

**MASS MEDIA EXPOSURE AND AWARENESS ABOUT FAMILY PLANNING AND
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AMONG CHILD BEARING WOMEN IN SILCHAR
TOWN OF ASSAM**

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Abstract

India was the first sovereign nation to have implemented family planning programme way back in 1952 but paradoxically even with the expansion and reach of mass media, India is the second most populous country in the world today. The success story of any developing country is based on the overall development of its women folk. Their overall growth not only uplifts a particular woman but influences the overall development of her family as a whole. These virtues, ideas and thoughts still remain in its theoretical phase to the women of India. Time and again an opposite picture has been revealed of our women folk. Illiteracy, poverty, malnutrition, health hazards, male dominance and customs have grasped the root level of the mindset of majority of Indian women folk. Educational programmes through mass media pertaining to reproductive health can bring in the much required changes to curb the menaces prevailing in our society in this regard. Mass Media today has widened the mental horizon of the people by providing sound knowledge about reproductive health care especially family planning, female infanticide, female foeticide, family size, antenatal care, postnatal care etc. In fact, it has the ability to bring positive changes for health consciousness and encouraging an adoption of healthful lifestyles among the people.

Thus, the proposed study is aimed to assess the role of mass media exposure of women in urban areas in generating the awareness about family planning and reproductive health in Silchar town of Assam.

Statement of the Problem

Mass media made people aware of choice of contraceptives and other reproductive services but paradoxically Each year, 1/2 million women worldwide die from pregnancy complications and 100,000 from unsafe abortions. Women still bear the greatest burden of reproductive health problems. They also face risks in preventing unwanted pregnancy, suffer the complications of unsafe abortion, bear most of the burden of contraception, and are more exposed to contracting and suffering the complications of reproductive tract infections, particularly sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). 529,000 women dies from pregnancy-related causes each year worldwide and more than 10 million women a year suffer severe or long-lasting illnesses or disabilities which indicates the pitiable condition of women worldwide with respect to health care.

Reliable information sources are an important constituent of any democratic society (Haber mass, 2006). India being a democratic country believes in the empowerment of individual and media facilitates it through communication and ensures freedom of expression and freedom of conscience. In democracy mass media forms an integral part. It is regarded as indispensable in regard to the social welfare of people.

Mass media and its varied forms have influenced human life in the present century. They have primarily provided sound and authentic information and entertainment to people across the globe. Through the various arms of media people can make responsible and informed choice rather than act out of ignorance or misconception. In spite of the efforts taken up by mass media, women still experiences adverse affects like

female infanticide, female foeticide, atrocities against women, domestic violence and the overall dominance of the male population over the fairer sex are major evils prevailing in our society.

Thomson Reuters conducted a global poll wherein it was found that India is the "fourth most dangerous country" in the world for women and the worst among the G20 countries. Maternal mortality rate for women in India is very high and as per the survey it is the second highest in the world. According to UNDP Human Development Report (1997), 88% of pregnant women (age 15-49) were found to be suffering from anemia. Most women deliver with help from women in the family who often lack the skills and resources to save the mother's life if it is in danger. As per record only 42% of births are supervised by professionals.

Women in urban areas are more exposed to modern world than their rural counterparts due to their literacy, employment and their lifestyle factors. They face flexible type of social structure as compared to rural women. Moreover, mass media exposure is relatively high than their counterparts. Thus, the proposed study is aimed to assess the Socio-economic background of the respondent, analyze the mass media habit and the relationship between mass media exposure and awareness about reproductive health care of women in Silchar.

Objective of the study

1. To know the socio-economic background of the respondents.
2. To access the media habit of the respondents.
3. To find out the source of information about family planning and reproductive health.
4. To explore the relationship between mass media exposure and level of awareness regarding family planning and reproductive health care.

Methodology

The researcher has employed Survey based research. The Schedule and Questionnaire have been used to collect the information from the respondents. The Researcher has used Purposive Sampling Technique for the selection of the ward of Silchar. The researcher has drawn the sample from the voter list.

Sample Size

The researcher has carried out research on 100 child bearing women of the selected ward.

The Study Area

The proposed study is located in ward no.23 of Silchar town in Assam. The rationale of selecting this ward is that it is one of the developed and commercialized ward of Silchar in terms of medical, transportation, banking and recreational facilities. Moreover the familiarity with the people and place makes the researcher to specify the ward. The Researcher wanted to know whether Mass media has played any role in promoting awareness about family planning and reproductive health care.

Operational Definition of the Terms

1. **Mass Media Exposure of Women:** Mass media exposure of Women refers in terms of their exposure to the print media i.e. newspaper and magazines etc, access to audio-visual media i.e. television, the access to audio medium i.e. radio and multimedia such as internet.
2. **Family Planning:** Family planning is the planning of when to have children and the use of birth control and other techniques to implement such plans. Other techniques commonly used include sexuality education prevention and management of sexually transmitted infections, pre-conception counseling and management, and infertility management.

3. Reproductive Health: Reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of reproductive disease or infirmity. Reproductive health deals with the reproductive processes, functions and system at all stages of life.

Findings

Social Background of the Respondent.

The findings reveals that among 100 respondents, 1% of the respondents belongs to 18-19 age groups, 14% respondents belongs to 20-29 age groups, 32% respondents belongs to 30-39 age groups, 29% respondents belongs to 40-49 age groups and 24% of the respondents belongs to above 50 age group. Among the respondents, majority of 91% of the respondents were Hindu followed by Muslim with 9 percent. Majority of 88% of the respondents have Bengali language as their mother tongue followed by Hindi speaking with 8 % and nepali speaking with 4%. In respect of languages known, majority of 79% knows three languages (English, Bengali and Hindi) followed by 20 % who know 2 languages (Hindi and Bengali) while 1% respondents knows only one language (Bengali). In term of class status, 66% respondents belong to middle class followed by 22% respondents belong to lower middle class while 12% respondents belong to low class .

The findings reveals that among 100 respondents regarding the educational qualification, 62% respondents studied up to graduation followed by 21% respondents who studied upto high school while 17% studied up to post graduation.. In terms of Occupation of the respondents 87% were housewives while 13% were workers. Among them 5 persons were govt employee, 3 persons were businesswomen and 5 persons are involved in private sector.

Regarding the family structure of the respondents, 93% of the families were in the nuclear structure where as 7% of the families were in the joint structure. Among respondents, 79% have less than or 2 children while 21% have more than 2 children.

In terms of respondents residing in Assam state, 100% are residing in Assam since childhood. Among 100 respondents, majority of 94% are of Barak Valley origin followed by 6 respondents are of Guwahati origin. Regarding type of ownership of the house, majority of 78% have their own house while the rest are residing in rented homes. In terms of source of drinking water, among 100 respondents, majority of 98% uses supply water while 2% uses underground water. Regarding fuel used for cooking, 98% cooks food by LPG cylinder while 2% use both LPG cylinder and kerosene stove. In terms of saving habit of the respondent with the banks, majority of 99% have bank accounts whereas 1% do not have. In terms of saving habit of the respondent with the post office, majority of 85% don't have saving account whereas 15% have. With respect to the respondent's preferred choice of transportation, 66% travels by own vehicle while remaining 18% prefer public transport like auto rickshaw and 16% prefer cycle rickshaw.

Mass Media Exposure

Traditional Media

The findings reveal that among 100 respondents, majority of 85 % haven't attended street plays whereas the rest have seen. Regarding puppet show, majority of 88% have not attended puppet shows whereas the rest have attended the same. Among 100 respondents, majority 95% haven't attended meetings whereas 5% respondents have attended. Among 100 respondents, 98% haven't attended speeches while 2% have

attended. Among 100 respondents, majority of 93% have not attended campaigns whereas 7% have attended.

Regarding street play, among 15% respondents, none of them have seen any theme on family planning and reproductive health. Regarding puppet show who has attended, neither have seen any theme on family planning nor have they seen any theme on reproductive health care. Among 5% who have attended meeting, none have seen any theme on family planning and reproductive health care. Among 2% who have attended speeches, none have come across any theme on family planning and reproductive health care. Among 7% who have attended campaign, 6 have come across the theme on family planning and 3 have come across the theme on reproductive health care. Among 100 respondents, 91% have seen banner/ hoarding/ wall paintings based on family planning and women reproductive health care.

Among 91 respondents, 54 have seen hoardings and 43 have seen wall painting based on family planning programmes. Among the 91 respondents, 45 have seen wall painting and 43 have seen hoarding on reproductive health care.

Newspaper

Among 100 respondents, 96% subscribe and read newspapers whereas 4% do not. Among 96 respondents who do, majority of 76 respondents read Dainik, Jugasankha followed by 64 respondent reads telegraph, 12 respondents read Samayik Prasanga and 24 respondents reads Sentinel.

Among 96 respondents, 86 respondents read headlines, 34 respondents read health related matters, 12 reads first page news, 37 reads current affairs, 32 respondents read zodiac sign while 46 of the respondents read advertisement.

Among those 96 respondents, 92 reads daily followed by 4 respondents who reads in 2-3 days. Among 96 respondents, 80 respondents reads for half an hour, 4 reads for one hour and 12 reads for less than half an hour. Among 96 respondents, 51 have read news/articles/ads / stories/ features related to family planning and 12 have read news/articles/ads / stories/features related to reproductive health care . #Among 51 respondents, 34 have seen ads followed by 20 who have seen news, 6 have seen features based on family planning theme whereas among 12 respondents, 7 have seen ads followed by 5 who have seen feature based on reproductive health care.

Magazine

Among 100 respondents, 78% respondents read magazines whereas 22% do not. Among 78 respondents, 38 respondents read magazine for less than half an hour and 40 respondents read for more than half an hour. Among 78 respondents, none have read about news columns/articles/ads / stories/features on reproductive health care and family planning theme in the magazine.

Computer

Among 100 respondents, 37 have access to computers whereas 63 do not. Among 37 respondent, 32 uses internet. Among 32 respondents, 3 uses it at cyber café, 22 surfs the internet at their home and 6 surf at office room. Among 32 respondents, 16 does internet for educational purpose, 6 for official purpose and 22 respondents do for entertainment purpose. Among 32 respondents, 4 have seen email/information on reproductive health care. # Among 4 respondents, 4 have seen information on reproductive health care. Among 32 respondents, none have seen email/information on family planning.

Television

Among 100 respondents, 99 respondents have TV set at home whereas 1 doesn't have TV. Among 100 respondents, 99 watch TV at their home, 1 watch TV at neighbors' place. In terms of type of connection, 84 uses cable connection whereas 15 have Dish connections. In terms of frequency of watching TV in a week, 81 respondents watch programme daily followed by 19 respondents watch programmes for 5-6 days. In terms of time spent on watching TV in a day, 29 respondents watch TV for 1-2 hrs followed by 48 respondents who watch for 3-4 hrs and 23 respondents watches more than 3-4 hours. In terms of preferred time of watching, 12 watch TV in the night time followed by 64 who watch TV in afternoon, 21 watch TV in evening time and 3 watches uncertainly. Regarding the type of programmes preferred by the respondents, 89 respondents prefer serials followed by Dance programme with 45, Music programme with 43, films with 32 respondents, Health related programme with 27, children related programme with 35 respondents. Among 100 respondents, 24 respondents have seen the interviews/ads/documentaries/talk shows/discussions/serials/films based on reproductive health care and 69 have seen the interviews/ads/documentaries/talk shows/discussions/serials/films based on family planning.

Among 24 respondents, 20 have seen advertisement followed by interviews with 6 respondents and talk shows with 2 respondents based on reproductive health care. Among 69 respondents, 42 have seen advertisement followed by discussion with 23 respondents, 19 respondents have seen talk show, documentary with 3 respondents based on the theme of family planning.

Radio

Among 100 respondents, 2 listen to radio whereas 98 don't listen. Among those who listen to radio, 2 respondents listen to radio occasionally. The type of programmes listened on the radio are film songs and sports commentary with 2 respondents. Among 2 respondents, none have listened about news stories / ads on women reproductive health and family planning in the radio.

* The researcher has put forward more than 1 option wherever the percentage has gone higher than 100%.

Source of Information about family planning and reproductive health

The finding reveals that 100% has heard about family planning. Among 100 respondents, 100% have heard about oral pill. Among 100 respondents, 45 respondents have not heard about vasectomy, whereas 55% have heard about it. Among 100 respondents, 59% have heard about laparoscopic sterilization, whereas 41% haven't heard. Among 100 respondents, 49% have heard about IUD whereas 51% haven't. Among 100 respondents, 75% have heard about copper T where as 25% haven't. Among 100 respondents, 91% haven't heard about Diaphragm where as 9% heard about it.

Among 100 respondents, 77 have heard about urinary tract infection whereas 23 respondents have not. Among 100 respondents, majority (87) of the respondent have heard of antenatal care. Among 100 respondents, 62% have heard about post natal care whereas 38% have not. Among 100 respondents, 76% of respondent have heard about sexually transmitted disease whereas 24% have not heard.

Among 100 respondents who heard about oral pill, The major source of information is Mass media with 51 respondents followed by 37 from neighbors, 14 from spouse, 9 from doctor, 8 from friends. Among 55 respondents who heard about Vasectomy, the major source of information is Doctor with 44 respondents followed by 32 respondents from Doctor and 12 respondents from mass media. Among 59 respondents who knows about Laparoscopic sterilisation , the major source of information is 34 respondents from family members, 17 from relative, 12 from Doctor, 3 from Mass media. Among 49 respondents who know

about IUD, the major source of information is 36 respondents heard from Mass media, 13 from family members, and 7 from Doctor. Among 75 respondents who know about Copper T, the major source of information is 42 from Mass media, 18 from family members, 15 from spouse and 2 from Doctor. Among 9 respondents who know about Diaphragm, the major source of information is Doctor with 7 respondents followed by 4 respondents from relative.

#Among 77 respondents who have heard about reproductive tract infections, the major source of information is Mass media with 33 followed by conversation with friends with 23 respondents, 18 from relatives, 15 from Doctor. Among the respondents who came to know about ante-natal care (87), the major source of information is Mass media with 71 followed by 44 respondents from family members, 27 from relative, 15 from Doctor, 7 from friends, 3 from spouse. Among the respondents who have heard about post-natal care(62),the major source of information is Mass media with 54 respondents followed by 16 respondents who have heard from family members, 13 from Doctor,12 from neighbors. Among 76 respondents who know about the correct name of sexually transmitted diseases, the major source of information is Mass media with 52 respondents followed by 30 respondents who have heard from friends, and 12 from spouse.

#The researcher has put forward more than 1 option wherever the percentage has gone higher than 100%.

Relationship between Mass Media Exposure and Awareness about Family Planning and Reproductive Health

Majority of the respondents (93%) thinks that Mass media has helped in promoting awareness about family planning and reproductive health related issues.

#Among 100 respondent, Mass media helps in creating awareness about themes of enhancement in education of female child with 85 respondent followed by choice of contraceptive and family planning with 84 respondents, health and child care with 67 respondents, increase in marriage age of girl child with 61 respondents, sexually transmitted diseases with 64 respondents, antenatal care with 60, postnatal care with 47 and Urinary tract infection with 33 respondents.

Among the respondents, majority of 85 respondents have benefited from these programmes for the development of women's health/empowerment whereas 15 have not.

#The researcher has put forward more than 1 option wherever the percentage has gone higher than 100%.

Conclusion

The aim of the present study is to know the social background of the respondents. The pattern of mass media exposure of the respondents. It is an attempt to explore the relationship between mass media exposure and awareness about family planning and reproductive health care among child bearing women in Silchar town of Assam.

It is revealed from the findings that majority of the respondents belong to the age group of 30-39 years. Majority of the respondents are Bengali speaking and know three languages i.e. English, Bengali and Hindi. Majority are from middle class background and the education of majority of the respondents are graduates. They have bank accounts. Their consumption pattern is average and can afford to go to private clinics.

Regarding Mass media exposure of the respondents, it can be concluded that majority of the respondents subscribe to newspaper and prefer reading both English and Bengali newspaper. Among the subscribed newspapers, Bengali newspaper 'Dainik Jugashankha' is the most preferred. Regarding Television, majority of the respondents watches serials followed by Dance programme and music programmes. Regarding radio, majority of the respondents don't have radio set at home. Among the respondents who have radio sets at

home, minimal number of respondents listens to radio and prefers programmes of film songs and sports commentary. They listen to programmes with no fixed schedule. Regarding internet use, minimal numbers of the respondents are internet savvy. They use the internet for 1-2 hours for official purpose and social networking. We can conclude that television is the popular form of mass media among the rest.

The study also revealed that gradually traditional media is losing its importance. Among the respondents, majority of them have not attended puppet shows nor have meetings but majority of the respondents attended campaigns. Through the findings it has been noticed that none have attended meetings or puppet shows based on either family planning or reproductive health care. Majority of the respondents have not attended campaigns based on family planning programme and very few respondents have attended campaigns based on reproductive health care.

Regarding source of information about various family planning measures, Mass media played a prominent role in disseminating information about oral pill, IUD and Copper T. Regarding Vasectomy and Laparoscopic Sterilization; mass media played a minor role. Regarding source of information about Diaphragm, mass media has a very negligible role to play.

Regarding source of urinary tract infection, majority of the respondents have heard about from mass media. Regarding source of antenatal care and postnatal care, majority have heard from mass media. Regarding sexually transmitted diseases, majority of them have heard from the mass media.

Regarding mass media exposure and awareness about family planning and reproductive health care, it is revealed that majority of the respondents revealed that mass media helps in promoting awareness about family planning and reproductive health care. Among them, majority of the respondents are aware of the theme based on enhancement in education of the girl child followed by the theme on choice of contraceptive and family planning. The most preferred source of information about family planning and reproductive health care viz. antenatal care, post natal care, urinary tract infection and sexually transmitted diseases are television advertisements followed by TV interviews and then TV talk shows. It has also been noticed that the majority of the respondents have benefited from these programmes for the development of women's health/empowerment.

As the respondents are from an average economic background and having good academic background the majority of the respondents have two children. It can thus be concluded that the respondents have accepted the message of 'Hum do Hamare do'. As the majority of the respondents are Hindus it was not difficult for them to accept the family planning programmes. Majority of the respondents are health conscious about reproductive health related issues.

From the observational point of view the researcher can say that the Ministry of health and family welfare, Assam and various NGO's should organize frequent campaigns, seminars and discussions on such contemporary issues like family planning and reproductive health care. This would help the people to get more and more authentic information over the contemporary issues. The content and the programme quality of both the print and electronic media should be more informal regarding family planning and reproductive health related issues. Information on various schemes about education, general health and hygiene, reproductive health related issues, women welfare, women empowerment, family planning programmes should be broadcast more and more in all private channels as their viewership is higher.

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