

Exploring the Cultural Context of HIV/AIDS Pandemic in a Nigerian Community: Implication for Culture Specific Prevention Programmes

Emeka E. Obioha

*Department of Social Anthropology and Sociology, National University of Lesotho, Roma,
Lesotho, Southern Africa
E-mail: eeobioha@yahoo.com*

KEYWORDS Culture. Human Immune Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. Pandemic. Programming. Nigeria

ABSTRACT The new face of Human Immune Virus (HIV)/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) has earned it recognition as a social problem due to the associated devastating social and cultural consequences on the individual and the society at large. As such, the pandemic needs to be given adequate social and cultural explication and exploration for the purpose of designing effective prevention programmes. This becomes important, as there may be cultural variations that need be understood before an effective programme could be designed. What works for a particular society in terms of HIV/AIDS prevention programming may not work out in another due to the cultural and human differences. The need to know the extent of the interrelationship between cultural practices/beliefs and HIV/AIDS for an effective programme design led to this rapid assessment in a culturally diverse state in Nigeria, which this paper presents. The assessment was carried out in Taraba state of Nigeria, adopting combined anthropological research techniques, namely key informant interview, written records and non-participant observations. The study among other things discovers the major HIV "hot spots" in the state and some behavioural risk factors sustaining the spread of HIV/AIDS. The observation shows that these risk factors and the major hot spots are interconnected with some specific cultural practices, which militate against effective and speedy prevention programmes in the state. The study therefore recommends a thorough understanding of people's cultural practices before HIV/AIDS prevention programme.