

Media Coverage Of Hiv/Aids: A Content Analysis Of Two Nigerian Newspapers (The Guardian And Daily Sun)

ODOEMELAM L. E., ONUMADU, F. N., ARUA, I. V.

ABSTRACT: A lot of educational campaign, with different strategies has been employed to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS in Nigerian, yet the spread had keep on scaling up. Therefore, the study tried to ascertain the frequency of coverage of the HIV/AIDS in Guardian and Daily Sun newspapers, because as a mass media channel, has the potential for easy reach. Both Primary and Secondary methods were used to collect data for the study. Data generated analyzed with the use of simple descriptive statistical tools such as frequency distribution and percentages. The result of the study indicated that HIV/AIDS information was under published in the two newspapers especially in Daily Sun newspaper; the study also shows that the Guardian carried the highest number of stories (77.6%) and the Daily Sun (22.4%). The low number of news report on HIV/AIDS is surprising given that the period of study covered the month of December when the world celebrated the worlds AIDS day. In December Guardian had (9) and Daily Sun (3) publication respectively. The study based on these findings recommends that journalists should be trained on health issues in order to have adequate knowledge of the epidemic. The coverage of the HIV/AIDS should be positioned in strategic pages of newspaper, for easy access by the public, and government should also subsidize the expenses to enable their increase coverage. The study further investigated the determinants of news coverage of news items, the result shows that (64%) of the respondents said that organizational ownership, (58%) cited interest of the editor, (70%) said audience demand of the particular newspaper, (56%) said competition among the publishing media can spur action while 78% said if government made it compulsory for a very media house to carry it regularly.

Keywords: Media Coverage, HIV/AIDS and Newspapers

INTRODUCTION

Over the last 20 years, the World Health Organization (WHO) has documented at least 30 new diseases probably the best known being AIDS – Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome. Traditional attempts to cure the diseases have been clinical in approach, attempting to identify linear interactions between a specific human health indicator and its outcome. The first cases were reported to have seen at Enugu (South-east) and Lagos South-west geopolitical zones of Nigeria respectively. Subsequently, tricks of cases continued to be reported from various parts of the country. By 1991, an HIV prevalence rate of 1.8% in some federal reports was observed among pregnant women attending anti-natural clinics in the first documented natural HIV survey (Bulletin of Epidemiology, 1992). This progressively rose through 4.5% in 1996 to 5.8% in 2001. Drop to 5.0% to 4.4% were observed in 2003 and 2005 surveys respectively (HSS 2003 and 2005). From the prevalence rates over the years, it was clear that Nigerian situation was characterized by multiple epidemics with varying agrees in the various states.

The medical communities have grappled for along with the control of disease such as malaria and with the reduction of child mortality rates through immunization. The escalating figures on HIV/AIDS necessitated that other options be identified, developed and sustained, since the Nigerian health care system are currently grossly inadequate for the care of HIV/AIDS patients (Odoemelum and Nwachukwu, 2010). Looking back over the past efforts against the epidemic the initial reaction of Nigerian government was to persuade individuals and selected groups to change their behaviour by providing information about HIV/AIDS. Gradually, behaviour change was understood to require more than information; the importance of decision making and negotiation skills to be effective programmes need to make HIV visible and the factors leading to its spread, discussable. Programmes need to make people aware of the existence of HIV and how it spread, without stigmatizing the behaviour that lead to its information. These can be achieved cost-effectively through mass media campaign (Odoemelum and Nwachukwu 2011) and also Falobi *et al.* (2002) cited that mass media has the potential to improve general awareness and understanding of HIV/AIDS, to set agenda for public discussion and policy making on AIDS. Adeyi *et al.* (2006) report increase in frequency newspapers reported that could be used as one of the many tools to educate the Nigerian communities. This research highlighted the crucial role of communication and the media in the supports of these efforts with the following specific objectives to;

- ODOEMELAM L. E., ONUMADU, F. N., ARUA, I. V.
- DEPARTMENT OF RURAL SOCIOLOGY AND EXTENSION
- MICHAEL OKPARA UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE, UMUDIKE, ABIA STATE, NIGERIA
- E-mail: lovinasteve@gmail.com

1. ascertain the type of publications carried by the two newspapers.
2. identify the frequency of media coverage of HIV/AIDS on the two dailies.
3. identify the type of HIV/AIDS messages carried by the newspapers.
4. perceived of newspapers coverage of news items.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Nigeria. The area has about 36 States and many local government areas within each state. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, with a population of over 130 million people. It is bordered in the North by Niger Republic, East by Republic Chad and Cameroun, South by Atlantic Ocean and West by Republic of Benin. Its domestic economy is dominated by agriculture, which accounts for about 40% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and two-third of the labour force. Agriculture supplies food, raw materials and generates household income for the majority of the people. The external sector is dominated by petroleum, which generates about 95% of Nigerian foreign exchange earnings while agriculture contributes less than 5%. Trade imports are dominated by capital foods, raw materials and food. Nigeria is currently preoccupied with the challenge of diversifying the structure of its economy. Nigeria officially became part of the global HIV/AIDS epidemics in 1996. Since then, the spread has continued to evolve, hitting a prevalence rate of 5.8 in 2001. Since then the situation has not been anything in the States including Federal Capital Territory (FCT); hence the emphasis on making the states the focus of the fight against the scourge. It has been recognized by the federal government as a major developmental issue and has requested state governments to set up a state AIDS action committee to stimulate, catalyze and coordinate a multi-sectoral response in their various states. Apart from the response from the Ministry of Health, intensive educational campaign were also involved using television, news paper and other mass media channels. Two Nigeria National Newspapers (The Guardian and The Sun) for the year 2012 were purposively selected. In each of these Newspapers ten (10) months (June, July, August, September, October, November, December, January, February and March) were selected at random in each of these Newspapers. In each of these months, 5 Newspapers were sampled to get information on agriculture, education, commerce, politics and health, bringing the total sample to 52. Finally fifty (50) respondents were randomly selected within the period under study to ascertain their perceived determinant. Data collected were analyzed with the use of simple descriptive statistics like frequency distribution and means.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Distribution of news articles published in the Newspapers

Publications	Guardian	Daily Sun	Total	Percentage
Education	26	18	18.8	13.5
Health	31	29	22.5	21.8
Commerce	43	37	31.2	27.8
Politics	38	34	27.5	25.6
Agriculture	20	15	14.5	11.3

Results from Table 1 shows that the two dailies publishes educational matters 19% for Guardian and Daily Sun 14%, health 23% for Guardian and 22% for the Daily Sun, if both newspapers carried up to that percentage of health

messages then HIV/AIDS messages should also be included in their publications. The implication of this result is that regular reading of newspapers will lead to increase awareness and high level of knowledge on preventing HIV/AIDS measures.

Table 2: Distribution of HIV/AIDS in Guardian and Daily Sun Newspaper on Monthly Bases from June 2010 – March, 2011

S/N	Variables	Guardian		Daily Sun	
		Frequency (No)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (No)	Percentage (%)
1	June	5	9.62	1	6.8
2	July	2	3.84	4	26.7
3	August	9	17.31	1	6.7
4	September	1	1.92	1	6.7
5	October	5	9.62	-	-
6	November	9	17.31	1	6.7
7	December	9	17.31	3	20.0
8	January	2	3.84	-	-
9	February	5	9.62	2	13.3
10	March	5	9.62	2	13.3
	Total	52	100	15	100

Source: Field Survey, 2011

The result on Table 2, shows the media coverage of HIV/AIDS in Guardian Newspaper for a period of 10 months. The result indicated that the Newspaper publishes HIV/AIDS articles every month. The months of September being the least in percentage (1.92%), while November and December carried equal percentage. The higher percentage can be attributed to the fact that December, 1st is celebrated as the World AIDS day. If media coverage of a particular newspapers can be as high as that of Guardian on HIV/AIDS coverage, then most Nigeria population should be knowledgeable enough to combat HIV/AIDS. Although the circulation figure for newspaper is relatively low in Nigeria especially in the rural areas but it still has wide circulation among the urban elites. According to Odoemelam (2010), there are disparities dependence on socio-economic and educational status among the population and this will significantly affect access and readability of the papers. Table 2, shows the monthly coverage of HIV/AIDS on Daily Sun Newspaper from the table, the peak coverage of the HIV/AIDS information was in the months of July, (26.7%), December (20.0%) and February, March (13.3%) respectively depending on how the editor prioritize the information in the coverage, the public is likely to attach the same importance, thereby increasing the readability of the Newspaper. Most of the HIV/AIDS articles came under the category of news stories, some were in features, news analysis, letters to the editor and occasionally as cartoons.

Table 3: Distribution of article carried by the Newspapers within the period under study

Variables	Guardian	Daily Sun	Total	Percentage
HIV/AIDS prevalence rates	11	4	15	27.8
HIV/AIDS control measures	20	5	25	46.3
Medical cost of HIV/AIDS	2	1	3	5.6
Sources of HIV/AIDS transmission	9	-2	-11	20.4
Other social cost				
Politics of AIDS	-	-	-	-
Claim of ability to cure HIV/AIDS	-	-	-	-
Total			67	100

Source: Field Survey, 2011

Table 3, distribution of article carried by the Newspapers within the period under study. From the results on 3, it was clear that the two dailies carried a lot of articles concerning HIV/AIDS. About 46.3% of the articles were on control measures, 28% were on prevalence rates of the epidemic; that is creating awareness that the disease actually exists, 20% were highlighting sources of transmission and demographic cost of the epidemic. In a research carried out by (Odoemelam and Nwachukwu, 2012) they cited that the media have been viewed as being influential in building awareness across different sections of the society on HIV/AIDS and the importance of being careful in sexual behaviour and practices. According to Makee *et al.* (2004) 'the main strength of the media has been that of agenda setting, meaning that sustenance of a topic for long in the public forum will lead to extensive and hopefully intensive discussion that spur some action on a given topic.

Table 4: Comparism of the Two Newspapers of HIV/AIDS Information Coverage on Guardian and Daily Sun Newspaper

S/No	Variable	Guardian		Daily Sun Newspaper	
		No	%	No	%
1	June	5	9.62	1	6.8
2	July	2	3.84	4	26.7
3	August	9	17.31	1	6.7
4	September	1	1.92	1	6.7
5	October	5	9.62	-	-
6	November	9	17.31	1	6.7
7	December	9	17.31	3	20.0
8	January	2	3.84	-	-
9	February	5	9.62	2	13.3
10	March	5	9.62	2	13.3
Total		52	100	15	100

Source: Field Survey, 2011

Result on Table 4, shows the comparism on the monthly coverage of HIV/AIDS information on the Guardian and Daily Sun Newspaper. Findings indicated level of differences within each month, for month of June (Guardian 10% while Daily Sun 7%) for August Guardian 17% while Daily Sun had 7% as well, but for Month of July Daily Sun had 27% of published articles for HIV/AIDS that month while Guardian had only 4%. Critical look at the table shows that HIV/AIDS information were published regularly throughout the period understudy and the regular occurrence depends on the degree of attention given to it by the editor.

Table 5: Determinants of newspaper coverage of news items

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Organizational (public & private) ownership	Public 18 (51)	Private 18 (64)
Interest of the editor	Interested 29 (58)	Not interested 21 (42)
Audience	Adequate 35 (70)	Inadequate 15 (30)
Competition	Current 28 (56)	Not current 23 (44)
Government policy	Compulsory 39 (78)	Not compulsory 11 (22)

Source: Field Survey, 2011

The process of news flow and coverage may be considered a meta-concept in that this conceptual conglomerate is not only approached from diverse theoretical perspectives, but also analyzed at difference empirical level. Table 5 reveals respondents perceived determinants of newspaper coverage of news item on Newspaper publications. From Table 5, about 46% reported public ownership while 64% stated private ownership will increase news coverage of

any item. In a longitudinal analysis of foreign news content in Taiwanese newspaper, Tang and Chan (1990) found that the percentage of self produced international news had increased more quickly in commercial paper than their government owned newspaper. They attributed this disparity to the sensitivity of the privately owned newspaper to the market demand and the pressure from competition, resulting in more resource allocation to any current issues that will interest the public. From the same table, about 58% of the respondents reported that if the editor is interested in the issue he/she will quickly rush for its publication but 42 said he may or may not give it public attention. Wu, H. D. (2000) cited that kind of events selected as newsworthy and the factors that leads to that decision is the interest of the editor, and Shoemaker and Reese (1996) opined that individual psychological and macro-social media natures e.g. journalists news perception and news values and professional norms and practices as well are repeatedly influence the process of newspaper. One important extra-media factor assumed to determine creation and distribution of news as a product is audience demand. From table 5, about 70% of the respondents said that if the demand for that particular newspaper is high, it will make them to scout for any news that will interest the audience. The size of the city population along with educational level of the consumers, gross income per household. Lacy et al. (1998) found that city population was a predictor of news coverage. The interest in HIV/AIDS news coverage will increase as the population grows and its affect its spread. About 56% of the respondents said that if the media house faces challenges it will increase its media coverage Kim, K. (2003) in his studies stated that competition on indicator of market structure may be considered a determinant affecting news coverage through its influence on management decision. About 78% of the decide respondents stated that if government to use the channel as a strategic educational campaign to create public awareness on HIV/AIDS, they will make the coverage more regular than ever.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

A feature story from an individual journalist aimed at stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS cannot bring a meaningful result towards this hazard. So concerted efforts of all journalists aimed at formulating programmes against the spread of the disease is the best way journalists can contribute to the fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS. AIDS education should be introduced in journalism training institution so that there will be no excuses of not being able to preach correct messages and good example of HIV/AIDS prevention. Spirit of working together between media, politicians, non-governmental organization as well as bilateral and multilateral bodies should be encouraged, to enable journalists be knowledgeable on social, political, cultural, economic and moral affairs which contribute to the spread of the disease in Nigeria.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Adeyi, O., Kanki, P., Odutolu, J. A. (Eds) (2006). *AIDS in Nigeria, A Nation on the Threshold*. Cambridge Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies.
- [2]. Hur, K. K. (1984). 'A critical analysis of International News Flow Research'. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 1: 365 – 78.
- [3]. Wu, H. D. (2000). 'Systemic Determinants of International News Coverage: A Comparison of 38 Countries', *Journal of Communication* 50: 110 – 30.
- [4]. Odoemelam and Nwachukwu (2010) *Effectiveness of Mass Media and Interpersonal Communication in Disseminating HIV/AIDS Information to Rural Communities in Abia State Nigeria*. Unpublished PhD Thesis submitted to the Dept. of RSE, MOUAB Abia, Nigeria.