

Kilimani Sesame has positive impact on children in Tanzania: study

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There are 8.3 million children who are 5 years and younger living in Tanzania. With limited access to formal education, can media intervention make a positive and significant impact on what these children learn? Sesame Workshop, which produces Kilimani Sesame, the Tanzanian version of Sesame Street, recently commissioned researchers from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in full collaboration with a Dar es Salaam-based research team, to examine the effects of a six-week intervention delivering Kilimani Sesame content to 223 children in the rural district of Kisarawe and the city of Dar es Salaam. The article is expected to be published in July in the *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*.

Kilimani Sesame, which features the feathered and furry Muppets of Sesame Street characters, presents educational objectives that include improving children's basic literacy and numeracy skills, as well as providing knowledge and reducing the stigma related to HIV/AIDS. The study found that [children](#) with greater exposure to Kilimani Sesame showed more gains in cognitive, social and health outcomes than those with less exposure. Specifically, children who viewed more Kilimani Sesame content had higher scores on tests of literacy and primary math skills, greater ability to describe appropriate social behaviors and emotions, and knew more about malaria and HIV/AIDS.

Children with greater exposure to Kilimani Sesame were also more likely to say an HIV positive child could play with others and that they would invite an [HIV](#) positive person into their home to share a meal.

These findings remained robust over and above the contribution of factors that are important in predicting these outcomes: child age, child gender, location, general media exposure, and the child's performance in these outcomes prior to the intervention.

"We are pleased that researchers at an esteemed academic institution have found evidence of the impact of this media intervention." said Dr. Charlotte Cole, Vice President of International Education, Research, and Outreach at Sesame Workshop. "Children learn best when learning opportunities match their own daily life experiences. Kiilmani Sesame, which was developed by a team of Tanzanian educators and producers, provides images and content that features an environment familiar to its viewers and imparts age-appropriate messages - such as malaria prevention information - that are critical to children living in the country."

"This was an exciting opportunity to see how media can have a great impact," described Dr. Dina L.G. Borzekowski, an Associate Professor with the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health's Department of Health, Behavior and Society. She continued, "Despite lacking basic resources such as household water and electricity, children in this study benefited from the culturally-relevant and age-appropriate books, radio and video. Sesame Workshop demonstrates how media can best be used engage and motivate young children. This intervention offers a powerful, educational foundation to help Tanzanian children reach their highest potential."

More information: The study abstract can be read here:
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2010.05.002>

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