

Newspaper Stories on HIV/AIDS in Jordan: A Look into the Lexicon

Jihad M. Hamdan
University of Jordan

Abstract: *The study reported here explored the HIV/AIDS-related lexicon in two mainstream Arabic dailies in Jordan over a period of 21 years. Throughout the time period, the most frequently used term to refer to HIV/AIDS was al-eidz, the Arabicized acronym for 'AIDS'. Both Jordanian and Western media tended to emphasize the role of religion and social values in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The data also showed a significant attitudinal shift, over time, towards HIV/AIDS. This was evident in the gradual disappearance of the negative attributes, e.g. 'plague of our time', which were used intensively in the earlier stages to describe HIV/AIDS and people living with it. It was also clear in the slogans used to mobilize the public and other stakeholders to act against the disease. Finally, the study suggested that future research examine the portrayal of HIV/AIDS in the lexicon of tabloids and broadcast and electronic media.*

1. Introduction

The study reported here is a preliminary exploration of the words and phrases used in Arabic newspaper stories in Jordan to describe one of the sexually transmitted diseases, viz. HIV/AIDS and persons living with it¹. In this regard, some readers, particularly non-Arabs, may find it useful to know that Jordan is a small country (92,300 sq km) with a population of approximately six million whose native language is Arabic, and main religion is Islam (Muslims 94% and Christians 6%). The literacy rate is 91.3% of the total population (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

The first HIV/AIDS case in Jordan was detected in 1986. Shortly afterwards, the Jordanian National AIDS Program (JNAP) was established. By 2006 (end of data collection), the cumulative reported cases had risen to 492, 35% of whom were Jordanians, with 71 deaths. A report that appeared in *Al Rai* daily, a leading Jordanian newspaper, in May 2007 estimated the real figure to be around 4000. In a message posted on the website of JNAP (2007), Darwazeh, the then Minister of Health, warned that "low prevalence does not mean we are safe from HIV/AIDS." He added that the epidemic "is a threat to development as it requires an unprecedented and extraordinary response, and it affects every aspect of human life and national economies."

In a short review, Lettau (2000) perceived contemporary terminology of infectious diseases (ID) in English as a collection of "foreign words, slang, euphemisms, misnomers, acronyms, and a variety of other terms referring to people, places, foods, colors, and animals" (p. 734). Moreover, he sarcastically posited that disease eradication achievement does not sometimes imply more

than a name change. For instance, *venereal disease* is still alive but under another name, i.e. sexually transmitted disease (STD). Further, Lettau (ibid) reported that the acronym GRID *gay-related immune deficiency* was an early term for AIDS in the 1980s. However, it “died in infancy ... as a result of both political and epidemiological incorrectness” (p. 734). Another early reference to AIDS was “the Haitian disease”. Lettau added that some people still refer to AIDS as “the American disease” (p. 737).

Moto (2004) investigated the relationship that holds between the Malawian culture and the language and linguistic expressions used in discussing matters of sex and HIV/AIDS. The author reported that the majority of Malawians use the term *kaqchirombo* ‘a small beast’ to refer to HIV. This name implies that one can get rid of this disease in the same manner one can fight and kill a wild beast (ibid: 354). However, the epidemic was also known as *matenda a boma* ‘government's disease’, an echo of the unprecedented interest the Malawian government had shown in the disease (Lwanda, cited in Moto, 2004: 354). The paper concluded that the language used revealed a “sense of denial as well as acceptance of fate and determinism” (Moto, 2004: 344).

A number of studies focused on the portrayal of HIV/AIDS in Western media (e.g. Clarke, 1992; Lupton, 1999; Sacks, 1996). In a more recent article, Clarke, McLellan and Hoffman-Goetz (2006) examined the portrayal of HIV/AIDS in the two highest circulating magazines directed at African Americans and African Canadians, i.e. *Ebony* and *Essence*. The sample consisted of all articles that mentioned HIV or AIDS, or discussed HIV/AIDS along with another topic (n= 32) from January 1997 to October 2001. The results showed that metaphors, similes, euphemisms and clichés abound. For instance, AIDS was portrayed as “a violent and aggressive disease”. Combat metaphors were also used, e.g. “AIDS war” that “attacks Black women” who must “fight the battle” (p. 500). Examples of euphemism included reference to a woman with the disease “on her journey” and how to “make her transition easier”. Another example was “Wendell passed” and he “quietly withered away of AIDS.” Black men who have sex with men (MSM) as well as with women were described as “brothers on the low down”, a euphemistic expression used instead of gay or bisexual (p. 501). MSM were also described as “brothers mired in stigma and denial.” An HIV-positive Black woman was portrayed as “a sister overcome by her illness.” Another feature which the authors highlighted was the epidemiological contrasts between infection rates for Blacks and Whites. Examples included “Black women continue to get infected at rates 20 times greater than those for White women” and “1 in 50 Black men are infected with HIV, compared with 1 in 250 White men” (p. 501). The role of religion [in this case the church] in the fight against HIV/AIDS was also emphasized; the Black church “should teach responsible sexual behavior as well as abstinence” (p. 502), and it is said to “have an obligation to counsel and comfort people” (p. 503).

Brodie et al. (2004) reported the findings of a comprehensive examination of media coverage of HIV/AIDS in the USA over a period of 22

years from 1981 to 2002. The study addressed issues such as increase or decrease of coverage over time, change of topics covered, the role of stories in educating the public about transmission, prevention, testing, and treatment, in addition to differences between print and broadcast coverage. The findings pointed to a decrease in total media coverage of HIV/AIDS since the late 1980s, and that media coverage echoed key events that have occurred over the history of the epidemic, e.g., Magic Johnson's announcement that he was HIV positive (16% of stories in 1992). The focus of news stories changed over the time period. The number one topic was HIV prevention (mainly composed of stories on HIV education and awareness efforts), followed by stories on HIV research (mainly on drugs, vaccines and treatments). One in ten stories was about transmission, and a similar account was about social issues, e.g., stigma. The tone of media coverage also varied. The period of optimism was 1996-1999, whereas the period of pessimism was 2000-2002. Notwithstanding, print news stories were more likely to be optimistic than broadcast stories.

Dancy and Dutcher (2007) provided an overview of the National Library of Medicine's (NLM's) AIDS Community Information Outreach Program in the United States during the years 1994 to 2005. The main objective of the Program was to improve access to HIV/AIDS information for the targeted constituencies/groups that included, among others, news media and patients in addition to the affected community. Part of the findings was directed to "developing specific educational or information materials such as culturally appropriate or language specific tools" (ibid: 324). In this regard, one of the funded organizations, viz. Aids Education Global Information System (AEGIS), launched a website which posted valuable information as was perceived by a person living with HIV/AIDS. His/Her testimonial was as follows: "Thanks so much for keeping this individual site up and running! I sincerely believe what I had learned from AEGiS has played a significant role in keeping me alive and fairly healthy for 15 years! And that allows me to be of use to others as well" (ibid: 328).

People living with and affected by HIV/AIDS continue to suffer from stigma, particularly in poor and developing countries. In his seminal contribution 'Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity', Goffman (1963: 3) described stigma as "an attribute that is deeply discrediting within a particular social interaction". The person with the attribute is "reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one" (ibid: 3).

Ironically enough, research proposals may suffer from AIDS stigma as well. Goode (2003) reported that researchers who study AIDS and other STDs had been warned by US federal health officials that their proposals for research grants might come under unusual scrutiny if they include sensitive language, e.g. "sex workers", "men who sleep with men", "anal sex" and "needle exchange." Goode (2003) quoted Alfred Sommer, from Johns Hopkins University, as saying that a researcher at his institution had been advised by a project officer at the National Institute of Health (NIH) to use a more euphemistic form for the term "sex worker" in a grant proposal for a study of HIV prevention among

prostitutes. Sommer added that the idea of grants being subject to political screening was creating a “pernicious sense of insecurity” among researchers. In the same vein, a researcher at the University of California said that he had been advised by an NIH project officer to make sure that the abstract of grant application should not include contentious words such as ‘gay’ or ‘homosexual’ or ‘transgender’. The researcher quoted the project officer as saying that grants that included those words were “screened”.

In the modern world, media play a very important role in shaping and reflecting the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of the public toward the various aspects of their lives, including health and illness. Thus, examining how HIV/AIDS is reported in mainstream newspapers constitutes a useful technique which can contribute to promoting our knowledge of how particular cultural groups, in this case Jordanians, understand the disease, its causes and means of prevention. In this context, media stories, which use sensitive words and phrases may only contribute to fueling stigma and stereotypes against people living with HIV/AIDS and/or promoting self- or internalized stigma among them. Thomas et al. (cited in Holzemer et al., 2007: 1008-1009) reported a significant negative correlation between internalized stigma in people living with HIV/AIDS in India and the quality of their life.

It is believed that a thorough examination of the lexicon of Arabic newspaper stories on HIV/AIDS will unveil the words and phrases which have emerged over time as collocates of this disease. It is hoped that this type of data and analysis will contribute to the ongoing debate on the role of media, particularly newspapers, in fueling or defueling AIDS stigma. After two decades of Arabic newspapers disseminating news and information on HIV/AIDS in Jordan, it may be assumed that a related lexicon has developed. On this assumption, the study reported here seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What are the specific words, phrases, idiomatic expressions, clichés, etc that characterize the lexicon of Arabic newspaper stories on HIV/AIDS in Jordan?
2. To what extent does this lexicon fuel or defuel the AIDS stigma?

2. Data collection and processing

The data were collected from two leading Arabic dailies in Jordan, namely *Addustour* and *Al Rai*, over a period of 21 years from 1986 to 2006. These newspapers are examples of mainstream media which publish all sorts of stories with no obvious religious, ethnic or socio-economic bias. News stories in each newspaper were manually screened for inclusion. Each story was examined to determine whether or not HIV/AIDS was its dominant topic. The inclusion criterion developed by Brodie et al. (2004: 8) was adopted: If 50% or more of the story was direct reporting on HIV/AIDS, it was included; the percentage of direct reporting dropped to 33% if the headline included the name of the epidemic. The resulting sample totaled 177 stories, 84 in *Addustour* and 93 in *Al Rai*. The topic focus of each story was identified. Moreover, all words and phrases that were used to describe or refer to HIV/AIDS and people living with

or affected by the disease were recorded and examined with a view to characterizing the lexical features of this type of discourse.

3. Results and discussion

As stated earlier, the database of the study extended over 21 years, i.e. 1986-2006. In order to facilitate tracing the development of the HIV/AIDS lexicon in newspaper stories during this period, the researcher analyzed the data in terms of four chronological stages, each consisting of five years, except for the last one which covered six years. Table 1 shows the distribution of the news stories per stage, year and newspaper.

Table 1: Distribution of news stories between 1986 and 2006

Stage & No. of Stories	Year	Addustour	Al Rai	Total
1 (1986-1990) N = 33	1986	2	2	4
	1987	4	1	5
	1988	4	5	9
	1989	2	2	4
	1990	7	4	11
2 (1991-1995) N = 52	1991	5	6	11
	1992	6	12	18
	1993	5	6	11
	1994	3	3	6
	1995	3	3	6
3 (1996-2000) N = 33	1996	4	2	6
	1997	3	6	9
	1998	3	4	7
	1999	2	2	4
	2000	2	5	7
4 (2001-2006) N = 59	2001	2	4	6
	2002	3	4	7
	2003	4	3	7
	2004	4	2	6
	2005	4	8	12
	2006	12	9	21
Total		84	93	177

Before proceeding with the analysis, it is useful to observe that the relatively small number of stories over a period of 21 years is, in a sense, a reflection of the low profile of HIV/AIDS in the Jordanian community, probably due to its low prevalence among Jordanians. The total number of annual outlets fluctuates between 4 and 21 with two sharp rises in 1992 ($n = 18$) and 2006 ($n =$

21). While it is not easy to account for the first rise in the absence of evidence derived from the stories themselves, one may appeal to possible links between the second rise and Jordan's commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the diagnosis of the first HIV/AIDS case in the country.

Prior to an in-depth examination of the HIV/AIDS lexicon, one may wish to be informed about the main themes which featured in the data. This background information is of special importance as the topic of the text is a key determiner of its vocabulary and structure. Table 2 provides an overview of the focus of the news stories in each of the four stages².

Table 2 shows that awareness was the number one focus. These stories were mainly announcements of activities held or scheduled to be held in the various governorates to raise public awareness towards HIV/AIDS in terms of causes, prevention measures and treatment. Opinions and commentaries were the least recurrent outlets. The fact that HIV/AIDS has not attracted but a small number of individuals to express their views on it may be attributed to its low prevalence or high sensitivity in the Jordanian community. The AIDS stigma, though not the focus of any single news story, tended to surface in stigma fueling or defueling expressions in all types of outlets.

Table 2: Distribution of news stories in terms of focus

Focus	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
	1986-1990	1991-1995	1996-2000	2001-2006
Awareness announcements and reports	24	34	17	30
HIV/AIDS status in other countries	4	5	6	7
Statements (e.g. by officials)	2	11	6	19
Opinions and commentaries	3	2	4	3
Total	33	52	33	59

Now we turn to the detailed description of the lexicon in each of the four stages.

3.1. Stage one: 1986-1990

Table 1 shows that stage one included 33 stories. The descending order (based on rough calculations) of the most frequently used labels for HIV/AIDS in this stage was as follows:

- (1) a. al-eidz
AIDS

- b. maraḍ/ wabaʔ/vayruus al-eidz
AIDS disease/epidemic/virus
- c. maraḍ (vayruus) al-ʔawz al-manaaʔa
Immune Deficiency Disease (Virus)
- d. mutalaazimat al-ʔawz al-manaaʔi al-muktasab "al-eidz"
Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome "AIDS"
- e. maraḍ/wabaaʔ fuqdaan al-manaaʔa al-muktasaba "al-eidz"
Acquired Immune Deficiency Disease/ Epidemic "AIDS"

The first occurrence of the disease in all news stories was limited to these labels. Further reference to the disease in the same story was often made through such terms as *al-maraḍ* 'the disease' *al-wabaaʔ* 'the epidemic', *al-vayruus* 'the virus', *ʔtaʔuun* 'the plague' or through negative attributes collocating with these terms as in *al-maraḍ al-khaṭiir/ al-qaatil* 'the dangerous/fatal disease', *al-wabaaʔ al-khafiyy* 'the invisible epidemic', and *taʔuun al-ʔasr* 'the plague of our time'. While *al-maraḍ* and, to a lesser extent, *al-wabaaʔ* sound neutral, the other terms are judgmental, to say the least. The following attributes were also attested in the data:

- (2) a. la ʔilaaja lah
It is incurable
- b. yuhaddid al-ʔalam
It threatens the world
- c. yuhaddid at-tanmiya
It threatens development
- d. akhtaḥ maraḍ fi al-qarn al-ʔishreen
It is the most dangerous disease in the 20th century
- e. yusaawi al-mawt
It is equal to death
- f. laysa maraḍan ʔaadiyyan
It is not a common disease
- g. laysa mushkila kabiira fi al-ʔurdun
It is not a major problem in Jordan

Except for (g), the negative collocates focus on the threatening and fatal nature of the disease. It seems that the use of negative words and expressions was meant to highlight the serious threat of the disease since most of the attributes were embedded in news announcing or reporting HIV/AIDS awareness activities against the disease in Jordan. User intention aside, these negative attributes may contribute to stigmatizing HIV/AIDS, people living with it, their families and local communities.

Now we turn to items used in stage one to describe or refer to people living with HIV/ AIDS³.

- (3) a. People infected with the disease
- b. Carriers of the virus
- c. AIDS patients

- d. Epidemic victims
- e. AIDS victims

Not even once does the reader attest in the data an equivalent of the less judgmental and more humanistic term 'people living with HIV/AIDS'. Moreover, the data contained mixed attitudes towards the disease. For instance, the collocates in (4a-b) tended to reflect negative and stigma-fueling attitudes as they associated HIV/AIDS with homosexuality, drug addiction, prostitution, etc. In this context, adherence to religion and social values was viewed as a means of salvation. The pronoun 'it' in the examples refers to the disease:

- (4) a. It is associated with homosexuality, adultery and blood transfusion
- b. It prevails among drug addicts, homosexual men, and men having sex with prostitutes.
- c. Adhering to traditions, beliefs and values protects the public from the disease.
- d. Religion immunizes us against the disease.

On the other hand, the data contained a few examples which sounded more scientific and exhibited an earlier humanistic approach towards the disease and people living with it.

- (5) a. The cases are leading a normal life.
- b. We combat AIDS through education.
- c. The virus is not transmitted through tears and saliva.
- d. The incidence of AIDS in Jordan is not alarming.
- e. We fight the disease, not the patient.
- f. Casual contact does not transmit the disease.
- g. We should develop a positive attitude towards those who contracted the disease.

3.2. Stage two: 1991-1995

Stage two comprised 52 stories. Once again, the loan acronym *al-eidz* 'AIDS' continued to top the list of the disease labels; it mainly collocated with Jordan's celebration of World AIDS Day. The other most frequently used labels were 'AIDS disease', 'Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome', "AIDS" and 'AIDS virus'. Compared with stage one, the full name of the disease followed immediately by the acronym started to figure higher in the data. This might be a reflection of the more scientific knowledge the media had accumulated about the disease. However, the media's drive for brevity and economy of space would justify the high frequency of occurrence of shorter labels.

Stage two also echoed the use of many of the judgmental and negative collocations that appeared in stage one though with slight variation in phraseology.

- (6) a. The fatal disease/virus
- b. The disease of our time
- c. The damned disease

- d. A scaring nightmare for humanity
- e. The uncontrollable disease

Once again, an equivalent of the term 'people living with HIV/AIDS' was not attested in the data. The terms used in actuality were equivalent to 'infected with the disease' and 'carriers of the virus'. While the term 'AIDS victims' had hardly occurred, a new term, viz. *ʔiijaabiyyuu al-maʔl* 'HIV positive' was used to describe the carriers of the virus.

Although associations between the disease, homosexuality, drug addiction and adultery abound, some new associations emerged, i.e. associating the disease with tattooing, infected mothers and unspecified causes. These new associations were particularly important since they suggested a new category of 'innocent patients' compared with e.g. 'those who contracted the disease by choice' [sic]. However, one may argue that "classifying some as innocent means classifying others as guilty" (Jain and Jain 2005). Once again, the limited prevalence of the disease was attributed to "Jordanians' adherence to virtues, religion and genuine Arab morality in addition to the active role of the Ministry of Health in combating the epidemic". The sub-lexicon of this stage also highlighted some disease combating measures, viz. raising public awareness, educating the youth, using medical devices (e.g. condoms) and offering counseling services to patient families.

What makes the sub-lexicon of this stage significantly different from that of stage one is the slogans it contained which aimed at mobilizing the public and stakeholders to act against the disease. The slogans translate as follows:

- (7) a. One Front in the AIDS Battle
- b. AIDS Battle: Commitment for All
- c. AIDS: Call for Immediate Action
- d. Family against AIDS
- e. Shared Rights, Shared Responsibilities

Another look at the slogans shows that HIV/AIDS is viewed as an enemy, in fact a very fierce and threatening one. This perception explains the use of combat and military terms such as 'front' and 'battle' or 'weapon' as in 'awareness is the only weapon to stop the incidence of the disease'.

3. 3. Stage three: 1996-2000

Stage three comprised 33 stories. The frequency of occurrence of the items used to refer to the disease in this stage was very similar to that of stages one and two. In descending order, they were as follows: 'AIDS', 'AIDS disease/epidemic', 'Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome' "AIDS" and 'AIDS virus'. In actuality, the acronym collocated primarily with World AIDS Day and to a lesser extent with phrases such as 'combating AIDS', 'AIDS infection', 'Jordanian National AIDS Program' and 'people infected with or carrying AIDS'.

The judgmental and stigma fueling attributes and alarming expressions in stage three also abound. Below are three-specific terms:

- (8) a. The World calamity
 b. The satanic disease
 c. The destructive disease
 d. The health disaster of the time

While referring to people living with HIV/AIDS, terms equivalent to 'persons infected with the disease' and 'carriers of the virus' continued to show up. Further, no equivalent of the term 'people living with HIV/AIDS' was attested in the data. What is characteristic here is the more frequent use of the neutral and non-stigmatized term 'AIDS Patients'. One news story even called for 'treating such patients with due respect'. It added: 'we need to isolate the disease not the patient'.

HIV/AIDS associations with homosexuality, drug addiction, adultery and infected mothers were also a feature of stage three. However, the name of the disease collocated more than once with 'orphaned children' who contracted the disease from their 'infected mothers'. Orphaned children are a subcategory of the 'innocent patients' mentioned in stage two. The vulnerable groups highlighted in stage three included the youth, women, Jordanian students abroad, frequent travelers to and from 'diseased countries', unskilled domestic workers and tourism and hotel staff. Another two highly vulnerable categories were missing, viz. sex workers and nightclub female workers. It may be the case that these two groups were overlooked on purpose, i.e. not to outrage public opinion against licensing the institutions where such women work.

Echoing the earlier stages, the data of stage three attributed the limited prevalence of the disease to religious virtues, tradition, high morality and the active role of the Ministry of Health. Disease combating measures mentioned in earlier stages resurfaced, e.g. educating the public and paramedics about the possible causes of HIV/AIDS transmission and offering counseling services to the patients and their families.

The sub-lexicon of this stage also highlighted the slogans which echoed those adopted by the UN HIV/AIDS program in its campaign against the disease. The slogans translate as follows:

- (9) a. One world, One Hope
 b. Force for Change: World AIDS Campaign with Young People
 c. AIDS: Men Make a Difference

3. 4. Stage four: 2001-2006

Stage four comprised 59 stories. It was, in a sense, a replica of stages two and three with regard to frequently used names for HIV/AIDS. The acronym AIDS continued to top the list, followed by 'AIDS disease/epidemic', 'Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome' "AIDS" and 'AIDS virus'.

Once again, the acronym collocated primarily with World AIDS Day and, to a lesser extent, with Arabic phrases equivalent to 'combating AIDS, TB and malaria', 'combating AIDS and drugs', 'AIDS infection', 'Jordanian National AIDS Program' and 'people infected with or carrying AIDS'.

A careful examination of stage four data shows a significant decrease in the use of judgmental and stigmatizing jargon. In effect, one hardly encounters expressions such as 'the vicious disease', 'the damned disease' and 'AIDS is a time bomb'. In contrast, there is a proliferation of items that aim at raising awareness about the causes, symptoms and consequences of the disease among the public, the medical staff and other stakeholders. The data also showed a growing sympathy with the people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS while calling for serious measures and collaborative effort to fight the disease. Below are illustrative examples:

- (10) a. The Jordanian National AIDS Program focuses on combating infection and providing health care for the patients and their families.
- b. To win the battle against AIDS, our enemy must be the disease, not the patient.
- c. "The workshop deepened our understanding of the problems which the patients and their families encounter. It also educated us on how to help the patients get rid of the feeling of sin", a nurse said.
- d. AIDS is not contracted through illegitimate sex only. For instance, X is a child who contracted the disease through her infected mother.
- e. "Abandoning the patient is a mistake made by the lay and many of the medical staff", a physician in the AIDS Information Center said.
- f. A girl who contracts AIDS remains innocent until she becomes a teen, when she starts to experience AIDS-related stigma and discrimination.

In this stage, the term 'AIDS patients' occurred more frequently than in stage three. For the first time, both 'AIDS patients' and 'AIDS victims' started to give way to the Arabic equivalent of 'people living with AIDS'. This shift is believed to be a reflection of a more rational and humanistic perception of the disease emerging in the Jordanian community.

Awareness, counseling and education campaigns and activities in stage four targeted the youth, policemen, health-care workers, civil defense staff, teachers and students, workers and employers, people living with HIV/AIDS and the general public. While sex workers and nightclub female workers continued to be missing from the vulnerable groups list, prisoners and persons infected with other sexually transmitted diseases were included. Counseling services were mainly offered through face-to-face meetings; however, stage four witnessed the initiation of a hot line service by the Ministry of Health.

In 2006, Jordanian reporters and journalists were targeted for the first time. A workshop was held in Amman by Family Health International with a view to improving the competence of journalist in preparing HIV/AIDS- related reports and providing them with positive language skills, which may contribute to reducing stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS and their families. The exact impact of this type of activity on media language used in addressing HIV/AIDS-related issues has to await further research.

Jordanian physicians, officials, educationists and clerics took part in awareness campaigns. Nonetheless, the focus of statements and slogans made by each group was not always the same. While physicians and educationists focused on statistical data (e.g. cumulative reported cases in terms of number, nationality, gender, age, etc.), transmission methods, symptoms, medication and prevention measures, officials and politicians emphasized the political commitment of the Jordanian government towards combating the disease and ensuring health and social care services for the patients and their families. Clerics reiterated the role of religion and morals in preventing and combating the disease. To this end, they focused on illegitimate sexual contact, illicit drugs and alcohol (sic.) as if they were the sole ways in which HIV is contracted. In so doing, they tended to view the disease as a curse or punishment inflicted by God on the 'sinners'. The term 'safe sex' has never been attested in the data.

The sub-lexicon of stage four included a larger number of slogans that aimed at reducing the social stigma associated with HIV/AIDS, people living with it and their families. These slogans were either the Arabic version of the UN slogans or domestically tailored ones within the same context. Below is a sample of these slogans:

- (10) a. Live and Let Live
- b. Stop AIDS, Keep the Promise
- c. I Care ... Do You?
- d. Together to Provide Prevention, Medication and Care for People Living with AIDS and Vulnerable Groups

The data of this stage comprised, for the first time, a statement made in 2004 by a Jordanian young man living with HIV/AIDS. Below is an excerpt from his narrative:

I lack the courage to visit private or public clinics. Even if doctors understand my case, who guarantees that other members of the medical team will behave in the same way? When I report to a clinic, I feel that I'm a strange creature; the condemning looks and whispers are always around. When the company where I used to work told me that I tested HIV positive, I was completely shocked and lost consciousness. When I woke up, the manager told me that I had to find another job. He also asked the porter to collect the teacups and pots and throw them in the garbage container. In fact, he didn't know that I used to work in another building. At the time, I had no idea about the disease. I was very worried about my parents for fear they had been infected. I bought a small book on AIDS and read it. I was

relieved when I knew that the disease is not transmitted through casual contact.

A physician at the AIDS Information Center in Jordan commented on the case as follows: “This case was reported 10 years ago but the patient still enjoys good health; he is a carrier. HIV is not transmitted through casual contacts with either carriers or patients”. It seems that both the narrative and the comment convey one message, i.e. stigmatizing people living with HIV/AIDS and severing ties with them is scientifically and socially unjustifiable. According to Brimlow et al. (2003), HIV-related stigma refers to a myriad of negative attitudes, beliefs, and policies directed at people perceived to have HIV/AIDS and the individuals, groups and communities associated with them.

Nonetheless, people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS in Jordan and developing countries in particular continue to suffer from stigma. In this context, Herek (1990) cited previous studies reporting that people with AIDS were evaluated more negatively than people with other incurable diseases, even by health care workers. Further supportive evidence to this observation came from a top official and physician in Jordan, viz. the Deputy Minister of Health, who admitted in 2002 that “AIDS patients suffer from discrimination at work, school, and even worse, at hospitals and health care centers”. In the same vein, the psychological counselor at the AIDS Information Center in Jordan added in 2004 that “the community usually sympathizes with patients who suffer from incurable diseases provided that they are not AIDS patients”.

The perception of HIV/AIDS as an enemy and the use of military terms in the fight against it continued to surface, though infrequently, in stage four.

- (11) a. We will not win this battle unless we make the virus our enemy.
- b. AIDS is a fatal disease that invades the world.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

The study reported here explored the HIV/AIDS-related lexicon in two mainstream Arabic dailies in Jordan over a period of 21 years. Throughout the time period, the most frequently used terms to refer to HIV/AIDS were the Arabicized acronym for ‘AIDS’, followed by the Arabic equivalents of ‘AIDS disease/epidemic’ and ‘Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome’ “AIDS”. It seems that the acronym was used more frequently than the full name due to economy of space in newspapers. Many of the attributes associated with the epidemic, particularly in the first two stages, tended to have negative connotations (e.g. ‘It threatens development’, ‘the dangerous/fatal disease’, ‘the plague of our time’ and ‘the satanic disease’). It was argued that the use of such negative and stigmatizing attributes and metaphors, regardless of their truth-value, was meant to highlight the serious threat of the disease since most of them were embedded in news reporting awareness activities against the disease in Jordan

Euphemism was hardly evident in the data; *tuwuffiyya* ‘passed away’ rather than *maata* ‘died’ was the only euphemistic term used to refer to those

patients whose death was ascribed to HIV/AIDS. What is worth noting in this regard is that not a single obituary in the time period referred to HIV/AIDS-related complications as a death cause. Moreover, not a single story in the data disclosed the real name or picture of any person living with HIV/AIDS. However, sources who tended to release information, verify facts and interpret information on the disease (e.g. medical staff, officials and social workers) were usually named.

Further examination of the data showed a mixed imaging of HIV/AIDS and people living with it. While some stories were in harmony with popular Western magazines in associating the disease with homosexuality and in describing people living with it as failures in morality, thus stigmatizing them as having contracted it through their own choices (Hammond, cited in Clarke, McLellan & Hoffman-Goetz, 2006: 497; Clarke, 1992), others provided a more humanistic imaging.

Both Jordanian and Western media tended to emphasize the role of religion in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The data also showed a significant attitudinal shift, over time, towards HIV/AIDS. This was evident in the gradual disappearance of the negative attributes which were used intensively in the earlier stages to describe HIV/AIDS and people living with it. It was also clear in the slogans used to mobilize the public and other stakeholders to act against the disease (e.g., Stage 2: 'One Front in the AIDS battle'; Stage 3: 'One World, One Hope'; Stage 4: 'I Care ... Do You?').

As the data of the study reported here came from Arabic mainstream newspapers in Jordan, future research may examine the portrayal of HIV/AIDS in the lexicon of tabloids. In contrast to print media, broadcast coverage (radio and television) and electronic media may as well be the focus of another study. One may also wish to see if a significant change has taken place in the lexicon of Jordanian mainstream newspaper stories on HIV/AIDS between 2007-2011, the period which has not been covered in the study reported here.

Endnotes

¹ I feel deeply indebted to the University of Jordan for allowing me a sabbatical leave during which this piece of research was carried out. I also wish to thank the former MA student, Shatha Zahran, for her assistance in data collection.

² A word of caution is due here. Focus refers to the main theme of the story; however, overlap of themes in the same story is also attested.

³ For the reader's convenience, particularly the reader who does not read Arabic or who finds it uneasy to follow transliteration, subsequent presentation of the Arabic illustrative examples will be made through their nearest English equivalents.

References

- Al-Nusour, Ahmad.** (2007). *Dahaayaa am?* [Victims or ...?] (In Arabic). *Al Rai Daily Newspaper*, 37: (13374).
- Brimlow, Deborah, Jennifer Cook and Richard Seaton.** (Eds.). (2003). 'Stigma and HIV/AIDS: A Review of the Literature'. http://test.stigmaactionnetwork.org/atomicDocuments/SANDocuments/20110330164904-HRSA_2003_Stigma%20and%20HIV-AIDS%20-%20A%20Review%20of%20the%20Literature.pdf (Retrieved on October 10, 2007).
- Brodie, Mollyann, Elizabeth Hamel, Lee Ann Brady, Jennifer Kates & Drew Altman.** (2004). 'Aids at 21: Media coverage of the HIV epidemic 1981-2002'. *Columbia Journalism Review*, (Supplement) 42/6: 1-8.
- Clarke, Juaane, N.** (1992). 'Cancer, heart disease, and AIDS: What do the media tell us about these diseases?' *Health Communication*, 4: 105-120.
- Clarke, Juaane, Lianne McLellan & Laurie Hoffman-Goetz.** (2006). 'The portrayal of HIV/AIDS in two popular African American Magazines'. *Journal of Health Communication*, 11: 495-507.
- Dancy, Nicole and Gale Dutcher.** (2007). 'HIV/AIDS information outreach: A community-based approach'. *Journal of the Medical Library Association*, 95/3: 323-329.
- Darwazeh, Samih.** (2007) 'Low prevalence does not mean we are safe from HIV/AIDS'. <http://www.moh.gov.jo/Aids/Aids/EIndex.html> (Retrieved on October 8, 2007)
- Goffman, Erving.** (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1963.
- Goode, Erica.** (2003). 'Certain words can trip up AIDS grants, scientists say'. *New York Times*. April 18. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/04/18/national/18GRAN.html> (Retrieved on October 9, 2007)
- Herek, Gregory.** (1990). 'Illness, stigma and AIDS'. In P. Costa and G. R. VandenBos (eds.). *Psychological Aspects of Serious Illness*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Holzemer, et al.** (2007). 'Validation of the HIV/AIDS stigma instrument-PLWA (HASI-P)'. *AIDS Care*, 19/8: 1002-1012.
- Jain, Mimmy and Savyasaachi Jain.** (2005). *HIV/AIDS Media Manual: India*. India: Thomas Foundation.
- Lettau, Ludwig.** (2000). 'The language of infectious disease: A light-hearted review'. *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, 31: 734-738
- Lupton, Deborah.** (1999). 'Archetypes of infection: People with HIV/AIDS in the Australian press in the mid 1990s'. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 21: 37-53.

- Moto, Francis.** (2004). 'Toward a study of the lexicon of sex and HIV/AIDS'. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 13/3: 343-362.
- Sacks, Valerie.** (1990). 'Women and AIDS: An analysis of media misrepresentations'. *Social Science and Medicine*, 42: 59-73.
- Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.** 'Demographics of Jordan'.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religi>