

MASS MEDIA AND FAMILY PLANNING: UNDERSTANDING THE EFFECTS OF TELEVISION IN INNOVATION-DECISION PROCESS OF HEALTH COMMUNICATION IN DISTRICT PESHAWAR

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To assess the effectiveness of Pakistan Television (PTV) as a tool in altering different levels of human behavior from increasing awareness, persuasion, decision making and confirmation of decision about family planning messages.

Material and Methods: This study was based on theory of diffusion of innovation by Rogers and Shoemaker (1971). The study involved 150 married couples (300 males/females) of child bearing age of Peshawar District. The data was gathered through a cross sectional survey. All data computing was done on excel sheet.

Results: Eighty per cent respondents had a knowledge ranging from “to some extent” (36%), “to great extent” (29%) and “completely” (15%). Only 13% were unaware of the issue. Similarly, 14% respondents stated that television changed their attitude towards family planning “completely”. Another 18% were of the opinion that it changed their attitude “to great extent” and 38% marked as “to some extent”. Only 23% denied any role of television in attitude formation. As per analysis, 13% of the respondents consider television as a potential source for decision making for family planning innovation. Only 11% respondent used television “completely” for confirmation of their decision regarding family planning innovation.

Conclusion: The effects of family planning innovation vary on married couples of child bearing age in the locale under study. Television played a significant role at the knowledge and persuasion level however it was found as less effective at decision and confirmation stages.

Key Words: Mass Media, Effects, Health Communication, Innovation-Decision, Family Planning.

This article may be cited as: Sultan K, Younus S. Mass media and family planning: Understanding the effects of television in innovation-decision process of health communication in district Peshawar. KUST Med J 2010; 2(2): 58-63.

INTRODUCTION

Human reproduction is the key not only to human survival but also to the continuing health of billions of men and women and their present and future children. Issues relating to reproduction are becoming increasingly prominent on the public health agenda.¹ Family planning programs organize efforts to provide contraception to women and men are one of the major social

and health interventions in the second half of the 20th century. These programs exist in most countries and in all world regions. As of 1998, 179 governments, representing 92% of governments where over 99% of the world's population lived, supported access to contraceptives.² That is due to the reason that mass media is giving considerable time and space to the issues of health development and communication.

The media have been the subject of academic study for over 70 years. However, it is only in the last decade that *media studies* as a subject has really come into the public awareness.³ Massive campaigns (in terms of budget and time) were designed by the WHO, UNICEF, Ministry of Health Pakistan and health development messages were disseminated through mass media for awareness and change in attitude. The effects paradigm (or widely adopted theory) assumes media and their audiences are connected in a basic cause-and-effect scenario.⁴

There is a surprisingly long tradition of effects-based audience research, and an examination of it reveals a significant body of different approaches. All have

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Date Received: September 11, 2009

Date Revised: December 19, 2010

Date Accepted: December 21, 2010

in some way sought to examine the effects of media output on their audiences and all have argued that the media influence their audiences in some way.⁵ There is evidence from a number of studies that individuals' exposure to mass media messages promoting family planning influences contraceptive behavior.⁶⁻⁹ For example, in Nigeria, use of modern contraception, intent to use, and desire for fewer children were found to be associated with exposure to media messages on family planning.⁷ Another study in Tanzania has revealed that women exposed to mass media promoting family planning were more likely to use family planning.¹⁰

Similarly, television is the source of the most broadly shared images and messages in history. Its mass ritual shows no signs of weakening and its consequences are increasingly felt around the globe.¹¹ As McLuhan thinks television with its sounds and pictures is cool, less complete, in comparison to imageless radio, and for that matter to most words printed on a page lacking sound as well as image. Because of coolness of medium, its invitation to fill in the details depends upon the degree of intensity senses it engages rather than the number of senses.¹² A number of models have emerged from different fields identifying specific pathways to behavior change and offering insights to programs as they try to influence and change behavior. Several have been very influential in explaining the effects of mass media campaigns on fertility-related behavior. Ideation change, defined as a change in the way of thinking through the diffusion of new ideas and practices, has been identified as an important determinant of fertility decline.¹³ The ideation model derives from the diffusion of innovation theory and includes five stages through which an individual progresses: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation.¹⁴ The input/output persuasion model considers how various aspects of communication influence the behavioral outcome of communication.¹⁵ The Steps to Behavior Change is an adaptation of the diffusion of innovations theory and the input/output persuasion model and consists of five major stages of change: knowledge, approval, intention, practice, and advocacy.¹⁶

This framework emphasizes that there are several intermediate steps that people move through before they change their behavior. This suggests that different messages and approaches in behavior change communication are required to reach people at different stages in the process. Studies have also shown that there is a dose-response effect between the amount of exposure to family planning messages in the mass media (as defined by the number of different types of media) and an increase in use of family planning methods. In Tanzania, Miriam NJ¹⁰ found that the more types of media source of family planning messages, the greater the likelihood of contraceptive use. Likewise, Kane TT et al¹⁷ found that contraceptive knowledge and use and more favorable attitudes towards family planning were

positively associated with the number of mass media interventions in Mali.

Rationale

Overpopulation is amongst the greatest issue on earth. The state advocates and encourages family planning. The contents of the mass media encourage controlling the increasing trend in population. Efforts towards family planning helps save women's and children's lives and preserves their health by preventing untimely and unwanted pregnancies, reducing women's exposure to the health risks of childbirth and abortion and giving women, who are often the sole caregivers, more time to care for their children and themselves. All couples and individuals have the right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to do so.

A planned family has a much better chance of being a happy one. An unplanned one has virtually no chance at all. Various studies have shown higher morbidity among mothers and children in large sized families.¹⁸ Promotion of family planning in countries having high birth rates may reduce the poverty and hunger and avert 32% of all maternal deaths and nearly 10% of childhood deaths.¹⁹ Family size is seen to be related to education, where the mother's education is high, the family size is usually smaller and infant mortality is also relatively lower. There are certain hazards of large and unplanned families about which people need to be aware. These hazards are going to affect not only the mothers and children, but also the family as a whole, and subsequently, the community and the nation.¹⁸

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this research work is generally based on the effects approach of mass communication. However, this study is primarily focused on diffusion of innovations by Rogers and Shoemaker's.²⁰ Diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system. It is a special type of communication, in that the messages are concerned with new ideas. Here persuasion refers as a change in opinion, attitude, or behavior due to exposure.²¹ But when we look at what came before such an event, and at what follows, we often realize that the event is only one part of a total process in which information is exchanged between the two individuals. For example, the client may come to the change agent with a problem, and the innovation is recommended as a possible solution to this need. The change agent-client interaction may continue through several cycles, as a process of information exchange. So diffusion is a special type of communication, in which the messages are about a new idea. This newness of the idea in the message content gives diffusion its special character. The newness means that some

degree of uncertainty is involved in diffusion. Uncertainty is the degree to which a number of alternatives are perceived with respect to the occurrence of an event and the relative probability of these alternatives. Uncertainty implies a lack of predictability, of structure, of information. In fact, information is a means of reducing uncertainty. Information is a difference in matter-energy that affects uncertainty in a situation where a choice exists among a set of alternatives.²² This study was conducted to assess the effectiveness of Pakistan Television (PTV) as a tool in altering different levels of human behavior from increasing awareness, persuasion, decision making and confirmation of decision about family planning messages.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Research Design

This cross sectional survey was carried out to explore the effects of television in innovation-decision process of health communication in district Peshawar. The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents at homes and work places. The investigation determined through the main research question "To what extent television is effective at different levels of innovation-decision process of family planning?" The independent variable in the study was exposure to television regarding family planning messages whereas dependent variables were: 1) Knowledge 2) persuasion 3) decision and 4) confirmation of decision regarding family planning.

Study Setting

The area of the study was the urban and rural areas of district Peshawar.

Study Population

Females and males of child bearing age of District, Peshawar.

Sample Frame

The study involved 150 married couples (300 males/females) of child bearing age (best age for child-bearing remains 20-35) of District, Peshawar. The data was gathered through questionnaire. The researcher used convenient sampling method for selection of respondents from the urban and rural areas of the district under study.

Data Collection

The questionnaires were distributed among the respondents through a team of students. A group of 6 students were trained by the researchers how to fill the questionnaire and later on assigned the task.

Research Question

To what extent PTV is effective at various levels of innovation-decision process regarding family planning.

The analysis is carried to cover the four dimension of the study, namely: Awareness/knowledge, attitude, practice and confirmation.

Considering the resources, time and financial constraints a sample of size 150 couples i.e. 300 individuals comprising male and female is carried out according to the sampling techniques stated in the methodology. Out of the total sample size 29 questionnaires were not received while 271 cases were processed for analysis.

RESULTS

Knowledge/Awareness Quantification

The figure below gives percentage distribution of respondents' knowledge on family planning which shows 80% respondents had a knowledge ranging from "to some extent" (36%), "to great extent" (29%) and "completely" (15%). Only 13% were not aware of the issue whereas 7% of the target group marked as doesn't know.

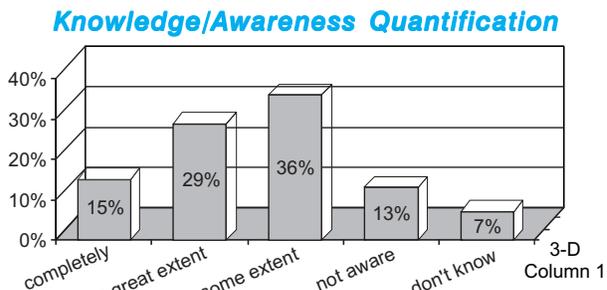


Fig. I

Television as a source of information for family planning

A part from 20% of the respondents which does not favor the effective role played by television in the awareness regarding family planning a sizable number of respondents i.e. 71% of the sampled population agreeing on "less effective" (40%), to "more effective" (18%), and completely effective (13%) role. The remaining 9% of the target group marked as doesn't know.

Television as a source of information for family planning

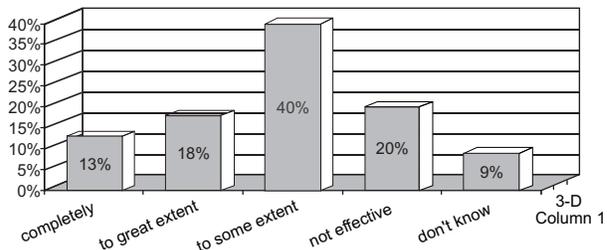


Fig. II

Importance of Family planning Urban and Rural comparison

The urban population of the target group attaches significant importance to the family planning as compared to the rural ones. The perceived need of family planning according to the urban group is 60% whereas that of rural is 40%.

Importance of Family planning Urban and Rural comparison

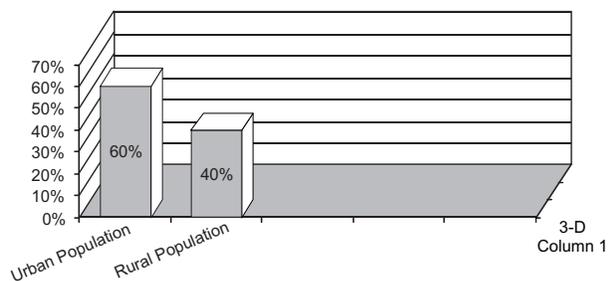


Fig. III

Television and attitude change towards family planning

The analysis revealed that television played a considerable role in attitude formation towards family planning. Fourteen per cent respondents opined that television changed their attitude towards family planning “completely”. Another 18% were of the opinion that it changed their attitude “to great extent” and 38% marked as “to some extent”. Only 23% denied any role of television in attitude formation.

Television and attitude change towards family planning

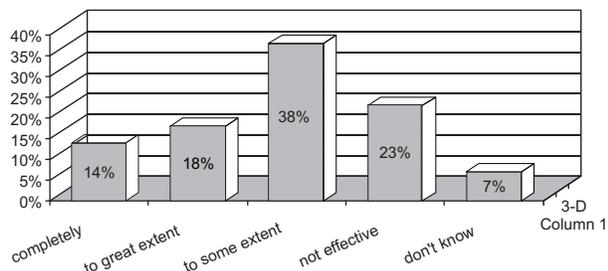


Fig. IV

Television as a source in decision making for family planning

As per the analysis 13% of the respondents consider television as a potential source for decision making for family planning innovation. Another 15% opined that television is responsible “to great extent” for their decision regarding family planning. A considerable number i.e. 42% of the target population marked “to some extent” whereas 24% denied any role of television in decision making regarding the family planning.

Television in confirmation of decision in family planning

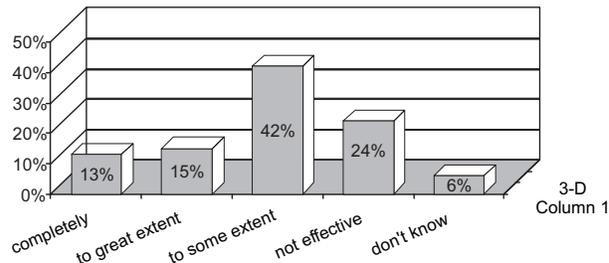


Fig. V

Television in confirmation of decision in family planning

As clear from the figure 6, below, 11% respondent used television “completely” for confirmation of their decision regarding family planning innovation. Further, 19% “to great extent” and 36% “to some extent”. Whereas 28% of the sample population did not use television for confirmation of family planning innovation.

Television as a source in decision making for family planning

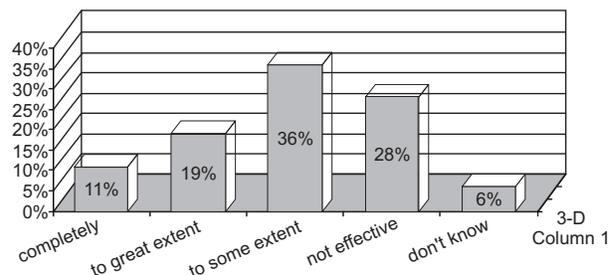
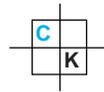
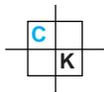


Fig. VI

DISCUSSION

In order to assess the effectiveness of television at all the four levels i.e. knowledge/awareness, persuasion, decision and confirmation of family planning messages it is argued on the basis of results that PTV is not effective at all the four levels. However, dissemination of family planning messages by PTV in district Peshawar is effective at knowledge/awareness and persuasion levels. According to the survey results, a sizeable percentage of the target group (80%) is aware of the family planning messages on PTV. The results of a study “The impact of mass media family planning promotion on contraceptive behavior of women in Ghana”²³ show that exposure to media messages on contraception exerts strong impact on current practice of, and intention to use, contraception. Women who had heard or seen advert on contraceptive brands, and women who favor broadcast of family planning messages in the media, are significantly more likely to adopt birth control behavior than women who had not heard or seen, and women



who do not favor broadcast of such media messages, respectively. Large increase in the number of family planning clients at clinics followed different communication campaigns.²⁴ The effectiveness of PTV at attitude formation level is again encouraging ranging from 14% respondents opined that television changed their attitude towards family planning “completely”. Another 18% were of the opinion that it changed their attitude “to great extent” and 38% marked as “to some extent”. If we add all these three categories the result would be 70%. It means that at the knowledge/awareness level the percentage is 80% and at attitude formation level it is 70% a drop of 10%. Furthermore, as per the study “The Cognitive and Co-Native effects of health communication campaign”²⁵ amongst the sources studies, Television is clearly emerged as a dominant source that brings considerable life to polio immunization campaign. According to the findings of that study, 79.1% respondents agreed that TV has played a vital role in bringing awareness, attitude formation, in decision making and even in reinforcement. Since the results shows that PTV is not effective at decision and confirmation levels as only 13% respondents consider PTV as a potential source for decision making followed by only 11% for level four i.e. confirmation of decision, so it can be concluded that a decreasing trend from level 1 to 4 is noticed (level 1=80%, level 2=70%, level 3=13% and level 4=11%). On the basis of this argument we can say that PTV is providing information on family planning to 80% respondents of the target area and the practices of family planning by the virtue of PTV messages is only 13%.

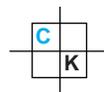
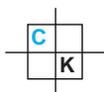
The study found marked differences in the pattern of responses in the urban-rural stratification. Sixty per cent of the respondents in the urban areas termed family planning as a necessity while 40% of them from rural areas said so. This can be attributed to greater exposure levels to mass media, greater rate of family planning adoption practices and higher socio-economic status of urban respondents. The data upholds the Knowledge Gap Hypothesis which propounds that differential level of exposure to mass media leads to differential knowledge levels.

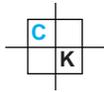
CONCLUSION

In the light of the results it can be concluded that PTV is effective at knowledge/awareness level where as it has a very limited role in decision and confirmation levels of the innovation-decision process of health communication. Further, the effects of family planning innovation vary on the basis of urban/rural population. Hence there is a need to disseminate the family planning messages from all the available sources. A regular media campaign like the one for polio immunization would be an effective method to control the ever increasing population.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST
Authors declare no conflict of interest

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