

Broadcast media coverage of the AIDS issue

Suprapti Widarto

1994

Suprapti W. (1994). Broadcast media coverage of the AIDS issue. In AMIC Seminar on Mass Media and Aids in Southeast Asia, Bangkok, Aug 17-19, 1994. Singapore: Asian Media Information and Communication Centre.

<https://hdl.handle.net/10356/79848>

Broadcast Media Coverage Of The AIDS Issue

By

Suprapti Widaeto

BROADCAST MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE AIDS ISSUE

Suprapti Widarto

Televisi Republik Indonesia

1. As a result of the economic and technological developments, the world has swiftly turned to be the fertile land for the rife of AIDS. There seems to be no country in the world which is free from AIDS.

What is most fearful from AIDS is its rapid growth and the fact that its curative therapy has not yet invented. That's why the number of patients and the death rate attributed to AIDS has increased considerably.

AIDS which has been prevalent throughout the world toward the year 2000 has caused fears and panic everywhere.

As is in some other parts of the world, AIDS patients in Indonesia have increased in number especially in the year of 1992.

If the situation remains unchanged, Indonesia is predicted to experience an AIDS explosion in some years to come which will be of no less worse than those experienced by other countries.

Due to the fact that anti AIDS vaccine has not been invented, one of the methods to cope with the disease is to promote the attitude and behavioral approaches leading to the strengthening of the people's resilience against the disease.

In this connection, radio and television programmings play a pivotal role in helping cope with the possible spread of AIDS in Indonesia.

2. Compared to other media radio and television broadcasts have their own advantages in term of its wide transmission range and its pervasiveness in influencing their audience.

With regard to these advantages, radio and television programmings might bring about some significant impacts on the social, cultural, economic, political and security aspects. That's why radio and TV programmings have its strategic values in meeting the people's need for information.

In this context, radio and televisions services should be dealt with in a such way for the benefit of Indonesia's development program as a whole.

Radio

The state-owned RADIO REPUBLIK INDONESIA (RRI) constitutes the biggest radio network in Indonesia.

Established on September 11, 1945, RRI now comprises 49 radio stations spreading throughout the country.

RRI foreign service is on air for 12 hours daily in English, German, French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Malay and Japanese. Since 1983, RRI has carried out its service 24 hours a day. Aside from RRI there are now a total of 807 non-government radio stations.

Private radio stations have their own programming with a requirement that they have to relay RRI news daily and certain other national programs occasionally.

Television

The state-owned TELEVISI REPUBLIK INDONESIA (TVRI) which was established in August 24, 1962 consists of 12 TV broadcasting stations, seven Mobile Production Stations and 329 transmission stations.

The domestic satellite Palapa which was launched in 1976 has been enabling radio and television broadcast to cover the whole country by way of linking ground stations to the transmitter throughout Indonesia.

Under a total daily broadcast of 12 hours, TVRI carries out its programs nation-wide with the support of its local stations.

Since 1988, the Indonesian government has licenced private televisions to operate in Indonesia. Up to 1994, there have been 4 (four) private televisions operating in the country with national programming network.

The four are: 1. Rajawali Citra Televisi Indonesia (RCTI)
2. Cipta Televisi Pendidikan Indonesia (TPI)
3. Surya Citra Televisi (SCTV)
4. Cakrawala Andalas Televisi (ANTV).

The private televisions are obliged to relay TVRI news daily and other national programming occasionally.

Thus, necessary informations about AIDS are disseminated through all broadcasting services, government and private.

3. How information about AIDS is disseminated through radio and television?

News about AIDS and its related cases is frequently and widely exposed by the existing print and electronic media in Indonesia. Each week we find three to four items about AIDS in newspaper, periodicals, radio and television.

Health and medical issues constitute an interesting object for the press coverage as it directly deals with the concern of all individual in their strive to live healthier and longer.

The fear for disease related to death and misery constitute a part of people's motivation to listen to radio and to watch television in an effort to obtain information related to the prevalence of disease, invention of medication and healing method, surgery activities and various seminars on health and medical affair.

Television programs on phisical exercises, health, doctor consultation and other such information also constitutes interesting programs. Aside from obtaining advantageous health information, the viewers also feel being entertained if the programming are tailored in such a way in an informative, educative, persuasive and entertaining manner.

What should be born in mind on the part of news maker is that news about AIDS should be based on the guideline for the writing of health issues stated in the code of ethics of the Indonesian Journalists Association.

In accordance with the guideline the presentation of radio and television news on health issues should :

1. Have positive impact upon the forming of public opinion and attitude in line with health program.
2. Have positive impact towards the increasing participation of the people in the health development.
3. Visualise the technic and curing method of diseases which have been proven effective.
4. Appreciate the right of doctors in keeping confidential information.
5. Appreciate the individual's right to privacy and or upon the agreement of those concerned, except for the interest of the general public..
6. Prevent matters that might promote consumerism in the fields of health.
7. Prevent commercial promotion or excessive self esteem of doctors deal with the report.
8. Prevent cooperation with any agencies for promotional purposes of institution, products and health services of which result might be disadvantageous.
9. Prevent health reasoning for exposing sensational news and for programming which are against the moral and ethical values.
10. Abide by the journalism code of ethics and prevent a lee way to doctors to practice thing which are contrary to the codes of ethics in the medical field.

Based on the afore mentioned journalistic code of ethics press report on AIDS should be factual and should not be sensasional.

Press reports which are less comprehensive, let alone sensational, might create confusion and panic on the part of the people.

What is more important is that press report about AIDS should be conducive to opinion building and change of behaviour in line with health requirement.

Both government and private radio and television in Indonesia have sufficiently disseminated information on AIDS and its related cases through regular and occasional programming as well.

The policy for the dissemination of information on AIDS through media broadcast is in line with the national strategy, program, and target of eradication of AIDS.

Radio and television programming on AIDS constitutes an educational campaign which is geared to:

1. disseminating correct information to the people so as to help generate correct attitude and action on the part of the people in coping with AIDS
2. exposing and explaining the government policy for the control and eradication of AIDS
3. explaining facts about the prevalence and contagion of AIDS
4. stressing the need to maintain a healthy live and preventing less responsible interaction on the part of both men and women that might lead to the contagion of AIDS
5. paying more attention and more human approach to AIDS patients in order to help reduce their misery.

Information on AIDS and its related cases is presented on various radio and TV program such as daily news, current affair bulletin, commentary, interview, public announcement, quiz program, fragmantery drama and other education and information programmes.

The target audience of the programming are:

1. those who have high risk of being affected by AIDS
2. those who are under medical treatment for AIDS
3. youth who tend to be easily influenced by free life style
4. the general public.

In order to expose news on AIDS issues clearly and correctly, news sources should be transparent and open.

The medical doctors in general are helpful to assist journalists in carrying out their profession. However, many agencies that deal with AIDS in Indonesia use covered identities. This, in fact does not help newsmen in making investigative coverage on AIDS. Hospitals dealing with AIDS are not clearly mentioned as those treating AIDS but are, instead, identified as special infection clinics. This makes it less possible for newsmen to obtain information on AIDS treatment programme. Therefore it would be advisable for the Ministry of Health and other health agencies to stop using euphemistic terminologies that might disinform the people. Efforts to eradicate AIDS need openness, not only on the part of the patients, but also on the part of health institutes dealing with the disease.

Cases of AIDS have been widely reported by mass media in Indonesia with the hope to change certain social behaviour toward prevention of the rise of AIDS. How far this effort is effective is not known yet.

Special research to identify whether or not the programmings on AIDS issue are really effective and advantageous is not officially conducted yet by any broadcasting agencies in Indonesia.

This kind of survey seems to be urgent in view of the fact that the audience prefer to switch off the channel or turn on the other channels when information programs are on the air, as a rejection to non entertaining programming.

This constitute a challenge to broadcasters to seek better method in disseminating information on AIDS through interesting programs that can be an artistic blend of the informative, educative and entertaining elements.

Such programs are expected reach the target of changing the people's behaviour leading to effective prevention and eradication of AIDS.

Conclusion

1. The change of the people's behaviour from a condition being prone to AIDS into a better condition which is less-inclined to such a disease constitutes a part of an effective campaign against AIDS.
2. Radio and television constitute effective media for the disseminations of information on AIDS thanks to their pervasiveness and effectiveness in influencing the audience.
3. In order to be effective the programming material should be tailored in such a way in line with the national policy on prevention and eradication of AIDS.
4. News sources dealing with AIDS should be open and transparant in order to enable broadcasters to expose matters relating to AIDS.
5. Broadcasters need to increase their professional ability in order to be able to improve their programmings on the satisfaction of audience.