Chapter 6
MotherCare App for Expectant Mothers in Interior Parts of Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Pregnancy, as a matter of fact, is always physically and emotionally challenging for women. Rapid physical changes with baby’s growth in the womb exposes the mother to severe mood swings from short spell of merriment to long spells of anxiety and depression about upcoming child’s health, its wellbeing, and so on. Most of the third world countries with their struggling economies have patriarchal social fabric, a fact that makes it worse for women of these societies to healthily tackle or seek help during gestation. The main goal of the proposed application, MothersCare, is to help the expecting mothers when they need it most. It will help them choose the right physician and request appointments from the comfort of homes, barring cumbersome wait for turn in long queues in rush hours for appointments with doctors at hospitals. This app is absolutely user-friendly in terms of simplicity of use and wide spectrum of maternal healthcare services it offers.

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INTRODUCTION

With the fast development of mobile technology, mobile devices are becoming ever more importantly ubiquitous. With the recent improvement on mobile devices, their humanitarian utility has become multifaceted. Their multipurpose service not only includes facilitation of one-on-one or one-on-group interaction but education, personal security, healthcare, etc. A number of software packages, embedded or downloadable in one’s mobile, offer a range of services—a fact that has easified day to day affairs of mobile users.

MotherCare is one such app through which we seek to assist an expecting mother in maintaining her own health as well as that of the baby during pregnancy. Meant for Pakistani women, specifically the women of District Swat in Khyberpakhtunkhwa, the app intends to save moms-to-be the labor of queuing up for allotment of appointment number and then waiting for the turn to see a doctor. It facilitates female patients to locate doctors and set appointments easily. This app also provides weekly information illustrated with images to the patients regarding their pregnancy. Hence, our app aims to provide consultancy and tips to the expecting mothers with the help of mobile phones by making maternity care service more interactive and accessible.

BACKGROUND

Pakistan, which is fifth most populous country of the world with a population of over 209,970,000 people (Stimson & Haynes 2012), has a 60.78% rural population (Trading Economics, 2018). The economic façade of the country has changed rapidly in recent years from a dominantly agricultural to an evolving industrial economy. Many settled areas in less known parts of the country have already put on an urban or at least suburban array such as Kohaat, Nooriabad, Nowshera, Mirpur Khas, etc. Residents of these areas enjoy access to basic amenities of life. All the same, there are certain interior parts of Pakistan where development has been slow to make its mark. These areas are physically and temperamentally rustic. Unavailability of smooth tarmacked roads to travel long distances and absence of basic medical facilities are the regular nuance to the residents, for instance, underdeveloped parts of Haala and Tharparkar Districts in Sindh, and Charsadda District in Khyberpakhtunkhwa.

Female residents especially suffer greater due to unavailability of basic healthcare facilities near their homes. They suffer worse because, being a patriarchal society to the core, male members of the family feel shy to allow the ailing women of their families to travel long distances and get themselves checked by proper physicians or specialists in cities for prenatal care. Men’s attitude becomes more rigid towards women who are in the family way. Instead of letting their women visit a maternity
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