

BOOK REVIEW

EFFECTIVE HEALTH COMMUNICATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Suzie Yanti Muhamad Lagis



Patchanee Malikhao

August 2016

Effective Health Communication for Sustainable Development

New York, USA. Nova Science Publisher Inc

ISBN: 987-1-63484-807-7 US\$190 (hardcover)

Pauline Teh, Asian Institute for Development Communication, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Health communication evolution has become one of the factors today ever since the emergence of communication; from traditional media, new media and hybrid media. This book reveals health communication perspectives for sustainable development that revolves around social approach, and it supports strategies for individuals to change their behaviour. This book discusses different topics on health communication.

The first chapter of the book clarifies discourses on health, illness, wellness and well-being. The topic is further elaborated to physical, psychological/emotional, intellectual/cognitive, spiritual and environment. The writer states that being healthy does not mean only being free from diseases but implies the ability to manage them. Health literacy and health for all are goals for sustainable development that symbolise inner freedom. 'Health for all' stands for social freedom, social justice and equity. Communication strategies are needed to achieve all of these goals.

Communication theories used in health communication are discussed too and it also analyses the communication theories in relation to development paradigms. It is important for health communicator to understand communication theories and relate with modernisation paradigm framework. The writer stresses on individual's capacity and cognitive ability, growth in economic terms and Westernisation as the goal of development, to the multiplicity paradigm which views the socio-cultural context as important to encourage social thinking. It cannot be denied that self-determination and autonomy are important for personhood development nurtured by accessing environment at the individual level. The writer adds that health behaviour is also supported by institutional structures, health resources, morbidity and mortality, and demography.

The next chapter highlights the impact of globalisation on individual and community health and diseases. In order to achieve sustainability of health, it is stated that one must acknowledge that health and well-being has to be addressed at the individual, the social, the environment and the global level. All of the levels are needed to interact with one another and that affects an individual's health. The writer explains that sustainability of health means the reduction of inequalities that affect health of rich or poor, male or female or the third gender; black or yellow or white, or mixed; old or young, where ever they live.

Additionally, the next chapter touches on the context of health. The writer elaborates on biosocial, geosocial, socioeconomic, cultural and environmental factors that contribute to health inequalities. She states that in order to change one's behaviour, a person needs to feel safe, feel accepted and supported by the environment.

It is interesting how the writer elucidates on a topic called ‘Communicating For/About Health For Sustainable Development.’ She explains that successful health communicator for sustainable development should be a health advocate or a health mobiliser. This is because to communicate for/about health, one requires interdisciplinary knowledge. Health communicator must acquire trained communication skills to build up mutual trust that includes writing professionally, speaking with loving kindness and compassion, listening carefully, and having good human relations skills. On top of that, the writer includes that human skills include intercultural communication to connect with everyone while being flexible and able to respond.

Traditional and new media are equally important to advocate health literacy, health and well-being, health and a clean environment, and social justice and equality in healthcare. Without a doubt, the writer states that community media is seen as tools to alert and boost health and environment issues which affect health. She adds that community media should connect the locals for actions and health behaviours.

The next chapter highlights on a topic; ‘Health Communication Strategies for Sustainability: The Principles.’ This chapter integrates on relevant theories under multiplicity paradigm, external and internal factors that have impact on health and disease, media literacy and knowledge on the mass media, and new media and community media to devise appropriate communication strategies by deploying the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method. PAR has been used to improve health and decrease health inequalities. Sustainability in health is a national goal to engage and include every sector in the society; civil society, private and public institution, such as public health, schools, hospitals; the media institutions, communities and individuals. In this case, leadership from the government is important to improve old or health policies or to issue a new one for a smooth and transparent inter-sectoral collaboration. The writer states that good governance requires accountability, justice, fairness and virtues to ensure health for all. Therefore, media and communication are necessary to encourage and create awareness for society to take care of their own health and warn policy makers.

The writer on the next chapter provides practical advice and examples of strategies needed to improve health through a life course to empower people; tackle communicable, non-communicable diseases and provide all necessary supportive systems to maintain and sustain community where everyone is included. She states that the media alone will not be able to change health behaviour and the community direction but how media is used for the benefits of all. She adds that sustainability is a long-term perspective that requires commitment, perseverance, planning, policies, good governance and accountability.

Finally, the writer summarises all of the topics discussed in the book by stressing on how new ways of communication manage to strengthened the traditional ways of communication. She states on the need of health communicator to access the digital culture in of each group in order to engage with interested public and stakeholders. The emergence of digital technologies, health communicator is able to help the young and old to understand individual agency and their digital voices are able to contribute to dialogue in the digital pubic sphere.

This book is able to deepen our understanding on health communication and helps health communicator to understand audience in changing their behaviour towards better health and sustainability.



Suzie Yanti Muhamad Lagis is a lecturer at Department of Communication, Faculty of Communication, Visual Art and Computing, University of Selangor (UNISEL). She is the Head of Programme for Bachelor of Communication (Hons) Corporate Communication programme. In 2016, while being the HOP she was the Head of Department for Department of Communication until February 2019. Suzie started her career in academic after spending a couple of years in the industry. Her forte is in Public Relations and Corporate Communication and holds a master’s degree in Mass Communication. Her 9 years experience in academic qualifies her as a programme curriculum committee member for a master’s degree and Foundation programme in communication. Email: suzielagis@unisel.edu.my