Chapter- 2
Theories of Interpersonal communication, Mass communication & Media effects

The link between communication and families is created through social interaction of family members, on the other hand to understand family communication is essential to understand family members and family relationships. Thus, the family communication theories are often correlations between family communication processes and family relationships that provide explanations for various phenomena of interests that take place within the family system. The family communication theories is outcome of various communication theories in general but it does not have its own exclusive domain, framework or model, however they are developed in conjugation with interface interpersonal communication between the family members on various sociological issues or events that bring about communication behavioural changes or outcome of any influence or effects on family members.

2.1 Interpersonal Communication

It is an interactional process between two people, either face-to-face or through mediated forms. It is, in other words, a dialogue or conversation that is personal, direct and intimate. A lot depends on the relationship between the two individuals, their equality of status, the socio-cultural environment in which the exchange takes place etc. When a mechanical device mediates in an interpersonal exchange, it is termed as interpersonal mediated communication. Feedback is instantaneous and easy to measure. The following important aspects are stressed on:

**Relational (Qualitative)** - Communication in which the roles of sender and receiver are shared by two people simultaneously in order to create meaning.

**Situational (Contextual)** - Communication that occurs between two people in a specific context.

**Quantitative** - Dyadic interactions, including impersonal communication.
Functional (Strategic) - Communication for the purpose of achieving interpersonal goals.

2.1.1 Communication Pragmatics/Interactional View - "Relationships within a family system are interconnected and highly resistant to change. Communication among members has both a content and relationship component. When people's content and relationship component do not match up, miscommunication is likely to occur. The system can be transformed only when members receive outside help to reframe the relational punctuation. This theory uses axioms, it seems that the theory is more humanistic rather scientific. The axioms provide a framework for how communication takes place, i.e. depend upon the situation in order to explain what is really taking place. This theory has many implications for everyday life. Since families often suffer from miscommunication, this theory is able to explain why such things take place. The interpersonal communication between parents about issues surrounding their child or media etc. can be understood. (Watzlawick et al., 1967)

2.1.2 Communication Competence - Communication competence is the ability to choose a communication behaviour that is both appropriate and effective for a given situation. The component model is a model that sets the framework for what makes someone a competent communicator. Interpersonal competency allows one to achieve their communication goals without causing the other party to lose face. The model most often used to describe competence is the component model. (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984) which includes three components:

1. knowledge,
2. skill, and
3. motivation

Knowledge simply means knowing what behaviour is best suited for a given situation. Skill is having the ability to apply that behaviour in the given context. Motivation is having the desire to communicate in a competent manner. (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984)
2.1.3 Constructivism - Constructivism is a scientific theory that attempts to explain why some people are more successful in attaining their interpersonal communication goals than others. It also makes predictions that people who are more cognitively complex will be more successful because of their ability to use rhetorical design logic in sending messages. (Delia et al., 1982)

Cognitive Complexity → Rhetorical Design Logic → Sophisticated Communication → Beneficial Outcomes

Thus in the context of Indian traditional family system the elderly / new parents are involved in major decision making. They need cognitively complex interpersonal communications to communicate with growing or adolescent child while dealing their critical issues.

2.1.4. Coordinated Management of Meaning- It is a humanistic theory, and seems to be both analytically consistent and systematic in its approach. According to it persons-in-conversation co-construct their own social realities. The social world depends on specific situations and contexts, the meaning created and understood can be varying. This is the definition of having multiple truths (epistemology). (Pearce & Cronen, 1980)

The theory finds its place in family system where the need and importance of interpersonal communication largely depends on the role played by each member like their perception power and understanding of situation to the context, its proper analysis and interpretation which depends upon their beliefs. Therefore, for any received content or information either through thoughts sharing, gossiping or from media source each individual in family communicate differently.

2.1.5. Expectancy violation theory - It is a scientific theory because it assumes that there is only one truth. Individually it is perceived as when our expectations are violated, we will respond in specific ways. If an act is unexpected and is assigned favourable interpretation, and it is evaluated positively, it will produce more favourable outcomes than an expected act with the same interpretation and evaluation. (Burgoon, 1978) In Indian context where father leads family in most of the cases violation of expectancy may occur. This can help to study the specific behaviour of youth in our country.
2.1.6 **Fundamental Interpersonal Relationship Orientation (FIRO)** - In family system parent-child relationship, husband –wife relationships and brother-sister relationships depend on interpersonal needs to fulfil their communication practices within family and in society.

This theory concentrates on three interpersonal needs that most people share: the needs for inclusion, for control and for affection. Inclusion refers to people’s need to be recognized as participants in human interaction. Schutz maintains that people begin relationships in order to satisfy one or more of these needs. The use of the term control as it applies to this theory refers to people’s desires to make a difference in their social environments and to have some say over what happens. Finally, people seek a sense of interpersonal warmth or of being liked or loved. This is a humanistic theory because it has intuitive credibility; it makes sense and is relative to actual communication practice. (Schutz, 1958)

2.1.7 **Interpersonal deception** – This theory explains about manipulation of messages by sender and detection of validity of message by receiver where by suspicion finds its way through the communication process. (Buller, 1996)

This theory is quite humanistic in nature and a solution too for Indian families where disputes lead the family relations.

2.1.8 **Marital Communication** - This is a scientific theory that makes predictions about marital dimensions based on three factors - ideology, interdependence and conflict. This theory says that one dimension does not necessarily define a good or bad marriage. What is best depends on the needs of the couple. (Fitzpatrick, 1998)

In family system it is often observed that the role of couple keeps on changing as their companionship matures. A single couple can start with traditional type changing to conventional and finally separate or even vice-versa. The interface interpersonal communication during these phases may all change.

2.1.9 **Relational Dialectics (Graphical Representation of the Theory)** - Communication parties experience internal, conflicting pulls causing relationships to be in a constant state of flux, known as dialectical tension. The pressures of these tensions
occur in a wavelike or cyclical fashion over time. Relational Dialectics introduce the concept that the closer individuals come to one another, the more conflict will arise to pull them apart. There are three primary relational dialectics:

1. *Connectedness and Separateness* - Although it is only natural to desire a close and permanent bond in our interpersonal relationships, no relationship can endure unless the involved individuals spend some time alone. Too much connection results in the loss of individual identity.

2. *Certainty and Uncertainty* - Relational partners need predictability along with a sense of assurance in their interpersonal relationships.

3. *Openness and Closeness* - In an interpersonal relationship, communication partners feel the pressure to be transparent and reveal extensive personal information. However, this pull counters a natural individual desire for privacy. This dynamic struggle demonstrates that intimacy in relationships is not a straight-line path.

Relational Dialectics is useful to apply in situations when trying to explain dramatic or sudden changes in human communication behaviour. (Baxter, 1988)

In family system such situations often arise between close relations such as husband and wife. There is sudden change in behaviour and the partner feels the dialect tension in the interpersonal communication. The reason of such behaviour change can be situational, internally or externally mediated.

2.1.10 **Social Exchange Theory** - The Communication Theory of Social Exchange is a theory based on the exchange of rewards and costs to quantify the values of outcomes from different situations for an individual. People strive to minimize costs and maximize rewards and then base the likeliness of developing a relationship with someone on the perceived possible outcomes. For greater outcomes closer relationship is attained. This can be assumed a humanistic theory with intuitive credibility; it makes sense and has a systematic approach. (Thibault & Kelley, 1952)
This theory is a guideline for establishing close relationships. The cases of intimate love, affection or separateness within the family relationship can be understood after reviewing costs and rewards to quantify the relational values.

2.1.11 Social Penetration Theory- This is a scientific theory that makes predictions about relationship development based on levels of self disclosure. The theory states that as relationships develop, communication moves from relatively shallow, no intimate levels to deeper, more personal ones. The more time we spend with others, the more likely we are to self-disclose more intimate thought and details of our life. In family system the relationship develops between the couples, the infant grow to adult in the family environment and latter in their trust and belief is more on parents which mature with time. (Altman & Taylor, 1973) This theory applies in family system as thoughts and feelings are shared with close intimate relations within family members.

2.1.12 Relationship Development- The model of relational development is an explanation put into stages that identifies and develops understanding about the interpersonal communicators experience in terms of changes in intimacy levels. The relational stages model is useful to apply in all situations in which interpersonal communication occurs. It is relevant for romantic as well as platonic or same-gender relationships. The model also helps couples understand why there are discrepancies in what each partner is wanting from the relationship. When a person wants to move up a stage in his or her relationship, it probably means that he or she wants to increase positive feelings derived from being with the other person. When one partner wants to move down a stage, it usually means he or she wants to decrease certain negative feelings that come from being involved with the other. (Knapp, 1984)

2.2 Theories of Mass Communication

These theories are based on developmental stages of Communication and explain communication as a complex and dynamic process leading to the evolution of meaning. The study of communication and mass media has led to the formulation of many theories: structural and functional theories believe that social structures are real and function in ways that can be observed objectively; cognitive and behavioural theories tend to focus
on psychology of individuals; interactionist theories view social life as a process of interaction; interpretive theories uncover the ways people actually understand their own experience; and critical theories are concerned with the conflict of interests in society and the way communication perpetuates domination of one group over another.

The earliest theories were those propounded by Western theorists Siebert, Paterson and Schramm in their book Four Theories of the Press (1956). These were termed "normative theories" by McQuail in the sense that they "mainly express ideas of how the media ought to or can be expected to operate under a prevailing set of conditions and values." Each of the four original or classical theories is based on a particular political theory or economic scenario.

2.2.1 CLASSICAL THEORIES

2.2.1.1 Authoritarian Theory

According to this theory, mass media, though not under the direct control of the State, had to follow its bidding. Under an Authoritarian approach in Western Europe, freedom of thought was jealously guarded by few people (ruling classes). Steps were taken to control the freedom of expression. The result was advocacy of complete dictatorship. This theory stemmed from the authoritarian philosophy of Plato (407 - 327 B.C), who thought that the State was safe only in the hands of a few wise men. Thomas Hobbes (1588 - 1679), a British academician, argued that the power to maintain order was sovereign and individual objections were to be ignored. Engel, a German thinker further reinforced the theory by stating that freedom came into its supreme right only under Authoritarianism.

2.2.1.2 Libertarianism or Free Press Theory

This movement is based on the right of an individual, and advocates absence of restraint. The basis of this theory dates back to 17th century England when the printing press made it possible to print several copies of a book or pamphlet at cheap rates. The State was thought of as a major source of interference on the rights of an individual and his property.
Advocates of this theory were Lao Tzu, an early 16th century philosopher, John Locke of Great Britain in the 17th century, John Milton, the epic poet ("Aeropagitica") and John Stuart Mill, an essayist ("On Liberty"). Milton in Aeropagitica in 1644, referred to a self righting process if free expression is permitted

2.2.1.3 Social Responsibility Theory

Virulent critics of the Free Press Theory were Wilbur Schramm, Siebert and Theodore Paterson. In their book Four Theories of Press, they stated "pure libertarianism is antiquated, outdated and obsolete." They advocated the need for its replacement by the Social Responsibility theory. This theory can be said to have been initiated in the United States by the Commission of The Freedom of Press, 1949. Social Responsibility theory thus became the modern variation in which the duty to one’s conscience was the primary basis of the right of free expression.

2.2.1.4 Soviet Media/Communist Theory

This theory is derived from the ideologies of Marx and Engel that "the ideas of the ruling classes are the ruling ideas". It was thought that the entire mass media was saturated with bourgeois ideology. Lenin thought of private ownership as being incompatible with freedom of press

Two more theories were later added as the "four theories of the press" were not fully applicable to the non-aligned countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, who were committed to social and economic development on their own terms. The two theories were:

(a) Development Communication Theory

The underlying fact behind the genesis of this theory was that there can be no development without communication. Under the four classical theories, capitalism was legitimised, but under the Development communication theory, or Development Support Communication as it is otherwise called, the media undertook the role of carrying out positive developmental programmes, accepting restrictions and instructions from the State.
(b) Democratization/Democratic Participant Media Theory

This theory vehemently opposes the commercialization of modern media and its top-down non-participant character. The need for access and right to communicate is stressed. Bureaucratic control of media is decried.

2.2.2 MAGIC BULLET / HYPODERMIC NEEDLE / STIMULUS RESPONSE THEORY

It propounded the view that the mass media had a powerful influence on the mass audience and could deliberately alter or control peoples' behaviour.

Klapper (1960) formulated several generalizations on the effects of mass media. His research findings are as follows: "Mass-media ordinarily does not serve as a necessary and sufficient cause of audience effect, but rather functions through a nexus of mediating factors and influences.

2.2.3 Two Step Flow Theory

In the early 40’s, before the invention of television, Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Goudet conducted an American survey on mass campaigns. The study revealed that informal social relationships had played a part in modifying the manner in which individuals selected content from the media campaign. The study also indicated that ideas often flowed from the radio and newspapers to opinion leaders and from them to the less active sections of society. Thus, informal social groups have some degree of influence on people and mould the way they select media content and act on it.

2.2.4 One Step Flow Theory

This theory simply stated that mass communication media channels communicate directly to the mass audience without the message being filtered by opinion leaders.

2.2.5 Multi Step Flow Theory

This was based on the idea that there are a number of relays in the communication flow from a source to a large audience.
2.2.6 Uses and Gratification Theory

This theory propounded by Katz in 1970, is concerned with how people use media for gratification of their needs. An outcome of Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, it propounds the fact that people choose what they want to see or read and the different media compete to satisfy each individual’s needs.

In the hierarchy of needs, there are five levels in the form of a pyramid with the basic needs such as food and clothing at the base and the higher order needs climbing up the pyramid. The fulfilment of each lower level need leads to the individual looking to satisfy the next level of need and so on till he reaches the superior-most need of self-actualization.

2.2.7 Spiral of Silence Theory

Propounded by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, this theory states that the media publicizes opinions that are mainstreamed and people adjust their opinions according to their perceptions to avoid being isolated. Individuals who perceive their own opinion as being accepted will express it, whilst those who think themselves as being a minority, suppress their views. Innovators and change agents are unafraid to voice different opinions, as they do not fear isolation.

2.2.8 Consistency Theories (1950s)

Festinger formulated the consistency theories that talked about people’s need for consistency in their beliefs and judgments. In order to reduce dissonance created by inconsistencies in belief, judgments and action people expose themselves to information that is consistent with their ideas and actions, and they shut out other communications.

2.2.9 McCombs and Shaw’s Agenda Setting Theory

This theory puts forth the ability of the media to influence the significance of events in the public mind. The media set the agenda for the audience's discussion and mentally order and organize their world. The theory is consistent with a "use and gratification" approach. McCombs and Shaw assert that the agenda-setting function of the media causes the correlation between the media and public ordering of priorities. The people most affected by the media agenda are those who have a high need for orientation
2.2.10 Media Dependency Theory

Developed by Ball-Rokeach and DeFluer, the key idea behind this theory is that audiences depend on media information to meet needs and reach goals, and social institutions and media systems interact with audiences to create needs, interests, and motives in the person. The degree of dependence is influenced by the number and centrality of information functions and social stability.

2.2.11 Stephenson’s Play Theory

Play is an activity pursued for pleasure. The daily withdrawal of people into the mass media in their afterhours is a matter of subjectivity. The effect of mass communication is neither escapism nor seducing the masses. Rather it is seen as anti-anxiety producing, and is regarded as communication-pleasure.

2.2.12 Modeling Behaviour Theory

Behaviours which are modelled from media experiences can become habitual if found useful and/or if they are reinforced in the environment. This is not about violent or criminal behaviour.

2.2.13 Stalagmite Theories

These theories suggest that mediated experiences induce long term effects that are very difficult to measure. The effects are like stalagmite drippings building up over time. Meaning Theory and the Cultivation Theory are two of the most significant Stalagmite theories.

(A) Meaning Theory

Media experiences mould meanings by putting things in a particular framework.

(B) Cultivation Theory

George Gerbner tried to determine the influence of television on viewers' ideas of the environment they lived in. He found that dominance of TV created a common view of the world and that it homogenized different cultures.
2.2.14 Diffusion of innovations theory

Pioneered in 1943 by Bryce Ryan and Neil Gross of Iowa State University, this theory traces the process by which a new idea or practice is communicated through certain channels over time among members of a social system. The model describes the factors that influence people's thoughts and actions and the process of adopting a new technology or idea.

2.2.15 Social learning theory

Formulated by Albert Bandura at Stanford University, this specifies that mass-media messages give audience members an opportunity to identify with attractive characters that demonstrate behaviour, engage emotions, and allow mental rehearsal and modelling of new behaviour. The behaviour of models in the mass media also offers vicarious reinforcement to motivate audience members' adoption of the behaviour.

Baran and Davis (2000) classify mass communication theories into three broad categories:

1. microscopic theories that focus on the everyday life of people who process information - for example, uses and gratifications, active audience theory, and reception studies;
2. middle range theories that support the limited effects perspective of the media - for example, information flow theory, diffusion theory, and
3. macroscopic theories that are concerned with media's impact on culture and society - for example, cultural studies theory.

Theories of mass communication have always focused on the "cause and effects" notion, i.e. the effects of the media and the process leading to those effects, on the audience's mind.

2.2.16 The Shannon-Weaver Model

Shannon and Weaver produced a general model of communication known after them as the Shannon-Weaver Model. It involved breaking down an information system into sub-systems so as to evaluate the efficiency of various communication channels and codes. They propose that all communication must include six elements:
This model is often referred to as an “information model” of communication. A drawback is that the model looks at communication as a one-way process. That is remedied by the addition of the feedback loop.

2.2.17 Berlo's S-M-C-R Model

Berlo’s SMCR (SOURCE, MESSAGE, CHANNEL, and RECEIVER) model focuses on the individual characteristics of communication and stresses the role of the relationship between the source and the receiver as an important variable in the communication process. The more highly developed the communication skills of the source and the receiver, the more effectively the message will be encoded and decoded.

2.3 Uses and Effects of mass media

2.3.1 Intrapersonal Communication

Intrapersonal communication is one-way communication. Individual contemplation, internal reflection, prayers, etc. are types of intrapersonal communication. This type can also be termed as a form of internal persuasion. There are two types of messages, nonverbal and verbal. Examples of nonverbal communication are facial expressions, posture, gestures, tone of voice, touching, spacing and systematic use of time.

2.3.2 Balance Theory

This theory advocated by Fritz Heider and Theodore Newcomb in 1946 states that when tensions arise between or inside people, they attempt to reduce these tensions through self-persuasion trying to persuade others. Balance theory proposes that there exists a balance between both source and receiver about likes or dislikes, agreement or disagreement or a positive attitude about an object or an idea.

2.3.3 Cognitive Dissonance Theory

The theory propagated by Leon Festinger in 1962 says that human beings often have conflicting beliefs with actions they take, or other beliefs they have. This dissonance
created when the issue is more important and an individual has more than one option. The tension or dissonance created during the process can be reduced by changing the option of belief or action.

2.3.4 Information Manipulation Theory (IMT)

Theorist Steve A. McCornack propounded this theory in 1992. This states that a speaker purposefully and covertly violates one of the conversational maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner with the intention of deceiving his/her listener. Speaker does this for the sake of safeguard of his/her very interest, motive or profit.

2.3.5 The Inoculation Theory (1961) by William McGuire states that inoculation is used to describe the attribution of greater resistance to individuals or the process of supplying information to receivers before the communication process takes place in the hope that the information would make the receiver more resistant. This theory stresses on the importance of the nature of the presentation of the message. To see the impact of message on listeners, readers or viewers, this theory finds a practical approach.

2.4 Theories of Media Effects

Marshall McLuhan said “The medium is the message”. No matter what the contents of the program, he argued that the audiences will watch television if it commands their attention as no other medium has. Mass Communications are neither good nor bad, but rather mystical devices that possess powers to change the way humans lead their lives.

2.4.1 Reinforcement Theory

Joseph Klapper and other theorists believed in the reinforcement function of mass media. Only after reinforcing existing values and attitudes can program of the media be popular with the majority of social groups interested in perpetuating their own traditions and status.

2.4.2 Narcosis

Lazarsfeld and Merton held that the mass media could not be relied upon to work for changes, even minor ones, in the social structure. They perceived in mass
communication a narcotizing dysfunction that distracts and prevents audiences from facing real problems. Exposure towards a flood of information narcotizes the average audience rather than energize. This theory is now outdated as the media today have a galvanizing effect in bringing about many revolutionary changes.

2.4.3 Catharsis

Seymour Feshbach, the main exponent of this theory, argued that the media may have a cathartic effect on the audiences and purges them of anti-social or unfulfilled desires and frustrations. A study was conducted on a group of college students. They were subjected to savage insults and criticisms by experimenters. A portion of the group was shown an aggressive film of a brutal boxing match, another portion was shown a dull control film. It was found that those students who had seen the aggressive film felt less hostile to their experimenters than those who had seen the control film.

But in a parallel study conducted by Berkovitz, it was found that the aggressive film was responsible for the aggressive response of the students. Other experiments have shown that children are likely to imitate violence in films.

2.4.4 Manipulation Theory

The manipulation theory by Ernst Van Haag is an extreme view that states that mass communications are demeaning, depersonalizing instruments of manipulation. But it is to be noted that social and economic circumstances and not mass media alone foster such hedonism.

2.5 Theory of Windows on the World

Edward Shils and David M. White (Pooley, 2006) are of the view that mass media constitute windows on the world dealing in new and popular culture that bring more of the good to more people than ever before in history. But White talks about the gatekeeper aspect of the editor who sees to it that only those events which he believes to be true should reach the audience.

2.5.1 Corruptive Theory

Frederick Wertham also holds an extreme view that the content of the media is corruptive and inculcates materialism and anti-social behaviour towards others.
2.5.2 The relationship between media use and interpersonal communication

The rapidly changing media environment means that audiences are living in an increasingly information saturated society.

From the early days of communication research, scholars have suggested that interpersonal communication mediates the effects of media exposure on human behaviors, which produces the classic two-step flow model (Katz, 1987; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955) and its variants, such as the communication mediation model (Shah et al., 2007) and the inter-media processes (Rogers, 2003). These mediation models are based on the following roles of interpersonal communication: relaying media information to others (i.e., social diffusion; Katz, 1987), providing opportunities for elaboration about media content before and during conversation (Eveland, 2004), and establishing and reinforcing social norms (Valente & Saba, 1998).

2.5.2.1 Instrumental-Affective communication theory

Rick Peterson and Stephen Green of Virginia Tech describe two types of family communication. Instrumental communication is “the exchange of factual information that enables individuals to fulfil common family functions” such as arranging schedules (Peterson & Green, 2009). Affective communication, in contrast, is “the way individual family members share their emotions with one another” such as communicating feelings of gratitude (Peterson & Green, 2009).

2.5.2.2 Media Richness Theory was developed by Richard L. Daft and Robert H. Lengel in 1986. Alan R. Dennis and Susan T. Kinney of the University of Georgia, Athens, describes Daft and Lengel’s theory as a communication theory that “argues that performance improves when team members use ‘richer’ media for equivocal tasks” (Dennis & Kinney, 1998). The main premise of Media Richness Theory is that “media differ in ‘richness’ (‘the ability of information to change understanding within a time interval’ Daft and Lengel 1986, p. 560), with face-to-face communication being the richest, while other media capable of sending fewer cues (e.g., vocal inflection, gestures) or providing slower feedback (e.g., memos, voice-mail, or e-mail) are ‘leaner’” (Dennis & Kinney, 1998).
Both Instrumental-Affective Theory and Media Richness Theory are significant aspects of my study and will be discussed in the succession of the essay.

Figure-2.1: Media Richness Theory