

# A Study Of Coverage Of Asmita Yojana In Selected Newspapers And The Role Of Mass Media In Its Implementation

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## Abstract:

According to WHO (2020) media use and advocacy are crucial to messages disseminating health promotion. Governments launch welfare schemes regularly and often with a lot of pomp which are directed towards various sections of people. Asmita Yojana is a scheme launched statewide in Maharashtra in the year 2018 which provides subsidized sanitary napkins to girls and women in the state. Jernigan and Wright (1996) assert that it is crucial to know the media advocacy done to further the scheme and the media coverage as well. The study is two pronged as it is concerned with a content analysis of newspaper coverage of Asmita Yojana in Maharashtra. Wherein five newspapers were studied for this purpose which includes news reports, articles, editorials, cartoons and opinion pieces. In the second part a quantitative research was conducted to ascertain the role of mass media in the implementation of the said scheme. A survey was conducted among the sample beneficiaries of the scheme to determine the same.

Keywords: Asmita Yojana, Health communication, mass media, government schemes, content analysis, survey method.

## Introduction:

Media coverage can significantly influence all stakeholders such as implementers and beneficiaries on several issues. This study is concerned with the media coverage of a particular scheme directed at young women and girls in the state of Maharashtra, 'Asmita Yojana' launched in March

2018. Chapman (2015) opines that the mass media have a larger role to play in spreading messages than simply 'agenda setting'. Both print and electronic media can be used strategically to raise awareness, inform and change attitudes. The official website of Maharashtra State Rural Livelihood Mission, the nodal agency for the implementation of the scheme states that the Asmita Yojana was floated on 8th March 2018 to mark the International Women's Day. This scheme offers sanitary napkins to young women and girls in rural areas subsidized rates. All the schoolgirls are also issued an 'ASMITA Card' which they can use to buy the sanitary napkins. The process is operationalized through an ASMITA app to increase convenience and transparency. The digitization has greatly helped the school girls who are aged between 11 to 19 years. The App offers a platform for Self-Help Groups which can purchase napkins in huge quantities and pay for the same through an e-wallet. Citizens can also contribute to this cause by becoming a sponsor of the scheme. The study will undertake a content analysis of select national newspapers of India regarding the said scheme. The World Health Organization defines media advocacy as an instrument to bring about policy change and help populations to use the considerable power of media influence. The researcher has also undertaken a survey of the sample population who are the targeted beneficiaries of the scheme.

#### **Review of literature:**

The review of literature included the study of health communication, existing research done on the importance of role of media in health messaging, the challenges therein, the use of mass media in spreading awareness related to the various government schemes. A study done on the awareness levels regarding government schemes women workers involved in the beedi making industry in Karnataka India in 2002 revealed that there is hardly any use of mass media done to raise awareness or inform them regarding the various such schemes. An assessment done on a few welfare schemes across India also highlights the similar use of lack of media advocacy. There have been several health insurance related schemes launched in India, a few studies conducted on them through 2010-2020 reveal that much greater information campaigns through the mass media is required in order for them to truly benefit the masses.

Additionally, the specific health schemes, which also carry financial incentives, launched for women and girls have low levels of awareness among them and media is hardly used for their advocacy. Similar studies have been conducted on schemes related to maternal health also conclude there is poor utilization of such schemes and that push through media is pertinent in order for the schemes to reach the people. Nutbeam (2000) accentuates the role played the mass media in this regard and asserts that they constitute the most effective strategy in delivering health messages. Kreps (2005) further concludes that apart from informing people of the schemes, disparities in health can also be effectively checked. Noar (2012) opines that more primary research must be conducted in the area of communicating health through mass media. Rice and Atkin (2012) illustrate that the purpose of health communication informational campaigns is to make people aware, disseminate knowledge and also cause behavioral change, the implementers must launch well designed set of media messages through various vehicles. Schiavo (2013) articulates that the unless proactive media advocacy is pursued, the objectives of the health communication cannot be met. Schlafer et al (2016) define communication as an all-encompassing activity covering verbal, nonverbal, and written exchange of messages. They emphasize the importance of interpersonal communication and opine that both delivery and receiving of messages is equally important and thus the health workers and social workers must receive adequate training in effective communication skills which would them optimize the process of communication. Stoto et al (2005) emphasize the importance of communication as being not only vertical but a horizontal and participatory process which must involve the beneficiaries or the targeted populations as well. Lin et al (2014) conclude that media strategy must be designed in advance taking into consideration all inequalities and disparities and develop campaigns which reach the populations or social groups. New media also are a media tool but Korda and Itani (2013) caution about the use of social media when they infer that it is an inexpensive, broad reaching powerful tool but there is also an information overload there. Practitioners and officials need to ascertain that it is able to retain both intention and retention. Programs and policies based on theory can be measured and evaluated but researchers need to develop similar

matrices for the social media. Jacobson et al (2012) state that the framing of media messages can greatly influence the public's understanding of information. The process by which the news media chooses to highlight specific parts of an event or an issue in order to accentuate it, is referred to as framing. It is also sometime known as a schema which means the central or defining theme or factor of any issue. Thus by way of framing and scheme, the news media's coverage of an event or issue significantly influences the people's interpretation and comprehension of it. It lends people a perspective which may be economic, political or social. This is also known as salience transfer and this can be studied through the content analysis.

#### **Research objectives:**

The two research objectives of the study are:

1. To find out the media coverage of Asmita Yojana Maharashtra, India in the selected newspapers.
2. To examine the role of mass media in the implementation of the Asmita Yojana.

#### **Research Methodology:**

In the content analysis part, the first step was to determine the key words related to the coverage. The next step was to locate the mass media form to carry out the content analysis. There are various print and electronic mass media channels which carry the articles. Five national newspapers were taken for the same considering their wide circulation. Only the newspapers which carried a minimum of ten reports were considered. In the next step, the news reports, opinion pieces, editorials, letters to the editor and cartoons were taken for analysis. The keywords and phrases were identified which indicated the positive or negative coverage of the scheme. In the second part, interviews were conducted with the implementing agency officials and the public relations personnel of the concerned ministry regarding the media strategy deployed for awareness campaigns. Quantitative study was carried out wherein a structured survey questionnaire was administered to the select sample of the population which are 11-19-year-old girl students of Zilla Parishad schools in the Palghar district of Maharashtra. The subsequent data analysis resulted in attaining the objective of the study.

#### **Data analysis and findings:**

1. Content analysis:

**Table 1: Newspapers considered for analysis**

Newspapers	Content
The Hindu, The Indian Express, Lokmat, The Hindustan Times, Mid-day	News reports, editorials, opinions, letters to the editor, cartoons

**Table 2: Key words and phrases related to coverage**

Positive	Negative
Welcome initiative, empower women, subsidized napkins sign of good things, beneficial to women, blessing to women	Substandard napkins, nothing but a lot of hot air, poor quality of napkins, no awareness regarding the scheme, hardly any availing of benefit, empty promises

**Table 3: Summary of analysis**

The Hindu (7 contents )	2 positive 5 negative
The Hindustan Times (5 contents)	3 positive 2 negative
The Indian Express (8 contents)	3 positive 5 negative
Lokmat (5 contents)	5 positive
Mid-day (5 contents)	3 positive 2 negative
Total- 30	Positive- 16 Negative- 14

The content analysis shows that the coverage was mixed in the newspapers selected. The Yojana received almost equal positive and negative coverage.

2. The quantitative study to examine the role of mass media in implementation of the Asmita Yojana: Around 500 student beneficiaries were randomly chosen as respondents of the survey questionnaire. Following are the findings:

1. All 100% respondents were aware of Asmita Yojana.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	509	100.0	100.0	100.0

2. 87.6% of the students had heard about the scheme via

other media/new media such as YouTube or word of mouth.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	63	12.4	12.4	12.4
	Yes	446	87.6	87.6	100.0
	Total	509	100.0	100.0	

3. 76.0% respondents were somewhat aware of the process of this scheme.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Completely unaware	41	8.1	8.1	8.1
	Somewhat aware	387	76.0	76.0	84.1
	No opinion	3	.6	.6	84.7
	Mostly aware	24	4.7	4.7	89.4
	Completely aware	54	10.6	10.6	100.0
	Total	509	100.0	100.0	

4. 71.9% student respondents expressed that the information given in the various media channels is somewhat enough.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not enough at all	20	3.9	3.9	3.9
	Somewhat enough	366	71.9	71.9	75.8
	No opinion	7	1.4	1.4	77.2
	Mostly enough	38	7.5	7.5	84.7
	All the information is given	78	15.3	15.3	100.0
	Total	509	100.0	100.0	

5. 98.0% of the students would like to get this information through social workers or health workers.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	10	2.0	2.0	2.0
	Yes	499	98.0	98.0	100.0
	Total	509	100.0	100.0	

6. 58.3% of the students responded that they always avail the benefit of the scheme and utilize the subsidized product.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
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Valid	Always	297	58.3	58.3	58.3
	Often	117	23.0	23.0	81.3
	Can't say	27	5.3	5.3	86.6
	Sometimes	46	9.0	9.0	95.7
	Never	22	4.3	4.3	100.0
	Total	509	100.0	100.0	

### Conclusion and Discussion:

The study throws some interesting insights into the newspaper coverage of the scheme as well as the role mass media plays in awareness and implementation of the scheme. There has been mixed coverage of the scheme in the selected newspapers. Also, the media advocacy is not sufficient in the given scheme as there has not been enough press conferences, press releases and reports in the news media. Regarding the role of mass media, it was found that all the selected respondents were aware about the scheme and most of them had heard it through word of mouth or the internet, specifically, the YouTube videos. As Edgerton et al (2016) illustrate that social media can be greatly leveraged in health messaging and the practitioners must use all platforms optimally to their advantage and utilize its reach and the influencers. More than 75% of the respondents felt that the information given in the media is somewhat enough. Interestingly, a huge majority, 98% respondents preferred to get this kind of information through interpersonal communication channels such as health workers or social workers. The study shows that the mass media are an effective and efficient way of delivering messages to the targeted groups.

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