

Chapter 15

Digital Literacy and Health Workers: A Study of Kashmir

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ABSTRACT

This chapter is an effort to provide a detailed examination of digital literacy among healthcare professionals in the region of Kashmir, which is located in the north of India. In the contemporary era, technology acts as the backbone of the healthcare in current landscape. The chapter examines the current status of digital literacy among health workers emphasizing the challenges they face and opportunities available for improving their digital skills. It offers strategic insights and recommendations to bridge the digital divide and empower healthcare workers with the necessary possible competencies. The chapter aims to stimulate a future where healthcare professionals in Kashmir are fluent at harnessing digital tools to increase healthcare efficiency.

INTRODUCTION

Humans from birth to death learn basic and foundational skills like reading, writing, language, and other social skills but as technology grows and changes, the learning demands change as well. We see schools getting updated with their curriculum, we update our homes by introducing technological gadgets for daily work, and long distances and impossible-to-reach areas become possible with the introduction of communication technologies. To use all these technologies, gadgets, and services we need to learn the skills to operate and use them and for that, the term used is *Digital literacy*. According to the American Library Association, digital literacy is the ability to use information and communication technologies to

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find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills (Digital Literacy, 2023). We have come to believe in the promise of technology and its potential to improve our lives in new and exciting ways, to enhance our capabilities, and to enable us to achieve all our dreams and aspirations (Begley, 2017). The technologies today are deeply integrated in all aspects of life and digital literacy helps to navigate the complexities created by the rise of information and communication technologies. While numeracy and basic literacy are still fundamental to learning, digital literacy has emerged as another critical life skill and is now, per the World Economic Forum, part of the 21st-century toolkit (Leal, 2022). Sustainable Development Goal 4 is about ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, and target 4 of it talks about the relevant skills for decent work which includes digital and other technological skills. Digital literacy is seen as an international concern and in this regard, a lot of steps have been taken by organizations globally to tackle the need. For instance, the Digital Literacy Guidelines of UNESCO are to be utilized by world bodies when pursuing digital literacy projects, and the Digital Literacy Framework of 2019 by UNICEF in collaboration with other bodies to research and publish on digital literacy across the globe (Leal, 2022). The vision of the global strategy is to improve health for everyone, everywhere by accelerating the development and adoption of appropriate, accessible, affordable, scalable, and sustainable person-centric digital health solutions to prevent, detect, and respond to epidemics and pandemics, developing infrastructure and applications that enable countries to use health data to promote health and well-being, and to achieve the health-related sustainable development goals and the triple billion targets of WHO's Thirteen General Programme of Work, 2019-2023 (WHO, 2021)

DIGITAL HEALTH AND HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS WORLDWIDE

Digital health refers to the use of digital technologies for providing healthcare. In its earlier avatar, it was called eHealth with the use of communication technologies, and then mHealth with the usage of mobile technologies (Bakshi, 2021). Digitalization is the forthcoming term for the integration of technology in existing processes to foster their efficacy, efficiency, and effectivity after IoT, Smart Devices, Big Data, and co (Meister, 2016). Digital literacy worldwide is marked by a systematic shift in the way the globe functions, communicates and accesses information. Stephanie Allen, Global Public Health and Social Service Leader says, "COVID-19 has accelerated numerous existing and/or emerging healthcare trends, particularly around health equity, and environmental and sustainability. Additionally, shifting consumer preferences and behaviors, the integration of life sciences and the healthcare sector, rapidly evolving digital health technologies, new talent and care delivery models, and clinical innovation continue to be top of mind for healthcare executives globally. How they respond to these challenges while continuing to address the pandemic will be critically important in 2022" (Deloitte, 2022). However, just as we see AI Artificial Intelligence evolving and integrating into our lives, from virtual assistants to personalized recommendations, the healthcare industry is on the verge of this paradigm shift. These technologies are expected to bring about a positive change in patient care and health treatment deliveries. It is also understood that technological innovations alone are not sufficient to address the global challenges worldwide. The innovations need funds, human resources, raw materials, and much more which jointly can provide us a sustainable environment. There is an example of such collaboration for change, also called "*Sormas Foundations open-source mobile eHealth platform.*" This was a collaboration between the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and the Ghana Health Service to manage the risk of the COVID-19 pandemic

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