

Research Article

Structured Assessment of Quality of Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) Materials Utilised under Programme Yuva Spandana: A Cross-Sectional Study

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A B S T R A C T

Introduction: To enhance the effectiveness of any health promotion/ education initiatives, a variety of well-designed and effective Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials and their assessment are crucial.

Objective: To assess all available IEC materials under Yuva Spandana (YS).

Methodology: Data were collected using a specifically developed checklist to assess the quality of 233 IEC materials (142 printed and 91 video). The key domains of quality were listed through desk review and discussion with the core team of YS for their appropriateness and feasibility. A scoring system was developed for assessing the quality and the questions in the assessment checklist were scored (1-Yes & 0-No). Subsequently, the quality of each IEC material was assessed by formula (scores obtained by each IEC material/ maximum score for that IEC material X100). Categorical variables were summarised using frequency and percentage and continuous variables were analysed and presented as mean and standard deviation.

Results: Our study revealed that the quality of most IEC materials utilised in programme YS was above average. Almost 90% of the visual IECs had quality percentage scores between 50% and 74%. The average quality score of printed IECs was 27.09 (\pm 4.32) and visual IECs was 35.44 (\pm 4.87).

Conclusion: This assessment provides essential inputs for improving the IEC materials used in YS. Although the developed checklist is comprehensive, a few domains need further exploration.

Keywords: Youth, Communication, Quality Information, Cafeteria Approach, Youth Issues, Youth Mental Health, Mental Health Promotion, Information, Education and Communication Materials

Introduction

Information, Education and Communication (IEC) constitute a crucial component of any health programme. It aims to create awareness and disseminate information regarding the benefits available under various schemes/ programmes to beneficiaries.¹ IEC is the process of learning that empowers people to make decisions, modify behaviours, and change social conditions. IEC materials play an integral part in disseminating such change. It includes a collection of techniques, ideas, and methods that enable people, families, groups, organisations, and communities to actively participate in attaining, safeguarding, and maintaining their health.² The education and promotion activities for any programme depend on a variety of well-designed and effective IEC materials.³

The IEC materials enhance the effectiveness of any mental health promotion and education initiatives, a variety of well-designed and effective IEC materials are crucial. Print materials and videos such as posters, brochures, flyers, billboards, etc. that are intended to draw attention to information are called IEC materials.² IEC is a critical component in targeting new beneficiaries and creating awareness about the programme Yuva Spandana (YS). Traditionally, IEC materials primarily focus on diseases, and vulnerable populations of children, women, elderly etc. Youth-focused health promotion-centric IEC materials are minimal. The programme YS is a unique community-based youth mental health promotion programme that provides support to youth for their issues related to behavioural, mental, social, or psychosocial wellbeing.⁴ Broadly, YS focuses on 6 issues (Educational and Academic issues, Personality Development issues, Health and Lifestyle issues, Relationship & Emotional Regulation issues, Safety issues and Gender, Sex and Sexuality).⁴ For an effective IEC, materials used for delivering messages are a vital component. The IEC materials utilised under YS are an important component to enhance the effectiveness of the sensitisation programme and increase footfall.⁵ The programme utilises various traditional IEC materials such as posters, brochures and pamphlets addressing youth issues and raising awareness among youth, parents and potential beneficiaries about the free services available under the programme as well as newer unconventional methods like reels, influencer videos, testimonials, animated videos etc have more reach and acceptability among potential beneficiaries. These are available both for specific target audiences as well as general audiences which enhances the reachability. The programme YS being a novel initiative, it is important to have quality IEC materials. Therefore, as a first step, assessment of the quality of IEC materials becomes important, more so for a unique first-of-its-kind youth mental health promotion programme like YS. This study provides an opportunity to assess the quality of IEC

and will provide valuable recommendations on filling those gaps regarding the quality aspects under the programme YS.

Methodology

This cross-sectional study was conducted in Centre for Public Health, Department of Epidemiology, NIMHANS, Bengaluru between June and September 2022. A total of 233 IEC materials were available within the programme Yuva Spandana as of May 31, 2022 and were assessed. There were 134 posters, 91 videos (consisting of 15 testimonials, 5 animated testimonials, 7 animation video, 50 reels, 7 influencer videos and 7 other videos consisting of motivational videos by IAS officer, joint director and commissioner), 7 brochures and 1 pamphlet. They were assessed using a specifically developed checklist comprising general information about the IEC materials (type of IEC, purpose, date of review, issues addressed), information related to the relevance of content, aesthetics, medium of communication, and provision of details related to YS (contact details, services available etc.). All the items had "Yes" and "No" responses corresponding to a score of 1 and 0, respectively, except items related to aesthetics which were scored on a 4-point rating scale. Data were collected using this checklist which was incorporated into a Google form for data entry. Mean scores and mean percentage scores for quality were calculated overall and for specific domains. All the analysis was performed using MS Excel. Appropriate ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Committee, vide letter number No. NIMH/DO/IEC (BS & NS DIV)/2022.

Results

A total of 233 IEC materials consisting of 142 printed IECs and 91 visual IECs were available and assessed under the programme YS. Among all the IEC materials, the majority were posters (57.51%) and videos (39.05%). Videos consisted of testimonials (16.48%), animated testimonials (5.49%), animation videos (7.69%), reels (54.94%) and influencer videos (7.69%) (Table 1).

The majority of the IEC materials focus on health and lifestyle (35.14%) and personality development issues (21.08%). Youth and safety and gender, sex, and sexuality issues (7% each) are the least focused issues. There are brochures that focus more on gender, sex, and sexuality (21.73%), and youth and safety (17.39%). Most IEC materials focused on only one issue (74.67%) while about 6% focused on all 6 issues (Table 2).

Most IEC materials consisted of information regarding the YS helpline (34.53%) and the YS weblink (31.22%). Overall, almost all of the IEC materials provided general information regarding YS (~96%), the cost of services being "free" (93.56%) and visiting hours of Yuva Spandana Kendra (YSK) (91.84%), location of YSKs (9.01%), services provided (8.15%) and personnel providing these services (5.15%).

The majority of the posters had a helpline (100%), weblink information (100%), “free” services (92.53%), and visiting hours of YSKs (91.79%). Brochures largely lacked information related to helpline (26.31%), weblink (15.78%), and e-mail id (26.31%). Most of the videos contained general information related to YS (Table 3).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Study Participants

Types of IEC Materials	n	%
Posters	134	57.51
Brochures	7	3.00
Pamphlet	1	0.42
Videos	91	39.05
Reels	50	54.94
Testimonial videos	15	16.48
Influencer videos	7	7.69
Animation videos	7	7.69
Animated testimonial videos	5	5.49
Other videos*	7	7.69

*Other videos consist of motivational videos (actor), videos by IAS, Joint director and Commissioner.

The majority of the IEC materials assessed had colours that were attractive “to a great extent or a moderate extent” (~94%) and adequate (~93%) “to a great extent or moderate extent”. A majority (around 86%) used pictures or graphic appeal to convey information “to a great extent or moderate extent”. The text in the IEC material was perceived to be not text-heavy (93.99%) and visible (93.53%) (Table 4). In the content of IEC materials assessed, 91.8% were relevant to the YS programme. All IEC materials were opined to arouse interest among users, the language used was simple, and almost all the IEC had a uniform tone, clarity of language, and cultural appropriateness relevant to the programme and the issues addressed (%). Solution-focused IEC material was majorly present (76.82%) followed by motivating IEC materials (38.19%) (Table 4).

Printed and visual IECs had an average quality score of 27.09 (± 4.32) and 35.44 (± 4.87), respectively. Approximately two-thirds of them had a quality percentage score between 50% and 74% whereas about one-third had less than 50% quality percentage score. Almost 90% of the visual IECs had quality percentage scores between 50–74% (Table 5).

Table 2. Issues Addressed by the IEC Materials Utilised in Programme Yuva Spandana

Types of IEC Materials	Poster	Brochure	Pamphlet	Animation Video	Animated Testimonial Videos	Influencer Video	Testimonial	Reels	Others	Total
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	N (%)
Types of issues addressed*										
Educational and academic	24 (12.76)	4 (17.39)	1 (16.60)	3 (17.64)	2 (20.00)	5 (62.50)	7 (16.66)	10 (14.92)	-	56 (15.14)
Personality development	38 (20.21)	3 (13.04)	1 (16.60)	2 (11.76)	1 (10.00)	2 (25.00)	10 (23.80)	16 (23.88)	5 (55.55)	78 (21.08)
Health and lifestyle	80 (42.55)	3 (13.04)	1 (16.60)	6 (35.29)	4 (40.00)	1 (12.50)	12 (28.57)	19 (28.35)	4 (44.44)	130 (35.14)
Youth and safety	8 (4.26)	4 (17.39)	1 (16.60)	2 (11.76)	-	-	4 (9.52)	6 (8.95)	-	25 (6.76)

Gender, sex and sexuality	7 (3.72)	5 (21.73)	1 (16.60)	2 (11.76)	-	-	4 (9.52)	6 (8.95)	-	25 (6.76)
Relationship and emotional regulation	29 (15.43)	4 (17.39)	1 (16.60)	2 (11.76)	3 (30.00)	-	5 (11.90)	10 (14.92)	-	54 (14.59)
Others**	2 (1.06)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2 (0.54)
No. of issues addressed										
1	105 (78.35)	4 (57.14)	-	5 (41.66)	1 (20.00)	6 (75.00)	7 (46.66)	41 (14.59)	5 (71.42)	174 (74.67)
2	20 (14.9)	-	-	-	3 (60.00)	2 (25.00)	2 (13.33)	7 (1.53)	2 (28.57)	36 (15.45)
3	3 (2.23)	-	-	-	1 (20.00)	-	1 (6.66)	1 (2.00)	-	6 (2.57)
4	1 (0.74)	-	-	-	-	-	1 (6.66)	1 (2.00)	-	3 (1.28)
5	4 (2.98)	1 (14.28)	-	1 (8.33)	-	-	-	-	-	6 (2.57)
6	1 (0.74)	2 (28.57)	1 (100.00)	6 (50.00)	-	-	4 (26.66)	-	-	14 (6.00)
-	134 (57.51)	7 (3.00)	1 (0.42)	12 (5.15)	5 (2.14)	8 (3.43)	15 (6.43)	50 (21.45)	7 (3.00)	233 (100.00)

*Percentages do not add up to 100 as some IEC materials address more than one issue.

**Others consist of a COVID-19 poster and a Google page describing the Yuva Spandana webpage.

Table 3. Information Provided Regarding Yuva Spandana in IEC Material

Information	Posters	Brochure	Pamphlet	Animation Video	Animated Testimonial Videos	Influencer Video	Testimonial Videos	Reels	Others	Total
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	N (%)
Information provided regarding										
Yuva Parivarthakas	-	4 (21.05)	1 (100.00)	-	3 (20.00)	3 (17.60)	-	3 (3.48)	-	14 (7.18)
Yuva Samalochakas	-	2 (10.52)	-	-	2 (13.33)	-	-	-	-	4 (2.05)
Yuva Spandana helpline	134 (100.00)	5 (26.31)	1 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	5 (33.33)	7 (41.17)	15 (51.72)	49 (56.97)	6 (54.54)	229 (34.53)
Yuva Spandana e-mail id	1 (0.37)	5 (26.31)	1 (100.00)	-	-	-	-	3 (3.48)	-	10 (1.50)
Weblink of Yuva Spandana	134 (100.00)	3 (15.78)	1 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	5 (33.33)	7 (41.17)	14 (48.27)	31 (36.06)	5 (45.45)	207 (31.32)
All the above information is provided	-	2 (10.52)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2 (0.87)
General information about Yuva Spandana programme										
YSKs	2 (1.49)	7 (100.00)	1 (100.00)	2 (28.57)	5 (100.00)	1 (14.28)	4 (26.66)	4 (8.00)	1 (14.28)	27 (11.58)
Location of YSKs	3 (2.23)	7 (100.00)	1 (100.00)	1 (14.28)	5 (100.00)	-	2 (13.33)	2 (4.00)	-	21 (9.01)
Services provided in these YSKs	-	7 (100.00)	1 (100.00)	2 (28.57)	5 (100.00)	-	2 (13.33)	2 (4.00)	-	19 (8.15)
Who provides the above services?	-	7 (100.00)	1 (100.00)	-	2 (40.00)	-	2 (13.33)	-	-	12 (5.15)

Cost of services being "free"	124 (92.53)	7 (100.00)	1 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	5 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	14 (93.33)	47 (94.00)	6 (85.71)	218 (93.56)
Visiting hours to these YSKs	123 (91.79)	6 (85.70)	1 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	4 (80.00)	7 (100.00)	14 (93.33)	46 (92.00)	6 (85.71)	214 (91.84)
Total	134 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	1 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	5 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	15 (100.00)	50 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	233 (100.00)

Table 4. Subjective Characteristics of IEC Materials Utilised in Yuva Spandana

Types of IEC Materials	Animated Testimonial Videos	Animated Videos	Brochures	Influencer Videos	Pamphlets	Poster	Reels	Testimonial Videos	Others	Total
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	N (%)
Aesthetic characteristics										
Colours used are attractive										
To great extent	5 (100.00)	4 (57.14)	7 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	1 (100.00)	89 (66.41)	40 (80.00)	5 (35.71)	6 (85.71)	163 (70.26)
To moderate extent	-	3 (42.85)	-	-	-	42 (31.34)	7 (14.00)	2 (14.2)	1 (14.28)	55 (23.71)
To some extent	-	-	-	-	-	3 (2.23)	-	2 (14.2)	-	6 (2.59)
Not at all	-	-	-	-	-	-	3 (6.00)	5 (35.71)	-	8 (3.45)
Extent of adequacy of colours										
To great extent	5 (100.00)	4 (57.14)	5 (71.43)	7 (100.00)	-	85 (63.32)	41 (82.00)	5 (33.33)	7 (100.00)	159 (68.24)
To moderate extent	-	3 (42.85)	2 (28.57)	-	-	46 (34.32)	6 (12.00)	2 (13.33)	-	59 (25.00)
To some extent	-	-	-	-	1 (100.00)	3 (2.23)	-	3 (20.00)	-	7 (3.00)

Not at all	-	-	-	-	-	-	3 (60.00)	5 (33.33)	-	8 (3.45)
Extent of use of pictures to convey information										
To great extent	5 (100.00)	4 (57.14)	6 (85.71)	6 (85.71)	-	102 (76.11)	24 (48.00)	2 (13.33)	4 (57.42)	153 (65.67)
To moderate extent	-	3 (42.85)	-	-	1 (100.00)	259 (18.65)	14 (28.00)	3 (20.00)	3 (42.8)	49 (21.03)
To some extent	-	-	-	1 (14.28)	-	4 (2.98)	8 (16.00)	4 (26.66)	-	17 (7.30)
Not at all	-	-	1 (14.2)	-	-	3 (2.23)	4 (8.00)	6 (40.00)	-	14 (6.01)
Use of graphic appeal to convey information										
To great extent	5 (100.00)	5 (71.42)	6 (85.71)	6 (85.71)	-	102 (76.11)	25 (51.02)	2 (13.33)	4 (57.42)	155 (66.80)
To moderate extent	-	2 (28.57)	1 (14.70)	-	1 (100.00)	25 (18.60)	10 (20.40)	5 (13.33)	3 (42.80)	47 (20.30)
To some extent	-	-	-	1 (14.70)	-	4 (2.98)	12 (24.48)	3 (20.00)	-	20 (20.30)
Not at all	-	-	-	-	-	3 (2.20)	2 (4.08)	5 (13.33)	-	10 (4.30)
The font size is adequate	5 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	1 (100.00)	131 (56.22)	50 (100.00)	15 (100.00)	6 (85.71)	229 (98.28)
The text is clearly visible	5 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	1 (100.00)	130 (56.03)	41 (82.00)	14 (93.33)	5 (71.40)	217 (93.53)
The content is not text-heavy	5 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	6 (85.71)	7 (100.00)	1 (100.00)	123 (52.79)	48 (96.00)	15 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	219 (93.99)
Content										
Information relevant to										
Programme Yuva Spandana	5 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	6 (85.71)	6 (85.71)	1 (100.00)	128 (95.52)	41 (82.00)	14 (93.33)	6 (85.71)	214 (91.85)
Issue addressed	4 (80.00)	6 (85.71)	7 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	1 (100.00)	130 (97.01)	46 (92.00)	13 (86.67)	7 (100.00)	221 (94.85)

Language used is										
Clear	5 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	1 (100.00)	125 (93.28)	50 (100.00)	15 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	224 (96.14)
Simple	5 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	1 (100.00)	134 (100.00)	50 (100.00)	15 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	233 (100.00)
Culturally appropriate	5 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	1 (100.00)	129 (96.27)	50 (100.00)	15 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	228 (97.85)
Uniform tone	5 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	1 (100.00)	129 (96.27)	50 (100.00)	15 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	228 (97.85)
Arouses interest among users	5 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	1 (100.00)	134 (100.00)	50 (100.00)	15 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	233 (100.00)
Contains/ conveys the following										
Humour	-	-	-	-	-	1 (0.74)	3 (6.00)	-	-	4 (1.71)
Positive emotions	5 (100.00)	2 (28.57)	5 (71.42)	6 (85.71)	-	38 (28.35)	8 (16.00)	2 (13.33)	3 (42.85)	69 (29.61)
Motivating	-	3 (42.85)	6 (85.71)	1 (14.28)	1 (100.00)	38 (28.35)	23 (46.00)	10 (66.66)	7 (100.00)	89 (38.19)
Informative	4 (80.00)	3 (42.85)	4 (57.14)	5 (71.42)	-	43 (32.00)	11 (22.00)	9 (60.00)	-	79 (33.90)
Solution-focused	5 (100.00)	6 (85.71)	7 (100.00)	4 (57.14)	1 (100.00)	90 (67.16)	50 (100.00)	9 (60.00)	3 (42.85)	179 (76.82)
Fear-inducing	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1 (0.42)
Total	5 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	1 (100.00)	134 (100.00)	50 (100.00)	15 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	233 (100.00)

Table 5. Overall Quality Assessment and Scoring of All IEC Materials and Sensitisation Programme Conducted

Types of IEC Materials	Overall Quality of IEC Materials (N = 233)
Quality mean score	
Prints (maximum possible score = 51)	27.09 ± 4.32*
Visuals (maximum possible score = 60)	35.44 ± 4.87*
Quality mean percentage score	
Prints (maximum possible score = 51)	53.13 ± 8.49**
Visuals (maximum possible score = 60)	59.07 ± 8.12**
Print IEC score (%) (N = 142)	n (%)
< 50	44 (32.84)
50–74	92 (68.66)
≥ 75	6 (4.48)
Visual IEC score (%) (N = 91)	n (%)
< 50	7 (7.69)
50–74	81 (89.01)
≥ 75	3 (3.30)

*represents mean score and standard deviation; **represents mean percentage score and standard deviation;

% represents percentage; IEC represents information, education and communication materials

Discussion

An array of 233 IEC materials addressing one or more youth issues across different platforms (like print media, and visual/ social media), targeted for different audiences was assessed. Most IEC materials (visual IEC and print IEC) had quality percentage scores between 50% and 74% with scope for improvement in some of the IECs. The most common IEC materials developed were posters and videos under YS. A comprehensive checklist for quality assessment of IEC materials was developed focusing on the quality of content, aesthetics, medium of communication, user-friendliness, and certain subjective characteristics.

IEC is a critical component in targeting new beneficiaries and creating awareness about the programme YS. Our study is unique since few studies assess the quality of IEC materials for a unique first-of-its-kind youth mental health promotion programme YS. The developed checklist incorporates all aspects of the programme that need to be potentially included within the IEC materials and is capable of comprehensively assessing any kind of IEC material under YS. Providing all information regarding YS in every IEC material is a challenge as well as not necessary as each type of IEC has a specific focus. It is ideal to have all required information regarding the helpline, webpage, email, Yuva Parivarthakas (meaning youth change agents), and Yuva Samalochakas (meaning youth counsellors) within all the posters, brochures, and pamphlets. This is because they are focused on potential beneficiaries and expected to be retained by them to bank on when they need further information related to the programme. Videos and reels are made to focus on specific issues and to make specific audiences with such issues access YS services. These IEC materials are justified in having one or two contact information rather than having all the information provided in it. Therefore majorly, information regarding the YS Helpline is available along with a weblink of YS for almost all IEC materials more so for videos. Also, having helpline details in all IEC materials is a good support for beneficiaries especially those who are in crisis. It is recommended that future IEC materials contain helpline information. It was observed in our study that helpline information is available in approximately 50% of the IEC materials. YS helpline came into existence only during the year 2021. All IEC materials developed after the commissioning of the helpline contained helpline information. It is recommended to include helpline information in all IEC materials developed before 2021 including the future ones.

The colour of any reading material usually attracts individuals to exhibit interest in reading the information,⁶ contemplate behavioural changes, and eventually, act based on the information. The majority of IEC materials utilised in YS are attractive and colourful “to a great extent”.

One of the known key reasons for not using IEC material is its non-availability in the local language.⁷ All of them were available in the local language (Kannada). Further, language appropriateness, clarity, tone, and simplicity of language used contribute to overall aesthetics as well as the effectiveness of the IEC material. Our study assessed these characteristics and found them to be appropriate in almost all IEC materials except some posters.

IEC materials most commonly addressed health and lifestyle issues and personality development issues. Youth and safety and gender, sex, and sexuality were the least addressed issues. Animated testimonials and influencer videos are a powerful medium to address youth and safety and gender, sex, and sexuality issues as they are known to be associated with stigma.⁸ Gender, sex, sexuality, and safety issues are more focused on through brochures. Brochures are good for targeting individual beneficiaries. However, to reach larger audiences and get clients with safety issues and gender, sex, and sexuality issues to YSKs, influencer videos, and other mass-media IECs are more beneficial. YS could utilise this lost opportunity to develop influencer videos and other mass-media IEC based on these issues. IEC materials under YS show diversity in terms of several issues focused on and the type of IEC materials developed. This will help in casting a broader net to sensitise youth through different modes like actual sensitisation programmes to those using social media, print media, etc. Specific focused IEC materials address only one issue facilitating IEC for specific targeted audiences and others that are more general and focus on multiple issues for a general audience. With this, the programme YS has an array of materials across types and issues facilitating the resource person to use a cafeteria approach based on the audience, purpose, and time available.

Compatibility with culture and being focused are important attributes of any IEC material.⁹ It is important to understand the potential beneficiaries and their culture while developing them. With the focus of IEC materials under YS being youth and sensitising them on youth issues, traditional IECs like posters, pamphlets, and brochures although useful, may not be the sought-after materials. Newer unconventional methods like reels, influencer videos, testimonials, animated videos, etc have more reach and acceptability among potential beneficiaries. This is one of the strengths of our study as both conventional and non-conventional IEC materials are available to suit the needs of the youth of Karnataka and diverse issues are addressed with a focus on simplicity, understandability, clarity, and cultural appropriateness.

Conventionally, IEC materials are used to make beneficiaries contemplate changing behaviour/ improve health-seeking or access care, etc. IEC materials within YS are primarily

developed to sensitise potential beneficiaries or their stakeholders (teachers, parents, etc) and increase footfalls into YSKs. They are a significant tool in the process. The focus on sensitisation and increasing footfall shifted from in-person sensitisation programmes to additionally employing social media sensitisation recently (since 2021) utilising IEC materials for the same.¹⁰ Out of 233, about 181 IEC materials were developed after 2021 to serve the same. Increased footfall is the natural outcome expected to assess the effect of these IEC materials. This is ideally done in the community by seeking feedback from potential beneficiaries.¹¹ However, as a first step, this assessment of IEC materials assumes importance to ensure the appropriateness of quality and make corrections to conduct a beneficiary-focused quality assessment of the IEC. Thus, this study was conducted with researchers from within the programme. The next step would be to look at the effectiveness of these IEC materials among key stakeholders and beneficiaries in the community. Our checklist is now available to assess such effectiveness as a way forward.

Strengths & Limitations

Our study has its strengths and limitations. First, this is one of the few studies that comprehensively analyse the quality of IEC materials across various domains of assessment namely content, aesthetics, medium of communication, information regarding the programme, quality of the video, and various characteristics (such as humour, solution-focused, informative, motivative, etc.) focused on sensitising the beneficiary about the programme. Second, a comprehensive quality assessment checklist is available that is developed with the help of inputs from core team members of YS to assess any IEC materials within YS. Both conventional and non-conventional IEC materials are available to suit the needs of the youth of Karnataka and diverse issues are addressed with a focus on simplicity, understandability, clarity, and cultural appropriateness. As limitations, more IEC materials that address issues such as gender, sex, sexuality, and safety that are considered stigmatised and culturally taboo are needed. With the availability of non-conventional modes of IEC, there is an opportunity to de-stigmatise such issues and contribute towards mainstreaming youth with such issues. The checklist consisted of various characteristics related to components of humour, motivation, information provided, solution-focused, fear-inducing, etc. These assessments are subjective in nature. This study did not evolve objectivity into this subjective assessment. This might seem to be a limitation of the study. However, this is justified as these important components need to be viewed from the subjective user perspective that is dependent on users' life experience, upbringing and socio-cultural scenarios.

Despite these limitations, a variety of well-designed and effective IEC materials are crucial to enhancing the effectiveness of mental health promotion and education initiatives.

Conclusion

This study provides a specifically developed quality assessment checklist for assessing the available IEC materials in programme YS. Our study revealed that the quality of most IEC materials utilised in the programme YS was above average percentage score. Although the developed checklist is comprehensive, a few domains need further exploration. This assessment provides suggestions which is essential for improvement in existing as well as future IEC materials.

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