

# Language Use in the Portrayal of both Women and Men in HIV/AIDS Public Sensitization Texts in the Tanzanian Mass Media

Mwema Felix Pambila

The University of Dodoma, P.O. BOX 626, DODOMA, TANZANIA, EAST AFRICA

## Abstract

This research paper aimed at exploring how women and men are portrayed in HIV/AIDS public sensitization texts in the Tanzanian mass media. The research was carried out in Dodoma region, Dodoma municipality in central Tanzania. The data was collected in both print and electronic media. Since it is a qualitative research, I analyzed the concepts by describing the essential and core concepts; interpretation of data whereby the issue is studied and described within the broader context to add meaning to the data. In order to explore the social construction of gender roles in language use, I relied on the Feminism Theory (FT) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which contends that there is a close relationship between language and power and that language can lead to imbalance power relations. The study reveals that women and men are portrayed differently. Men are shown as active; they are the ones who matter, while women are shown as passive or second class human beings. In the anti-HIV/AIDS discourse, men are portrayed as the ones who are main users of condoms while women are depicted as passive objects. This means that, women have no power over the act of safe sex since they depend on men who decide on whether to use condoms or not.

**Keywords:** Language, gender stereotypes, critical discourse analysis, HIV/AIDS, mass media

## About the Author

The author is an Assistant Lecturer of linguistics at the University of Dodoma, Tanzania. She holds Bachelor of Arts with Education and Master of Arts in linguistics. She has been teaching at the University of Dodoma for six years. Her research interest is in sociolinguistics specifically on gender issues.

## 1.0 Introduction

Gender refers to social category, which is associated with certain behaviour, i.e. it is socially constructed. It is something we learn. Social scientists believe that we acquire social characteristics and engage in behaviours because of how we are understood by those around us (Jule 2008). In this study, language was viewed as a social practice; this means that language mediates all aspects of our lives and does not merely reflect social life but actively contributes towards shaping society. Language is a product of society and, in turn, society is partly shaped by language. The differences between men and women in terms of relations, statutes and roles today are attributable to the way society has used language to talk about the two sexes and the way language has continuously reproduced and sustained these differences.

The media are the most influential instruments in sustaining or changing the existing gender relations by the way they portray men and women. The growth of mass media like television, radio, magazines and billboards functions not only to provide entertainment for people, but also to provide them with information. The media portray many important social roles, one of the most important and pervasive of them being gender through literary and symbolic language including slogans, advertisements and metaphors in order to engage the audience. But through it, both consciously and subconsciously, gender stereotypes are reflected and reinforced although the main role of these media narratives is to play a manipulative function that is to convince the public to change their behaviour or life styles (Kothari 2010).

In any country, language and society are intertwined, i.e. they are inseparable. One cannot fight against HIV & AIDS without using language. Language, being the facilitator of communication in HIV education campaigns which mainly aim at cautioning people that HIV is dangerous, should be gender sensitive. This is because gender relationships have a major impact on sexual and reproductive health. Girls and women are especially vulnerable to STIs and HIV infection due to the existing gender relations which often mean that they are not able to make their own decisions about whether, when, where, how or with whom to have sex. Therefore, the major concern of this study is to examine the language used to portray both women and men in the anti-HIV/AIDS discourse in the media of Tanzania.

The overall research problem addressed in this study was that, despite massive anti-HIV/AIDS campaigns and prevention strategies, the infection rate is still high and many people continue dying in large numbers. This is what made me to be interested in making a thorough investigation of the gendered language used in HIV/AIDS public sensitization texts that might have been overlooked but impedes the effectiveness of prevention strategies.

The main objective of this study was to examine the language used to portray both men and women in the HIV/AIDS public sensitization texts.

The study aimed to provide an answer on the following question: How is language used to portray both women and men in HIV/AIDS public sensitization texts?

The significance of this study is, if the issue of gendered language in anti-HIV/AIDS discourse is not treated with the seriousness it deserves, it will be difficult for Tanzania to slow the spread of HIV/AIDS since language is a powerful medium through which the world is reflected and constructed, as a result the disease will continue to affect the most productive people in the society through sickness and death. I believe that, the knowledge obtained in this study will contribute much on cautioning people that HIV is dangerous and people will change their sexual behaviour which requires changes in the social and economic power relations in society. As a result, the country will achieve universal access to comprehensive HIV prevention programmes and treatment goal to slowing the spread of the disease.

## **2.0 Literature review**

The review of literature has been divided into two major categories: the first category is literature on language, gender and gender stereotypes in Tanzania; and the second category is literature on gender and language use in anti-HIV/AIDS discourse in the media.

### **2.1 Language and gender**

Language is a powerful medium through which the world is both reflected and constructed. Feminist linguists believe that language has been historically man-made with the male forms reflecting the male's position in society and female forms perceived as deviant. It also includes the depiction of women in the position of passive objects rather than active subjects. Some claim that, the use of generics (such as mankind to refer to both women and men) reinforces a binary that sees the male and masculine as the norm and the female and feminine as the not norm. Language works as an essential tool, which people use to express, control and also alter the power relations (O' Barr 1984), and it is obvious that, language is the main reason which all claims of gendered difference rely on.

The dominance theory states that, any gender differences in language use are a result of women being dominated by men in various interactions. Spender (1980) suggested that, it had been men who dominated women as part of patriarchal system so that women were not deficient as much as they were dominated. She also questioned the role of women themselves in creating their own domination. Many women made specific linguistic choices that simply reflected a lack of power and even their own desire to remain in powerless position in order to be in relationships with men. On the other hand, the difference theory states that, women and men are distinguished by their gender differences; that they belong to distinct subcultures that are benignly different. That is no one is oppressed and no one is the oppressor. The differences in the way men and women speak is due to the differences in the way women and men socialize from childhood. They talk differently because they are socialized differently. Tannen (1998) finds that very young children participate in gender specific subcultures with distinct gender styles: the socialization process begins very early. There are pressures on girls to "be nice" and on boys to be competitive. Again, these differences are culturally defined; they depend on the culture one belongs to and the religious background.

### **2.2 Gender stereotypes in Tanzania**

The socially constructed beliefs about men's and women's behaviors and roles often find their way into documents because texts are written by men and women who are themselves products of the culture and society in which they are raised. It is important to pay special attention to the gender sensitivity of a text and to ensure that the statements made are in full respect for equal rights and use non-derogatory language directed at any sex and at any sex of any age (UNESCO 2008).

Several scholars have done different studies on language and gender inequality in different social, political and cultural spheres in Tanzania. The findings of their studies have tended to show similarities in the generalization that have been made regarding the way language use reflects gender stereotyping. In Tanzania, a number of studies have shown that the image of women in the communication media is generally negative. For example, in her study of Kiswahili prose, Mbughuni (1979) found negative portrayal of women in Kiswahili short stories and novels. Along the same vein, Qorro and Rubagumya (1999) studied greetings and weddings among the Iraqw, Sambia, Chagga and Nyakyusa ethnic groups of Tanzania. In some of those societies, the findings showed a consistent pattern of unequal relationship between men and women in terms of who is expected to show respect during a greeting encounter.

Rutashobya (1996) analyses advertisements in Tanzania in general and observed that women are assigned domestic roles such as cooking, washing of clothes, caring for children and husbands, and many other soft roles, while men are involved in construction, truck-driving, and many other tough roles. This assignment of

roles is typically gendered in that it emphasizes the society's belief that men are muscular, hence their ability to perform tough jobs while women are tender, hence their inability to do so.

Rutashobya (1996) also uses the feminist analysis method to analyze 30 drama and novel texts and one comic pamphlet, *uroda*. The conclusion was that, a woman's permanent station in life is home where she works as a domestic servant, a mother and housekeeper. This is evidenced by the fact that when a man wants to marry he says that he is looking for *nyumba* 'a house' or *jiko* 'kitchen'. Likewise, McWilliam (1988) analysed Kiswahili lexicon to see if the language was sexist. The study discovered that some lexical items in Kiswahili show evidence of sexism. In the marriage institution, for instance, words like *oa* 'marry' for men and *olewa* 'get married' for women, suggest that among the Kiswahili speakers, a man is active and a woman is passive as far as matrimony is concerned.

It is generally accepted, in most societies, that for a man a successful life cannot really start until one has a wife. Mlacha (1991:72) when analyzing Kiswahili novels noted that, although unity in society is expected to be largely the responsibility of the father, the mothers are portrayed as playing a more vital role. It is their patience, hard work, love and tolerance that hold together their families. They are more understanding than their husbands. Mlacha (1993:25--27) also observes that a woman is a basic element in society. These observations go hand in hand with Yoruba beliefs that God put women in-charge of all the good things on earth, e.g. without them children cannot come into the world.

### 2.3 Language use in anti-HIV/AIDS discourse in the media

Since we cannot separate language and society, and every issue is gender oriented, gendered language and the anti-HIV discourse cannot be separated. Language is not a neutral medium; the language that is discriminatory contributes to the unequal social status of certain groups in society. There has been limited gender sensitivity in information generation and dissemination about HIV/AIDS in the media of Tanzania. Ownership and control of the media is one of the limitations of the media channels in generating and disseminating effective information about the HIV/AIDS prevention. In terms of providing information for HIV/AIDS prevention, the pursuit of profit and related benefits by news print media implies that the coverage on HIV/AIDS issues will only be limited to topics which attract high readership rates (Nkebukwa 2007).

Developing a culturally sensitive language is an invaluable negotiating and programming tool. If the language used is loaded with negative judgments on the community, it creates unnecessary tensions and constructs a wall between the community and the programme (UNESCO 2008). An appropriate language is constructive, does not fuel stereotypes and does not cause prejudice. Language has a strong influence on attitudes towards HIV/AIDS together with people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

Inequalities and inequities in gender relations have to be addressed all the time as we discuss the issues relating to HIV/AIDS. AIDS has become one of the major causes of death for women of reproductive age in various areas of the world, sub-Saharan Africa inclusive. This is because infection of a woman by a man is biologically more likely than infection of a man by a woman because of the anatomical make up of women. Women are also getting HIV infection at younger age than men all over the world. One reason is that women tend to have sexual relationships with older men than themselves. Another reason is that in most communities in Africa, women have weak financial resources and therefore depend on men for their living. This denies them the right to make decisions even on matters concerning their own sexuality as they play passive role in sexual interaction and are only required to agree or disagree to sexual approaches by men (Mruma & Njau 1995).

The impression one gets from the media (printed texts or pictures) is that women with HIV/AIDS are prostitutes or generally loose and are guilty of spreading the disease. In his study, Kamanzi (2012) also came up with similar observation that men continuously blame women that they are HIV/AIDS carriers and therefore they are the source of the spread of the disease.

### 3.0 Methodology

A set of methods and principles were used in this study during data collection and analysis. The research area of this study was Dodoma Region, Dodoma municipality due to the feasibility of getting data required for the study and because the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is very high in Dodoma municipality. As the available data shows that in 2005 the CTC of Dodoma regional hospital had only 65 HIV and AIDS infected individuals and about 5700 in the year 2011. This is what made me to be interested to carry out research in this area. Geographically, Dodoma is located in central Tanzania; it is the capital city of Tanzania and is a place where the parliament of Tanzania is located. Hence, it has high interactions with people from all parts of Tanzania.

Data collection technique was chosen depending on the nature of the research topic and objective. I collected the HIV & AIDS public sensitization texts from both print and electronic media, such as television, radio, magazines and billboards. The texts were from ITV, TBC1, and Channel Ten television stations while the radio stations were Radio One, Clouds and Radio Free Africa. From magazines, the texts were collected from *Femina Hip* magazine together with five billboards and leaflets so as to get authentic language data which was of

central focus in this study. Data were later analyzed using Feminism and Critical Discourse Analysis in order to explore the gender inclusive language and the social construction of gender roles in a language. Data collection took two months starting from December 2011 to January 2012. Instruments such as camera and recorder were employed in collecting data. The camera assisted me to get photographs from the billboards and magazines, while the recorder was instrumental in recording some advertisements on HIV/AIDS from the radio and television stations.

Data analysis was also determined by the research itself. Since it was qualitative in nature, I analyzed the concepts by describing the essential and core concepts. In data interpretation, the issue was studied and described within the broader context to add meaning to the data.

This study employed two theoretical frameworks in describing the essential and core concepts. In order to explore the social construction of gender roles in language use, I first relied on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which contends that there is a close relationship between language and power and that language can lead to imbalance power relations. According to Fairclough (1989:5), this approach analyses social interaction in a way which focuses upon their linguistic elements and sets out to show up their generally hidden determinations in the system of social relationships, as well as hidden effects they may have upon that system. Secondly, I employed Feminism Theory which focuses on limiting or eradicating gender inequality to promote women's rights, interests and experiences particularly in social, economic and political issues in the society. I employed liberal feminism in analyzing the data because this type of feminism seeks no special privileges for women; it simply demands that everyone receives equal consideration without discrimination on the basis of sex. Feminist theorists attempt to reclaim and redefine women through restructuring language. They want to make female gender to be more visible in today's language, since the language we use, speak, and hear has an impact on our own thoughts as it has its own specific connotations. Looking at language in this way can denaturalize it and allow the researcher to come up with some necessary objectivity. Data collection and analysis can be represented as follows:

**Table 1: Data Analysis Steps**

Step 1	Collection of data from the media
Step 2	Analysis of data from the media using CDA and Feminism

### 3.1 Data presentation and analysis

Despite numerous national campaigns and millions of dollars spent on education and health services, HIV/AIDS prevalence rates in Tanzania remain at epidemic levels. Research has shown that it is important for anti-HIV initiatives to target the country's most vulnerable and high risk populations who contribute disproportionately to the spread of the illness (<http://www.tanzania.go.tz.hiv-aids.html> TACAIDS 2010). Therefore, one can argue that despite the massive HIV/AIDS public sensitization texts found in the media as presented below, trying to educate people about the epidemic, the national prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS in Tanzania is still very high. The national prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS in Tanzania is 6.2 percent, which is high compared to its East African neighbours ([Http://www/ tanzania.go.tz.hiv-aids.html](http://www/tanzania.go.tz.hiv-aids.html); TACAIDS 2010). The current situation might be caused by many factors including the gendered language used in the media of Tanzania. The language used in the anti-HIV/AIDS sensitization texts is not gender sensitive as it has been revealed in the subsequent sections of this study. Many texts about the use of condoms target men more than women; this puts women at high risk of being infected by HIV/AIDS.

#### 3.1.1 HIV/AIDS sensitization texts found in the media

In this study, several HIV/AIDS sensitization texts from both print and electronic media were collected and analyzed in which traditions and cultural norms play an important role in the construction of these texts. Therefore, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Feminism have been used to analyze the texts in order to explore the social construction of gender roles in language use. The media, being one of the most powerful forces on earth for shaping the way we think, potentially have a powerful role to play in transforming gender relations through language use. The following are some of the HIV/AIDS public sensitization Swahili texts found in the media:

##### Text I

Nampenda mpenzi wangu, nampenda kwa vitendo. Amenipa moyo wake, nami nimempa wangu. Hii inaoneshwa kwa matendo yangu...(Mwanaume anamfunika mwanamke na koti ili asinyeshewe na mvua). Kama kweli unampenda utamlinda. Salama kondom kinga thabiti!

**Translation:** I love my partner, indeed. She has trust in me and I in her. This is indicated by my actions...A man covers a woman with a coat in order to protect her from rain. If you really love her, you will protect her from HIV/AIDS. Salama condom is the best protection. From ITV.

The above text reflects patriarchal relations in the construction of HIV/AIDS public sensitization texts. The man is portrayed as the one who is supposed to protect the woman against the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The coat and rainfall symbolize a condom and HIV virus respectively. Here the man is responsible for the use of a condom

(symbolized by the coat) in order to protect the woman against the HIV Virus (symbolized by rainfall). It is done by the information disseminators either consciously or subconsciously in the media when attempting to convince the audience to change their behaviour.

#### Text II

Kuna kundi la morani wa Kimaasai ambao wanacheza mchezo wa kuruka juu, huku wakiangaliwa na washangiliaji, wazee kwa vijana. Miongoni mwa watazamaji, kuna msichana mrembo ambaye anatafutiwa mchumba na baba yake. Baba mtu amekaa mstari wa mbele kabisa akiangalia wachezaji kwa makini. Wachezaji wanaingia mmojammoja katikati ya duara. Anaingia kijana wa tatu ambaye amevaa Kimaasai, lakini hana kaida za Kimaasai. Hata ruka yake ina matatizo. Katika kuruka anaangusha kondom na kutanabahi sana. Lakini huyu ndiye anakuwa chaguo la baba wa binti, kwani huyu ndiye atakayeweza kumlinda dhidi ya UKIMWI.

**Translation:** There is a group of young Maasai *morans*, who are performing springing dance before an audience of old and young spectators. Among the audience, there is a beautiful girl being betrothed through her father. The father is sitting in front of the dancers in order to closely observe the man who will win her daughter. The performers enter the ring, one at a time. There comes the third springer who is clothed in Maasai attire, but has no Maasai features. He has difficulties even in his performance. In the course of springing, he drops a condom and feels greatly embarrassed. But this is the moran who wins the daughter, because the father thinks he will protect her against HIV/AIDS. From TBC1.

Discourse of gender and HIV/AIDS in Tanzania shows that the position and practices of women are highly troubling and that they reflect wider patriarchal relations. There is a lack of women's voice and limited portrayal of their power in the media especially in sexual relations. The text above shows that the man is the one who is responsible for caring a woman including protecting her against HIV/AIDS epidemic. In addition to that, a woman has been observed as the person who is not free; cannot make a decision on her own hence even the choice of her fiancé is done by her father (man). Therefore, language being the facilitator of communication in HIV/AIDS educational campaigns which mainly aim at cautioning people that HIV is a dangerous disease perpetuates gender imbalance between women and men.

#### Text III

A: Halo Fred, niache hapo naenda kwa girlfriend wangu. Naomba huo mkate wangu na hizo zana zangu.

B: Zana zipi?

A: Hizo hapo.

B: Aaah, kumbe dume kondom.

A: Ndiyo, si unajua mimi mwanaume wa ukweli lazima nijilinde.

#### Translation:

A: Hello Fred, drop me there, I am going to meet my girlfriend. Can I have my bread and tools?

B: Which ones?

A: Over there.

B: Wow! *Dume* condoms!

A: Yeah! Don't you know that a real man like me should know how to protect himself against HIV/AIDS? From *Radio One*.

The above text also implies that a man is shown as an important person in protecting himself against the HIV/AIDS. The media still reinforce the patriarchal relations in these texts by depicting men as the ones who are responsible for protecting themselves and their partners. There is lack of women's voice in the media, hence portrayed as passive users of condoms. Therefore, a woman depends on a man who decides whether to use a condom or not for protection against HIV/AIDS.

#### Text IV

Jana mlimng'ang'ania **chawote!** Alipowauliza kama mna kondom, mkadai kuwa amewanywea pombe yenu, kwahiyo lazima kieleweke!

**Translation:** Yesterday you forced a prostitute to have sex with you, because she had accepted your drinks. When she inquired if you had condoms, you ignored her and insisted to have her. From *Radio One*

The above text reveals that some of the derogatory words are still reinforced in this discourse in some of the public HIV/AIDS sensitization texts. Words such as *chawote* or *malaya* 'prostitute' are used in the advertisements of the uses of condoms. These words refer only to prostitute women but not men; this is due to social inequalities between men and women caused by the patriarchal system in most of our African societies which makes women more disadvantaged.

#### Text V

Hii klabu kwa vidoshu, mimi udenda wanitoka...lakini tujiangalie, tusije tukalewa tukasahau kuvaa buti zetu!

**Translation:** This club has so many beautiful women who make me salivate ... however; we should not drink in such a way that we forget putting on our boots!). (boots here mean condoms). From Radio One

Inequalities and inequities in gender relations have to be addressed all the time as we discuss the issues relating to HIV/AIDS. As it has been observed above, endearment words such as *kidoshu* 'small bird/beautiful girl' and *mtoto* 'baby' are still used in anti-HIV/AIDS discourse in the media. All these referring to a beautiful woman and are used to demean women by reducing them to mere physical beauty and by implication to sex objects. For example, a delegate from Uganda in one HIV/AIDS conference said, "HIV/AIDS will kill us all because that *ka-thing* 'the vagina' is sweet". This is to blame women for HIV/AIDS infection. It also demeans women by reducing them to sexual organs. Such a man will engage in sexual intercourse just for his own pleasure; the feelings of his partner do not matter. It is almost masturbation inside the vagina.

#### Text VI

Mwanaume anayejali huwa ana maamuzi ya kujali. Dume condom kinga thabiti.

**Translation:** A real man always makes the right decision. *Dume* is the best protection. From a billboard.



Figure 1: A male condom

#### Text VII

Lady pepeta, kondom ya kike yenye raha zaidi.

(*Lady pepeta*, a female condom with more pleasure). From a billboard.

Here a woman is depicted as the one who is looking for pleasure during sexual intercourse as she has no power to decide whether to use condom or not. The name of the female condom itself *Lady pepeta* has sexual connotation because in kitchen parties *kupepeta* is used in a sexually suggestive way on how women should please their husbands during sexual intercourse. The study found that there are different types of male condoms like *salama*, *salama bomba*, *rough rider*, *dume*, *wet* and *wild* and so many other types, while there was only one type for female condom known as *lady pepeta*. Majority of the male condoms have female pictures as if they are special for women while female condoms are not available in shops and it is said that they are no longer produced because women are not aware of them and even those few who know them, say they are difficult to use.

*Rough Rider* below is a male condom with a picture of a woman. The name of the condom *Rough Rider* can have two interpretations. At literal level, the condom has a rough surface (studded for extra sensation), which presumably is meant to give a woman more pleasure during sexual intercourse. At metaphorical level, the name *Rough Rider* is not only sexually suggestive; it also has connotations of sexual violence. The man *rides* the woman in a rough manner, meaning that the man is allowed to have as many women as he wants and in any manner he wants. All these point to unequal power relations between men and women during sexual intercourse. The picture of the woman shows semi-exposed breasts, as if inviting the man for a *rough ride*. The word *Dume* implies a man of sexual power, like a bull whose only job is to impregnate cows. *Wet and wild*, on the other hand, creates in the mind of a man a woman who is sexually aroused (wet) and who is ready for wild sexual intercourse.

It is therefore clear that, condom makers do not focus on HIV/AIDS prevention; rather, they are more interested in making money by inciting men into believing that condoms are for sexual pleasure. It is equally clear that condom advertisements target men, not women. Women are there only as sexual objects for the enjoyment of men, hence the advertisements use semi-naked pictures and erotic language.

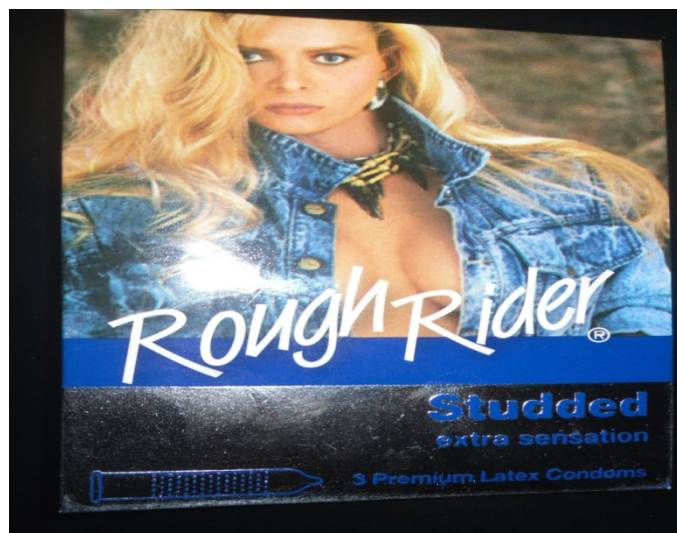


Figure 2: Male Condom with a Female Picture

In addition to that, there are proverbs and sayings used also in marriage ceremonies in a sexually suggestive way on how women should please their husbands during sexual intercourse and not vice versa like in *mwanamke ni dereva wa mapenzi kitandani* 'a woman is the driver in sexual intercourse in bed' and *mwanamke ameumbwa kumpa starehe mumewe* 'a woman was created to give her husband sexual pleasure'. A man is the one who makes the right decision on the use of condoms. Therefore, a woman depends on man's decision, which puts women at high risk of being infected by HIV/AIDS.

#### Text VIII

Mwanamke anakohoa, halafu mwanaume anamwambia, "Vipi shangazi, mbona unakohoa hivi?" Shangazi anajibu, "Tangu nimekunywa zile dawa za bwana Fadhili za kutibu UKIMWI na kuacha ARVs! Nilikuwa naendelea vizuri". "Ah! Shangazi, hapo umeharibu. Hukutakiwa kuacha ARVs".

**Translation:** A woman is coughing, then a man asks, "What is the matter, aunt? Why so much coughing?" Aunt responds, "I have been coughing since I started using Mr. Fadhili's medicine for HIV/AIDS treatment and stopped using ARVs. I was formerly doing fine". Oh, Aunt, you have made a mistake. You were not supposed to stop using ARVs. From *Radio Clouds*.

In TV commercials, women speak fewer words than men do. Men use more authoritative language than women while women use more of the language to express the state of affairs, lack of knowledge and surprise (Shartiely 2005). This idea concurs with the findings of this study whereby a woman is depicted as ignorant because she does not know the importance of using ARVs. She believes that there are local medicines that can treat HIV/AIDS. The man, on the other hand, is portrayed as the person who is knowledgeable and cautions. The woman was not supposed to stop using ARVs because up to this moment there is no medicine for HIV/AIDS treatment.

#### Text IX

Kauli mbiu ya siku ya UKIMWI duniani, 1 Desemba, 2011. Tanzania bila maambukizi mapya ya UKIMWI, unyanyapaa na vifo vitokanavyo na UKIMWI inawezekana.

**Translation:** The motto of HIV/AIDS day, 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2011. Tanzania without renewed HIV transmission, stigmatization and deaths caused by HIV/AIDS is something possible.

Baadhi ya shule hapa nchini zimependekeza kuwa watoto wanaoishi na VVU wavalishwe nembo kuonyesha kuwa wameathirika.

**Translation:** Some schools have suggested that children living with HIV/AIDS should be labeled showing that they are HIV positive. From *Radio Free Africa*.

The texts above show that while the government is struggling to fight against the disease, especially the fight against stigmatization, the stigmatization against people living with HIV/AIDS is still high. As indicated in the above texts, there are some schools suggesting that those students living with HIV/AIDS have to be labeled to indicate that they are HIV positive. Female students therefore are to experience multiple stigmas since they are already under the disadvantaged group.

#### Text X

Akina mama wajawazito wawahi kliniki ili kuzuia maambukizi ya VVU kutoka kwa

mama kwenda kwa mtoto.

Pregnant women are advised to attend clinic early enough so as to stop transmission from mother to child. From Radio Free Africa

HIV/AIDS

Text XI

### Condoms for poverty reduction

It leads to poverty when you have sex without condom  
And spend large sums on doctor's bills for treating STIs.

It leads to poverty when you have sex without condom  
And end up with an expensive and dangerous abortion

It leads to poverty when you have sex without condom  
And get pregnancy with a baby you cannot support. From *Femina HIP*

The photograph below illustrates the above text:

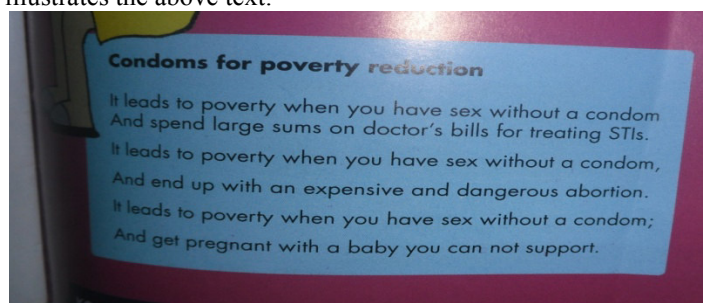


Figure 3: Text about importance of condom

Text XII

### The Condom

The condom is one of the best methods of contraception for young people. It has a dual protection functions as it also protects you from sexually transmitted infections. If used correctly and consistently, it is very effective. (From *Femina HIP*)

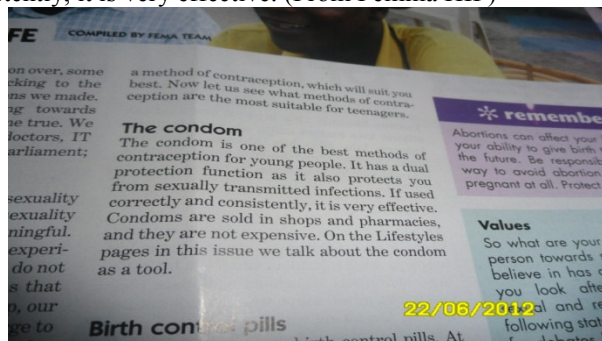


Figure 4: Text about the uses of condoms

The observation done by this study revealed that the HIV/AIDS information disseminators have changed the way of advertising the use of condoms by promoting the dual protection of condoms (condoms for HIV/AIDS protection and birth control purpose) in order to convince the audience to use them. This means that when women and men use condoms for birth control purpose, they are at the same time protecting themselves against HIV/AIDS. Condoms are also used for protecting them from Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) like syphilis, gonorrhea and HIV/AIDS. This ideological common sense is even entrenched in the minds of the youths, because they fear to get pregnancy more than HIV/AIDS, as one of the verses reads in the above texts: *it leads to poverty when you have sex without condom and end up with an expensive and dangerous abortion*. Therefore, one can conclude by saying that media are very powerful source of information to the society, due to the gender stereotypes created by the media being entrenched in the minds of the society as it was observed in this study. People normally believe in everything they see, read or listen to from the mass media without questioning.

### Men's portrayal

The study findings show that women and men are portrayed differently in the anti-HIV/AIDS discourse. To a large extent, the public sensitization texts on HIV/AIDS epidemic are all about the use of condoms as the best means of HIV/AIDS protection and very few on other issues like the use of Anti-retroviral (ARVs), parent to



child transmission and stigmatization. Most of the texts found about condoms target men more than women in the Tanzanian mass media. This is because most of these texts are about male condoms rather than female condoms, and the way in which they are presented in the media portrays that men are active while women are passive users of condoms.

### **Women's portrayal**

The study findings also revealed that women are misrepresented in anti-HIV/AIDS discourse in the Tanzanian mass media. Most of the anti-HIV/AIDS sensitization texts are male based and very few are women based. For example, the female condom itself is rarely advertised in both print and electronic media. Only one advertisement of female condom known as *lady pepeta* was observed on one billboard in Dodoma municipality while there were no such findings on radio and television.

Women have been portrayed as men's possession. There is widespread portrayal of women as individuals who are not independent and free to make decisions. The general picture we get here is that women are not free to use condoms without the consent of men. Women cannot make decisions on matters concerning their own sexuality as they play passive role in sexual interaction and are only required to agree to sexual approaches by men. As a result, women are at high risk of being infected with HIV/AIDS because if men are not in position to use condoms, they are likely to have unsafe sex. This reflects the socially accepted structure, norms, relations and values of our society; it is a perception that has prevented women from even seeing what they are or what else they could be. The study also revealed that women do use condoms not for the purpose of protecting themselves against the HIV/AIDS epidemic but for birth control.

The role of the broadcasting and print media in Tanzania, as in any other society, is important in the development and re-enforcement of attitudes, values and social aspirations. Unfortunately, as seen in this study, instead of challenging the view that women are inferior, subservient and unimportant, the mass media reinforce it and establish men as the ones who matter in prevention against HIV/AIDS. This study also revealed that the anti-HIV/AIDS discourse in the media still uses cultural beliefs, attitudes and practices in stereotyping women and men.

The observation done by TACAIDS (2003) saw that two groups emerge as the most affected by HIV/AIDS in Tanzania. These are the youth and the women. Several reasons were advanced to explain the observation. Early marriage and early initiation of sex among women, young girls having sex with older men, peer pressure for high-risk behaviour, biological and anatomical predisposition are some of the most important reasons. In addition, failure of women to protect themselves from HIV infections due to economic hardships, repressive customary laws, beliefs and polygamy could all contribute to this state of affairs. In Tanzania, cultural norms, beliefs and practices that subjugate/subordinate women are the main reasons why women are more infected than men. Obligatory sex in marital situations is condoned even by religion, and women cannot divorce in some faiths. Furthermore, in some cultures multiple sex partners for men is tolerated and may even be encouraged to show that they are real men. They do not expect any woman to refuse their sexual advances. However, women who are easily seduced by men are called prostitutes! So women are always losers in whatever they do.

On top of that, a promiscuous woman infected with HIV/AIDS can have sex with several men without infecting any of them with HIV/AIDS, while a promiscuous man will almost certainly infect all the women he has sex with. This is because the probability of the HIV virus in the semen deposited inside the vagina to enter the woman's blood stream is much higher than that of the virus in vaginal fluids entering a man's blood stream through the opening of the penis (urethra). For this case, it is actually women who need to protect themselves against the infection more than men; hence there is a need for women to have control over who to have sex with as opposed to the current situation revealed by this study whereby women have no power over the act of sex, especially safe sex. For example, in one of the sensitization text observed is that of *Dume Condom* which reads: *mwanaume wa ukweli huwa ana maamuzi ya kujali* 'a real man is he who makes right decisions'. This text shows that men are the ones who have right decisions on the use of condoms and not women. This is the ideological common sense about the use of condoms created by the media.

This study on anti-HIV/AIDS discourse shows that women are marginalized in the sense that they have no power on the use of condoms. This suggests that women are individuals who are not independent; their protection against HIV/AIDS depends on men who are main users of condoms. They have also been portrayed as men's possessions. As a result of such a portrayal, even their protection against HIV/AIDS depends on men who own them. The media still reinforce these stereotypes in the construction of public sensitization texts about HIV/AIDS despite the fact that the disease is of great social and economic concern to the Tanzanian community, since it is depleting the youth who are the most productive group within the population. The discourse should therefore be presented with clarity and gender sensitivity.

In this study, language is viewed as a social practice. The very words we choose to use in anti-HIV/AIDS discourse reflect value judgments about feminine or masculine gender since language is not a neutral

medium. The language that is discriminatory contributes to the unequal social status of certain groups in society. Therefore, unequal social status between men and women that has been observed in this study is manifested through the choice of words used in this discourse.

#### 4.0 Conclusion

Since independence, Tanzania is said to have had most progressive policies in terms of promoting equality in society thereby cultivating solidarity and support for mutual respect and development (Mruma & Njau 1995). During his reign, Mwalimu Nyerere was conscious about women's contribution to the main stream of Tanzanian's development when he said, "If we want our country to make full and quick progress now, it is essential that our women live in full equality with their fellow citizens who are men". In spite of the government's positive commitment to people's equality, equality among men and women has yet to be achieved. The slow progress is largely due to historical prejudices and double standards with regard to women, which is still in place.

The study findings concur with the findings of Nkya (1995) who argues that, "instead of challenging the view that women are inferior, unimportant and second class human beings, the mass media in Tanzania still reinforce it and establish men as the ones who matter". The information disseminators about HIV/AIDS still reinforce the gender stereotypes by treating women as second class human beings as they have no power on the use of condom, hence their protection against HIV/AIDS depends on men, who are responsible for protecting them against this epidemic.

Drastic changes need to be taken into the mindsets of people. The perverse perceptions and images of women can be improved, if not changed. Change has to be made from both sides. The men have to change or be made to change and the women have to change also. But for men to change, women themselves have to change their mindsets due to the fact that they are much closer to their children than men and it is the children of today who make women and men of tomorrow. Mothers could therefore begin to educate their children about the existing perceptions, especially the power of girls in the whole issue of protecting themselves against HIV/AIDS.

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