



Original Article

Impact of Mass Media on Attitude and Practice of Public Health Knowledge among Urban Population of Bangladesh

Nowshin I¹, Salim F², Rozario RJ³, Nazneen H⁴

Abstract

This descriptive type of cross-sectional study was conducted among 180 persons of different socio-economic conditions of Dhaka city using semi-structured questionnaire through face-to-face interview to identify the impact of mass media in disseminating public health related messages to the urban population of Bangladesh. Convenience sampling was the process of selecting the subjects. Among 180 respondents mean age of the respondents was 28.75±8.55 years. Majority of the respondents were graduate (29.0%). Of the total 180 respondents 121 (67.2%) read newspaper and among them, 46 (38.32%) read Public Health related articles in the newspaper regularly. On the other hand out of the total 180 respondents 170 (95.0%) watch television and of them 36 (21.18%) watch public health related programme in the television regularly. Highest 140 (77.8%) respondents said television as the source of information in TB prevention. Majority (90%) of the respondents said of television as the information source on prevention of diarrhoeal diseases. Magazine and internet were mentioned by 20 (11%) respondents in each group as the information source. Regarding the sources of information on pregnancy related problems and solutions television was mentioned as the source of information by 156 (86%) of the respondents. Friends or relatives or teachers (67%), newspaper (64%), billboard (45%) and radio (44%) were other sources. Television was found as the main source of public health information to the people. Impact of print media in disseminating public health messages was mentioned very satisfactory by 24% and electronic media by 77% respondents. The mass media can be very much effective in getting public health messages to the community in developing countries. In view of our findings, it may be recommended that television, newspaper and billboards may be used as tools for reaching out that the use of these media should be strengthened further.

Key words: Mass media, public health, urban population

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Introduction

Mass media refers collectively to all media technologies, including the internet, television, newspapers, film and radio, which are used for mass communications, and to the organizations which control these technologies^{1,2}. Since the 1950s, in the countries that have reached a high level of industrialization, the mass media of cinema, radio and TV have a key role in political power. The invention of the printing press in the late 15th century gave rise to some of the first forms of mass communication, by enabling the publication of books and newspapers on a scale much larger than was previously possible³⁻⁵. Mass communication is a message created by a person or a group of people sent through a transmitting device (a medium) to a large audience or market⁶. Mass media are tools for the transfer of information, concepts and ideas to both general and specific audiences. They are important tools in advancing public health goals. Communicating about health through mass media is

complex, however and challenges professionals in diverse disciplines. In an article in the Journal of health Communication, Liana Winett and Lawrence Wallack wrote that “using the mass media to improve public health can be like navigating a vast network of roads without any street signs- if you are not sure where you are going and why chances are you will not reach your destination”⁷.

Communication through media both print and electronic is seen to be an essential ingredient of promotion of health communication strategies in present day globalized world. These strategies are planned and designed to change the modifiable health risk factors and behaviours of individuals in our society. The mass media in these health-related cases have capacity to reach and influence every aspect of our life. It is needless to state that the media are a major source of health information for individuals and community⁸.

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Materials and Methods

This cross-sectional study was conducted among people of different socio-demographic characteristics in Dhaka city. A total of 180 respondents were interviewed face-to-face. Convenience sampling technique was adopted. One general pre-tested semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data. Total study period was from June to December 2016. Collected data was analysed using software SPSS version 20.

Results

Most of the respondents were in the age group 21-30 years (61.0%). Mean age was 28.75 years with standard deviation of ±8.554. Out of the total 180 respondent’s male were 102 (57%) and female were 78 (43%). A total of 18 (10.0%) were doing government service, 36 (20%) private service, 24 (13%) were housewives, 20 (11%) were business men, 40 (22%) were students and the rest 42 (24%) were laborer. Majority of the respondents were graduate 52 (29.0%), 28 (16%) were having HSC, 34 (19.0%) were SSC and 27 (15%) were with primary education.

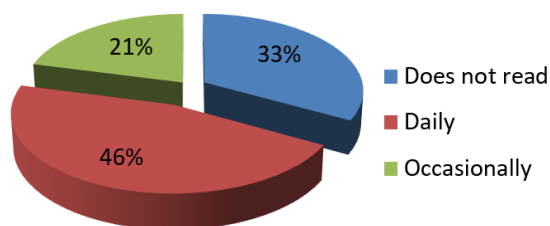


Figure-1: Newspaper reading habit of the respondents

Figure-1 reveals newspaper reading habit of the respondents. Of the total 180 respondents 121 (67.2%) read newspaper and rest 59 (32.7%) did not read. Among the 121 respondents 83 (46%) reads daily and 38 (21.2%) read occasionally.

Table-I: Distribution of the respondents by reading PH related articles (n=121)

Read PH related articles in newspaper	Number	Percentage (%)
Read (regularly)	46	38.00
Occasionally	65	53.78
Do not read	10	8.22
Total	121	100.00

Of the respondents who read newspaper (121), 46 (38.0%) read PH related articles in the newspaper regularly. Sixty-five (53.78%) read those occasionally and 10 (8.22%) do not read those at all though they read newspaper (Table-I).

Among the 180 respondents 170 (95.0%) watch television and the rest 10 (5.0%) did not watch. Among the 170 respondents 90 (50% of the total)

watch daily and rest occasionally. Of the respondents who watch television (n=170), 36 (21.18%) watch PH related articles in the television regularly. One hundred and ten (64.70%) watch those occasionally and rest do not watch those at all though they watch televisions (Table-II).

Table-II: Distribution of the respondents by watching PH related program (n=170)

Read PH related Programs in TV	Number	Percentage (%)
Watch (regularly)	36	21.18
Occasionally	110	64.70
Do not watch	24	14.12
Total	170	100.00

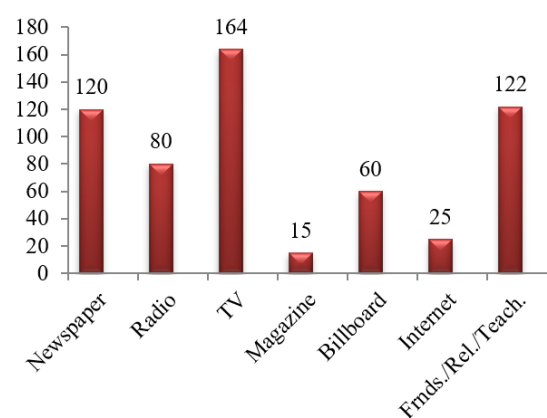


Figure-2: Distribution of the respondents by sources of information on EPI

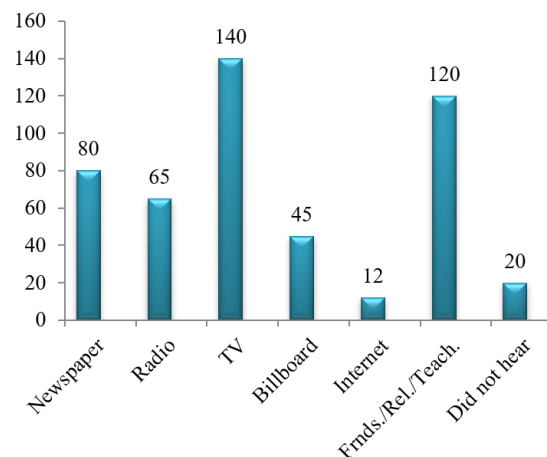


Figure-3: Distribution of the respondents by sources of information on TB prevention

Respondents were asked about sources of information of some PH programmes and activities running in Bangladesh. Figure-3 reveals the sources of information on expanded program on immunization as opined by the respondents. Television was said as the source of information by majority of the respondents. Other sources were newspaper, friends/ relatives/ teachers, radio, billboards etc. (Figure-2).

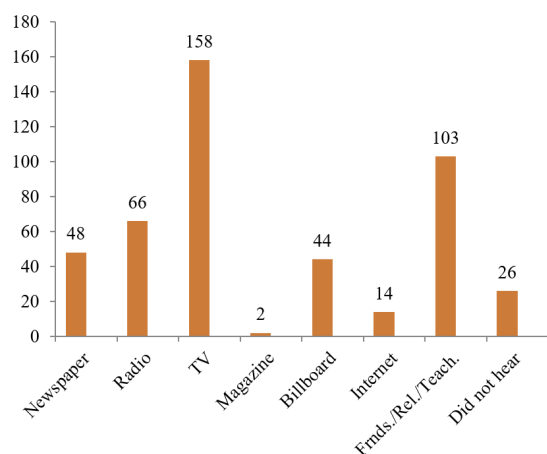


Figure-4: Distribution of the respondents by sources of information on Hand washing

About the sources of information on AIDS majority told of television. Friends/ relatives/ teachers, newspaper, radio, billboard etc. were other important sources of information. Opinion about the sources of information on arsenicosis among the respondents majority said of TV as the source of information on arsenicosis. Thirty (16%) of the respondents said of internet. However another 30 (16%) said that they did not hear about arsenicosis. Highest 140 (77.8%) respondents said television as the source of information in TB prevention. Friends/ relatives/ teachers, newspaper, radio, billboard etc. were the other sources. Twenty did not hear of TB prevention program (Figure-3).

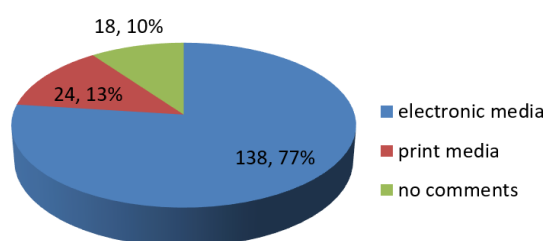


Figure-5: Respondents opinion on comparing print and electronic media on PH knowledge dissemination

Majority (90%) of the respondents said of television as the information source on prevention of diarrhoeal diseases. Magazine and internet were mentioned by 20 (11%) respondents in each group as the information source. Figure-4 shows respondents views about sources of information on hand washing. Here 158 (83%) respondents mentioned of television. Friends/ relatives/ teachers (56.5%), radio (36%), newspaper (26%) and billboard (24%) were the other important sources to be mentioned. Regarding the sources of information on pregnancy related problems and solutions television was mentioned as the source of information by 156 (86%) of the respondents. Friends/ relatives/ teachers (67%), Newspaper

(64%), billboard (45%) and radio (44%) were other sources. Respondents were asked to comment on the role of print media and electronic media on propagation of public health knowledge among the population. Majority 138 (77%) was in favour of electronic media. Twenty-four (13%) were saying that our print media is contributing more in PH knowledge dissemination. Eighteen (10%) did not do any comment (Figure-5).

Discussion

The study was conducted to identify the contribution of our mass media in disseminating public health messages to the people. A total 180 respondents were interviewed from different area of Dhaka city. Mean age was 28.75 years with standard deviation of ± 8.554 . The sex ratio is consistent with the sex ratio among adult population of Bangladesh [0.9male(s)/female]⁹. Though more than 90% of the respondents were literates and majority of them graduates (29%); the proportion of newspaper reader is not very high. About 33% do not read newspaper and almost half of the rest (Readers) read occasionally (21.2% of the total). Of the newspaper readers about 54% read any public health related feature occasionally and only 38% read those regularly.

On the other hand, 95% of the respondents watch television and 50% watch it daily. Of the watchers 21.18% watch public health related programs regularly and about 65% watch occasionally. Only 14.12% do not watch those at all. Similar findings have also been observed elsewhere^{10,11,15}.

About the sources of information on the different public health programs television was the most important source as mentioned by the respondents. Friends/ teachers/ relatives were the second important source for most of the programs. Newspaper and radio were the other sources. There is a significant association between educational level of respondents and PH knowledge from different source of mass media ($p < 0.05$).

The findings of this study further indicate that mass media is or could be an essential platform for transmitting health information in rural areas. Regarding the sources of information on pregnancy related problems and solutions television was mentioned as the source of information by 156 (86%) of the respondents. Similar findings have also been observed elsewhere¹²⁻¹⁴. Total 140 (77.8%) respondents said television as the source of information in TB prevention. Friends/ relatives/ teachers, newspaper, radio, billboard etc. were the other sources. Twenty did not hear of TB prevention program. The media was reported as a source of health education and information about TB in developing countries¹⁶⁻²¹. In India, more than 70%

of the general population reported the media to be a source of TB information²¹.

In recent years, the behavioural change and social mobilization have gained momentum including broadcasting TB/HIV messages through national television, radios, newspapers, TB posters, pamphlets and leaflets to increase case detection, treatment adherence and combating stigma and discrimination related to TB¹⁵. Highest 140 respondents in this study said television as the source of information in TB prevention.

Respondents under this study were exposed to both the mass media (i.e. print and electronic) more or less. Role of print media was mentioned very satisfactory by 24% and electronic media by 77% respondents. The important logics behind their opinion were that in our country all the people are not educated (even many educated people do not go through print media) and understanding television message do not need much education, television is available in almost all the houses and knowledge dissemination through TV is much easier. On the other hand, 13% of the respondents opined that print media act better in PH knowledge dissemination among our people. Only 20 (10.0%) of the respondents did not make any comment on comparing between print and electronic media. According to Sharma²² mass media is instrumental in affecting knowledge and attitudes of people for adopting /maintaining healthy lifestyle. It is a well-known fact that Media influences our behaviour toward health belief by informing and educating people. Mass media interventions have great impact on common people's knowledge, attitudes and behaviour towards health and healthy lifestyle.

Conclusion

Print and electronic media both are disseminating information on different public health issues though about their role and success there are different views. Print media are exposed to literate people and electronic media (i.e., television and radio) is exposed to all. Media play an important role in spreading health messages as it has a wide reach among the population in Bangladesh. People believe that TV is still the most effective media for health communication. Optimal utilization of mass media can play a significant role in the rigorous dissemination of important public health information and education and can change the misconceptions about different health problems.

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