ASSESSING ROLE OF NEWSPAPERS IN CREATING AWARENESS OF HIV/AIDS IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This study investigates the HIV/AIDS coverage in the selected newspapers. The premises of the study depend upon the fact that informing public about any social issue that effects people's life is among one of the fundamental functions of media, such as HIV/AIDS is one of prime importance. In this study two most prime newspapers of Pakistan Daily Jang and Dawn were analyzed. This paper adopted two approaches for investigation one is content analysis, and another is discourse analysis. The content analysis was used to determine the frequency of HIV/AIDS content coverage. Discourse analysis was used to determine consciousness of these newspapers on covering HIV/AIDS stories with correct language and terminologies according to the given media guideline of UNICEF. Total 368 editions from 1st July 2017 to 31st December 2017 were sampled for the study. The result of the study indicates that newspapers have severely underestimated the severity of HIV/AIDS. The coverage given by newspapers is dissatisfactory. Selected newspapers used inappropriate terminologies and language in the stories which shows negligence of newspapers regarding HIV/AIDS issue.

Keywords: Pakistani newspapers, HIV/AIDs, coverage, public awareness, content analysis, discourse analysis

Introduction

Pakistan is the country where health issues are the least priority for Government, policy makers and unfortunately in the foray of media as well. The spread of diseases is rampant where little or no control is exercised in order to control or curb the escalation. The country has battled with epidemics like polio, dengue, Congo virus, Hepatitis B and C, Typhoid and HIV/Aids for decades. There is no available database by the health authorities in the government of Pakistan which can identify areas of concern nor is there any policy implementation to improve this situation. the responsibility is then automatically shifted to the other institutions of the society in which the strongest is news media of Pakistan.

Today worldwide media is considered as a fourth pillar of state which means media is responsible to cover each aspect of society, it also works as a watch dog in different institutions to analysis whether they are performing their duties appropriately if not then media highlights those areas through their contents and enforce the regulatory bodies to investigate the issues. In the case of governmental negligence of health care in third

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world countries, news media is the ultimate institution which can bring about awareness with respect to diseases, prevention, cure and complications. As Health care is the basic human right of every person whether rich or poor without any disparity as written in the article 25 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights¹, Pakistani government is also bound by it, unfortunately there is very small percentage of budget allocation to health and policy execution is far from satisfactory.

HIV/AIDS is the Global health problem. It is a disease that cannot be cured and can only be controlled by prevention, which needs hard hitting and direct awareness programs. In Pakistan it keeps growing despite many efforts to control it. UNAIDS through its sustainable development goals is leading an effort to end HIV/AIDS by 2030 as the health threat for public. Pakistan is one among the countries where number of HIV/AIDS cases is increasing rapidly almost 1, 33,259 people estimated to have contracted with HIV². Mass media is considered as one of the major tools to educate or create awareness about this disease and its prevention, also the risk about this situation turning into an epidemic. Researches around the world suggest that people who are well informed about HIV/AIDS are more likely to gauge the threat and have preventive behaviors³.

The way news is reported has great influence on understanding the importance of the problem and its epidemic however little and insubstantial coverage of HIV/AIDS can minimize the severity in the eyes of public⁴. To keep society informed about HIV/AIDS media organizations in Pakistan should keep covering this issue intensively. In the absence of a literacy and enlightenment in a country like Pakistan, media should separately define some strategies to cover HIV/AIDS matter and try to reach out the masses to create wide spread cognizance about this issue.

In Pakistan the spread of the disease is through unsafe sex between partners as well as rampant usage of contaminated syringes. The low-key barber shops have also played a role where the reused razors are common. All these actions have perpetuated the disease with the pace that has outdone the efforts of any preventive program implemented here.

The stigma attached to this disease which has been battled throughout the world for ages is still very much alive in Pakistan. The religious and cultural norms have kept this issue under wraps especially with respect to the spread of this epidemic. Since prevention is only way forward to control and eliminate HIV/Aids, the measures of prevention are also not discussed in the media contents especially in the public awareness campaigns which have been disapproved and criticized by the conservative elements in the country. The middle class and the lower middle class are at great risks with very little or no information about the prevention techniques.

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¹ United Nation. (n.d.). *United Nations*. Retrieved March Sunday, 2018, from United Nations: http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/

² Ilyas, F., & Junaidi, I. (2017, October Tuesday). *Dawn*. Retrieved March Monday, 2018, from Dawm: https://www.dawn.com/news/1361879

³ Effermont, M. a. Media use and HIV/AIDS knowledge: a knowledge gap perspective. (Health Promotion International, 2013), 739-747.

⁴ Stevens, R. C., & Hull, S. J.. The colour of AIDS: an analysis of newspaper coverage of HIV/AIDS in the United States from 1992-2007, *Critical Arts*, (2013), 27(3), 352-369.

Statement of Problem

In Pakistan HIV/AIDS gives real threat to the health of individuals, families and other communities. There are currently 132,000 HIV/AIDS patients and the figures are increasing year on year. This study examines the role of print media on creating awareness related to HIV/AIDS severity through newspaper's contents.

Literature Review

Philadelphia Health Management Corporation a nonprofit research and service organization has developed their own HIV prevention print materials for focusing women in Philadelphia community, they believe in creating effective print materials that produce behavioral change and helped in delivering important message of HIV prevention⁵.

There are many media organization those are working to mount the knowledge of HIV/AIDS, promoting awareness and educating their listeners, viewers and readers about the facts and figures of epidemic and how to control it. A national survey conducted by United States where 72% of Americans identify newspapers, television and radio as a prime source of getting information about HIV/AIDS than doctors, friends and family⁶. In Uganda experts believes that a free discussion on HIV/AIDS in media and among civil society leads to success in upturning the epidemic⁷. Mass media can be an instrument for breaking the ice that encircle the disease and can provide encouraging environment for discussions so that an individual can protect themselves and change their behaviors.

EtinAnim in 2011 conducted a study on The Perception of the HIV and AIDS pandemic by the Nigerian Press. The researcher findings show that there was a massive decline in the coverage of HIV and AIDS between 2005 and 2010 the decline was 94%, lowered coverage shows the negligence of newspapers regarding the seriousness HIV and AIDS⁸.

Rebecca De Souza (2007) examined The Construction of HIV/AIDS in Indian Newspaper: A frame Analysis. The discourse analysis of the study seems to be more than a war against HIV/AIDS. The highlighted risk groups of the findings discussed in the discourse were poor children, middle class women and married women. All in all, each category was discussed with multiple and competing frames in the newspapers⁹.

In their study The Colors of AIDS: An analysis of newspaper coverage of HIV/AIDS in the United States from 1992-2007, Robin C.Stevens and Shawnika J. Hull discovered that there was a notable decline of HIV/AIDS coverage in American newspapers. The decrease rate was 76% approximately. It was also noted that the coverage was increased

⁸ Anim, E. The Perception of the HIV and AIDS Pandemic by the Nigerian Press, *Journal of Communication*, (2011), 2(2), 105-116.

⁵ Bond, L., Bowden, J., Lauby, J., Walls, C., & Woll, M. Developing Non-traditional Print Media for HIV Prevention. *American Journal of Public Health*, (1997), 289-290.

⁶ Joint United Nation Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAID). *The Media and HIV/AIDS: Making a difference*. (Geneva: UNAID, 2004).

i Ibid.

⁹ Souza, R. D. The Construction of HIV/AIDS in Indian Newspapers: A frame Analysis, *Health Communication*, (2007), 21(3), 257-266.

when HIV/AIDS become fatal disease for all Americans which also indicated racial disparities for African American¹⁰.

A study of News coverage of HIV/AIDS in selected South African Newspapers by LungisaniMoyo and Nketsi A. Moqasa (2017) indicated that selected newspapers covered HIV/AIDS epidemic moderately. The result also revealed that the language used in these newspapers were positive and encouraging which become useful for behavioral change in South African society¹¹

Robin Steven and Robert C. Hornik (2014) in their study AIDS in Black and White: The Influence of Newspapers Coverage of HIV/AIDS on HIV/AIDS testing among African Americans and White Americans 1993-2007 noted that increased news coverage of HIV/AIDS decline in HIV testing among African Americans as compare to White Americans. In addition, the overall decline rate was 79.2% of HIV/AIDS coverage in the newspapers¹².

Unfortunately, in Pakistan there has been very little work on HIV/AIDS in the context of media and projection of severity of disease in newspapers that's why it is important to conduct study with respect to newspaper's role in creating awareness regarding HIV/AIDS. It will be helpful for media organizations in making their future policies for covering alarming health diseases of Pakistan.

Theoretical Perspective of the Study

Uma Sakaran and Roger Bougie suggested that theoretical framework is the conceptual model to proceed with the investigation. It is an explanation that why researcher belief that the relationship exist among the variables. "The processes of building theoretical framework consist of introducing definition of the concepts or variables in your model, developing conceptual model that provides a descriptive representation of your theory and coming up with the theory that provides an explanation for relationships between the variables in your model". The theoretical framework of this study has been chosen under considered judgment of researcher. Following are the theory that has been examined:

- 1. Agenda setting.
- 2. Framing theory.
- Theory of issue attention cycle.

¹⁰ Stevens, R. C., Op.cit.

¹¹ Moyo, L., & Moqasa, N. A. News coverage of HIV/AIDS in Selected South African Newspapers, Journal of Communication, (2017), 8(1), 28-43.

¹² Stevens, R., & Hornik, R. C. AIDS in Black and White: The Influence of Newspapers Coverage of HIV/AIDS on HIV/AIDS testing among African Americans and White Americans 1993-2007, Journal of Health Communication, (2014), 19(8), 893-906.

¹³ Sakaran, U., & Bougie, R. Research Methods for Business. Chichester, (West Sussex, UK: John Waley & Sons Ltd. 2016).

Agenda Setting Theory

While defining agenda setting Bernard Cohen wrote that "press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its reader what to think about. And it follows from this that the world looks different to different people, depending not only on their personal interest, but also on the map that is drawn by the writers, editors and publishers of the papers they read".

Maxell Mc Comb and Donald Shaw in their research The Agenda Setting Function of Mass Media wrote that newspaper coverage also influence news content, audience does not only learn about the public issue but they also learn about the issue which is required most attention of public through the maximum coverage news media give it. "Agenda setting is most appropriately categorized as a post positive theory and it is reasonable to evaluated agenda setting theory on the criteria of accuracy, consistency, simplicity, scope and fruitfulness"¹⁵.

Iyengar and Kinder found position of the story as a main component for influencing the reader and increasing the news worthy of the story. Lead stories have a greater agenda setting effect because of two reasons first people paid more attention on the beginning of the news and second people imagine lead story is newsworthy because of its designation ¹⁶. Newspapers are the market place for ideas where coverage frequency and content priority sets agenda, influence public, government and policy maker from HIV/AIDS perspective. Less coverage shows negligence of issues related to public health in newspapers agenda.

Framing Theory

Framing is an individual's set of expectations to make sense of social world and media contributes to those expectations¹⁷. Tewksbury and Powers conducted a research on The Effects of Frames on Readers and suggested that "Framing focuses not on which topics or issues are selected for coverage for the news media, but instead on the particular ways those issues are presented"¹⁸. The concept of framing is tool to explain the presentation of HIV/AIDS issue in newspaper content of The News and Dawn.

Theory of Issue Attention Cycle

The theory of issue attention cycle is originally proposed by Down in 1972 in his article Up and Down with Ecology. "This issue attention cycle is rooted both in the nature of certain domestic problems and in the way major communication media interact with the public"¹⁹. In his paper Downs explains five stages of cycle pre-problem stage, alarmed

¹⁴ Cohen, B. C. *The Press and Foreign Policy*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983).

¹⁵ Comb, M. M., & Shaw, D. The Agenda Setting Function of Mass Media. *Pubic Opinion Quarterly*, (1972), 176-187.

¹⁶ Iyengar, S., & Kinder, D. R. *The News that Matters*. (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1987).

¹⁷ Baran, S. J., & Davis, D. K. *Mass Communication Theory*. (Boston, USA: Michael Rosenberg, 2012).

¹⁸ Price, V., Tewksbury, D., & Powers, E. The Impact of News Frames on Readers' Cognitive Responses. Communication Research, (1997), 481-506.

¹⁹ Downs, A. Up and Down with Ecology-the Issue Attention Cycle, *Public Interest*, (1972), 38-50.

discovery and euphoric enthusiasm, realizing the cost of significant progress, gradual decline of intense public interest and the post problem stage²⁰. From the perspective of HIV/AIDS issue the stages of issue attention cycle starts from 1st stage where the issue is only discussed among the selected group of people and is disrupted from 2nd till 4th stage and ended on 5th stage of post problem where the decline of media interest.

Research Objective

The objective of this study is to find if the English and Urdu newspapers both print mediums are ineffective in projecting the severity of HIV/AIDS for public.

Research Questions

- 1. How much coverage is being given to HIV/AIDS in the major newspapers of Pakistan?
- 2. How much space is being given to HIV/AIDS issue?
- 3. What are the placements of stories in newspapers for highlighting HIV/AIDS?
- 4. What is the discourse used in writing the content related to HIV/AIDS in Pakistani newspapers?
- 5. Which of type of category is being used to discuss HIV/AIDS issue?

Methodology

This study adopted both Qualitative and Quantitative approach of content analysis to investigate the issue. Rhetorical content analysis helped to understand how HIV/AIDS has been covered and depicted in the selected newspapers. Rhetorical analysis focuses on how much messages are delivered and with what (intend or actual) effects Krippendorff, 2004). The study population of this paper comprised of 368 editions of two Prime daily newspapers Dawn and Daily Jang of Pakistan for a period of 6 months (1stJuly 2017 -31stDecember, 2017). The reason to take this period was that there were no major events in the complete year except the World's AIDS Day that took place at the end of the year.

Results and Discussions

Krippendorff (2004) suggested that tables are more useful tool for researcher to simply the textual data. He characterized tabulation as "by far most common technique used to render data comprehensible". Thus, the data for this study are presented in tabular form²¹.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Krippendorff, K. Content Analysis. Thousand Oaks, (California: Sage, 2004).

Table: 1
Distribution of HIV/AIDS Content in Newspapers
From 1st July 2017 Till 31st December 2017

Newspapers	Frequency	Percentage
Daily Jang	04	36.6%
Dawn	07	63.63%
Total	11	100%

Table 1 represent the total number of contents including all categories of newspaper content which is clear that within the period of six months Daily Jang covers only 4 content regarding HIV/AIDS whereas Dawn give coverage to 07 content which is relatively very low. The issue covered by newspapers routinely or to which they give a lot of space in news, editorials, features, columns, interviews and cartoons were politics, political cartoon, fashion, movie industry crosswords and so on.

Table: 2
Distribution of HIV/AIDS Content by
Genre of Daily Jang and Dawn

Genre	Frequency	Percentage
News	6	54.4%
Editorials	2	18.1%
Features	1	9%
Columns	1	9%
Interviews	1	9%
Cartoons	0	0%
Total	11	100%

The data from table 2 shows that Daily Jang and Dawn covers 6 news by which 2 were covered by Daily Jang and 4 were covered by Dawn, both of the newspapers giver one, one editorial on HIV/AIDS yet in the study time period total 736 editorials were published, zero feature was published in Daily Jang, however 1 feature was published in Dawn, seemingly zero columns were written on HIV/AIDS whereas Dawn wrote 1 column, 1 interview of specialist was published in Daily Jang and zero interview in Dawn and zero cartoon created on HIV/AIDS issue in both of the newspapers.

Table: 3
Appearance of HIV/AIDS News Stories on Front, Back and Inside Pages of Daily Jang and Dawn

Pages	Frequency	Percentage
Front	0	0%
Back	0	0%
Inside	6	100%
Total	6	100%

Iyengar and Kinder in their book News that Matters offered an idea of position of a story, according to them lead stories had a greater impact on audience²². As shown in table 3 there were zero news on front and back pages of newspapers those were consider as the most viewed pages of any newspaper that is why most important news are placed on these pages but there were zero coverage of HIV/AIDS issue in these pages which shows the negligence of severity from Daily Jang and Dawn two most premier newspapers of Pakistan.

Table: 4
Distribution of HIV/AIDS Content by
Number of Paragraph in Daily Jang and Dawn

No. of Paragraph	Frequency	Percentage
1-5 paragraph	6	54.54%
6-10 paragraph	1	9.09%
11-15 paragraph	3	27.27%
16-20 paragraph	0	0%
21 or more	1	9.09%
Total	11	100%

The data from table 4 represents the paragraphs of stories covered by Daily Jang and Dawn on HIV/AIDS issue. No of paragraph shows in depth coverage of any particular issue and it also depict the newspaper policy on giving attention to particular issue. 1-5 paragraphs had highest frequency of items. The insignificant relationship between the HI V/AIDS epidemic and the paragraph devoted to cover stories shows that newspapers did not give that much reasonable prominence to the issue.

Table: 5
Distribution of HIV/AIDS Content by
Category of Daily Jang and Dawn

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Medical	1	9.09%
Political	3	27.27%
Awareness	3	27.27%
Disaster	4	36.36%
Total	11	100%

The data from table 5 indicates that selected newspapers covered majority of disaster stories on HIV/AIDS, whereas stories related to awareness and political were covered equally and medical coverage of HIV/AIDS story was the least. Overall coverage of awareness related stories was inadequate respectively there should be a periodic coverage because HIV/AIDS issue needs to be covered extensively.

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²² Iyengar, S., Op.cit.

Table: 6
Distribution of HIV/AIDS Content of Daily Jang & Dawn by Headline Font Size

Font size	Frequency	Percentage
12-16	0	0%
18-24	0	0%
26-34	4	36.36
36-48	7	63.63%
72 or more	0	0%
Total	11	100%

As shown in the data of table 6 the most frequently used font size for the headline of HIV/AIDS content was between 36-48. Headlines have an impact on readers for selecting news to read. Over all coverage was low that is why font size of HIV/AIDS is not the one that highlight the importance of issue. Carole Rich suggested that "today readers and viewers are bombarded with so much of information. Many studies show that most newspaper readers are scanners who just read headline that give a quick review of the story headline larger in size appeal reader towards the news out of other news on the page" 23.

Table: 7
Distribution of HIV/AIDS Content of Daily Jang& Dawn By Page Dimension

Page dimension	Frequency	Percentage
One third	2	18.18%
One fifth	3	27.27%
One half	1	9.09%
One quarter	2	18.18%
Full page	3	27.27%
Total	11	100%

Above data suggest that newspapers misjudge the severity of HIV/AIDS. Therefore they place coverage lower in their priorities. Not giving justified space to issue is ultimately giving the message to the reader that it is an unimportant issue. Both of the newspapers give less space to reporting and covering the epidemic of HIV/AIDS. Socially responsible newspapers work as a wheel for society and human development matters.

²³ Rich, C. Writing and Reporting News. 25 Thomson Palace, (Boston, USA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2007).

Discourse Analysis of HIV/AIDS Content

As mentioned in the guideline of UNESCO that "language media use to conceptualize and talk about HIV/AIDS reflects its personal biases, understanding and lack of understanding. It also helps shape others attitude about HIV/AIDS. Appropriate language is constructive, does not fuel stereotypes and does not prejudice"²⁴. The analyzed newspapers were found very careless in using appropriate words and value neutral language when reporting of HIV/AIDS issue.

For instance, phrase used "HIV patient" instead of "person with HIV", a news story entitled "503 Aids cases in capital, NA told" found on a news story, the mentioned word "Aids" should be "AIDS", since these two words have distinctive meaning and usage. The newspaper continuously reported "HIV disease" instead of "HIV infection" suggests that the news staff failed to recognize the difference in the two. Most of the stories have used the phrase "HIV/Aids" instead of "HIV/AIDS". Another inappropriate reporting of HIV/AIDS is news stories which contain the phrase "HIV/AIDS incurable disease" which is no need to use when reporting about HIV/AIDS. Journalists should avoid such terms as according to UNSECO guideline it can create distress in person suffering with this disease and it also creates negative stereotype within the society.

It is quite obvious with the above-mentioned facts that the reporters, gatekeepers and editors of the newspaper have no sensitization training when it comes generating such news stories. The lack of sensitivity also suggests that in such news organization the health beat and reporters working on it have not educated or enlightened in this regard. If one is to undertake and recognize the role of news media around the world in forestalling this epidemic in their respective countries, it can also be safely understood that health journalism has been given priority in their news space and health reporters have been well grounded in the skill of doing such stories, which is clearly not the case in Pakistani news media.

Conclusions and Recommendation

The outbreak of HIV/AIDS has moved at an alarming rate in Pakistan. The governments a program have been quite ineffective in controlling it and has also failed create any impact through the media tools as well. This study which researched upon two privately owned newspapers which have the most impact in the Pakistani society has also provided insufficient coverage of the issue at hand.

The analysis of the selected newspapers Daily Dawn and Jang of Pakistan indicates that newspapers pay inadequate attention to the HIV/AIDS issue. The placement of stories, the space allocation, the style of story, the inappropriate textual references have done nothing to create awareness in the masses. The coverage of this issue is also non – periodic. The need of the hour is that newspaper's editors must prioritize HIV/AIDS issue to create awareness among public. Both Urdu and English newspapers have been

²⁴ Matsurra, K. UNSECO Guildeline on Language and Content in HIV/AIDS Related Materials. (Paris 07 SP, France: UNESCO Education Centre, 2006).

inefficacious in covering the severity of HIV however, coverage in English newspaper has relatively been better than the Urdu newspaper, which also a cause for concern as most of the Pakistani literate population does not read English newspaper and prefers the Urdu newspaper for their information.

The findings of the research questions suggest something more alarming. There is no balance in genres used in reporting, no appropriate space is given to highlight the issue. The language used for reporting is not according to the guidelines proposed by UNESCO which shows careless attitude of the newspapers in relation to this issue. The results strongly suggest that there is no clear policy by the newspapers to cover HIV/AIDS issue.

It is safe to conclude that newspapers of Pakistan remain ineffective and nonproductive in creating awareness regarding HIV/AIDS because there was so negligible reporting on the issue. Newspapers must be socially responsible by doing extensive and sensitized reporting in relation to educating and enlightening the public. Newspapers should devote more space or have specific edition or page to discuss the severity of HIV/AIDS in depth because news coverage has powerful impact on public behavior.

Limitations of the Study

No one except science can be perfect for the first time. No one's work is beyond limitation. First because of the time limit, this study depends upon small size of population that covers 1 prime Urdu newspaper and 1 prime English newspaper. Therefore, to generalize the result the study should also have to involve more newspapers of regional languages. In addition, since the newspapers were examined by the researcher herself, it is unavoidable that in this study certain degree of subjectivity can be found.

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