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Print Media And Health Promotion In Pakistan

By

Jalil Ahmed
PRINT MEDIA AND HEALTH PROMOTION IN PAKISTAN

PRESENTED BY

Mr. Salim Ahmed,
News Editor,
Association Press of Pakistan (APP) and
honorary professor,
Department of Journalism,
University of Karachi,
at the Round Table Conference on
PRINT MEDIA AND HEALTH PROMOTION
HEALTH AND NUTRITION, SRI LANKA,
SRI LANKA.

PRINT MEDIA IN HEALTH EDUCATION PROMOTION
IN PAKISTAN

By Jalil Ahmed,
News Editor, Associated Press of Pakistan,
Honorary Professor,
Department of Journalism,
University of Karachi.

The scope of my paper is limited as I have to confine myself to the role of print media, i.e. newspapers, periodicals and journals, in the service of health education promotion in Pakistan.

At the very outset one feels happy to note that despite various constraints and difficulties, the print media did not lag behind its State-owned electronic counterparts -- Radio and Television -- in terms of contribution to the national development.

Like other areas of national endeavours, in the health sector also the mass media have extended a helping hand to the government by creating social awareness about change in the desired directions by advocating the adoption of recommended strategies and by indicating and pinpointing the role of citizenry in various areas of national development.

It is in this context that one should proceed to evaluate the contribution of mass media, specially the print media in promoting health education in Pakistan.

PRINT MEDIA

The mass media in Pakistan has had uneven growth. Despite 36 years of independence, the press in Pakistan has "a narrow base of readership". As Institution it is still small and weak in terms of monetary resources and command. It also suffers from a number of handicaps such as: low literacy (27%), large rural population (70%), inadequate transport and communication facilities, specially in rural areas.

Starting with many fine traditions of national service, but very few resources, the print media has grown steadily despite above impediments.

At the time of Independence a few thousand copies were produced whereas now the total circulations of newspaper and periodicals runs into a little over two million copies a day. This works out to about 23 copies per thousand of population.
Recent years have also witnessed significant improvement in the contents, production and expansion of the print media following infusion of capital and modern technology. Behind this lies a saga of mediamen's sustained efforts, suffering and trial.

The success registered by the print media is also related to the growing acceptance of Urdu as National Language. Urdu press in particular has shown a phenomenal growth and now it can claim to have reached the real mass medium status.

A survey of Gallup Pakistan Poll -- Pakistan Institute of Public Opinion -- claims "although Pakistan has a literacy rate of 27%, as many as 47% of the country's adults consider themselves occasional newspapers readers". The Survey continues: "Many people", however, "in the rural areas listen to a collective reading of newspapers and include themselves among readers."

The Survey also adds: Urdu newspapers collectively have an overwhelming influence and 97% of the country's newspapers and periodicals readers read the Urdu press. This figure is, however, contested by the President, All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) as it places English newspapers readership at around 20%.

Till the end of 1984, the number of newspapers and periodicals registered with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting totalled 1,405; Urdu --1,103 and English --256. According to the Mass Media, Planning Commission, the annual newsprint consumption in the country upped to 36,000 metric tons in 1984 as against 19,400 metric tons in 1977, showing substantial increase in the newspaper/periodical publications between the years.

Newspapers import newsprint (Pakistan does not produce newsprint) on the basis of their circulation by the Ministry of Information's Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC). The regional Press buys newsprint at control rate from the state-owned Trading Corporation of Pakistan.

Among the four regional languages -- Punjabi, Pashto, Baluchi and Sindhi, only Sindhi, the language of southern province of Sind, is used as language of mass literacy and journalism. It has recorded a steady growth as newspapers and periodicals in this language now numbered 96. Punjabi, Pashto Baluchi and other smaller dialects together account for 30 periodicals -- mostly with as low circulation as less than 2,000 copies.
Meanwhile, monthly magazines, including specialists publications, have grown in the recent past and they do now match the dailies run.

The popular monthlies are modelled on the Reader's Digest and contain both original and translated material. Ten of the most popular monthly digests in Urdu have a total circulation of 700,000 and there are some 40-odd such digest on the market.

Out of 121 dailies listed with the ministry of Information the major national dailies are: Jang, Nawa-i-Waqt, hashriq, Jassarat, Hurriyat in Urdu; Dawn, Pakistan Times, The Muslim, Morning News and the Business Recorder in English.

**MAJOR NEWSPAPERS**

Newspapers and periodicals in Pakistan are owned either by private individual proprietors; or joint stock companies, or by the Trust. The group owning newspaper chains are:

1) The National Press Trust (NPT), set up in 1964 by businessmen to seek the promotion of sound and healthy journalism, was taken over by the government in 1972.


For all purposes the NPT newspapers functions as semi-government publications, particularly in their policy orientation. Among the major private enterprises:


iv) Nawa-i-Waqt Limited owns: Nawa-i-Waqt, Urdu daily published from Lahore, Multan, Rawalpindi and Karachi.

In Pakistan, the newspapers generally do not make
public their circulation and financial figures. The Audit Bureau of Circulation, set up by the Government of Pakistan, to periodically assess the circulation of various dailies and periodicals, keeps records of circulation of the print media. However, these also are not made public; they are intended for the government computation of advertisement rates of various dailies and periodicals.

Because of this situation, it is very difficult to arrive at the real circulation of the given publications.

The combined circulation of Jang comes to 450,000 while hawa-i-Waqt publishes 175,000 and Haasaniq 75,000 copies a day. Among English dailies, Dawn is on top with 52,000 copies a day followed by Pakistan Times 42,000 and The Muslim with 13,000 copies a day.

A feature of the development of the Press in Pakistan has been the introduction of advanced technology. Urdu daily Jang scored a technological breakthrough back in Oct 1962 when it started computerised printing of its Lahore edition in Urdu calligraphic (Nastaliq) script. Urdu language newspapers, it may be added, traditionally are calligraphed labouriously and then printed on litho or photo off-set process.

Likewise English daily Dawn has switched over to phototype setting (or composing) on computerised linoterm machines, abandoning the old-letter press printing system.

Another English daily "The Muslim" is produced on IBM composing machine with an in-built mini-computer which can store about 60,000 characters (about 1,500 words) in the memory bank.

Even those newspapers/periodicals, both national and regional, which cannot afford setting up of their own computerised press, avail of the computerised printing in the commercial markets, indicating their commercial viability. The adaptation to computerised printing has substantially lifted the face and run of the papers in the recent years.

Many of the newspapers in the recent past have become commercially viable, though few publish their finances.
Advertising forms the main source of their revenue and the government's share in this regard comes to 30% of the total print media. Smaller newspapers, in particular, rely more on government and state-owned enterprise advertisements. These, too, form a major source of national dailies earnings. Back in 1961-62, the business in the account of advertisements was estimated at more than 400 million rupees per year.

Inspite of expansion in the circulation and business, the print media in Pakistan does not offer sufficient training facilities for journalists. Graduates from various universities in the country find government jobs and public relations positions more lucrative, leaving newspapers vacancies for graduates in other subjects.

NEWS AGENCIES

The primary function of informing the public is performed by the mass media with the assistance of the national news agencies which specialise in the collection and distribution of news.

The media in Pakistan are fed by two major news agencies: the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP), and the Pakistan Press International (PPI).

The APP, which was taken over by the government in 1961 from a private Trust, supplies national and international news to the newspapers, radio and television stations, government departments and some commercial subscribers.

Despite the governmental take-over it has maintained professional orientation and objectivity in its news coverage and related activities.

APP's total teleprinter subscribers in June 1964 stood at 55. Additionally, it supplies to 97 commercial subscribers and an abridge cyclostyled service.

Headquartered at Islamabad, APP has bureaux at Lahore, Karachi, Rawalpindi and branches at Peshawar, Quetta, Hyderabad Sukkur, Multan, Faisalabad and Bahawalpur. It has correspondents/stringers in all major town in Pakistan.

On an average, APP puts out about 40,000 words a day on its teleprinter network linking its headquarters, bureaux and subscribers.
AiF has its own correspondents stationed at New York, New Delhi, London, Cairo and Beijing. All the "major Four" western news agencies; Reuter, Associated Press of America (AP), United Press International (UPI) and Agence France Presse (AFP) distribute news in Pakistan through AiF, which has also news exchange arrangements with Tass (Soviet Union), Xinhua (China), ITNA (Iran) Antara (Indonesia), Anatolia (Turkey), ASA (Egypt) ESS (Bangladesh) International Islamic News Agency (IINA, Saudi Arabia), PAP (Poland) and most of the news agencies of eastern Europe, Middle East, Bernama (Malaysia), Kyodo (Japan), and Aga Press (Romania), Ceteka (Czechoslovakia), Tanjug (Yugoslavia) and PII (Press Trust of India).

The Pi, formerly known as the Pakistan Press Association (PIA) was established in 1956 as a private joint stock company, and has been operating effectively since.

The West German international news agency (DPA) supplies its news to Pakistan through Pi, which also has news exchange arrangements with a number of news agencies including AP (Soviet Union), ANSA (Italy) NTI (Hungary) BTA (Bulgaria), and UPI (India). Pi has its own correspondents based in Washington and London. Equipped with a network of telex facilities, Pi supplies its service to 50 subscribers. It maintains its bureaux at Karachi, which is also the agency's headquarters, and in Lahore, Rawalpindi, Peshawar and Quetta. It has correspondents/stringers in all major towns and cities in the country.

However, the print media in Pakistan are yet to cover a long distance to become a real "potent force" of mass communication.

The total run of newspapers and periodicals comes only to a little over two million copies a day, compared to any developed country it is extremely low. Also, Pakistan is far below the UNDCP's standard of ten copies for one hundred persons for a developing country as it produces only two copies for a hundred persons.

In this context, one is happy to note that both government and private owners of the press are fully alive of the situation, as they are taking matching steps to boost newspaper industry and newspapers circulation to catch up the lost time in this regard.
The expansion of the newspaper industry is directly linked with the spread of education and industrial growth. Under the current national development plan now under its third year of implementation, a record amount of Rs.495 (495) billion is being spent to hasten in an overall rapid change in the socio-economic development.

**PHYSICAL COMMUNICATION**

The plan lays increased possible stress on the extension of communication facilities deep down to 45,000 villages, where 70% of the total 85 million country's population live.

A sum of Rs.31 billion is being spent on construction and expansion of highways, road network and railway routes with a view to link the rural areas with the major towns and cities. Another sum of Rs.5,500 million is being spent on expansion and construction of airfields.

To date country's distances, spread over an area of 769,095 Sq. Kms more than half of which is mountainous, is covered by 6823 Kms rail-routes, 101,315 Kms road network and 26 airfields under domestic services.

**EDUCATION AND MASS LITERACY**

The plan also seeks to improve literacy level through long and short term programmes. The short term programme aims at covering the mass of illiterate population which has already gone past the primary school age. The number of illiterates of 10 and over was estimated by the Planning Commission at around 45 million. The short term programme is executed by the Literacy and Mass Education Commission (LAhEC). Under the plan, literacy will be imparted to fifteen million persons (05 million males and 10 million women) of the age group of 10 to 19 years by 1966. In view of the catalytic role of women and the need to reach rural population, higher priority is given to women education.

To achieve this objective a total of Rs.19.9 billion is being spent on overall promotion of education.

In order to supplement the education expenditure further a noble step has been taken by the government to levy a five percent import duty across the board, known as Iqra Surchage-meaning a levy for education promotion. Pakistan's imports account for Rs.70,000 million a year.
Indeed the print media did not expand at the desired pace due to socio-economic constraints, but the leeways planned under the plan are bound to effect an overall rapid growth of its economy, expansion and progress with the hope of reaching the total population before the century rolls up.

HEALTH SECTOR

It should be noted that like other development programme and strategies, all health education projects have been initiated and supported by international agencies like World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, etc. Occasionally, support for health education programme has been received through bilateral contacts such as under the Colombo Plan and US Aid.

One of the distinguishing feature of such international collaboration has been the inclusion and promotion of the role of mass media in such programmes. It may be noted that most of the donor countries and agencies, specially in the western hemisphere, realise the dynamic role of mass media in the transformation of human society from its backward level to a developed stage. They are particularly conscious of the need to generate and acquire popular acceptance and will for various development plans. It is because of this orientation that even in various programmes of physical development, due emphasis is placed on chalking out an information and publicity component of the programme.

An important feature of such information and publicity programme is the combination of mass media and interpersonal communication channels. Therefore, the budgetary allocation as well as organisational structure do contain and reflect motivation and communication teams and personnel as well as mass media use in the promotion of various development plans.

It may be referred that at the apex we have a mass media division in the national planning commission. Other National agencies such as the Agricultural Council and Council of Scientific and Industrial Research have well developed interpersonal and mass media sections, which help project and popularise their activities among the various strata of the nation.
Coming to the health sector, it should be noted that at the national level ministry of health and its affiliated departments make use of the interpersonal channels as well as the mass media in their health education programme. Some health education programmes, because of their national importance and growth in size and organization are no longer under the ministry of health. In fact, they have acquired an autonomous status. The population programme is a case in point which is guided and supervised by a trained demographer and social worker of international repute, Dr. Mrs Atiya Enyatullah.

In recognition and appreciation of the cultural and social context of Pakistan, health education programmes make use of both the electronic and print media. As has been highlighted in the preceding paragraphs, the electronic media though relatively more developed and widespread, have certain limitations which dictate the use of print media for all national informations and publicity programmes. For this purpose a corps of trained journalists is employed for writing motivational literature, Press Releases, Articles and Write-ups for use by various print media.

The print media though mostly owned privately, have lent impromptu support for motivating people against pollution and environmental damage, disease prevention, blood donation and health promotion activities, smoking and drug abuse, breast feeding, cleaning drinking water and sanitation, etc. The success of Expanded Programme for Immunisation launched in 1975 under the Sixth Five-Year national development plan owes much to the materials produced by the print media. The Rs. 1,322 million programme aims at immunising entire child population of the country against Diphtheria, Tuberculosis, Whooping cough, Measles, Polio and Tetanus and control of diarrhoeal diseases by oral therapy by 1988, the year when the current plan period ends.

To-date over 15 million children have already been effectively immunised against six diseases, as named in the preceding paragraph.
Besides, the print media played an effective part in the malaria, tuberculosis control and nutrition programmes in Pakistan. Scanning of newspapers, periodicals and journals reveals extensive coverage to various health education programmes. Series of articles, features, cartoon, editorials and ADS put out by the print media contributed a lot in creating mass awareness about health and hygienic living.

The impact on the people may be assessed from the fact that now they, both in urban and rural areas, complain and protest against unhygienic condition in their environment. And, the print media, more than any other media, lend prompt support to their voice by highlighting their needs and views in news, articles, columns, cartoons and editorials.

The print media also played an effective role in carrying out the family planning programme, a delicate issue where a clash with traditions, cultures and religious susceptibilities is always apprehended.

In this context it was felt that mere film slides, T.V. showings, or small Ads on the radio network were inadequate in transmitting the messages of family planning and getting acceptance for them.

The print media entered into this sensitive area with caution and care and scored considerable success. The newspapers, periodicals and journals reached the people with the family planning messages in a subtle way that its theme became at least readable, if not acceptable at large.

Thus, whereever complexities are involved and the situation requires careful handling, the print media proves able to deliver the goods. This is evident from the increased number of articles, editorials and ADS on health, child-care, and population related issues appearing in bulk in both national and regional press.

If one proceeds to dispassionately evaluate the impact of the print media in terms of long and lasting results, one would obviously note that the print media enjoy advantages of "control" and "Repeated exposure" to the materials, Fuller coverage and the widest possible specialised appeal as emphasised by Paul. F. Lazarsfeld, Doob, Douglas Waples and Bernard Berelson-- all noted authorities on mass communication.

In fact, the print media, more than any other media, approach the literate audiences who belong to the middle and upper classes of the society in the Third World. As is true elsewhere, in Pakistan they, too, spearhead the movement for modernity. They are perceived as leaders by illiterate and less endowed section of the society.
Pakistan has launched an ambitious health programme at a total cost of Rs.14.6 billion (b) under its sixth national development plan.

Under the plan by 1986, crude death and infant mortality will be brought down from nine against eleven and fifty as against ninety per thousand at present respectively. The plan aims at raising the life expectancy to a little over 60 from present 54-55 years. Communicable diseases will be lowered down to negligible level from 30% and third degree malnutrition among children will be wiped out. Children and new borns will be protected, on permanent basis, against six childhood diseases while assistance of trained attendant will be provided to every mother at the time of child birth. The plan is also designed to prevent, as far as possible, occurrence of disabilities and ensure care for disabled for better prospects.

The preceding objectives, as set up in the plan, demand of immediate attention to increase and strengthen the media publicity for motivating people, particularly in rural areas.

To obtain success within the stipulated period, it therefore becomes imperative for health ministry to integrate the mass media in its national health policy. The integration of publicity into the health care programme will enable the ministry to effectively launch health education programme on scientific line.

Adequate funds may be set aside for promotion of motivational activities through press, which is as vital as the provision of health care in a society, characterised by high illiteracy.

In order to make the publicity integration into the national health policy a success, better understanding and improved relationship between the health policy makers and mediamen is desired. With a view to evolving the relationship between the two, the ministry of health may setup an information centre to disseminate informations in readable form to the media and to impart training to journalists/producers on specialised health reporting.
In this context, the ministry may seek assistance of friendly developed countries' and specialised agencies' under the United Nations like WHO, UNESCO, UNICEF and other allied concerns.

Newspapers and periodicals may be introduced to have at least a two-page insert a week as they are doing in the case of business and commerce.

Regional Press may be provided subsidy to put out more health related materials in view of its immediate and easy accessibility to the rural complex. Subsidy may be given on the basis of certified circulation of the newspapers and periodicals.

Lastly, the AMIC, as an international organization, may work as a centre to co-ordinate and promote exchange of informations and expertise on health education and publicity between the South Asian countries.

These steps will go a long way to accomplish the objective of the WHO's "Health Care for all by the year 2000".

Thank You.
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ROLE OF PRINT MEDIA IN PROMOTION OF
HEALTH EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN.

JALIL AHMED,
NEWS EDITOR, AIP.

The subject of my paper is limited as I have to confine myself to the role of print media in the service of promotion of health programme in Pakistan. You will be happy to note that despite various constraints faced by the print media in Pakistan it did not lag behind its electronic counterparts and has made substantial contribution in creating awakening among the readers about the primary health care and the need for participation in the health programmes of the government.

This is amply demonstrated by the presentations of my colleagues Prof. Dr. Basharat Jazbi, former health minister, Mr. S.H. Rizvi, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health and Mr. K.G. Murtuza, Director General of Radio Pakistan that the contribution of the print media in promoting the public health and ensuring the success of the government programmes was valid and valuable.

It is accepted that in terms of coverage and reach the print media seems to suffer from a number of handicaps as compared to radio and television because of low literacy rate. Yet in terms of effect and results, I, as a newsmen, would humbly submit that the print media certainly has an edge over other modes of communication. What in fact, I mean to stress is that the print media approaches the literate class, the opinion leaders and the intellectuals of the society who have the necessary capacity and talent to influence a great many people.

I may further submit that as compared to electronic media, the materials produced in prints have the ability to create a long and sustained effect on the minds of the readers which is basically essential for bringing in desired change in attitude and behaviour of the people.
Just to quote a few examples, I would like to mention that in the success story of the Pakistan's expanded programme of immunization, the articles, the features, the cartoons and Ads put out by press have produced such a long term impact on the readers that the momentum of the campaign would not be lost, even if the publicity carried out through other media is stopped today.

I may, however, clarify that I do not propose to make any such recommendation to my government or there is any intention to belittle or underrate the contributions made by other media. But what I want to underline here is that in spite of very restricted readership, the awakening created by print media is not in any way less valuable and significant than others.

In the recent past the print media in Pakistan has made substantial progress as the number of newspapers, advertising agencies and allied institutions producing materials in English, Urdu (national language) and other regional languages have increased as can be assessed from the fact that annual consumption of newsprints upped to 35,000 metric tons in 1983-84 as against 19,4 metric tons in 1976-77. The combined circulation of newspapers alone comes to more than two million copies a day. At present we have some 121 dailies, 315 weeklies, 562 monthlies and more than 158 quarterlies besides numerous house journals. Yet sufficient scope for newspaper expansion exists in my country as international standards demand at least ten newspapers for a hundred persons while in Pakistan, it comes to two newspapers per hundred.

The government of Pakistan is fully alive to the situation and therefore it is taking a series of steps to promote literacy in the country. The Sixth-Five Year Plan, now under its third year of implementation, lays all possible stress on mass education.
Quite a sizeable fund has been allocated to this vital sector and a novel step has been taken in the form of levying a five percent import duty across the board known as Terra Surcharge—meaning a levy for promotion of education. With the increase in the number of literate people and a verse the approach of print media is bound to increase and more promising results are likely to flow.

Apart from the mass immunisation programme, print media have played very effective role in the malaria control programme, T.B. control programme and nutrition programme of the government. At this juncture, it would not be out of place to mention that on problematic and delicate issues, where a clash with traditions, culture and religious susceptibility of the people is apprehended, it is only print media which has to step in.

Again, what I am trying to hint at is that in carrying out the family planning programme in Pakistan it was felt that simple flip slides, TV Showings, or small Ads on the radio may produce most undesirable results. The print media has, therefore, to take up the challenge of entering into this dangerous area and is able to reach the people with a delicate message in a way that the theme of family planning becomes at least readable, if not acceptable. My intention in mentioning this fact is that wherever complexities are involved and the situation demands a delicate and careful handling, it is the print media which has to come forward and deliver the goods.

I in a way feel obliged to pay tribute to the print media in Pakistan that inspire of all weaknesses, limitations, constraints and difficulties it has been able to play appreciable role in helping the success of the government programme for the primary health and other health related programmes. I feel that the purpose of this small presentation will be achieved if the inherent potentialities of the print media as an effective instrument of public education is accepted by this forum and its wider role is recognised for the benefit of the people at large.