



Mass media and awareness of lifestyle diseases in India (2019–2025): A review study

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Abstract

The rising number of lifestyle diseases is a major public health concern in the modern era. Mass media; including print, electronic and digital media play an important role in dissemination of information and spreading awareness about various issues related to health. The research paper attempts to review existing research related to the role of mass media in creating awareness about lifestyle diseases in India during the period 2019–2025. The existing literature about the role of various media (print, electronic & digital media) in spreading awareness about lifestyle diseases between 2019 and 2025 in Indian context has been reviewed in this paper.

Keywords: Mass media, lifestyle diseases, health awareness, health communication, public health, media

Introduction

It is an alarming fact that the rise in the lifestyle diseases is a major public health concern in the current era. Rapid urbanization, changing food habits, sedentary lifestyles, work-related stress, and reduced physical activity have significantly contributed to the increasing prevalence of diseases such as diabetes, obesity, hypertension, and cardiovascular disorders. Lifestyle diseases are primarily based on everyday lifestyle pattern and individual behavior, unlike communicable diseases.

Lifestyle diseases are ailments that are primarily based on the day to day habits of people. Habits that detract people from activity and push them towards a sedentary routine can cause a number of health issues that can lead to chronic non-communicable diseases that can have near life-threatening consequences. (Tabish, 2017) ^[1]

In the recent years, India has witnessed a substantial rise in non-communicable diseases, affecting both urban and semi-urban populations and creating serious social, economic, and healthcare challenges. A research paper about lifestyle diseases states: “Over the past century, India has transitioned from an era dominated by disease burden attributed to infectious diseases, childhood and maternal deaths to an era of lifestyle disease-related chronic diseases – Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs). In 2017^[1], India witnessed 61.8 per cent deaths due to non-communicable diseases.” (Mathur & Mascarenhas, 2019) ^[2] In this context, the steps towards awareness and preventive measures particularly on lifestyle diseases have become extremely important in current scenario.

Mass media, which consists of print media, electronic media and digital media; plays a significant role of dissemination of information and spreading awareness about various issues related to health. They act as a tool of spreading awareness about various diseases including both communicable and non-communicable diseases. From educating populations on preventive care to promoting health-seeking behaviours, mass media plays a multifaceted role in shaping how individuals perceive and respond to health challenges. (Champati & Udgata, 2025) ^[3]

In the modern era, with the advent of internet, digital media has become extremely popular among the public, especially young adults and middle age groups. During the recent

years, from 2019 to 2025 ^[17], people are increasingly depending on online platforms and social media for information about health. Social media, as a popular and innovative communication and education tool, offers opportunities to modify health behaviour. (Ghahramani *et al.*, 2022) ^[4] However, other traditional media such as print, radio and television still hold their importance for health communication purposes.

The present study attempts to review existing research related to the role of mass media in creating awareness about lifestyle diseases in India during the period 2019–2025 ^[3, 11]. The study seeks to understand how different forms of media contribute to public awareness, health education, and preventive communication regarding lifestyle-related health problems in the Indian context.

Objectives

The paper aims to examine the role of mass media in awareness of lifestyle diseases in India by studying the existing literature on the subject including research papers, journal articles, book chapters, and other academic material, with a focus on the duration from 2019 to 2025^[2, 17]. The objectives are as below:

1. To examine the role of mass media in creating awareness about lifestyle diseases and promoting preventive healthcare practices in India during 2019–2025^[3, 11].
2. To review and analyse existing studies related to mass media, health communication, and lifestyle disease awareness in the Indian context.

Methodology

The research paper is based on a qualitative review of secondary data. Relevant literature was collected from scholarly databases and online academic repositories, including Google Scholar and PubMed, Academia, ResearchGate, as well as peer-reviewed journals and published articles. The literature about the role of mass media (print, electronic & digital) in spreading awareness about various lifestyle diseases in Indian context, published between 2019 and 2025 ^[2, 7], was analyzed.

The study focuses on the literature published between 2019 and 2025^[17], with an emphasis on the Indian context. Relevant studies related to print media, television, radio, digital media, and health communication have been reviewed and analysed to identify major trends, themes, and patterns associated with awareness regarding lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, obesity, hypertension, and cardiovascular disorders in India.

Discussion

Mass media plays a vital role in spreading health awareness. In today's world, the mass media plays an important role, and it can provide a unified platform for all public health communication, comprehensive healthcare education, and guidelines. (Venkat & Janakiram, 2021)^[5] Various types of research are conducted so far in the context of mass media and lifestyle diseases. The literature is analyzed in the context of various types of media namely print media, electronic media, and digital media in this paper.

1. Print media and lifestyle disease awareness

Indian print media industry consists of national and regional newspapers, magazines, journals, tabloids, and so on. Several studies are conducted in the context of print media and lifestyle diseases such as hypertension, obesity, diabetes, and so on.

A research paper titled 'Exploring Coverage of Non-communicable Diseases in Newspapers' adopts content analysis of two newspapers along with in-depth interviews of physicians and journalists, to explore the coverage of non-communicable diseases in newspapers. They concluded that the overall space occupied by health news and articles on NCDs in daily newspapers was less. The authors further stated that the interviews with the physicians revealed that the overall space and coverage for NCDs were insufficient, and the presence of NCD related advertisements was misleading. (Kotian et al, 2022)^[8]

In another study titled 'Frames of Mental Illness in an Indian Daily Newspaper', a qualitative framing analysis of a sample of stories on mental illness in The Times of India was conducted. The author stated that two predominant frames were identified: people with mental illness are a danger to themselves and others and mental illness can be caused and treated in various ways. (Subramanian, 2019)^[6]

Another study titled 'Earned Print and Digital Media in Advancing Hypertension Management Services in Punjab, India: A Descriptive Study' systematically analyzes and describes the outreach of print and online-earned media generated during a "hypertension control project" undertaken in Punjab. The authors concluded: "In the absence of financial support for paid media, earned media was strategically used to promote awareness about hypertension control." (Upadhyay et al, 2025)^[7]

The overall number of studies conducted between 2019 and 2025^[17], specifically about the coverage of lifestyle diseases in the Indian print media is less. It indicates that more research is required in the domain of non-communicable diseases and print media in India in current context.

2. Electronic media: Radio & Television

The electronic media such as Radio and Television has played a significant role in spreading awareness about various issues including health, since their emergence. The

analysis of the available literature in this context is as below:

2.1 Radio

In the recent years, community radio has emerged as a platform of creating awareness and educating the listeners about various issues. Some studies are conducted about the role of community radio in health awareness. Though there are no studies focusing directly on non-communicable diseases and radio, there are researches focusing on radio and its role in general health awareness, nutrition, mental health and behavior change.

A research paper published in 2025 analyses the impact of JECRC 90.8 FM's health awareness programs and its effectiveness on college students in its broadcasting areas, through survey and interview methods. The authors have stated based on the study: "According to the high trust ratings, community radio could be used more widely for public health campaigns. The popularity of mental health programs indicates an opportunity to increase the amount of time, which is spent to discuss these subjects." (Sharma *et al*, 2025)^[9]

Another study analyses the role of Radio Dhimsa, a community radio in tribal-rich Korapur district in Odisha, in bringing changes in health seeking behavior, through content analysis of radio programs and interviews with the community members. The authors have concluded that the radio Dhimsa's impact extends beyond mere broadcasting, it catalysis positive change in community healthcare practices, especially within underserved tribal regions. (Bhakta *et al*, 2025)^[10]

2.2 Television

Television, since its emergence, has been playing a significant role in creating awareness about various health measures. However, television viewing has also been criticized for rising cases of obesity, and other lifestyle diseases. A study titled "Association of frequency of television watching with overweight and obesity among women of reproductive age in India: Evidence from a nationally representative study" aims to determine the association between the frequency of television watching and overweight and obesity among women of reproductive age (15–49 years) in India. The study concludes that the likelihood of being overweight and obese significantly increased with the frequency of watching television; likely due to physical inactivity during leisure time. The authors have recommended that public health promotion programs in India should raise awareness regarding the harmful effects of the sedentary lifestyle associated with watching television. (Das Gupta, 2019)^[11]

Television has also served as a medium of spreading awareness about tobacco usage and cancer via advertising and TV programs. A study titled 'Cancer awareness and attitude towards cancer screening in India: A narrative review' stated that television, friends, relatives and health personnel were the common source of information for cancer-related information. (Sahu et al, 2020)^[12] It indicates that television serves as one of the significant medium in spreading information about cancer.

Some studies also criticize television for causing unhealthy behavioral changes among the viewers. A study concluded that unhealthy food marketing through popular children's

television channels is widely occurring in Asia and is a clear breach of child rights. (Karupaiah, 2024) ^[13]

3. Digital media

In recent years, digital media and internet-based platforms have gained significant popularity. It is observed that studies conducted in the domain of media and health awareness increasingly focus on digital media rather than traditional forms of media. Consequently, the number of studies on digital media and health is notably higher compared to other media within the timeframe of this study.

There are many researches and reviews formulated on the basis of existing literature about digital media and non-communicable diseases. A study stated that recent advancements in digital health interventions, including mHealth, eHealth, and telemedicine, have facilitated patient-centered care for NCDs. (Hossain *et al*, 2019) ^[14]

Another research paper titled 'Non-communicable diseases, digital education and considerations for the Indian context – a scoping review' collates the existing evidence on the use of digital education of health professionals within NCD topics. The study concludes that digital education for Health professionals related to NCDs has proven to be beneficial for learners, and simultaneously, offers an effective way to bypass geographical barriers. (Karan *et al*, 2024) ^[15]

A research article proposed a conceptual model developed using three widely known models of communication for implementing media strategy for hypertension and cardiovascular diseases in Punjab. The article stated: "One of the important components of our strategy was the vast use of social media for dissemination of information. One of the key distinguishing features of social media is that it allows for a large number of users to converse directly without intermediaries at a very low cost." (Goel *et al*, 2021)

A research assesses the effectiveness of digital media content on the behavior domain of diabetic patients with two hundred type-2 diabetes respondents from the rural and urban areas of the Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh. The author concluded that educating the patients by using modern digital media content formats like text, voice messages, and animated modules in local language enhanced the knowledge, skill, and attitude of the respondents towards the disease for effective selfmanagement. (Devi, 2020) ^[16]

Some studies have also criticized digital media for promoting unhealthy behaviors leading to a rise in obesity and mental health issues. A study investigated the influence of social media on eating behaviors and obesity risk among young adults in Aizawl, Mizoram. The study stated in the conclusion that the social media influencers, junk food marketing, and misinformation contribute substantially to unhealthy dietary practices. This digital influence poses a critical public health challenge, particularly in urban settings and among educated populations. (Khangte *et al*, 2025) ^[3]

Another study titled 'Tobacco Imagery in Indian Over-the-Top (OTT) Media and Its Compliance with Existing Tobacco Laws: A Content Analysis' stated that depiction of tobacco imagery in OTT exclusive programmes is common in India. (Pulicheria & Kodali, 2023) ^[18] Some studies also found negative impacts of social media usage on mental health of users. A study concluded on the basis of survey of adolescents that excessive use of social media is correlated with increased stress, anxiety, and depression. (Taddi *et al*

2024) ^[20] Another study, based on a survey stated in the conclusion: "The study provides compelling evidence linking excessive screen time and social media use with adverse mental health outcomes such as depression symptoms, anxiety symptoms, stress, and low self-esteem among Indian adolescents and young adults." (Saleem *et al*, 2024) ^[20]

Research Gaps

The review of existing literature indicates that while there is a growing body of research on mass media and health awareness in India, significant gaps remain in the context of lifestyle diseases. Most studies are either medium-specific or disease-specific, with limited comprehensive research integrating different forms of media and their collective impact on lifestyle disease awareness. Additionally, there is comparatively less research focusing on traditional media such as print and radio, as the majority of studies emphasize digital media during the timeframe of 2019 to 2025^[7, 14].

Conclusion

This review study synthesizes existing literature to examine the role of mass media in creating awareness about lifestyle diseases in India during 2019–2025^[3, 11]. The findings indicate that while both traditional and digital media contribute to disseminating health information, recent research shows a stronger emphasis on digital platforms, reflecting changing media consumption patterns.

Overall, the study highlights that mass media plays a significant role in shaping public awareness of lifestyle diseases; however, the effectiveness of such communication varies across media types and audience groups. The review underscores the need for more balanced and inclusive research that considers diverse media channels and population segments to better understand and enhance health awareness outcomes.

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