Reviewer's report

Title: Assessing impact of a media campaign on HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention in Nigeria: results from the VISION project evaluation

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Reviewer: Friday E Okonofua

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The study reports an assessment of a media campaign project aimed at creating awareness and preventing HIV/AIDS in three Local Government Areas of Nigeria. The project examined the effects of the project on three outcome variables – (1) discussion of HIV/AIDS with one’s partner, (2) awareness that consistent condom use reduces HIV risk, and (3) condom use at last intercourse.

The study is reasonably well conducted and well reported.

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined? The question is new in that media campaigns on HIV/AIDS prevention have not previously been evaluated in Nigeria. Nigeria is one country that has low rate of evaluation of its HIV/AIDS programs in Africa. I believe this study will contribute to an understanding of the relevance of media campaign in the dissemination of HIV/AIDS prevention and care messages in the country. The question is also well defined as both the elements of the media campaign and the outcome variables are well known at the onset.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work? The methods are appropriate and well described. However, it is not clear how many of the partner NGOs carried out complimentary media campaigns on HIV/AIDS in the study sites. It is also relevant to know whether the government or other non-partner NGOs or agencies carried out similar activities in the project sites during the period. The intensity of such complimentary activities needs to be known so as to determine the relative effects of the VISION project activities in the area. The methods are well described and sufficient details have been provided to enable the replication of the project. However the considerations that went into the sample size calculation need to be described.

3. Are the data sound and well controlled? Yes. However, the study would have been better conducted with a quasi-experimental design, where sites using the media campaign methods are compared with those not using the specific methods. In the absence of such a design, it is difficult to determine the relative benefits of the VISION project since other projects using the same approach could have been active in the three areas at the same time. However, the use of logistic regression enables the control for potentially confounding factors and increases the internal validity of the data.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? I am not comfortable with the fact that the results and discussion were combined in one section. I believe these should be separated, especially since it would appear that the discussion was severely restricted through such a combination. Much of the combined section presented the results, with very little space provided for discussion.
5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? Yes, but as mentioned previously, the discussion needs to be done in a separate section and linked up more actively with the conclusions. The discussion and conclusion should be presented in the same section.

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? Yes. However, I will prefer the term “outcome” or a similar word in the title, rather than “impact”. Impact is a longer term assessment of an entire program, whereas I believe a term that describes the shorter term effects of the project should have been used.

7. Is the writing acceptable? Yes.

The paper is well written and should be considered for publication. My specific comments are as follows:

1) Discretionary Revisions. More information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the three study sites should be provided to enable international readers understand the context of the study.

2) Minor Essential Revisions:
   - The legends to figures 1 and 2 should be provided
   - The word “impact” in the title should be replaced with “effects” or “outcomes”, or a similar word.
   - A few typos, such as spelling “Enugu” as “Enugo”, in the abstract should be corrected.

3) Major Compulsory Corrections:
   - The Discussion should be separated from the Results section, and actively presented in the text.

   - The limitations of the study, especially the non-use of a quasi-experimental research design should be discussed, and how this has been overcome in the data analysis and the interpretation of the results.

   - Complimentary activities relating to HIV/AIDS awareness creation, prevention and care in the three study sites should be described to enable appreciation of the relative effects of the VISION project.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare I have no competing interests.