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# **The Impact of Health Awareness Campaigns on Public Health Behavior in Saudi Arabia**

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **1.1 Research Background**

Health awareness campaigns have emerged as a fundamental strategy for promoting healthier lifestyles in societies worldwide. With the rise of chronic diseases, mental health concerns, and pandemics, governments are under increasing pressure to educate citizens on preventive health measures. In Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Health has led several campaigns focusing on conditions like diabetes, heart disease, obesity, mental health, and more recently, infectious diseases such as COVID-19.

Traditionally, many Saudi citizens were unaware of the link between lifestyle choices and health outcomes. However, the rise of social media, coupled with a national drive under Vision 2030, has introduced modern communication channels to reach the public. Despite the increased visibility of health messages through platforms like Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, TV, and outdoor advertising, the question remains: Are these campaigns truly influencing behavior?

This study aims to bridge that inquiry by exploring the depth and nature of behavioral change that occurs as a result of such campaigns in Saudi Arabia. The focus will be on identifying effective platforms, measuring the credibility of various messengers (doctors vs. influencers vs. government), and determining whether these campaigns lead to tangible actions such as dietary shifts, increased physical activity, or medical check-ups.

## 1.2 Research Problem

Over the past decade, Saudi Arabia has witnessed a noticeable surge in health awareness campaigns launched by government bodies such as the Ministry of Health, private hospitals, and non-governmental organizations. These initiatives have spanned a variety of topics ranging from chronic disease prevention (e.g., diabetes and cardiovascular health) to mental well-being, nutrition, physical activity, smoking cessation, and more recently, pandemic preparedness. These campaigns have been delivered through multiple channels—television commercials, billboards, public service events, mobile apps, posters in clinics, and social media platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter (X), and YouTube.

However, while the **visibility and frequency** of these campaigns are commendable, a significant issue persists: **there is a lack of comprehensive empirical evaluation regarding their actual impact on public health behavior**. In other words, we do not know how effective these campaigns are in achieving their ultimate goal—sustained behavior change among the population. A health campaign might attract views, likes, or shares, but does that translate to increased exercise, better dietary habits, or routine health check-ups? This gap between **awareness and action** remains poorly understood.

Anecdotal evidence and limited pilot studies suggest that while many citizens consume health content, only a small portion may internalize it enough to alter their behavior long term. Often, individuals may momentarily express interest or experiment with lifestyle changes, such as trying a new diet or visiting a clinic once, but these habits tend to fade quickly. Furthermore,

**message fatigue**, where audiences become desensitized due to repetitive content, and **mistrust in sources**—especially on social media—may further reduce campaign effectiveness.

Another key concern is that **campaign messaging is not always adapted to the diverse socio-demographic makeup of Saudi Arabia**. Messaging that appeals to urban, tech-savvy youth may not resonate with elderly citizens, rural populations, or lower-literacy audiences. In some cases, content may even contradict prevailing cultural or religious norms, leading to rejection or misunderstanding. Thus, the absence of nuanced, segmented, and culturally informed messaging further contributes to the ineffectiveness of some health campaigns.

The core research problem, therefore, lies in identifying **to what extent these health campaigns influence real, measurable behavior change**, and **which factors—such as platform type, message tone, or source credibility—enhance or inhibit that change**.

### **1.2.1 Theoretical Gap**

The theoretical foundation for most studies on public health awareness and behavior change has predominantly been developed within Western or European contexts. These frameworks often assume a population with a high degree of health literacy, individualism, secular governance, and trust in formal institutions. However, these assumptions do not always hold true in Saudi Arabia, where **collectivist cultural values, religious considerations, and varying levels of trust in government and influencers** shape public perceptions and decision-making processes in unique ways.

Moreover, Western studies tend to generalize behavioral response models—such as the Health

Belief Model (HBM), Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), or Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)—without adapting them to regional socio-cultural dynamics. While these models provide a useful lens for understanding behavior, their application in Saudi society requires **contextual calibration**. For example, the influence of family elders, the mosque, or tribal leadership in disseminating and validating health advice may play a far more important role than in Western countries.

Unfortunately, there is a **notable absence of localized theoretical models or empirical studies that examine how Saudi culture, language, trust structures, and digital engagement shape health behavior change**. This results in a theoretical void—making it difficult for policymakers and campaign designers to base their strategies on robust, evidence-based frameworks tailored to the Saudi context.

### **1.2.2 Practical Gap**

From a practical standpoint, even though the government and healthcare organizations invest significant time, effort, and financial resources into designing and disseminating health awareness messages, **there is currently no standardized mechanism to evaluate their real-world outcomes**. Most campaigns do not track post-campaign metrics beyond viewership or basic engagement rates. There is limited follow-up to assess whether the audience actually changed behavior or improved health outcomes after exposure to campaign materials.

Furthermore, **campaigns are often designed using a one-size-fits-all template**, overlooking critical variations in audience needs, literacy levels, digital accessibility, and cultural attitudes.

For instance, a campaign encouraging early cancer screening may be effective in Riyadh but fail to resonate in more conservative or remote regions due to stigma or lack of healthcare infrastructure. Similarly, younger audiences may respond well to humorous or influencer-led content, while older individuals may require a more formal and medically endorsed message.

Without a **data-driven feedback loop**—such as pre- and post-campaign surveys, focus groups, behavioral tracking, or regional impact analysis—campaign designers are left to operate on assumptions rather than facts. This lack of empirical accountability means that even well-intentioned efforts might not achieve their objectives and may lead to **resource misallocation, message misalignment, and public disengagement**.

There is, therefore, an urgent need for structured evaluation systems and adaptive design frameworks that ensure health awareness campaigns are not just seen—but are understood, trusted, and acted upon across different segments of Saudi society.

## **Main Research Question**

**To what extent do health awareness campaigns impact public health behavior in Saudi Arabia?**

## **1.3 Research Significance**

Health awareness campaigns are one of the most visible forms of public health intervention. They have the potential to prevent illness, promote early diagnosis, and reduce the burden on healthcare systems—especially in a rapidly developing nation like

Saudi Arabia. As such, evaluating their effectiveness is not only timely but critically important. The significance of this research lies in its dual contribution: both to academic knowledge and to public health practice in the Kingdom.

### 1.3.1 Theoretical Level

On a theoretical level, this research seeks to address an evident and persistent gap in the academic literature surrounding public health communication in the Gulf region, particularly in Saudi Arabia. Most existing models of health behavior change have been developed and tested in Western contexts, where factors such as individualism, secular public life, and high health literacy dominate the discourse. These variables may not be directly transferable to a Saudi context, where **collectivism, religious values, trust in traditional authorities, and rapid digital transformation** all play crucial roles in shaping health-related attitudes and behaviors.

By applying behavior change theory within a culturally specific framework, this study aims to **localize global models** such as the Health Belief Model (HBM), Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), or Diffusion of Innovations theory, testing how these constructs function in a Saudi population. It also adds value by examining the **interaction between media type (e.g., television vs. Instagram) and source trust (e.g., doctors vs. influencers)**—an area that is still underdeveloped in Saudi-focused research.

Furthermore, the study contributes to **interdisciplinary scholarship**, intersecting public health, psychology, media studies, and cultural sociology. The insights gained will inform future researchers interested in **how health messages are interpreted, internalized, or rejected** based on social norms, generational identity, or region-specific communication patterns. In doing so, this research lays the groundwork for a more nuanced, theoretically sound, and evidence-based understanding of public health messaging in Saudi Arabia.

### 1.3.2 Practical Level

From a practical perspective, the findings of this study could offer **immediate value to public health institutions, campaign designers, and policymakers**. In particular, the Ministry of Health (MOH), which is the central authority for healthcare campaigns in Saudi Arabia, could benefit significantly from evidence-based recommendations regarding **what works, what doesn't, and why**. This is especially relevant given the Kingdom's ambitious Vision 2030 objectives, which prioritize both physical and mental well-being as essential components of national development.

By revealing which communication platforms (TV, social media, public events, etc.) are most effective across demographic segments—and by identifying which message sources the public finds most credible—this research can guide campaign strategists in **allocating budgets more efficiently**, improving message design, and increasing public engagement. For example, if the study finds that young adults trust medical influencers on Instagram

more than government ads on TV, future campaigns could strategically pivot in that direction.

Moreover, this study offers **practical insight into message targeting**—highlighting the importance of tailoring campaigns to different cities, age groups, literacy levels, and gender-specific preferences. By identifying these nuances, health authorities can avoid the inefficiencies of generic, one-size-fits-all campaigns and instead adopt a **more data-driven, segmented, and personalized approach**.

#### 1.4 Research Questions

- Do Saudi citizens gain knowledge about diseases through awareness campaigns?
- Which platform (TV, social media, etc.) has the widest reach and greatest influence?
- Do campaigns lead to actions like health checkups or dietary changes?
- Who is perceived as the most trustworthy messenger: government, doctors, or influencers?

#### 1.5 Research Objectives

- To evaluate whether health awareness campaigns influence health-related behavior.
- To compare the effectiveness of various communication platforms.

- To analyze which sources are trusted most by the public.
- To provide recommendations for future health campaigns in Saudi Arabia.

## 1.6 Research Hypotheses

- **H1:** Health awareness campaigns significantly influence public health behavior.
- **H2:** Social media campaigns yield more behavioral change than traditional television campaigns.
- **H3:** Trust in the source of the message strengthens the effectiveness of the campaign.

## 1.7 Research Model

| Variables        | Type                 |
|------------------|----------------------|
| Health Campaigns | Independent Variable |

|                            |                      |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Health Behavior            | Dependent Variable   |
| Trust, Age, Gender, Region | Moderating Variables |

## 1.8 Research Methodology

This research adopts a **quantitative research methodology**, which is appropriate for studies aiming to measure patterns, trends, and relationships across a broad population. The decision to use a quantitative approach stems from the study's primary goal: to statistically assess the influence of health awareness campaigns on public behavior in Saudi Arabia and determine which variables—such as platform type or message source—most significantly impact behavioral outcomes.

The primary data collection instrument will be a **structured online questionnaire**. This questionnaire will be designed to include both closed-ended and scaled-response questions (using Likert scales) to capture a range of responses related to awareness levels, behavioral changes, trust in message sources, campaign exposure, and platform preference. Questions will also collect demographic data including age, gender, education level, and city of residence to allow for segmentation and comparative analysis.

The survey will be distributed digitally through social media platforms (e.g., WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram), university forums, and email networks to ensure wide reach and accessibility. Given the high internet penetration rate in Saudi Arabia, online distribution is considered both practical and representative for this study.

The **target population** comprises Saudi citizens aged 18 years and older. Particular focus will be placed on respondents from the Kingdom's three largest urban centers: **Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam**, as these cities are often the focal points of national health campaigns and have diverse, demographically representative populations.

After data collection, responses will be coded and analyzed using statistical software such as **SPSS or Microsoft Excel**. The analysis will involve:

- **Descriptive statistics** (e.g., frequencies, percentages, means) to summarize data trends.
- **Inferential statistics** such as **correlation and regression analysis** to explore the relationships between independent variables (e.g., campaign type or platform) and dependent variables (e.g., self-reported health behavior changes).

## **1.9 Scope of the Study**

The scope of this research is **deliberately defined to ensure focus, manageability, and relevance**. This study concentrates exclusively on the behavior and perceptions of **Saudi citizens aged 18 and above**, as this demographic is legally recognized as adult and fully capable of making independent health-related decisions. Additionally, adults are more likely to have

encountered a range of health campaigns and possess the cognitive and social maturity to assess and act on health information.

Geographically, the study focuses on **urban populations**, specifically within the cities of **Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam**. These cities are selected for several reasons: they host a large proportion of the Kingdom's population, serve as hubs for health infrastructure and education, and are typically prioritized in national campaign rollouts. As such, residents of these urban centers are more likely to have been exposed to multiple formats of health campaigns across various platforms, making them ideal subjects for analysis.

The study does **not include rural populations**, non-citizens (including expatriates and migrant workers), or individuals under the age of 18. While these groups are undoubtedly important to broader public health strategies, their inclusion would require a different sampling strategy and potentially different survey instruments to accommodate variations in language, legal status, literacy, and campaign exposure.

Additionally, this research limits itself to analyzing **campaigns that were active between the years 2020 and 2025**, aligning with recent public health priorities, including responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, non-communicable disease prevention, and mental health promotion.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of the theoretical foundations and previous studies related to the impact of health awareness campaigns on public health behavior. The purpose of this literature review is to provide a clear understanding of the existing body of knowledge, identify major themes relevant to the topic, and highlight the gaps that justify the need for the present study.

Health awareness campaigns have become one of the most widely used strategies to promote healthier lifestyles, prevent disease, and influence public behavior. As governments and health organizations continue to invest in public health communication—especially in countries such as Saudi Arabia—it is essential to examine how these campaigns are perceived and whether they lead to measurable changes in awareness and behavior. Reviewing prior research allows this study to build on established theories, such as the Health Belief Model, Theory of Planned Behavior, and Social Cognitive Theory, which explain how individuals interpret health messages and make behavioral decisions.

This chapter also reviews empirical studies from global, regional, and Saudi contexts to understand the effectiveness of health campaigns across different populations. These studies provide insights into the role of media platforms, message design, and source credibility in shaping public attitudes and actions. By critically analyzing previous findings, this chapter identifies the limitations, inconsistencies, and gaps in the literature that the current study aims to address.

Overall, the literature review forms the academic foundation of the research and establishes the need to investigate how health awareness campaigns influence public health behavior in Saudi Arabia, particularly within the context of evolving media platforms and varying levels of public trust.

### **1. Alhomoud et al. (2025) “Know your medicines, know your health”—Public perspectives on medicines and health awareness campaigns**

This study by Alhomoud et al. (2025) examined the public’s attitudes and perceptions toward medicines and health awareness campaigns in Saudi Arabia.

The main aim of the research was to explore how effectively health awareness campaigns improve people’s understanding of safe medication use and whether these campaigns contribute to better decision-making regarding personal health. The authors sought to understand not only the level of public knowledge but also the degree of trust in health-related messages disseminated by official bodies.

The methodology adopted was a quantitative cross-sectional survey, targeting adults from different regions of Saudi Arabia. The researchers distributed structured questionnaires measuring participants’ exposure to health awareness campaigns, their knowledge about medicines, and their attitudes toward medication practices. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to identify correlations between campaign exposure and medication literacy.

The study’s findings revealed that health awareness campaigns had a positive impact on the public’s understanding of correct medication usage. Participants who were frequently exposed to such campaigns demonstrated significantly higher knowledge levels concerning the risks of self-medication, dosage accuracy, and the importance of consulting healthcare professionals. The study also found that individuals trusted messages delivered by pharmacists and medical experts more than messages shared through non-specialized media channels. Additionally, misconceptions—such as relying on advice from friends or social media—were reduced when campaigns emphasized accurate and scientifically supported content.

The recommendations highlighted the importance of increasing public access to reliable health information, especially regarding medication safety. The authors encouraged the Ministry of Health to collaborate with pharmacists, as they play a vital role in patient

education. The study also recommended strengthening the design of awareness campaigns by making them more interactive and increasing their presence on digital platforms, where the majority of the population seeks information.

## **2. Alotaibi (2025) Perceived credibility of public health campaigns and its impact on infection control behaviors**

In this study, Alotaibi (2025) explored how the perceived credibility of public health campaigns influences infection control behaviors among Saudi citizens.

The primary aim was to determine whether trust in health messages contributes to better compliance with preventive practices, and to examine the mediating roles of health literacy and motivation in this relationship.

The study used a quantitative survey design, collecting data from a large sample of adults across Saudi Arabia. Participants completed a structured questionnaire assessing their perceptions of campaign credibility, their health literacy levels, their personal motivation to follow health guidelines, and their actual infection control behaviors (such as hand hygiene, mask-wearing, and vaccination uptake). Statistical analyses included regression modeling and mediation analysis to test the theoretical relationships.

The findings demonstrated that campaign credibility is a powerful predictor of infection control behaviors. Participants who perceived the campaigns—especially those delivered by the Ministry of Health—as credible were more likely to adopt preventive behaviors. The study also showed that health literacy and motivation acted as significant mediators, meaning that credible messages enhanced individuals' understanding of health risks, which in turn increased their willingness to engage in protective actions. Furthermore, the study found that digital campaigns were more effective among younger demographics, while older participants relied more on traditional media and government announcements.

The recommendations emphasized improving the clarity and transparency of public health messages to enhance credibility. The researcher suggested incorporating medical experts more frequently in campaigns to strengthen trust, using simple language to increase health

literacy, and tailoring messages to different age groups and cultural segments. Additionally, the study recommended continuous evaluation of campaigns to measure public trust and behavioral impact over time.

### **3. Bou-Karroum et al. (2017) Using media to impact health policy-making: An integrative systematic review**

The study conducted by Bou-Karroum et al. (2017) provided a comprehensive review of how media platforms influence health policy-making and public health behavior globally.

The aim of the study was to analyze the effectiveness of various media strategies in shaping public awareness, influencing political decisions, and promoting healthy behaviors. The focus was on understanding how media communication affects both general populations and policy-makers.

The methodology consisted of an integrative systematic review, synthesizing findings from numerous international studies across different cultural contexts. The reviewed literature included both quantitative and qualitative studies examining media interventions related to public health issues such as vaccination, smoking cessation, diet, physical activity, and mental health awareness.

The results showed that media plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions and driving behavioral change. Campaigns that used multi-channel approaches—combining television, radio, social media, and community outreach—were found to have the highest impact. The review also highlighted the strong influence of message repetition, emotional appeal, scientific credibility, and visually engaging content. Media was shown to be particularly effective when backed by credible institutions or medical experts. Importantly, the study also noted that media coverage can influence policymakers by increasing pressure for legislative action when public awareness reaches a critical level.

The recommendations emphasized the need to develop long-term, sustainable media strategies rather than short-term campaigns. The authors recommended stronger collaboration between public health experts, media professionals, and government

institutions to ensure message accuracy and effectiveness. They further suggested that campaigns should be culturally sensitive, target specific audience groups, and employ scientific evidence to reinforce credibility and drive meaningful policy and behavioral change.

#### **4. Glanz & Bishop (2010) “The role of behavioral science theory in development and implementation of public health interventions”**

In their influential review, Glanz and Bishop (2010) examined the application of behavioral science theories in the design and implementation of public health interventions.

The primary aim of their work was to evaluate how core behavioral theories—such as the Health Belief Model, Social Cognitive Theory, and the Theory of Planned Behavior—guide intervention development and contribute to long-term behavior change at the population level.

The methodology of this study followed a narrative and critical review approach, synthesizing decades of theoretical and practical research in public health, psychology, and behavioral sciences. The authors analyzed multiple interventions across global contexts to determine how effectively theoretical frameworks were being used in the field.

The findings highlighted that interventions grounded in well-established behavioral theories were generally more successful in achieving meaningful behavior change than those lacking theoretical foundations. The review emphasized the importance of constructs such as perceived risk, self-efficacy, observational learning, and perceived behavioral control. Glanz and Bishop noted that multi-theoretical approaches—combining concepts from several models—often yielded the strongest outcomes. Additionally, they argued that culturally tailored interventions based on theory were significantly more effective than generic or one-size-fits-all campaigns.

The recommendations stressed the need for public health professionals to integrate behavioral theories consistently and systematically when developing health campaigns. The authors encouraged combining quantitative and qualitative methods to assess theoretical

constructs and called for continuous evaluation to refine interventions based on behavioral feedback.

### **5. Noar & Zimmerman (2005) “Health behavior theory and cumulative knowledge regarding health behaviors: Are we moving in the right direction?”**

In this foundational study, Noar and Zimmerman (2005) explored the evolution of health behavior theories and assessed whether the field is progressing toward more effective and comprehensive models.

The aim was to evaluate how existing theories explain health behavior and to analyze whether cumulative scientific knowledge is advancing the development of more predictive and practical theoretical frameworks.

The methodology utilized was a comprehensive conceptual review that compared major health behavior theories—including the Theory of Planned Behavior, the Health Belief Model, Social Cognitive Theory, and the Transtheoretical Model. The authors reviewed empirical studies applying these theories across various health domains such as physical activity, diet, substance use, and screening behaviors.

The key findings showed that although existing theories explain certain aspects of health behavior, no single model fully captures the complexity of human behavior. The review highlighted shortcomings in theoretical overlap, limited predictive power in some contexts, and insufficient integration of environmental and cultural factors. The authors also noted that many interventions apply theories superficially, failing to measure or analyze core theoretical constructs properly.

The recommendations proposed greater theoretical integration and the creation of hybrid models that incorporate psychological, environmental, and social influences. Noar and Zimmerman emphasized the need for stronger empirical testing of theoretical constructs, as well as culturally sensitive adaptations of health behavior theories—an essential point for countries like Saudi Arabia where cultural norms strongly influence behavior.

## **6. Seymour (2017) “The impact of public health awareness campaigns on the awareness and quality of palliative care”**

In this study, Seymour (2017) examined the extent to which public health awareness campaigns influence public understanding of palliative care and the perceived quality of such services.

The aim of the study was to evaluate whether national and international awareness efforts effectively increase knowledge about palliative care, reduce misconceptions, and encourage earlier utilization of supportive care services among patients and families.

The methodology involved an analytical review of a wide range of public health campaigns focused on palliative care awareness. Seymour assessed campaign materials, communication strategies, and audience engagement across various countries. Additionally, the study synthesized findings from surveys and observational reports measuring changes in public knowledge and attitudes before and after campaigns.

The results indicated that well-designed awareness campaigns significantly improved public understanding of palliative care, particularly by clarifying its purpose, benefits, and availability. Campaigns that used simple language, emotional storytelling, and testimonials were found to be more effective in reducing stigma and encouraging conversations about end-of-life care. The study also highlighted that lack of awareness remains a barrier, and many people still associate palliative care only with terminal stages rather than ongoing quality-of-life support.

The recommendations emphasized the need for continuous, multi-channel campaigns to normalize palliative care discussions. Seymour recommended that health authorities collaborate with community leaders, healthcare providers, and the media to deliver culturally sensitive messages. The study also stressed the importance of integrating palliative care awareness into broader public health communication strategies.

## **7. World Health Organization (2021) “Health promotion and health literacy in the Eastern Mediterranean Region”**

This comprehensive report by the World Health Organization (2021) analyzed the status of health promotion and health literacy across the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR), including Saudi Arabia.

The aim was to identify gaps in public health communication, evaluate the effectiveness of national awareness initiatives, and propose strategies to enhance health literacy at the population level.

The methodology followed a regional assessment approach, combining country-level surveys, policy reviews, and analysis of national health promotion programs. The report also incorporated feedback from ministries of health, healthcare providers, and public health experts within the EMR.

The findings revealed significant challenges in health literacy across the region, with many citizens struggling to understand medical information, preventive guidelines, and disease symptoms. The WHO report highlighted that health awareness campaigns are often fragmented, short-term, or lacking cultural adaptation. However, countries that implemented multi-sectoral strategies—linking education, digital outreach, and community engagement—achieved higher awareness levels and better public health outcomes. The report also emphasized the increasing role of digital and social media platforms in shaping health behaviors.

The recommendations included strengthening national health literacy frameworks, improving communication skills among healthcare workers, and integrating health education into school curricula. The WHO also urged governments to invest in long-term, culturally tailored awareness campaigns and to adopt inclusive approaches targeting vulnerable groups.

**8. Alahmad, Kurdi, & Almutairi (2023) “The role of cultural values in health communication in Saudi Arabia: Implications for public health campaigns”**

In this empirical study, Alahmad et al. (2023) investigated how cultural values influence the effectiveness of health communication in Saudi Arabia and how these cultural dimensions shape public responses to awareness campaigns.

The aim was to identify cultural factors that facilitate or hinder the reception of health messages, with the goal of improving the design of public health campaigns in the Kingdom.

The methodology employed a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with Saudi citizens from various regions. The survey examined exposure to campaigns, attitudes toward health messages, and perceived cultural relevance. Meanwhile, interviews explored deeper insights into how traditions, religious beliefs, and social norms influence health decision-making.

The findings showed that cultural values—such as collectivism, family influence, gender norms, and religious beliefs—play a central role in shaping how individuals interpret and act upon health messages. Campaigns that aligned with cultural expectations were significantly more effective. For example, messages emphasizing family well-being, social responsibility, and Islamic values resonated strongly with the Saudi public. Conversely, campaigns that failed to reflect cultural sensitivities faced resistance, misinterpretation, or low engagement.

The recommendations highlighted the necessity of designing culturally adapted health campaigns in Saudi Arabia. The authors recommended involving religious leaders, community figures, and family-oriented messaging to increase campaign acceptance. They also stressed the importance of using culturally appropriate visuals, language, and storytelling methods to enhance message credibility and behavioral impact.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by three major health behavior theories that explain how individuals respond to health awareness campaigns and how these campaigns influence their attitudes and behaviors.

### 1. Health Belief Model (HBM)

The Health Belief Model (HBM), first introduced by Rosenstock (1974), suggests that individuals are more likely to adopt healthy behaviors when they believe they are personally at risk of a health problem (*perceived susceptibility*), recognize the seriousness of the condition (*perceived severity*), see clear benefits in taking preventive action (*perceived benefits*), and perceive minimal obstacles to performing the behavior (*perceived barriers*). Later developments by Glanz & Bishop (2010) emphasized the importance of *self-efficacy*, noting that individuals are more likely to change behavior when they feel confident in their ability to perform health actions.

Evidence from previous studies supports the relevance of HBM in shaping public responses to health campaigns. For example, Noar & Zimmerman (2005) found that campaigns grounded in HBM principles were more effective in increasing health awareness and influencing preventive behaviors. Additionally, Hochbaum, Rosenstock, & Kegeles (as cited in Glanz & Bishop, 2010) demonstrated that clear cues to action—such as media messages and public health announcements—play a crucial role in triggering behavioral change as predicted by the model.

In the context of this study, HBM provides a strong theoretical foundation for explaining how health awareness campaigns in Saudi Arabia can increase individuals' perception of risk and severity, thereby enhancing their motivation to adopt healthier behaviors.

## **2. Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)**

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), proposed by Ajzen (1991), is one of the most widely used models for predicting and understanding health behaviors. TPB argues that an individual's behavior is primarily shaped by behavioral intention, which is influenced by three core components: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.

Attitude reflects the individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing a particular health behavior—for example, whether exercising regularly or attending health check-ups is viewed as beneficial. Research by Noar and Zimmerman (2005) has shown that when individuals develop strong positive attitudes toward preventive behaviors, they are more likely to form strong intentions to act.

Subjective norms, the second component, represent the perceived social pressure from family, friends, or the wider community to perform or avoid a behavior. In collectivist societies such as Saudi Arabia, subjective norms are especially influential. According to Alahmad, Kurdi, and Almutairi (2023), social expectations, family influence, and cultural values often determine whether individuals accept or reject health messages. For instance, if family members encourage healthy eating or regular screening, individuals are more likely to comply.

Perceived behavioral control refers to the individual's belief in their ability to perform the behavior, similar to the concept of self-efficacy. Glanz and Bishop (2010) emphasized that perceived control plays a major role in determining whether individuals feel capable of changing their health habits, particularly when external barriers such as cost, access, or time constraints are present. When campaigns highlight simple, actionable steps and empower individuals with the necessary skills, perceived control increases—leading to higher behavioral intention.

TPB is highly relevant for understanding how health awareness campaigns (independent variable) influence public health behavior (dependent variable) in Saudi Arabia. Campaigns have the potential to shape attitudes by presenting clear benefits; they can leverage subjective norms by involving religious leaders, community figures, and family-focused messaging; and they can enhance perceived control by offering practical guidance and culturally appropriate strategies. As Alahmad et al. (2023) noted, culturally aligned messaging is crucial in the Saudi context, where values and social expectations heavily shape health-related decisions.

In summary, TPB helps explain why some individuals adopt healthy behaviors while others do not, even when exposed to the same awareness campaigns. By understanding how attitudes, social norms, and perceived control influence intention, public health professionals can design more effective campaigns that resonate with Saudi society and lead to meaningful behavior change.

### **3. Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)**

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), developed by Bandura (1986), explains how individuals learn and adopt behaviors through a continuous interaction between personal factors, environmental influences, and observable actions. A central concept in SCT is observational learning, which suggests that people learn new behaviors by watching others—especially credible, respected, or relatable role models. In the context of public health, these role models may include doctors, health professionals, social media influencers, or public figures who demonstrate healthy habits.

SCT also highlights the importance of self-efficacy, defined as a person's belief in their ability to successfully perform a behavior. According to Glanz and Bishop (2010), self-efficacy is one of the strongest predictors of whether an individual will adopt and maintain a health behavior. Health campaigns that provide simple, clear steps and show real people successfully performing the behavior can significantly increase self-efficacy.

Media-based health campaigns strongly align with SCT principles. When individuals observe trusted figures modeling behaviors such as exercising, eating healthy, or attending medical check-ups, they are more likely to imitate these behaviors. Research by Noar and Zimmerman (2005) supports this idea, showing that behavioral modeling in campaigns increases motivation and improves health outcomes. In the Saudi context, this is particularly important, as many citizens rely on social media and influential figures for health guidance. Studies such as Alsubaie and Jones (2022) highlight that Saudi audiences show stronger engagement and behavior change when messages are delivered by credible influencers or medical professionals.

Overall, SCT provides a valuable theoretical foundation for understanding how health awareness campaigns (independent variable) influence public health behavior (dependent variable) by increasing self-efficacy, offering relatable behavioral models, and shaping the social environment. Campaigns that demonstrate positive behavior through trusted figures are, therefore, more effective in encouraging individuals to adopt healthier lifestyles.

## **Summary**

Together, these theories provide a foundation for understanding how health awareness campaigns influence public knowledge and behaviors, and why factors such as trust, cultural norms, and media exposure play a critical role.

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