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## Effect of Communication Campaigns in Reducing HIV and AIDS High Risk Behavior in Rural Areas in India

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### **Abstract:**

*The spread of HIV/AIDS has become a social, economic and political concern in India, particularly in the rural areas where there is low literacy rate, superstition, and different social and cultural taboos. Govt. and other voluntary organizations have been using the mass media campaigns as remedial tool to fight against the HIV/AIDS as the first case of HIV was detected by Dr. Suniti Solmon among sex workers in Chennai in 1986. Every year millions of rupees are spent on television programmes, newspaper advertisements, radio messages and other form of communication to combat against the HIV/AIDS. The objective of the study is to find out the impact of mass media campaigns to change the attitude and behavior of people in rural areas of India. Are communication campaigns helpful to generate awareness to minimize the disease? Data is collected from 200 people aged 20-40 years chosen randomly. The study finds that people has a sufficient exposure to the mass media campaigns but less attitude and behavioral change. Television and newspaper are the main source of knowledge about the HIV/AIDS among people.*

**Key words:** Mass Media, Campaigns, HIV/AIDS, attitude and behavior, prevention, sex

### **1. Introduction**

Today, HIV/AIDS is influencing every segment of society in India. Because of high rates of HIV/AIDS, the epidemic is deepening poverty, reversing human development, worsening gender inequalities, overburdening the government, swaying the economy and lowering the reputation of the country. In the absence of possible treatment, intervention programmes such as awareness, information spreading and knowledge sharing have the significant impact to minimizing HIV/AIDS and diminishing high risk behaviors among people. In this regard, mass media campaigns have been used with high frequency around the world to help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS (Palmgreen, P., Noar, S. M., & Zimmerman, R. S. (2007).

However, because a large population of India is illiterate and living in villages, it is very important to educate them about the danger of HIV/AIDS. Therefore, mass media campaigns are frequently employed since of their ability to reach every person in an effective way, giving such mass media campaigns great potential as an instrument in combating the spread of HIV/AIDS (Cohen 2005). However, from the past two years, it is believed that India has been paying more attention on HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns and with the assistance of these campaigns it remained successful to reduce the pace of HIV/AIDS. On the other hand, it is found that mass media campaigns are not fully able to change the attitude and behaviour of people particularly in rural areas as it is expected. Sex is a taboo topic in India, thus the spread of information about HIV/AIDS prevention is inhibited. Stigma and discrimination are continued to be important barriers to prevention, care and treatment (UNICEF, 2004).

### **2. Review of Literature**

As it is already confirmed by the scientists and medical experts that the AIDS is an incurable disease, then the role of mass media campaigns is increased more. Some of past studies say that there is a positive relationship between exposure to mass media campaigns and HIV and AIDS-related behaviour change, for example, the adoption of condom uses (Japhet & Goldstein, 1997). Mass media messages could serve as pioneers to behaviour change (Piotrow et al., 1997; Rogers, 1996).

A systematic review of communication campaigns studied in developing countries summarised that there was direct connection and influence between increasing HIV/AIDS knowledge and decreasing high-risk sexual behaviour. The study also concluded that increased level of people's knowledge motivated them to adopt condom and abstain from risky behaviour. One more study conducted by Jato, Sood & Sengupta (2004) endorsed a profound relationship between mass media campaigns and reducing misconceptions about HIV/AIDS.

Undoubtedly, the above studies reflect a positive role of mass media campaigns in minimizing HIV/AIDS epidemic. But despite the sufficient mass media campaigns, basic knowledge and awareness level of HIV/AIDS is still lacking in two fifths of the rural youth in India. Education and media exposure are factors that determine awareness of HIV among them and can be helpful to raise

their knowledge regarding this scourge (Sudha B Yadav, Naresh R Makwana, Bhavin N Vadera, Kishor M Dhaduk, Kapil M Gandha, 2011).

### 3. Objectives of the Study

- To find out the impact of HIV/AIDS mass media campaigns on peoples' knowledge, attitude and behaviour in rural areas.
- To identify the factors that slow down the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns.

### 4. Methods

#### 4.1. Survey Design

The first case of HIV/AIDS in Himachal Pradesh was detected in Hamirpur district. Now it is the second highly infected district of the state. Therefore, a village, Tikka of Hamirpur is selected for the study. For data collection, a sample of two hundred people was chosen randomly. The eligibility criteria of the sample were determined by their age between 20 and 40 years because more than one third of reported cases of HIV/AIDS in India are among youth and 60 percent of these reside in rural areas.

#### 4.2. Measure

A questionnaire containing 65 questions was distributed to each and every one of the samples according to their availability at home and school. Both close and open ended questions were included in the questionnaire. During the collection of data many parents and elders denied to involve their children in the survey. It was observed that many old aged people in rural areas still fear from the name of HIV/AIDS and many misconceptions are available there.

#### 4.3. Data Analysis

After conducting the survey, the gathered data were summarized, coded, and tabled. Descriptive tool was used for analyses and interpret the collected data.

### 5. Results

Media use by the respondents	
Television	92%
Newspaper	78%
Radio	37%
Internet	11%

Table 1

The table no.1 displays that television is the most popular mass media used by the respondents in rural areas, with 92% of people viewing television and 78% people read newspapers, while 37% of sample use the radio. Internet use among people is minimum, 11%.

Mass Media that provides the most of the information on HIV/AIDS	
Television	72%
Newspaper	13%
Radio	9%
Internet	1%
Other media	5%

Table 2

The results of table 2 shows that according to the respondent's television provide them maximum information on HIV/AIDS while 13% of get it from newspaper. Radio and internet provide them less information respectively 9% and 1%. Almost 5% of the sample obtain it from other sources such as interpersonal communication, school etc.

Reactions toward HIV/AIDS message in the Media	
Felt the shame	56%
Ignore the messages	31%
Frighten or fear	7%
Determine to use preventions	6%

Table 3

In rural areas people watch television with their family members. A large part of the survey (56%) felt shame when HIV/AIDS message appeared on the television while 31% ignored the message or changed the channel. Only 6% people heard it and determined to follow the preventions.

<b>Factors that influence Mass Media campaigns results</b>	
Typical language and content of campaigns	23%
Hesitation and shyness about buying condom and knowing more about HIV/AIDS	77%
Social and family Culture	71%
Religious perception	8%
Non-availability of preventive means	83%
Not take seriously	24%
Others	15%

Table 4

People expressed different reasons about the minimum impact of mass media campaigns. 83% of people did not get any preventive measures such as condoms, facility of doctor for checkup etc. in the village. Social and family culture is also a major (77%) threat to the impact of mass media campaigns in positively. Majority of the people (71%) also felt that hesitation and shyness to buy condom or know more about HIV/AIDS. 24% of people do not take mass media campaigns seriously, whereas, 23% of the sample argues that there is problem with the language and content of HIV/AIDS campaigns.

<b>Impact of Mass Media Campaigns on people knowledge, attitude and behavior</b>	
Level of information increased	93%
Visited to hospital for checkup	4%
Not shared blade or needle	41%
Used condom	7%
Sympathy increased toward PLWA	26%

Table 5

The table 5 displays that mass media campaigns are a significant tools to increase the knowledge of people (93%). After hearing, watching or listening to the message 4% of sample visited the hospital for their checkup. 41% of people gave up their habit of sharing blade with other people. A small population of the people (7%) started to use condom during intercourse. 26% of people have become generous toward the victims of HIV/AIDS.

## 6. Discussion

The results of the study show that HIV/AIDS awareness and campaigns has a major impact on the level of knowledge but not significant change in attitude and behavior. There are various reasons as stated by the respondents to improve the practical aspect of the mass media campaigns in rural areas. Mainly, the subject of our media programmes and plans are concentrated on urban population and rural areas population is ignored practically. That is why the mass media campaigns do no impact them efficiently. On the other hand, most of the subjects responded that they did not have any proper medical facility or service in their nearest. Providing people sufficient medical service in their villages can make mass media more result oriented and effective. In other words, there is necessity to change the outlook of parents and elders about the HIV/AIDS. Without sharing the knowledge with each other, it is not possible to overcome over the epidemic. As the education level is low in the villages people prefer to watch the television, therefore, more communication campaigns should be broadcast on the television.

In summary, the study suggests that mass media campaigns are useful tools to fight against HIV/AIDS in rural area if designed efficiently and followed carefully.

## 7. Conclusion

The impact of the mass media campaign is limited with regard to changing attitude and behaviors to adopt preventions. The results of these campaigns are influenced by the culture, psychology and practical behavior of people. For making mass media campaigns more result oriented there is a need of spreading scientific education and temperament among people in rural areas. In this regard, many researchers have suggested inter communication a best effective tool to change the behavior of people.

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