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ETHICS, LEGAL AND SOCIETAL IMPLICATION OF AI IN MEDICINE

Donnie Jomon Kaikara
Sreshta Ann John
Student UG, Government Law College , Thiruvananthapuram

INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing healthcare by enabling rapid diagnostics, personalized treatments, and enhanced operational efficiency, offering solutions to systemic challenges in medical service delivery. In India, where healthcare systems grapple with under-resourcing, a shortage of medical professionals (0.8 doctors per 1,000 people), and stark disparities in access, AI presents a transformative opportunity (World Bank, 2022). Innovations like AI-driven diagnostic tools, predictive analytics, and robotic assistants, such as the Mitra robot deployed during the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrate practical applications that alleviate pressure on healthcare infrastructure (Shrotriya et al., 2025). Globally, AI's adoption in radiology, robotic surgery, and telemedicine highlights its potential to improve patient outcomes and reduce costs (IBM, 2024).

However, AI's rapid integration raises complex legal, ethical, and social challenges. In India, the Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDP Act) of 2023 addresses data privacy but lacks specificity for AI-related issues like algorithmic bias, liability for errors, and informed consent (Ahlawat & Associates, 2025). Ethical concerns, such as discriminatory algorithms and lack of transparency, risk exacerbating inequalities in a diverse nation with a significant digital divide (32% rural internet penetration vs. 67% urban; TRAI, 2022). Internationally, the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and proposed AI Act provide models for transparency and accountability, while the U.S. emphasizes clinician liability (Gerke et al., 2020; Price et al., 2019). The absence of AI-specific legislation in India leaves critical gaps, necessitating a tailored framework to balance innovation with ethical and social responsibility.

This paper examines the legal perspective on AI's ethical use and social responsibility in healthcare, focusing on India with comparative insights from global jurisdictions. It aims to propose a comprehensive regulatory framework that ensures equitable and responsible AI deployment. The study is structured to

review existing literature, identify research gaps, and provide policy recommendations for India's healthcare system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on AI in healthcare exhibits its transformative potential and associated challenges, with a growing focus on legal, ethical, and social dimensions.

AI Applications in Healthcare

AI enhances diagnostics through advanced image analysis, such as Google's DeepMind, which outperformed radiologists in breast cancer screening by reducing false positives (Reid, 2020). In personalized medicine, AI tailors treatments to individual genetic profiles, improving outcomes in oncology and cardiology (IBM, 2024). Operationally, AI optimizes hospital workflows through predictive analytics and virtual assistants, reducing administrative burdens (Shrotriya et al., 2025). In India, AI addresses healthcare disparities through telemedicine platforms and diagnostic tools, as seen in Apollo Hospitals' use of AI for patient monitoring (NITI Aayog, 2018). Globally, robotic surgery systems like the da Vinci Surgical System enhance precision, with early adoption in India's urban centers (Gerke et al., 2020).

Legal Frameworks

In India, the DPDP Act (2023) regulates personal data processing, requiring consent and data minimization, but lacks provisions for AI-specific challenges like algorithmic transparency or liability (Ahlawat & Associates, 2025). The Information Technology Act (2000) addresses cybersecurity but is inadequate for AI-driven harms, such as misdiagnoses (Mukherjee & Iyer, 2023). The Consumer Protection Act (2019) covers product liability but struggles with AI's complex causation chains. Non-binding guidelines, such as NITI Aayog's Responsible AI for All (2018) and ICMR's Ethical Guidelines for AI in Biomedical Research (2023), emphasize fairness and accountability but lack enforceability (NITI Aayog, 2018).

Internationally, the EU's GDPR (2018) sets stringent data privacy standards, including the right to explanation for automated decisions, while the proposed AI Act (2021) classifies healthcare AI as high-risk, mandating transparency, human oversight, and audits (European Commission, 2020). The AI

Liability Directive (2022) proposes shared responsibility models. In the U.S., HIPAA protects health data, and the FDA regulates AI-enabled devices, but liability primarily falls on clinicians, creating uncertainty (Price et al., 2019). Australia and Singapore also explore risk-based AI frameworks, offering additional models (Royal Society Open Science, 2024).

Ethical Challenges

Algorithmic bias is a significant concern, as AI systems trained on non-representative datasets can perpetuate discrimination. A U.S. study found an algorithm underestimated risk for Black patients, affecting resource allocation (Obermeyer et al., 2019). In India, urban-centric datasets may exclude rural populations, exacerbating disparities (Shrotriya et al., 2025). Transparency and explainability are critical for trust, but black-box AI systems challenge patient and clinician confidence (Mukherjee & Iyer, 2023). Informed consent is complicated by complex algorithms and low health literacy, particularly in India (Ahlawat & Associates, 2025). The digital divide, with only 32% rural internet penetration, risks excluding marginalized communities (TRAI, 2022; Moore, 2022).

Social Responsibility

Social responsibility demands AI prioritizes patient welfare and equity. The Mitra robot's use in Indian hospitals during COVID-19 reduced infection risks but raised surveillance and data security concerns (Shrotriya et al., 2025). Public engagement, as in the UK's National AI Strategy, fosters trust through inclusive policymaking (Royal Society Open Science, 2024). Community-driven AI development ensures context-specific solutions, as advocated by NITI Aayog (2018). The literature highlights the need for AI-specific laws and inclusive governance to balance innovation with ethical and social responsibility, particularly in resource-constrained settings like India.

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

The integration of AI into healthcare offers immense potential to address India's systemic challenges, including a shortage of medical professionals and overburdened infrastructure. However, the absence of AI-specific legislation leaves critical gaps in addressing legal, ethical, and social challenges. The DPDP Act (2023) provides a data protection framework but does not cover AI-specific risks like algorithmic bias, transparency, informed consent, or liability for errors (Ahlawat & Associates, 2025).

Ethical issues, such as discriminatory algorithms, risk exacerbating inequalities in India's diverse population, where technology access is uneven (32% rural vs. 67% urban internet penetration; TRAI, 2022). The digital divide threatens to exclude marginalized communities, undermining AI's equitable potential (Moore, 2022). Practical deployments like the Mitra robot during COVID-19 highlight benefits (e.g., reduced infection risks) but raise concerns about surveillance and data security (Shrotriya et al., 2025). Globally, the EU's GDPR and AI Act offer models for transparency and accountability, while the U.S.'s clinician-centric liability approach highlights regulatory complexities (European Commission, 2020; Price et al., 2019). India's unique socio-economic context requires a tailored legal framework to ensure AI's ethical use and social responsibility, addressing gaps in current laws and fostering inclusive healthcare delivery

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this research are:

- To analyze the legal challenges of AI integration in India's healthcare system, focusing on data privacy, liability, and informed consent.
- To examine ethical issues, including algorithmic bias, transparency, and equitable access, in India's diverse socio-economic context.
- To compare India's regulatory framework with international models (EU's GDPR and AI Act, U.S.'s HIPAA and FDA regulations) to identify best practices.
- To explore the social responsibility of AI in promoting patient welfare and addressing healthcare inequities in India.
- To propose a comprehensive legal framework for India, incorporating mandatory algorithmic audits, clear liability regimes, and public engagement to ensure ethical and equitable AI deployment.

RESEARCH GAP

While existing literature highlights AI's potential in healthcare, it reveals significant gaps in addressing India-specific legal and ethical challenges. The DPDP Act (2023) focuses on data protection but lacks provisions for AI-specific issues like algorithmic transparency, bias mitigation, or liability allocation

(Ahlawat & Associates, 2025). Studies on India's healthcare AI emphasize technical applications (e.g., telemedicine, diagnostics) but rarely explore comprehensive legal frameworks or social implications (NITI Aayog, 2018). Global frameworks like the EU's GDPR and AI Act provide robust models, but their applicability to India's resource-constrained, diverse context is understudied (Gerke et al., 2020). The social impact of AI deployments, such as the Mitra robot, is underexplored, particularly regarding surveillance, data security, and equity (Shrotriya et al., 2025). There is limited research on integrating public engagement and community-driven AI development to address India's digital divide. This study fills these gaps by proposing a tailored legal framework that balances innovation with ethical and social responsibility, informed by global best practices and India's unique needs.

RESEARCH MODEL/RESEARCH QUESTIONS/HYPOTHESIS

Research Questions

1. What are the legal challenges of implementing AI in India's healthcare system, particularly regarding data privacy, liability, and informed consent?
2. How do ethical issues like algorithmic bias and transparency impact AI's equitable deployment in India's diverse population?
3. How can international frameworks (EU's GDPR/AI Act, U.S.'s HIPAA/FDA) inform India's AI regulation in healthcare?
4. How can AI uphold social responsibility to ensure patient welfare and equity in India?
5. What legal and policy measures can India adopt to balance AI innovation with ethical and social responsibility?

Hypothesis

H1: The absence of AI-specific legislation in India exacerbates legal and ethical challenges, risking inequitable healthcare outcomes.

H2: A tailored legal framework incorporating mandatory audits, shared liability, and public engagement can ensure ethical and equitable AI use in India's healthcare system.

Research Model

This study adopts a doctrinal legal research model, analyzing legal texts, policies, and case studies to evaluate AI's regulatory landscape in healthcare. It employs **comparative analysis** to draw lessons from global jurisdictions (EU, U.S.) and proposes a normative framework for India, emphasizing ethical principles and social responsibility. The model integrates qualitative thematic analysis to identify legal gaps, ethical challenges, and policy solutions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative doctrinal methodology, focusing on legal and policy analysis to address AI's integration in healthcare. The approach includes:

Primary Sources: Analysis of Indian legal texts (DPDP Act, IT Act, Consumer Protection Act) and policy documents (NITI Aayog's Responsible AI, ICMR Ethical Guidelines).

Secondary Sources: Peer-reviewed journals (e.g., Science, JAMA), government reports (e.g., World Bank, TRAI), and reputable publications (e.g., IBM, European Commission) for insights on AI applications, ethics, and global regulations.

Case Studies: Examination of AI deployments in India, such as the Mitra robot during COVID-19, and global examples like Google's DeepMind, to assess practical implications.

Comparative Analysis: Evaluation of EU (GDPR, AI Act) and U.S. (HIPAA, FDA) frameworks to identify best practices for India.

Data Collection: Sourced from trustworthy databases (PubMed, SpringerLink, Google Scholar) and verified websites (e.g., NITI Aayog, European Commission).

Analysis: Thematic analysis to identify legal gaps, ethical challenges, and policy solutions, ensuring a rigorous, evidence-based approach.

The methodology ensures a comprehensive exploration of AI's legal, ethical, and social dimensions in healthcare, tailored to India's context while drawing global insights.

SIGNIFICANCE

This research is significant for several reasons like policy development where the paper proposes a tailored legal framework for AI in India's healthcare, addressing gaps in the DPDP Act and promoting ethical use. The next significant reason is the social impact it can create. By emphasizing equity and public engagement, it ensures AI benefits marginalized communities, reducing healthcare disparities. Other reason is the global relevance of the research question. Comparative analysis with EU and U.S. frameworks contributes to harmonizing global AI standards. Other significant reason is the practical implications of the research. Recommendations like algorithmic audits, liability regimes, and professional training enhance AI's safe and equitable deployment in hospitals. Another driving force is the academic contribution. The study fills a research gap by integrating legal, ethical, and social perspectives specific to India, advancing discourse on responsible AI in healthcare. Also, by advocating for transparency and community involvement, it fosters trust in AI systems, critical for widespread adoption. This research provides actionable insights for policymakers, healthcare professionals, and technologists to ensure AI's transformative potential is realized responsibly.

LIMITATIONS

This research has several limitations:

1. The scope of the study is limited. The focus on India, with EU and U.S. comparisons, may overlook other jurisdictions' approaches (e.g., China, Singapore) that could offer additional insights.
2. There is limited data availability. Limited empirical data on AI deployments in India (e.g., Mitra robot) restricts in-depth case study analysis.
3. Regulations are always evolving. The DPDP Act and proposed AI Act are recent, and their implementation remains uncertain, limiting predictive analysis.
4. There is presence of interdisciplinary complexity. Integrating legal, ethical, and technical perspectives may oversimplify some technical aspects due to the legal focus.
5. There are resource constraints. The study relies on secondary data, as primary data collection (e.g., stakeholder interviews) was not feasible.

Despite these limitations, the research provides a strong foundation for policy recommendations, with scope for future empirical and comparative studies.

CONCLUSION

AI's integration into healthcare offers transformative potential to address India's systemic challenges, including a shortage of medical professionals and overburdened infrastructure. Applications like the Mitra robot during COVID-19 demonstrate practical benefits, such as reduced infection risks, but highlight legal and ethical risks, including data privacy, algorithmic bias, and inequitable access (Shrotriya et al., 2025). The DPDP Act (2023) is a starting point for data protection but lacks AI-specific provisions, necessitating tailored legislation to ensure accountability and fairness (Ahlawat & Associates, 2025). Drawing from the EU's GDPR and AI Act, India can adopt transparency, mandatory audits, and shared liability models to build trust and equity (European Commission, 2020). The U.S.'s clinician-centric liability approach underscores the need for clear responsibility frameworks (Price et al., 2019). Ethical considerations, such as bias mitigation and informed consent, are critical to prevent discrimination in India's diverse population. Social responsibility demands prioritizing patient welfare and inclusivity, addressing the digital divide through infrastructure investment and community engagement (Moore, 2022).

Policy recommendations include:

- Enacting AI-specific legislations to address healthcare-specific risks.
- Establishing an Inter-Ministerial AI Coordination Committee for unified governance (Lexology, 2025).
- Investing in digital infrastructure to bridge the rural-urban divide.
- Promoting interdisciplinary collaboration among technologists, clinicians, and policymakers.
- Implementing mandatory algorithmic audits to ensure fairness.
- Enhancing training for healthcare and legal professionals to navigate AI complexities.

Global cooperation will strengthen these efforts, ensuring AI delivers an inclusive healthcare revolution that benefits all, particularly the most vulnerable.

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