

Role of Mass Media in Achieving Sustainable Healthcare

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Abstract

The mass media is a ubiquitous and institutionalised system within modern society, which can influence attitudes and behaviours associated with health. The impact of this phenomenon might manifest in both advantageous and detrimental ways. The social, economic, and environmental aspects are the three primary pillars around which sustainable development is built. These pillars serve as the essential framework for sustainable development. The state of one's health is a critical factor that plays a crucial role in reinforcing and sculpting the foundation of three essential pillars. A single institution can't fulfil the goal of sustainable healthcare on its own; instead, this objective can only be met via the concerted efforts of a variety of different stakeholders. When media platforms help to develop a sense of togetherness and continuously distribute information to the larger population on healthcare requirements, mass media's role in promoting successful communication is of the utmost importance.

Key Words: *Mass Media, Healthcare, Sustainable, Awareness, Health Schemes*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Communication has always been important in human growth, and mass media is a powerful tool. The word "media" comes from "medium," a carrier that spreads news, information, and public awareness. Mass media, like everything else, has pros and cons. India is known for having the most extensive democratic system in the world. The media has a considerable presence and substantially affects the nation (Mazumder 2019). The mass media, particularly radio and television, serve as significant platforms for education and information dissemination within society. These mediums can potentially play a crucial role in enhancing public health. The media significantly influences the health of individuals and the general public. Additionally, the media has a substantial role in shaping the knowledge base surrounding health literacy (HL) at the individual and societal levels (Saei et al., 2021).

The mass media is an omnipresent and institutionalised framework inside contemporary society, capable of suggestively impacting health-related attitudes and behaviours. Numerous studies have demonstrated that adults acquire a significant portion of their health-related knowledge via mass media sources. Furthermore, empirical studies in health communication have shown that mass media channels play a crucial role in enhancing awareness and understanding regarding health-related matters, potentially surpassing the impact of interpersonal communication (Fishman, 2006).

Most publications have regular health beats and particular health sections or pages staffed by well-informed reporters. Radio and television stations offer frequent medical programming, generally presented by doctors. Several academic programs increase journalists' background on health topics (Otten, 1992).

Mass media-based health-related behavioural modification interventions can improve or prevent population changes (Wakefield et al., 2010). Individuals have access to diverse resources that they might utilise while constructing narratives about their identities. The behaviour of individuals when they fall ill, make health-related decisions, seek healthcare services, or form opinions and make voting choices about healthcare policy and financing can be significantly influenced by the information and resources they obtain from diverse mass media outlets. These encompass representations of the experience of illness, the aetiology of diseases, concepts of health and healing, healthcare workers' behaviour and ethical obligations, as well as the characteristics and consequences of health policies. Certain narratives may be advocated by specific interest groups with the intention of exerting influence over communities (Seale, 2003).

Sustainable Healthcare

The United Nations Brundtland Commission formally articulated the concept of sustainability in 1987, when it was described as the capacity to fulfil the requirements of the current generation while safeguarding the potential of future generations to achieve their own needs (United Nations, n.d.).

The concept of sustainable development is grounded upon three essential pillars: social, economic, and environmental (Safdie, 2023).

Health is an imperative factor that is crucial in supporting and forming the foundation of three fundamental pillars. The absence of good health hinders the fulfilment of current and future needs, impeding sustainable development. Given the escalating incidence of debilitating ailments caused by communicable and non-communicable diseases, as well as the pressing concerns surrounding food safety and imminent ecological hazards, the achievement of sustainable development in India, particularly in terms of health, poses a formidable challenge (*Sustainability of the Healthcare Industry in India*, n.d.).

Healthcare Status in India

According to the Global Health Security (GHS) Index 2021, the average global GHS Index score declined from 40.2 in the GHS Index 2019 to 38.9 in 2021. The GHS Index is a collaborative effort between the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) and the Johns Hopkins Centre for Health Security at the Bloomberg School of Public Health.

India was positioned at the 66th rank among 195 countries, with an overall Index score of 42.8. This score experienced a decrease of -0.8 compared to the previous year, 2019. The United States of America (USA) achieved the top position on the index, attaining a score of 75.9, with Australia and Finland following closely (Arora, 2021).

Despite a notable escalation in government health expenditure (GHE) throughout the years, Indian citizens continue to bear a higher financial burden in the form of out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE) for accessing healthcare services. Based on the Economic Survey 2023 findings, there has been a gradual rise in the proportion of government expenditure in Total Health Expenditure (THE) over the years, with an increase from 28.6% in FY14 to 40.6% in FY19. Nevertheless, the Out-of-Pocket cost (OOPE) remains elevated, accounting for 48.2% of the cost (Kumar, 2023).

India's Step Towards Sustainable Healthcare

Ayushman Bharat, a flagship scheme of the Government of India, was launched as proposed by the National Health Policy 2017 to fulfil the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) aim. This effort has been created to meet Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its core commitment: to "leave no one behind."

Ayushman Bharat is an endeavour to change from a sectoral and segmented method of health service delivery to a holistic, need-based health care programme. This plan aspires to execute path-breaking activities to holistically address the healthcare system (encompassing preventive, promotion and ambulatory care) at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Ayushman Bharat utilises a continuum of care approach composed of two inter-related components, which are -

Health and Wellness Centers (HWCs)- The Indian government announced the development of 1,50,000 Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) by revamping Sub Centres and Primary Health Centres in February 2018. Health and Wellness Centres will provide a wider range of services to meet their community's primary healthcare requirements, increasing access, universality, and equity. Health promotion and prevention aims to engage and empower individuals and communities to select healthy behaviours and make changes that minimise the risk of chronic diseases and morbidities (National Health Authority | GOI, n.d.).

The Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY), India's most recent nationally publicly financed health insurance scheme, started in late 2018. The Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) has been implemented to replace the previously existing Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY). Its primary objective is to provide financial coverage for families by delivering roughly 7000 USD per year. As a result, the benefits package has been expanded to encompass a wider range of secondary and tertiary therapies. The programme has also eliminated the restriction on the maximum number of family members eligible to receive the program's benefits. It asserts that around 500 million individuals from the most economically disadvantaged segment of society are entitled to benefit from this programme (Angell et al, 2019). Over 40 million individuals have already utilised the services in a manner that is both cashless and paperless, leading to a collective savings of nearly 7 billion dollars for the citizens.

One World, One Health

Human well-being is contingent upon the proper functioning of ecosystems, which play a crucial role in offering essential resources such as unpolluted air, uncontaminated water, medicinal substances, and reliable access to food. Additionally, ecosystems contribute to illness prevention and climate stabilisation. Biodiversity within an ecosystem, which encompasses the full range of biological diversity, holds significant importance for

human well-being, sustainable livelihoods, and advancements in medicinal research. The global phenomenon of climate change has given rise to various manifestations, including extreme weather events, prolonged periods of drought and flooding, and the acidity of oceans. These changes have had detrimental effects on biodiversity, leading to significant implications for human health on a global scale.

The emerging paradigm of "One World, One Health" is founded upon recognising the interconnectedness between humans, animals, and the environment. This signifies a global acknowledgement of the interdependencies among ecological systems, animal-borne diseases, and public health. Consequently, there is a collective effort to establish and sustain a state of equilibrium and collaboration in these domains (Banerjee & Garg, 2021).

India aims to enhance the accessibility and affordability of healthcare services for its population and the global community. Prime Minister Narendra Modi opened and delivered a speech at the One Earth One Health – Advantage Healthcare India – 2023 event, held at New Delhi. The significance of resilient global healthcare systems in achieving this vision India is playing an imperative role as a collaborator with numerous nations in preserving lives by providing vaccines and medications. The government domestically produced vaccines, the world's most extensive and expeditious COVID-19 vaccination campaign, and dispatched 300 million COVID-19 vaccines to more than 100 countries. In this demonstration, India's capacity and dedication was highlighted, affirming the nation's commitment to becoming a reliable ally for any country striving to ensure the well-being of its populace.

India has maintained a holistic approach towards health for numerous centuries. India possesses a rich heritage in preventive and promotive health, exemplified by the ancient practises of Yoga and meditation. These traditional Indian contributions have transcended geographical boundaries and evolved into worldwide phenomena. Further, Ayurveda, a comprehensive well-being system, can address both the physical and mental aspects of health.

It is imperative for a comprehensive and collaborative approach to address healthcare difficulties on a worldwide scale. There is a need for an integrated, inclusive, and institutionalised response to effectively tackle these issues (*PM Inaugurates 6th Edition of One Earth One Health – Advantage Healthcare India 2023*, n.d.).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The research study titled 'Role of Mass Media in Achieving a Sustainable Healthcare in Nigeria' examines the fact that the media can shape and guide our focus towards specific societal matters. The present discourse pertains to the agenda-setting hypothesis within mass media. The media's ability to influence public opinion lies not in their capacity to dictate thoughts but rather in their remarkable effectiveness in shaping the subjects and issues that occupy the minds of their readers. Further, many individuals depend on the news media as a primary source of health-related information. There is an increased need for precise, pertinent, expeditious, and unbiased dissemination of public health information among individuals, with a concurrent reliance on mass media as the primary conduit of such information. The public health community commonly seeks support, attention, and endorsement from the media, which is seen as a primary provider of health and science information, even among health professionals. Conversely, they are also regarded as a significant instrument for disseminating health-related information to the general populace. The news media fulfil a vital role in providing the general public with health-related information. Consistent with the agenda-setting idea (*ROLE of MASS MEDIA in ACHIEVING a SUSTAINABLE HEALTH CARE in NIGERIA*, 2018)

This study, titled 'Role of the Media in Achieving a Sustainable Society Media and Public Culture' examines the potential impact of the media in fostering sustainability within society. The phrase sustainable development and its ultimate objective, a sustainable society, are delineated within the specific framework of Bhutan's goal of Gross National Happiness. In light of the Royal Government's long-term vision for Bhutan and the subsequent implementation of intentional and strategic policies, a burgeoning population will inevitably exert heightened strain on the environment, culture, and society. Hence, it is contended that for Bhutan to pursue a trajectory of sustainable development earnestly, the Bhutanese populace must undergo a shift in their conduct, moving away from existing or potentially unsustainable behaviours and embracing sustainable practices. These factors should contribute to the promotion of sustainable development, hence enhancing the overall measure of Gross National Happiness.

The attainment of this shift in behaviour cannot be accomplished autonomously but rather necessitates deliberate endeavours on the part of the government and society. There is a suggestion that implementing Education for Sustainable Development across all segments of society can contribute to the desired shift in behaviour.

Given that a significant portion of the Bhutanese populace is not currently enrolled in the conventional educational framework, there is a compelling argument to be made for augmenting the involvement of media platforms in disseminating Education for Sustainable Development (Bodt, n.d.).

The study 'Achieving sustainable e-health with information and communication technologies in Nigerian rural communities' discussed that utilising contemporary information and communication technologies (ICTs) can enhance healthcare quality. Rural residents are potentially vulnerable to the persistence of diseases that may have been more effectively prevented or controlled had they readily accessed e-health information through current information and communication technologies (ICTs). The maintenance of good health is vital for the attainment of significant advancements. The attainment of optimal health is designated as the third objective within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals established by the United Nations. Nevertheless, this objective may be elusive for individuals residing in certain rural regions due to their limited access to prompt and comprehensive online health information. A field study was conducted to gather the perspectives of 621 participants from 14 rural areas in Ota, Western Nigeria, regarding their access to online services. Due to limited or negligible access to online health information, their level of engagement and involvement in the pursuit of sustainable e-health is significantly lacking. This study suggests that it is imperative for both governmental and non-governmental organisations to promptly implement measures aimed at enhancing people's internet accessibility. This will effectively promote the use of e-health services and contribute to the expeditious attainment of Sustainable Development Goal Three (Aririguzoh et al., 2021).

The study 'Association Between Mass Media Use and Maternal Healthcare Service Utilisation in Malawi' discussed that it is advisable to prioritise the integration of mass media exposure into maternal health programmes in Malawi, to foster creative techniques for disseminating maternal health-related information to local communities. Enhancing media coverage and mitigating regional disparities necessitate the use of specific techniques. This study represents a pioneering effort to include eight distinct media channels to disseminate family planning messages. Nevertheless, the absence of data about the content of these media channels hinders our ability to assess the comparative effectiveness of these channels comprehensively. Additional research is required to examine the efficacy of media communication in promoting maternal healthcare-seeking. This can be accomplished by employing a more comprehensive approach of mass media platforms. The results suggest a positive correlation between media communication about family planning and the utilisation of maternal healthcare services. Acquiring critical health-related knowledge and information can empower women, enabling them to make better-educated decisions to mitigate the risk of pregnancy problems and unfavourable birthing outcomes. Healthcare initiatives in Malawi ought to prioritise allocating resources towards augmenting women's knowledge through mass media channels and enhancing the accessibility of reproductive health information, irrespective of socioeconomic and geographic constraints (Wang et al., 2021).

III. METHODS AND MATERIAL

To gather material on sustainable healthcare and the role of the mass media, we searched Google Scholar for research articles/papers and opinions on the subject, in addition to several websites that focus on news on healthcare. Not even a handful of research publications have been made available that are pertinent to this area of inquiry. We looked into the matter, conducting research on it, and paying special attention to the settings in which sustainable healthcare is discussed and reviewed, as well as the highlights where there is mention of the media. We tried building up a scholarly debate to bring attention to this topic.

The Objectives include-

- To investigate the potential role that mass media might play in achieving sustainable healthcare
- To investigate whether or if mass media informs and educates the public about important healthcare development

IV. DISCUSSION

The primary issue about the healthcare situation in India is a need for more awareness. What are the reasons behind the relatively low level of health awareness among the Indian population? The potential explanations may be found in factors such as limited educational attainment, inadequate functional literacy, insufficient emphasis on education within the healthcare system, and a diminished focus on health within the population, among other contributing factors. Notably, endeavours aimed at augmenting degrees of awareness have generally yielded favourable outcomes. For example, research conducted in the states of Bihar and Jharkhand exhibited enhanced levels of awareness and perceptions around abortion after implementing a behavioural change intervention. A systematic evaluation of treatments targeting adolescent reproductive health revealed a notable enhancement in the awareness levels of female adolescents about several aspects, including knowledge about health issues, environmental health, nutritional awareness, and reproductive and child health subsequent to the implementation of the intervention.

The underlying communication is evident: we must exert effort to enhance consciousness among other educators and foster a belief in the transformative potential of education among the younger cohort to facilitate behavioural modifications (Kasthuri, 2018).

Further, a large populace still lacks awareness regarding the government's schemes for their healthcare needs. A survey was done by Haqdarshak, including a sample size of 175 households from six different states, to comprehend the utilisation patterns of participants of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY). Although every household had access to PM-JAY coverage, the research revealed a notable deficiency in individuals' awareness regarding the advantages of the programme and the procedures for utilising them. A significant proportion of the population, specifically 56%, showed a lack of awareness regarding the diseases and treatments encompassed by their healthcare coverage. Furthermore, an even larger percentage of households, precisely 74%, were uninformed about the necessary procedures to follow to access cashless treatment options. Despite comprehensive healthcare coverage, 75% of the users assessed under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) remain at risk of severe poverty. Research done in the states of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand has revealed that individuals enrolled in the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) programme are consistently subjected to comparable charges at both public and private healthcare facilities without receiving any subsequent refunds. According to the NFHS-5 data, it is evident that there was an increase in out-of-pocket expenditures in 12 out of the 20 states and union territories covered under the PM-JAY programme (*How a Lack of Awareness Is Hindering PM-JAY's Reach* | IDR, n.d.).

The mass media would play a substantial role in fostering awareness regarding healthcare (Igbinoba et al., 2020). The utilisation of media advocacy has emerged as a well-established approach in the realm of health promotion, partly due to the significant impact of the World Health Organization's Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion in 1986. There is a growing trend to establish a "partnership" or "shared agenda" with the mass media when disseminating health information to the general public, namely in preventive, risk reduction, and drug-related knowledge.

The influence of mass media extends to individual health behaviours, consumption of healthcare services, healthcare practices, and health policy (Grilli, Ramsay and Minozzi, 2002).

Public health mass communication involves stated objectives, audience knowledge, best channels and techniques, and assessment mechanisms to follow changes over time based on health behaviour change and communication theory. Focus groups, in-depth interviews, and surveys helped create mass communication tactics that represented the local contexts of the programmes' communities. Culture influences how key audiences perceive and receive message content, structure, sources, and channels and is linked to many health behaviour factors. Cultural elements in mass communication can boost community health messages and programmes (Kreslake, 2019).

Empirical evidence exists pertaining to several crucial variables that contribute to achieving success, including strategic targeting, effective networking, the utilisation of SMART objectives, ongoing evaluation, and alignment with national and international policy frameworks. Campaigns must be situated within the context of public health promotion, with a deliberate examination of the possible collaboration between nationwide mass media campaigns and localised community action projects (Seymour, 2018).

V. CONCLUSION

The mass media possesses the capacity to provide citizens with access to crucial information regarding health, the prevention of diseases, and the availability of healthcare services, especially in areas marked by limited resources or inadequate healthcare systems. Moreover, this technology holds the potential to effectively mitigate the presence of obstacles and societal prejudices linked to particular medical conditions, hence fostering individuals' willingness to seek appropriate healthcare and therapeutic measures.

The media must effectively communicate health education about government schemes launched to combat prevalent diseases and advocate for adopting preventive measures. If regularly executed over a period of time, these endeavours have the potential to make a substantial contribution to the overall welfare of individuals. The consistent dissemination of health education across many media channels has effectively empowered individuals to adopt essential preventive measures (SiliconIndia, n.d.).

The media have the capacity to occupy a significant role in raising awareness about various health concerns, and the importance of this role is indisputable. Achieving sustainable healthcare necessitates numerous stakeholders' collective efforts, as any single entity cannot solely accomplish it. Mass media is crucial in achieving effective communication, particularly when media outlets establish a sense of unity and continuously provide information to the broader population regarding healthcare needs.

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