

An Examination of the Language Use of Selected South African Newspapers for Reporting HIV/AIDS

Nketsi Abel Moqasa¹ and Abiodun Salawu²

¹Department of Communication, University of Fort Hare, Eastern Cape South Africa

*²Department of Communication, North-West University, Mafikeng Campus,
Muabatho, South Africa*

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ABSTRACT This study investigates HIV/AIDS coverage in selected South African newspapers. The rationale for the study hinges on the fact that the media's role in informing society about social issues, such as HIV/AIDS, is of paramount importance. Four daily newspapers were analyzed, namely: Daily Dispatch, Daily Sun, Sowetan and The Star. A total of 288 editions of newspapers, spanning a period of twelve months (January to December 2010) were sampled. This study is informed by agenda setting theory. Discourse analysis was used to determine the compliance of these newspapers to media guides on the use of appropriate language or terminologies when disseminating HIV/AIDS stories. Results revealed that these newspapers used appropriate terminology and value-neutral language in their stories. The study recommends that media should not engage in sensational reporting as this tends to create fear, hatred, rejection and despondency amongst people living with HIV/AIDS.