

## **Course Name: Communication Theories-II**

**Course Instructor: Ms. Zowaina Azhar**

### **Gate keeping Theory**

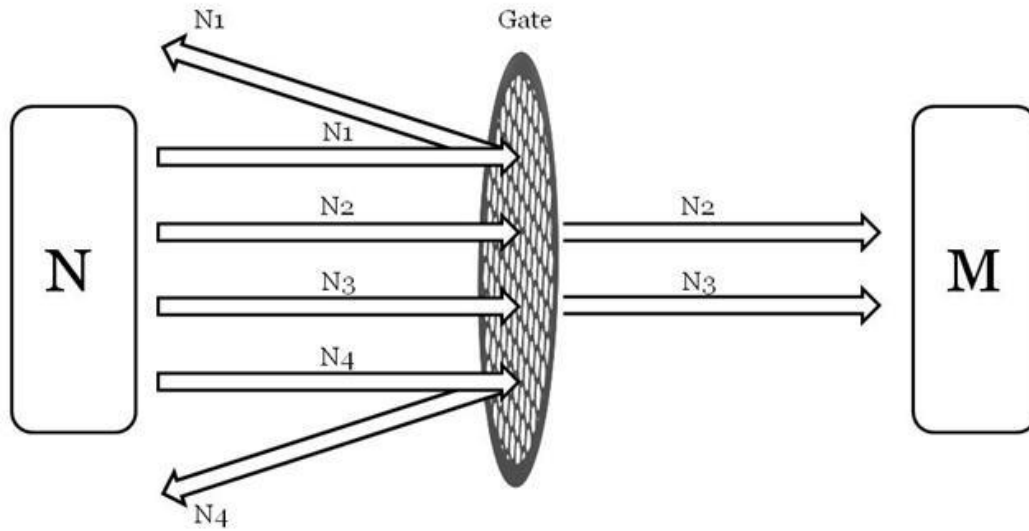
Kurt Zadek Lewin (1890-1947), was born in German. He was a great Psychologist and pioneer in Social Psychology. He developed the concept in the field of psychology called psychological “field” and “life space” in order to understand the human behavior and its important consideration of total life space. His studies are more based on to understand a person’s own world, physical, mental and social through frequent conversation between his pre-memories, desire and his goals. And also his works help to understand the relationship between attitudes and behavior in the group or individuals.

Kurt Lewin coins the word called “Gate keeping”. It’s nothing but to block unwanted or useless things by using a gate. Here the person who makes a decision is called “Gatekeeper”. At first it is widely used in the field of psychology and later it occupies the field of communication. Now it’s one of the essential theories in communication studies.

#### **Concept:**

The Gatekeeper decides what information should move to group or individual and what information should not. Here, the gatekeeper are the decision makers who letting the whole social system. The gatekeeper is having its own influence like social, cultural, ethical and political. Based on personal or social influences they let the information to the group. Through this process the unwanted, sensible and controversial information’s are removed by the gate keeper which helps to control the society or a group and letting them in a right path. In home mother plays the vital role and she has to decide what their kid’s needs and what should avoid.

In news medium editor play vital role. He has to decide what kind of news items will publish and what should not. Every day the news channel receives various news items from all over the world. The channel have its own ethics and policies through this the editor decide the news items for publish or aired. In some cases few news items are rejected by the editor due the organizations policy or the news items which are not suitable for publish.



N – Source of news item    N<sub>1,2,3,4</sub> – News items    M – Audience  
 N<sub>1,4</sub> – Discard item        N<sub>2,3</sub> – Selected item

## Gate Keeping Theory

### Example:

An international news channel receives numbers of news items within day like international terror issues, UN discussions, Texas bull fighting and religious abuse on international community.

A news channel can't show all those news items to audience because it may affect the channel reputation in public and organizations policy. Here, editor decides the news items especially he can't show the Texas bull fighting because it is not internationally popular story. But the same time the news channel can't show the religious abuses also because it may hurt audience directly and it may affect organizations policy also. But international terror issues and UN discussions are universal common news that won't affect the channel reputation in public and organizations policy.

### **News items:**

N<sub>1</sub>: Texas bull fighting, N<sub>2</sub>: International terror issues, N<sub>3</sub>: UN discussions, N<sub>4</sub>: religious abuse on international community

### **Gatekeeper:**

Chief Editor

### **Selected News Items:**

N2: International terror issues, N3: UN discussions,

### **Discarded News Items: (on popularity)**

N1: Texas bull fighting

### **Discarded News Items: (on policy)**

N4: Religious abuse on International community

## Factors of Gatekeeping

The factors that influence gatekeeping are:

- **Individual:**  
Journalist who creates the report is the person who is the most influential to make the news article. Other gatekeepers just change some aspects of the news but the reporter states truth.
- **Routine:**  
The themes shown in the news and other media is always in a pattern. Media also have schedules to follow and have allocated time for each category.
- **Organization:**  
Media organizations have their own views, agendas and propaganda. They also have to follow certain rules and ethics. The news or other media products has some elements of the media house's opinions and views.
- **Extra-Media:**  
Many media related people and institutions have a say in what is published like sponsors, advertisers, government, etc.
- **Ideology:**  
The societal ideologies must be followed by media as it influences what is reported. The norms and values of people must be respected by media. Similarly, ethical issues must also be taken care of.

## Features of Gatekeeping Theory

- It is a process of selection and filtering of items for media and editing it as per the requirements like limited time or space.
- The function of gatekeeping is surveillance.
- Gatekeeping sets the standard for newsworthiness.
- Editor who works as a gatekeeper changes news as the person has his/her own subjective perceptions.
- Media plays a role of a watchdog.
- There are many factors for gatekeeping like the organizational policies.
- The theory is descriptive with normative traits.

- Information moves in a step by step process in a structure.
- It is also used as a social control for media influence.

## Criticisms of Gatekeeping Theory

- The theory suggests there is only one gate, but in reality, there might be many.
- Gatekeepers themselves are wired to think in a specific way.
- Editors and other gatekeepers change the priority of news causing influence in society like racism, sexism, classism, etc.
- It can cause negative presentations and abuse of power.
- The reality might not be shown as it is.
- The theory also has appeal as well as plausibility and applicability.
- Gatekeeping has become less in today's news broadcast due to internet media and people posting anything and everything.