

## THE MASS MEDIA AND THE FIGHT AGAINST HIV/AIDS IN BORNO STATE: A CASE STUDY OF NTA MAIDUGURI

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### ABSTRACT

*HIV/AIDS is a health issue that has affected every facets of our national lives. This study would seek to examine the role of the media in the fight against the virus. The objectives of this study would be to examine the amount of time devoted to HIV/AIDS programmes, how the media can be used to promote sex education and how the media can be used to eliminate stigmatization of HIV/AIDS victims. 150 questionnaires were distributed randomly among equal number of females and males scattered across the state. 145 questionnaires were completed and returned, after which they were analyzed using simple percentage. The study found out that HIV/AIDS programmes on NTA Maiduguri were not given adequate coverage. It also revealed that HIV/AIDS programmes on NTA Maiduguri do not sufficiently promoted sex education, and that education, advocacy and drama programmes, if introduced by NTA Maiduguri would go a long way in reducing or eliminating stigmatization and discrimination of HIV/AIDS victims. Among other things, the study recommended that, NTA Maiduguri, should give more time for HIV/AIDS programmes on their own, apart from programmes relayed from NTA network service. By so doing, many more will be educated and informed of HIV/AIDS virus. The study concluded that NTA Maiduguri has not been using its power of influence to bring about the needed change on HIV/AIDS issue in the state.*

**Keywords:** HIV/AIDS, mass media, awareness

### INTRODUCTION

HIV is an acronym for Human Immuno-deficiency Virus while AIDS is Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. AIDS is a disease that is caused by HIV. The disease has no cure for now and neither is there a vaccine to prevent the infection.

Borno state has a population of 4.1 million people, with a prevalence rate of infection of 3.4%. According to Iroegbu (2008), "40 new cases of people infected with HIV/AIDS are recorded every day, at the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital. A minimum of 200 patients that are newly infected are estimated to have visited the hospital on a monthly basis."

The fight against the dreaded disease must be fought from every front if the battle must be won. The use of the media in educating, informing and enlightening the people about all aspects of HIV/AIDS can never be over emphasized.

Kayode and Jimoh (2007) were of the opinion that the media can help in educating people to reduce every misconception that is associated with HIV/AIDS. They further said that people who are well informed are likely to understand better and at least learn to live with others who are even AIDS infected.

Okunna (2002) clearly pointed out the role of the media in the following ways "The information function of the media is all encompassing and essential for the existence of members of the society. Through their various contents, the mass media collect, store, process and disseminate news, data, pictures, facts, messages, opinions and comments which members of the public need in order to react knowledgeably to personal, environmental, natural and international conditions as well as to be in a position to take appropriate decisions."

Chukwuma and Atelhe (2007) were also of the view that "the media enables diffusion of ideas and public awareness, which are indispensable for a progressive societal living."

In the light of the above, therefore, this paper will seek to examine how the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Maiduguri can be used in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

### STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In spite of the huge resources already spent by government and non-governmental organization in combating the disease, and the availability of the media and their accessibility by the people in the state, the rate of infection is on the increase instead of decreasing unfortunately. The question then is: what is the media not doing that needed to be done?

### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- a. Examine the amount of air-time devoted to programmes on HIV/AIDS.
- b. Examine how the media can be used to promote sex education.
- c. Examine how the media can be used to fight against discrimination and stigmatization of HIV/AIDS victims.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- a. How many hours do the media devote to airing HIV/AIDS related programmes?
- b. How can media be used to promote sex education?
- c. How can the media be used to fight against discrimination and stigmatization of HIV/AIDS victims?

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this paper is to succinctly bring out the impact of the media coverage of HIV/AIDS would have in controlling the disease in Borno state in particular and Nigeria in general. The study would be of benefit to the Borno State Government, Borno State Action Against AIDS [BOSACA], National Action Against AIDS [NACA] and the Federal Ministry of Health.

### SCOPE

The paper will specifically examine the coverage of HIV/AIDS on Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) Maiduguri zonal center only

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In a modern society like ours, mass media plays an important role in every facet of life. Mass media can be grouped into different categories namely: electronic and the print media. According to Geddes and Grosset (1998), mass media is defined as newspapers, Radio, Television and other means of communication with large numbers of people.

Chukwuma and Atehe (2007) stated that “mass media is principally an agent of information dissemination. The mass media also plays the following important roles, education and enlightenment, socialization and cultural transmission, entertainment, agenda setting and public advocacy.” Using any or a combination of these medium of communication to inform, educate, entertain and enlighten the audience about any aspect of preventing HIV/AIDS would help in no small measure to reduce or prevent the spread of the disease. This agrees with Mulu (2009) who observed that the mass media has a great contribution to make in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Besides delivering direct information, they have the potential to influence attitudes, behaviours and even policy-making through their coverage of the epidemic in news, drama, documentation and discussion.”

Since the early 80s when HIV/AIDS was first noticed in Nigeria and in many other countries, both government and non-governmental organizations have realized that the disease cannot be fought successfully without the involvement of the media especially the broadcast media. They are perceived to be an effective and powerful organ of communication. In the words of Kofi Anan as quoted by Singh (2009; p. 1) “broadcast media have tremendous reach and influence, particularly with young people who represent the future and who are the key to any successful fight against HIV/AIDS. We

must seek to engage these powerful organizations as full partners in the fight to halt HIV/AIDS through awareness, prevention and education.”

The media has the unparalleled ability to save lives by providing vital information in electronic and printed form on HIV/AIDS. The information so provided has the potential to change people’s behavior “as well as their culture. This corroborates the words of Penda (2005 p. 211), where he said “to prevent HIV/AIDS effectively, people need to change their behaviours...it is believed that mass media especially newspaper has the potential to change individual behavior as well as culture.”

Education is one of the key roles performed by the media in the society. Therefore, educating the people on the danger of being infected by HIV/AIDS will save millions of lives. Taboos and myths associated with HIV/AIDS will also be eliminated or reduced to the barest minimum.

Singh (2009 P. 7) observed that “media combats the disease through public education and awareness as the disease is not only a battle against a virus but also a battle against the stigma, discrimination, cultural taboo and the ideas.”

Mainstreaming is another method the message of HIV/AIDS can be spread to the people. This way, HIV/AIDS issues are broadcast across a number of programmes. The report of the conference on Global Media Strategies for HIV/AIDS held in Kuala Lumpur, agrees with this, when it stated that “all sections of the society need to be reached...to broadcast HIV/AIDS messages and programmes across the programming schedule, including prime time, to produce and broadcast programmes, related to HIV/AIDS in all genres and formats including news, current affairs, documentaries, talk shows, game-shows drama and other entertainment formats” (Mahdu 2007 P. 49).

## **METHODOLOGY**

Survey research method was employed in this study. This method is adopted because it is considered the most popular research method among communication researchers. Sobowale (1983) supported this assertion when he stated that “it is the most frequently used research technique by behavioral scientists.” Severin and Tankard (2001) stated that survey research method is the study of a part or sample of a specific population.

The research instrument used for this study is the questionnaire. According to Wilson (2008), “the questions are known as questionnaire or research instrument. The members of the population who are later asked to answer these questions are called sample.”

The choice of questionnaire becomes necessary due largely to economy and its ability to provide rapid information that is important for this study. The target population is 75 males and 75 females, making a total of 150 viewers scattered around Borno state. The 150 viewers were selected randomly to participate in the study. Busha and Hater (1980) stated that “the population can be very large or very small depending on the size of the group of persons or subjects about which the researcher plans to make inference.” In this case the group is very small. It is on the basis of this that 150 viewers were selected to conduct this study when compared to the population of the state.

Each of the questions was drafted in such a way that respondents can easily understand and respond. Five field assistants were used to administer and to retrieve the questionnaires. The data collected were later analyzed using simple percentages and frequency.

## **ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

Out of the one hundred and fifty (150) copies of the questionnaire that were given out, one hundred and forty five (145) copies were duly completed and returned. Therefore, analysis in this work was based on the One hundred and forty five questionnaire that were returned.

**Research Question 1**

Table 1. Hours in a Day that NTA Maiduguri Devotes to HIV/AIDS Programmes

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Valid</i>	<i>Cumulative percentage</i>
Valid	¼	38	26.2	33.3	33.3
	½	41	28.3	36.0	69.3
	1	31	21.4	27.2	96.5
	2	4	2.8	3.5	100.0
	Total	114	78.6	100.0	
Missing	System	31	21.4		
Total		145	100.0		

Source: Field Survey, 2009

How many hours does NTA Maiduguri devote to HIV/AIDS programmes?

Table 1 shows that out of the total number of respondents that answered the question, majority (28.3%) said that NTA Maiduguri devotes ½ hour in a day to HIV/AIDS programmes. Another (26.2%) of the respondents that answered the question said that NTA Maiduguri devotes ¼ hour to HIV/AIDS programmes. Another (21.4%) of the respondents that answered the question said that NTA Maiduguri devotes 1 hour to HIV/AIDS programmes while (2.8%) of the respondents that answered the question said that NTA Maiduguri devotes 2 hours to the HIV/AIDS programmes. While the remaining (21.4%) were not sure of the hours NTA Maiduguri devote to HIV/AIDS programmes.

**Research Question 2**

Table 2. Do HIV/AIDS Programmes on NTA Maiduguri Promote Sex Education?

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative</i>
Valid	Yes	54	37.2	38.3	38.3
	No	87	60.0	61.7	100.0
	Total	141	97.2	100.0	
Missing	System	4	2.8		
Total		145	100.0		

Source: Field Survey, 2009

Do HIV/AIDS programmes on NTA Maiduguri promote sex education?

From table 2, out of the total number of respondents that answered the question, majority (61.7%) said that HIV/AIDS programmes on NTA Maiduguri do not promote sex education. Another (37.2%) of the respondents that answered the question said that HIV/AIDS programmes on NTA Maiduguri promote sex education. The remaining (2.8%) of the respondents did not answer the questions.

**Research Question 3**

Table 3. What Programme Should NTA Maiduguri Introduce to Fight Against Stigmatization and Discrimination of HIV/AIDS Victims?

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative</i>
valid	Education	11	7.6	22.4	24.4
	Advocacy	1	0.7	2.0	24.5
	Drama	37	25.5	75.5	100.0
	Total	49	33.8	100.0	
Missing	System	96	66.2		
Total		145	100.0		

Source: Field Survey, 2009

What programmes should NTA Maiduguri introduce to fight against stigmatization and discrimination of HIV/AIDS victims?

From the table, out of the total number of respondents that answered the question, majority (25.5%) said that educational programmes on HIV/AIDS should be introduced to take care of stigmatization and discrimination against victims. Another (7.6%) of the respondents that answered the question said that dramatizing care and love for victims of HIV/AIDS should be introduced to take care of the problem. Other (0.7%) respondents that answered the question said that advocacy programmes should be introduced to take care of the problem of stigmatization and discrimination. The remaining (66.2%) respondents did not answer the question.

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

From the totality of the responses, the following findings have emerged.

The hours devoted a day by NTA Maiduguri is inadequate. Majority (36.0%) of the valid percent as shown on the table said that ½ hours is devoted by NTA Maiduguri, to HIV/AIDS programmes. (33.3%) of the valid percent said ¼ hour is devoted by NTA Maiduguri to HIV/AIDS programmes, while (3.5%) of the valid percent said NTA Maiduguri devoted 2 hours only to HIV/AIDS programmes.

Table 2 revealed that, majority (61.7%) of the valid percent said HIV/AIDS programmes on NTA Maiduguri do not promote sex education. The remaining (38.3%) said HIV/AIDS programmes on NTA Maiduguri promote sex education.

Majority (75.5%) of the valid percent as revealed by table 3, said NTA Maiduguri should introduce drama to fight against stigmatization and discrimination of HIV/AIDS victims. (22.4%) said NTA Maiduguri should introduce education to fight against stigmatization and discrimination of HIV/AIDS victims. The remaining (2.0%) said NTA Maiduguri should introduce advocacy to fight against stigmatization and discriminating of HIV/AIDS victims.

The remaining (2.0%) said NTA Maiduguri should introduce advocacy programmes to fight against stigmatization and discrimination of HIV/AIDS victims.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. Most of the HIV/AIDS programmes on NTA Maiduguri are relayed from NTA Network. NTA Maiduguri should create more time on their own apart from the programmes relayed from their headquarters. This way, many will be educated and informed of HIV/AIDS virus.
- b. Ignorance of the nature of HIV/AIDS virus is the major problem associated with stigmatization and discrimination of HIV/AIDS patients. NTA Maiduguri should do more in educating her viewer about the disease and the need to show love and care to those who have been infected with the disease.
- c. Commercialization policy of NTA, is the reason why NTA devotes little time to HIV/AIDS programmes. HIV/AIDS is not only a health and social problem. It is a national problem. NTA Maiduguri should set aside their policy of commercialization when it comes to the issue of HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS programmes should be aired free to the public, as part of community service.
- d. HIV/AIDS programmes on NTA Maiduguri should not only be in English language but also in the local languages.
- e. Television is a powerful medium of communication whose primary role is to inform, educate, entertain and to enlighten the society. NTA Maiduguri must be seen to be performing these roles, if HIV/AIDS must be controlled or eliminated in our society. NTA owned by Federal Government must provide the adequate fund for NTA Maiduguri to perform her expected roles.

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