

NEEDS OF ASSESSMENT OF JOURNALISTS INVOLVEMENT IN PROMOTING HEALTH AND LONGEVITY THROUGH PROPER DIET AND EXERCISE

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ABSTRACT

The role of journalists in promoting health and longevity through proper diet and exercise has become increasingly critical in addressing public health challenges. This study examines the needs assessment of journalists' involvement in promoting health and longevity through proper diet and exercise. The findings highlights the roles of journalists in promoting proper diet, exercise, health and longevity and the types of media used by journalists in promoting human health and longevity such as television and radio, print media, social media, websites and blogs and podcasts. The study concluded that assessing journalists' involvement in promoting health and longevity is crucial for ensuring the dissemination of accurate, evidence-based information. Journalists need continuous training to stay informed about advancements in nutrition, exercise, and longevity science. One of the recommendations made was that journalists should undergo continuous professional development programs focusing on the latest research in nutrition, exercise science, and longevity.

Keywords: Journalists Involvement, Health and Longevity Proper Diet and Exercise

Introduction`

It is indisputable that journalists have a significant impact on society behaviours and public opinion formation. Given their wide audience and the confidence people have in them for information on a variety of subjects, their role in promoting health and longevity is especially important. It is becoming more and more crucial to evaluate how journalists help spread knowledge about healthy eating and exercise as the globe deals with growing health issues including obesity, chronic illnesses, and sedentary lifestyles.

In addition to informing the public, journalists—particularly those with a focus on health communication—have the ability to influence behavioural changes that can greatly enhance health outcomes. Journalists frequently act as a bridge between the general public and scientific understanding by covering health-related issues. However,

their knowledge of lifespan, exercise science, and nutrition is crucial to the calibre and efficacy of their engagement in encouraging healthy behaviours. Journalists must possess accurate, evidence-based knowledge in order to convey health messages effectively, and this can only be accomplished via ongoing training and professional development.

Assessment is necessary for a number of reasons. First, it is crucial to assess how journalists might be taught to identify reliable sources and appropriately portray health information, given the growing incidence of health misinformation and the dissemination of sensationalised health claims in the media. Second, journalists must remain educated and modify their reporting techniques due to the quickly changing nature of health research, particularly in fields like physical fitness and nutrition. Third, because journalists work with a wide range of audiences, health messages need to be customised for different demographics. This can only be done if journalists have a thorough grasp of how various population groups react to health messages.

A thorough evaluation of journalists' participation in health promotion can provide information about their training requirements, the tools they need, and the best ways to engage audiences. It also makes it easier to see how journalists may help close the gap between scientific understanding and common behaviours, promoting longer lifespans and healthier lifestyles. For example, studies have demonstrated that media campaigns emphasising healthy habits like exercise and a balanced diet may lead to quantifiable gains in public health outcomes (Järvinen, 2020; Nagler et al., 2021). Media outlets and health organisations may work together to make sure that information disseminated through the media is accurate and effective by assessing the influence of journalists in this area.

Concept of Journalism

The profession of journalism is essential to society because it collects, evaluates, creates, and disseminates news and information to the public. Its main objective is to ensure that citizens are informed, which is necessary for a functioning democracy. Mencher (2018) argues that journalism maintains the balance of power in society by acting as a watchdog over the government and other powerful institutions and holding them accountable to the public, which ensures that people are aware of social, political, and economic issues and helps them make informed decisions in their daily lives.

Modern journalism is multifaceted, encompassing various platforms such as print, broadcast, and digital media. The rise of the internet has revolutionized journalism by providing instant access to news and information. With digital platforms, journalists now have the capacity to reach a broader audience, as well as engage in real-time reporting. McQuail (2020) notes that digital journalism has introduced new challenges, such as maintaining accuracy and credibility in an environment where misinformation can easily spread. Nevertheless, this digital shift has expanded the opportunities for citizen journalism, where non-professionals can contribute to the news-gathering process, further democratizing information dissemination.

A key function of journalism is to provide factual and objective information. Objectivity, as described by Kovach and Rosenstiel (2020), is the cornerstone of journalism ethics, requiring reporters to present information without personal bias. This principle ensures that the public receives impartial coverage, which is critical in

maintaining trust between the media and its audience. However, achieving complete objectivity is challenging, as every journalist brings their own perspectives to a story. Despite these challenges, journalism continues to uphold the ideal of delivering balanced, accurate news.

Concept of Human Health

The idea of human health is complex and includes social, mental, and physical well-being. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health as a condition of total well-being rather than only the absence of illness or disability (WHO, 2020). The intricacy of the variables that affect a person's health, such as lifestyle, environmental, and hereditary influences, is reflected in this holistic viewpoint. The necessity for integrated healthcare methods to enhance total well-being is emphasised by modern approaches to health, which acknowledge the connections between physical, mental, and social health (Anderson, 2019).

Physical health is the most apparent aspect of human health and involves the optimal functioning of the body and its systems. Regular physical activity, a balanced diet, and preventive medical care are essential for maintaining physical health. As noted by Lee et al. (2020), lifestyle choices such as exercise and nutrition have a profound impact on preventing chronic diseases like diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular conditions. Additionally, physical health is closely linked to other dimensions of health, where physical well-being can enhance mental and emotional stability, creating a positive feedback loop of health maintenance.

Mental health is another crucial dimension of human health, often considered equally important as physical health. Mental health refers to a state of emotional and psychological well-being in which an individual can cope with everyday stresses, work productively, and contribute to their community (Kessler et al., 2018). Mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder can significantly impair a person's quality of life, underscoring the importance of mental health interventions. The increasing prevalence of mental health issues globally has led to a shift in healthcare practices, emphasizing the integration of mental health services into primary healthcare systems (Thornicroft, 2021).

Social health involves an individual's ability to form and maintain meaningful interpersonal relationships and to function in social environments. Social connections are a key determinant of overall health, as isolation and poor social networks can lead to both mental and physical health decline (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2019). In fact, studies show that individuals with strong social relationships have better health outcomes, including lower risks of mortality and disease. Therefore, fostering social well-being through community engagement and supportive relationships is an important aspect of human health promotion.

Concept of Longevity

The ability to live noticeably longer than the average lifetime for a particular species is referred to as longevity. It is commonly thought to be the average lifetime that may be attained in ideal circumstances. Although life expectancy and lifetime are sometimes used interchangeably, they are not the same thing. The greatest number of

years that a person can possibly live is referred to as their lifespan. It stands for the maximum age that a species' individuals can attain under the best of circumstances.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines longevity as long life or long duration of existence. The term is also sometimes equated with life expectancy; the period of time for which something is expected to exist. The first meaning of longevity – the concept of a long life – refers to life considered in its length and unity; that is a life span. The average life span indicates the calculated average life time of an organism of a particular population. Maximum life span is the longest life span of such an organism that has been observed. In the second meaning of longevity, the aspect of continuity over time is highlighted; the perspective of a life course consists of specific moments and periods over the life time of something that can be measured. The longevity of either an object or an organism is measured as its age. Therefore, the concept of longevity is inseparable from the concepts of age and ageing (Hans-Jörg, 2015).

In contemporary health and wellness, longevity is understood as more than just living a long life - it encompasses living a long, healthy, and high-quality life. This shift in perspective has led to several focuses (King, 2024). Longevity is influenced by genetics, lifestyle, environment, and healthcare. Enhancing longevity and health span ensures a high quality of life. There are many ways that a person can support their longevity and health span including regularly exercising, eating well, and maintaining social connections. Each of these interventions can be invaluable in helping individuals to reach their important goal of living a more fulfilling and healthier life.

Concept of Proper Diet

A proper diet is essential for maintaining overall health and well-being. It refers to the consumption of a balanced variety of foods that provide the body with the necessary nutrients, vitamins, and minerals for optimal functioning. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020), a healthy diet protects against malnutrition and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Proper dietary habits are key to promoting growth, improving immune function, and supporting physical and mental health throughout life (Johnson & Smith, 2019).

The foundation of a proper diet is balance. A balanced diet consists of different food groups in appropriate proportions, ensuring that the body receives carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals in the right amounts. As noted by Lichtenstein et al. (2020), a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins promotes cardiovascular health, reduces inflammation, and supports healthy weight management. Proper dietary balance ensures that no nutrient is consumed excessively or insufficiently, both of which can lead to health problems.

Macronutrients—carbohydrates, proteins, and fats—are the primary components of a proper diet, providing the energy needed for bodily functions. Carbohydrates serve as the main energy source, while proteins are essential for tissue repair and muscle development. Fats, although often misunderstood, are vital for hormone production and brain function. According to Mozaffarian (2018), focusing on healthy fats, such as those found in nuts, seeds, and fish, rather than Trans fats and saturated fats, is crucial for maintaining heart health. Understanding the role of macronutrients in a proper diet enables individuals to make informed food choices that support long-term health.

Micronutrients, including vitamins and minerals, are equally important components of a proper diet. These nutrients are required in smaller amounts but play significant roles in bodily processes such as metabolism, bone health, and immune function (Rimm et al., 2019). For example, calcium and vitamin D are necessary for bone strength, while iron and vitamin C are important for oxygen transport and immune support, respectively. A proper diet that includes a wide range of fruits, vegetables, and fortified foods ensures adequate intake of these micronutrients, preventing deficiencies that can lead to various health issues.

The Concept of Exercise

Exercise refers to physical activity that is structured, repetitive, and purposeful, undertaken to improve or maintain physical fitness and overall health. It can take various forms, including aerobic activities like walking, running, and swimming, as well as strength-training exercises such as weightlifting and resistance exercises. Exercise is critical for individuals of all ages as it enhances physical function, supports mental health, and reduces the risk of chronic diseases. The World Health Organization (WHO) highlights that regular physical activity is vital for the prevention of cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and certain cancers (Bull et al., 2020).

Regular participation in physical exercise is closely linked to improvements in cardiovascular health. Aerobic exercises, in particular, have been shown to enhance the efficiency of the heart, lungs, and circulatory system, leading to better oxygen circulation and lower risks of heart-related ailments. A study by Ross et al. (2019) found that moderate to vigorous aerobic exercise significantly reduced the risk of cardiovascular disease by improving heart rate variability, lowering blood pressure, and managing cholesterol levels. Thus, routine exercise contributes significantly to a healthier cardiovascular system.

Additionally, exercise plays a crucial role in weight management and metabolic health. Physical activity increases the body's energy expenditure, which helps in maintaining a healthy balance between calorie intake and consumption. Regular exercise aids in regulating body weight by burning calories and enhancing metabolic processes. In particular, resistance training promotes muscle growth, which in turn increases resting metabolic rate, leading to more effective weight management (Garber et al., 2019). Proper exercise routines, combined with balanced nutrition, are essential for managing obesity and other metabolic disorders like type 2 diabetes.

Roles of Journalists in Promoting Proper Diet and Exercise

Journalists play a crucial role in influencing public knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors concerning health, particularly regarding proper diet and exercise. Through their platform, they serve as a bridge between scientific research, health experts, and the general public. Below are key roles journalists play in promoting proper diet and exercise as mentioned by numerous scholars, including Ebuka and Mbah (2024).

Educating the Public: Journalists inform the public about the importance of proper diet and exercise by disseminating factual, research-based content. Through articles, interviews with health experts, and coverage of new studies, they help people understand the impact of nutrition and physical activity on overall health and wellness.

They also clarify misconceptions or myths about diet fads and exercise trends, offering reliable information.

Raising Awareness on Health Risks: One of the critical roles of journalists is raising awareness of the risks associated with poor diet and inactivity. By reporting on the prevalence of lifestyle diseases such as obesity, diabetes, heart conditions, and related disorders, journalists highlight the urgency of adopting healthier lifestyles. This awareness pushes individuals and communities to take proactive measures towards better health practices.

Advocating for Policy Change: Journalists can advocate for better public health policies that promote proper diet and exercise. Through investigative journalism, they can expose gaps in governmental or institutional efforts to provide adequate nutritional guidance and promote physical fitness. Their reports can lead to discussions on implementing policies that support healthier school meals, public health campaigns, and better access to exercise facilities.

Promoting Success Stories: Sharing personal success stories of individuals or communities who have benefited from improving their diet and exercise routines can be highly motivational. Journalists bring these stories to a broader audience, showing how achievable positive health changes can be. Such narratives serve as inspiration for others to follow similar paths toward healthier lifestyles.

Roles of Journalists in Promoting Human Health and Longevity

Journalists play a vital role in shaping public perceptions and behaviors concerning human health and longevity. Through their work, they bridge the gap between scientific research, healthcare policies, and the general population, influencing how people view and maintain their health. Below are the key roles journalists play in promoting human health and longevity as mentioned by Stellefson, Paige, Chaney and Chaney (2020):

Providing Health Education: Journalists are crucial in educating the public about the principles of maintaining good health and extending life expectancy. Through articles, reports, and interviews with healthcare professionals, they simplify complex medical information and deliver it in a way that is accessible to the average person. Topics like disease prevention, the importance of regular medical checkups, and ways to maintain mental well-being are presented clearly, helping the public make informed health decisions.

Raising Awareness on Preventive Healthcare: A key role of journalists is to promote preventive healthcare, which is essential for increasing longevity. They highlight the importance of vaccines, screenings, early diagnosis, and lifestyle changes to prevent diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular disorders. By raising awareness about prevention, journalists encourage individuals to adopt healthier practices that can significantly extend their lifespan.

Advocating for Health Policy Improvements: Journalists have the ability to influence public policy by exposing inadequacies in healthcare systems and promoting reforms that improve public health. Investigative reports on issues like access to healthcare, medical malpractice, or government mismanagement of health resources can lead to

policy changes that benefit the population. In this way, journalists advocate for better healthcare services, ensuring that the public has the tools needed to live longer and healthier lives.

Types of Media Used by Journalists in Promoting Human Health and Longevity

Journalists play a critical role in promoting human health and longevity by disseminating valuable information through various media platforms. The media serves as an essential tool for educating the public on health issues, raising awareness about healthy living, and encouraging behaviors that contribute to longevity. Over the years, advancements in media technology have expanded the types of media available to journalists, making it possible to reach diverse audiences. These include traditional media like television, radio, and print, as well as new media formats such as social media, websites, and podcasts. Each of these platforms has distinct features that contribute to the promotion of health.

Television and Radio

Television and radio have been fundamental traditional media platforms used by journalists to promote health messages. These platforms offer a broad reach, especially in rural and underserved areas where access to other media may be limited. Health programs, documentaries, talk shows, and public service announcements (PSAs) broadcast on television and radio have proven effective in informing audiences about diseases, preventive measures, and healthy lifestyle choices.

Print Media

Print media, including newspapers, magazines, and brochures, has historically played a significant role in public health promotion. Health journalists use print to provide in-depth coverage of medical breakthroughs, government health policies, and human interest stories that inspire readers to make healthier lifestyle choices. Newspapers and magazines offer a platform for opinion pieces, expert interviews, and investigative journalism that explores various aspects of health and longevity.

Social Media

Social media has revolutionized health journalism by enabling journalists to reach larger and more diverse audiences quickly and interactively. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube allow journalists to share health information in real-time, engage with followers, and encourage public participation in health discussions. These platforms are particularly effective in reaching younger demographics who consume news and information predominantly through digital means. Social media campaigns can go viral, exponentially increasing their impact on public health education.

Websites and Blogs

The internet has provided journalists with the opportunity to use websites and blogs as platforms for detailed health communication. Many news organizations maintain health-specific sections on their websites, offering articles, infographics, videos, and interactive tools to educate the public on a wide array of health issues. Independent health bloggers and digital health platforms have also gained prominence,

offering evidence-based health information and advice. Websites like WebMD, Healthline, and government health portals serve as repositories of reliable health information, while blogs written by health journalists provide a more personal take on health and wellness.

Podcasts

Podcasts have emerged as an increasingly popular medium for health journalism, allowing journalists to present health topics in a conversational, accessible format. With their growing popularity, health-related podcasts are now widely available on various platforms, covering topics such as mental health, nutrition, exercise, and medical research. Podcasts appeal to people with busy lifestyles, as they can be consumed while commuting, exercising, or performing household tasks.

Video and Multimedia

Journalists are increasingly using video content and multimedia to enhance the impact of their health reporting. Platforms like YouTube, Video, and news websites enable journalists to produce high-quality videos that demonstrate health practices, explain medical conditions, or offer expert interviews. Video content can be particularly effective in breaking down complex medical procedures or illustrating lifestyle habits that contribute to longevity, such as exercise routines or dietary advice.

Types of Media Used by Journalists in Promoting Proper Diet for Human Beings

Journalists play a crucial role in educating the public about proper dietary habits by leveraging various forms of media. In today's digital age, the media landscape has expanded beyond traditional outlets to include digital, social, and multimedia platforms, all of which can effectively promote nutrition awareness. Journalists use these media to disseminate accurate, research-based information to guide people toward healthier eating habits. As noted by Potter and Parsons (2021), the media is vital in shaping public perceptions of diet and nutrition, influencing the choices people make daily regarding their food consumption.

One of the primary media used by journalists is print media, which includes newspapers, magazines, and journals. Despite the growth of digital platforms, print media remains a reliable source for in-depth nutritional analysis and expert advice. Magazines dedicated to health and wellness often feature articles by nutritionists, dietitians, and health journalists that emphasize the importance of a balanced diet (Rodriguez & Green, 2020). Articles in newspapers and health journals provide detailed explanations of proper diet principles, such as the benefits of whole foods, portion control, and nutrient-rich diets. This medium reaches an audience that prefers traditional reading formats and values expert opinions.

Television is another influential medium through which journalists promote proper diet and nutrition. Health segments on news programs and dedicated health shows frequently feature discussions about the latest dietary trends and guidelines. According to Smith et al. (2019), television can effectively engage a broad audience by providing visual demonstrations of healthy meal preparations, discussions with nutrition experts, and coverage of public health campaigns aimed at promoting better eating habits.

Social media has emerged as one of the most powerful platforms for journalists to promote proper diet and nutrition. Platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook enable journalists to share bite-sized information, infographics, and links to more detailed content. This medium allows journalists to interact directly with their audience, answering questions and engaging in discussions about proper diet.

Blogs and online news platforms provide another important outlet for journalists to promote proper diet. These digital spaces allow for long-form writing that can delve deeply into nutritional science, dietary recommendations, and health outcomes. Blogs often include personal stories or interviews with health experts, making the information more relatable to the general public.

Lastly, podcasts and video-sharing platforms, such as YouTube, have gained popularity as media for promoting proper diet. Journalists and health experts use these platforms to produce episodes or videos focused on nutrition topics. The podcast format allows for detailed discussions and interviews with nutritionists, doctors, and dietitians, offering listeners in-depth insights into proper dietary habits (Walker & Bailey, 2021). YouTube channels dedicated to health often provide visual demonstrations of healthy cooking, making it easier for viewers to follow along and implement the advice in their daily lives. These multimedia formats cater to an audience that prefers auditory or visual content over traditional reading.

Journalists use a wide array of media to promote proper diet for human beings, from traditional outlets like print and television to modern digital platforms such as social media, blogs, and podcasts. Each medium offers unique strengths in reaching different segments of the population, whether through in-depth articles, interactive discussions, or visual content. By utilizing these diverse media channels, journalists can play a key role in encouraging healthier dietary practices and improving public health outcomes.

Types of Media Used by Journalists in Promoting Involvement in Exercise

Journalists use a variety of media platforms to promote involvement in exercise, effectively reaching a wide range of audiences and encouraging them to adopt active lifestyles. By leveraging both traditional and modern media, journalists can spread awareness about the benefits of regular physical activity, promote fitness campaigns, and share expert advice. Each media platform offers unique advantages in engaging specific demographic groups, making the promotion of exercise more accessible and impactful. The main types of media used include television, print media, social media, websites, podcasts, and video content.

Television and Radio

Television and radio have long been powerful platforms for promoting public health, including exercise. Journalists and broadcasters use these media to air fitness programs, interviews with health professionals, and public service announcements (PSAs) encouraging physical activity. These formats are particularly effective in reaching older adults or those in rural areas where internet access may be limited. For example, television exercise shows and morning fitness segments have been popular for decades, providing easy-to-follow routines for viewers at home. According to Wakefield et al. (2019), mass media campaigns, including those on television, have proven

effective in promoting health behaviors such as increased physical activity by delivering persuasive and repeated messages.

Print Media

Print media, including newspapers, magazines, and fitness brochures, has traditionally played a significant role in promoting exercise. Health journalists often write articles on the importance of physical activity, provide tips for workout routines, and publish stories on the success of fitness programs. Research by Viswanath and Bond (2020) shows that while digital media is growing, print continues to offer depth and reliability, making it a useful medium for promoting exercise-related content.

Social Media

Social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok have revolutionized the way health journalists promote exercise. These platforms allow journalists to share quick tips, motivational content, and workout challenges that can be easily consumed and shared by users. Fitness influencers and experts often collaborate with journalists to create viral campaigns encouraging physical activity. Additionally, hashtags and fitness challenges help engage users in interactive ways, turning exercise into a social activity that encourages participation. Social media campaigns, such as #Fitspiration or #30DayChallenge, have proven successful in inspiring people to commit to regular exercise (Ventola, 2020). The interactive nature of social media makes it a powerful tool for building a community of fitness enthusiasts and promoting healthy behaviors.

Websites and Blogs

Websites and blogs provide journalists with platforms for in-depth content related to exercise promotion. Major news outlets and health-focused websites often feature detailed articles, video tutorials, and fitness resources to encourage readers to adopt regular exercise routines. These platforms offer versatility, allowing health journalists to present data on the benefits of exercise, offer personalized workout plans, and share expert opinions.

Podcasts

Podcasts are becoming increasingly popular as a medium for promoting exercise and fitness. Many health journalists have adopted podcasts to discuss exercise-related topics, interview fitness professionals, and provide listeners with motivation to stay active. Fitness podcasts often include workout tips, discussions on the mental and physical benefits of exercise, and insights from experts in sports science and health. The convenience of podcasts makes them appealing, as listeners can consume the content while walking, running, or working out. A study by Munro et al. (2020) highlights the growing influence of health and fitness podcasts, noting that they have a positive impact on listeners' attitudes toward physical activity.

Video Content and Multimedia

Video platforms like YouTube and multimedia on news websites have become critical in promoting exercise. Health journalists and fitness professionals use these platforms to create and share exercise tutorials, live workout sessions, and motivational

content. Videos offer visual instruction that helps people follow along with exercise routines, making it easier to adopt new workouts. YouTube fitness channels have grown in popularity due to the accessibility of free, expert-led workout videos that cater to different fitness levels.

Conclusion

In conclusion, assessing journalists' involvement in promoting health and longevity is crucial for ensuring the dissemination of accurate, evidence-based information. Journalists need continuous training to stay informed about advancements in nutrition, exercise, and longevity science. Proper assessment helps identify the skills and resources journalists need to communicate effectively with diverse audiences. By enhancing their capabilities, media can contribute significantly to public health, encouraging healthier lifestyles and preventing chronic diseases. Ultimately, such evaluations foster a more informed society and support the long-term well-being of individuals.

Recommendations

1. Journalists should undergo continuous professional development programs focusing on the latest research in nutrition, exercise science, and longevity.
2. Journalists should work closely with nutritionists, fitness experts, and medical professionals to better understand complex health issues.
3. Media outlets should implement strict guidelines for fact-checking health-related content and evaluating sources for credibility.

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