

The Current Situation Regarding Public Access to Media and Information on the Topic of Domestic Violence Prevention

PhD. Thi Tuyet Minh NGUYEN

Abstract: Domestic violence refers to one type of gender-based violence in which violence is a means and also a consequence of demeaning women and gender inequality. Domestic violence prevention continues to be regarded as a priority in the national development strategy. Communication is identified as playing a key and long-term role. It is important to assess the actual situation of public access to media and information on domestic violence prevention today in order to suggest effective communication solutions. This article uses the results of the 2020-2021 ministerial-level project “The role of mass media in domestic violence prevention and control in Vietnam’s international integration period today” conducted by the Academy of Journalism and Communication.

Keywords: communication; domestic violence; gender equality; public; media research.

1. Definition and survey description

Communication is the process of transmitting and sharing information. This process occurs continuously, involving the exchange of knowledge, emotions, and skills. It is a complex process with multiple steps and stages, where these steps and stages are relatively flexible and aim to change the perceptions and behaviors of individuals and groups (Mai Quynh Nam). Communication can be divided into various types based on different classification criteria. Based on scope and influence, it can be classified into individual communication, group communication, and mass communication.

Personal communication is recognized as the process of communication between individuals who participate in an organization and exchange information, thoughts and emotions. During communication, individuals influence each other in terms of perception, attitude, and behavior. Personal communication takes place in personal relationships, with a limited number of participants, in a defined space and time. It can be direct face-to-face or indirect with the support of communication technology (phone, mail, social

networks...). Some personal communication skills are identified, such as face-to-face meetings, phone calls, personal letters, lobbying, personal advice...

Group communication involves more participants than personal communication, and the social design factor is manifested and takes place in a defined space and time with the form of 1-1 group or group communication. 1-group communication takes place, in which the communicator (1) directs its activities towards a social group (1 group) with a targeted impact. This form of communication is effective when the group has operating regulations, specific social roles within the group (bosses, leaders) are identified and have credibility with each other... Group communication, when developed into a larger group, will encompass many smaller groups and will take place at different group levels.

Mass communication is the process of disseminating the same information content to individuals and social groups on a large scale based on mass communication techniques. This process is only established when it has all the necessary elements such as a communicator (creating messages), an audience (receiving messages), and communication activities (conveying messages on channels). Mass communication channels are diverse and rich, including channels such as the press, books, cinema and TV.

Domestic violence is the intentional behavior of a family member that causes harm or has the potential to cause harm, physically, mentally, or economically, to another member of the family. Domestic violence is a form of gender-based violence with deep-rooted causes in the imbalance of power between men and women in the family and society⁽¹⁾. The consequences of domestic violence can lead to death and significant economic damage. In Vietnam, the estimated cost of domestic violence in terms of missed opportunities was 1.41% of the GDP in 2010, equivalent to VND 2,536 trillion (United Nations, 2012). Domestic violence can be manifested in visible behaviors such as physical assault, but it can also be invisible, such as sexual and psychological violence.

The Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control (2007) stipulates the content of information and communication on preventing and combating domestic violence, including (1) Policies and laws on domestic violence prevention and control, gender equality, and the rights and obligations of family members; (2) Good traditions of Vietnamese people and families; (3) The harm of domestic violence; (4) Measures, models, and experiences in preventing and combating domestic violence; (5) Knowledge about marriage and family, skills in building a cultured family, and (6) Other content related to preventing and combating domestic violence.

Media communication for preventing domestic violence is considered a sustainable and long-term solution. Domestic violence is not just seen as a private and personal issue, but as a complex social problem that needs to be addressed. The Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control, enacted in 2007, clearly stipulates the role of media in Article 40: (1) The Ministry of Information and Communications is responsible for directing the mass media to disseminate information and communication about policies and laws on domestic violence prevention and control; (2) The mass media is responsible for the timely and accurate dissemination of policies and laws on domestic violence prevention and control.

A survey using a questionnaire was conducted in three locations including Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Quang Tri with a sample size of 561 cases, of which Hanoi accounted for 35.8%; Quang Tri 27.5%, and Ho Chi Minh City 36.7%. The sample distribution by gender of the respondents (NTL) included 42.4% male and 57.6% female, with the gender-neutral group accounting for an insignificant proportion.

2. The current situation of access to information and mass media

To accurately measure the amount of time respondents spend accessing media, a scale with minutes as the unit and measured over a 24-hour period was used to survey various media outlets including television, radio, print media, online newspapers, and social media. The average daily time spent accessing social media was the highest at 76.78 minutes, with some individuals accessing social media 24/7 (1440 minutes). The second highest average time spent accessing a mass media outlet was television, with 40.25 minutes per day. Among the surveyed mass media outlets, television had the highest average daily access time, although it was still much lower than social media. On average, respondents accessed social media almost twice as much as they accessed the most popular mass media outlet, television. Online newspapers had the second highest average access time of 36.26 minutes, while radio and print media had very low daily access times, less than 10 minutes per day.

The survey results showed a significant difference in media access time between men and women. Women spent an average of 26.04 more minutes per day on social media than men (88.69 minutes for women compared to 62.65 minutes for men). Men spent an average of about 20 more minutes per day accessing television and online newspapers than women (46.89 minutes for men compared to 39.42 minutes for women for television; 44.10 minutes for men compared to 31.38 minutes for women for online newspapers). The

difference in average access time for radio and print media was negligible, with radio having slightly higher access time than print media.

The average daily access time to social media was the highest at 76.78 minutes per day. Chart 1 of the survey results shows that the highest usage rate was for Facebook, followed by Zalo and then YouTube. Viber and two new Vietnamese social media platforms, Gapo and Lotus, had low usage rates. Women had a higher usage rate for Facebook than men by about 10%, while Viber, Gapo, and Lotus had low usage rates for both genders.

Therefore, the survey results show that on average, NTL's daily access time to social media is the highest, followed by television, online news, and printed news and radio both have the lowest average access time. The average access time to different media channels varies by gender, with females spending more time on social media, while males spend more time on television and online news. The three most commonly accessed social media platforms in order are Facebook, Zalo, and YouTube.

3. Current situation of accessing information on domestic violence prevention

A study was conducted to survey the level of NTL's access to information on domestic violence prevention through various information channels in the past 5 years, from the survey period (2016-2021), with the level of access measured by scores: Never accessed is 1 point; Rarely accessed is 2 points; Occasionally accessed is 3 points; Regularly accessed is 4 points and Very frequently accessed is 5 points. Therefore, the higher the score, the more frequently NTL accesses information on domestic violence prevention, and vice versa. The sources of accessed information were measured from 3 forms of communication including: (1) personal communication such as direct exchange with friends, relatives; direct private exchange with grassroots officials at all levels (villages, neighborhoods...); direct private exchange with local media officials; indirect exchange via social networks (FB, Zalo...); other forms; (2) group communication including training, talking in various forms at the local level; participating in, knowing about communication and mobilization activities at the local level on occasions throughout the year; from communication activities of departments, organizations, religious institutions...; other forms; (3) mass communication including television, radio, print newspapers, online newspapers.

The results of the survey analysis show that the highest average score is for direct communication with friends and family (3.43 points) and the second highest is for indirect communication through social networks (Facebook,

Zalo, etc.) (3.07 points). Although these two personal communication channels have the highest average scores, they still do not reach the level of 4 points, which means the level of reception is evaluated on average but not frequent. Personal communication channels with direct exchange with local officials (village, neighborhood, etc.) (2.29 points) and direct exchange with local communication officials score low on average (2.13 points), over 2 points, meaning they are rarely used.

In terms of group communication, all three main forms of training, discussion on local topics (2.20 points); participation and awareness of communication activities at local events throughout the year (2.55 points); and communication activities of departments, organizations, and religious institutions (2.64 points) are recorded at the lowest level compared to personal and group communication, with over 2 points, meaning they are a little rare and far from occasional.

Among the mass communication channels, including television, radio, print media, and online newspapers, online newspapers and television are two sources of information that achieve the highest average score of nearly 4 points (online newspapers achieve 3.59 points; television achieves 3.40 points), meaning they are close to the level of frequent use, above the occasional level. However, the average score for access to radio (2.76 points) and print media (2.66 points) is low. This shows that communication about domestic violence prevention is more effective in personal and mass communication than in group communication.

The results of analyzing gender differences and the average level of access to information on domestic violence prevention through personal, group, and public media channels show that there is not much difference between men and women. Direct exchange with friends (men 3.38 points; women 3.47 points) and indirect exchange via social networks (Facebook, Zalo, etc.) (men 3.04 points; women 3.15 points) are two sources of information that are accessed at a higher level, although not yet at a frequent level. Respondents do not have a habit of exchanging information about domestic violence directly with local officials (village, neighborhood, etc.) (men 2.29 points; women 2.06 points) or directly with local media personnel (men 2.45 points; women 2.21 points). This is also a point to note in community-level communication, so it is necessary to consider personal communication forms such as home visits and family counselling from the grassroots level of government.

The analysis scores show that group communication is the form with the lowest level of information access among the three forms, all of which have not

reached 3, occasionally reaching only above 2, meaning that this form exists but is very rare. This is also a problem to consider in communication on domestic violence prevention at the grassroots level because group communication forms are often implemented by non-governmental organizations in community intervention projects due to their superiority in providing information from awareness to attitudes and behaviors.

The average level of information access through mass media is mainly through television (men reached 3.31 points; women reached 3.47 points) and online newspapers (men reached 3.55 points, women reached 3.63 points), both reaching levels above 3 and approaching 4, meaning occasional and near frequent access. The average level of access through print media (men reached 2.64 points; women reached 2.68 points) and radio (men reached 2.66 points; women reached 2.84 points) are both low, and this level is common for both men and women, with not much difference.

Specific analyses of the level of reception of information on domestic violence prevention through personal media channels from survey data show that about one-third of respondents (34.4%) occasionally or regularly exchange information indirectly with others via social networks. Direct exchange with friends and relatives is the most common method, with nearly half of respondents (46.2%) using this approach occasionally. However, 36.3% of those surveyed never exchange information with local media officers, and 28.3% never exchange information with local grassroots officials such as village women's associations, village health workers, and population officers. This indicates that grassroots officials such as village women's associations, village health workers, and population officers need to be mobilized and play a greater role in communicating domestic violence prevention at the grassroots level.

The survey results on the level of reception of information on domestic violence prevention through group media channels show a high response rate at the "never" or "rarely" level. More than one-third of respondents (34.1%) reported that they have never participated in local training or conversations in the community. Over one-third (34.6%) occasionally participate or know about promotional activities during peak periods. 35.3% occasionally receive information on domestic violence prevention through the media activities of departments, organizations, and other group media channels, while other group media channels accounted for 32.7%. At the level of frequent or very frequent reception, the highest percentage of respondents reported receiving

information on domestic violence prevention through media activities of departments, organizations, and other group media channels, accounting for 21.5%. Participation or knowledge of local promotional activities ranked second at 18.3%. Other forms accounted for 16.4%, and local training or conversations had the lowest percentage at 13.5%.

The level of information reception regarding domestic violence prevention through mass media channels is still generally higher than other forms of media. Two mass media channels that are regularly identified with high levels of information reception regarding domestic violence prevention are television and online news outlets. This also suggests that a solution for domestic violence prevention through media should utilize the role of mass media in promoting domestic violence prevention.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

The results of measuring NTL's daily media use based on a scale of minutes per day for each media channel allows for calculation of the average time spent on each specific media channel. Among these channels, social media had the highest average time spent per day.

Calculating the average time spent per day on each mass media channel showed that television had the highest average time spent and also the highest percentage of NTL accessing it. Online news outlets were the second highest in average time spent per day and also the second highest in percentage of NTL accessing it. Radio and print media were the two channels with the lowest average time spent per day and also the two channels with the lowest percentage of NTL accessing them. This analysis also suggests the necessity of using social media channels in promoting domestic violence prevention through media, especially for younger audiences.

The analysis results also show gender differences in the use of different media channels, with a much higher proportion of females using social media compared to males. Therefore, when using social media in domestic violence prevention, the target audience should be women. On the other hand, when communicating with male target audiences, more attention should be paid to online news and television channels. Although radio and print media have lower direct access rates, their opportunities can still be increased by leading to social media platforms, especially Facebook, Zalo, and YouTube.

The public receives information on domestic violence prevention through various forms of media, including interpersonal communication, group communication, and mass media. Therefore, domestic violence prevention

media should focus on and promote cross-media communication to effectively reach target audiences.

For personal communication, more direct information exchange with friends and family should be encouraged, as the survey results indicate that this is the most popular form of communication among the target audience. In addition, more information exchange on domestic violence between individuals through social media, mainly Facebook and Zalo, should be promoted, as these are the two channels that the target audience most frequently accesses for information on domestic violence prevention. The participation of KOLs, individuals with credibility and influence within groups, should be encouraged to increase the effectiveness of information dissemination. This suggests that personal communication about domestic violence prevention should use both direct and indirect forms.

For forms of media that involve opinion leaders, influential individuals should create an open environment for discussion of domestic violence prevention, so that it is no longer a private matter or “hush-hush”. Sharing stories of domestic violence can encourage changes in awareness, attitudes, and the behavior of those involved, and this is a form of ‘community speaking out’ against domestic violence instead of just exposing the problem to others. However, in personal communication, the role of grassroots workers should be emphasized with forms of visitation, counselling, etc. for proactive domestic violence prevention instead of just waiting for the victim.

The survey results also show that the approach to information on domestic violence prevention through group media is still limited. Although the forms are recognized to exist, the access rate is still very low. This suggests a need to leverage the strengths of group media in domestic violence prevention, such as training, small and large group discussions, club activities, and integrating activities of local grassroots organizations.

Access to information on domestic violence prevention through mass media channels such as television and online news is high in both localities and for both genders. This indicates the need to leverage the strengths of television and online news in communicating domestic violence prevention information./.

(1) Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control No. 02.2007/QH12. <http://vanban.chinhphu.vn/> online Sunday, 26.09.2021.