

**Understanding Inequalities in Maternal & Child Health &  
Communicable Disease Status between Kerala, Gujarat &  
Uttar Pradesh: A Social Determinants Approach**



A Doctoral Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the  
Fellow Programme in Management

Indian Institute of Management Indore

By  
Vaibhav Khandelwal

Thesis Advisory Committee

Prof. Ganesh Kumar N.  
(Chair)

Prof. Siddhartha K. Rastogi (Member)      Prof. Joysankar Bhattacharya  
(Member)

Prabal V. Singh (Member)

## ABSTRACT

There has been a paradigm shift in the manner in which the Health of the population is being currently viewed by health professionals & researchers. There is a realisation that the health of an individual is not just a function of his medical status but is also determined by the environment in which he work and lives. This idea of going beyond a pure bio-medical explanation for health status of individuals and looking at social determinants has provided researchers with tools for explaining the puzzle related to difference in health of individuals and societies who although living in the same country, state or municipal limits have different burden of disease. Various researches conducted around the world have identified factors like Education, Caste/Ethnicity, Religion, Transport etc. which account for the difference that people experience in terms of their health outcomes. These factors are important not only from the purpose of academic interest but are also critical from the perspective of the policy makers. Government agencies at the country level, state level and at local level and other private organisations are increasingly becoming aware of the fact that for health interventions to succeed, a thorough knowledge of the milieu in which people live and work is essential. If interventions are designed to improve the social conditions in which the society functions, then the benefits can be immense in terms of reducing the health inequity.

Although there has been studies identifying various determinants in different national contexts, literature search reveals that within country comparison of social determinants which influence individual health are very few. This study aims to fill this gap by providing a comparative analysis of the manner in which social determinants act on Maternal & Child Health and Communicable diseases status (TB and HIV) between three states in India. Not only is the analysis limited to cross-state comparison among states in India but also looks at the differences within a state by comparing rural and urban areas. The results amply demonstrate that there are differences in factors between states which affect the health outcome status. Not only are the differences found between states but there are differences even within a state between rural and urban areas.

The study contributes to the understanding of the reasons behind the difference in the health status of the population and identifying suitable context driven interventions in

each state which will be more effective as opposed to a general set of solutions. The outcomes also provide an evidence of the growing view in public health that the health of the population in general and health inequities in specific cannot be removed just by purely focussing upon improving medical care but a social view of the situation has to be taken in order to bring about any improvement.

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are now emerging as a new public health threat. In this study, NCDs could not be considered due to lack of data on them. This study can be further extended as and when the data becomes available to study the social determinants of NCDs which would contribute very meaningfully to the public health discourse especially in India.

**Keywords:** Social Determinants, Bio-medical, Health Inequity, Living and Working environment, Context driven interventions

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