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"Role Of Regional Kannada Media In Communicating Water Quality And Health Risks Under The Jal Jeevan Mission In Karnataka: A Public Risk-Perception And Behavioural Response Study" Review Of Literature

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Abstract
*Safe drinking water is fundamental to public health and sustainable development. The **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)**, launched by the Government of India in 2019, seeks to provide Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs) to every rural household while promoting water quality monitoring, community participation, and behaviour change through Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) initiatives. In Karnataka, persistent challenges such as fluoride contamination, nitrate pollution, salinity, groundwater depletion, and microbial contamination continue to threaten drinking water security and public health. Regional Kannada media, including newspapers, television channels, digital news platforms, and community media, constitute an important communication network for disseminating information on water quality, health risks, and government interventions. However, the existing body of literature reveals limited scholarly attention to the communication dimension of the Jal Jeevan Mission, particularly the role of regional-language media in influencing public understanding, risk perception, and behavioural responses.*
This review synthesizes interdisciplinary literature on five thematic areas: (i) water quality and public health, (ii) the Jal Jeevan Mission and rural drinking water communication, (iii) regional Kannada media and development communication, (iv) media-based risk communication and public risk perception, and (v) media influence on health awareness and behavioural change. The review identifies a significant research gap in empirical studies examining how Regional Kannada Media communicate water quality and health risks under the Jal Jeevan Mission and how such communication shapes rural communities' perceptions and preventive behaviours. It proposes a conceptual framework linking media exposure, message framing, public risk perception, and behavioural outcomes. The paper contributes to the literature on development communication, health communication, and environmental risk communication while offering policy insights for strengthening JJM's IEC strategies and promoting evidence-based communication for safe drinking water governance in Karnataka.

Keywords: *Jal Jeevan Mission; Regional Kannada Media; Water Quality; Risk Communication; Behavioural Response; Drinking Water Safety;*

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I. Introduction

Water is indispensable for human survival, health, and socio-economic development. Ensuring access to safe and potable drinking water remains a major public policy priority across the world. In India, water contamination resulting from biological, chemical, and environmental factors continues to pose significant public health challenges, particularly in rural areas. Diseases caused by unsafe drinking water contribute substantially to morbidity and mortality, affecting vulnerable populations such as women, children, and the elderly.

Recognizing the importance of safe drinking water, the Government of India launched the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) in 2019 with the objective of providing Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs) to every rural household. Besides infrastructure development, the mission emphasizes water quality monitoring, community participation, and public awareness. In this context, media play a crucial role in communicating water quality information, health risks, and preventive measures to the public.

Regional Kannada media possess a unique advantage in reaching rural populations of Karnataka through culturally relevant and linguistically accessible communication. Understanding how Kannada media communicate water quality and health risks and how audiences perceive and respond to such information is therefore of considerable academic and practical significance. The following review examines existing literature

on water quality and health risks, Jal Jeevan Mission communication, regional media, risk perception, and behavioural responses.

II. Literature Review

Literature On Water Quality And Public Health Risks

Water quality is a critical determinant of public health and sustainable development. Access to safe and clean drinking water is recognized as a fundamental human right and an essential prerequisite for improving health outcomes. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2019) reported that contaminated drinking water is associated with diseases such as diarrhoea, cholera, dysentery, typhoid, hepatitis A, and polio. According to WHO estimates, nearly two billion people globally consume drinking water contaminated with fecal matter, making water-borne diseases a major public health challenge. The organization emphasizes that improving drinking water quality can significantly reduce disease burden and improve life expectancy.

Prüss-Ustün et al. (2014) conducted a global assessment of the burden of disease attributable to inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). Their findings revealed that unsafe water continues to account for millions of cases of infectious diseases annually. The study further emphasized that public awareness, behavioural change, and community participation are essential components of effective water safety management.

Ramesh and Mahesh (2017) examined groundwater quality in Vijayapura and Bagalkot districts and reported seasonal variations in water contamination levels. The study observed that high concentrations of dissolved solids, nitrates, and fluoride posed health risks to local communities. The researchers emphasized the importance of community participation and water quality surveillance mechanisms.

A study by the Karnataka Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (KRWSSA, 2020) revealed that several rural habitations continue to face challenges related to drinking water contamination despite improvements in water infrastructure. The report emphasized the need for strengthening water quality monitoring laboratories, community awareness programmes, and local governance mechanisms to ensure safe drinking water access.

Overall, the reviewed literature clearly demonstrates that water quality is not merely an environmental issue but a major public health concern. International, national, and Karnataka-based studies consistently emphasize the importance of water quality monitoring, community participation, awareness creation, and risk communication in preventing water-borne diseases and improving public health outcomes. These findings provide a strong foundation for examining how regional Kannada media communicate water quality issues and associated health risks under the Jal Jeevan Mission.

Literature on Jal Jeevan Mission and Rural Drinking Water Communication

The Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), launched by the Government of India in August 2019, is one of the most significant rural development initiatives aimed at ensuring universal access to safe and adequate drinking water through Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs). The mission seeks to provide potable water to every rural household while emphasizing source sustainability, water quality monitoring, community participation, and institutional strengthening. Unlike previous water supply programmes that focused primarily on infrastructure development, JJM adopts a holistic approach that integrates technical, social, and communication dimensions of water governance (Ministry of Jal Shakti, 2021).

Several scholars have examined the policy framework and implementation strategies of the Jal Jeevan Mission. According to the Ministry of Jal Shakti (2021), the mission recognizes that infrastructure alone cannot ensure safe drinking water unless communities actively participate in water management and quality monitoring. Consequently, the programme places considerable emphasis on Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) activities aimed at promoting awareness regarding water conservation, water quality testing, hygiene practices, and community ownership of water resources.

Research conducted by the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR, 2022) highlighted that awareness generation and behavioural change communication are essential components of sustainable rural water governance. The report indicated that communities informed about water quality issues were more likely to adopt safe water handling, storage, and treatment practices. The findings underscore the importance of continuous communication efforts rather than one-time awareness campaigns.

Karnataka-based studies have also examined the implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission and community participation. Billava (2024) investigated the role of Gram Panchayats in implementing JJM across Karnataka and found that local governance institutions play a crucial role in creating awareness regarding water quality and health risks. The study emphasized that Gram Panchayats function as important communication intermediaries between government agencies and rural households.

Despite substantial research on the technical, administrative, and governance aspects of Jal Jeevan Mission, relatively little attention has been paid to the role of regional media in communicating mission

objectives and water quality concerns. Existing studies largely focus on infrastructure development, community participation, and policy implementation, while media-related dimensions remain underexplored. Moreover, there is limited empirical evidence regarding how communication through Kannada media influences public awareness, risk perception, and behavioural responses related to drinking water safety.

Overall, the reviewed literature suggests that effective communication is indispensable for the success of the Jal Jeevan Mission. Awareness generation, community participation, and localized communication strategies significantly influence programme outcomes and sustainability. However, a clear research gap exists regarding the contribution of regional Kannada media in disseminating water quality information and shaping public responses. The present study seeks to address this gap by examining the role of Kannada media in communicating water quality and health risks under the Jal Jeevan Mission in Karnataka.

Literature on Regional Kannada Media and Development Communication

Development communication has emerged as a significant field of study that examines the role of communication processes and media systems in promoting social change, economic development, and public welfare. Scholars have consistently emphasized that mass media serve as important agents of modernization by disseminating information, creating awareness, and facilitating behavioural change. Rogers (2003), through his Diffusion of Innovations Theory, argued that communication channels play a crucial role in spreading new ideas, technologies, and developmental programmes among diverse populations. According to Rogers, media help reduce uncertainty, increase knowledge, and encourage the adoption of innovations by creating awareness and shaping public attitudes.

In India, regional language media have become powerful instruments of development communication because of their accessibility, cultural relevance, and linguistic proximity to local audiences. Unlike national media, which often focus on broader political and economic issues, regional media provide extensive coverage of local concerns, government welfare programmes, agricultural developments, health initiatives, and community affairs. Kumar (2015) observed that vernacular newspapers serve as important platforms for citizen engagement by providing information that directly affects local communities. Their localized reporting enables audiences to better understand developmental policies and participate in governance processes.

Bhat (2016) observed that Kannada newspapers have actively participated in development journalism by highlighting issues such as drought, farmer welfare, water scarcity, public health, and rural infrastructure. The study noted that regional newspapers often function as intermediaries between policymakers and citizens by bringing local concerns to the attention of government authorities. Similarly, Rao and Shankar (2017) found that Kannada newspapers significantly influence public discourse on developmental issues because of their emphasis on local news and grassroots reporting.

Television has also emerged as a powerful medium of development communication in Karnataka. Kannada news channels such as TV9 Kannada, Public TV, Suvarna News, News18 Kannada, and BTV have expanded public access to information regarding government schemes, health campaigns, disaster management, and environmental issues. Research conducted by Patil (2019) revealed that regional television channels play a significant role in increasing awareness regarding public welfare programmes among rural populations. The study found that visual presentations, expert interviews, and field reports enhance audience understanding of developmental issues.

The rapid expansion of digital media has further transformed the communication landscape in Karnataka. Online news portals, mobile applications, social media platforms, and YouTube channels have emerged as important sources of information. According to Kumar and Prakash (2021), digital Kannada media have increased citizen participation by enabling immediate access to news and facilitating interaction between audiences and media organizations. Digital platforms have proven particularly useful in disseminating information regarding public health, disaster management, and government welfare initiatives.

The reviewed literature clearly indicates that regional Kannada media constitute an important component of the development communication ecosystem in Karnataka. Through newspapers, television channels, digital platforms, and community radio, these media facilitate information dissemination, public participation, and social awareness. However, a significant research gap exists regarding their role in communicating water quality issues and health risks under programmes such as the Jal Jeevan Mission. Therefore, the present study seeks to examine how regional Kannada media frame and communicate water-related risks and how such communication influences public perception and behavioural responses among rural populations in Karnataka.

Literature on Media-Based Risk Communication and Public Risk Perception

Risk communication has emerged as a significant area of research within public health, environmental communication, and development communication studies. It refers to the process of exchanging information, knowledge, and opinions among individuals, communities, institutions, and policymakers regarding potential

risks to health, safety, and the environment. Effective risk communication is essential for enabling people to make informed decisions and adopt appropriate preventive measures during health and environmental crises. Covello and Sandman (2001) defined risk communication as the interactive exchange of information and opinions among stakeholders concerning risks and risk management strategies. They argued that successful communication requires transparency, credibility, trust, and active public engagement.

Frewer (2004) emphasized that effective risk communication enhances public trust and facilitates informed decision-making. The study identified transparency, source credibility, message clarity, and audience participation as essential components of successful communication strategies. According to Frewer, risk communication is most effective when information is communicated honestly and when audiences perceive communicators as trustworthy. This finding is particularly relevant in public health contexts where misinformation can undermine preventive efforts.

Health communication scholars have also explored the role of media framing in shaping public perceptions of risk. Entman (1993) argued that media framing influences how audiences interpret issues by selecting certain aspects of reality and making them more salient. In the context of health and environmental risks, media frames can influence whether audiences perceive a situation as a crisis, a public health concern, or a manageable problem. Studies on disease outbreaks such as SARS, H1N1 influenza, Ebola, and COVID-19 have demonstrated that media framing significantly affects public awareness, anxiety levels, and compliance with health guidelines (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005).

In the Indian context, risk communication has gained importance in addressing public health challenges related to sanitation, drinking water safety, vector-borne diseases, and environmental pollution. Studies have shown that mass media campaigns play a vital role in educating communities about disease prevention and environmental hazards. Chatterjee (2018) observed that localized communication strategies using regional languages are more effective in influencing public understanding of health risks than centrally produced messages.

In Karnataka, studies on public health communication have emphasized the role of regional media in disseminating information related to environmental and health issues. Kannada newspapers, television channels, and digital media platforms frequently report on water scarcity, groundwater contamination, drought conditions, and public health concerns. However, limited research has examined how these media frame water quality risks and how such communication influences public risk perception and behavioural responses.

The literature also suggests that audience characteristics such as education, socio-economic status, media literacy, and institutional trust influence the effectiveness of risk communication. According to Renn (2008), successful risk communication requires understanding audience perceptions, concerns, and information needs. Communication strategies must therefore be audience-centred and culturally relevant to achieve desired outcomes.

Literature on Media Influence, Health Awareness and Behavioural Change

Behavioural change remains one of the primary objectives of public health communication. Beyond merely providing information, communication interventions seek to influence attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and practices that contribute to improved health outcomes. In the context of drinking water safety, communication plays a crucial role in encouraging individuals and communities to adopt preventive measures such as water purification, safe storage, regular water quality testing, and hygienic practices. Several theoretical frameworks have been developed to explain how media messages influence behavioural change and public decision-making.

One of the most widely applied theories in health communication is the Health Belief Model (HBM), developed by Rosenstock (1974). The model proposes that individuals are more likely to engage in preventive health actions when they perceive themselves as vulnerable to a health threat, consider the consequences serious, believe that recommended actions will reduce the risk, and perceive minimal barriers to adopting such actions. Research applying the Health Belief Model has consistently demonstrated positive associations between exposure to health information and preventive behaviours. Janz and Becker (1984), in their review of HBM studies, found that perceived susceptibility and perceived benefits were strong predictors of health-related behavioural change. In the context of water quality communication, individuals who understand the health consequences of consuming contaminated water are more likely to adopt protective measures such as boiling water or using filtration systems.

Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations Theory explains how new ideas, technologies, and practices spread through social systems over time. According to Rogers, mass media play a critical role in creating awareness about innovations, while interpersonal communication facilitates adoption decisions. The theory identifies five stages in the innovation-decision process: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. Numerous studies have utilized this framework to examine the adoption of health innovations, sanitation practices, and public health interventions. In the context of Jal Jeevan Mission, media can facilitate

the diffusion of information regarding water quality monitoring, household tap connections, and community participation in water governance.

Wakefield, Loken, and Hornik (2010) examined the effectiveness of mass media campaigns in promoting health-related behavioural change. Their research concluded that well-designed media campaigns significantly influence public behaviour when messages are repeated, credible, culturally relevant, and supported by community-based interventions. The authors argued that media campaigns are particularly effective in increasing awareness, changing attitudes, and motivating preventive actions when combined with supportive policies and institutional mechanisms.

Research on water quality awareness in Karnataka indicates that communication campaigns can significantly improve public understanding of contamination risks and preventive measures. However, studies also reveal that awareness does not always translate into behavioural change. Factors such as economic constraints, inadequate infrastructure, limited access to safe water sources, and social norms often influence behavioural outcomes. Consequently, scholars argue that communication strategies should be integrated with institutional support and community engagement mechanisms.

The reviewed literature clearly demonstrates that media play a transformative role in influencing health awareness and behavioural change. Through information dissemination, attitude formation, social influence, and motivation, media contribute to the adoption of safe drinking water practices and reduction of health risks associated with contaminated water. Nevertheless, limited research has examined how regional Kannada media influence behavioural responses related to water quality and health risks under the Jal Jeevan Mission. The present study seeks to address this gap by exploring the relationship between media exposure, risk perception, and behavioural responses among rural communities in Karnataka.

III. **Research Gap And Relevance Of The Present Study**

The literature reviewed reveals extensive research on water quality, public health, development communication, and behavioural change. Similarly, a growing body of scholarship has examined the implementation and outcomes of the Jal Jeevan Mission. However, several gaps remain evident. First, limited research has explored the communication dimension of the Jal Jeevan Mission, particularly from a media perspective. Second, there is a lack of empirical studies examining how regional Kannada media communicate issues related to water quality and associated health risks. Third, existing studies rarely investigate the relationship between media exposure, risk perception, and behavioural responses among rural populations in Karnataka.

Furthermore, while public health and environmental communication studies have addressed risk communication broadly, localized analyses focusing on drinking water safety within the Kannada media ecosystem remain largely absent. The influence of newspapers, television channels, radio, and digital platforms on public understanding of water quality issues has not been adequately documented. The present study seeks to bridge these gaps by investigating the role of regional Kannada media in communicating water quality and health risks under the Jal Jeevan Mission and by examining how such communication shapes public risk perception and behavioural responses in Karnataka.

IV. **Conclusion**

The literature establishes that safe drinking water is a critical determinant of public health and that effective communication is essential for promoting awareness and behavioural change. Regional media play an important role in disseminating development-related information, particularly among rural populations. However, there is a notable lack of research examining the specific contribution of Kannada media to water quality communication under the Jal Jeevan Mission. The present study is therefore timely and relevant, as it seeks to generate new knowledge regarding media influence, public risk perception, and behavioural responses in the context of drinking water safety in Karnataka.

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