International Journal of Medicine
journal homepage: www.ijmjournal.org

Original Research Article

Special Issue: Pulmonary Medicine

# Prevalence and Risk Factors of Multidrug-Resistant Tuberculosis (MDR-TB) in India: A Cross-Sectional Study in High-Burden Districts

**Dr. Richa Mittal**[*1]

[1]JR, Department of Pulmonary Medicine, Seth GS Medical College and KEM Hospital, Mumbai

## HIGHLIGHTS

1. High prevalence of MDR-TB in India.
2. Risk factors include previous TB treatment.
3. Poor treatment adherence increases MDR-TB cases.
4. Malnutrition and HIV co-infection increase risk.
5. Urgent need for drug resistance screening.

## ARTICLE INFO

Handling Editor: Dr. Oliver Hastings

**Key words:**
Multidrug-resistant tuberculosis
Prevalence
Risk factors
India.

## ABSTRACT

**Background**: Multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) is a global health challenge, especially in high-burden countries like India, which contributes 26% of the world's TB cases. MDR-TB, defined by resistance to rifampicin and isoniazid, poses significant treatment difficulties due to prolonged and toxic regimens. Understanding local epidemiology and risk factors is crucial for public health interventions in India. **Methods:** This cross-sectional study was conducted in high-burden districts of TB hospital of Mumbai, Maharashtra, India, targeting 128 smear-positive pulmonary TB patients aged 16 years and above. Socio-demographic and clinical data, including treatment history, smoking status, and HIV status, were collected through the patient's clinical records. GeneXpert MTB/RIF was used for rifampicin resistance testing, and further drug susceptibility tests on Lowenstein-Jensen media were performed to confirm MDR-TB cases. Logistic regression was applied to identify risk factors associated with MDR-TB. **Results:** The overall prevalence of MDR-TB was 6.3%, with a higher prevalence among retreatment cases (16.2%) compared to new TB cases (2.2%). Males represented 87.5% of MDR-TB cases, and rural residents accounted for 62.5%. The key risk factor identified was a history of previous TB treatment, with these patients being 7.5 times more likely to develop MDR-TB (OR = 7.50, 95% CI: 1.50–40.00, p = 0.031). No significant associations were found between MDR-TB and other factors like gender, education level, or HIV status. **Conclusion:** This study highlights the significant role of prior TB treatment in the development of MDR-TB in districts of TB hospital of Mumbai, India. Strengthened control measures, improved treatment adherence, and expanded diagnostic capacity are critical to curbing the MDR-TB epidemic, particularly in rural and underserved regions.

* Corresponding author.
Dr. Richa Mittal, JR, Department of Pulmonary Medicine, Seth GS Medical College and KEM Hospital, Mumbai
Received 18 August 2024; Received in revised form 20 September 2024; Accepted 24 September 2024
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## INTRODUCTION

Multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) is a major public health concern, particularly in countries like India where tuberculosis (TB) remains endemic[1]. TB continues to be one of the leading infectious disease threats globally, with India accounting for approximately 26% of the world's TB cases according to the World Health Organization (WHO) 2022 report[2]. India also bears a significant burden of MDR-TB, with an estimated 1,24,000 cases of rifampicin-resistant TB annually, making it the highest among all countries worldwide[3]. MDR-TB, defined as resistance to at least rifampicin and isoniazid, the two most powerful first-line anti-TB drugs, represents a severe challenge to TB control programs due to its difficulty to treat and the need for more prolonged and toxic treatment regimens[5].

The global rise in MDR-TB cases can be attributed to several factors, including the misuse of antibiotics, poor adherence to treatment regimens, and inadequate healthcare systems[6,7]. In India, socio-economic challenges, such as poverty, malnutrition, overcrowded living conditions, and limited access to healthcare, further exacerbate the situation[8,9]. The country has implemented various strategies under the National Tuberculosis Elimination Program (NTEP), yet controlling MDR-TB remains a formidable challenge. In 2021, India reported an MDR-TB prevalence of approximately 3.4% among new TB cases and 18% among previously treated cases, highlighting the critical role that treatment history plays in the development of drug-resistant TB[10].

Recent advancements in diagnostic technologies, such as the widespread use of Gene X-pert MTB/RIF, have improved the detection of both TB and rifampicin-resistant TB in India[11]. This rapid molecular diagnostic tool has been instrumental in early detection, enabling quicker initiation of appropriate treatment. However, despite the availability of better diagnostics, many rural and underserved regions of India still face significant barriers in accessing timely diagnosis and treatment for MDR-TB. These barriers contribute to the continued transmission of drug-resistant strains, particularly in areas with limited healthcare infrastructure[12]. In rural parts of India, such as in high-burden states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Maharashtra the MDR-TB crisis is exacerbated by delays in diagnosis, lack of adherence to treatment regimens, and poor healthcare access. Migrant labour populations, who often move between urban and rural areas, further complicate efforts to control TB and MDR-TB, as their movement increases the risk of transmission. Understanding the local epidemiology of MDR-TB in these regions is crucial to formulating effective public health interventions.

This study aims to assess the prevalence and risk factors of MDR-TB in districts of TB hospital of Mumba in India, focusing on identifying socio-demographic and clinical characteristics that may contribute to the development of drug resistance [13]. By doing so, the study seeks to provide critical insights into the dynamics of MDR-TB in India, helping inform policy decisions and improve the management of MDR-TB in these high-burden areas.

## METHODOLOGY

### STUDY DESIGN

This study utilized a cross-sectional retrospective design to assess the prevalence of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) and its associated risk factors. The study was conducted in district TB hospital of Mumbai. Data collection occurred between August 2023 to November 2023, during which clinical and laboratory investigations data were obtained from patient's record file. Patient's with smear-positive pulmonary TB were recruited from district TB hospital in Mumbai . Data was obtained from patient's clinical records.

### STUDY POPULATION AND DATA COLLECTION

The study population consisted of smear-positive pulmonary TB patients aged 16 years and above who were either newly diagnosed or had a history of prior TB treatment. A total of 128 patients were included in the study, with participants selected through consecutive sampling. All the case file with sputum positive patient with proper clinical history and data of sputum examination required for the study were considered in inclusion criteria. Exclusion criteria included patients with incomplete medical records or those who were too ill to participate in the study. The data gathered included age, sex, residence (urban or rural), occupation, education level, history of TB treatment, smoking history, HIV status, and BCG vaccination status. The data was obtained from the record file of OPD and admitted patients in district TB hospital of Mumbai who undergoes clinical examination and sputum analysis.

### SPUTUM DECONTAMINATION, ISOLATION, IDENTIFICATION & DRUG SUSCEPTIBILITY TESTING

Decontamination and further homogenization of the samples were performed following Petroff's method. Isolates were identified based on their typical colony characteristics on Lowenstein-Jensen (LJ) media, supplemented with standard biochemical tests. The GeneXpert machine was employed to assess rifampicin (RIF) resistance. Subsequently, RIF-resistant Mycobacterium tuberculosis (MTB) isolates were tested for both isoniazid (INH) and RIF resistance using the indirect proportional method on LJ media. The proportion method measures the percentage of resistant bacilli in a sample. Two appropriate dilutions of the bacilli, $10^{-2}$ and $10^{-4}$ (undiluted = $10^{6}$ to $10^{8}$ CFU/ml), were inoculated on both drug-containing and drug-free media. If the proportion of resistant bacilli was below the critical threshold (1%), the strain was classified as sensitive; otherwise, it was classified as resistant. Additionally, the HIV status of each patient was obtained from the TB unit register at their respective clinics. Quality control was ensured for the Gene X-pert assay (sample processing and probe verification) and LJ media by utilizing standard strains of MTB H37Rv-ATCC27294.

### STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Data were entered and analyzed using SPSS software version 28. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the socio-demographic and clinical characteristics of the study population.

Bivariate logistic regression was applied to assess the association between potential risk factors and MDR-TB. Variables with a p-value less than 0.05 in the bivariate analysis were further analyzed using multivariate logistic regression to control for confounding factors. Odds ratios (OR) with 95% confidence intervals (CI) were calculated to estimate the strength of associations. A p-value of less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

## RESULTS

**Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Tb Patients:** A total of 128 smear-positive pulmonary tuberculosis (TB) patients were included in the study from district TB hospital of Mumbai. The highest, 90 (70.3%) were newly diagnosed with active TB, while 37 (29.7%) had a history of previous TB treatment (retreatment cases). The majority of the patients were male, accounting for 83 (64.8%) of the total cases. The age distribution revealed that the largest proportion of patients, 58 (45.3%), fell into the 26-35 age group, with 39 of them being new TB cases and 19 being retreatment cases. Patients younger than 25 years comprised 29.7% of the total, with 38 cases in total, and retreatment cases were lower in this group (16.2%). Older age groups, particularly those above 46 years, made up a smaller portion of the total cases but showed a higher proportion of retreatment cases (21.6%) Table 1.

Regarding residence, 67 (52.3%) of the TB patients were from urban areas, while the remaining 61 (47.7%) resided in rural areas. In terms of occupation, 60 (46.9%) of the participants were farmers or day labourers. A higher proportion of retreatment cases (48.6%) were observed in this group, compared to 46.7% of new cases. Other notable occupational groups included housewives (22.7%), merchants (13.3%), and drivers (4.7%). In terms of income, the majority of patients earned between 10,000 and 20,000 Rs. per month (44.5%), followed by 31.3% who earned less than 10,000 Rs. Only 20.3% of patients reported earning more than 20,000 Rupee monthly. Among the religious affiliations, the majority of the patients, 117 (91.4%), identified as Hindu, with a small propor-ortion being Muslim (7.0%). The education data show the largest proportion of patients were illiterate, accounting for 51.6% of the total cases. This group included a higher percentage of retreatment cases (59.5%). A smaller percentage of participants had completed primary or secondary education, and only 7 patients (5.5%) held a diploma or higher degree Table 1.

**Prevalence of Multidrug-Resistant Tuberculosis (MDR-TB):** Of the 128 smear-positive TB patients, 8 (6.3%) were diagnosed with multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB). The prevalence of MDR-TB was significantly higher among retreatment cases, with 6 out of 37 retreatment patients (16.2%) testing positive for MDR-TB. In contrast, among the 90 new TB cases, only 2 patients (2.2%) were found to have MDR-TB. The gender distribution of MDR-TB cases showed that 7 out of 8 MDR-TB patients (87.5%) were male. The age distribution of MDR-TB cases indicated that the majority of MDR-TB-positive patients were in the age group of 25-35 years (3 cases), followed by those aged 36-45 years (2 cases). The rural population showed a slightly higher prevalence of MDR-TB, with 5 out of 8 cases (62.5%) identified in rural residents.

**Rifampicin-resistant Non-MDR-TB:** Sputum samples from 128 smear-positive pulmonary TB patients were tested using the GeneXpert MTB/RIF assay to detect Mycobacterium tuberculosis (MTB) and identify rifampicin resistance. Of these, 8 cases showed resistance to rifampicin. These rifampicin-resistant samples were subsequently cultured on Lowenstein-Jensen (LJ) medium for further drug susceptibility testing to assess resistance to both rifampicin (RIF) and isoniazid (INH), in order to confirm MDR-TB.

The results indicated that all 8 rifampicin-resistant samples were also resistant to isoniazid, confirming the presence of multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) in these cases. No instances of rifampicin-resistant, non-MDR-TB were found. This finding suggests that rifampicin resistance in this population is a strong indicator of MDR-TB, highlighting the necessity of testing for isoniazid resistance in rifampicin-resistant cases to accurately identify MDR-TB.

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of TB Patients in District TB Hospital of Mumbai, Maharashtra, India**

| Variable | Total TB cases (N=128) | New active TB cases (N=90) | Retreatment TB cases (N=37) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Age group** | | | |
| ≤25 | 38 (29.7%) | 32 (35.6%) | 6 (16.2%) |
| 26–35 | 58 (45.3%) | 39 (43.3%) | 19 (51.4%) |
| 36–45 | 17 (13.3%) | 12 (13.3%) | 5 (13.5%) |
| ≥46 | 15 (11.7%) | 7 (7.8%) | 8 (21.6%) |
| **Gender** | | | |
| Male | 83 (64.8%) | 54 (60.0%) | 29 (78.4%) |
| Female | 45 (35.2%) | 36 (40.0%) | 9 (21.6%) |

| Variable | Total TB cases (N=128) | New active TB cases (N=90) | Retreatment TB cases (N=37) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Resident** | | | |
| Urban | 67 (52.3%) | 49 (54.4%) | 18 (48.6%) |
| Rural | 61 (47.7%) | 41 (45.6%) | 17 (45.9%) |
| **Occupation** | | | |
| Farmers and day labourers | 60 (46.9%) | 42 (46.7%) | 18 (48.6%) |
| House wife | 29 (22.7%) | 22 (24.4%) | 7 (18.9%) |
| Government employee | 9 (7.0%) | 9 (10.0%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Merchant | 17 (13.3%) | 14 (15.6%) | 3 (8.1%) |
| Driver | 6 (4.7%) | 1 (1.1%) | 5 (13.5%) |
| Student | 9 (7.0%) | 5 (5.6%) | 4 (10.8%) |

| Variable | Total TB cases (N=128) | New active TB cases (N=90) | Retreatment TB cases (N=37) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Income/month (Rs.):** | | | |
| Income < 10,000 | 40 (31.3%) | 30 (33.3%) | 10 (27.0%) |
| Income 10,000 – 20,000 | 57 (44.5%) | 40 (44.4%) | 17 (45.9%) |
| Income > 20,000 birr | 26 (20.3%) | 17 (18.9%) | 9 (24.3%) |
| No means of income | 5 (3.9%) | 4 (4.4%) | 1 (2.7%) |
| Religion | | | |
| Hindu | 117 (91.4%) | 83 (92.2%) | 34 (91.9%) |
| Muslim | 9 (7.0%) | 7 (7.8%) | 2 (5.4%) |
| **Educational status:** | | | |
| Illiterate | 66 (51.6%) | 44 (48.9%) | 22 (59.5%) |
| Primary school | 38 (29.7%) | 27 (30.0%) | 11 (29.7%) |
| Secondary school | 18 (14.1%) | 16 (17.8%) | 3 (8.1%) |
| Diploma and above | 7 (5.5%) | 6 (6.7%) | 1 (2.7%) |

| Variable | Total TB cases (N=128) | New active TB cases (N=90) | Retreatment TB cases (N=37) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Marital status** | | | |
| Married | 64 (50.0%) | 45 (50.0%) | 19 (51.4%) |
| Unmarried | 47 (36.7%) | 36 (40.0%) | 11 (29.7%) |
| Widowed | 6 (4.7%) | 4 (4.4%) | 2 (5.4%) |
| Divorced | 11 (8.6%) | 5 (5.6%) | 6 (16.2%) |

**Factors Associated with MDR-TB Status:** Several socio-demographic and clinical factors were analyzed for their potential association with MDR-TB status (Table 2). The analysis showed that a history of previous TB treatment was the most significant risk factor for MDR-TB. Patients with a histohistory of previous TB treatment had a 7.5 times higher likelihood of developing MDR-TB compared to those who had not been treated previously (OR = 7.50, 95% CI: 1.50–40.00, p = 0.031). Patients younger than 25 years had a lower prevalence of MDR-TB (1 case), while the prevalence was slightly higher in the 26-35 age group (3 cases) and the 36-45 age group (2 cases). However, none of these age groups showed a statistically signif-

-icant association with MDR-TB (p > 0.05). Male patients were more likely to be MDR-TB positive, with 7 out of 8 cases found in males. Despite this difference, gender was not significantly associated with MDR-TB (OR = 4.20, p = 0.30). Illiteracy was observed more frequently among MDR-TB patients, with 3 out of 8 MDR-TB cases found in illiterate patients. However, this association was not statistically significant (OR = 6.00, p = 0.19). Rural patients had a higher prevalence of MDR-TB, with 5 out of 8 cases coming from rural areas, although this association was not significant (OR = 1.70, p = 0.60). MDR-TB was more prevalent among farmers and day labourers, with 5 out of 8 cases occurring in this group, but the association was not significant (OR = 2.00, p = 0.50). History of smoking did not show a significant association with MDR-TB, as 2 out of 8 MDR-TB patients had a history of smoking (OR = 1.20, p = 0.85). BCG vaccination did not appear to influence MDR-TB status, as 7 out of 8 MDR-TB patients had no history of vaccination (p = 0.80). Although MDR-TB prevalence was higher among HIV-positive patients (2 cases), the association was not statistically significant (OR = 2.00, p = 0.20). One MDR-TB patient had a history of imprisonment, but there was no significant association between imprisonment and MDR-TB (OR = 1.10, p = 0.91).

**Table 2 : Factors Associated with The MDR-TB Status Among Pulmonary TB Cases in District TB Hospital of Mumbai, Maharashtra, India**

| Variable | MDR-TB Positive (N=8) | MDR-TB Negative (N=120) | Crude Or | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Age Group** | | | | |
| Age ≤ 25 | 1 | 38 | 3.10 (0.20, 50.00) | 0.45 |
| Age 25 – 35 | 3 | 54 | 1.50 (0.15, 12.00) | 0.92 |
| Age 36 – 45 | 2 | 16 | 1.30 (0.10, 25.00) | 0.85 |
| Age ≥ 45 | 2 | 12 | 1.05 | - |
| **Gender** | | | | |
| Male | 7 | 81 | 4.20 (0.50, 33.00) | 0.3 |
| Female | 1 | 39 | 1 | - |

| Variable | MDR-TB Positive (N=8) | MDR-TB Negative (N=120) | Crude Or | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Education** | | | | |
| Illiterate | 3 | 63 | 6.00 (0.50, 70.00) | 0.19 |
| Primary School | 3 | 34 | 2.10 (0.20, 25.00) | 0.62 |
| Secondary School | 1 | 17 | 3.50 (0.20, 60.00) | 0.51 |
| Diploma and Above | 1 | 6 | 1 | - |
| **Fasting** | | | | |
| Fasting: Yes | 3 | 74 | 0.55 (0.15, 3.00) | 0.25 |
| Fasting: No | 5 | 46 | 1 | - |
| Smoking | | | | |
| History of Smoking: Yes | 2 | 34 | 1.20 (0.25, 6.50) | 0.85 |
| History of Smoking: No | 6 | 86 | 1 | - |

| Variable | MDR-TB Positive (N=8) | MDR-TB Negative (N=120) | Crude Or | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Resident** | | | | |
| Rural | 5 | 56 | 1.70 (0.35, 8.50) | 0.6 |
| Urban | 3 | 64 | 1 | - |
| **Occupation** | | | | |
| Farmer and Day Labourers | 5 | 57 | 2.00 (0.45, 9.00) | 0.5 |
| Other | 3 | 63 | 1 | - |

| Variable | MDR-TB Positive (N=8) | MDR-TB Negative (N=120) | Crude Or | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **BCG Vaccination** | | | | |
| BCG Vaccination: Yes | 1 | 29 | 0.85 (0.20, 4.00) | 0.8 |
| BCG Vaccination: No | 7 | 91 | 1 | - |
| History of Previous Treatment | | | | |
| History of Previous Treatment: Yes | 6 | 32 | 7.50 (1.50, 40.00) | 0.031 |
| History of Previous Treatment: No | 2 | 88 | 1 | - |
| **HIV status** | | | | |
| HIV Status: Yes | 2 | 27 | 2.00 (0.30, 10.00) | 0.2 |
| HIV Status: No | 6 | 93 | 1 | - |
| History of Prison | | | | |
| History of Prison: Yes | 1 | 19 | 1.10 (0.15, 9.00) | 0.914 |
| History of Prison: No | 7 | 101 | 1 | - |

**Note that: N number of Subjects Or Odds Ratio**

These findings indicate that the history of previous TB treatment is the most important risk factor for MDR-TB, underscoring the need for better management and adherence to treatment protocols to prevent drug-resistant strains from emerging.

All key variables were included in the binary logistic regression analysis, which revealed a significant association between MDR-TB and a history of previous anti-TB treatment (OR = 7, 95% CI: 1.2–37.6, $p = 0.025$). However, no other variables showed a statistically significant association with MDR-TB. After adjusting for interactions among the independent variables in the binary regression model, the analysis still indicated no significant association between any of the other factors and the prevalence of MDR-TB ($p > 0.05$), except for previous treatment history.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the ongoing challenge of managing multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) in India, particularly in regions with high TB burdens. The over--all prevalence of MDR-TB in this study was 6.3%, which aligns closely with recent national reports from India. Globally, similar findings have been reported, with studies such as that by Wells et al. (2020) documenting MDR-TB prevalence of 5.6% in high-burden countries, reflecting the global challenge of drug-resistant TB management (*Journal of Global Health*, 10(2), 020401)[14]. A study conducted by Desikan et al. (2022) found that the national prevalence of MDR-TB in India ranged between 3.4% among new TB cases and 18% among previously treated cases, similar to the prevalence rates observed in this study, where 2.2% of new TB cases and 16.2% of retreatment cases were diagnosed with MDR-TB[15] . Zhao et al. (2021) reported similar results in China, where the prevalence of MDR-TB among previously treated cases reached 20%, emphasizing the global consistency of these trends (*International Journal of Infectious Diseases*, 103, 462-468)[16].

A key finding from this study is the significant association between a history of prior TB treatment and the development of MDR-TB. Patients with a history of prior TB treatment were 7.5

times more likely to develop MDR-TB compared to those who were newly diagnosed. This is consistent with multiple studies conducted globally, which show that prior TB treatment is the strongest predictor of MDR-TB by Matteelli et al. (2019), who highlighted the role of previous TB treatment as the strongest predictor of MDR-TB in sub-Saharan Africa (*Lancet Infectious Diseases*, 19(9), e349-e360)[17]. Mishra et al. (2021) also identified previous treatment as a critical risk factor, particular--rly in regions where treatment adherence and proper management are compromised due to socio-economic factors[18].

The gender distribution of MDR-TB cases in this study is noteworthy, with males making up 87.5% of the MDR-TB cases. This gender disparity has been observed in other studies, including one by Prasad et al. (2021), which suggests that males are more likely to develop MDR-TB, potentially due to higher rates of smoking, alcohol consumption, and occupational exposure to TB, particularly in rural settings[19]. However, the gender association in this study was not statistically significant, similar to the findings of other recent studies. Similarly, Torre-Cisneros et al. (2020) found a male predominance in MDR-TB cases in Spain, attributed to behavioral and occupational risk factors (*European Respiratory Journal*, 56(5), 2001148)[20].

Geographical distribution also played a role, as the study showed a slightly higher prevalence of MDR-TB in rural areas (62.5%). This is supported by international studies like that of Alvarez-Uria et al. (2019), which showed that rural populations in Uganda face similar healthcare access challenges, contributing to higher MDR-TB rates (*PLoS One*, 14(4), e0214523)[21]. Rural regions in India often face healthcare access challenges, including delayed diagnosis and inadequate follow-up, both of which contribute to the persistence and spread of MDR-TB. A study by Singh et al. (2020) supports these findings, indicating that rural populations are at greater risk for MDR-TB due to limited healthcare infrastructure and lower awareness of TB treatment protocols[22].

The absence of a significant association between factors such as education level, smoking, and HIV status with MDR-TB in this study mirrors findings from other recent research. Müller et al. (2021) observed that, in South Africa, smoking and HIV status were not consistently linked with MDR-TB, underscoring the need for context-specific risk assessments (*BMC Public Health*, 21(1), 1109)[23, 24]. While studies such as that by Sharma et al. (2021) have indicated potential links between these factors and TB outcomes, they are not always consistent across different populations and regions[25]. In particular, HIV co-infection, though associated with a higher risk of TB in general, did not emerge as a significant factor in the development of MDR-TB in this cohort. This may reflect regional variations in HIV-TB co-infection dynamics or the effects of improved antiretroviral therapy coverage in India.

One of the more concerning findings of this study is that all rifampicin-resistant cases identified via GeneXpert were also resistant to isoniazid, confirming that they were MDR-TB cases. This is a strong indicator that rifampicin resistance can serve as a reliable proxy for MDR-TB, a point underscored by a recent systematic review by Farooqi et al. (2022), which concluded that in regions with high MDR-TB burdens, the majority of rifampicin-resistant TB cases are likely to be MDR-TB[26]. Zignol et al. (2020) found similar results in Russia, with rifampicin resistance serving as a reliable proxy for MDR-TB in regions with high TB burdens (Emerging Infectious Diseases, 26(3), 477-483). This highlights the importance of using rapid diagnostic tools like GeneXpert for early detection, followed by confirmatory testing to guide appropriate treatment regimens [27].

The findings of this study underscore the critical need for strengthened TB control measures, particularly in regions with high rates of treatment failure and relapse[28,29]. Efforts must focus on improving treatment adherence, expanding diagnostic capacity, and ensuring timely follow-up for patients with a history of TB treatment[30]. India's National Tuberculosis Elimination Program (NTEP) has made strides in expanding access to MDR-TB treatment, but challenges remain, particularly in rural and underserved areas[31]. This study emphasizes the need for targeted interventions in these high-burden regions to reduce the prevalence of MDR-TB and prevent the emergence of extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB)[32,33].

In conclusion, this study reaffirms the importance of prior TB treatment as the most significant risk factor for MDR-TB in India and highlights the need for continuous monitoring and improved management strategies to combat MDR-TB in rural and urban populations alike. With the growing burden of drug-resistant TB, more comprehensive approaches are required to ensure early diagnosis, effective treatment, and robust healthcare infrastructure, particularly in regions facing the greatest challenges in TB control.

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