

Attitudes Towards HIV/AIDS Campaigns in Uasin Gishu District, Kenya.

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Abstract

This paper examines the attitudes towards the HIV/AIDS educators and their campaign programmes in Uasin Gishu District of Kenya. Data was obtained through both observations and questionnaires administered to a sample of 238 male and female respondents aged between 15-55 years selected using multi-stage sampling technique. Study findings revealed that most of the respondents perceived the age, ethnic background, and dressing style of the educators positively. However, most of the respondents had a negative attitude towards the language used by the educators – especially that used when talking about major issues such as contraceptives and sexual terms – and the nature of the audience-mix mainly adopted by the educators during the campaigns. The paper recommends that preliminary researches be done prior to campaigns to establish the cultural value systems of the targeted audience. The need for educators to enhance their relationship with their audience by being perceived to be credible, competent and trustworthy is also suggested. It was also suggested that there was need for continuous monitoring and evaluation to establish audience's reactions in order to adjust the programmes to suit their needs without necessarily changing the HIV/AIDS messages.

Introduction

HIV/AIDS is undoubtedly one of the greatest challenges facing humanity today. In many countries, especially the developing countries, AIDS has drastically reduced the human resource on which the countries' future security, health and general development depends (UNAIDS, 2001; UNDP, 2003; Mati, 1997; Obel, 1995). The unprecedented nature of the pandemic has forced governments to seek combined efforts in fighting the virus. Leaders all over the world have come to realize that turning back the scourge "*is a task beyond individual efforts, no matter how outstanding or heroic*" (Annan, 2001). Since the development of an effective drug to combat the pandemic is yet to be achieved (Alcamo, 2002), countries have shifted their focus on educating the society on the necessary behavioral changes to avoid contracting the virus (UNAIDS, 1997).

The HIV/AIDS education programmes aims at achieving an "AIDS Competent" society. That is, a society whose members are

aware – in a detailed and realistic way – of their collective vulnerability to HIV/AIDS are mobilized to do something about this vulnerability and have practical knowledge of the different options they can take to reduce their vulnerability (UNAIDS, 1997). To achieve this, intensive HIV/AIDS campaigns have been launched at the village level involving educators from various sectors of the government, non-governmental organizations (NGO's), political leaders and even religious groups (UNAIDS, 1999).

Despite huge amounts of money spent on the HIV/AIDS campaign programmes, little has been achieved in terms of attendance, participation and the behavior change of the target audience (UNESCO, 2000). A significantly small percentage of the target audience turns up to listen and participate during the campaigns especially in the rural areas. The main reason why many members of the target community are unwilling to participate in the campaigns may be the unfavorable attitude towards the methods adopted in passing HIV/AIDS information.

The audience's attitude is critical to the success of the HIV/AIDS campaigns since it

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determines the willingness of the audience to receive information and therefore completing the communication circle. Communication can take place only if the source has information and emits it, if the targeted recipient wants the information and accepts it, and if the appropriate channel is available to both (Vickery and Vickery, 1991). This implies that, the source/originator of the message does not simply pass information to the recipients but must also seek their active involvement and participation (Akong'a, 1988). This active involvement will be possible only when the targeted recipient of the message develops a positive attitude towards the communication process as a whole.

According to Ellis and McClintock (1990), attitude colours the way we perceive other people, the assumptions we make of their personalities, what they say, and even whether we are going to listen to them or not. Thus, success in HIV/AIDS campaigns is determined by the attitude of the targeted audience towards the campaign exercise, which influences their willingness to actively participate in the communication process. It is on the basis of this argument that a study was conducted to investigate the attitudes of the targeted audience towards the methods adopted by the HIV/AIDS educators during awareness campaigns among the Nandi.

Purpose of the study

Specifically, the study aimed at finding out the attitude of the audience towards the HIV/AIDS educators, the language used by the educators during the campaigns, and the nature of audience-mix adopted during the campaigns.

Data and methods

Sample: A total of 240 respondents (both male and female) aged between 15-55 years were selected for the study using a multi-stage sampling technique. Within this age bracket were the youth, who are said to be hardest-hit by the HIV/AIDS scourge in Kenya (Obel, 1995; JHU/CCP, 1997; UNAIDS, 1999 and Aggleton, 1995), and a low-risk group of adults that are perceived to be influential in the

HIV/AIDS campaign (Hubley, 1990).

Using purposive sampling technique, four locations were selected namely: Ziwa, Soy, Sirikwa and Moi'sbridge for the study. According to the Uasin Gishu District Aids Control Council, these locations are among those hardest-hit by the HIV/AIDS in Uasin Gishu District and are also less cosmopolitan compared to other locations ravaged by the disease in the district hence providing a base for an easy analysis of the cultural perspective to the campaigns. In each of the selected locations, four villages were purposively selected where those villages close to main roads and/or main shopping centers identified for the study. From each of the selected villages, a total of 15 respondents were selected using both stratified and simple random sampling technique (2 adult males, 3 adult females, 5 young males and 5 young females). However, two questionnaires were misplaced and were therefore not included in the final analysis.

Research Design: Descriptive and exploratory research design was used to obtain data for the study. Descriptive research studies are those studies that are concerned with the description of the characteristics of a particular individual or a group whereas exploratory studies are those whose purpose is to "formulate a problem for more precise investigation or for developing a working hypothesis from an operational point of view" (Kothari, 1990). The aim of the current study was to describe the behavior of the audience towards HIV/AIDS education programmes, their attitudes towards those who carry out the AIDS education and to explain why the audience was unwilling to participate in the AIDS awareness programmes. Interview schedules, analysis of documented information and observations were utilized to obtain data. Data obtained was analyzed using both the descriptive and inferential statistical techniques where Chi-square and Spearman r correlation coefficient were computed to test the hypotheses at $p = 0.05$.

Results and Discussion

Attendance of HIV/AIDS campaigns

To establish success of the HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns in the study area, the researchers sought to find out from the respondents the level of participation of the audience in the HIV/AIDS campaigns. Participation in this case referred to either attending the campaign or acting as a facilitator in the awareness campaign.

Study findings revealed that 85.3% of the respondents had participated in the campaigns while 14.7% said they had not. Asked about their frequency of attendance in the campaigns, 39.4% of the respondents indicated that they had attended the campaign once, 22.2% indicated that they had attended the campaign twice, 10.3% indicated thrice, 0.5% indicated four times while 27.6% indicated that they had attended the campaign more than four times. This findings do indicate that most of the respondents had attended the campaign only once despite the high intensity of the HIV/AIDS campaigns in the study area. This indicates that the audience may have negative attitude towards the HIV/AIDS campaign rallies that – according to information obtained through observation – were mainly carried out through educative speeches on the real nature of the pandemic and how one can avoid contracting the disease including demonstrations on how contraceptives are to be used.

When those who had not participated in the campaign were asked to state reasons for their failure to participate, 17.1% claimed that they had other commitments during the campaign times, 20% said they were not aware of the function, 48.6% stated that there has never been any campaign in their area. 14.3% gave other reasons such as sickness, not being around during the campaign and so on. However, during the study, the researcher noted that there were some respondents who insisted that there had never been any campaigns in their area even when their spouses and children were claiming that campaigns were being carried out at least once each month in their village. This is an

indication that, for some reasons, some respondents either despised the HIV/AIDS educators or did not see the importance of the exercise at all.

Audience size in the HIV/AIDS campaigns

When asked to state the number of people that attended the latest HIV/AIDS campaign in which they have attended, 48 (23.6%) respondents stated that the audience was less than 50 people, 103 (51.7%) stated that the audience was between 50-100 people, 20 (9.9%) indicated an audience of between 101-150, 15 (6.5%) indicated audience size of between 151-200 while 17 (8.3%) indicated audience size of above 200 people. The mean attendance level of the audience in the campaign was between 50-100 people. This shows that a significantly small size of audience (less than 10% of the total number of residents in the targeted villages) turned up to attend the HIV/AIDS campaign in the study area. Thus this signals that the campaigns were not as effective as expected considering the large budgets that are being spent during the campaigns.

Attitudes towards the HIV/AIDS campaigns

The researchers attempted to capture the feelings of the audience towards the way the HIV/AIDS campaign was being carried out. To achieve this, the researchers asked the respondent to indicate whether he/she stayed until the end of the presentations during the last HIV/AIDS campaign conducted in their area. Those who replied “no” were asked to explain the reasons why they left before the end of the presentations. The respondents were also asked to indicate whether they noticed some members of the audience who departed before the end of the presentations. Those who indicated “yes” were asked to explain why they thought others left before the end of the presentations. Respondents were further asked to state their attitude – and reasons for their attitude – towards the nature of the educators conducting HIV/AIDS campaigns and the kind of language that the educators used in the HIV/AIDS campaigns. Respondents’ were further asked to state the kind of audience-mix

adopted by the educators and their attitudes towards this kind of audience-mix assessed against their attitudes towards other kinds of audience-mix.

Length of stay during HIV/AIDS campaigns

During the HIV/AIDS campaign most of the respondent, 168 (83.3 %) stayed until the end of the presentation, while 34 (16.7%) did not. However, further probing indicated that most (67.0%) of the respondents who had attended the HIV/AIDS campaigns claimed to have noticed people who moved out before the end of the presentations. The reasons advanced by the 34 (16.7%) respondents who left before the end of the presentation were; 10 (29.4%) claimed that they did not feel comfortable with the kind of language that was being used in the campaign, 3 (8.8%) said that what was being used was scaring, 21 (61.8%) claimed they moved out because they had other commitments. Furthermore, the possible reasons given by the respondents as to why others left before the end of the presentations show that 77 (56.6%) claimed that those who left before the end of the presentations may have been uncomfortable with the kind of language used. 27 (19.9%) claimed that those who left may have been scared by what was being said, 24 (17.6%) claimed that those who left may have had other commitments, whereas 10 (7.3%) claimed that those who left may have had other personal reasons such as sickness and time factors. This finding shows that a great percentage of the audience end up developing an unfavorable attitude towards the HIV/AIDS campaign exercise and this may explain why most of them fail to attend the campaigns as frequently as expected and also why small numbers turn up to listen during the campaigns.

Attitudes towards the personality of HIV/AIDS educators

Attitude colours the way we perceive other people, the assumptions we make of their personalities, what they say, and even whether we are going to listen to them or not (Ellis and McClintock 1990). If the recipient of information perceives the sender to be

"unqualified" to address him/her, he/she may refuse to participate in the communication exercise. This "lack of qualification" may be a result of factors such as inappropriate age, ethnic background and/or dressing style. Thus, the researchers attempted to capture the respondents' perception of the HIV/AIDS educators in order to determine whether it was a contributing factor leading to low turn out in the campaigns.

When asked to state their attitude towards the age of those carrying out the HIV/AIDS campaign, 59 (29.1%) indicated that they felt that their educators' age was highly appropriate, 102 (50.2%) indicated that the age was appropriate, 10 (4.9%) were undecided, 31 (15.3%) felt that the age was inappropriate while 1 (0.5%) indicated that the age of the educators was highly inappropriate. Concerning the reasons given for their attitudes towards the age of the educators, 111(54.7%) stated that the educators were of the right age to speak to the audience, 40 (19.7%) indicated that the audience were not of the right age to speak to the audience, 48 (23.6%) indicated that the age factor does not matter whereas 4 (2.0%) gave other reasons. For example, they claimed the educators were mixed. Therefore there were appropriate educators for different age groups. From these findings, it can be concluded that most of the members of the audience had a positive attitude towards the age of those carrying out the HIV/AIDS campaign and, therefore, age factor may not be one of the major reasons for the low turn out during the HIV/AIDS campaign.

A majority of the respondents also indicated a positive attitude towards the dressing style of the educators. 54 (26.6%) felt that the dressing style of the educators was highly appropriate, 121 (59.6%) felt that the dressing style was appropriate, 7 (3.4%) were undecided, 18 (8.9%) felt that the educators were inappropriately dressed, while 3 (1.5%) felt that the dressing style of the educators was highly inappropriate. When asked to state the reasons for their attitude towards the dressing style of the educators, 172 (84.7%) claimed that the educators were decently dressed, 24

(11.8%) indicated that the educators were indecently dressed, 6 (3.0%) stated that the dressing style does not matter while 1 (0.5%) said was not keen on the dressing style of the educators. These findings support the conclusion that most of the members of the audience have a positive attitude towards the dressing style of the educators.

About 22.2% of the respondents who had attended the HIV/AIDS campaign felt that the ethnic background of the educators was highly acceptable, 89 (43.8%) indicated acceptable, 25 (12.3%) were undecided, 39 (19.2%) indicated unacceptable while 5 (2.5%) felt that the ethnic background of the educators was highly unacceptable. When asked to state the reasons for their attitude towards the ethnic background of the educators, 79 (38.9%) of the respondents indicated that the educators were mainly from their community and therefore highly acceptable, 52 (25.6%) stated that the educators were mainly from other communities and therefore not acceptable, 63 (31.0) felt that the ethnic background of the educator does not matter whereas 9 (4.4%) gave other reasons such as that educators from non-Kalenjin communities would have been more acceptable in the Kalenjin community.

A critical look at these findings reveals that most of the members of the audience have a positive attitude towards the ethnic background of the educators. It should be noted, however, that a significant percentage of the respondents were either undecided or stated that the ethnic background of the educators was either unacceptable or highly unacceptable. This is an indication that the ethnic background of the educators might explain, to some extent, why most members of the audience were unwilling to attend the HIV/AIDS campaigns.

Attitude towards educators' language

Language usage is one of the main determinants of the success of a communication exercise. How the sender of the message uses the language may either offend or attract the interests of the listeners thus determining the kind of attitude that the targeted receiver of information will attach towards the whole process of communication.

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Appropriateness of language usage in communication varies depending on the context of the communication process. It is for this reason therefore that the researcher sought to find out, first, the kind of language used by the educators in communicating AIDS information and also the perception of the audience towards this kind of language in relation to the kind of audience present during the campaigns.

Most (63.1%) of the respondents indicated that the educators use actual terms in Kiswahili/English when talking about morally sensitive issues such as contraceptives and sexual terms, 33 (16.3%) indicated euphemistic terms in Nandi/Kalenjin, 30 (14.8%) claimed that the educators used actual terms in Kalenjin, while 12 (5.8%) indicated euphemistic terms in Kiswahili/English. These findings show that educators working in most parts of the study area use open and direct language when communicating HIV/AIDS information. When asked to indicate their perception towards the appropriateness of this kind of language during the campaigns, 37 (18.2%) of the respondent felt that the language was highly appropriate, 83 (40.9%) indicated that the language was appropriate, 9 (4.4%) were undecided, 62 (30.5%) felt that the language was inappropriate whereas 12 (5.9%) indicated that the language was highly inappropriate.

Reasons given for these attitudes show that 80 (39.4%) felt that the language was embarrassing, 57 (28.1%) indicated that it was the right kind of language for the kind of audience being addressed, 60 (29.6%) stated that there is now need to speak openly since AIDS was too dangerous while 6 (3.0%) gave other reasons.

A critical look at these findings shows that close to half of the respondents were either undecided or had a negative attitude towards the language used by the educators when communicating issues on sexuality and contraceptive use. Furthermore, the main reason given for this attitude was that some respondents felt that the language was embarrassing when used in mixed kinds of

audience. This, therefore, may be one of the main factors that lead too low turn out of the audience during the campaigns.

Attitudes towards various categories of audience-mix

The acceptability of language used in a particular context is determined by the nature of audience composition. More than 70% of the respondents indicated that the kind of audience-mix adopted by the educators was mixed (adult and young male and female), about ten percent (10.3%) of the respondents indicated that the audience was homogeneous (adult male/adult female/young male/young female only); 23 (11.3%) indicated mixed (young men and young women); 12 (5.9%) indicated mixed (adult male and adult female); 2 (1.0%) indicated mixed (young and adult male only) while none indicated mixed (young and adult female only). The variation in the responses received may have been a result of the variety of HIV/AIDS educators visiting different parts of the study area.

When respondents were asked to indicate how comfortable they were when being educated on HIV/AIDS in the presence of both adults and youth among the audience, 20 (8.4%) of the respondents indicated that they felt very comfortable, 50 (21.0%) indicated that they felt comfortable, 16 (6.7%) were undecided, 106 (44.5%) said they were uncomfortable while 46 (19.3%) said they felt

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highly uncomfortable. The reasons for their attitudes were varied. 160 (67.2%) said that one would feel shy to participate and ask questions in such an audience-mix. 64 (26.9%) said that the nature of the audience-mix does not matter because of the danger now posed by HIV/AIDS. 9 (3.8%) said that in such an audience-mix, the youth and adults will have an opportunity to share ideas while 5 (2.1%) gave other reasons. Respondents were further asked to rank their preference towards other kinds of audience compositions. On their preference to homogeneous audience (agemates of same gender), 152 (63.9%) respondents indicated that they were very comfortable, 46 (19.3%) said they were comfortable, 12 (5.0%) were undecided, 20 (8.4%) were uncomfortable whereas only 8 (3.4%) said they were uncomfortable (See Table 1).

As shown in Table 1, most of the respondents preferred a homogeneous kind of audience and the main reason given is that the audience would feel free to participate and ask questions. This seems to explain why there is a low level of participation of the audience in the HIV/AIDS campaigns. The attitude of the respondents will, to a great extent, influence their willingness to attend the campaigns. Even when they may be willing to attend the campaigns, members of the audience may not feel free to contribute during the campaigns in heterogeneous kinds of audience-mix possibly

Table 1: Attitude of the respondents towards various kinds of audience-mix (N=238)

Group	Attitudes (%)				
	Very Comfortable	Comfortable	Not decided	Not Comfortable	Very uncomfortable
Homogenous	63.9	19.3	5.0	8.4	3.4
Mixed (M & F same age)	48.3	41.2	2.1	8.4	0
Mixed (A & Y, M & F)	10.1	16.4	7.1	28.2	38.2
Same gender (A & Y)	35.7	46.2	5.5	5.5	7.1

M = Male, F = Female, A = Adult and Y = Young

because of the influence from their cultural background. This means that they may not contribute freely or ask for clarifications on issues that they may not understand well because of the presence of those that they think are too young or too old to listen to them ask such questions. The implication of this is that at the end of the campaigns, the audience will not have fully acquired the information that they wanted to have. In some cases, the members of the targeted audience may opt not to attend the campaigns rather than feel embarrassed listening to certain things together with members of certain age groups.

Findings of the Chi-square analysis (see Table 2) showed that the preference of the respondent to the kind of the audience-mix adopted by the educators was significantly associated with the level of participation of the respondents for four out of the six variables at $p \leq 0.05$ level of significance.

Findings of the Spearman r bivariate correlations indicated a strong correlation between the preference of the respondent to mixed (adult and young male and female) audience and the size of the audience during HIV/AIDS campaigns ($r = -0.20$; $p < .01$) (the negative value of the correlation was a result of coding of the value labels of the independent variable from the highest to the lowest). These findings implied that the higher the number of people who preferred the mixed (adult and

young, male and female) audience, the bigger the size of the audience during the campaigns. By extension, this also implies that the higher the number of people who perceived the heterogeneous kind of audience-mix negatively, the smaller the size of the audience during the campaigns.

This preference of the audience to various kinds of audience-mix was related to the kind of language used during the campaigns in the sense that some members of the audience, for instance adults, would not have liked to listen to certain issues being discussed in the presence of certain kinds of audiences, for example their children. In support of this argument, the main reason given by the respondents for their preference of a homogeneous audience was that they would be free to listen and contribute during the campaigns. This showed that what hindered their freedom to listen and contribute freely in mixed kinds of audience was the presence of certain other listeners of different age categories amongst the audience.

Conclusion

The role of the HIV/AIDS educators is to facilitate the flow of information on HIV/AIDS to the intended audience. Establishment of rapport between them and the recipients of their messages is thus a necessity. For this to be established, the educators must strive to be

Table 2: Cross-tabulation findings for the preference of the respondents to the audience-mix adopted by the educators in the HIV/AIDS campaigns and the level of participation of the targeted audience (Dependent variable = Size of audience)

Variables	R	χ^2	Df	Sign.
Homogeneous audience	0.05	21.888	16	0.147
Mixed young male & young female audience	0.10	10.198	16	0.856
Mixed adult male & female audience	0.13	45.888	16	0.000
Mixed adult & young male and female audience	-0.20**	42.922	16	0.000
Male-only audience	-0.06	40.813	16	0.001
Female-only audience	-0.13	27.297	16	0.038

=203, $p^{**} < 0.01$, Note: 35 (14.7%) of the respondents were not included in this analysis because they claimed not to have attended HIV/AIDS campaigns

perceived by the audience as being credible, trustworthy and competent. This is because the targeted audience must first accept the educators before they accept their messages. To achieve this acceptability among the targeted audience, the educators should conduct preliminary researches to understand the nature of clients they are dealing with before they embark on an intensive campaign programme. The educators should also develop a feedback system through which they can understand the reaction of the audience towards their programmes and therefore make necessary adjustments so as to adjust them to suit the needs of the targeted clients without necessarily changing the content of their messages.

Audience segmentation is also a necessity in the HIV/AIDS campaigns in Uasin Gishu District as seen in the respondent's negative attitudes towards mixed audiences. It is recommended that the audience be segmented by age where adults are educated separately from the youth to facilitate flexible use of language and enhance openness of the participants. This will imply that more rallies need to be conducted in the area hence increasing the financial cost. However, the researchers noted that more than 16 groups had been funded to conduct HIV/AIDS campaigns in the whole of Uasin Gishu district as per the time of the study while several other groups were funded at the constituency level. Thus, with proper co-ordination, all the audience segments can easily be reached when different groups target different audience segments in specified locations. Audience segmentation will also make HIV/AIDS campaigns more acceptable to the targeted audience hence more people will be reached faster than holding several campaigns where the targeted respondents were unwilling to participate.

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