

The Role of Mass Media in Health Care Development: A Review Article

Rutuja Anil Saraf¹, J Balamurugan²

¹B.Tech Student, School of Information Technology and Engineering, Vellore Institute of Technology – 632 014, Tamil Nadu, India.

²Assistant Professor, Department of Social Sciences, School of Social Sciences and Languages, Vellore Institute of Technology – 632 014, Tamil Nadu, India.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24321/2395.3810.201807>

Abstract

The role of mass media in the health development field is of high value. The strength of mass media can cause a major impact on a large population. The world is facing a lot of health issues and if the issues are not presented to the people then they can cause adverse effects to mankind. Mass media plays a vital role in presenting these issues to masses. This article reviews the research that is done on the role of mass media on health. The paper focuses on the surveys conducted in the published papers on mass media and health care development in the past and highlights the positive as well as negative aspects of media on the health of people. This article also discusses the ways to improve the performance of mass media in creating an impact on the health behavior of people. The conclusion of this article is the vital role played by mass media in health issues and health care.

Keywords: Health behavior, Health development, Health issues, Improve performance, Surveys in past

Introduction

An important topic of discussion nowadays is the mass media and the role of mass media in promoting the socio-economic development. One such socio-economic development by mass media is the field of health. Health issues and health care is an important field in the development of the country.⁶ The death rate is declining day by day due to the improvements in the field of health care. Hence there should be a good platform for showcasing these health developments. Mass media provides this platform. These developments should be promoted by mass media and hence the article highlights the role of mass media in health care development. The health issues prevalent in the world are focused by mass media and presented to the world. Although there is a lack of information and

accessible primary research, this form of communication has a very important role in use of health care interventions. The mass media has positive impact on health issues and behavior except a few negative impacts. Due to the growing need of mass media in the field of health care and several types of research done on this topic, the researchers have chosen this topic to review.

Advantages of Mass Media with Respect to the Health Issues

Mass Media can turn Negatives to positives: The mass media change the negative behavior of people into positive behavior regarding the health issues. It can dismiss the negative thoughts about health issues in the minds of people and create awareness about the various health

Corresponding Author: J Balamurugan, Department of Social Sciences, School of Social Sciences and Languages, Vellore Institute of Technology – 632 014, Tamil Nadu, India.

E-mail Id: balasocio@gmail.com

Orcid Id: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7328-1868>

How to cite this article: Saraf RA, Balamurugan J. The Role of Mass Media in Health Care Development: A Review Article. *J Adv Res Jour Mass Comm* 2018; 5(1&2): 39-43.

issues and solutions. Reaching out to large population, the mass media has a wide range of scope in reaching to the masses. A survey by Grilli, et al. reveals that 70% of the people are positively affected by mass media related to health behavior.⁹ Sharing of involvement in the community, the health care organizations get into partnership with their communities and present the health issues and health care via various forms of media. Raising issues and concerns through media, the common man can also raise the health issues via media and present it to the masses. New ideas and advancements in the health field can be exposed through the mass media. Thus, the role of mass media is to focus the problems of people and come up with solutions.¹⁴

Disadvantages and Negative Impacts of Mass Media on Health

Studies have found that mass media advertising that portrays negative messages or negative scenes about the health consequences affects the audience behavior that is targeted in a better way than the other messages and advertising forms. We can take the example of the scenes of tobacco, smoking, consumption of alcohol, drugs in the advertisements and movies which depict a negative behavior on the audiences. This leads to a change in the behavior and addiction to such harmful substances since the audience is more inclined to the negative advertisements according to psychological studies conducted in the past. Mass media can change the psychological behavior and can lead to aggression, eating disorder and ways are provided to reduce the negative impact on the children and adults.¹⁸

The teenagers are the biggest victim of such negative behavior due to the mass media. The negative scenes and actions in the mass media forms affect the teens in a negative manner and cause adverse health effects such as addiction to harmful substances, obesity, inactiveness, more unhygienic and junk food consumptions, change in the behavior, greed and various other psychological changes in the child. These problems can lead to lung problems, cardio-vascular problems, depression, high blood problems, diabetes and other severe problems. The children are exposed to violence, substance abuse and sexual indications due to mass media forms. They tend to get addicted to media and become inactive. There are high chances of people interpreting a certain message on the media in a wrong way and hence it affects their health.¹⁷

Improving the Performance of Mass Media

An awareness regarding how to deal with the media is necessary for communicators of health. The media researchers should get cue on specific and precise medicines that are the new focus of the health community in order to understand the role of the specific medicine and its target. The balancing of competing and different aims has been

always tried by the health-related journalists. They should convey the best and trusted sources regarding the health issues and doctors. The medical reporters should have proper technical knowledge, power, and ability to focus on major problems and the appropriate source channels. The health communicators should have an awareness of way of working with the mass media. This means that they should understand the journalists since the journalists should be available and must provide with proper resources and build good relations with the reporters of health.¹⁹

Advances in Health-Care

E-Health

The health-care service provided by the means of electronic processes is E-Health. E in E-Health stands for electronic that indicates that the health is promoted electronically and via communication. The mass media plays a vital role in these recent advances. The electronic devices and mass media help to promote E-health. The technology types that are being used are apps, video conferencing, websites, Virtual reality (VR) and wearable technology. Applications can be easily downloaded on electronic devices and the patient can keep a check on the physical activities. The videoconferencing is a form of mass media in which the patients can communicate with the doctors from any corner of the world via the Internet video calling. The World Wide Web plays a vital role in spreading the information related to health-care and medicine management. The wearable technologies include the devices that are linked with various apps and can be used by the patients to keep knowledge about their health. Virtual reality is used in the medical settings and helping the patients to overcome fear. Mass media help in enhancing this knowledge about E-health and health-care effectively.

Car reported that the health-care is an emerging field and hence faces many challenges in the medication belief and management of medicines.² The effectiveness of medication is determined by medication adherence that plays an important role in improving the outcomes of health-care and E-health. E-health helps in changing the management of medicines of for patients. It affects the complete journey of medicine management starting from the appointment of the doctor to the consultation and medicine management learning. It increases the belief and trust of the patient towards medication and health-care. The advances in E-health can be understood by studying its present and future. E-health increases the efficiency of health-care by decreasing the gap between the doctors and patients via various different techniques. The E-health has potential to enhance the reach of medication and the access to various health-care facilities and treatments thus enhancing the economic development of the developing countries. The quality and services offered by health-care can be improved

by E-health in the developed countries.¹³

M-Health

The provision of health-care via mobile phones and wireless devices is called M-Health. The mobile device helps in giving the information about health-care and medical facilities to the patients and helps the doctor to monitor the patients. A proper review of the interventions of M-health will give us an idea of the advantages of communication technologies as well as mobile computing in order to improve the health services.⁷

Telemedicine

The mixture of information technology and telecommunication to promote health-care is telemedicine. The use of telemedicine is crucial in case of emergency, overcoming the barriers of health-care promotion and gap between the doctor and patients. Telemedicine also provides with education related to medicines, medicine management and health-care.¹² The systems of telemedicine can be divided on the basis of information transferred and the ways to transmit this information. Telemedicine is beneficial in situations when there is problem in transfer of ready information between the doctor and patients due to physical barrier as well as when the medical management completely relies on provision of information.¹⁵

Other advances include Medical Informatics and Cyber medicine. Medical Informatics is the science of utilizing the analytics tools in order to develop algorithms and solutions to the increasing health issues. Cyber medicine is delivering the health-care services, drug prescriptions and consultation via Internet.

Objective

- The main objective of this research article is to review and analyze the past studies on the role of mass media on health issues and health care.
- To figure out the findings and research done on the health issues and how mass media helps to present these issues and come out with various solutions.
- To study the various ways to increase the impact of mass media on health issues and knowledge.

Literature Review

Grilli published an article emphasizing that mass media presenting topics related to health is a leading information source of health-related issues and are used by the people who want to create an impact on the behavior of patients and doctors.⁹ The main objective is to analyze the mass media effects on health services utilization. Tools used to study the effects are: clinical trials that are controlled, randomized trials, mass media interventions controlled

studies. Data was collected and analyzed by two reviewers who extracted the data independently and examined the quality of the twenty studies performed. In their study, out of the twenty studies, except one all other studies were successful in showing that mass media is effective. Although there was a lack of information and accessible primary research, this form of communication has a very important role in the use of health care interventions. Hence, they conclude that mass media is an important tool in creating an impact of health care and health issues to the masses. However, the other research article by Redman lists the disadvantages as well as advantages of mass media on health care development.¹⁷ The effects of programs of mass media to modify the use of safety restraint among adults or the behavior of cardiovascular risk have been examined. The author states that this research of effect of mass media has been failed a number of times since mass media does not affect the health behavior to large extent. Hence the article concludes that mass media causes a very less or no impact on health and further studies and research is required on this topic.

The research study conducted by Griffiths W, Knutson AL, it is stated that mass media has a very important role in public health.⁸ The mass media are applied to all the stages of public health so that a few effects occur such as new behavior in health is created, right information regarding health is being learned and change in the attitude and values of health. Then the authors also emphasize the point that the mass media creates a right impact on a specific people rather than all the people. They have reviewed a lot of studies and concludes that mass media plays an important role in public health awareness. Cavill N, Adrian B added that the role of mass media campaigns in influencing the physical activities of the masses.⁴ The campaigns reach a wide range of the population in fewer costs. They have reviewed over 15 campaigns with a special emphasis on the physical activities. It showed that 70% of the people were aware of the campaign and its benefit in increasing the health-related awareness. The ways to bring a long-lasting impact on people due to campaigns have been studied.

Noar SM emphasized the role of mass media campaigns to promote health related topics and health issues.¹⁴ His studies on the impact of these campaigns studied over past 10 years and the article conclude that a proper, well-arranged health mass media campaign can create an impact on not only knowledge about health but also fields like behavior, attitude, beliefs impacting a wide range of people due to the vast reach of mass media. Similarly, the other article by Randolph starts with a study of the planning of campaigns and the improvements in the campaigns.¹⁶ The factors that the planners of campaigns should consider during campaign planning are identified. The studies of 5 years on health-related campaigns and their applications

and uses in the future campaigns are showcased. It focuses on how campaigns are conducted and then their success or failure reasons. Hence the article is of utmost importance to the researchers and professionals of public health to indicate marketing of health through campaigns of mass media.

However, Benelli E analyzed the recent experiences of mass media role in medical treatment by the case study on supply in Italy.¹ A new treatment that was unproven was focused by media, initially claimed to be a good treatment for various types of cancers. The Italian media changes over the past 20 years have been focused. This brings us to a conclusion that the mass media has a strategic role in spreading exact and accurate information on health issues. DeJong W concentrate on the adverse effects of alcohol consumption and how mass media helps to increase this alcohol side-effects awareness among college students.⁵ They suggest that information campaigns on high-risk of alcohol consumption are helpful in bringing awareness among students to a high extent. The author categorizes the mass media campaigns on student drinking into 3: advocacy, information and marketing of social norms. It is suggested that a proper and systematic procedure should be followed for organizing campaigns in order to create impact on the students. The campaigns in the future should integrate the 3 types namely advocacy, information and marketing of social norms for creating support from the colleges, institutions and organizations to eliminate the consumption of alcohol by the students.

A clear distinction between the mass and targeted audience is done by Flora and the methods used by mass media to promote the mass and the target audiences have been surveyed.⁶ The audience is categorized into 4: communities, organizations, individuals and networks and then discusses the mass media role at these 4 levels of audiences. The goals of promoting health in this article include both the outputs of the intermediate process and ultimate interest. Hence the article concludes that mass media is of utmost importance to all the four levels of audiences. The impact of campaigns on mass media in the context of health risk behaviors like addiction to drugs, alcohol and tobacco, physical intercourse related behaviors, cancer-related topics, heart-related problems, blood and organ donation is analyzed thoroughly. The survey indicates that mass media have a huge impact in bringing a positive behavior on the masses or prevent a negative behavior with respect to health. The various features of mass media that bring this positive change in the behavior of masses are discussed in the article. The article also proposes their own methodology to improve in this field of mass media impact on health such as large and funded investments in order to get more exposure to the media campaigns and messages of the media.¹⁹

Findings

The research and review articles mentioned above in the Literature review state that mass media play a very important role in health care and health issues except for a few articles which denote less impact of mass media on health issues. Many authors have conducted a survey on the role of mass media and conclude that almost 70% of the people have positive impact of mass media related to health issues. Mass media brings a positive change in the behavior of people towards the health issues or changes the negative behavior related to health concerns.

The role of mass media on students shows that the students get various addictions like alcohol, drugs in their college life and hence proper exposure to the adverse effects of these addictions via mass media can lead to change in the behavior of students. Despite having less information and research in the role of mass media, it proves to be a very successful field in eradicating health issues and alarming people about various health related concerns. Hence the role of mass media in health issues is of utmost importance and it plays a vital role in development of health care.

Summary

Mass media has an important role in helping the communicators of health to increase their reach to the audience where a fact needs to be understood that although such type of directly communicating channels needs a lot of resources, they are able to reach only a few people in the undeveloped areas. A necessary link between the important national health information and the residents of rural areas is provided by the mass media.

Radio, television, newspapers and various other forms of mass media are able to persuade a large number of people for adopting new behaviors and create a positive attitude in them towards health care and solutions to the health problems. The mass media not only inform the people about the new spreading diseases but also keeps them updated. The most renowned form of mass media is the audio-visual medium, television, which creates an impact on a large number of people. Television is an important communicating force to deliver health care services' messages via its programs on health and the advertisements. The advertising of public health services is a powerful tool to present many health services and problems faced by the count.

Conclusion

The mass media campaigns on health are a very beneficial tool in promoting the health services at national as well as rural level. It is better to stop arguing on the fact that is mass media an effective channel in promoting health

since it is obviously a very important tool that reaches a large number of population and delivers a vast amount of knowledge about health issues and health care. The knowledge and awareness about various serious health issues like HIV, cancer, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, etc., can be promoted via mass media which will help a lot of people to get aware of such health problems and diseases. Hence the methods discussed in this article and the reviews of the research in the past prove that mass media has a vital role in health issues and health care.

References

- Benelli E. The role of the media in steering public opinion on health care issues. *Health policy* 2003; 63: 179-86.
- Car J. eHealth in the future of medications management: personalization, monitoring and adherence. *BMC Medicine* 2017; 15: 73.
- Catalán-Matamoros D. The role of mass media communication in public health. *Health Management-Different Approaches and Solutions*, 2011.
- Cavill N, Adrian B. Changing the way people think about health-enhancing physical activity: do mass media campaigns have a role? *Journal of Sports Sciences* 2004; 22: 771-790.
- DeJong W. The role of mass media campaigns in reducing high-risk drinking among college students. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol, Supplement* 2003; 14: 182-192.
- Flora June A, Maibach EW, Nathan M. The role of media across four levels of health promotion intervention. *Annual Review of Public Health* 1989; 10: 181-201.
- Free C. The effectiveness of M-health technologies for improving health and health services: a systematic review protocol. *BMC Research Notes* 2010; 3: 250.
- Griffiths W, Knutson AL. The role of mass media in public health. *American Journal of Public Health and the Nations Health* 1960; 50: 515-23.
- Grilli R, Craig R, Silvia M. Mass media interventions: effects on health services utilization. *The Cochrane Library*, 2002.
- Naveena N. Importance of mass media in communicating health messages: an analysis. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 2015; 20: 36-41.
- Kelly MP. *Economic appraisal of public health interventions*. Health Development Agency, London. 2005.
- Khandpur RS. *Telemedicine Technology and Applications (M-Health, Telehealth and E-Health)*. PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd., 2017.
- Meier CA, Fitzgerald MC, Smith JM. eHealth: extending, enhancing, and evolving health care. *Annual Review of Biomedical Engineering* 2013; 15: 359-82.
- Noar SM. A 10-year retrospective of research in health mass media campaigns: Where do we go from here? *Journal of Health Communication* 2006; 11: 21-42.
- Perednia DA, Ace A. Telemedicine technology and clinical applications. *Jama* 1995; 273: 483-8.
- Randolph W, Kasisomayajula V. Lessons learned from public health mass media campaigns: marketing health in a crowded media world. *Annu. Rev. Public Health* 2004; 25: 419-37.
- Redman S, Spencer EA, Sanson-Fisher RW. The role of mass media in changing health-related behaviour: a critical appraisal of two models. *Health Promotion International* 1990; 5: 85-101.
- Strasburger Victor C, Jordan AB, Ed Donnerstein. Health effects of media on children and adolescents. *Pediatrics* 2010; 125: 756-67.
- Wakefield Melanie A, Barbara L, Hornik RC. Use of mass media campaigns to change health behaviour. *The Lancet* 2010; 376: 1261-71.

Date of Submission: 2017-9-13

Date of Acceptance: 2017-12-11