



ISSN: 0976-3031

Available Online at <http://www.recentscientific.com>

CODEN: IJRSFP (USA)

*International Journal of Recent Scientific Research*  
Vol. 9, Issue, 10(C), pp. 29218-29221, October 2018

**International Journal of  
Recent Scientific  
Research**

DOI: 10.24327/IJRSR

## Research Article

# HEALTH AND HEALTH RELATED NEWS COVERAGE OF ENGLISH DAILY NEWSPAPER THE HINDU, CHENNAI EDITION-QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE APPROACH OF CONTENT ANALYSIS

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24327/ijrsr.2018.0910.2815>

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Received 06<sup>th</sup> July, 2018

Received in revised form 14<sup>th</sup>

August, 2018

Accepted 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 2018

Published online 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2018

#### Key Words:

Content analysis, Space, Health management, Theme wise classification, Newspaper

### ABSTRACT

To analyze the health and its related news coverage of National daily- The Hindu of Chennai city edition during the month of January 2017 to the month of March. The articles were marked and coded under the six main themes such as health management, diseases, immunization, treatment, nutrition and mental health. The main category in this analysis is the news based on different health related topics and the first sub-category on immunization for diseases and the second sub-category on different diseases. Health management related news had maximum number of news items published i.e. 39.7% which ranked first. Second and third coverage being given to disease and nutrition and the last ranked being mental health. In immunization theme Zikka virus, Rubella vaccine, BCG vaccine, Polio drop, Malaria vaccines were discussed within three months period. In disease prevalence sixteen different news items were covered and the maximum number of news was about the non-communicable disease mainly diabetics. The findings of the study suggest that due importance need to be given to topics such as awareness on disease and its prevention, nutrition and mental health which play an important role in preventing diseases or promoting need to be given due importance. The preference of the readers in reading the front-page information is the usual habit, health related news need to be covered in front page so as to increase the information reach to the common man.

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## INTRODUCTION

The newspaper has been part of daily life for several centuries to be informed about the importance of event occurring around the world. Over the decades newspaper have undergone many changes mainly great advancement in printing technology by automation, these development lead to the boom in this newspaper industry, several newspaper editions are published to cover the national, local and international issues. In recent years the entire newspaper content is available online. In India twenty different vernacular and English language news paper are on circulation. Global daily circulation of newspaper was 519 million having a readership of 2.3 billion in 2010. This was 20% more than the internet users worldwide. In the age of internet, still newspapers represent 8% of total media consumption time (World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers, c2015).

As a daily newspaper sold in large number the Hindu newspaper has 1, 458, 398 copies circulation. As literacy rate increased the circulation of newspaper also increased. As per

audit Bureau of circulation, next to Hindi language newspaper English language circulation occupies second position (<http://www.auditbureau.org>). The Hindu has registered a 20% growth in circulation over six months period in 2015. Though there was slight decrease in 2017, and it is second largest circulated English daily, initially it was started as a weekly newspaper (1878), later in 1889 it was changed into daily newspaper (<https://www.thehindu.com/aboutus>). The print communication field is cost effective; readers can spend time as per their convenience and comfort. Even it can be shared by many people the elaborate report can provide better understanding and clarity about the news and its related issues even one can recheck the content if it is essential. The purpose of this content analysis is to study systematically the health-related coverage in newspaper.

According to Cole content analysis is a method of analyzing written, verbal or visual communication messages (Cole OF.L, 1988). Krippendorff a pioneer in content analysis methodology explained that content analysis is a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena, and it will

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help the researcher to take out the valid inferences from data to their context with the purpose of providing knowledge, new insights, a representation of facts and a practical guide to action (Newbery park, 1980)

A health content analysis is a useful tool to know how media delivers health messages and the way in which population receives this health information in terms of the amount of space related to health issues and formats of this space as articles, editorials, letters, advertisements, visual references, graphics, etc. (Roberts R, 2004). Several researchers had used content analysis to study health related research areas. Singh Archana studied the role of mass communication in prevention and control of AIDS using content analysis of Indian newspapers (Singh R Archana, 2007). Newspaper are also seen as an important tool to disseminate health information to the population. The news media are quite important in furnishing the public with health information. In line with the agenda-setting theory, Bryant and Thompson are of the view that “news coverage of health matters takes on considerable significance, in that it has the potential to shape the impressions of average citizens and powerful policy makers alike” (Bryant J, Thompson S, 2002). In the words of Brown and Walsh-Childers, news coverage of health “tends to ascribe the power to control individual’s health to medical experts using high-technology equipment” Brown JD, (Walsh-Childers K, 1994). Studies have also shown that the news media tend to increase their coverage of health concerns as they affect the society’s mainstream and/or the greatest number of people in their audience. There is an extreme scarcity of scientific studies evaluating the coverage and content of health-related articles in national as well as regional newspapers. However, limited evidence has suggested that prime focus was on health and nutrition message, health communication, health news, etc. (Maheswar M, Rao DR, 2012, Maheswar M, Rao D, 2011, Kuppuswamy S et al 2011, Gupta A, Sniha AK, 2010].

The content analysis helps to study the health-related messages in newspaper. Also, the researcher will be able to get an insight into involvement of the media within the health communications. So as per the report available with audit bureau of circulation, as well as The Hindu web page the Hindu newspaper with circulation of 1,458,398 in January -June 2016 which is considered to be a national daily was selected as the newspaper for content analysis. And from the month January 2017 to march 2017 Hindu newspaper was reviewed on health and health related news, information and articles were marked then it was coded under the themes such as health management, diseases, immunization, treatment, nutrition and mental health. To estimate the information coverage the news column length and width was measured and it was converted into area in Sq.centimeter. Based on the area coverage, number of news item and the supportive images rank was given to each theme to comprehend the importance of news and social incidence.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

To Study the health and its related content coverage of the English national daily - The Hindu. The Hindu newspaper was reviewed from January 1<sup>st</sup> to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2017 and the related information was read and marked under the categorized theme and the number of news item were counted by quantitative

method and the content was thoroughly read to classify the theme, and the area allotted for each item was measured in centimeter to calculate the area coverage of the content on various themes, as well as the rank was given on the basis of area coverage, number of news item and supportive image. For ninety days The Hindu English national daily of Chennai edition were read and all the health-related news were marked and classified under different themes, number of news appeared under each theme were classified according to the content then the area length and width was measured on Sq.centimeter to estimate the area coverage of news item.

## RESULT

**Table 1** Theme wise classification of the news on health-related topics

Sl.no	Health themes	No of items published (%)	No of images displaying (%)	Space allotted on each theme (cm <sup>2</sup> )	Ranking
1	Health management	56 (39.7)	24 (35.8)	13040.48	1
2	Immunisation	11 (7.8)	7 (10.4)	2972.9	4
3	Treatment	14 (9.9)	6 (9.0)	2910.9	5
4	Disease	32 (22.7)	11 (16.4)	6824.31	2
5	Nutrition	18 (12.8)	14 (20.9)	5997	3
6	Mental health	10 (7.1)	5 (7.5)	2179.06	6
	Total	141	67		

Within the noted time six different themes related to health was published in the selected newspaper 39.7% of news items discussed about health management. To support the health management content 35.8% images was displayed to support the news and 13040.48 sq.cm spaces allotted particular theme thus health management theme was ranked first. The theme disease stands second rank and the space allotted to the content was 6824.31sq.cm and third theme nutrition takes the third rank with 5997 sq.cm allotted to the news item. The theme immunization and the treatment ranking on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> rank respectively the last rank news was about mental health. In this topic national health policy issue, national and state health program and implementation, new policies and limitation in health system management were included.

**Table 2** Theme wise classification on Immunization for different diseases

Sl.no	Name of disease	No of news items (%)	Total Space allotment(cm <sup>2</sup> )
1	Zika virus	2 (18.2)	702.4
2	Rubella vaccine (M R Rubella measles	5 (45.5)	1226.48
3	BCG-antigen	1 (9.1)	335
4	Polio dry, Injectable polio	2 (18.2)	517.7
5	Malaria Vaccine	1 (9.1)	191.25
	Total	11	

The immunization about Zikka virus, Rubella vaccine,BCG vaccine, Polio drop, Malaria vaccine were discussed within three months period. More number of news items was published on rubella vaccine and 1226 sq.cm space was allotted related to rubella vaccine, next to rubella vaccine the news items related to Zikka virus vaccine was published and news items about other immunization were scanty.

In disease prevalence sixteen different news items were covered and the maximum number of news was about the non-

communicable disease mainly about diabetics and the space allotted to that was 1875 sq.cm followed by H1N1 virus 21 % of the news was discussed and space allotted to this was 874.27 sq.cm. The news about HIV AIDS also received due importance similarly the H1N1 virus related incidents from different districts of Tamil Nadu were reported.

**Table 3** Theme wise classification on news about different disease

Sl.No	Name of disease	No of news items	%	Total Space allotment(cm <sup>2</sup> )
1	Epilepsy	1	3.1	93
2	TB	3	9.4	570.96
3	H1N1 VIRUS	7	21.9	874.27
4	HIV-AIDS	3	9.4	629.09
5	Litchi fruit toxin	1	3.1	195.5
6	Water contamination and health problem	1	3.1	288.4
7	Malaria control	1	3.1	296.78
8	Diabetes	5	15.6	1875.9
9	Air pollution	2	6.3	402.85
10	Health problem during pregnancy	1	3.1	124.95
11	Swine flu	1	3.1	137.5
12	Reproductive health issues	1	3.1	399
13	Respiratory infections	1	3.1	114.3
14	Cancer	1	3.1	119.31
15	Autism	1	3.1	86
16	Climate and disease	1	3.1	294
	Zika virus	1	3.1	322.5
	Total	32		6824.31

## DISCUSSION

The content analysis of The Hindu newspaper has shown light into various facts about the overall patterns of the news covered by the newspaper on health and its related contents. The main category in this analysis is on different health related topics and the first sub category is based on immunization for different diseases and the second sub category being theme based on different diseases. Whereas in a content analysis conducted in Canada they had classified the content based on 10 main themes such as Government health care coverage, barriers in providing services, health care policy reform, legal issues, public health initiative, health related advocacy etc. and it was analyzed based on number of articles published in the newspaper (Christen Rachul and Timothy Caulfield, 2015) whereas in our study we had analyzed it based on space allotted to each theme and it was ranked accordingly. Also, the analysis reveals that the theme Health Management had maximum news coverage with 56 news items which shows the proactiveness of the government towards health programmes and its implementation. The theme disease had second highest coverage with 32 news items which could be due to the increase in incidence of diseases such as dengue and zikra virus during that period. And due importance was given to nutrition information and healthy food intake. Though risk behaviour incidence have been increasing in the society which could be due to poor mental health but very less importance was given to mental health related information in terms of news coverage. The news budgetary allocation for health sector had increased from 38,343 crores to 47,352 crores which shows the

importance given to health by the Government of India. Similarly, action plan to eliminate kala-azar, filariasis, leprosy, measles and tuberculosis by 2020-2025 is the greatest target to be achieved in health sector.

On nutrition theme vitamin and mineral rich food item, traditional tribal diet, food distribution among the family members, app to determine the healthy food intake, small millet based nutritious recipe and about malnutrition were covered in the newspaper. Even though under nutrition theme all these aspects were covered nutrition ranks only third in terms of news coverage which is a matter of concern as knowledge on nutrient rich food intake will help in preventing diseases. Hence topics such as nutrition and mental health need to be given more news coverage and regular news on these themes will help in making the people much more aware about its importance in life.

## CONCLUSION

From this quantitative and quantitative method of content analysis it can be concluded that though as a whole if we consider there has been importance given to health-related news on newspapers while when the news was segregated into themes it could be found that Health Management ranked top covering all those policy aspects related to health and the government strategy on it. Also, a study conducted in Bangalore which analyzed five English newspaper found that out of 9125 editions scanned only 2.91% published the information about oral health which shows that least attention given to oral health information (Anuradha S et al, 2014). On the other hand, if news which could help in improving the knowledge of common man so as to prevent diseases or maintaining the well-being is considered like awareness on diseases and its prevention and mental health themes were not given due importance. Also, the theme nutrition which plays a very important role in preventing diseases or promoting healthy life need to be given more attention. Even the appearance of health-related news in the front pages which majority of the readers thoroughly go through will play a role in improving the reach of the health-related news to the common man. And even the government media relation officers need to give due importance in regularly promoting health news coverage in print media.

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**How to cite this article:**

Vijayapushpam T et al., 2018, Health And Health Related News Coverage of English Daily Newspaper The Hindu, Chennai Edition-Qualitative And Quantitative Approach of Content Analysis. *Int J Recent Sci Res.* 9(10), pp. 29218-29221.  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24327/ijrsr.2018.0910.2815>

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