

ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ СОЦІАЛЬНИХ ФЕНОМЕНІВ

УДК 616.98:578.828:070(477)

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PRINTED MEDIA COVERAGE OF HIV/AIDS: THE RESULTS OF ALL-UKRAINIAN MONITORING OF THE MOST POPULAR NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

The paper presents the results of the all-Ukrainian monitoring of the most popular printed mass media on the coverage of the HIV/AIDS problem. Particularly, the following issues are highlighted: the media discourse and AIDS epidemics; publication numbers and volumes; key publication topics; key publication characters, attitudes to HIV-positive people and sources of information; argumentation and quality of articles. The results of the research show a certain level of interest of journalists on the HIV/AIDS issues. Still the quality and argumentation of articles needs to be greatly improved.

The Media Discourse and AIDS Epidemics

Mass media play a potent role in formation of certain ideas within society regarding various problems. Mass media tackling each specific social problem actually is of a two-fold nature: on the one hand, journalists reflect those views and opinions on a certain situation, in particular, on HIV/AIDS spreading among already wide-scale social groups, - that have been formulated as social setting and stereotypes. On the other hand, though, presenting information on HIV/AIDS problems leads to formulation of a corresponding - either similar or a derivative from the one offered to society - popular attitude towards this problem. As such, absence of any mentioning by mass media of HIV/AIDS spreading problems, as well as little attention given to needs of people with HIV/AIDS, or inappropriate tackling of this issue giving it predominantly negative colouring, prevents the society in general from developing tolerant attitudes towards HIV-positive and AIDS-infected people, as well as further complicates running adequate state policies aimed at solving these problematic issues.

Each problem - political, social - enjoys corresponding public discourse that is made up by a set of ideas and symbols (that is, signs) which help construct its meaning and represent the system of values. On the one hand, within the free informational field mass-media not only reflect social life, but by reflex are orientated at public opinion and reflecting in their products those ideas which are

wide-spread or dominate among general public. On the other hand, the discourse, in particular that of the printed media - newspapers - is a rather dangerous mechanism that allows manipulation of human consciousness [1]. Therefore, depending on the way mass media tackle social problems of various vulnerable population groups, and depending on what is discourse stance of such publications, the indirect level of tolerance of general population support can be assessed towards those in need of social support in new social-economic conditions, in particular towards those people who have been diagnosed with HIV-infection and AIDS [2].

For a long time mass media treated AIDS as "evil", and those diagnosed with AIDS - as "high-risk groups", and the latter were opposed to "normal people" [3]. Information offered by mass media on HIV/AIDS was mostly based on fear notion and was negative in nature. The major objective of journalists was "to scare young people and warn them of dangerous experiments, thus establishing barriers for HIV/AIDS" [4]. Up until recent media information was aimed at heterosexual people having low or average income, not using drugs, conceals cases of sexual promiscuity if such ever happen, Slavs by nationality, and dwellers of cities [5]. It is very difficult to identify themselves with the above-mentioned statistical characters for those who are HIV high-risk groups, including women offering their services for money, people having many sexual one-night stands, parents of drug

addicts. 2001-2004 were the years when trainings for journalists were run to help provide adequate treatment of the problem. There were competitions organized for the best journalistic works which indeed facilitated prestigious level of these problems tackled by mass media. 2001-2004 were also the years when first media campaigns were initiated to help disseminate information on the ways HIV is transmitted, as well as developing ideas of solidarity towards people living with HIV, more active informational work aimed at remembering some special events, including the Remembrance Day of those who died of AIDS and the International Day of fighting against AIDS. 2004 was also the year of wide-spread campaigns that actively employed social advertisement tools.

Despite much action in recent years there is still rather superficial coverage of reality offered by mass media. HIV/AIDS problem has constantly been associated with "taking drugs and alcohol", which may lead to further imprinting of negative and even hostile attitudes into public opinion towards HIV/AIDS in general and those infected in particular [6]. Media reflect all the stereotypes that have been formed around HIV/AIDS problem.

The wish to attract readers' attention by sensational material or scandalous fact also prevents objectivity in addressing this topic, as well as prevents society from developing tolerant attitude to HIV-positive people [7]. This happens because in their quest for "being objective" journalists become more focused on the text itself, rather on the consequences of the publication [8]. Moreover, the majority of popular mass media - in an inconspicuous and sometimes contradictory manner - facilitate support for existing social institutions and social relationships, by this "helping" marginalization of attitudes and behaviour that are much too far from the "mainstream". Thus, such way of presenting information on HIV/AIDS problem brings into forth erroneous ideas and myths that prevent ordinary people from taking correct decisions, and sometimes even lead to discrimination and human tragedies [9].

Some researches state that when using the model for mass communication should be borne in mind that cognitive processes are extremely complicated and that recipients possess informational filters of trust/mistrust. It is believed that mass media information is most effective in cases "when people's opinions are not completely formed" [10]. HIV/AIDS issue belongs to such cases, as it challenges traditional views on "good" and "evil", on problems of marginality, on social ostracism and social exclusion of "others", i.e. people who dif-

fer from "normal". It also raises doubts as to such a division in general and raises the problem of responsibility for one's own behaviour. Therefore, finding out the way HIV/AIDS is reflected in Ukrainian mass media, allows assessing both social opinion on this matter and the level media discourse tackles models of safe behaviour, the issues that could have effectively decrease disease spreading rates [11].

This paper presents the results of research aimed at exploration of newspaper and magazine discourse on HIV/AIDS problem in Ukraine.

Research methodology

The research was conducted by the NGO "Socium-XXI" in spring 2005. It was supported by International HIV/AIDS Alliance in Ukraine in line with the program of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

The research group was formed by the professors and graduate students of School of Social Work, National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, - Tetyana Semigina (head of the group), Yuriy Savel'yev, Iryna Zubets', Daryna Bogdan, Anna Afinogenova, Lyudmyla Kopach, Olga Voinarovska, Svitlana Fil', Alia Boyko. Special thanks should go to the experts from the different departments of the "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy" and group set up the by International HIV/AIDS Alliance in Ukraine under the UNAIDS co-ordination for offering methodological support of the research.

According to the terms of reference, some 20-25 rating all-Ukrainian and 3-4 most popular regional editions from each region for the calendar year of 2004 were subject to monitoring. So, **the sample of research** consists of 121 editions: 25 all-Ukrainian ones (20,7 %) and 96 regional editions (79,3 %). All regional editions are newspapers, and there were 6 "glamour" editions among the all-Ukrainian ones, i.e. magazines for different target population groups: female, male, teen-age.

Almost half of all editions studied have the average circulation of 10-50 thousand copies. 22 editions have circulation up to 10 thousand copies. Circulation of 20 editions - 50-100 thousand copies. 10 editions have circulation from 250 thousand to 1 million copies. Only 2 monitored editions have circulation of over 1 million copies.

Substantial part of editions (44 of them) was founded by commercial organizations (including 14 all-Ukrainian publications - the major share of all studied all-Ukrainian editions). 22 publications were founded by state/communal agencies. Labour collectives were founders of some 21 editions. 5 publications founded by parties or social-political or-

ganizations, and 2 editions are departmental (Cabinet of Ministry of Ukraine and the Ministry of Health Care of Ukraine). 22 publications have other founders (most often these are represented by 2 various entrepreneurial agents that have jointly founded a publication, i.e. regional council and labour collective).

This research employs both major **methods of content-analysis and discourse-analysis** of materials in printed media. Combination of quantitative (content-analysis) and qualitative methods allowed, on the one hand, to describe, develop typology and structure of the overall subject matter in line with selected parameters, and on the other hand, to identify content nuances and motivations behind publications.

Publication Numbers and Volumes

While conducting research some **1322** publications (articles and so) were identified in the archives for the year 2004, that is approximately 11 publications per 1 media. This included 887 (67,1%) publications — in regional editions (which constitute 79,3% of media sample), that is, 9 publications per 1 media. At the same time almost one third of publications - **435** (32,9%) are placed in all-Ukrainian editions, which constitute only 20,7% of the sample, that is, 17 publications per 1 media. Therefore, all-Ukrainian editions are tackling HIV/AIDS theme much more often.

Distribution of publications by regions testifies to the fact that HIV/AIDS topic is most often tackled by the journalists of the Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Kyiv regions, of the Autonomous Republic of the Crimea, Zaporizhzhia, L'viv and Lugansk regions. Quantitative analysis results testify to the fact that such editions as «Segodnia» ("Today") (69 publications - 5,2% of all), «Donbass» (46 publications - 3,5%), «Vashe zdorov'ia» ("Your health") (44 publications - 3,3%), «Khreshchatik» (41 publications - 3,1%), «Dzerkalo tyzhnia» ("Weekly mirror") (40 publications - 3,0%), «Den'» ("Day") (40 publications - 3,0%) are the ones that tackle HIV/AIDS topic most often.

Fewer publications were identified in media of the Kirovograd, Poltava, Chernigiv and Sumy regions. In general, journalists ignore HIV/AIDS topic in the majority of regions in the Northern and Central parts of Ukraine. Little "popularity" enjoys HIV/AIDS topic in the Western part of Ukraine as well.

Characters' numbering in publications by regional and all-Ukrainian printed media depends on the importance of HIV/AIDS topic for the general contents. The materials that are totally devoted to HIV/AIDS topic are less sizable compared to those,

where HIV/AIDS theme is an auxiliary one, or when it is alluded to. Actually, 3,5-4 printed characters (considering spacing for heading, under-heading, rubrics and signature) - is a size of a moderate article that can take up to one-quarter of a newspaper page space. The ratio between the publication size to the size of edition proves insignificant interest that the analyzed editions attach to HIV/AIDS topic.

HIV/AIDS topic is given a special emphasis in almost half of the analyzed publications (44,6%), i.e. these are the articles totally devoted to HIV/AIDS. As additional, auxiliary theme, HIV/AIDS is treated in 14,6% of publications, that is, these articles tackle other topics (for example, drug addiction, tuberculosis, social problems of youth, meetings of local governments or regional councils, etc), and some part of attention and printed space belongs to HIV/AIDS topic. As a mentioning, a simple allusion used to attract readers' attention, to frighten or to warn them, the phrase "HIV/AIDS" is used in 40,8% of articles (for example, "ecological AIDS" in an article on charity aid to Chernobyl disaster victims).

Content analysis results demonstrate that a substantial share of publications (30,0%), analyzed throughout the research, are just brief informational notes. Moreover, words "HIV/AIDS" are often used in articles to attach additional sensation to materials and attract readers' attention. These words are included into headings of articles even when there is no direct correlation with the text of the publication. This allows us to suppose that editorial boards of newspapers and magazines continue to view certain sensation and weirdness in HIV/AIDS.

Key Publication Topics

According to the major, dominant theme all publications with the mentioning of HIV/AIDS can be divided as follows:

- publications on social topics (in particular, on discrimination of people living with HIV, on relationships between HIV and drugs, sex-business, migration, poverty, etc, setting up social services for HIV-positive people, implementation of programs of harm reduction, social system, values, charity, socially vulnerable children, health life style, etc) - 42,4%;

- publications on medical topics (medical treatment, medicines and vaccines, medical sector financing, problems of modern medicine, medical conferences and meetings, work of doctors and training medical staff to work with HIV-positive, articles on peculiarities of certain conditions and diseases, etc) - 28, 1%;

- publications on political topics (burning social-political problems, programs and speeches of candidates for Presidency, statements of political leaders, government and state programs, politicians' participation in activities on fighting AIDS, etc) - 8,0%;

- publications on entertainment topics (on virtual sex, on sex relationships, on music and movies stars' lives, jokes and funny stories, etc) - 5,1% (mostly found in glamour magazines);

- publications on criminal-legal topics (fight against drug-dealing business and drugs dissemination in Ukraine, penitentiary system situation, crime rate, etc) - 4,3%;

- publications on economic topics (social sphere financing in general and HIV/AIDS programs in particular, economic consequences of AIDS, cost of grants and loans disbursed to fight epidemics, etc) - 3,3%;

- publications on other topics - 8,7%.

It should be also considered that only 8,8% of articles have appeals to change risky behaviour. Therefore, it is possible to state that printed media do not participate in forming safe behaviour patterns, and do not offer practical recommendations and advice how to escape HIV-infection. All this is done indirectly, by only giving information on ways of transmitting HIV. In cases there are appeals, they are not accompanied by specific recommendations on specific actions. For example, there are appeals in the publication: "Life is much too valuable to throw it in the gutter" in the newspaper "Naddniprians'ka pravda" ("Over-the-Dnipro realness"), Kherson region ("...do not treat your life and health lightly, value them both"), in the article "Resource centre on HIV/AIDS is organized in Nikolaev", newspaper "Vecherniy Nikolaev" ("Nikolaev at night").

Publications in printed media contain little information on services available for people living with HIV and AIDS. At the same time, such information can be obtained only from articles describing activities of some specific organizations (usually, in a wider perspective), as these articles often contain contact information of the organizations in question. This may also mean advertisement of such institutions and the fact, that co-operation between HIV-service organizations and journalists has become more intensive.

Key Publication Characters, Attitudes to HIV-positive People and Sources of Information

Publications on HIV/AIDS include various heroes and, in particular, as quantitative analysis proves, the most popular key characters of publi-

cations are not HIV-positive people or their family members, but doctors (17,4%) and politicians (11,9%).

In general, quantitative analysis of gender-age peculiarities of HIV-positive people shows, that journalists give almost equal attention to adult women (16,2%), men (14,0%) **and** children (12,8%). Articles with HIV-positive as key characters mostly tell real stories of people encountering HIV/AIDS. Say, the newspaper "Fakty" ("Facts") published the following story: HIV-infected person was illegally sacked, discriminated and isolated; as well as the story of a little HIV-infected girl where the story of her illness was alternated by the story what the girls loved to do, whom to play with, and how this "sunny child" was "terrifying" some adults and children. Such publications make readers see real people having their dreams and hopes, feeling pain from maltreatments, through the illusions on HIV-positive people. There is a sense of compassion arising when one reads stories like this.

As the majority of articles identified through monitoring (46,9% of all publications) do not speak about lives of HIV-positive people, then system value attitude was specified for this group of people. Nevertheless, the remaining publications (50,1 %) have the following attitude: often encountered positive attitude to people living with HIV (38,6%), less often - supportive attitude (21,9%) and discriminative attitude (11,5%). As the majority of articles are brief informational notes of fact-stating nature, then in some 14,8% of articles describing HIV-positive it is rather difficult to assess system of values.

So, the printed media in Ukraine participate in formation of tolerant attitudes towards children living with HIV and AIDS, at the same time, almost completely omitting problems and needs of HIV-positive mothers. Some publications' authors include appeals of supportive character towards people living with HIV/AIDS, although, at the same time, use words with negative connotations to describe the problem itself, which, in the final result, does not help develop tolerant attitude to people living with HIV and AIDS.

Statistical analysis shows that there is an extremely low level of presenting opinions of HIV-positive people themselves. There were only 53 publications representing their opinions, and this constitutes some 4% of the total number of articles analysed. Most often such opinions appear in articles devoted to Day on fighting AIDS and Day of remembering those who died of AIDS.

First, there is a stereotype that confirms that HIV/AIDS is so far away and has nothing to do with me - this, of course, reflects one-sided descrip-

tion of HIV/AIDS topic, without offering «a glance from within», and this definitely does not help develop tolerant attitude towards HIV-positive and AIDS-infected people. It is interesting to note that among the publications that present opinions of HIV-positive, there is just one (!) of discriminative character, whereas the rest are positively orientated.

Rather substantial is the share of publications (20,9%) where it is impossible to identify the information source, as such materials are predominantly brief information notes. The most popular information sources for journalists to turn to while preparing materials on HIV/AIDS include: medical workers (24,7%), state bodies (14,3%) and NGOs (12,2%).

Argumentation and Quality of Articles

Analysis of the journalists' competence on HIV/AIDS topic suggests that almost half of the identified publications (50,2%) can be judged as the ones providing real convincing facts. The other half is represented by the articles containing general judgments and obvious lack of informational awareness. Therefore, one can speak here about the lack of knowledge that authors demonstrate while tackling this topic.

The best argumentation is included in the articles where HIV/AIDS is the major topic (see table 1). This may be explained by task-oriented search for the needed information that journalists perform, looking through specialised literature or consulting experts (doctors, representatives of state or NGOs). Extra information search improves informational awareness of journalists and, as a result, often helps exclude erroneous images and stereotypes on HIV/AIDS from the texts of articles. Describing the activities of state and non-state organisations working in HIV/AIDS sphere, the journalists often present materials in the form of press-releases that also contain reliable data. Contrary to articles where HIV/AIDS is just an auxiliary topic or is alluded to, authors, even subconsciously, describe wide-spread

myths and stereotypes on HIV/AIDS that are already deeply-rooted in social conscience.

Printed media reproduce wide-spread social stereotypes on HIV/AIDS, its image of "expensive disease", "disease of drug-users", "punishment for loose behaviour". There is still HIV/AIDS image as "evil", "scary disease", "inevitable result". There are, nevertheless, many publications, especially in the Southern and Eastern regions, where there is no labelling of groups like "women engaged in sex-business" and "drug-users". Media, even though, use illustrations of scary nature, still sometimes publish positive illustrations or even non-discriminatory ones.

The work conducted with journalists, in particular, "round tables", seminars, demonstrations of movies, when realistic, truthful and adequate information is delivered, bears positive fruit: articles that are written following such events are characterised by more tolerant attitudes expressed towards HIV-positive people and present better understanding of social problems related to HIV/AIDS.

Summary

HIV/AIDS issues are being tackled by printed media in all regions of Ukraine. There is growing interest of journalists to social aspects of HIV/AIDS. Still, the substantial number of publications on HIV/AIDS is brief informational notes of fact-giving character.

Articles containing allusions to HIV/AIDS speak mostly about pre-conditions leading to the disease - tendencies of its spreading and ways of HIV transmitting. Key characters and heroes of publications are not people living with HIV/AIDS, but rather medical people, who are simultaneously the major informational source on this topic. Articles with general medical directiveness describe major characters as people living with HIV/AIDS, but, as a rule, only medical aspects are tackled in such cases. This emphasis narrows general understanding of HIV-infection to purely medical problem, and leaves aside social aspects of living with HIV/AIDS.

Table!. Argumentation of materials respective of HIV topical importance

Material argumentation	% in the articles where HIV/AIDS is a main topic	% in the articles where HIV/AIDS is an additional topic	% in the articles where HIV/AIDS is an allusion	% from all articles
Real, reliable facts	57,1	47,3	27,1	50,2
General judgment, lack of facts	37,9	46,7	62,9	43,8
Lack of information, erroneous treatments of facts	5,0	6,0	10,0	6,0

Alongside with presentations of 'dry' facts, including epidemic situation of HIV/AIDS and ways of HIV transmitting, there is a gradual shift to description of such relatively new aspects of the problem as: treatment and anti-retro viral therapy; tendencies of changing ways of transmitting HIV; human rights and HIV/AIDS, especially HIV-positive children; problems of discrimination and stigmatisation of people living with HIV and AIDS. At the same time, such aspects are often provided without adequate argumentation and are not fully disclosed, very often lack informational potential and often have no connection to official information sources, viewpoints of people living with HIV and AIDS are not included into materials.

Printed media pay little attention to prevention aspects of HIV/AIDS spreading. This is confirmed by a substantial number of publications mentioning prevention issues, but actually containing no information on this topic, and revealing no essence or directions of HIV/AIDS prevention activities. Publications have practically no appeals to change risky behaviour, and they lack advice and description of specific ways of changing risky behavioural patterns into safer ones.

The level of informational awareness of journalists and editors of printed media on various aspects of HIV/AIDS remains rather low, which is confirmed by insufficient argumentation in almost half of the publications analysed.

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ВИСВІТЛЕННЯ ВІЛ/СНІДУ У ДРУКОВАНИХ ЗМІ: РЕЗУЛЬТАТИ ВСЕУКРАЇНСЬКОГО МОНІТОРИНГУ НАЙПОПУЛЯРНІШИХ ГАЗЕТ І ЖУРНАЛІВ

У статті представлено результати всеукраїнського моніторингу найпопулярніших друкованих засобів масової інформації щодо висвітлення проблем ВІЛ/СНІДу. Зокрема, розкрито такі питання: медіа-дискурс та епідемія СНІДу; кількість та обсяг публікацій; ключові теми публікацій; ключові герої публікацій, ставлення до ВІЛ-позитивних людей та джерела інформації; аргументованість та якість статей. Результати дослідження свідчать про підвищення рівня зацікавленості журналістів у темі ВІЛ/СНІДу, проте якість і аргументованість статей потребують значного покращення.