

Correlation between Communication Model of Wilbur Schramm and Communication Method of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)

SHARIF ADNAN

Researcher, Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur

Abstract

Communication is a perpetual process. This operation has been conducted since the beginning of mankind. As communication styles never remained the same in all eras, communication scholars developed various communication models based on different types or forms of communication. The present research article analyzes how the communication style of the Prophet [PBUH] is correlated with the communication model of Schramm and the similarities they have. Qualitative approaches based on content analysis and the case study method have been applied to this research. Case studies are selected from the hadith of Shahih Bukhari, Muslim and Tirmidhi. According to the findings, what Schramm demonstrated in his model in 1954, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) carried out that communication process and placed emphasis on those communication elements 1400 years ago. It is also discovered that there is a direct resemblance and link between Prophet's communication method (ﷺ) and Schramm's communication model.

Keywords: Communication, Schramm's Communication model, Prophet (ﷺ) Communication style, Communication elements

INTRODUCTION:

In his book "The Process and Effects of Mass Communications," Wilbur Schramm, an American mass communication expert, devised a simple communications model. According to his communication model, communication is primarily accomplished by the first and second parties, where both of them serve as the sender or source of messages and the receiver, who receives the messages (Jones, 1955). Schramm also emphasized that encoding and decoding are the two major factors while

communicating (Galandar, 2002). On the other hand, Muhammad is the Prophet of Islam and the Proclaimer of the Qur'an. He is the last Messenger of Allah too. As a messenger, the Prophet communicated with the people of different areas of the world in order to spread the religion of Allah. Just like the model, most of the time, the Prophet conducted the same communication style, that was, a two-way communication method to preach the words of Allah (Mowlana, 2007). He also gave emphasis on clear messages to ensure a swift encoding and decoding process (Kashani,2012). Because of these similarities, many Islamic communication scholars conducted and analyzed this issue for many years. They also emphasize further in-depth analysis to get expected output. As a result, this study attempted to analyze and delineate the similarities and mutual relationship between Prophet Muhammad's (ﷺ) communication style and Wilbur Schramm's communication model.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this research can be specified as under which spotlights on finding the answers to the following questions:

1. To see if there are any similarities between Prophet Muhammad's (ﷺ) communication method and Schm's communication model.
2. If so, then how?

To attain the objectives, this research includes the discussion of the elements and process of the Schramm's communication model. It will also examine Prophet Muhammad's conversation style and communication method.

METHODOLOGY:

A qualitative research method has been applied in this research article. Considering the need, nature, and objectives of this research paper, content analysis and case study methods were used to justify and determine whether there are any similarities or correlations between the communication style of the Prophet (PBUH) and the communication model of Schramm. The literature covered in the paper includes journals, articles, pamphlets, and books. Contents which are collected from secondary sources such as published research articles, books, journals, and pamphlets are used to analyze and enrich the discussion of this paper. Three hadiths from Shahih Bukhari, Muslim and Tirmidhi are chosen as case studies to validate the participants' attitudes and comprehend the information transmission process during the Prophet's communication. So that it can easily be compared with Schramm's communication model.

COMMUNICATION MODEL OF SCHRAMM

Wilbur Schramm, a well-known communication theorist, developed a straightforward communication model in 1954, where he showed that human communication is actually a two-way process between the first party and the second party, and that both of them play as sender and receiver. In that model, he also mentioned three elements: the source, the message, and the receiver or destination. According to Schramm’s model, when the source sends the message towards the receiver, the receiver must interpret it according to the expected form of the source and give a response to the source accordingly. So, when the receiver provides feedback from his perspective, he also sends a message to the first party and becomes the source of the message. On the contrary, after receiving the feedback message from the receiver, the source becomes the receiver as well. Schramm also emphasized the two most important factors: encoding and decoding, without which information cannot flow between two individuals. Encoding occupies a vital part as it begins the communication steps by transforming the opinions into content. When the information reaches its destination, that is, the receiver, who is the second party, it is the responsibility of the receiver to understand what the first party wants to say. If the second party is unable to decode the information or fails to understand the message according to the sender or the first party's expected form, the message is valueless.

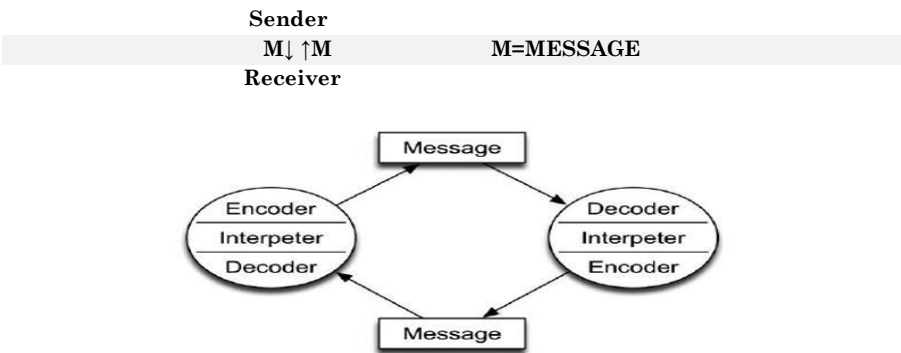


Figure 1: Communication Model of Schramm

Schramm believed that an individual’s background, beliefs, knowledge, values, experience, and culture are also vital for communication, because if two people are of the same belief, culture, experience, and values, there is a possibility of good communication. On the contrary, people from diverse cultures, religions or backgrounds tend to interpret the message in different ways, such as using signs, body language, or gestures.

Analysis of the Parallels between Prophet Muhammad's Communication Arts and Schramm's Communication

Model:

In his model Schramm mentioned, communication is two-way between the first party and the second party, and both of them play as sender and receiver. He also talked about three elements—the source, the message, and the receiver or destination.

Two-way communication conducted by Prophet (ﷺ)

Now, in Case Study 1, consider Prophet (ﷺ)'s communication style with his companions.

Case study 1.

The Prophet Muhammad said to his companion: "If there was a river at your door and he took a bath in it five times a day, would you notice any dirt on him?" They said, "Not a trace of dirt would be left." The Prophet Muhammad said: "The five prayers are like that." "Allah wipes out the sins with them." (Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 528)

Analysis and findings from the case study 1

Similarly, to the model, when communicating with the people, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) acted as the first party (source) and gradually presented his divine message, beginning with what was simple and easy to understand so that the receiver could interpret it according to the Prophet's expected form (ﷺ) and respond to him accordingly. Then he became the receiver in the course of the communicating period after getting the feedback message from the other side. On the other hand, his companion, though he started as a second party (receiver), became the sender or source too, after responding and giving feedback message to the Prophet.

Sometimes, especially in the judging period, the Prophet Muhammad acted as a second party or message receiver. In that case, he responded and provided feedback in a more understandable language and style. Let us take a look at case study 2.

Case study 2:

The Prophet (ﷺ) had a discussion with a Bedouin. His wife had given birth to a black child. As a result, the Bedouin denied that the child was his. The Bedouin said, "My wife gave birth to a black child. I want to reject this child". Hearing this, Prophet asked, "Do you have camels?", Bedouin added, "yes, my prophet." He then asked, "What color are those camels?" Bedouin replied, "Red." "Are any of them Grey?" asked the Prophet (ﷺ). He said, "There are

grey ones among them." "From where do you think this color came to them?" asked the Prophet (ﷺ). "O Allah's Messenger (ﷺ)! "exclaimed the Bedouin. It resulted from hereditary disposition. " "And this (i.e., your child) has inherited his color from his ancestors," the Prophet (ﷺ) said. (Sahih al-Bukhari 7314).

Analysis and findings from case study 2

In this instance, we can see that Prophet (ﷺ) initiated communication as a second party (receiver). After responding and giving feedback messages to Bedouin, he became the sender or source too. Bedouin, on the other hand, began communication as a first party (source), sending messages to the second party, which means the Prophet (ﷺ). Then Bedouin became a receiver too, after getting a feedback message from the other side.

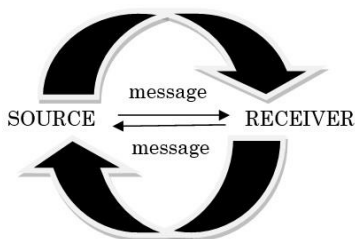


Figure 2: Communication Style of Prophet (ﷺ)

Schramm also emphasized the two most important factors: encoding and decoding. In the process of encoding, the sender (i.e., encoder) uses verbal (e.g., words, signs, images, video) and non-verbal (e.g., body language, hand gestures, facial expressions) symbols for which he or she believes the receiver (that is, the decoder) will understand. The symbols can be words and numbers, images, facial expressions, signals, and/or actions. It is very important how a message will be encoded; it partially depends on the purpose of the message. The decoding of a message is how an audience member is able to understand and interpret the message. It is a process of interpretation.

Prophet (ﷺ) gave importance on clear and concise words too for ease of encoding and decoding process:

Prophet (ﷺ), like Schramm, emphasized on the words of speech to facilitate the encoding and decoding process. Let us take a look at case study 3.

Case Study 3:

The Prophet stated that:

"You will not talk to the people about something that they do not understand, except that it will become an object of slander among them." (Muslim, Bab al-Nahy 'an al-hadith bi kul ma sami ', hadith number 9)

Analysis and findings from case study 3

Here we see the Prophet (ﷺ) forbidding the use of words with ambiguous meanings or that are difficult to understand. Reason behind forbidding the use of complicated, confusing words by Rasulallah (saas) is that, if such types of words are used, messages will be hard to decode for the receiver. He knew that unless and until the second party is able to understand or decode the information through which the sender wants to communicate, the message is actually of no use.

Rasulullah (saas) himself used to talk little, and everything was expressed in this brief talk. In his speech, there was no trace of excess or brevity. The words came one after another, like pearls. Whoever heard them will remember them. Aisha (ra) stated:

"The speech of Rasulallah (saas) was not as quick and continuous as yours." He spoke clearly, word by word." (Jami at- Tirmidhi 3639)

So, the Prophet (ﷺ) encoded his messages in such a way that the receiver could easily decode them, and it is clear from the preceding discussions that the Prophet (ﷺ) indirectly emphasized the encoding and decoding process.

Let's look at Figure 3

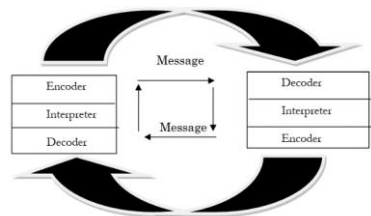


Figure 3: Encoding – Decoding process during Prophet (ﷺ) Conversation

According to Schramm, an individual's background, beliefs, knowledge, values, experience, and culture are important for communication because if two people have similar backgrounds, beliefs, and knowledge, there is a possibility of good communication. On the other hand, people from different backgrounds, beliefs, knowledge, and values tend to interpret the message in different ways, such as using signs, body language, and gestures.

Now let us discuss some of the Prophet Muhammad's speeches:

Ali reported that the Messenger of Allah said: "Talk to people with speech that they can understand." Do you wish that people believed in Allah and His messenger? " [Al-Bukhari]

The Prophet also said, 'Address people according to their understanding and knowledge.' He said, "I was ordered to address people according to their understanding."

The Prophet (ﷺ) delivered the preceding speech because he believed that an individual's background, beliefs, knowledge, values, experience, and culture were all important in communication. As a Prophet, Muhammad's mission and goal was to spread Islam in the whole world through communicating with people, and to do this, he not only used the various means of communication that belonged to his era, he also considered the psychological peculiarities of the individual and society in order to present the message in the best and most effective way. Therefore, during the Islamic invitation, he was careful about the characteristics of the society and people around him. The Prophet Muhammad was able to understand the social psychology as well as the individual characteristics and beliefs of the people who made up society and thus used different methods of communication. In the above-mentioned Bedouin incident, for example, we see that the Prophet (ﷺ) did not allow him to deny paternity of the child. The Prophet did not merely say, relying on his authority as prophet: "No, I tell you as the Prophet of Allah that this is your child." Rather, he spoke in a way that the Bedouin could understand, taking care to use an example that was related to the Bedouin's life, and thus, by benefiting from the experiences of the addressee, he was able to solve a problem in a convincing manner by having the Bedouin come up with the solution himself.

The face-to-face relationship between the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions and followers developed an effective and unique mode of communicating Islamic teachings and behavior through observational learning. Moreover, the Prophet (PBUH) gave direction to them orally as they have the same beliefs, culture, language, and values. This style was essential because of the novelty of the religion and its rituals, and because most of the companions and followers were illiterate. That's why he used that communication technique because he believed too that people who are of the same belief, culture, experience, and values have a possibility of good communication. Moreover, in the era of Apostleship, the Prophet Muhammad used to answer the question by using his hand signal, as told in this hadith which recorded by al-Bukhari:

"The people who take care orphans and myself will be like this in Paradise (Showing his middle and index fingers and separating them)" [Sahih al -Bukhari 5304].

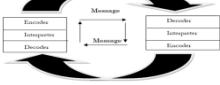
It was narrated that the Prophet [pbuh] never used foul speech, nor did he like to listen to it. If a bad word was used in his presence, he would turn his face away to reflect his objection to it [Al-Bukhari].

Hence, communication, symbolically or non-verbally was practiced by the Prophet Muhammad to consolidate his verbal acts because he believed too that people from different backgrounds, beliefs, knowledge, values tend to interpret the message in different ways such as using sign, body language,

gesture. That's why He acted according to the conditions of the region he was in while eating, drinking or dressing.

The following table will illustrate the Analysis of the Parallels between Prophet Muhammad's Communication Arts and Schramm's Communication Model in brief:

Comparison and Similarity Table

<i>Schramm communication model</i>	
Two-way process	
Both of them are playing as source and receiver part.	
Schramm emphasized about two most important factors encoding and decoding process directly.	
According to Schramm, an individual's backgrounds, beliefs, knowledge, values, experience and culture are important for communication.	
<div>Sender → Receiver</div> <div><div>Sender ↔ Receiver</div><div></div></div>	<i>Prophet (PBUH) communication style</i>
	Two-way process
	Both communicators are playing as the sender role or source of messages and the receiver role who will receive the messages
	Prophet (ﷺ), emphasized on encoding and decoding process indirectly.
	Prophet (ﷺ) believed that people from different backgrounds, beliefs, knowledge, values tend to interpret the message in different ways such as using sign, body language, gesture.

FINDINGS:

Based on the facts, information, analysis, and evaluation, the following matters are crystal clear:

Just like in Schramm's model, we see that while communicating with the people, sometimes Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) acted as a first party (source) and then he became a receiver in the course of the communicating period after getting feedback message from the other side. On the other hand, his companion, though he started as a second party (receiver), became the sender or source too, after responding and giving feedback message to the

Prophet. In addition, the Prophet (ﷺ) occasionally communicated with people as a second party or receiver. Thus, we see what Schramm said: communication is a two-way process, with both parties acting as sender and receiver, as highlighted in the Prophet's (pbuh's) communication approach or method.

Schramm also emphasized the two most important factors: encoding and decoding. Prophet (ﷺ), like Schramm, also emphasized on the use of simple words in speech for ease of encoding and decoding. In Case Study 3, we see that Prophet (ﷺ) prohibited using words with ambiguous meanings or that are difficult to understand, because doing so, would make it difficult for the receiver to decode the message.

According to Schramm, an individual's background, beliefs, knowledge, values, experience, and culture are important for communication. Rasulullah (saas) also believed that. That's why he used oral language when he had a conversation with his familiar companions. He also used sign language or gave facial gestures so that people from different places so that they could also understand what he was trying to say.

In his model, Schramm said about three elements: the source, the message, and the receiver or destination. According to Schramm's model, when the source sends the message towards the receiver, the receiver must interpret it according to the expected form of the source and give a response to the source accordingly. Rasulullah (saas) himself used to talk little, and everything was expressed in this brief talk. In his speech, there was no trace of excess or brevity. The words came one after another, like pearls. Whoever heard them will remember them. So, in his communication method, we also find that he acted as both sender and receiver and gave clear and concise messages so that everyone could understand his messages.

So, after discussing the findings, it is certain that, there remain similarities in the communication arts of Prophet and Schramm's communication model.

CONCLUSION:

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had a mission and goal which was to spread Islam in the whole world. That's why he used to communicate with the people of different area. Prophet Muhammad was able to understand the social psychology as well as the individual characteristics, belief of the people where he went for preaching, and thus he had to use different methods of communication. he used oral language when he had a conversation with his familiar companions. He also used sign language sometimes, so that people from different place could also understand what he was trying to say and the receiver could able to decode his message. Sometimes while communicating he acted as a first party and the sometimes as a second party. Sometime he

became sender or sometimes he started communicating as a receiver but he always gave priority to the messages. Prophet [pbuh] never used foul speech, nor did he like to listen to it. He spoke clearly and word by word. All these communication styles, elements and methods have a mutual relationship with what is described in communication model of Wilbur schramm . So no doubt the communication method of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and communication model of Wilbur schramm have certainly similarities and mutuality.

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