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Universidad del Zulia
Facultad Experimental de Ciencias
Departamento de Ciencias Humanas
Maracaibo - Venezuela

The concept of being healthy and sick from Scavengers' point of view

Hanny Hafiar

Public Relations Study Program, Faculty of Communication Science,
Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia
hanny.hafiar@unpad.ac.id

Priyo Subekti

Public Relations Study Program, Faculty of Communication Science,
Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia
prito.subekti@unpad.ac.id

Lukiati Komala

Public Relations Study Program, Faculty of Communication Science,
Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia
lukiati.komala@unpad.ac.id

Kokom Komariah

Public Relations Study Program, Faculty of Communication Science,
Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia
kokom.komariah@unpad.ac.id

Abstract

This study intends to examine the concept of being healthy and being sick from a scavenger's point of view based on their intrapersonal communication process. The method used in this research is qualitative descriptive; data collected through observation, interview, and literature study. The results of the research show that the scavengers' concepts of being healthy and being sick are relatively different from the ones accepted by society in general. In conclusion, in the campaigns, the activities arranged are appropriate for scavengers in terms of language and the depth of information shared.

Keywords: Health communication, Scavenger, Treatment, Behavior.

El concepto de estar sano y enfermo desde el punto de vista de los carroñeros

Resumen

Este estudio pretende examinar el concepto de estar sano y estar enfermo desde el punto de vista de un carroñero basado en su proceso de comunicación intrapersonal. El método utilizado en esta investigación es cualitativo descriptivo; datos recopilados mediante observación, entrevista y estudio de literatura. Los resultados de la investigación muestran que los conceptos de los carroñeros de estar sano y estar enfermo son relativamente diferentes de los aceptados por la sociedad en general. En conclusión, en las campañas, las actividades organizadas son apropiadas para los carroñeros en términos de lenguaje y la profundidad de la información compartida.

Palabras clave: Comunicación en salud, Carroñero, Tratamiento, Comportamiento.

1. INTRODUCTION

Public health is one of the national development program objectives initiated by the government cascaded through health offices and related institutions. One of them is to raise public awareness to take good care of individual health in order to obtain a better quality of life. This is in line with what SOEJOETI (2005) wrote that health development as one of the national development efforts directed towards the achievement of awareness, willingness, and the ability to live healthily for every citizen in order to realize optimal health status. Some considerations about bioethics are mentioned by VILLALOBOS, and URDANETA (2016). They point out that health

policies, the allocation of limited resources, the exploitation of biomedical techniques have helped to consolidate bioethics as a necessary discipline to help in making the best decisions for the good of the individual and the community in general.

Therefore, the government has long been making elaborate works in providing health education to the target community. Health education is essentially an activity or effort to convey health messages to communities, groups or individuals to improve healthy and clean living behavior (PHBS). Health education activities conducted by the government are conducted in various forms; some are a campaign with a specific purpose, for example research titled health campaigns are conducted to improve public health status and reduce morbidity (NURHAJATI, 2015).

Nevertheless, there are social groups who are at risk to have potential health problems caused by the nature of their livelihood. One of the aforementioned groups is scavengers who scour piles of garbage in the landfill on daily basis. This is because the landfill is a place that potentially affects the health of scavengers due to the fact that the garbage piles allow bacteria and viruses to procreate.

In this study, researchers wanted to study the concept of being sick and being healthy according to the scavengers' version. It is based on the findings in the field that scavengers consider itchy sensation on

the skin, stomach pain, fever, cough, and flu are categorized into mild illnesses that do not require medical treatment.

Each individual has a different view of health, scavengers feel that flu, cough and cold are not sick, they consider themselves healthy but experiencing unpleasant sensation; not an indicator to pay a visit to health facility (VYHRYSTYUK, ROGOZHNIKOVA, SEMENOVA & SHUSHARINA, 2017).

The notion of being sick and being healthy according to SOEJOETI (2005), is a process related to human ability or inability to adapt to the environment either biologically, psychologically or socio-culturally. On another hand, MUSTIKAWATI (2013), suggests that while working in the landfill, scavengers look for valuable used goods utilizing no PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) because they feel it unnecessary. They assume that their bodies are immune to bacteria and viruses and that they feel inconvenient when wearing PPE for its impracticality in exploring the landfill looking for the goods to be resold and other activities such as drinking, eating and smoking.

Scavenger has a very high risk of exposure to various diseases and accidents. Unfavorable work environment and dirty and poor nutrition make it easier for scavengers to get infected by various diseases such as cough, runny nose, itching, and diarrhea. Other risks the scavengers face are the heat when exposed to sun while searching

for used goods may lead to dehydration; the weight of garbage can pose risks to the hand, back and the head.

In line with research conducted by CITRASIWI, HAFIAR & SJORAIDA (2017), argue that scavengers have already had good understanding of healthy lifestyle. They know health principles in terms of personal hygiene, home hygiene, food and beverage hygiene, are clearly well understood. In turn, it is expected they will make use of such knowledge in day to day life practices. It is observed that some scavengers made an effort to clean themselves after they finish working. It is proof that they have had understanding of health. But it cannot be denied that their work environment will obscure the knowledge.

This study originated from the researcher's curiosity about the concept of being healthy and being sick from scavengers' point of view; considering their intense contact with garbage which is full of bacteria, germs, and viruses. Most respondents have no other choice of work due to limited education and skill. In research conducted by DEWI (2015), it describes the position of scavengers in the city of Bandung. On the one hand, they are often regarded as low-class society and treated as social problems in the city of Bandung that need to be solved. While on the other hand, they serve as the spearhead of the recycling industry.

Scavenger behavior becomes an interesting focus for this research, considering the nature of their work, selected topics pertaining to scavengers' understanding of being healthy and being sick concepts. Working in an environment that defies all health concepts, the researches want to know how scavengers perceive the concept of being healthy and being sick.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research uses descriptive method employing both qualitative and quantitative data. It aims to describe the said phenomenon occurring in urban settings. In addition to that, it concludes efforts to describe, record, analyze and interpret the phenomenon observed. In other words, this descriptive research aims to obtain any available information about the existing situation. According to Bogdan and Taylor, qualitative methodology is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in written or oral forms about people and behavior that can be observed (AZHARI, 2009).

Qualitative data collection is carried out through observation and in-depth interviews. The criteria of informants are scavengers who are working on the landfill searching for waste. The research was conducted in several landfills located in municipalities and districts in West Java, Indonesia. The instruments used are questionnaires with

open questions and observation guides. Qualitative research aims to gather a complete picture of human views on any particular subject. Qualitative research is related to the ideas, perceptions, opinions or beliefs of the people studied and it is near to impossible to quantify them (RADHY, 2019).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Having all that in mind, it is necessary to know the scavengers working condition and their understanding on health, as health education will not be effective when public understanding about health is less than comprehensive, which include the concept of being healthy and being sick. The first insight obtained from respondents is how they perceive their health condition at the moment of the research.

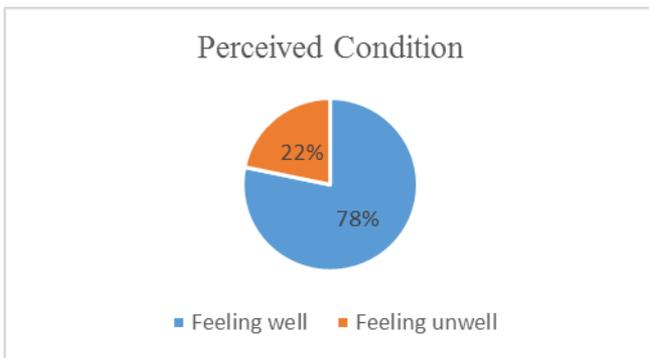


Figure 1. Perceived Condition

Referring to the answers given by the respondents, most considered that they are in good health condition basing the claim to the fact that they can work and move around as usual. However, observation revealed that the majority of scavenger experiences health problems such as skin diseases, hair and teeth problems, cough, and colds. Since these conditions did not interfere their work significantly, the respondents are confident to declare themselves healthy.

Lest to their knowledge that in principle, the definition of being healthy is a dynamic change of internal and external environment an individual needs to adjust to sustain life (KOMALA, SUBEKTI & HAFIAR, 2016). On the other hand, the definition of being sick is the absence of synchronization between the environment and the individual. Perkins in SANI (2011), offers another definition of being sick, that being ill is an unpleasant situation that befalls a person causing disruption to daily activities both physical, spiritual and social.

One's understanding of the concept of being healthy and being ill is inseparable from one's educational background; research suggested that educational background, occupation and the family culture of being clean and healthy (related to race-based culture) influence behaviors shown. It is not surprising though that the concept of being sick and healthy according to the scavengers is recognized from the very few symptoms as illustrated in the following table:

Table 1. Indicators of Being Healthy and Being Sick

NO	CONDITION	INDICATOR
1	Being healthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling no pain <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can still work despite being an elderly • One has to feel well in order to be able to work well and earn money • Can still work from morning until afternoon • Feeling nothing funny (no more than itches and insect bites) • Can still select garbage • Stress-free/ having no burden
2	Being sick	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slightly feeling cold mostly due to weather • Cough (smoking-related)

Overall the scavengers' concept of being healthy is associated with their ability to work as usual. As for the concept of being ill, on average the response is blaming the cigarettes for the coughs. The concepts plainly reflected in the scavengers' behavior. An elder in SHOLIKHAH & SUSTINI (2013) stated that attitudes towards clean and healthy living behaviors are respondents' behaviors related to diet, exercise, smoking, alcoholic beverages, resting patterns, stress control, and lifestyle. There are some factors that affect healthy living behavior, namely: the right knowledge, motivation, and skills to perform healthy living behaviors.

A study concluded that some people are aware that they are having health problems while some others are not. It means that certain conditions will be interpreted as a condition of being sick, but the same conditions are considered to be somewhat healthy by another community group. The meaning of being sick encourages the existence of health-related behavior. Health-related behaviors have been defined in various ways. For example, Conner and Norman define them as any activity undertaken for the purpose of preventing or detecting disease or for improving health and well-being (AHMADI, AZAR, NAGAHISARCHOGHAEI & NAGAHI, 2014).

Differences in meaning are also triggered by individual social status. The position of people in an unequal system influences their behavior and socio-economic socioeconomic factors in the health sphere. The concept of health and its opposite term illness are phenomena of culture and not only the characteristics of a body's physiological state. Some conditions identified are not considered to fall into being-sick category. When it was admitted otherwise, respondents did not think that any treatment is needed. Especially if in that condition they can still work. This finding is not much different from the finding that says they do not think that fever, abdominal pain, shortness of breath, skin aches or headaches as an alarming situation. As long as they can still do their routines, especially working to collect used goods, then the state of the body can be said to be healthy. Based on these findings, it can be argued that the concept of being sick possessed by scavengers differs from the general concept.

Not surprisingly that when being mildly sick, the scavengers would not immediately seek treatment. Even when they do seek treatment, most likely they would not follow the recommendations given by health professionals. The severity of illness influences the medication's compliance. Treatment-seeking behavior when being sick depends on the concept of being sick or being healthy adopted. It explains that the level of understanding of the concept of being healthy plays a big role to the compliance of a person's treatment, treatment-seeking behavior or health-care is closely related to knowledge and understanding of health-related concepts (ROCHGIYANTI, NURDIYANA, RUSWINARSIH, APRIATI & MATTIRO, 2010).

Behavior that shows concern for health can play a role in prolonging life expectancy and improve quality of life especially for those who are old but still want to work. Most scavengers when sick will opt for self-medication first, relying on traditional remedies, predominantly herbal concoction and massage. Research confirms that traditional medicine as part of culture is an effort to heal using non-medical approach.

The fact shows that traditional medicine still has a place in addition to modern medicine. Before seeking treatment, some scavengers would choose to self-medicate on the basis of their own experience. This is supported by Notoatmojo who argues that the reasons people do self-medication are because people or communities have faith in themselves and tasted success earlier from past

experience. Sometimes it resulted in no effort made to seek health professional service, believing it is enough having self-medication treatment such as kerokan, massage, herbal medicine and over the counter drugs. People search for alternative treatments because they are simple-minded, health problems are more cultural than physical one. Similar to that, people prefer familiar treatment to options that are considered foreign.

Fortunately, some scavengers have already been aware of the importance of taking care of personal hygiene and environmental condition. The awareness is due to the fear of passing on any illness caused by occupational hazard to family members, especially children. As suggested by the research results, scavengers who are aware of taking care of their health and the environment will pay more attention to their bodies. When they feel unwell, they will immediately take medicine, go to the doctor and seek health information from various sources. In contrast, those who are ignorant of these issues will usually feel less concerned about their health. They will only be flipped when realizing a disease has infected as obvious impact on the body and ability to work emerged.

Regardless of various up-to-date dissemination tools, the Health Agent Award is an example of such initiative; health-related products producer may use it as part of its corporate social responsibility in encouraging people from all walks of lives making a difference in their respective communities, including scavengers.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The concept of being healthy and being sick understood by scavengers is relatively different from the concepts behold by society in general. The difference is driven more by economic factors where that require them to keep working and make money to meet their daily needs regardless of the perceived conditions. The majority of scavengers more often ignore symptoms of any diseases; only when it affects their mobility and ability to work then they would seek any available treatments they can access. As a result of such attitude, the condition is already severe when they finally appear on any health facilities' door.

Due to financial consideration, when scavengers are aware of being sick, the first thing they would do is applying self-medication, followed by opting for alternative treatment and last visiting health facilities. It is also obvious that money plays a key role when scavengers are asked the definition of being sick and being healthy. It is crucial for the relevant agencies to launch campaigns improving the understanding of the concept of being healthy and being ill. In the campaigns, the activities arranged are appropriate for scavengers in terms of language and the depth of information shared.

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