
THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGY IN PROMOTING COMMUNITY'S HEALTH

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Abstrak

Bidang kesehatan sudah tidak lagi berurusan dengan bakteri dan penyakit menular. Saat ini faktor penyebab penyakit lebih banyak datang dari faktor gaya hidup, kondisi psikososial dan lingkungan. Psikologi dapat berperan banyak dalam bidang kesehatan masyarakat untuk melakukan intervensi, baik di tingkat individual, komunitas hingga kebijakan publik. Psikologi sangat dibutuhkan perannya untuk upaya promosi kesehatan.

Kata kunci: Gaya hidup, kesehatan masyarakat, promosi kesehatan

Abstract

The field of health is no longer solely dealing with communicable diseases. Nowadays, disease causation factors mostly coming from individual's life style, psychosocial conditions and environment. Psychology is possible to play significant roles in public health to develop multilevel intervention (individual-community-public policy). Psychology is highly needed to play its significant role in health promotion.

Key Words: life style, public health, health promotion

Health Promotion: Introduction

It has been almost 50 years ago when international organization (WHO) recognizing mental and social well being, along with physical well being, as the determinant of the state of health. WHO defined health as "a state of complete mental, physical and social well being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (Beaglehole & Bonita, 1997). Even the definition of health proposed by WHO is considered as "an utopia" (because of the fact that it is very hard to achieve a complete ideal state of health as expected by that definition), at least the acknowledgment of mental and social aspects as the main contributors to a complete state of health reflecting on the broader moving of the definition of health. After centuries on the

understanding of micro-bacteria as the major cause of disease, the new era has emerged by that acknowledgement.

The development of industrialization has lead to urbanization and other changes in people's life style. Living conditions such as sanitation, food intake, physical activities, traffic and environmental pollution, all are changing and move into a more disadvantaging situation for people's health (Naidoo & Wills, 1994). Thus the role of the state toward people's health become more vital and demanded. Terms of "Public Health Act" was introduced in England during the late of 19th century to accommodate the role of the state in improving people's health in urban center. Local authorities are responsible for the control of water supply, sewage treatment and

animal slaughter (Kazarian and Evans, 2001). This kind of regulation was popular in the beginning of public health movement in the 19th century, where the approach was popularly so called as 'disease prevention'. This approach lay on the assumption that authority holds a responsible for its community's health (Kazarian & Evans, 2001).

As the determinants of health are getting more complicated, disease prevention were seen as failed to address the prevention effort at individual level. Research has showed that the major cause of premature death of people in developing countries is disadvantageous life style such as smoking, drinking, and unhealthy food intake. This means that people need to be empowered in order to prevent themselves from living with unhealthy behavior. Nowadays, this approach is known as "Health Education". Combination of disease prevention and health education is the most comprehensive approach in the field of public health. A Canadian Minister of Health and Welfare during the 1970s, Marc Lalonde, introduced the term of "Health Promotion" which stands for actions and interventions designed to support and enhance the health of people, understanding that the actions and interventions would include health education, disease prevention and health protection activities (Kazarian & Evans, 2001). Health education is addressed to change individual behavior or interpersonal factors such as attitudes and beliefs thought to mediate behavior, in order to promote better personal health (Bennet & Murphy, 1998). Meanwhile, disease prevention and health protection are terms that addressed larger domain, such as community and authority level, by developing public health policies.

Psychology and Health Behavior

Psychology deals with individual's behavior, try to comprehend why people

behave in certain way while the others behave in another way toward a same exposure. Related to health, we may ask, why people keep smoking while at the same time they are also informed about the long term risk of having lung cancer of being a smoker. Why people driving too fast, not using their seat belt, and put themselves into a big risk of having car accidents? We may claim that these people might have a typical personality that easily involving them into a risk taking behavior. This particular of things, indeed, needs an analysis of human behavior and its origin such as motives, needs, attitudes and beliefs that drives people behind their smoking or high-speed driving behavior.

Health behavior constitute of actions that purposed of putting people staying healthy (Marelich & Erger, 2001). From the perspective of Psychology, behavior is a product of the mixture of cognitive-emotional and social process within an individual. Several theories have different framework or model in explaining the origin of behavior. Operant theory states that behavior that is rewarded or reinforced will continue or increase its frequency, while behavior that is punished will reduced (Bennet & Murphy, 1998). Social Cognitive Theory states that behavior is planned by individual through an active process based upon choices between differentially valued reinforces: behavioral outcomes learned from observation of others and a moral framework. Meanwhile, Theory of Action Reasoned proposed by Martin Fisbein & Icek Ajzen state that behavior is produced by a complex summation formula and interaction between attitude, subjective norms and perceived control of individual. Regarding to health behavior, several models that specifically developed to comprehend individual's health behavior also developed, such as Health Belief Model (developed by Godfrey Hochbaum) and Health Locus of Control (developed by Kenneth A Wallston

& Barbara S Wallston). All are stating that health behavior is driven by a complex interaction between internal aspects of individual (biological and psychological) and its social environment.

Nowadays, we are situated in a modern era where modern technology works well to manage sanitary and people's hygiene. Communicable diseases that were endemic during the middle age until the end of 19th century such as small pox, tuberculosis, scabies and measles are no longer a big challenge for public health. Medical treatment improved by the development of modern surgical techniques and the use of medications, and immunizations. It did reduced death rates and helped to prevent many life-threatening diseases. But, Non Communicable diseases (NCD/diseases that are not contagious) or chronic illnesses such as heart disease, cancer, lung diseases, and other physical symptomatic related to psychological stresses continued to rise in the second half of the 20th century. These kinds of diseases are caused by individual's lifestyle (such as tobacco smoking, alcohol, physical exercise, dietary intake and unsafe sex), psychosocial (stress, gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity) and other environmental mediators (pollution and other environmental damage caused by human).

Lifestyle is considered as responsible for the premature death of 50% among people in Western countries (Beaglehole & Bonita, 1998). Coronary heart diseases and hypertension for example, are major disease that attributable from cigarette smoking. In many developing countries, cigarette smoking is considered as responsible for 25% of all coronary heart diseases related death, and 90% of death associated with lung cancer (Bennett & Murphy, 1998). Alcohol consumption among people in UK is responsible for 20% of psychiatric admission, 30% of divorces, and 40% of incidence of wife battering (Beaglehole & Bonita, 1997). It eventually

became clear that many chronic illnesses could have been prevented or at least managed better through modifications in behavior. These are obvious evidence that individual's health behavior is actually needed to be specifically addressed through the development of health education programs that designed by those who learn about behavior. And, Psychology is the answer.

The role of Psychology in Health Promotion

As I've mentioned earlier in this article, health promotion are actions and interventions designed to support and enhance the health of people, understanding that the actions and interventions would include health education, disease prevention and health protection activities. Such actions and interventions are actually needs to be addressed from the scientific perspectives of Psychology, as Psychology deals with human behaviors and its nature. Related to health behavior, Psychology is possible to give the answer at individual, community as well as at macro level on public policy making.

a. Actions and interventions at individual level.

Actions and interventions that are possible to be provided by the discipline of Psychology are:

1. Informational approach

Education for awareness raising on health behavior through information disseminations, testimonies by recovered patients and many other formats of campaign on the risks of negative health behaviors such as smoking, drinking, less exercise, and bad dietary intake toward physical and mental health.

2. Counseling.

For those who need a more personal touch for behavioral change program, such

as willingness to terminate smoking or drinking, counseling with problem solving or other cognitive approaches are suitable. People entrapped into unhealthy behaviors were sometimes caused by psychological problems. Counseling sessions will facilitate individuals to reveal their underlying psychological problems and find the solutions. For person with terminal ill, when there is little hope of recovery, psychologist can improve the quality of life of the patient by helping them recover their mental well-being.

3. Trainings on stress management.

Occupational barriers, life changing situations, and many other psychosocial and environmental pressures, including diagnosed as having very ill health are causing stress to individuals. Psychology mostly playing the role in this particular area: providing stress management trainings. Some practical skills that possible to be developed to help people to reduce stress are relaxation, such as cognitive imagery, progressive muscular or breathe exercise; concentration technique such as meditation and biofeedback; mind-body balance exercise such as yoga and tai-chi.

4. Self help manual

This term refer to a combination of information dissemination and self monitoring. Self help might be appropriate for high motivated typed of individual. It allows complex information on health; sometimes also include a structured approach to achieve things that related to health.

5. Behavioral modification

Using behavioral approach in modifying individual's behavior, Psychologist may lead individual to modify their negative health behavior into the positive one. Modeling, reinforcement,

token economic and systematic desensitization are some possible interventions at individual level.

b. Actions and interventions at community level.

Actions and interventions at community level were identified by WHO (1988) through several strategies such as creating supportive environment, developing healthy public policy, increasing individuals' personal resources and strengthening community action. How does each of those strategies work, and how Psychology deals with that? The underpinning theories that highlighting these strategies are implicitly explained by these theories:

- Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) that emphasize the *vicarious learning of skills* (our behavior are mostly engaged from observing behavioral models over our life span) and *self efficacy* (individual's belief themselves capable to engage certain behavior).
- Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985) that stress to the importance of social norms as one of the primary influence of individual's behavior.
- Health Belief Model (HBM) that highlight the importance of facilitating behavioral change through cues to action and minimizing the costs of engaging health promoting behaviors, as well as increasing barriers and reducing cues to unhealthy behaviors.

Here are some possible applications of the theories for the development of environmental interventions by manipulating people's environments:

1. Creating supportive environments (in the state, cities, neighborhood, schools or worksites).

From the perspective of Psychology, terms of 'creating supportive environment' refers to the environmental manipulation that include the reduction barriers to health promoting behaviors such as protecting "green spaces" in the middle of a city in order to give a healthy space for the joggers and other community recreational activities. These kinds of activities will maintain people's health and reducing occupational related stress. Another way included in creating supportive environment is public policies that encourage bicycle users or pedestrians over the use of cars (Bennet & Murphy, 1988).

Other practical initiatives are food labeling (either warning or nutritional facts), producing healthy food (low calorie and fat), putting the sign of "no smoking" in public places such as buses, train, public office, etc. Even the last effort may not lead to smoke cessation among smokers; at least it will protect the majority of non smokers in public places.

2. Developing healthy public policies
According to Benett and Murphy (1988) policies that developed in this frame are following these rules:

- *Creating barriers and reducing cues of unhealthy behavior.* Including in this rules are taxation to unhealthy products such as cigarette, alcohol, etc.; restriction to the advertisements and portrayals on unhealthy products and behaviors; and restricting the availability of unhealthy products.
- *Changing the social environment.* Perceived social norms might be change through educative processes or modeling

appropriate healthy norms. This means that main figure in the family, for example father figure, must be involved in creating himself as a model for his teenagers so that they will not smoking as himself. Beside this effort, individual's skill in being assertive or courage to express their refusal on certain unhealthy behavior must also be addressed. Assertive trainings and the use of peer educators as a strategy in empowering young people – as this group is vulnerable to be exposed by unhealthy behaviors and advertisements – are categorized as strengthening community actions.

Conclusion

Psychology can perform on the best ways to promote healthy living, prevent disease and assist people to have a better coping behavior when they are diagnosed with an illness. Psychology has become so involved in physical health and illness these days by assisting patient to develop better coping strategies, adjustment to their illness, and view their quality of life. Psychology can also focus their involvement in promoting community's health by facilitating for individual and community behavioral change for healthier life style, and even possible to use some of its theoretical frameworks for the development of public policies that promoting for community's health.

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