

Feedback Mechanisms of HIV/Aids Campaigns in Ghana's Prisons

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Abstract

Why do some behavioural change campaigns succeed while others fail? What mechanisms are employed in campaign channels/strategies that succeed? Feedback, for example, helps in tracking the progress of ongoing campaigns for informed adjustments in strategies for better communication impact. This study explores the mechanisms for feedback in the Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana's (PPAG) HIV/AIDS campaigns in Ghana's Prisons. Using semi-structured interviews, the study presents an assessment of the status of these mechanisms in PPAG's campaigns in Ghana's prisons with specific recommendations for improvement.

Keywords: Sensitisation campaigns, Feedback mechanisms, Case study, PPAG, Ghana's prisons

1. Introduction

Human Immuno Deficiency Virus (HIV) remains an international health problem that efforts are continuously made by all countries to check its rate of infection among all sections of their populations. The disease, which is acquired through sex and contaminated blood contact, has no cure and knows no boundary either. It is estimated that about 6,000 new infections occur globally each day, of which two out of three are in sub-Saharan Africa (Kharsay & Quarraisha, 2016). Besides, the sub-saharan Africa is also a carrier of 70% burden of global infections of HIV, and accounted for 74% of the 1.5 million AIDS related deaths in 2013 (ibid).

Ghana, as part of the sub-saharan Africa, is not spared of these infections. Of Ghana's estimated population of 24, 658, 823 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010), 250, 232 of its inhabitants were tested positive as of 2014 (Ghana AIDS Commission, 2015). A recent survey on HIV infections in Ghana revealed that the country experienced an increase of 1.8% in

2016 (http://www.ghanaid.gov.gh/gac1/aids_info.php). This statistic is a worry to stakeholders, who have called for increased behavioural change campaigns to help reverse the trend.

At the centre of efforts to eradicate behavioural practices that lead to HIV infections is the role of behavioral change communication campaigns. According to Corcoran (2007), communication plays a critical role in any actions aimed at improving health. These communication campaigns are seen as an essential part of comprehensive programs aimed at reducing AIDS infections (USAID, 2002). To ensure that campaigns achieve the desired impact, the need for the incorporation of feedback mechanisms to help elicit appropriate feedback that will be used in tracking the progress of these campaigns is paramount. Feedback mechanisms are the in-built opportunities in campaigns that produce feedback, without which an ongoing campaign will potentially experience setbacks. This is because feedback mechanisms can provide vital information to inform communication/campaign managers on the progress made, or the challenges facing their campaigns. Studies, however, show that in spite of the role of feedback in communication and the increasing pressure from donor agencies for the incorporation of its mechanisms in behavioural change campaigns, many organisations still relegate the mechanisms to secondary importance in their campaigns (Bonino, Jean & Clark, 2014). This phenomenon makes the subject of feedback mechanisms a topic of relevance for scholarly enquiry since it is held that “without feedback true communication does not occur” (Guth & Marsh, 2003, p. 139). Where feedback is ignored, the communication process is one-way, which is undesirable, as compared to a two-way communication process where feedback is provided (Keyton, 2010). Therefore, it can be argued that feedback sustains the communication process, especially in the face-to-face communication contexts where immediate feedback is required to keep the conversation going.

PPAG as one of the organisations responsible for education on sexual and reproductive health embarks on sensitisation campaigns that can potentially face, for example, audience-resistance barriers, which can only be detected through effective feedback mechanisms in its communication strategies. The fact that Ghana experienced an increase in HIV infections both in its prisons (Prisons HIV/AIDS Report, 2017) and the country as a whole in 2016 (Ghana AIDS Commission, 2016) makes it necessary to investigate the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS campaigns. In this article, I will define what sensitisation campaigns are, discuss scholarly arguments on the role of feedback in campaign effectiveness, highlight the current state of feedback mechanisms incorporated in campaigns in Ghana’s prisons and make appropriate suggestions for improvement.

2. Statement of Problem

The 1.8% increase in Ghana’s HIV infections in 2016 did not preclude the situation in the country’s prisons. Available statistics on infections in the prisons reflect a similar trend of increase in 2017 in spite of efforts to reduce infections through behavioural change campaigns. This situation has become a matter of grave concern to stakeholders who are at a loss as to what might have gone wrong with the campaigns. While what accounted for this may be multi-faceted, the aspect of communication certainly deserves immediate attention. This is because communication has an essential role in any action that aims to improve health

(Corcoran, 2007). As such, the problem in any of the elements of communication – message, medium, feedback – can reduce the effectiveness of behavioural change campaigns (Keyton, 2011). Inappropriate mechanisms for feedback, for example, can pose challenges to campaigns, since feedback that is required to help track the progress of these campaigns for the necessary adjustments to be made to improve their impact cannot be obtained. The prisons, for instance, are restricted environments where communication is strictly regulated among the inmate population. A study by Sanger et al. (2001) revealed that about 19.65% of prisoners had communication challenges, which implies that these challenges can potentially weaken the impact of behavioural campaigns if measures, such as feedback mechanisms, are not in place to elicit the right feedback on the progress of the campaigns. This understanding, in the wake of increase in HIV/AIDS infections in Ghana's prisons, underpinned the current study, which aimed at exploring the aspect of feedback mechanisms in PPAG's HIV/AIDS campaigns in the prisons.

3. Research Objectives

- 1). To ascertain the PPAG's campaign channels/strategies in the prisons.
- 2). To explore the mechanisms for feedback in the campaign channels/strategies.
- 3). To ascertain the constraints/weaknesses of these mechanisms.

4. Research Questions

- 1). What are the HIV/AIDS campaign channels/strategies of PPAG in Ghana's prisons?
- 2). What mechanisms are incorporated for feedback in the campaign channels/strategies?
- 3). What are the constraints/weaknesses of the mechanisms for feedback?

5. Significance of the Study

The study uncovered the constraints/weaknesses of the feedback mechanisms and proffered what can be done to improve the flow of feedback, which is required to track and inform future strategies capable of making better communication impact, in terms of influencing positive behavioural practices among the inmate population. The study, therefore, had a seminal effect on the existing knowledge on communication challenges in the prisons, especially in Ghana's case, considering the fact that the topic is an underexplored one in Ghana, and perhaps in Africa.

6. Theoretical Framework

This study was formed by the McGuire's Matrix Theory (1989), which suggests that there are five inputs (independent variables) namely, source, message, channel, receiver and context that individually contribute towards the achievement of the desired influence of a behavioural change communication. In other words, if any of these inputs fails in its role, the communication activity that these inputs collectively aim to support in achieving its goal will suffer setbacks. This presupposes, for example, that if the choice of channel for a particular communication activity/intervention is inappropriate, the message will potentially not make the desired impact or elicit the desired feedback. It argues that these inputs can be selected and controlled by an influence agent to accelerate the efficacy of what it identifies as outputs. These outputs (dependent variables), according to McGuire are exposure, attention, interest, comprehension, acquisition, yielding, memory, retrieval, decision, action, reinforcement and

consolation of the message received, which are seen as the various stages of the persuasion process.

The theory forms the basis of this study because it postulates that each of the inputs, including the channel (either face-to-face or through a medium – radio, TV, magazine, newspaper) which feedback mechanisms are usually incorporated in, play a critical role in the success of communication, including HIV/AIDS behavioural change campaigns. Keyton (2011) reinforces this theory’s argument by positing that a problem in any of these inputs, which Keyton refers to as elements of communication, reduces the effectiveness of the communication/campaign activity. The theory, therefore, supports the current study because it recognises that each “input” (element) of communication (including channels) plays a unique role in ensuring the success of communication, and that any defect in one may affect the outcome. This assumption has a direct link with the current study, which analysed an aspect of the channels, feedback mechanisms, usually incorporated in the channel(s), as an “input” of communication. This study assessed the appropriateness of the channels’ feed mechanisms (whether these mechanisms aid in eliciting feedback that is reflective of the status/impact of the campaigns), and therefore; enhances the channels’ effectiveness towards the overall goal of the campaigns: achieving behavioural change among the inmate population.

7. The Concept of Feedback

The interactive model of communication, illustrated in Lunenburg’s depiction of communication, recognises feedback as an element of the communication model or process. This is reflected in the figure below.

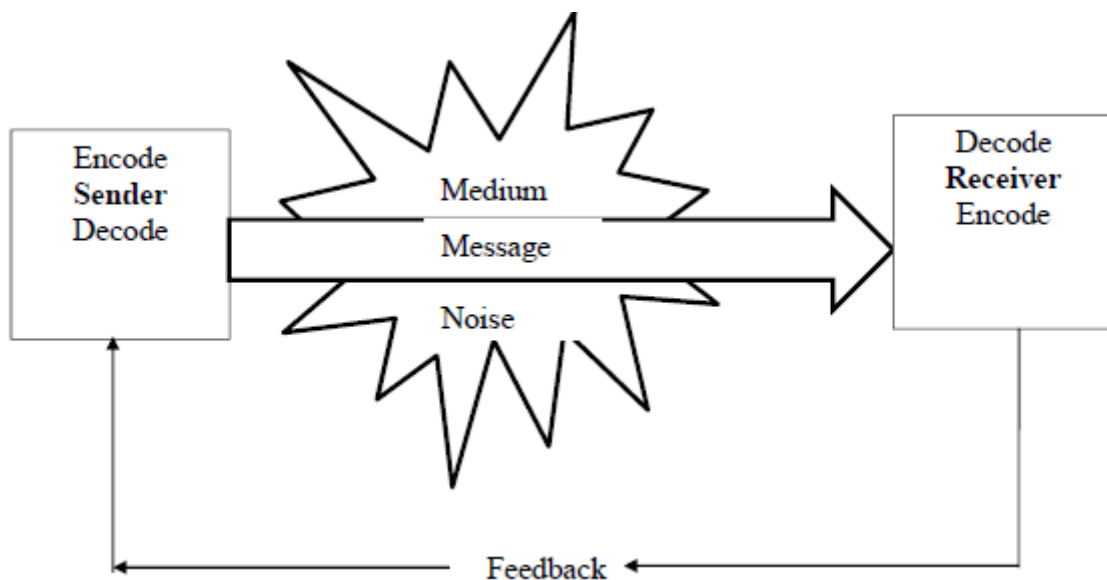


Figure 1. Adapted from Lunenburg (2010)

Social life produces interaction processes (Lal, 1995). These interactions evoke responses that are desirable or undesirable, based on the meaning the receiver attaches to the sender’s message. While these responses are given intentionally or unintentionally in social

interactions, their manifestations are observable. These responses, whether verbal or nonverbal, qualify the description, 'feedback'. Gamble and Gamble (2006) define feedback as the cues - verbal and nonverbal - that can be perceived in reaction to the communication function of the sender. Mortensen (1975) also sees feedback as all forms of behaviours which the receiver shows which give an indication to the sender on how well he or she has communicated. The above definitions imply that feedback is the receiver's reactions that show whether the sender's message has been given the intended interpretation (Tubbs, Guth & Marsh, 2003, p. 139). As held by Verderber and Verderber (2005), "communication is effective when it achieves its goals; it is appropriate when it conforms to what is expected in a situation" (p.18). By deduction, every communication has a goal, which feedback serves as an indicator of the success or failure of it to achieve that goal.

Gamble and Gamble (1996) categorize feedback into two major types: evaluative and non-evaluative. Evaluative feedback occurs when the receiver states his or her opinion on an issue of concern to her or him. This feedback appears judgemental in nature as it can be *positive, negative, or formative*. It is *positive* when it tends to maintain communication and its resulting behaviour patterns in the intended direction. This explains why people who are receptive in conversations are encouraged to proceed with their conversations. The *negative* is the reverse. It serves the purpose of discouraging the replication of undesirable behaviours: it is a corrective measure on behaviours. Unlike the positive and the negative feedback, Gamble and Gamble (2006) posit that the *formative* is a refined negative feedback which uses civil, less offensive and unhurtful language at the receiver to influence subsequent behaviours. However, the distinction between the negative and the formative feedback is that the former does not have the potential of reforming behavior (ibid).

The nonevaluative feedback on the contrary does not make any clear effort to direct the communicator's actions (Gamble & Gamble, 2006). Gamble and Gamble further explain that nonevaluative feedback has an in-built enquiring element that prompts for detailed information but not to reform behaviour. The authors postulate that the non-evaluative feedback can be classified into three: *understanding, supportive, and probing*. The *understanding* refers to a response that demonstrates a receiver's appreciation of a message. *Probing*, on the other hand, is described as a technique which is applied for the purpose of eliciting more information as a demonstration of interest in the subject matter. The supportive feedback aims to lessen the intensity of the other person's feelings while conscientising them that their plight is felt (ibid). Any of these reactions from the receiver serves as feedback to the sender; indicating how the communication message is perceived: understood or misconstrued and whether adjustments should be made to the communication strategy, content, or not.

7.1 Role and Features of Effective Feedback

Communication, which is an act of "receiving and giving of information to help enhance one's life and the life around him" (Sekyi-Baidoo, 2003, p. 11) is complete through the provision of a noise-free feedback (Tubbs, Guth, & Marsh, 2003). Consequently, it is, argued that without feedback true communication does not take place (ibid). Clearly, Tubbs, Guth and Marsh recognise feedback as an important element of communication which Dignen (2014) stressed as the most important communication element or skill in classroom settings

(involving face-to-face interaction) where immediate feedback is required to help adjust teaching methodologies. Feedback can provide important and constructive information...and indicate actions which should be taken for the improvement of one's performance in future (Blanka, 2015). Feedback therefore serves as "information about current performance that can be used to improve future performance" (ibid, p. 172). As a result, its importance is stressed in some communication designs, as special mechanisms are sometimes incorporated to help generate it (Tubbs, Guth & marsh, 2003). The general coherence of these scholarly arguments on the role of feedback suggests its relevance in communication, including sensitisation campaigns. Since PPAG undertakes campaigns on behavioural change in Ghana's prisons, its incorporation of feedback mechanisms will give it an opportunity to know whether or not its messages on HIV/AIDS are received and acted upon by the target population (inmates). As such, it can be said that PPAG's ability to determine the effectiveness or weaknesses of its HIV/AIDS campaigns in the prisons depend on the in-built feedback mechanisms in the campaign channels/strategies. These mechanisms, depending on their efficacy, can potentially provide feedback that is capable of reflecting the exact strengths and weaknesses of the communication strategies deployed.

As feedback serves as indicators that show how campaigns work, these indicators must be defined in every context based on the nature of the communication channels/media used. Gamble and Gamble (1996) argue that while face-to-face interactions can produce, for example, immediate feedback, this form of feedback cannot easily be obtained where mass communication channels are used. Bertrand and Kincaid (1996), however, validated this claim with a rather general prescription of features of effective feedback mechanisms. He posits that effective feedback mechanisms, regardless of the medium/channel must possess the following features:

- Valid: They aptly measure the phenomenon they are intended to measure.
- Reliable: They produce similar results when used more than once to measure the same Phenomenon.
- Specific: They measure only the phenomenon that they are intended to measure.
- Sensitive: They reflect changes in the status of the phenomenon being studied.
- Operational: They are measurable or quantifiable with developed and tested standards.

PPAG as an organisation embarks on campaigns to achieve behavioural change. The feedback mechanisms of its campaigns can therefore be assessed based on Bertrand and Kincaid's (1996) proposed features of good feedback mechanisms.

7.2 What are Feedback Mechanisms?

Feedback mechanisms can be said to be an embodiment of opportunities provided in campaign channels/strategies that allow the campaigner or influence agent to elicit responses from the recipients of his or her message about their understanding of the message. Bonino, Jean and Clarke (2014) defined a feedback mechanism and explained its functions in the context of humanitarian services as:

A set of procedures and tools formally established and used to allow humanitarian aid recipients (and in some cases other crisis-affected populations) to provide information on their experience of a humanitarian system. Feedback mechanisms can function as part of

broader monitoring practices and can generate information for decision making purposes. Feedback mechanisms collect information for a variety of purposes, including taking corrective action in improving some elements of the humanitarian response, and strengthening accountability towards affected population (p.5).

The authors sum it up on the most important feature of an effective feedback mechanism by arguing that it should be able to support the collection, acknowledgement, analysis and response to the feedback received. This understanding is reflected in Bertrand and Kincaid's (1996) prescriptive features of effective mechanisms, thereby implying that a mechanism that is unable to support the collection of appropriate feedback is ineffective, and therefore; cannot perform its tracking role meant to inform campaigners to adjust campaign strategies for improved impact. The analysis of the current study is therefore grounded in this perspective on what makes a feedback mechanism an effective one based on the Bertrand and Kincaid's proposed features of effective mechanisms.

8. Related Studies on Feedback Mechanisms

A study by CDA Collaborative Learning Projects (2011) on feedback mechanisms in International Assistance Organisations examined how recipient feedback in the sampled organisations is collected and used to inform decision making in international assistance interventions. This study was conducted based on Bonino, Jean and Clark's (2014) conviction that "feedback mechanisms provide organisations with data and perceptions from effectiveness of their efforts" (p. 1). The study noted that an ideal feedback process entails the gathering of feedback and the communication of response, which forms a "feedback loop". However, the study discovered that while some of the selected organisations for its investigations recognised the essence of feedback, "many agencies do not have wide mechanisms or system for collecting, analysing, utilising and responding to recipient feedback" (ibid, p. 5). The study claimed that despite the recognition of the role of feedback mechanisms in improving the effectiveness of the communication efforts of these institutions, decisions arising from this feedback process, which ought to be shared with the target group or community is seldom communicated back. As observed by Bonino and Warner (2014), the subject of beneficiary feedback mechanisms is generally a grey or emerging area which relevant information is unpublished. These observations show that less attention is paid to feedback mechanisms.

While Bonino, Jean and Clark's study has a direct link to the current study, the contexts are not exactly the same. The target population of previous studies was rather general (that is, in the mainstream society) as compared to the present study that focusses on prisons (restricted environments). The unique context of the present study promises to potentially offer new discoveries and insights.

8.1 Sensitisation Campaigns

Communication plays a critical role in efforts to achieve behavioural change among a population. According to Corcoran (2007) communication has an essential role in any action that aims to improve health. Campaigns, which are an approach of communication, aims at achieving this. Sensitization campaigns are, therefore, defined as organised communication activities which aim to raise awareness on particular issues or topics (health, environment,

education) for behavioural change among a population and to improve the focus on better outcomes (Hawkes, 2013). Snyder (2007) also defines a campaign as a communication activity directed at a particular population for a particular period of time, to achieve a particular goal” (p. 33).

These definitions suggest that campaigns are useful communication tools in the promotion of quality health behaviours. Hence, the use of health communication campaigns to address “most common causes of deaths – poor diet, physical inactivity, tobacco use and alcohol consumption in the United States of America (ibid). It is argued that a successful campaign adheres to the design of its message and choice of channels. Since the message is as good as its channel, the channel must possess certain features to be deemed appropriate for conveying a particular message in an effective manner (Masiuliene, 2015). Masiuliene posits, among others, that the choice of channels and their appropriateness must be based on the unique characteristics of each target population. This author further argues that the ability of a communication campaign to produce apt feedback, which is the object of this study, constitutes one of the most important and effective features of successful behavioural campaigns.

8.2 Effective Campaign Strategies

A campaign strategy could be described as an embodiment of specific communicative actions that a communicator intends to take in a bid to, firstly, achieve understanding of a particular message, and secondly, influence recipients’ decision to act on the message relayed. A sound communication strategy, therefore, provides coherence for a health program to succeed (O’Sullivan, Yonker, Morgan & Merritt, 2003, p.3). An ineffective strategy, on the other hand, ruins the above objective of campaigns. For example, a Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and Gesellschaft Fuer Technische Zusammenarbeit’s (GTZ) assessment report on rural communication for development in the area of extension services concluded that ineffective communication accounted for the failure of the project (FAO & GTZ, 2006). Hence, the observation that the impediments of organisational success include ineffective communication (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010). Even though this study was not centred on feedback mechanisms per se, it investigated the aspect of strategy, which plays a role in ensuring the effectiveness or otherwise of communication activities such as campaigns.

8.3 What Makes a Campaign Strategy Effective?

It is argued that for communication campaign strategies to be effective, they must possess feedback indicators, which serve as “interim measures used to track progress towards achieving objectives” (O’Sullivan, Yonkler, Morgan, & Merritt, 2003, p. 84). These authors are convinced that once the indicators are fixed, it makes it easier for the monitoring of the campaign to determine whether the intended behaviour change is being achieved, or not. Some evaluative studies on communication campaign effectiveness give credence to these authors’ view. A fairly simple before-and-after assessment conducted by Meekers, Agha, and Klein (2005) in their evaluation of a Cameroonian social-marketing campaign promoting safe sex to youth revealed that entertainment education employed radio drama, magazine pictures, peer education, and spot advertisements on various media outlets as the campaign strategies. That, the campaign made use of interactive question-answer sessions (in the case of fora), listener comments on radio after programmes as feedback mechanisms with phone-in

contributions to radio programmes, attendances to programmes as feedback indicators on the progress of the campaigns. These indicators, the study found, were effective in reflecting the impact of the campaign at each stage of the process, thereby confirming that the campaign strategies and its feedback mechanisms were effective.

Again, a research on the effectiveness of a campaign on HIV/AIDS (Vaughan et al., 2000) in Tanzania revealed that the use of entertainment education did the magic. The project developed a radio soap opera that promoted HIV/AIDS prevention, family planning, gender equity and other health issues. The soap opera was designed to stimulate interpersonal communication about AIDS among the listeners by presenting them with negative, transitional and positive role models for HIV prevention. The impact of this strategy was impressive as between 12% to 16% of the target population began using HIV prevention methods as the direct result of listening to the entertainment-education broadcast. This brings to the fore the fact that appropriate campaign strategies are central to the effectiveness and success of a behavioural change communication campaign. Even though the above studies are directly related to the present study, again, the context of the current study differs from these past studies: whilst these past studies were carried out in the main stream society, where access to different communication channels of exists, the current study focuses on the prisons, restricted environments where access to these channels is limited, especially in the Ghanaian situation.

9. Research Context

The research was conducted at the PPAG in Accra. The PPAG was established in 1967 by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), an International non-governmental organisation concerned with sexual reproductive health (<http://www.ppag-gh.org/ppag/>). PPAG is the one of the two organisations with the responsibility of educating Ghanaian residents on sexual and reproductive health. The vision of PPAG is to ensure that Ghana becomes a country in which “the youth are well informed about sexual and reproductive health issues and confidently exercise their rights of choice of sexual reproductive service without fear or any obstacle from any sector of the society” (ibid). It has its mission being: “To provide the youth with the knowledge and means of exercising their basic rights to decide freely and responsibly on their sexual and reproductive health as a means of improving the quality of life of Ghanaians” (ibid).

To fulfil its mandate, PPAG engages in targeted communication activities, also referred to as campaigns, aimed at addressing sexual reproductive and HIV/AIDS information needs of various segments of society, including the prisons. Hence, its sensitisation campaigns in the prisons. Ghana’s prison system has about 43 detention facilities holding an estimated 13, 239 inmates across the country (www.ghanaprison.gov.gh). Just as the mainstream society, prison environment also presents challenges, including health, to the prisoner population. Among the prevalent diseases in Ghana’s prisons are tuberculosis, asthma and HIV/AIDS. Available statistics on HIV/AIDS infections in the prisons, which has sparked researcher’s interest in the current study, indicate fluctuations in infections since the inception of the HIV/AIDS campaigns in 2010. For example, whilst 136 prisoners, out of a population of 14, 979 were tested positive in 2014, the infection rate increased to 241 in 2015 despite the decrease in the year’s population to 14, 553. Although the researcher could not lay hands on

the 2016 data, the figures on 2014 and 2015 indicate an increase in infections, which is a matter of concern. The behavioural change campaigns in the prisons do not seem to be making the desired impact, thereby necessitating an investigation of the effectiveness of these campaigns. Hence, the current study which focused on assessing the aspect of feedback mechanisms using the PPAG as a case study.

10. Case Study

A case study is a research methodology ideal when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed (Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg, 1991). Three basic types of case studies have been identified- exploratory, explanatory and descriptive. The explanatory is used for conducting causal investigations while the descriptive requires a theory that can be developed for the description of the study. The exploratory on the other hand, takes place when cases are sometimes considered as a prelude to social research (Yin, 1993). Three other types have been suggested- intrinsic, instrumental and collective. A case study is intrinsic when the researcher tends to have an interest in the issue or case; instrumental is when the case is used to understand an issue further than what is obvious to the observer. And the collective is, however, deployed when a group of cases are studied (Stake, 1995). The fact that this study is purely a qualitative one, which will involve an exploration of the problem, the researcher deemed it appropriate to use this research design.

11. Methodology

The study was qualitative and therefore used semi-structured face-to-face interviews. A qualitative refers to a research which findings are expressed predominantly in non-numerical terms: makes descriptive analysis of the observations or data collected (Reinard, 1998). A face-to-face interview, which Berger (2000) defines as a conversation between an investigator (someone who wants to gain information about a subject of interest) and the informant (someone who has information of interest who can always be revisited by the researcher), were employed in eliciting data based on its ability to "generate a good response rate" (Hocking & Stacks, 1992, p. 193). This means that by using interviews, the researcher had the opportunity to probe respondents for clarifications on vague responses. The indepth nature of the enquiry required respondents with specialised knowledge on the operations of the PPAG's campaigns. As such, a purposive sampling technique was used in selecting two respondents, the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officer of the PPAG and the Western and Central regions' coordinator of HIV/AIDS campaigns in prisons for the study based on their in-depth knowledge on the research questions. They were interviewed on the two key concepts of the topic under investigation, communication strategies and feedback mechanisms.

12. Findings and Discussions

The findings of the study have addressed the basic requirements of the objectives outlined. The investigation was on the key concepts, campaign strategies and the feedback mechanisms.

12.1 PPAG'S Campaign Strategies

Interviews conducted with the field coordinator of the Central and Western zone of PPAG and the Monitoring and Evaluation officer of PPAG discovered that the PPAG mainly uses

face-to-face medium of communication with inmates in the prisons. Its campaigns, therefore, employ communication strategies that allow field workers to have direct contacts and interactions with the inmates. These inmates have been categorised into two: peer educators and the general inmate population. Specifically, PPAG deploys the following as its communication or strategies:

- Drama performances
- Peer educators
- Film shows
- Distribution of informational materials

Drama performance and Film Shows

Drama is one of the strategies field workers of PPAG use in communicating HIV/AIDS messages to inmates in prisons. This strategy makes use of selected inmates who are trained to play certain roles in a play that contributes towards audience's (in this case inmates) understanding of the theme of the play. A respondent confirmed this:

We've an institution, which is Theatre for Social Change. They go to all the prisons across the country to train the inmates to act role, which they act to all the inmates. After the drama and film shows there is discussion to of the issues we are addressing, which is HIV/AIDS.

Distribution of hygiene kits

The distribution of hygiene kits – pepsodent, toothbrush and shaving blades - was also found to be a strategy used in the campaigns. The logic behind this approach was explained in the words of one of the participants:

It's an intervention to prevent people from sharing used blades because it can also transmit infections, which was the case before we started distributing the hygiene kits. However, though it's an intervention, it's also helping in terms of peer education. You're an officer so you understand the system very well. Initially, most of the inmates were not ready to talk to our peer educators and you know the prison, you must show something so when we started providing all the inmates with these items and they recognized that it was the project which the peer educators were engaged in, they started opening up. Though it's not directly, indirectly it helping in peer education.

Informational materials

In addition to the above, is the use of flyers and brochures. These contain short and easy-to-read information on HIV/AIDS that aim to inform, influence inmates' attitude and cause behaviour change among the inmate population. According to the informants, this strategy helps to share specific messages in unambiguous terms.

Peer Educators

Selected inmates are also engaged as peer educators to further disseminate the already shared information with the larger inmate population through drama and other strategies. With this strategy, each peer educator is assigned a group of inmates and tasked to lead discussions on a topic on HIV. They then report to the PPAG coordinator on the progress, in terms of understanding, challenges, or observations made during the focused group discussion. These peer educators therefore serve as conduits of feedback from inmates to the PPAG's field

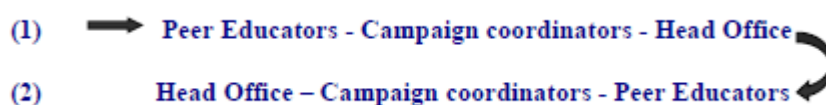
workers.

12.2 PPAG'S Feedback Mechanisms

In relation to how feedback on HIV/AIDS is obtained in prisons, the informants outlined certain mechanisms that are in place to ensure feedback is received. Question-answer sessions during fora, peer educators one-on-one meetings as well as focused group discussions with fellow inmates were found to be the main mechanisms for collecting feedback from inmates. The responses of inmates during these discussions constitute feedback. In cases where peer educators directly engage inmates in one-on-one or focused group discussions, they become the transmitters of feedback from such discussions to PPAG coordinators for onward submission to the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit of PPAG for analysis. The outcome of the analysis is seen as an indication of how the campaign messages are impacting on the mindsets of the prison population.

The diagrams, 1 and 2, show how feedback is communicated to PPAG headquarters. The diagram 1 shows the mechanism through which PPAG receives its feedback on its campaigns in the prisons, whilst the diagram 2 illustrates how PPAG'S processed feedback and subsequent actions are implemented through the reverse of the reporting relationship.

The diagrams 1 and 2 below show PPAG'S feedback mechanism.



The diagram (1) illustrates how feedback from the prison inmates is transmitted. From the diagram, it can be seen that feed is first received by inmate peer educators who in turn pass it on to PPAG's campaign coordinators for onward transmission to PPAG's headquarters. As found in the study, the feedback transmission in diagram 1 is centred on peer educators. They collect feedback from fellow inmates by probing them with the objective of assessing their understanding of the message, readiness to apply the messages or otherwise, which is transmitted to the coordinators as feedback. These peer educators, therefore, function as conduits/transmitters of feedback to PPAG, as shown in diagram 1. The content of the feedback received is analysed after which considerations and necessary actions are taken and conversely implemented through the reverse of the reporting relationship, as illustrated in diagram 2, thus, the decisions concerning the next intervention actions start from the head office through to the peer educators.

PPAG also measures feedback through long term mechanisms. This long-term feedback entails a measure of the overall impact of the HIV/AIDS campaigns, vis-à-vis the earlier feedback (immediate feedback).

These surveys seek to verify the authenticity of the earlier feedback received through peer educators. The surveys measure the level of inmates' knowledge, understanding and

behavioural change that had taken place over the campaign period. It was discovered that the surveys are conducted to collect, mostly quantitative data, on specific variables. Data gathered form the basis for adjustments to future campaign strategies.

Findings of the study also indicate that the immediate feedback is purely qualitative in nature while the long-term feedback, which makes use of surveys, is quantitative. The former does not allow for precise measurement of respondents' behaviours and attitudes. For this reason, there exists the possibility of peer educators generalising responses from few respondents to the entire inmate population. This, the study observed, can potentially result in inappropriate measures meant to address the defects highlighted in the feedback received. Since feedback received through peer educators partly informs the design of the end-term evaluation surveys, its inaptness may misinform the head office of the PPAG. This observation is based on the fact that the informants interviewed admitted the inherence of this problem, which one intimated could undermine the appropriateness of the design of end-line surveys.

They (peer educators) will tell you everything is fine but in reality things may not be going on well on the ground.

As observed in the study, PPAG's reliance on peer educators as channels for feedback comes with its own ramifications. Because peer educators serve as channels, inmates who use antisocial behaviour, including refusal to provide appropriate response on issues concerning them, as a means of communicating their needs (Sondenaa, Wangsholm and Ross, 2016) will be misconstrued. The face-to-face approach used by peer educators to elicit feedback from prisoners in this category will experience challenges. Again, because the original response/feedback from the inmates is mediated through this mechanism that engages peer educators, the feedback could potentially experience some white-wash or alteration, in which case, PPAG will be misinformed on the reality on the ground.

12.3 Constraints of Feedback Mechanisms

In spite of informants' view that PPAG's feedback mechanisms are helpful in the campaigns, the study observed certain challenges that impede their complete effectiveness or success.

Lack of linguistic Assessment

It was also found that PPAG does not do a language assessment of inmates to know the linguistic challenges and devise a way of addressing the communication needs of all its target population, inmates. A respondent admitted the lack of this language needs assessment in PPAG's campaigns:

Language barrier really hasn't come up. If an inmate doesn't understand twi, he might understand English or another language. Nobody has ever mentioned it. Yes, in our next meeting I will bring it up.

Inaccurate feedback

The study found that the mechanism that engages peer educators for the collection and transmission of feedback comes with its associated challenges, since the original feedback from the inmate population is mediated through the involvement of these peer educators. It was discovered that inmate peer educators are not offered any rewards to motivate them. The inability of PPAG to motivate the inmates who serve as peer educators was observed as a panacea for inaccurate feedback. One responded commented on this:

This issue of motivation comes up but we let them (inmate peer educators) know that the programme is meant to benefit them, and so if they make demands PPAG may fold up its programme in let's say Sekondi Central Prison if such demands come from the peer educators there. Yes, it is possible feedback can be affected because of inadequate motivation but we try to let the peer educators know that other inmates will be prepared to do it if they don't do it.

In corroborating this copious admission by the first respondent, the second respondent said:

Sometimes they will tell you everything is fine but in reality things may not be going on well on the ground. That is why we follow up with a client satisfaction survey to find out what is happening on the ground.

13. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study found that PPAG uses drama, film shows, informational materials and peer educators as channels for delivering its sensitisation campaigns in the prisons. Question-answer sessions, peer educator one-on-one and focused group discussions were identified as the mechanisms for feedback on the campaigns. Among the critical findings are the observations that PPAG does relies heavily on peer educators for immediate or early feedback, it is unable to motivate them to give off their best and finally PPAG does not conduct a language needs assessment of the inmate population that its sensitisation campaigns aim to modify their behaviour.

Based on the above findings and the analysis thereof, the following are recommended to help boost the efficacy of feedback mechanisms and the campaigns as a whole:

- Peer educators must be motivated to ensure they play their role effectively, since the lack of this may result in fabrication of stories as feedback to PPAG.
- Non-personal opportunities should be incorporated as mechanisms for eliciting first-hand feedback void of human interference or mediation currently caused by the direct involvement of the peer educators. The use of suggestion boxes will remedy this problem. This is premised on the fact that Ghana's prisons prohibit inmates from having access to modern channels of communication: telephone and internet (email system), and this limits the available options to only suggestion boxes, which can reduce the involvement of peer educators in feedback transmission.
- There is the need for research in the area language needs of prisoners in Ghana. PPAG should take the lead in conducting a preliminary language needs assessment of inmates to ensure steps are taken to address those needs. This is because the campaigns target the entire prisoner population, which has inmates from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

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