

Role of Media in HIV/AIDS Awareness

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Abstract

Mass media, particularly, newspapers, magazines, journals, leaflets, television and radio have helped to provide information and create awareness among the people about HIV and other health related issues. In a country with a large illiterate population, many people tend to think that sicknesses like HIV-AIDS, other sicknesses and physical or mental disabilities are a result of punishment of God, fate or one's Karma. As a result, many choose superstitious practices like witchcraft, magic, sacrifices etc. instead of adopting scientific and medical methods. If we want to provide information and education on important health related issues, we need to mount and sustain a major public education campaign. Media can play a key role in creating awareness about AIDS, spreading knowledge about its symptoms, the mode of transmission, methods of preventing infection etc. Media also help to keep us abreast with latest information and data gathered from various studies and researches going on in the field. In this research paper highlights the kinds, methods, types and role of Media in HIV/AIDS Awareness.

Keywords: folk media, group media, information, education and awareness

1. Folk Media and Group Media

Most people think of media as press, cinema, radio and television. These are called the Mass media, or 'big media'. They are big because of the large audience they address, vastness of their production, involvement of huge capital, costly equipment and qualified personal. The Group media or mini media, or small media, instead, are not only small in size, but are economical, easy to use, easily portable. They seldom require technical expertise of the kind needed for mass media. The term group media derives from actual experiences of using small media with the groups. These experiences involve a media presentation aimed at

promoting a group reaction, followed by a group discussion. Though there are some differences between Group Media and Folk Media, there are many common features between the two. Both are interpersonal, speaking the language and idiom of the people, and deal directly with the problems that concern them.

1.1 Characteristics of Folk Media and Group Media

I) Folk Media

Folk media are grounded on indigenous culture, produced and consumed by members of a group.

They reinforce the values of the group.

They are visible cultural features often quite strictly conventional by which social relationship and a worldview are maintained and defined.

They take on many forms and are rich in symbolism.

Folk media cannot be separated from folk cultures.

They are available to all at no cost. They are anonymous in origin.

There is little difference between producers and their consumers.

There is dialogue and verbal exchange.

Their aim is to provide teaching, initiation; they impart traditional aesthetic, historical, technical, social, ethical, religious values.

They provide a legal code, which rests on stories and proverbs, generated through the spoken word.

They mobilize people's awareness of their own past.

They tend to unite a people and give them cohesion.

1.2 Group Media

Group media are directed to groups to encourage exchange of ideas and experiences on relevant, interesting themes, presented in an artistically acceptable form, using a medium that is technically and financially within the reach of the group and are usually brief:

1) Group Media are directed to groups. Group media are used with small groups to enable each member to participate in discussion.

2) They encourage exchange of ideas and experiences. Group media productions provide the material for consideration, analysis and discussion among the participants. The fact that they are usually open-ended and without a formulated conclusion should act as a stimuli to begin group work.

3) They deal with relevant, interesting theme. Group media production is not simply for entertainment, nor are they programmes of a purely informative, artistic, humorous, or folkloric nature. They may contain some, or all of these elements, but their primary function is to propose a discussion on a problem, which is in some way vital to the group itself.

4) They are presented in an artistically acceptable form. The production's artistic

quality should enable the group to go beyond the images or words to the essential theme.

5) They use a medium that is technically and financially within the reach of the group, e.g., Audio cassettes, slide montages, dramatic sketches, marionettes etc. Since possibilities and needs of groups will differ from place to place, there should be a great deal of flexibility here.

1.3 Creating Awareness Through Group Media

Paul Freire's work of 'concretization' and the people of Latin America (See: Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paul Freire) highlighted the potential of group work in social process. He coined the word "CODE" to describe a community which is familiar but is as yet not willing to face up to its life situation. The life situation is encoded and presented in the form of a picture, song, mime or other media.

2. Kinds of Group Media

There are a wide variety of group media. In this section we shall study briefly some of the important kinds of group media that are popularly used in India.

Posters

Poster is a fairly large piece of paper containing some kind of brief visual information and usually fixed on a wall, fence, or bulletin board. A poster contains pictures, drawings, cut outs, illustrations and captions. A good poster presents a single idea concisely and powerfully.

The main purpose of a poster is to communicate a pertinent information in a way that:

It attracts attention

Emphasis the most important points

Reads easily

Looks pleasing

Creates a favourable reaction

Leads to action

A poster must urge people to action, to do something: Not to use alcohol, drugs; to attend a meeting or discussion; to contribute money or skills; to vote for a party; to use a product.

A good poster must have

1) Pictorial element: A good balance between pictures, text and white space.

2) Choice of colours: Colours should be matching and attractive. Colours signify meaning. Colours provide emotional effects, visual appeal and emphasis.

3) Words/ Text: Should be brief, catchy and draw the attention of readers. The text should include a brief statement of the problem, call to action, and the identity of those who are issuing. Call to action should be in imperative: "Avoid Smoking", "Contribute Generously"; "Drugs Kill".

4) Layout: The material should be neatly arranged according to a visual plan. A poster layout may follow either an L or Z or S or T pattern.

Collages

A Collage is a composition of pictures, words or objects, which have been collected according to a given theme. The process of selection and arrangements must be done carefully to convey the theme and facilitate discussion. Collages may be made of picture cut outs with a symbolic representation: an outline maps of India with different faces (to convey the idea of unity in diversity), a burning candle with motifs or various religious symbols to show harmony among all religions etc. Collages may be made of words or photographs or other pictures.

Banners

Banners are flying messages, written or stitched on large stretches of cloth. The message is composed as in a poster and stuck or sewn onto the cloth. Banners should be made with arrangements at the top or sides to enable hanging or displaying them. Banners are highly portable and is frequently used for demonstrations, march pasts and parades, sit in strikes etc.

Murals

The word mural means wall. Murals are visual displays on the walls. Instead of chart paper or picture cut outs, the graphics and text are portrayed on the wall. Murals may be supplemented with letter cut outs to present a theme verbally. Murals can be effective means to convey ideas to non-literate people.

Flip Charts

Flip charts are a collection of posters, clipped together at the top. As sheet after sheet is flipped over, people concentrate on one sheet at a time without being distracted by the others. A story or a theme can be illustrated in this way through a number of posters — using pictures, photos, words, texts or stick figures, The speaker can use the flip chart as she or he is talking. Old wall calendars are useful for making nip charts.

Flash Cards

"Flash cards" are so named as a message is flashed by the use of cards. The cards should be big enough to be seen by the group. A postcard size flip card is easy to handle. Flash cards serve as teaching aids and should be accompanied by talk or discussion. A story can be developed using flash cards. The cards should be placed in a sequence. The story may be written briefly at the back of the cards to help the narrator.

Mobile Displays

Mobile Display is a visual aid, like a collage. The aspect of mobility is its advantage. Its chief characteristics are that it is visible from all sides, and portable. Umbrellas (as used by vendors or in a circus), a tree (as in the Christmas tree), a basket etc. can be used for display of pictures with appropriate themes. Mobiles provide scope for a lot of originality and creativity.

Comic Strip, Gag Cartoon, Comic Book

The comic strip and comic books are very popular among all categories of people, especially children and youth. These create interest and use the idiom or language of the young. Both the drawings and dialogue should be carefully prepared if they are to draw the attention of those that read or see them.

Blackboard

The blackboard and chalk are the most widely used and elementary low cost group media. Blackboards may be replaced with more expensive green boards or whiteboards for writing and drawing. It is an important teaching aid commonly used in classroom activity. A blackboard can be used by anyone without much training or skill. It helps to focus attention and concentration. It has immediacy and helps participation. Blackboards help illustrate ideas, clarify points and is an effective tool to enliven group discussions.

Chalk Talk

Chalk Talk is a simple and easy to use form of group communication. It consists in speaking the message and at the same time dramatizing it by means of simple line drawings. A blackboard or other device may be effectively used if one has skill in the use of chalk talk. The simultaneous talking and drawing by the group leader help to maintain concentration and attention of the audience. The visuals help to understand the message and reinforce retention and memory of the theme. It is a powerful low

cost medium with great potential especially among rural folks, 6 illiterates and children. Colour chalks could be used to create greater visual effect.

Bulletin Board

Bulletin board is a display board where information can be displayed. Some of the elements of the poster like layout, colour, visual quality, can make the bulletin board a powerful means of communication. It can be used to display photographs, newspapers or magazine clippings, illustrations, samples of products, present competition themes.

Flannel Graph

Flannel graph is made with flannel, khadi or rough clothes like blankets which is wrapped around a stiff board. Using the flannel board as a background, pictures are displayed on them. Pictures are cut out and stuck against the flannel. Small pieces of flannel, wool, khadi or sandpaper is pasted on the reverse side of the pictures, drawings or letters. When pressed against the flannel, these will stick to them since the surface is rough. Pictures can be stuck, removed and replaced as the animator speaks. Besides the preparation of the material, a considerable time should be devoted to developing the theme and the story or message that is to be conveyed.

Story Board

Storyboard is a visual aid to tell a story using images. The images may be drawings made for the purpose, photographs, pictures gathered from magazines or other sources. There should be continuity of the story and visuals. Interest must be sustained by choosing appropriate images that will enliven the story.

Drawings

Drawing and pictorial representation, it is believed, predates written alphabets. A picture speaks a thousand words, and any text with illustration, any story accompanied by pictures, can draw greater attention than mere text. Drawing is an important past time for children. It gives creative expression to the ideas of a person. These innate skills can be purposefully channeled to present suitable themes.

Hoardings

Our highways, city streets and even rooftops are today covered with large and colorful hoardings that advertise goods and services. They do not

address only small groups, but are intended for mass audience. These hoardings are large metal, plastic or wooden.

Wall Writings

Wall writings are very common especially in cities. They are less expensive compared to hoardings. They are also temporary. Wall space is used a lot during elections to make known candidates and to familiarize the voters about the candidate's symbol thereby influencing voter preference. Walls of private institutions often put up "Stick No Bills" signs, which prevent using them by the public.

Photo Language

Photo language is a powerful way of reading a photograph or picture and trying to understand and interpret the message it contains. Photos can stir emotions, kindle hope or create sorrow. Pictures can shock us, make us weep or laugh. If we can try to think of the ways pictures and images affect us, we can understand the powerful sway they hold on us.

Photo language requires photos or pictures that can convey meanings and messages. Photos may be cut out and stuck on a uniform size paper or cardboard, mounted or laminated. If particular themes or ideas are to be presented one may take photographs and develop them to a suitable size. For instance, a photograph of individuals suffering from HIV/AIDS in a hospital or care home may be used for sessions. The photos may stir emotions of concern and sympathy, and help people to become more aware of the issue of HIV/AIDS and the need to contain it as well as prevent its spread. They may also become more conscious of the need to create awareness, care for those affected, promote preventive methods etc.

Slides

Slides serve a similar purpose as the photos, but have a definite advantage over photos as slides can be projected on the screen or wall. They enjoy greater visibility and clarity. A projected image is luminous, and with the use of bright colours, it can draw attention. The medium can be made alive if we add sound, music, commentary or dialogue.

A slide show or montage resembles a storyboard with the difference that the latter uses a projector and needs electricity.

Filmstrips

The filmstrips are continuous strip consisting of individual frames or pictures arranged in sequence with a unified theme. The silent filmstrips have only explanatory titles. The audience can be given a brief explanation of the pictures with the help of the printed notes. Some filmstrips have titles superimposed or written below the pictures. If the viewers can read and understand them the commentary can be reduced or done away with. A filmstrip can end with a general discussion. When a synchronized sound recording accompanied the filmstrip show, we call it Sound Filmstrip. Recorded music and commentary make the filmstrip more attractive for the audience.

Newsletters

Newsletters or mimeographed papers are a good way of sharing information. They are inexpensive, deal with specific themes, have clear objectives and readers. Newsletters can vary from multi-colour pages printed on an offset machine and on glossy papers, or can be simply typeset on a computer and photocopied or printed. They may also be stenciled and cyclostyled. Besides ensuring that the matter to be included in the newsletter are written well, care should be taken to ensure that the layout and typesetting add to make it attractive. Newsletters should have a suitable name and logo. Its format should be more or less fixed, so that readers become familiar with it. Two or three columns can make the page attractive. Black ink has the highest readability and looks good even on colored paper. Colored ink may be used on white paper, which is white or has a lighter tint of the same colour.

Wallpapers

Wallpapers are single page broadsheet papers, which may be handwritten or printed and displayed on the walls or bulletin boards. The major difference between a poster and wallpaper is that the former has only a few captions and titles while the latter consist mostly of written texts. Wallpapers are low cost. They can be used for sharing ideas, news and information on a regular basis.

3. Performing Arts and Music

Performing arts and music are popular people's media, which have variations according to place and culture. They are informal, include narrative, dialogue, action and improvisation. The leaders play important role. Audience tend to identify with the characters. Unlike in formal drama, the

varieties of performing arts have a high degree of creativity and flexibility. Costumes and make up are unimportant. We shall examine some of the important performing arts.

Mime and Pantomime

Mime and Pantomime are powerful means to communicate ideas and express feelings. Both consist in using the body and bodily movements to express ideas and feelings. Mime, with an offstage commentary and read by a narrator, is a powerful medium. When a song or poem is mimed, the song is sung and the poem is read, as a background.

Role Play

Role play is a relatively new form of communication with a lot of communication potential. In role play, people spontaneously act out problems of human relations or things that affect the community, and analyze them with the help of participants and audience. Role playing helps a person to relive, re-enact some moments of life — its experiences, problems and challenges. Role play should help define problems, establish the situation being played out. Actors must be serious and committed and should cast the characters effectively.

Ballard Forms

The method of story telling to express ideas and convey messages used by many cultures in India may be grouped under the Ballard form of art. Every state has a variety of Ballard forms, such as Alha (Uttar Pradesh), Burra Katha (Andhra Pradesh), Viupattu (Tamil Nadu), Jugani and Vaar Wjab) etc. The ballard forms, besides its traditional use, are being effectively used nowadays by political parties as well as business promotion agencies, governments and the non-governmental organizations.

Folk Music

India is estimated to have more than 300 folk musical styles. Folk music are not songs simply sung, but their chief characteristics include the presence of some theme or message, the participation of the community, improvisation, flexibility and participation of the audience.

Folk Sayings and Riddles

The rural people and those with illiteracy or minimum literacy, have a strong memory. They express traditional wisdom and pass it on to successive generations through folk sayings and riddles.

Proverbs

Proverbs provide a window to the wisdom of the people. Proverbs are traditionally used as a means to communicate worldviews, values of a community. The word 'Proverb' comes from the Latin word 'Proverbium' meaning 'before' or 'forth to the world' and 'verbum' meaning 'word'. Proverbs are pithy sayings. Proverbs touch on every aspect of the life of people who create them.

Story

Story is a powerful and ancient form of communication. The popular perception is that stories are fictional and not factual. Every culture and community has a vibrant and strong tradition of story telling. Stories explain origins, provide role models, creates and sustains cultural and religious values, encourage spirit of adventure and romance. Stories appeal to the intellect and emotions. They arouse sympathy and anger.

Puppetry

The theme of the puppet show should be centered on issues related to community health and HIV/AIDS.

Street Theatre

Street theatre is basically a no-cost medium of body using the techniques of movement, static, space, sound and silence performed in an arena (circular stage) formed among the people in an informal and inexpensive setting.

Types of Mass Media

Broadcast media

Radio is the most popular medium among the mass media in its ability to reach vast audience. Radio provides ample opportunities for individuals or organizations to present programmes. The radio broadcasts include national and regional programmes. There are programmes to cater to the various linguistic and cultural groups.

Broadly radio programmes are classified into two broad categories: spoken word programme and music programme. Newsreels present 'spot' reports, comments, interviews and extracts from speeches. Documentaries and radio features are factual information that combine the techniques of talk, drama and story telling. It may deal with the interpretation of an event, profile of a person, highlight the culture of a people etc. This format is a good slot for presenting a feature on health

issues, HIV/AIDS and related topics.

Another popular programme on radio is drama. Dramas prepared for radio should be so constructed as to tell the story only through sound media, hence there should be music, dialogue with voice variations etc.

Telecast Media

Television in India began as an educational and community service medium. Today it has grown in extent and coverage. With the mushrooming of television channels and growth of the number of TV sets in the country, one should not ignore the power of this medium to reach millions of viewers within a short time. Issues concerning health and HIV/AIDS can be presented in the form of serials, dramas, music etc. developed on the basis of the theme. Panel discussions, talk shows, quizzes, interviews, testimony, features, advertisements and quickies can be used to create awareness among the audience.

Cinema

The potential of cinema as a popular medium is evident from the large crowds that the cinema theatres in India draw, and the popularity of film artists. The cinema theatres can be a powerful medium to reach the masses with the message of HIV/ AIDS through stories, which deal with issues of health and family, HIV and AIDS. Documentaries and advertisements at intervals are also occasions to communicate ideas about health. The advantage of using this medium is that we can reach vast number of people who are illiterate, who are otherwise difficult to reach.

Print Media

Besides the efforts of the government and non-governmental agencies to popularize the concept of health and promote education on HIV/ AIDS, through newsletters, magazines, and pamphlets devoted to the theme, the national and regional newspapers and magazines can highlight the issue through its columns. Newspapers should regularly publish case studies, reports, advertisements, feature, reports of medical research in HIV/ AIDS etc.

Multi Media

Multimedia is a means of communication to a group or an audience by a good combination of different media and techniques. Multimedia presentations, using computer, video projectors, digital camera etc. can be effective to present the theme of HIV/ AIDS. The Internet is a powerful

tool to gather and disseminate data on the nature of the sickness, measures to prevent, developments in medical research and above all promote awareness. Multimedia presentations call for technical skills as well as costly equipment.

4. Conclusion

The mass media are clearly vital in the world's fight against the virus. Broadcasters are already undertaking impressive work on HIV, but much more needs to be done. The media can make AIDS programming a key part of their output and, indeed, their corporate strategy. The task at hand requires vision, dedication and, above all, creative programming that truly engages audiences. Broadcasters can talk to listeners and viewers about HIV in a language they understand, appreciate and find entertaining. They can build partnerships and alliances. They can put pressure on the powerful to take the disease seriously and give people the information they need to protect themselves and those they love. In short, the media have an essential role to play in reversing the progression of HIV.

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