

Engaging Contextual Approach to Understand What Factors Contribute to Effective Health Promotion Campaigns Targeted for Rural Communities

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Abstract— There has been a serious lack of research about the effectiveness of health promotion campaigns in the context of rural communities in Sarawak. This study attempts to address this limitation in the literature. The research aims to investigate what factors can influence the effectiveness of public health promotion campaigns targeted for rural communities. In this paper, we present and discuss the proposed conceptual framework and research design to undertake this research. We specifically engage the contextual approach proposed by Pettigrew to explore and identify factors that can affect the rural communities' perception and understanding with regard to health information dissemination via health promotion campaigns.

I. INTRODUCTION

The occurrences of many incidents of global outbreaks throughout the world have raised various concerns at the international level. The influenza pandemic outbreak is continued to be monitored closely by the World Health Organization (WHO). In the past, the first pandemic outbreak, known as the Spanish flu, had occurred in 1918 and were reported to cause death for nearly 50 to 100 million people (Taubenberger and Morens, 2006). Then, there were Fort Dix outbreaks and the Russian flu outbreaks that caused serious concerns among the international agencies, particularly WHO (Gatherer, 2009). In 2009, another pandemic outbreak, known as the swine flu or influenza A (H1N1) had caused about 17,000 deaths all over the world (Roos, 2010). Just recently, it was reported in the news that two Chinese women from Beijing, China have died from the H1N1 flu strain (Reuters, 2013).

In the Malaysian context, the H1N1 influenza outbreaks have received a close scrutiny by the Malaysian Government

through the role of the Malaysia Ministry of Health (MOH). MOH has made a serious attempt to curb the spread of the influenza by engaging health promotion campaigns to disseminate up-to-date important information to the public. During the critical period where the rise of influenza outbreaks was noted, the MOH has applied variety ways to communicate with the communities including the rural communities about the influenza risks and its preventive measures. In addition to distributing brochures, pamphlets and posters, as well as engaging the traditional media, the MOH also created a dedicated website at <https://h1n1.moh.gov.my> as part of the government initiatives to educate the public about the influenza risks and how to curb its spread.

In this paper, we present the work-in-progress of our research related to the understanding about what factors contribute to the effectiveness of health promotion campaigns targeted for rural communities. Our aim in this paper is to present and discuss the proposed conceptual framework and research design to undertake this research. The objectives of the research are as follows: (1) to identify factors that affect rural communities' awareness about the influenza outbreaks; (2) to identify factors that can influence the effectiveness of health promotion campaigns targeted for rural communities of Sarawak; (3) to determine the relationships between these factors and the effectiveness of health promotion campaigns; and (4) to propose recommendations to relevant stakeholders with regard to constructing effective health promotion campaigns targeted for rural communities of Sarawak.

This paper is organized as follows. Firstly, we present related literature review and briefly discuss the literature gaps. Secondly, we elaborate the contextual approach proposed by Pettigrew and justify why engaging the contextual approach is appropriate and viable for the study. Thirdly, we present the

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proposed conceptual framework to undertake the research, and provide a conclusion for this paper.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Health Promotion Campaigns Targeted for Rural Communities

Globally, substantial amount of money has been invested to combat illnesses in communities such as AIDS, obesity, diabetes, cancer, heart diseases and others (Connolly, 2004). To date, the unhealthy lifestyle and the bad eating habit and diet are examples of factors that have been noted to affect the individual health (Yasin, 2012). At the national level, a government has an important role to construct and design various initiatives to promote and influence public citizens to practice positive self-care and lifestyle (Nutbeam, 1998; Glanz, 2008).

In the context of educating the public or communities, health promotion campaign has become an important activity or initiative that needs to be prioritized especially when dealing with disease outbreak incidents. Allahyari (2010) argued that one has to critically consider the environmental factors, suitability of the communication tools and facilities to ensure important messages can reach the targeted audience. Shenson (2012) further stressed the importance to understand the target audiences in designing health campaigns using media.

In the context of rural communities, there are different characteristics of these communities that have been noted in the literature. Rural communities are known to depend on the government and other relevant agencies to obtain up-to-date and important information pertaining to health (Lowe and Hulatt, 2005). In the context of constructing effective health promotion campaigns, no doubt that the relevant agencies need to take into account about their demographic characteristics, health belief and behavior, educational level and decision making related to health issues (ARROW, 2000; Sint et al., 2007; Galea, 2004). In the context of certain communities, gender for example can be an important factor when come to decision making, attitude and perception on certain issues (O'stlin et al., 2004; Sint, et al., 2007). Several studies also observed that issues such as the remoteness of the place and incomplete data collection by the responsible agencies can contribute to why important information cannot reach certain rural communities (Senan, et al., 2011; Sibon, 2012).

B. Sarawak Rural Communities and Health Campaigns

Sarawak is nearly the size of Peninsular Malaysia, and has a land area about 124,449.51 square kilometers (Department of Statistics, 2010). Here, there are 27 ethnic groups and the Bumiputera ethics comprise of more than 50% of the total Sarawak population (Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, 2010). For effective resource management and development to cater for

2.4million total population, Sarawak is further divided into 11 divisions (Department of Statistics, 2010).

With regard to healthcare campaigns, the Malaysian government via the role of MOH has established a unit under the function of Health Education Department (*Bahagian Pendidikan Kesihatan*) to design promotion and activities related to public health promotion campaigns. The department website can be accessed at <http://www.infosihat.gov.my/infosihat/index.php>. In the context of Sarawak, the State Health Department plays an important role to disseminate and educate the communities on issues related to health. *Unit Promosi Kesihatan Kuching* for example has a dedicated team to design and construct health education activities for the communities.

In Sarawak context, it has been noted about the challenges in providing adequate health facilities to cater for the needs of the rural communities (Jin, 2007). Ariff and Lieng (2002) elaborated some of the constructive efforts undertaken by the Malaysian Government to ensure the rural areas of Sarawak have some accessed to basic health infrastructures and services. They also mentioned about the establishment of village health promoters to disseminate information to the rural communities.

Overall, based on the literature review, we found that there has been no systematic study that examines the effectiveness of health campaigns targeted for rural communities in Sarawak context.

C. Contextual Approach proposed by Pettigrew

Contextual approach proposed by Pettigrew (1990) is used to examine and understand the process of change. It is a multidisciplinary approach and emphasize on examining the details of the occurred change (Pettigrew, 1990). According to Pettigrew (1987), change as a process is continuous and has a direct relationship with actions, structures, endogenous and exogenous factors, as well as the role of chance and surprise.

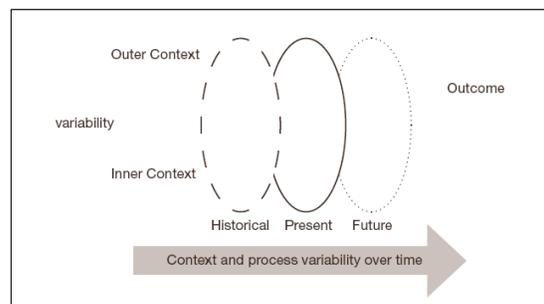


Figure 1: Components of Analysis: Context and Process (Excerpted from Pettigrew 1985: 37).

In using the contextual approach, Pettigrew (1992) suggested that one can understand the detail process of change by engaging outer context and the inner context. Inner

context is linked to aspects such as culture, structure and politics; outer context is linked to the environmental dimensions such as the economic, political and social context (Pettigrew, 1992). Any change that is observed is all related and very dynamic in nature because of the temporal factors, i.e., past, present and future (Pettigrew, 1992).

In the context of this study, the contextual approach particularly the proposed inner context and outer context, as well as the relationship between context and action can be constructive for this research. The following are the justifications of why engaging Pettigrew's Contextual Approach is appropriate for this research:

- The contextual approach enables us to study factors that can affect rural communities' awareness and understanding related to the influenza outbreaks. Here, the concepts of context, process and content can enable us to frame our thought and direct the focus towards the perspective of rural communities.
- As the contextual approach views change as an on-going and dynamic process and shape by temporal factors, hence it is appropriate to integrate the approach to guide the study. Specifically, this study can embrace the temporal factors (i.e., past, present and future) related to the on-going health campaign activities to further scrutinize what factors contribute to the effectiveness of health campaigns targeted for rural communities.
- Further, this study also can gain benefits by understanding the interaction effects between the context, process and content elements to study about the possible relationships between the proposed factors and in what ways these factors contribute to the effective of health campaigns.

III. PROPOSED RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

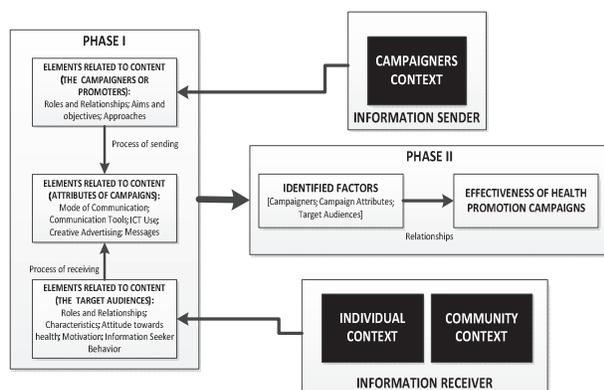


Figure 2: Proposed Research Framework

To undertake the research, we proposed to conduct two phases of data collection. Figure 2 depicts the proposed research framework. In general, we identified three important contexts pertinent to the research, in this case: the individual

context; the community context; and the health campaigner context.

For Phase I, the objective of this phase is to study factors that can affect the rural communities' awareness about the influenza outbreaks. Using the contextual approach, in general there are three important aspects that can be captured, namely: (1) the campaigners or promoters; (2) the attributes or characteristics of the devised campaigns; and (3) the target audiences, in this case the rural communities. The diagram further depicts some of the elements related to content and process that will need to be investigated further prior to conducting data collection. To collect the data, we will deploy a semi-structured interview and also a survey method. We aim to conduct the interviews with both 'senders' and 'receivers' of health information related to influenza outbreaks. Integrating the contextual approach, we will be able to capture the elements about context, content and process related to the process of disseminating information via health campaigns.

For Phase II, the objective of this phase is to address the second and third research objectives for this study, which are: (1) to identify factors that can influence the effectiveness of health promotion campaigns targeted for rural communities of Sarawak; and (3) to determine the relationships between these factors and the effectiveness of health promotion campaigns. Based on the research outcomes from Phase I, we will identify and propose factors that we believe contributing to the effectiveness of health promotion campaigns in the context of rural communities of Sarawak. We will further examine the possible relationships between these factors and the effectiveness of health promotion campaigns. To obtain data, we will deploy a survey method and use a random sampling strategy.

The completion of Phase I and Phase II will enable us to attain the fourth objective of this study, which is to propose recommendations to relevant stakeholders with regard to constructing effective health promotion campaigns targeted for rural communities of Sarawak.

In conclusion, in the context of our study, we found that engaging the contextual approach proposed by Pettigrew is viable and appropriate.

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