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## **Role of Media in Health: A study with Special Reference of Rural Himachal Pradesh**

*Vijay Shree<sup>1</sup>, Prof. (Dr.) Ramesh Chauhan<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, School of Media and Mass communication, APG Shimla university

<sup>2</sup>Dean Journalism, APG Shimla University

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### **ABSTRACT:**

Mass media plays a very significant role in distributing health information and increasing awareness about health education. Media not only spread awareness, but also inform and educate people over a period of time. This eventually helps in the change of attitude & behaviour of audience for accomplishing better health. In other words, media is influential in booming behavioural changes in knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes about health and healthy behaviours. Health education is an important constituent of public health & health promotion. Health education aims for positively influencing the health behaviour of people by informing & instructing common populace about health & hygiene and other health related issues. Across the globe public health promotion activities focus on health education to influence health behaviour of the target audiences. Being an important social organization mass media has wide reach and access that can influence the public by improving their health education level. The present study takes into account the role of mass media in health awareness and health education.

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Key Words: Public Health, Health promotion, Health Education, Mass Media, Health Information

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Health education is an interdisciplinary social science that draws from many disciplines i.e. medical sciences, psychology, education, environment, biology, and other disciplines, with an objective of providing information and instructing individuals, groups, and communities to achieve & maintain better health. Health has always been a cause of concern for human beings. Nothing is equivalent to sound health. That's why it is said that health is such a treasure which does not need any coffer and is away from theft. While a healthy person can accomplish any deeds, an unwell person remains bed-ridden and becomes a constant cause of worries and burden on his family. Most of the prayers at religious places are attributed to sound health only. Even when two persons happen to meet together, their first question is about health because our health brings longevities and ill health drives us towardspangs, agony and sufferings. Consciousness about health is not a new phenomenon It has been in vogue since man started living a civilized life. Before that man was at the mercy of beasts and other reptiles. He used to hide himself in caves or climb trees to ensure his security. But ignorance about health and hygiene has often resulted in shorter life span of human beings. With the advent of civilization, man made an attempt to become conscious about his surroundings and himself.

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### **HEALTH**

According to World Health Organisation (1948) health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. Health is not just the absence of disease or infirmity. This definition of health speaks about the absence of disease or infirmity. While health is not just the absence of illness or infirmity In fact, defining health isn't an easy task. Health is a combination of many facets of one's personality. Sharma & Gupta (2016) mention that health is much more than the biomedical health. Health includes physical health, mental health, spiritual health, family health, social health & well-being etc. Health is a multidimensional concept; Health is not just physical state of health as it includes mental, physical, social, psychological, and economic health etc. Health includes wellbeing also. The Ottawa Charter of WHO tried to include this multidimensional concept of health. World Health Organisation (1986) Ottawa Charter stressed that education, food, shelter, income, peace, a stable ecosystem; sustainable resources, equity, and social justice are necessary inputs for health.

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### **HEALTH EDUCATION**

World Health Organisation (1986) health promotion Glossary defines Health education as consciously constructed opportunities for learning involving some form of communication techniques designed to improve health literacy, that includes improving knowledge, and developing life skills, which are conducive to individual and community health.

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## **PUBLIC HEALTH**

World Health Organisation's (1986) health promotion glossary defines that Public health is the science and art of promoting health among common public. It aims at the prevention of disease, and prolonging the life of people. This prevention of disease and prolongment of life is done through the well-coordinated and organised efforts of different segments of society.

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## **HEALTH PROMOTION**

Health Promotion is a key component of Public Health. In fact, the very basic structure of public health is based on health promotion. Health promotion aims at promoting the health of each and every individual, in a family, which is part of a community in any given populations. Thus health promotion tries to transform the health of individuals, families, and communities.

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## **HEALTH EDUCATION & MASS MEDIA**

WHO (1986) health promotion glossary explains Health education as the combinations of learning experiences which are designed to help individuals and communities have improve control over their health. This improvement in control is done by increasing their knowledge about the surrounding or influencing their attitudes towards health.

This health promotion glossary further explains health education is not limited to the dissemination of health-related information but also inspiring and motivating the populace, to take necessary action to improve health, WHO's health promotion glossary also emphasizes on the communication of information concerning the underlying social, economic and environmental conditions impacting on health, as well as individual risk factors and risk behaviours, and use of the health care system.

Health promotion glossary further explains that main objective of health education is not only to increase knowledge about personal health behaviour but also to develop skills demonstrating the political feasibility and organizational possibilities of various forms of action to address social, economic and environmental determinants of health.

Going forward by the WHO definition of health education we find that WHO definition emphasizes on the

1. Dissemination of health-related information
2. Inspiring and motivating the population for
3. Taking necessary action (behaviour change)
4. Improve health
5. Maintain healthy behaviour / lifestyle

Motivating a large number of people simultaneously is a herculean task. That is done at several levels. Health education aims to empower individuals, groups, organizations, and communities, by imparting health information and addressing health issues with a view to positively influence their health behaviour. Gupta & Sharma (2015) suggest that mass media impart necessary health information in our daily life enabling common people to take appropriate decision about their different aspects of their lives especially about health. Evidences suggest that mass Media play a central role in informing & education people about important events / changes happening around the world. Especially because media connect the audience to the world beyond their immediate reach. In other words, media bring the world closer to the audience and increase their reach and access. Mass media is one such institution which has the ability and potential to influence an individual's life in a big way. We see that media has ability to influence, our behaviour, our culture and even it can affect our thinking and attitudes towards different issues in our daily life (Gupta, 2006).

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## **HEALTH PROMOTION VS HEALTH EDUCATION**

Health promotion and health education are two different concepts of public health. Unfortunately over the years they have been used interchangeably. Whitehead (2008) says health promotion and health education are different concepts. While health promotion emphasizes on environmental and socio-economic determinants and participatory involvements; health education focuses on empowering individuals and communities by providing information and teaching techniques to achieve better health.

Health education is a vital component of health promotion. Mass media play crucial role in disseminating health information and increasing awareness about health education. Here we can see that both health promotion and health education have common goals of achieving better health for people.

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## **MEDIA IS INTEGRAL PART OF OUR DAILY LIFE**

In today's technology driven world we are surrounded by technology, and use different technological gadgets in our day-to-day life. When we wake up in the morning, many people like to get latest news so they switch on to the TV or radio while sipping the morning tea/coffee. Even in washroom while performing the call of nature or taking bath, many of us like to use mobile / tablet to get connected with friends/ relatives / business clients around the world. Besides, during commuting to office we use mobile / other gadgets to reply to messages to our SNW connections / emails. After reaching office / business we use different gadgets e.g. desktop/laptop/ other instruments to perform our daily work. In evening when we reach back home we use TV / Radio for entertainment or other purposes.

Biagi (2003) found that in today's technology driven world, an individual who uses these gadgets spends more time with these gadgets than the time he spends in sleeping or for his work or business. More over advertising we see / listen / read on different media channels affect our habits / attitudes / thinking / beliefs related to many different issues related to our daily life. Health is an issue among many of them, which can be achieved through a constructive use of entertainment information advertising.

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## **RESEARCH PROBLEM**

On the basis of the research work, it has been observed that Media plays a vital role in the Health Awareness, not only in the urban areas but also in rural areas. The literacy rate of Himachal Pradesh is better than other States of India with all three arms of media looking upon urban as well as the rural areas of Himachal Pradesh but the reach has some limitations in the generating awareness for health-related issues in the rural society. Furthermore, reaching the far rural and geographically backbreaking destinations of Himachal has always proved to be a challenging task for the researchers. The rural population, due to lack of awareness, alienate researchers and thus hesitate in sharing the issues they face. The current study lays its emphasis on the present situation of Role of Media in Health Awareness of the state.

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## **HYPOTHESIS**

The rural population of Himachal Pradesh, with time is getting more and more aware as most of the people have at least a smart phone on their palms which is helping them getting enriched with the awareness of their health, related issues and the steps government has been taking for their wellbeing. Unlike the earlier times of print and broadcast media dominating the scenario,

Social media-new media has empowered the users in a way that was absent in the past. Now, people can re-watch and re-visit –as per their convenience—any of the information as it is available on too many platforms of new media. Social media has played a role on the forefront educating masses –rural and urban—about health programs and schemes such as vaccination drives, fading away the misconception's rumors of vaccines.

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## **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:**

- To discuss the pros cons and lacunae in the promotion of health issues Role of media in promotion of health and dissemination of health awareness in rural part of the state.
- To evaluate the impact of social media on general health awareness among the people.
- Focusing on identifying the level of authenticity and credibility of information supplied by media as perceived by audience.

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## **HEALTH VERSES COMMON PEOPLE:**

Mass media has changed the face of the common people in all walks of life and has inoculated the common people by giving them immense health awareness. Mass media which includes radio, television, newspaper, magazines and cinema are heavy tools available to the innovator or promoter of new ideas.

These mass channels of information can quickly and effectively spread awareness and introduce behavioral changes. Health information which is constantly being disseminated to the public is still in its rudimentary form in India and is oriented towards adult. Even when this information is available, there is disregard for balance in both selecting the information to be disseminated. Today, youngsters are languishing under bad practices such as smoking, alcoholism, drug abuse, and other practices that were socially and morally alien to us. But no attention is being paid by the media to combat with such issues which have created alarming proportions. Besides these issues that concern the children's well-being such as hygiene, nutrition, dental and eye care, first-aid other aspects are not adequately covered in the media. Without the whole hearted backing of the media in conveying health messages to the greatest number of people.

A desirable procedure in health education and communication programme planning can

begin by studying the knowledge, opinions, attitudes, values and pattern of health behavior of the children. Further, while designing health programmes it is essential to consider media factors such as media distribution, reach and accessibility to the children. It is not sufficient to make sure that children receive communication on health messages and have properly understood their contents. Health communication research is still in its infancy in India and has received little attention from communication scholars. Hence, an attempt is made to unravel the role of media in disseminating health information.

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## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For present research study, a survey has been conducted used the tool of questionnaire. A total of one hundred sixty samples have been taken from three villages and rural people dwelling in these villages having their Arts, Science and Commerce stream.

### (a) Research Design:

For present research study design, conducted survey on the rural areas of Himachal Pradesh in which three villages from Shimla District, Mandi District and Kangra District of Himachal Pradesh have been taken to know the role of computer literacy in rural areas of Himachal Pradesh as these populated villages depict the status of computer literacy in the whole areas of Himachal Pradesh. For this study, the media reports on computer facilities, internet facilities in the rural areas have been studied.

### (b) Population and Sample:

For population and sampling of the present research study, the age groups 16 to 45 of male & females of rural areas from three villages of big districts of Himachal Pradesh roped in the research study to observe and know the role of computer literacy status in the rural areas of Himachal Pradesh. From these three villages with population of three thousand of the age group of 16 to 45 is taken 160 people under research survey.

### (c) Tools and Techniques:

For present research study, various tools and techniques have been applied like questionnaire, interviews, and various media reports and studied on educational institutions in the rural areas regarding computer education.

### (d) Primary Research and Secondary Research Data:

For Primary Research Data Collection, interview method, interviews, survey method have been applied, and for Secondary Research Data Collection, media reports on rural development, schools in rural areas, usage of media, mobile phones, online/digital status of rural people, rural people's sense and awareness on operating computer for Health awareness and health education.

### (e) Analysis of Data:

After collecting research data, the comparative analysis has been inducted in the research to know the real role of Media in spreading Health consciousness and Health education in rural areas of Himachal Pradesh.

### (f) Testing of Variables:

For testing and analysis, the research collected data, independent variables and dependent variables have been tested which prove the role of Media in Health Awareness in rural areas of Himachal Pradesh.

### (g) Validity:

Earlier, the research study in the context of role of Media in Health Awareness in rural areas of Himachal Pradesh was conducted under smoothly including cities and towns of Himachal Pradesh but exact data of role of Media in Health Awareness in rural areas of Himachal Pradesh could not appear in front of the policy makers. However, the role of Media increased in rural areas of Himachal Pradesh after a few years with the growing rate common literacy in Himachal Pradesh. Role of Media cognizance in fact changes life-style of all but in rural areas there is digital divide as there is still dearth of computer-based information and communication technology and internet conveniences in contrast to urban areas of Himachal and other States of India.

### (h) Reliability:

After testing the research data and re-test-data, it is found that role of Media influences the psychology, Health consciousness, Sanitation, perceptions of humans, life-style, communication way regarding Health issues, behaviors and change in working in each field of life and humans are adopting the Media and new information technology to meet their problems. People are well efficient about their health-related issues.

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## RESULTS/FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

The results of the present research study showed that majority of rural masses of Himachal Pradesh use Media Platforms for one to three hours a day through newspaper, television, Radio and explore online information about Health and Hygiene. The findings indicate that 85% of rural respondents of Himachal Pradesh are well aware about media technologies and they get the appropriate information through Media tools for their well-being.

The study found that male and female graduates from rural background are more innovative in new media applications and they use computer, smart mobile phones for information about Health education, Health Programmes and poor people in rural areas have mobile phones but their access to smart communication is at zero but they get themselves updated through Radio and television. The rural youths are very keen that they are well aware about digital applications, social media, using different apps for health Information. And rural youths also teach their elders and parents about the importance of new media applications. For blind/disabled persons in rural areas even urban areas radio, audio communication has played a very significant role as there are so many health programmes broadcasted through radio. This is the best medium of health information and health education for them.

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## SUMMARY

Mass media has an important role in helping the communicators of health to increase their reach to the audience. Radio is one of the great medium of information for the Rural areas. A link between the important national health information and the rural areas is possible due to the mass media. Radio, television, newspapers and various other forms of mass media are able to influence a large number towards health care, health education 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 new media, television, which creates an impact on a large number of people. In Rural Area Television and Radio is an important tool of communication. It delivers health care services' messages via its programs on health and through advertisements.

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## CONCLUSION:

The present study concluded that majority of the rural masses of Himachal Pradesh use, Traditional way Radio, Television and as well as new media to get health information. In the Beginning with radio and magazines and now including the internet, mass media have greatly increased access to information. However, all these forms of mass media must be evaluated to ensure accuracy, stability, and depth of analysis. Mass media plays an enormously essential role in the spreading of health awareness among the masses. It is also helpful in promoting hygiene habits, facilitating exchange of ideas in the area of health research and make people more aware about their well-being. Media has a tremendous impact on everyday lives of People. Health education, combined with health improvement approaches have a great impact, in prevention and reducing the incidence of emerging diseases.

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