



EXPLORATION OF HEALTH-RELATED ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN DAILY SINHALA MEDIUM NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS

Nuwanthika U.M.P.^{1*}, Chandrasiri A.², Akalanka K.³ and Fernando M.⁴

¹Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka

²Regional Department of Health Services office, Galle, Sri Lanka

³Department of Basic Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka

⁴Department of Health Promotion, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka

manurasc@gmail.com

Abstract

According to provisional data in the latest edition of Central Bank's Economic and Social Statistics publication Sri Lanka, more than 30 million newspaper copies were sold in 2016 compared to 2015. This is going against the global flow. Therefore, newspapers could be utilized as a one of the effective media for health education and promotion in Sri Lanka. However, no data on descriptive studies on the number and type of health-related articles published in these newspapers are reported. Thus, the objective was to study health-related articles published in daily National Sinhala newspapers. The study was a descriptive cross-sectional study conducted in a randomly selected period of one month in 2018. The sample comprised of 404 newspaper articles from most selling daily Sinhala national newspapers in Sri Lanka. Articles with the heading including "name of any illness/name of directly noted health issue/name of category of health staff/name of health institute" were analyzed. Among the health-related articles 56% (n=244) was written by local reporters. The involvement of experts in writing the article was only 20.5 % (n=85). When compared to the amount of non-health related newspaper articles, the emphasis made on report writing related to different disease conditions and on the healthcare system of Sri Lanka is low. Of the total, maximum health related articles were published in Monday (n=104). Nearly 50% were in the main section and only 11% were in the Health section (n=45). Nearly 77% was written in inner pages (n=310), only 6.4% were located in the front (n=26). Nearly 55% of article headings were written in 28-72 font size (n=224). Nearly 50% were small articles (n=200). Local event reporting was observed to be very common (n=218, 54%). This study reveals that less emphasis has been paid on healthcare related report writing in national newspapers in Sri Lanka during the study period.

Keywords: Health, Newspapers, Articles, Experts