

Investing in Women's Health in Pakistan – Role of Mass Media: Positive or Negative?

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Abstract

Investing in women's health is still an island in this huge sea of knowledge. Hence, this research intends to focus on role of mass media on Pakistani women's wellbeing. The scoping review synthesized data from Pubmed and Google scholar databases reaped 17 eligible studies, of which 5 studies were on family planning/ contraception use and 3 studies on STD's prevention, 3 studies on breast cancer and its screening, 3 studies on cervical cancer and its screening and 3 studies on social media exploitation among Pakistani women. Findings revealed that reliability and active participation in mass media has fetched many educational programs in improvement women psychological and physical health awareness. But at the same time excessive use of media caused troubles and negative impact on youth's perception and attitude regarding women reproductive and sexual health resulting in obscenity leading to sexually transmitted diseases, unplanned pregnancy and miscarriages; which has inevitably affected women's health. Therefore, effective strategies are need of an hour to ensure that mass media services should provide positive awareness and parents continual monitoring on their children networking websites will help community to refrain from occurrence of various adverse health consequences as well as from unwanted sexual and risky behaviors.

Keywords: Mass Media, Breast and Cervical cancer, Contraception use, Social exploitation

Introduction

Mass media aims to capitalize women health on contraception use, family planning, STD's prevention, breast and cervical cancer screening. To enable women combating grave unavoidable diseases and promote healthy environment, cybercrime must be checked in developing countries like Pakistan.

Mass media platform (Internet, magazines, TV programs, music videos, movies and video games) is controlling individual's life by providing substantial knowledge about health promotion, disease prevention and its management facilities, learning opportunities and reducing communication barriers. The uniqueness of print, digital and social media targets diverse audiences concurrently to disseminate uniform messages, create awareness and knowledge on women's health including awareness about family planning, contraception practice, protection against sexual transmitted diseases, breast cancer, breast self examination, cervical cancer and its screening; on global and national public health issues through commercial advertisements and by community promotional health programs on mass media to popularize optimistic ideas that will not only empower individual's behavior but also persuade their attitudes to improve quality of life. This article aims to highlight role of mass media in awareness about women's health and social media exploitation in Pakistan.

Methodology

The research adopted scoping review consisting of all studies published in MEDLINE, Web of Science, Pubmed and Google scholar databases; based on role of mass media in women health. Articles were screened using combinations of Mesh search terms: mass media including both electronic and print media and women health. The research scrutinized all unique publications relevant to our title; after that, full text articles were analyzed for its eligibility criteria, whereas, conference proceedings, working papers, reports, literature review, books and dissertations were excluded. From full text articles; only those researches conducted in Pakistan that had special emphasis on role of mass media in promoting women health as well social exploitation in Pakistan were included for further review. Whereas, researches published in any other country except Pakistan were excluded (Figure 1).

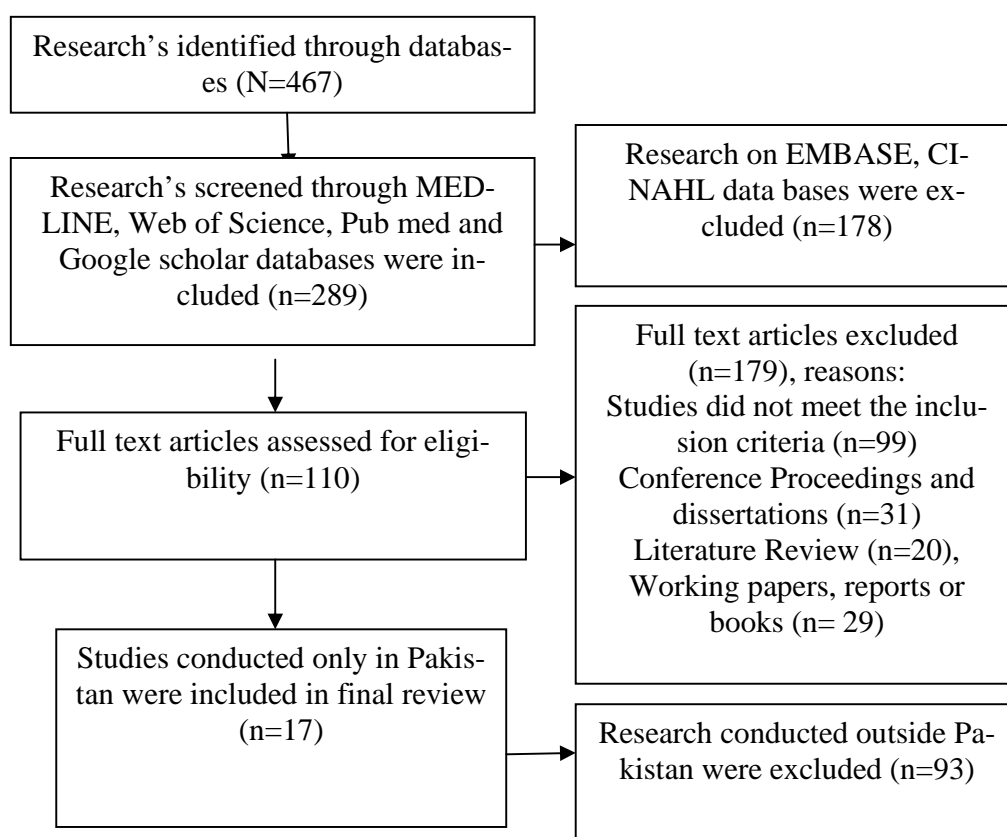


Figure 1. Flow diagram representing scoping review of the research and study selection process

Results

A total of 289 articles were screened based on the research study/title, of which 110 were assessed at full text articles; from them only 17 researches were found eligible; of which 5 studies were on family planning/ contraception use and 3 studies on STD's prevention, 3 studies on breast cancer and its screening, 3 studies on cervical cancer and its screening and 3 studies on social media exploitation among Pakistani women.

Table 1. Review of articles

Author, year, country of study	Study population	Study design	Conclusion
Family planning			
Jaffery et al. (2019), Pakistan	200 married women between 19-48 years of age	Cross-sectional study	89% women had awareness about contraceptive practice but only 66% women familiar with the benefits of contraception; study concluded that women awareness about contraception is very high but less practice was observed among them.
Shah et al. (2008), Pakistan	200 women; 15-49 years of age.	Cross-sectional study	60% and 40% women were using at least one method of contraception and were not under this practice respectively; 6% women receiving information from media.
Mustafa et al. (2008), Pakistan	100 rural women between the ages 15-45	Cross-sectional observational study	81%, 64% and 53% women had awareness about family planning methods, got information from media and were using some method of contraception's respectively.
Khawaja et al. (2004), Pakistan	204 married women between 26-40 years of age	Quantitative study	68% women had awareness about contraception and the main source of information was TV and relatives i.e. 26% and 24%.
Hameed et al. (2019), Pakistan	503 married women between 13-42 years of age	Cross-sectional study	99.4% and 28.8% women had knowledge about family planning and its methods and obtained information from TV/Radio respectively; study concluded that overall women knowledge on contraception and its practice was good and was influenced by media exposure and partner resistance towards family planning methods.
Sexually Transmitted Diseases			
Aijaz et al. (2020), Pakistan	413 young urban adults of 18 to 35 years of age	Descriptive Cross-sectional study	83% respondents had not heard about sexually transmitted diseases, 56.4% had knowledge about its transmission and complications, whereas 44% respondents got information about this disease from mass media.
Nasir et al. (2015), Pakistan	Ever married women between 15-49 years of age.	Secondary data sets of Pakistan demographic and health survey (PDHS) 2006-07 and PDHS 2012-13	The risk of getting HIV/AIDS after equating the two PDHS has improved over time just by 3.85% and 6.50% respectively in PDHS-2012-13 compared to PDHS 2006-07. Early age group (15-19) women have sufficient lack of knowledge about STIs. Media can play an important role in changing sexual behaviors, transforming negative beliefs and increasing knowledge.

Author, year, country of study	Study population	Study design	Conclusion
Nasir et al. (2016), Pakistan	50 Female Sex Workers (FSWs)	Convenient sampling	58% and 80% of the respondents had heard about HIV/AIDS and STDs respectively whereas, 74% FSWs had access to mass media ; but overall comprehensive knowledge towards HIV/AIDS transmission was low (34%).
Breast cancer and its screening			
Naqvi et al. (2018), Pakistan	1,304 women aged above 18 years	Cross-sectional study	94.2%, 50.2%, 55.2% and 52.8% respondents had awareness about breast cancer, mammography, breast cancer screening techniques and know about its treatment respectively. 62% undergo physical breast self examination, whereas, 34.4% respondents seek information from internet and electronic media.
Khokher et al. (2011), Pakistan	1155 respondents below and above 30 years of age	A survey based upon Multiple choice questionnaire was designed	27%, 14% and 59% respondents had good, poor and fair knowledge towards breast cancer. The study conclude that awareness campaigns arranged on Television and in educational institutions were the most commonly cited source of information in raising knowledge level among population.
Sobani et al. (2012), Pakistan	418 female attendants between the ages of 18 to 70 years	Cross sectional, questionnaire-based study	35.4% women had heard about mammography as a screening tool for breast cancer and the main source of disseminating knowledge about breast cancer awareness is TV i.e. 27% and health care professionals i.e. 23% and 70 % respondents felt that media play a vital role in creating awareness about breast cancer.
Cervical cancer and its screening			
Riaz et al. (2020), Pakistan	388 females aged between 17-65 years	Cross-sectional, questionnaire-based study	51.3%, 34.3% and 40.2% women had awareness about cervical cancer, its screening technique i.e. Pap smear test and HPV vaccination as prophylaxis respectively; but the overall practice of cervical screening and prevention was found very low i.e. 2.1% and 1.8% respectively. The study concluded the need for mass education through health care professionals and media that promotes early detection of lesions and prophylaxis against this deadly disease.
Razzaq et al. (2017), Pakistan	384 females aged 18 years and above	Cross-sectional survey	Insufficient knowledge about cervical cancer i.e. 23% and about its screening services was found among general population. Thus, there is a need to establish effective strategies on cervical cancer awareness and its prevention through health care providers and media advocacy that will improve health seeking beha-

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			avior and enhance early screening rates among females.
Khan et al. (2014), Pakistan	873 women were interviewed	Cross-sectional, interview-based survey	70.1, 8.5%, 7%, 5.2% and 4.3% had no awareness about cervical cancer, knew about cancer, knowledge that HPV as a causative agent, identified Pap smear test as diagnostic measure and were vaccinated against cervical cancer respectively. Low awareness of cervical cancer was found and a need for an active campaign by media was required to create awareness and introduce measures for its prevention.
Social exploitation			
Habiba et al. (2018), Pakistan	323 youngsters between the age of 21-24	Cross-sectional study	56.6% participants said social networking sites promote online harassment, 68.9% and 72.3% websites promote deviance among youth and abusive languages respectively. The study findings revealed that children, young adults and women should be well aware with the consequences of negative use of social networking websites especially when it comes to photo sharing and personal information on Internet.
Magsi et al. (2017), Pakistan	120 female students	Qualitative study	Among all the internet users; 65% of the youth between 18 to 29 years of age and women were unsafe and liable to domestic violence, cyber harassment, bullying, stalking, blackmailing and extortions.
Ahmed (2014), Pakistan	News networks of Pakistan (Dawn and Express News)	Descriptive and analytical study	49% sexual harassment and 20% physical torture was reported. The study concluded that news channels of Pakistan portray the issues of violence against women in a biased way and was given a very little space in their daily news to broadcasts problematic issues of women, which are the main reason of violence against women in Pakistan.

Conclusion

Media bids women to express their views, perceptions, resistance on societal constraints and source of information on reproductive and sexual health regarding contraception and planned/unplanned pregnancy, abortions, STD's and HIV/AIDS; but increase socialization, visualization of sexually leaning genres such as operas, video games and music videos and fictional metaphors as veracity generates inappropriate attitudes towards serotypes, new relationships goals, masturbation, extra-marital activities, cyber bullying, humiliation, harassment, peer relationships, pornography, violence, sexting, social rejection, domestic violence, physical torture or rape and depression among women. It is important to develop content, stories and messages that will engage community towards positive knowledge on individual's health and suggestions on how to handle social

media exploitations. In this way we can improve the quality of women's life and empower women to combat health issues.

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