



## **Role of Interpersonal Communication and Mass Media in Awareness, Prevention and Control Of HIV/Aids in Punjab, Pakistan**

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### **Abstract**

The objective of the study is to compare the role of interpersonal communication and mass media in awareness, prevention and control of HIV/AIDS in Punjab, Pakistan. It aims to determine whether interpersonal communication is more effective in motivating to adopt the precautionary measures for HIV/AIDS as compared to mass media. The precautionary measures include prevention, adoption of precautions measures and its cure. Theoretical framework is structured with the help of Elaboration Likelihood model and Two-step flow of communication. Population of this study comprises Female Sex Workers (FSWs), Injection Drug Users (IDUs), Male Sex Workers (MSWs) and clients of Sex Workers of different age groups and residing in Lahore, Multan & Faisalabad. The data is collected through focus group discussion and in-depth interviews. The key findings of the study are that: Interpersonal communication is more effective in creating awareness, control and prevention of HIV/AIDS than mass media. Barriers in adopting preventive measures can be controlled better by interpersonal communication than mass media.

**Keyword:** *HIV/AIDS awareness, prevention, control. Interpersonal communication, Mass media*

### **Introduction**

HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus. It is the virus which can lead to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, or AIDS, if not treated. Unlike some other viruses, the human body

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can't get rid of HIV completely, even with treatment. So once you get HIV, you have it for life (CDC, 2017).

HIV attacks the body's immune system. It can destroy resistance cells and a body can't fight off infections and disease. The infections take advantage of a weak immune system and signal that the person has AIDS, the last stage of HIV infection (CDC, 2017).

Currently no effective cure exists, but with proper medical care, HIV can be controlled. The medicine used to treat HIV is called antiretroviral therapy or ART. If taken the right way, this medicine can prolong lives of patients infected with HIV; keep them healthy with a less chance to infect others. AIDS is the most severe phase of HIV infection. People with AIDS have such badly damaged immune systems that they get an increasing number of severe illnesses called opportunistic infections. (UNAIDS, 2018)

Present study aims to compare the role of interpersonal communication and mass media in awareness, prevention & control of HIV/AIDS. To find whether interpersonal communication can better control the barriers in adoption of precautionary measures for HIV/AIDS as compared to mass media. It also aims to study how far can mass media discuss sensitive diseases like HIV/AIDS. There are seven different types of media print, recordings, cinema, radio, television and digital media. Since the eruption of HIV/AIDS pandemic, all types of media are being utilized by various NGOs, organizations and health institutions at national and international level to spread awareness about HIV/AIDS. Despite all these efforts the decline

in the ratio of HIV is not satisfactory due to certain elements like illiteracy, poverty and lack of research of the target audience. This study is conducted to highlight the importance of interpersonal communication in creating awareness, prevention and control of HIV/AIDS as compared to mass media.

Major part of the population are those people who are directly or indirectly involved with HIV/AIDS. The researcher has targeted those groups of the community who can be the main source of spreading this epidemic. So the rationale for selecting Female Sex Workers (FSW), Male Sex Male (MSW) / (MSM), and Injection Drug Users and clients of Sex Workers is that this population prevails in the high risk area. Increasing ratio of HIV/AIDS is high due to this specialized audience and AIDS can spread rapidly for worse, as compared to any other community because of them.

### **Literature Review**

Mankanchang (2010) explored that mass media can be contributory in aggregate mindfulness, knowledge and even in the raise of interpersonal communication about HIV/AIDS. Gender discrimination in Cameroon had usually placed women as substandard which restricted them from certain rights particularly sexual rights and to investigate the many practices used by Cameroon Post newspaper to encourage accountable and safe behavior among women in order to decrease the rate prevalent in HIV/AIDS. The study used both qualitative and quantitative research design and acquired data through online record of Cameroon post newspaper where all publications of the newspaper were available. The results demonstrated that the

media effects on fight against HIV/AIDS in Cameroon drive prominently attained only if the problem of gender inequality and poverty were seen upon and solutions delivered.

Baldan, Audenhove & Vergnani (2012) indicated that the contemporary speculative dissertation on HIV mediations was concentrated on the worth of interpersonal communication because interpersonal communication was belonging to the construction of social knowledge surroundings. Today mass media channels were used for conveying HIV messages and stimulating interpersonal communication between mark collections furthermore new technologies were also used for HIV prevention. The study used case study method to collect data. The objective was to establish, execute and estimate online debate stage for undergraduates to share understanding and debate on complex topics. The consequences exemplified that online platforms generated gap by which students liberally reflected childhood and innovative thoughts, learned information and educated to appreciation variable interpretations on the issues of debate.

Hanan (2009) critically reviewed HIV /AIDS prevention campaigns. The study's purpose was to check the communication strategies and steps that played a vital role in making powerful communication programs for modeling public behaviors related to the issues of HIV/AIDS. The study also focused on the role of interpersonal and mass communication in the expansion of HIV/AIDS campaigns. Findings clearly showed that the strategies involved in communication project were highly interconnected. Moreover, study also found that successful campaigns were

dependent on communicator skills who examined the needs of audiences in a specific target area for behavior change towards the prevention of HIV/AIDS.

Okaron (2015) inquired the influence of HIV/AIDS campaign messages in Nairobi Country. The objectives of this study were: How the target audiences understood and appreciated MpangoWaKando HIV/AIDS campaign messages. Moreover, how MpangoWaKando HIV/AIDS campaign used messages to conveyed HIV/AIDS awareness. Study was conducted by quantitative as well as qualitative research designs. The study population was based on 188 respondents including married and unmarried males and females between the ages of 18-40. The interpretation of the final result showed that MpangoWaKando HIV/AIDS campaign messages were effectively communicated among the audience because of its educative nature.

Fleisher, A.J. (2009) stated the concentrations on communication connected with HIV/AIDS, self-discipline and condoms among students of early (11-14 years) and middle (15-17years) adolescence. The aim of the study was to define teenage sexuality communication with parents and teachers about HIV/AIDS, sexual abstinence, condoms and identification of people whom adolescents find trustworthy to communicate about sexuality in order to evaluate the amount of adolescents who never or barely ever talked about sexuality. The baseline questionnaire survey was used. The result indicated that teenage girls were more interested to communicate about sexual information with their mothers and boys were interested with

their fathers and large percentage of youngsters were not intended to communicate about HIV/AIDS, abstinence, or condoms. The short ratio illuminated that muteness was communal regarding sexual communication and behavior across socio-demographic of subcategories.

Sood, Corinne, Rogers & Sengupta (2006) critically investigated Mass Media campaign effects in changing HIV/AIDS Behavior and knowledge in North India. Study highlighted that in 1990s there were few HIV/AIDS cases in India but today millions of people were breathing with this disease. Furthermore, India was also spreading the HIV/AIDS virus in the rest of Asia and Pacific region. This study analyzed HIV/AIDS campaigns in 3 North Indian states Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and New Delhi. The study objective was to find out the impact of mass media on HIV/AIDS awareness through entertainment and education. Moreover, study determined how mass media helped in interpersonal communication on HIV/AIDS. The findings revealed that persons were showing awareness about transmission of HIV/AIDS virus sexually and use of condoms. Furthermore, the study also highlighted that HIV/AIDS campaigns were limited to change people's condom usage behavior.

Kerubo (2015) studied the role of edutainment in HIV/AIDS communication strategies for creating awareness among the youth of Nairobi. This study was to examine edutainment role in communication social change for the awareness of HIV/AIDS among the Kenya youth. The study was conducted among the University of Nairobi students of Bachelor

of Arts (development communication) and (Broadcast Production) between the ages of 18 to 24. Both Qualitative (Interviews) and quantitative (Survey) methods were utilized for data collection. The conclusion of the study showed that Shuga Television effectively communicated HIV/AIDS messages. Moreover, the Shuga Television dramas effectively communicated the HIV prevention among adolescents and it was encouraging the young people for HIV testing. The study also found that Packages of HIV / AIDS messages on Shuga Television utilized the new trends of social awareness. Study was recommended to Kenya government to invest more in social issues like HIV/AIDS among the people for their health issues.

Muturi (2007) conducted a research about HIV/AIDS prevention through the interpersonal communication within FBOs in Jamaica. This study examined the communication techniques, challenges and difficulties that religious leaders faced in communication process. Study was conducted through qualitative (focus-groups) and (in-depth interviews). Study findings revealed that FBOs had social, cultural possibilities to influence attitude towards the HIV/AIDS awareness. Furthermore, study found that religious leaders facilitated more as good HIV/AIDS communicators than others and their collaborative efforts between the health organizations and FBOs more actively created awareness about the HIV/AIDS.

Limaye et al., (2012) disclosed that in Malawi suitable sexual instructions and sufficient information regarding sexual health issues did not materialize so the pervasive existence of AIDS cases was considered a problematic issue. 90% stock of

impurities existed in heterosexual transmission due to low usage of condoms. Focus group discussions and household survey methods were used in this study. The outcome of consuming qualitative and quantitative research designs revealed that self-efficacy knowledge seeming prosperities and mandate custom talking about condom use was vital manipulated goal to discourse condom usage by spouse and informative messages of sex motivated destructive concerns towards sexual actions rather than produced mutual understanding regarding sex information between parents, children, partners, and peers. In Malawi, there was a requirement to proliferate ability about sex and counting condom use. Mediations would contain mechanisms which enhance confidence level and communication skills regarding sexual conversation.

Galavotti et al. (2005) stated that people cultivated rationality through stories for daily position in society because the stories facilitated them to form and change their experiences in order to react towards existing conditions. The society faced more severe challenges when their members couldn't agree to change existing stories which they communicated. In sub-Saharan Africa, the alarming story was the pervasiveness of AIDS transmission. Now, there was a necessary need for substitute descriptions to become prominent in civilizations suffering the destruction of HIV/AIDS. The study designated the exclusive narrative interference policy called MARCH which stood for Modeling and Reinforcement to Combat HIV/AIDS in order to maintain US government's goal regarding HIV/AIDS to prevent and diminish their impact on people globally. In numerous African states for

MARCH schemes strategy, execution, and assessment purpose the US CDC was teamed up with native groups.

Morisky et al., (2005) evaluated high-risk of HIV/AIDS infection among (CSWs), (MSMs) and (IDUs) in Philippines. The study's purpose was to estimate 2-year consequences of publicly constructed peer education program with a goal to enlarge HIV/AIDS knowledge or attitudes toward condoms and their usage between cab and auto drivers. The questionnaire was designed to measure knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to STI-HIV/AIDS. The results of the study illustrated that in the Philippines, peer education program was conducted for successful measurements towards the control of HIV among cab and rickshaw drivers and also change their behavior for condom usage as well as the potential understanding about HIV prevention among male population. A higher %age of participants had received educational information on AIDS/STI prevention from peer's education programs.

Muturi (2005) indicated that the HIV/AIDS disease spread widely in Africa even after taking immeasurable fights towards their blockage. The purpose of the study was to observe those dynamics which influenced generative wellbeing choice of Kenyan folks' either to practice or not the contraceptives aimed to rescue HIV/AIDS infections zone. The study used KAP model concerning HIV knowledge. The active communication deliberated essential distribution packages to both providers and clients about HIV/AIDS infection. Especially in rural communities, it encompassed basically propagating health messages using popular media and enabled them for building

appropriate conclusion. The inconsistent media messages associated to social and cultural perspective subsidized minimum variation sexual practices. Data was gathered through qualitatively research design technique such as focus groups and in-depth interviews among men and women in rural Kenya. The results indicated that rural women were highly affected through HIV/AIDS due to lack of understanding regarding HIV prevention messages. In order to overcome these challenges positive communication was included which concentrated on better understanding of the communicated messages among audience.

Literature review indicates that though mass media has an importance in creating awareness prevention and control regarding HIV/IDS but without interpersonal communication it cannot achieve the desired goals. These studies show that interpersonal communication, interviews and counseling play a more important role than the mass media. In many studies, different educational programs are the main source to reduce this epidemic especially the awareness about use of condoms can only be through interpersonal communication. The studies also show that as the elaboration likelihood model, the audience who opt the peripheral route need interpersonal communication rather than mass media as the audience with peripheral route don't have interest in getting information from the mass media. There are many other factors like poverty that is an obstacle in their behavior to understand and follow the message broadcasted by mass media.

**Theoretical Framework**

Elaboration likelihood model (ELM) was used for this study. This model showed relevance with the present study as this model deals with the attitude and behavior of the people by means of central and peripheral route. It also deals with the motivation and ability of the audience. It explains the attitudes and how perceptions and attitudes can be changed if audience has no interest to perceive the message. Then, the sender plays a vital role to convince them with its credibility and expertise.

This theory argues that every message is being processed and that process is basically having an effect in changing the opinion and minds of the public. This model proposes that every message is being processed by the individuals through two ways. The first route is central route and other one is peripheral route. Central route is basically straight and to the point route and it is used for the individuals and the receivers who are very active and involved in receiving of messages. This route includes reasoning and arguments and it aims to change the minds of the public through reasoning and argumentation. So, this route basically caters long term effects. In this study, interpersonal communication is taken as a central route in which social Mobilizers play a role to diffuse message to the targeted audience with reasoning and argumentation.

The other route is periphery route which is basically for the individuals who are weak in involvement and not very interested in receiving messages. So, they are not involved in reasoning and argumentation of the messages. Marketing industries, public relations industries and advertising industries

come in action here. They use different tactics to persuade the audience as the messages lack argument and reasoning of any sort. Hence, individuals change their minds through different techniques which can be credibility, personality appeals and so many other methods of advertising, public relations and marketing. In this study, mass media was seen choosing the peripheral route by using various ways to persuade the targeted audience.

### **Methodology**

A focus group discussion and in depth interviews were conducted with both open-ended and close-ended questions. Three cities of Punjab i.e. Lahore, Multan & Faisalabad as the field of study due to the reason that Punjab Aids Control Program selected these cities as the ratio of HIV/AIDS in these cities was higher than the others. The participants for the Focus group of this study were total eight in number which included Female Sex Workers (FSWs), Male Sex Workers (MSWs), Injection Drug Users (IDUs) and clients of FSWs & MSWs. respondents from different categories for conducting in-depth interviews. These persons were directly or indirectly related to the above mentioned population.

### **Findings**

It was established that most respondents understood the importance of interpersonal communication than mass media in creating awareness about HIV/AIDS. The results of this research showed that mass media failed to provide the expected awareness about HIV/AIDS as somehow it could aware the audience about HIV/AIDS but it was not up to the mark. Interpersonal

communication was more effective because it was dealing with the people directly and can answer the questions clearly. In Pakistani society where it is a social stigma, people feel hesitant to speak or discuss it loudly or openly. Interpersonal communication is the best way to the prevention of HIV/AIDS. Results also supported the research hypothesis and following studies strengthened the problem statement. Elaboration Likelihood model also sustained the importance of IPC in comparison with Mass Media.

It was proved that talking about sexual contacts or sexual relations was not easy on the mass media and especially in Pakistani society where it is stigma for the people. People were not in a comfort zone when they talked about sex on mass media. Media could only deal with the awareness to some extent. According to the findings, selected respondents i.e. MSW, FSW, IDU could not discuss sex, preventive measures e.g. use of condoms or rectal fluid openly. They wanted to talk personally so that they could easily share their issues and get desirable solutions. So it was therefore proved that interpersonal communication could play a vital role in the prevention of HIV/AIDS. On contrary, mass media faced more difficulties to control the adoption barriers. On the other hand, interpersonal communication was considered as a two way process and people could get feedback immediately as compared to mass media. Through interpersonal communication respondents were getting more information regarding the precautions and the barriers were going to be controlled better. Talk about sex, use of offensive language and use of condoms could not be easily discussed on

mass media especially in Muslim countries like Pakistan where social and religious barriers were always present in every adoption process. This issue was not only present in Muslim countries rather it also prevailed in western world where explicit language was also not used in mass media. FGD and interview findings reflected that adoption of preventive measures was concerned with the attitude of the selected population. It came to knowledge that poverty and illiteracy were the major factor in the adoption of precautionary measures. So, interpersonal communication appeared as a better route to convince them to adopt the preventive measures e.g. use of condoms, use of lotion during anal sex etc.

It was established by the responses of targeted audience that interpersonal communication was more effective in controlling HIV/AIDS among HIV positive patients as the audience could easily share their views and complaints with the doctors or social mobilizers. They also got aware about the treatment and the health centers of HIV/AIDS through interpersonal communication. Mass media was not playing a role in the control of HIV/AIDS especially among the HIV positive patients. It was necessary to educate the HIV positive patients so that their disease could not be spread further. Interpersonal communication was considered as the best way to provide education to patients. As we had discussed that poverty and illiteracy were also the major factors in prevention. Likewise these factors were also there in control as mass media failed to guide or educate the public about the health centers specifically meant for HIV/AIDS treatment where free medicines were available for the

HIV positive patients. Their identities were also not shown to the public.

Elaboration Likelihood Model, the attitude formed through the central route rather than the peripheral route is stronger and more difficult to change. Only interpersonal communication can play a role to motivate people to change in their attitude. The peripheral route is used when the message recipient has little or no interest in the subject or has a lesser ability to process the message. So to overcome this problem interpersonal communication can play a role to grab the attention of recipient towards the message and make it more attractive and credible and motivate them to adopt the preventive measures.

Personal relevance can also affect an individual's degree of motivation. For example people were told regarding preventive measures of HIV/AIDS. This information was either supported by strong or weak arguments. The people who were going to be personally affected by it would think more about the issue than those people who were not going to be personally affected. That's why the FSWs, IDUs & MSWs were more concerned with the prevention and control rather than the general public.

In the present study the majority of the respondents were those recipients who had little or no interest in the message or had lesser ability to process the message. So in this case, if mass media was used it could not be effective as there was a gap between sender and the receiver. There was only interpersonal communication which could play an effective role and motivate

the audience to adopt central route instead of peripheral route which had a stronger and long lasting effect.

### **Conclusions**

In conclusion it is cleared that interpersonal communication is two way and open. Affected persons can be easily communicated and can get the feedback through effective communication from the target audiences like MSW, FSW and IDU. We should keep in mind that they are different in the way as we are perceiving the content and through interpersonal communication we are using this understanding to guide and aware them and for their prevention that is more important. Interpersonal communication is the real work of understanding, result orienting and the most importantly easy to access the target audience. The effectiveness of interpersonal communication can be defined by the results and responses we are getting from the MSW, FSW and IDU, not only by telling the targeted people through mass media the methods of cure but also the most important factor is the involvement of the target audience that will generate the result through the participation of MSW, FSW, IDU and the only way to make it possible is interpersonal communication. For the removal of this stigma of AIDS from Pakistan it is interpersonal communication that can lead to success. It is the power of interpersonal communication that can deal with the affected audience and control the barriers to the prevention of AIDS. Mass media and interpersonal communication is signifying and mass media is providing the information to the target audience but interpersonal communication is getting through them in it. Through this

research, it is clear to know that interpersonal communication is reaching towards the affected people to find out what they know and what they want to know. Interpersonal communication leads to the community that understands the issue, intimacy and mutual valuing.

The relationships among exposure, information, attitude, self-efficacy and behavior can be understood through interpersonal communication which completely reconciles the connection between exposure and attitudes. In other words, the correlation between exposure and attitudes is better explained by their relationships with interpersonal communication. Interpersonal discussion can aid to reinforce the original message. As noted previously, almost everyone in our sample was personally at elevated risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. The finding shows that interpersonal talk was a crucial part of swaying viewers to embrace more secure sex practices or different insurances and to sway others to do so was backed by member remarks.

Interpersonal communication builds a component for data replication and introduction among members. Specially for awareness of target audience like Female Sex Workers (FSWs), Male Sex Workers (MSWs) and Injection Drug Users (IDUs) having low background and less facility of mass media.

For better results, in any communication strategy, when sending messages, it is important to send the right message, through the right channel, at the right time and to the right people. Surely all communication channels be it radio, television, print can be used as tools for health communication. However, health

communication deals with a complex matter- enhancing social and behavioral change. So when dealing with the complex matters, interpersonal communication can be more effective than mass media and it can get the desired objectives.

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