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'FLOW OF COMMUNICATION AND ROLE OF OPINION LEADERS IN INDIA'

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ABSTRACT

In general reference flow of communication is from sender to receiver. Aristotle described that communication flow should be uniform and simplest. UNESCO formulated NWICO, NIEO and MacBride Communication to study about the flow of communication. As we are aware that world communication flow is unbalanced. Several complaints regarding this have come from the media of developing countries. It's also a matter of debate that in different layers of communication who will decide the appropriate flow of communication and the role of opinion leaders. So, this research paper is an effort to bring these things in a new context.

KEYWORDS: Communication, Opinion Leaders, Flow of communication, India, channel.

INTRODUCTION :

Communication in the ancient times was in the form of sign and symbols which was simply recognized as pictorial language. In those days, also opinion leaders were helpful in interpretation of communicational needs as intellectual level and level of understanding were different. To decode pictorial messages opinion leaders in the form of different hierarchy were available. In

present context opinion leaders are more active to decode the communication flow. Generally, in democratic countries communication has so many issues to cover and election is one of them. We can also consider election as a festival of democracy. In the country like India where people are getting influenced soon either by media, politicians or brokers these agents can easily accessible and influence the election results. Therefore, Importance of skilled, aware and open accessible opinion leaders

cannot be neglected in the democratic country like India.

OBJECTIVE OF RESEARCH:

- To find out the system of communication flow and role of opinion leaders,
- To examine whether the two-step communication flow is an up-to-date communication process,
- To examine the factors that increase or decrease the differences between opinion leaders and individuals,
- To examine whether mass media plays a very vital role in shaping opinions



- To examine the changing trends of humor political campaign.

IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH:

The importance of research is that in the present context opinion leaders are more active to decode the communication flow. Generally, in democratic countries communication has so many issues to cover and election is one of them. We can also consider election as a festival of democracy. In the country like India where people are getting influenced soon either by media, politicians or brokers these agents can easily accessible and influence the election results. Therefore, Importance of skilled, aware and open accessible opinion leaders cannot be neglected in the democratic country like India.

Review of Literature and Data Collection : Primary data collected from research methods and techniques and secondary data collected from various sources like from libraries, various research journals, books and reports of several e-portals and blogs.

Hypothesis: There are possibilities of new trends in the dissemination of information by opinion leaders via communication flow. Opinion leaders are facing many challenges to decode the communication flow and hidden embedded messages. In the developing countries like India the role of communication is divergent and multipurpose. Similarly, there are possibilities for divergent and multipurpose role of opinion leaders too. In largest spectrum, there are also possibilities that communication flow in developing countries

Research Methodology : The main research methods were non-participative observation and experimental. The research techniques adopted were questionnaire interview and schedule interview.

Analysis and Interpretation: There are several government policies and welfare schemes. If these policies and welfare schemes are reaching directly near rural audience then it will be very hard to access as there will be several unauthorized barriers and brokers of that communication flow and here the role of opinion leaders are very important to decode actual message for beneficial policies. Opinion leaders maybe in any form they can be at village level Sarpanch Mukhiya gram Sevak gram pradhan whatever it is in case of block live in case of block level Block Development Officer is responsible for dissemination of policies we can also see that in a in a large level MPS and MLA also be the opinion leaders to decode the communication flow and hidden embedded messages near to the target audience. In the developing countries like India the role of communication is divergent and multipurpose if we must discuss the primary role of communication universally then it is to inform to educate to aware etc. in largest spectrum it is also useful in conveying the message of harmony peace and national integration the role of opinion leaders becoming more challenging.

Paul Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz in his book 'Personal Influence' (1957) introduced the term opinion leader¹. Scholars like Everett M. Rogers & Dilip K. Bhowmik in his paper named 'Homophily-Heterophily: Relational Concepts for Communication Research' which was published on 01 January 1970 in American Association for Public Opinion Research states that "The Two-Step Flow of Communication is an up-to-date communication process, which carries all the significances of an ideal communication flow."² It means in such type of communication the flow is followed by feedback process. Communicator as well as receiver both is aware and updated. An ideal communication flow is that by which both the parties mutually get benefited and that must reflect vice versa.

In another opinion G Feder and S Savastano - World Development, Volume 34, Issue 7, July 2006, Pages 1287–1300 – Elsevier, in his research titled 'The role of opinion leaders in the diffusion of new knowledge: The case of integrated pest management' quoted that "The flow of information and influence is likely to be rather horizontal ... excessive differences among individuals, could hinder the effectiveness of communication flows between them."³ As per this interpretation excessive differences can hamper the communication flow and it can increase the differences between opinion leaders and individuals. So, flow of information and influence should be balanced.

Further scholars like KM Haywood in the Journal of Services Marketing, 1989 (emeraldinsight.com) focusing in his paper named 'Managing word of mouth communications' about "the external flows of information must be managed".⁴

In another discussion LK Sen - 1969 – ERIC in his publication titled claims about 'Opinion Leadership in India, A Study of Interpersonal Communication in Eight Villages' that "communication flows vertically from leaders at the top of the villagepowerhierarchy to the lower strata."⁵ In a further study by PW Turnbull, A Meenaghan - European Journal of Marketing, 1980 (emeraldinsight.com) he is analyzing the role of opinion leaders in communication flow in his paper titled 'Diffusion of Innovation and Opinion Leadership' that "communications flows among members of groups with similar interests and characteristics is the significances of diffusion of innovations"⁶ Scholars like Elfreda A. Chatman, American Library Association, Vol. 26, No. 3, JSTOR (Spring 1987), in his paper titled 'Opinion Leadership, Poverty, and Information Sharing', pp. 341-353 writes about the role of non opinion leaders and he further narrates that "in many respects to those held by non opinion leaders, a notable difference was in the leadership role opinion leaders played within."⁷ In a further discussion DK Kim, K Chitnis, PN Vasanti, in Journal of Creative Communications, 2007(crc.sagepub.com) in his paper 'Opinion Leadership in Indian Villages and Diffusion of E-Choupal' argues that " individual controls communication flows between/among other individuals or different communication networks."⁸ In a further article named Elite opinion and media diffusion exploring environmental attitudes published by The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics, 1999 - hij.sagepub.com author J Yin describes about "the common carrier and elite opinion in communication flow where mass media plays a very vital role in shaping opinions."⁹

CONCLUSION:

Thus, opinion leaders are helpful in interpretation of communicational flow. In present context opinion leaders are more active to decode the communication flow. In democratic countries communication has so many issues to cover and issue related to marginalized section is also requiring systematic and planned communication through opinion leaders. In the developing countries like India where the role of communication is divergent and multipurpose opinion leaders plays very useful role in conveying the message of harmony peace and national integration. Therefore, the role of opinion leaders is becoming more challenging.

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