

Research on Media Portrayal of HIV/AIDS: A Systematic Review

Rui Li^{1*}, Noor Aireen Ibrahim², Yasmin Hanafi Zaid³

^{1,2,3}Language Academy, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Johor Bahru, Malaysia

¹School of Foreign Languages for International Business, Hebei Finance University, Baoding, China

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ABSTRACT

Eradicating AIDS by 2030 has become an urgent global mission. Media portrayal of HIV/AIDS play a critical role in shaping public understanding and influencing efforts to combat the disease. While various studies have delved into how different media outlets represent HIV/AIDS, a comprehensive review of media discourse on HIV/AIDS remains absent. This study reviews analyses of HIV portrayal in newspapers from 2002 to 2023 to systematically examine the HIV-related issues discussed, potential chronological research trends, the theories and methods employed, and the practical implications for media professionals and other HIV stakeholders. Data were gathered from three major databases—Web of Science, Scopus, and Science Direct—with 31 studies selected from 4,977 research articles for in-depth review. The findings indicate that the research domain is predominantly restricted to the analysis of media discourse alone, with an evolving emphasis on HIV-related issues over time. Framing theory emerge as the dominant theoretical perspective, while inductive approach is the preferred research method. The reviewed studies consistently underscore the need for de-stigmatizing HIV in media reporting and guide stakeholders involved in designing effective HIV interventions. Future research should extend beyond media discourse to explore the narratives of key stakeholders, including global and national leading HIV organizations, to assess media alignment with official efforts thereby contribute to the fulfillment of the global aim of ending AIDS.

Keywords: HIV/AIDS, media portrayal, systematic review, HIV-related issues, global AIDS response

INTRODUCTION

Fighting AIDS has been elevated as global priority since the General Assembly adopted the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS during its twenty-sixth special session in 2001. Despite the remarkable progress made over the past decades, combating HIV remains an urgent mission. In 2023, approximately 39.9 million people worldwide were still living with HIV (UNAIDS, 2024), with an estimated 1.3 million new HIV infections (WHO, 2024). The urgency of addressing the AIDS issue has also been stressed by the United Nations, as indicated by its plan of action to “end the epidemics of AIDS by 2030” (UN, 2015).

The context of ending AIDS by 2030 highlights the importance of health communication, where media play a central role in informing the public about global events (Happer & Philo, 2013). The way media tell stories significantly shapes public perception (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2020) and sets the agenda for public policy (Colby & Cook, 1991; Myrick, 1998). News reporting has implications for the problems that receive public attention, the interpretation of problems, viable solutions to problems, and potentially individual behavior (Jones, 2013; Niederdeppe et al., 2013). Thus, the success of the fight against HIV/AIDS is closely related to how the epidemic is perceived by the public and stakeholders, which is subjected to the portrayal of HIV/AIDS in media.

Media portrayal analysis, as a type of media analysis, serves as a tool for highlighting societal issues and advocating for change, holds considerable power and authority (Braun et al., 2017). This makes a systematic

investigation into HIV media portrayal necessary. Despite this, no comprehensive, systematic review has yet examined the media's construction of HIV/AIDS. This study aims to fill that gap by reviewing the literature on media portrayal of HIV/AIDS from 2002 to 2023, following the UN General Assembly's first HIV resolution, to uncover research conventions, gaps and areas for future exploration.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This review explores the conventions in studies on newspaper portrayal of HIV/AIDS, which in turn serve as the foundation for identifying research gaps. The research questions guiding this study are outlined below:

1. What HIV-related issues were addressed in media framing studies from 2002 to 2023, and are there any common frames identified?
2. How has the focus of media framing studies on HIV-related issues evolved over time?
3. What theoretical frameworks and research methods have been employed?
4. How could the findings from reviewed studies on HIV media framing inform future media coverage and guide other stakeholders?

METHOD

Search strategy

This study reviews previous research on media portrayal of HIV from 2002 to 2023. The year 2002 is particularly significant as it follows the first UN resolution on HIV/AIDS in 2001, which officially enhanced the priority of HIV as a global concern. Data was gathered from three databases: Scopus, Science Direct, and Web of Science (WOS), focusing on how newspapers portray HIV/AIDS. To ensure comprehensive data collection, the following keywords were used in combination during the search: "HIV", "AIDS", "media", "news*", "fram*", "portray*", "represent*", and "construct*". These keywords were required to appear in the titles, abstracts, or keywords of the studies. The outcomes were further refined by restricting the materials to research articles published in English. Data selection criteria are illustrated below.

Eligibility criteria

This review focuses exclusively on studies examining newspaper portrayal of HIV/AIDS, both print and online reporting. Newspapers are chosen because they offer sections capable of providing in-depth analysis of health issues, facilitating more comprehensive examinations (Bardhan, 2001). Additionally, different types of media each construct HIV/AIDS narratives with unique characteristics, making it difficult to generalize commonalities across media types. Consequently, studies involving non-newspaper materials (such as magazines, videos, etc.) or going beyond newspaper texts (e.g. pictures) are excluded. Furthermore, news outlets specifically directed at people living with HIV/AIDS or high-risk groups (e.g., gay press) are also excluded, as their framing of HIV/AIDS significantly diverges from that of mainstream newspapers. To be included, media portrayal analysis must be one of the key objectives of the collected studies, and HIV/AIDS should be the main issue of concern. Moreover, studies should use English language and include an analysis of primary data. Table 1 illustrates the data exclusion criteria.

Table 1 Specified exclusion criteria

Studies focusing on discourse beyond newspaper texts or non-newspaper media or (e.g. pictures, magazines, videos, radio, social media, etc.)
Studies where HIV/AIDS is not the focus or is only tangentially addressed
Studies that do not focus on media portrayal or representation of HIV/AIDS
Studies that do not analyze primary data (e.g. secondary sources)
Studies written in non-English languages

Search results

The initial search yielded 1,354 results in Scopus, 27 in Science Direct, and 3,596 in WOS. Screening the titles and abstracts excluded 4841 irrelevant studies mainly addressing the medical research developments achieved and 14 inaccessible ones. The remaining 122 studies were downloaded and subjected to further review, focusing on the abstracts, keywords, and methods. 65 studies did not meet the inclusion criteria for they did not involve media portrayal analysis, and 9 duplicate articles were identified, resulting in 48 items for detailed text screening. After thoroughly reading the full texts, 8 items were excluded for involving data beyond newspaper texts (such as magazines, visual materials, tapes, etc.), and another 9 items were excluded for primarily addressing media framing of topics other than HIV/AIDS (e.g., transgender issues). This process ultimately resulted in a sample of 31 articles for full review, as shown in Figure 1.

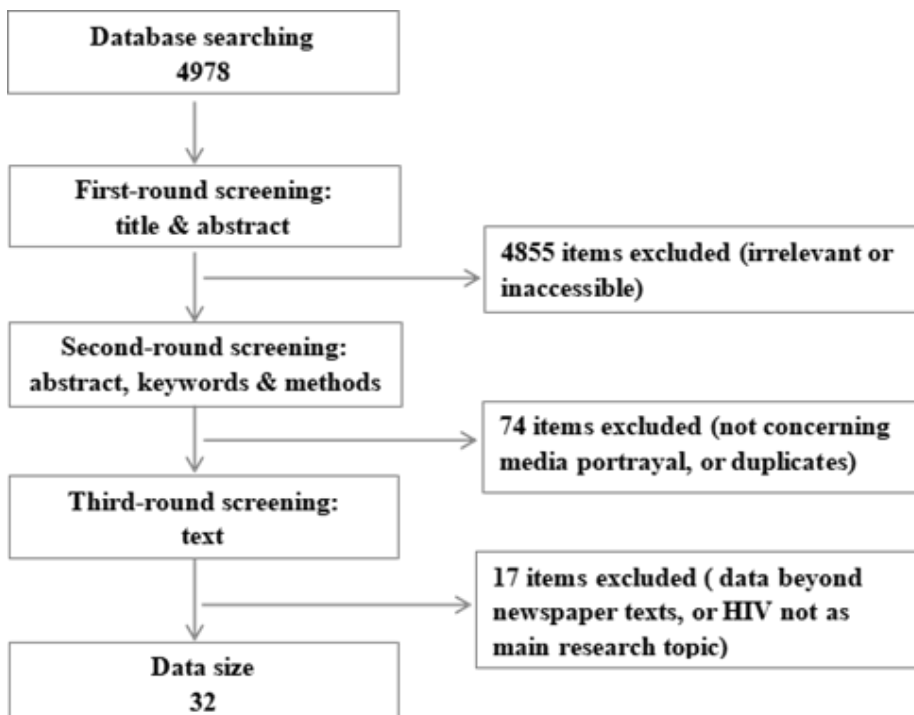


Figure 1 Data screening process

Data Analysis

The data were organized in an Excel document according to author, year of publication, theoretical perspectives, Data analysis method, Country of media origin, HIV-related issued addressed, inductive/deductive approach, frames (or themes) discovered, findings, and implications for HIV stakeholders (See Appendix).

FINDINGS

The addressed HIV issues

Regarding research question 1, six major types of HIV-related issues that HIV media portrayal studies focused on are identified: 1) Media focus: what kind of themes/topics media emphasize concerning the epidemic, such as HIV prevalence, HIV care, etc. 2) Political influences on HIV portrayal: How political factors, such as ideological differences, rival political parties, etc. shape HIV media framing. 3) HIV Stigma & People living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA): How media representations contribute to stigma and stereotypes, and how PLWHA are depicted. 4) HIV prevention measures: The portrayal of HIV prevention methods, such as PrEP and condoms. 5) HIV causality: How media construct the causes and solutions of HIV/AIDS. 6) HIV legal cases: the features of media representation of legal cases related to HIV/AIDS.

Other addressed issues including media construction of HIV cure (Power et al., 2017), community engagement in HIV management (Gibbs, 2010), and the correspondence between media framing and reader perception (Chen Tianen et al., 2023). The overall distribution of these issues is presented in Table 2. The percentages do not sum to 100% because these categories are based on the research aims of the reviewed studies. Some studies addressed multiple HIV-related issues, resulting in their inclusion in different categories.

Table 2 HIV-related issues addressed in prior studies

Issues	Percentage
Media focus	25.8%
Political influences on HIV portrayal	25.8%
HIV prevention measures	19.4%
Stigma & PLWHA	19.4%
HIV causality	12.9%
HIV legal cases	9.7%

Among the 31 studies reviewed, dominant research attention is placed on the Media focus. Eight studies (25.8%) examined what are the prioritized topics in media coverage. These studies typically explore the presence of HIV-related themes, frames, or topics (often used interchangeably) that the media emphasize when reporting on AIDS over a specific time span. Some studies, using a diachronic perspective, investigated changes in the HIV-related themes covered by the media over time (Caputo et al., 2016; Cullen & Callaghan, 2010; Kiwanuka-Tondo et al., 2012). Others, using a synchronic approach, summarized the common themes in media reports (e.g., de Souza, 2007; Vaughan & Power, 2023). Seven common themes are found in media coverage of HIV: medical care, clinical science, policy, human rights, prevalence, risks, and PLWHA.

Scholars show extensive interest in how political factors influence the way media construct HIV/AIDS. Eight studies (25.8%) discussed the roles of political factors in the media construction of HIV. Among them, two studies examined how international media, particularly Western media, frame the HIV epidemic in less-developed countries, revealing that Western media present a perspective on the pandemic that favors the agendas of industrialized nations (Wenham et al., 2009) and adopt a perspective of political, economic, and medical superiority over developing regions or countries (Sastry & Dutta, 2011). A common theme emerging from these studies is the portrayal of Western power/the industrialized world as a parental figure offering AIDS solutions to underdeveloped regions. Two studies examined how media in countries with different political systems, stances, or ideologies produce variations in framing HIV or HIV-related topics. Wu Min (2006) compared the contrasting constructions of HIV in China by Chinese domestic media and US media. Two counter frames were identified: a pro-government frame and an anti-government frame. D'Angelo et al. (2013) explored how Contained Democratic media in Nigeria and South Africa differ from Repressive Autocratic media in Kenya and Zimbabwe in framing HIV topics, drawing on the Efficacy frame and the Responsibility frame. Two studies unraveled the ideological and political construction of the epidemic in media (Jacobs & Johnson, 2007; Jones, 2013). Other studies compared the different ways HIV is portrayed by media of conflicting political parties or by media with different ownership within one country (Jung, 2013; Kiwanuka-Tondo et al., 2012).

Considerable research attention has been devoted to media framing of HIV prevention methods, with five studies specifically exploring media portrayal of HIV prevention medicines, such as PrEP and PEP, or their users (e.g., Young, 2021; Jaspal & Nerlich, 2016), while only one study examined the media representation of condoms (see McMorro et al., 2013). Regarding prophylactic medications, particularly PrEP and PEP, the "uncertainty" frame was identified in three studies (Jaspal & Nerlich, 2016, 2017; Schwartz & Grimm, 2017), whereas Young et al. (2021) identified both "uncertainty" and "certainty" frames across two distinct time periods. Potential PrEP users are primarily framed as gay or bisexual men (Jones & Collins, 2020; Young et al., 2021).

Six studies (19.4%) focused on media construction of stigma, stereotypes, and the portrayal of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). Five of these studies discussed how media coverage reinforced stigma by labeling HIV as a deviant foreign disease associated with immigrants (Soffer & Ajzenstadt, 2010), stereotyping certain social groups (e.g., intravenous drug users) to exacerbate an “us versus them” dichotomy (Ren Chunbo et al., 2014), attributing HIV risk to African Americans or to people from African or Caribbean nations (Stevens & Hull, 2013), constructing a stigmatized “evil vs. victimhood” dichotomy in reports on HIV criminal prosecution (Jaspal & Nerlich, 2022), and portraying people living with or affected by HIV as morally deficient (Vaughan & Power, 2023). Caputo et al. (2016) compared media reports across two periods and found that the representation of PLWHA evolved from stigmatized subjects seen as a risk to society, to frail subjects in need of care.

Four studies (12.9%) focused on media construction of HIV causality. Two common frames related to HIV causation emerged. The moral frame emphasizes individual behavior, choice, or lifestyle as the source of the problem in the spread of AIDS (Pickle et al., 2002), viewing HIV/AIDS infection as a result of a lack of personal responsibility in risk-taking behavior (Vaughan & Power, 2023). The socioeconomic-political-cultural frame highlights causes of disease that lie outside the individual at risk of becoming sick, focusing on factors such as socio-structural inequities, workplace dangers, environmental contaminants, and issues of class, gender, and ethnicity (Zhu Xiaoguang, 2010). Three common frames with respect to HIV solutions include medical and scientific interventions (such as the promotion of condoms and ART), stakeholder engagement (such as community involvement and coordinated societal efforts), and lifestyle changes (de Souza, 2007; Wenham et al., 2009; Zhu Xiaoguang, 2010).

Three studies (9.1%) examined how media representation of HIV legal cases involving deliberate transmission could stigmatize offenders (e.g., Jaspal & Nerlich, 2022) or even lead to the othering of the race or group (often of low economic status) to which the offender belongs (see Hastings et al., 2020; McKay et al., 2011).

Chronological trend of research focus on HIV-related issues

The 31 studies selected for the systematic review were published between 2002 and 2023. This period is adequate to observe trends on HIV media portrayal research. Figure 2 illustrates the temporal trend of media portrayal studies on HIV/AIDS within this time frame.

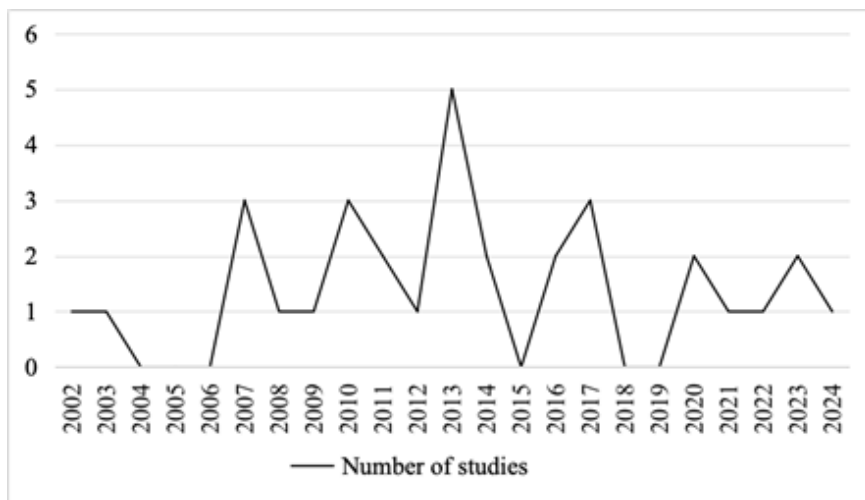


Figure 2 Number of studies on media portrayal of HIV/AIDS

The sudden plunge in 2015 highlights the need for a closer examination of studies conducted before and after this year to better understand whether the research focus on HIV-related issues shifted during this period.

As shown in Figure 3, there is a clear shift of attention regarding HIV-related issues in media framing studies after 2015. The top issue of concern for scholars before 2015 is political influences on HIV portrayal, while it

disappeared from academic agenda after 2015. The interest of media construction of HIV causality also faded after 2015. In contrast, HIV prevention measures received little attention in media framing research before 2015, but it became the dominant research interest after 2015, and the major focus is on media framing of PrEP—a significant biomedical approach for preventing HIV infection for individuals who are at high risk acquiring HIV, providing protection against HIV transmission. This change may be largely attributed to the event that US Food and Drug Administration approved PrEP for use in the prevention of HIV infection in 2012 (Baeten et al., 2013) and the conflict that many countries still face challenges of PrEP implementation although it has become a fundamental part of worldwide efforts for HIV prevention (Elion & Coleman, 2016; Kirby, 2020).

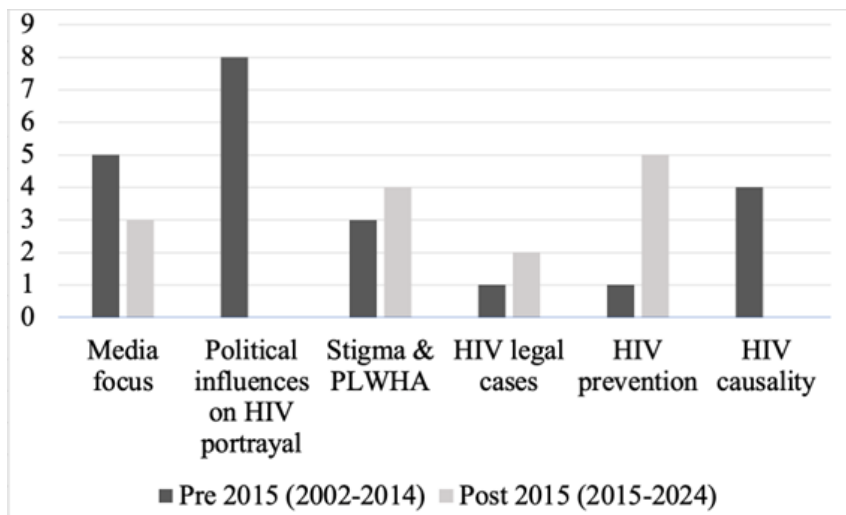


Figure 3 Academic focus on HIV-related issues Pre and Post 2015

To capture a complete picture of the evolving academic focus in HIV media framing studies, five timeframes were established, each spanning five years (see Figure 4). During 2002–2006, studies primarily examined the themes that media focused on in HIV-related reporting. The prominence of Media focus peaked during 2012–2016. In contrast, from 2007 to 2011, research concentrated on how HIV causality was represented in media, but this topic lost academic interest in subsequent periods.

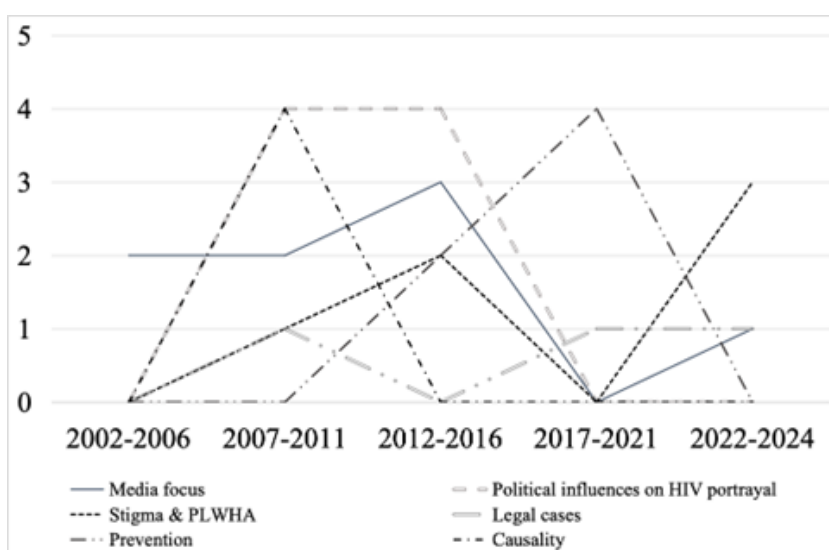


Figure 4 Temporal trends of HIV-related issues in media portrayal studies

The period 2012–2016 also saw Stigma & PLWHA reach its highest level of attention, although it became less prominent in later years. By 2017–2021, there were sharp decreases in studies on Media focus, political influences on HIV portrayal, and media representation of stigma and PLWHA. Interestingly, HIV prevention

studies experienced a notable peak during this period but gradually declined, hitting their lowest level in the most recent timeframe.

Finally, in 2022–2023, Media focus experienced a slight resurgence, while Stigma & PLWHA regained moderate attention. However, other topics—including Prevention, Political influences on HIV portrayal, Legal cases, and Causality—remained at consistently low levels. This temporal analysis underscores dynamic shifts in priorities, with some topics peaking at specific times and others remaining consistently low throughout.

Theories and methods employed

Among the 31 studies under review, nearly half utilized framing analysis to conduct media portrayal analysis of HIV/AIDS. About one-fifth employed theories of Discourse Analysis, including Critical Discourse Analysis. Additionally, 16.1% of the studies adopted other sociological theories, such as Social Representation Theory and Postcolonial Health Communication Theory. Around another one-fifth did not specify a guiding theory at all (see Table 3). Notably, the three most popular theoretical perspectives—Framing Theory, Discourse Analysis Theory, and Social Representation Theory—in media portrayal analysis found in the present research conducted data analysis through a social constructionist lens. This perspective holds that our understanding and perception of the world are products of how the world is represented or produced through language (Burr & Dick, 2017).

Table 3 Theories used in previous studies

Theories	Percentage
Framing theory	48.4%
Discourse analysis (including CDA)	19.4%
Other sociological theories	16.1%
Unspecified	16.1%

Fourteen (48.4%) studies under frame analysis extracted frames in different ways. Four of them borrowed frames from previous studies, two used frames from prior studies and proposed new frames based on the characteristics of the collected data, and the remaining eight, guided by framing theory, used content analysis, thematic analysis, grounded theory, or framing devices to detect frames. Inductive frame analysis appears to be the preferred approach, as it better suits varied research goals and may lead to discrepancies in the conceptualization of a frame. The varied understanding of “frame” ranged from considering it as “the sense an article conveys” (de Souza, 2007), the “central organizing idea” (Wu Min, 2006), to “the theme of the article” (Chen Tianen et al., 2023; Kiwanuka-Tondo et al., 2012). The latter understanding is most prevalent in the articles reviewed here. The flexibility of frame analysis allows researchers to interpret data in a way that fits their research aims, enabling data patterns to emerge and facilitating in-depth analysis.

Six (19.35%) studies performed HIV portrayal analysis under the framework of Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis to disclose power relations embedded in HIV-related media texts. This type of analysis is often combined with a linguistic perspective, particularly lexical analysis, to detect the implicit construction of HIV/AIDS news reports. For instance, Connelly and Macleod (2003) analyzed the linguistic features of South African media coverage of HIV/AIDS and discovered the existence of a war discourse, which reinforced racialized, gendered, and medical discourses. Wenham et al. (2009) found that linguistic devices used in US media reports of AIDS in India uncovered inequalities between developed and underdeveloped nations.

Five (16.1%) studies used other sociological theories. For instance, Social Representation Theory was employed to analyze media portrayal of PEP, PrEP, and HIV criminal prosecution (Jaspal & Nerlich, 2016, 2017; Jaspal & Nerlich, 2022). Drawing on Habermas’s notion of the public sphere, Campbell and Gibbs (2008) explored the dominant representations of HIV/AIDS management and how they are depicted as barriers

and facilitators to AIDS control. Using Postcolonial Health Communication Theory, Sastry and Dutta (2011) revealed that U.S. media representations of HIV/AIDS in India draw attention to India as the Third World, a space for intervention by the United States, and operate as a site for economic exploitation and control. Scholars using these sociological theories tended to reveal hidden social problems and favored thematic analysis to identify specific media representations.

Five (16.1%) studies on media representation of HIV/AIDS did not reference any theory. Four of them performed data coding and interpretation based on the adopted research methods (e.g., content analysis). The remaining study did not label a specific research method but described data-coding procedures used to reveal media representation of HIV/AIDS. Moreover, regarding the media selected in previous research, 14 studies (45.2%) focused on Western media coverage, specifically from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada. Additionally, national-level media remains the primary data source, with only one study examining provincial media reports.

Implications for media reporting and other stakeholders

Media portrayal studies on HIV/AIDS provide valuable insights for improving future coverage by highlighting issues of misrepresentation. Of the studies reviewed, 15 (48.4%) found that news media failed to report the HIV/AIDS epidemic appropriately. Media discourse often propagated stigmatizing social representations of HIV (Jaspal & Nerlich, 2022), framing it as a disease of “the deviant other,” particularly targeting gay men (Jones & Collins, 2020; Soffer & Ajzenstadt, 2010). This stigmatization contributed to the social marginalization of people living with HIV (PLHIV), either by perpetuating fear of AIDS (Jung, 2013) or invoking a blame-and-shame dynamic frequently associated with stigma (Vaughan & Power, 2023). The media also labeled PLHIV, reinforcing harmful stereotypes about certain social groups, race, and immigration status, thereby fostering an “us versus them” mentality (Hastings et al., 2020; McKay et al., 2011; Ren Chunbo et al., 2014; Soffer & Ajzenstadt, 2010). These findings underscore the need for the media to adopt alternative, non-stigmatizing frames that help the public better understand HIV/AIDS and promote constructive solutions (Soffer & Ajzenstadt, 2010; Zhu Xiaoguang, 2010).

Existing studies highlight the importance of stakeholder collaboration in addressing HIV and provide valuable support to stakeholders engaged in this effort. For instance, partnerships among researchers, public health professionals, and journalists can enhance sensitivity to concerns and mistrust reflected in the media (Pickle et al., 2002). Improved collaboration between health educators and media outlets also facilitates the effective dissemination of vital HIV/AIDS information (Gao Junling et al., 2013). Moreover, such studies empower stakeholders by guiding health communication professionals and anti-stigma advocates to mitigate HIV stigmatization in media contexts (Ren Chunbo et al., 2014), supporting policymakers and healthcare professionals in raising public awareness and knowledge of AIDS (Caputo et al., 2016), and helping healthcare providers gain better insight into the perspectives of HIV patients (Schwartz & Grimm, 2017).

DISCUSSION

The studies reviewed on how media represent HIV/AIDS mainly focus on six major HIV-related issues, such as Media focus and Political influences on HIV portrayal. Each issue has seen peaks of scholarly interest during different periods. In recent years, research attention has shifted toward HIV prevention measures, a trend closely linked to the release of new HIV-related policies. This underscores the influence of public policies on research direction, aligning with Kishi's (2019) argument policy focus gives scientists an incentive to pursue specific research subjects and influences a trend of scientific research. Studies examining Political influences on HIV portrayal reveal that media content is significantly shaped by political orientations, reflecting underlying political intentions. This supports Crimp's (1988) view that HIV/AIDS has emerged as a series of signifying practices that reinforce dominant power relations.

More recently, there has been a resurgence of research focusing on Media focus, an area initially explored in early studies. This renewed interest may be driven by the recognition that media reporting reflects how overall

attention to the epidemic has changed over time, in terms of quantity and content (Brodie et al., 2004). Stigma & PLWHA studies also saw an increasing trend, which may be largely related to the fact that stigma negatively impacts PLWHA and is cited as a major reason why HIV continues to be a global epidemic for blocking the access to prevention, care and treatment services (Brent, 2016; Golub & Fikslin, 2022; Katz et al., 2013; Mahajan et al., 2008; Nkengasong & Ratevosian, 2023).

News media play a crucial role in communicating policy information during health emergencies (Mach et al., 2021), serving as a primary source of health information and connect policymakers and the public in critical ways (Hoffman & Justicz, 2016; Laing, 2012). Media not only educate the public regarding appropriate individual behavior; but also promote social change and collective action. More specifically, it could promote large-scale policy implementation, which facilitates an environment conducive to behavior change and to managing the impact of HIV/AIDS over the long term (Stein, 2003). The studies selected in this research often focuses narrowly on micro-level analyses, examining the characteristics and content of media reports. Scholars predominantly adopt a bottom-up approach, identifying representation issues within media coverage and offering recommendations to media practitioners and stakeholders, but overlooks a critical macro-level question: to what extent do global and national HIV response agendas, set by stakeholders such as the United Nations and health ministries, influence media representations of HIV? This gap highlights the need for a broader research focus that integrates macro-level analysis, examining the alignment between media narratives and the strategic objectives of national and international HIV response plans. Future studies should consider adopting a top-down approach, analyzing the agendas of key HIV stakeholders and assessing whether media portrayals support or undermine these policy frameworks. Such an approach could offer valuable insights into the advantages and limitations of current media framing of HIV/AIDS, ultimately helping to bridge the gap between media representation and the long-term goal of eradicating HIV.

Sociological or linguistic frameworks are frequently utilized in analyzing HIV media portrayals, though some studies lack a clear articulation of the theoretical foundations guiding their work. Future research should carefully outline the theoretical foundations and distinct methods used in their projects. When addressing multi-dimensional objectives, researchers might consider integrating sociological and linguistic perspectives to achieve more comprehensive results, such as combining frame analysis with discourse analysis. As Lindekilde (2014) puts it, in contrast to discourse analysis, frame analysis does not include an analytical perspective on micro-level linguistics (wording, grammar, and so on), although both of them are fundamentally social constructivist and interpretive perspectives. This integrative approach could enhance the analytical depth of future studies. Moreover, the issue of a missing clear label for the research method persists, mirroring Sandelowski & Barroso's (2003) observation that some studies did not invest much effort in identifying an explicit methodological orientation.

Another critical finding is the disproportionate focus on Western media in studies on HIV portrayal, underscoring the dominant influence of Western media narratives. This lends support to Curran and Park's (2000) call that it is crucial to de-westernize media studies to uncover the unique characteristics of media reporting in different regions of the world, rather than generalizing from Western media coverage of HIV/AIDS. Hence, increased attention to media coverage in non-Western contexts is necessary, given the disproportionate impact of HIV in underdeveloped regions today. Additionally, national mainstream media holds more significance than other media sources in the studies reviewed, corresponding to the view that coverage of HIV/AIDS by mainstream news media serves as one important gauge of how prominent the issue is on the policy and cultural agenda of the nation (Brodie et al., 2004).

Existing research on media portrayal of HIV/AIDS empower HIV stakeholders by providing guidance to their work, which could potentially enhance the effectiveness of their efforts in containing and ultimately eradicating AIDS. For instance, the studies reviewed collectively point to the phenomenon that the construction of HIV/AIDS in the media has negative effects to some extent, such as creating division, causing stigmatization, and increasing prejudice and discrimination among the public. This aligns with prior research findings that media often further stigmatize AIDS and those affected by presenting the syndrome in a moralistic frame that reinforces negative public attitudes (Myrick, 1998). It demonstrates the importance for

news media to find alternative non-stigmatizing media frames that help the public understand the HIV/AIDS issue in ways that facilitate solutions (Soffer & Ajzenstadt, 2010; Zhu Xiaoguang, 2010).

CONCLUSION

The present study investigated the research conventions of HIV media framing analysis by exploring what HIV-related issues are addressed, whether temporal trends of research focus existed, what theoretical frameworks and research methods were utilized, and how the research findings could inform media coverage and other HIV stakeholders. The findings reveal that scholars primarily discussed six HIV-related issues: Media focus, the influence of political factors on HIV media framing, media construction of HIV stigma and representation of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), media coverage of HIV prevention, depiction of HIV causality, and reporting on HIV-related legal cases. These issues have been major research foci at different intervals, with the most distinct shifts in interest observed before and after 2015. A Micro-level analysis is primarily conducted in these studies by limiting the concern to the features of media text alone. Framing theory, Discourse Analysis, and Social Representation theory are the most widely adopted theoretical frameworks, while inductive approach is the most popular research method. Additionally, much of the academic attention has been focused on HIV framing by Western media. Previous studies provided guidance for better journalistic practices to avoid stigmatizing AIDS and offered insights for other HIV stakeholders in their efforts to combat the epidemic.

Meanwhile, there are gaps to be filled. It is crucial to expand the research scope from analyzing media texts alone to examining their alignment with official agendas addressing AIDS, which could better inform media's role in supporting the fight against AIDS and finally ending the epidemic. In other words, future studies on media portrayal of HIV should go beyond the Micro-level analysis of media discourse and integrate a Macro-level perspective by taking into consideration the discourse of HIV key stakeholders including the global or national AIDS response agendas set by HIV leading organizations. Furthermore, greater attention should be given to exploring non-Western media coverage, as AIDS is a global epidemic that affects the entire world, particularly underdeveloped regions, and ending AIDS is a global mission rather than an issue confined to the western world. Relevant research should inform mainstream media practices across all nations to fast track the global aim of ending AIDS by 2030.

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