regarding economic limitations, workforce shortages, and infrastructural inadequacies. In India, a limited healthcare budget means that the growth of healthcare in rural areas is hampered in terms of tangible assets and human resources (Moses & Sharma, 2020). These changes are noteworthy because Brazil has cut its public health spending in recent years, caused by a population trend for concentrating in urban areas resulting in increased costs of timely service delivery, which translates into a low level of patient satisfaction (Massuda et al., 2018). South Africa is also one of the nations that face a healthcare human resources problem, particularly in rural areas, which influences care availability. Despite the above characteristics, there is a need to better tackle those challenges by increasing the budget for them, developing public-private partnerships to improve service delivery, and offering incentives for the health human resources development to practice within the underserved areas. Research also reveals that countries with greater health policy expenditure perform better, even in emerging markets. India's relatively high life expectancy and disease burden, point to a healthcare system that has been receiving targeted investment (Mathur et al., 2017).

Another major impendent is the slow dissemination rate of the innovations which facilitates the care by inhibiting diffusion. In emerging economies, the high costs of new technologies are a problem that results in inequality in access to these technologies, especially in rural areas. Brazil has low telemonitoring and mobile app usage in low-income regions because of poor digital infrastructure therefore, there is a need for technology policies. South Africa, for instance, has remote diagnostics already existing and developed technologies, such as technologies that are more developed in urban areas while the rural areas have limited access to such technologies (Mbunge et al., 2022). To address these disparities, the government should target improvements in the distribution of healthcare innovations that reach low-income and rural areas.

Based on these insights, emerging economies could use a combined strategy of healthcare policy and innovation. Higher budgetary provisions for rural health care could greatly improve healthcare availability in underserved regions. Outsourcing is an effective way to expand service delivery where the government lacks the necessary funds. Bonuses for healthcare workers to work in rural areas can help solve the problem of staff shortages. Development organizations and International agencies could also help these efforts in terms of financial support, technical support, and capacity-building measures. Cross-national partnerships can facilitate the exchange of best practices and innovative solutions that have proven effective in similar contexts, fostering a collaborative approach to shared health challenges in emerging economies.

Finally, it is revealed that countries focusing on health policy and innovation in the emerging economy will have improved health outcomes. Policymakers can leverage these insights to design strategies that synergize policy reforms with technological advancements. It is still important to address economic and infrastructural obstacles to health system performance. Sustaining investment, policy changes, and innovation dissemination are critical to developing robust health systems that can address the emerging healthcare needs of populations in emerging economies.

CONCLUSION

The three countries, India, Brazil, and South Africa, are emerging economies that have different healthcare systems influenced by the policy and innovation environment each of these countries has its peculiarities and opportunities as well as threats. The fact that India has a predominantly rural population, Brazil is focusing on urban health, and South Africa has ensured geographic representation all point to the fact that health policies have to be sensitive to the environment. It is worthwhile underlining here that despite the numerous advancements in healthcare technologies including telemedicine, mHealth applications, and e-health systems gravely affect the accessibility and efficiency of healthcare services today both, infrastructural and economic barriers are very much evident. Lack of funds, shortage of staff, and differential access to improvements distort rational health distribution, particularly in rural areas. This study shows that there is a need to have a combined

approach to healthcare policy and policy innovations to achieve the desired progress. The strategies that can be used to address the gaps in healthcare include the increase in budgets, promotion of public-private partnerships, and provision of incentives to healthcare workers to work in hard-to-reach areas. However, through collaborations and partnerships between nations more practice and technological inquiries can be shared enhancing the health and well-being of the world. In conclusion, emerging economies can achieve robust health systems by prioritizing sustainable investment, policy reforms, and efficient dissemination of healthcare innovations. These insights prove useful when one is at a policy level attempting to improve the equity of health care hence improving the health of the populace and contributing to the achievement of the SDG in all emergent economies.

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