New Media and Family Planning Information in Bekasi City Family Planning Ambassadors: A Symbolic Interactionism Review

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to describe how messages in new media, about the family planning program can be interpreted by the ambassadors of family planning and acceptors. The discussion was carried out with the perspective of symbolic interactionalism introduced by Blumer. The research method is qualitative descriptive with case study pattern on family planning ambassador and acceptor in Bekasi city. The results showed that the information emitted by the new media was responded by the communicant (family planning ambassador and acceptor) by showing conformity with what was said by Blumer. The family planning ambassadors who were Y and Z generation see the family planning information through new media is a matter that needs to be addressed with due regard to the social environment and social interaction that they do.

Keywords: Symbolic Interactionalism; Family Planning; New Media; Family Planning Ambassadors

Introduction

Since the establishment of Indonesia, the founding fathers have thought far ahead to the future of this country. One of the manifestations of national goals, which have been determined in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution, is promoting the citizen public welfare. Therefore the national development is carried out as an effort to improve all the human and society quality in Indonesia at a sustainable manner, based on national capability by utilizing the advancement of science and technology and paying attention to global challenges.

In the development process as to refer to the personality of the nation and the universal noble values to realize the life of the sovereign, independent, equal, prosperous nation that strong in its ethical and moral value. A nation birth control program called Keluarga Berencana (Family Planning) has been established as one of the effort to realize the prosperity and happiness in the countrysmen family. The main purpose of Keluarga Berencana is to improving the mother and child welfare.

By arranging births, the wife gets many opportunities to pay attention and educate children in addition to having sufficient time to carry out tasks as a housewife. On the other hand the husband does not need to be bothered by the demands of living costs and the cost of education for children. More than
that, children will get enough attention from the parents who can later have a positive impact on the growth and development of the child's personality, so that they become physically, mentally and socially healthy in accordance with what is desired and governed by religion to be pious children (Makmur, 2013).

BKKBN is the official government organization of birth control and family planning in Indonesia. In the BKKBN strategic plan (2015), BKKBN's strategic shots for the 2015-2019 interval consisted of 5 targets, namely (1) decreasing the Population Growth Rate (PGR), (2) decreasing the total birth rate (TBR) per woman of childbearing age (15-49 years old), (3) increasing the use of contraception (CPR), (4) decreasing unmet need for family planning, (5) decreasing birth rates for adolescents aged 15-19 years, and finally (6) Reducing unwanted pregnancies from women of childbearing age (15 - 49 years old). Furthermore, it is specifically explained that adolescents aged 15-19 are one of the generations who are the strategic targets of family planning programs in reducing birth rates. This generation can be classified as generation Y and Z.

Generation Y is defined as the generation born between 1980 and 2000 (Gurau, 2012; Richard K. Miller and Associates, 2011). Generation Z is young-adult teenagers who were born in 1995 or later (Bassiouni & Hackley, 2014) and tend to be highly educated, proficient in technology, innovative and creative. They are the first generation born in the digital world, living online and are virtually integrated, related to their favorite brands (Bernstein, 2015), generation Z is the heavy users of technology and sees technology as an instrument for them (Van den Bergh & Behrer , 2016; Pripolas, Stylos, Fotiadis, 2016).

According from the birth period, generation Y and generation Z are the generations that born between 1980 till right now, they are classified as the digital natives. Marc Perensky (2007) explains that the rapid presence and spread of digital technology in the last 2 decades of the 20th century has changed the way of thinking and how to process information of generations born at that time. Their way of thinking is very fundamentally different compared to the generation before them. He explained that this generation is the generation of digital natives, namely the generation that was born and grew up in the digital era with technology close to their lives, they are the native speakers of digital languages from computers, video games, and the internet. They tend and are more accustomed to getting the information they wanted quickly, they prefer to do and process things in parallel (connected) and multitasking way, which is doing more than one thing at the same time, all these things can be done with the help of technology. A generation of digital natives are a generation that is more able to function and work well in their lives when they are connected with technology and internet networks.

The increasingly massive penetration of new media in this country can not be separated from the impact of empirical facts on the popularity of the media among users. In this context that will be in the spotlight of this article, of course, are users who fall into the category of the younger generation. This popularity is inevitable, because new media networks can be enjoyed by everyone from all groups of people in their daily lives easily. User-friendly design provides a more bigger space of exposure to the people. New media also allows synchronization, so messages delivered in one type of media can be directly connected with other media and can spread quickly. In addition, with the increase in the rate of adoption of young people towards smartphone devices and tablet computers that supported by the availability of mobile internet services at affordable rates, pushing the internet into an integral part of their habitual media patterns (Azca & Widhyharto, 2014).

This techno-sociological reality explains that the younger generation is very close to new media culture. The results of the research conducted by The Center for Internet and Society Bangalore India that was facilitated by Dutch Hivos entitled "Digital Native with Cause", identifying digital natives who were born after 1980 (categorized as young people) and familiar with digital media. The study found that digital natives are e-agent of changes because information and internet technology is widely used by
young people whose political participation is still apathetic. The study emphasizes the behavior of digital media users who tend to be done by young people. (Azca & Widhyhartono, 2014).

New media with varied content, in this case including the content about the ins and outs of family planning programs is truly an up-to-date communication vehicle. Unfortunately, based on the observations of researchers, until now the BKKBN is still inclined to reach their strategic goals by using conventional media approaches and minimal use of approaches with new media, this is feared to be one of the reasons why their current family planning programs have not yet been achieved. Therefore researchers see that the way generation Y and generation Z access and organizing family planning information is one of the important notion to be considered and analyzed more deeply which can later become a potential reference and reference for BKKBN when they consider using a new media approach to reach one of the targeted targets.

Even so, the new media is inevitably the "last love" of human beings which contains symbolic existence about human activities with all kinds of types. The content is then trusted, to be able to give a certain effect to the community / young generation that are exposed to them. What is presented in new media and how the messages are able to move a person, presumably symbolic interactionism will provide an adequate explanation. Some sociologists among others, Herbert Blumer, approach the symbolic interactionism, expressing the three main principles of symbolic interactionism, namely about meaning, language, and thought. This premise will later lead to the concept of a person's 'self' and its socialization to a larger 'community', society. The term "symbolic interactionism" was coined by Herbert Blumer in 1937. However, the basic ideas of this perspective seem to converge on the ideas of Herbert Mead who is none other than the teacher of Herbert Blumer when he studied at the University of Chicago.

Symbolic interactionism focuses on the importance of shaping meaning for human behavior, which in theory symbolic interaction cannot be separated from communication process because initially the meaning is meaningless, until finally it is interpreted constructively by individuals through an interaction process to create meaning that can be agreed together. Individuals use meaning to interpret events around them. In short, they cannot communicate without sharing the meaning of the symbols used in these institutions. Three premise of symbolic interaction Herbert Blumer (1969) are: (1). Meaning, (2). Language, (3). Mind.

Blumer appointed the first premise is that, “... human act toward people or things on the basis of the meanings they assign to those people or things.” Which mean that humans act or behave towards other humans basically based on the meaning they give to other parties. Once people define a real situation, it's very real in its consequences. The meaning of what is real to us in essence comes from what we believe to be reality itself. Because we believe that it is real, we believe it as reality.

Blumer's second premise is that, meaning arises out of social interaction that people have with each other. Meaning arises from social interactions exchanged between them. The meaning is not appearing or attached to something or an object naturally. The meaning cannot arise by itself. The meaning comes from the results of the negotiation process through the use of language (language) in the perspective of symbolic interactionism. Blumer emphasized the importance of naming in the process of meaning. Meanwhile Mead also believes that this symbolic naming is the basis of a human society.

Blumer third premise is that “...an individual's interpretation of symbols is modified by his or her own thought process”. Symbolic interactionism describes the process of thinking as a conversation with oneself. This thinking process itself is reflexive. Well, the problem according to Mead is that before humans can think, we need language. We need to be able to communicate symbolically.
Language is basically a software that can move our minds. (Herbert Blumer, 1969). The way how many people think is determined by the practice of language. Actually, language is not merely seen as a “tool for exchanging messages”, but symbolic interactionism sees the position of language more as a symbolic set of ideas exchanged for other parties. According to Blumer by performing symbolic interactions someone tries to interpret the meaning of the actions of others, make a definition of the situation, then act on the basis of the meaning or definition of the situation. Through symbolic interaction, individuals also provide indications or signals about what actions are expected from their interaction partners.

The difference in the use of language in the end also determines the difference in human thinking. But even though the meaning of a language is largely determined by context or social construction, often individual interpretations play a role in modifying symbols that we capture in the thought process. Symbolism in the process of interaction is not explicitly received from the social world, because we basically digest it in the process of thinking according to our own personal preferences. Meaning refers to language. The thinking process refers to language. Language determines how the process of meaning and thought processes. So, the three are closely related.

The three interactions are the main studies in the perspective of symbolic interactionism. In the level of the concept of communication, it can simply be seen that communication is essentially a process of symbolic interaction between communication actors. An exchange of messages occurs (which basically consists of certain symbols) to the other party being invited to communicate. This exchange of messages is not only seen in the context of transmitting messages, but also seen the exchange of ways of thinking, and more so in order to achieve a meaningful process. Communication is a process of symbolic interaction in certain languages with certain ways of thinking for the achievement of certain meanings, all of which are constructed socially.

Research Method

The research method using in this paper is qualitative research, where the key instrument is the human instrument which is the researcher itself. Analyzing data in qualitative research is inductive and the results of this study emphasize more on the meaning contained in the data than the generalization (Sugiyono, 2012). The style of this study is a case study that seeks to understand and explore complex cases and problems or objects that can broaden the experience or increase the strength of understanding of what has been known through the results of previous research (Moelong, 2013).

The research subjects that were selected according to the relevance of the background for this study, is Duta GenRe KB in Bekasi city which is an adolescent individual selected by the BKKBN as the representative ambassador of the birth control program among the teenagers and young adult in their respective city, they are consist of ten teenager and young adult in total that were selected from the PIK-R in Bekasi city. The research location is PIK-R and DPPKB in Bekasi city. PIK-R or an extension of the, is one Pusat Informasi dan Konseling Remaja, which means Youth Information and Counseling Center, they are the official youth organization established by BKKBN.

The primary data that will be used in this study is the information and messages obtained from the results of in-depth interviews conducted to the participants specified above. In this study the data analysis techniques that will be used are data reduction and descriptive. Huberman and Miles (1994) explain that data reduction techniques are techniques in the form of analysis that will sharpen, classify, and direct what will be done by making information and data that are not needed and organizing data in such a way that final conclusions can be drawn.
Discussion and Result

The Meaning of Message and Cognition About the Birth Control Program

This segment will elaborate, how the community, especially couples of childbearing age, will get certain messages and then manifest themselves in actions to take part in family planning programs or not. The politics is in the voting booth. The existence of a message is certainly confined to a particular communication event. A desire to direct a person's actions or behavior without what is called a communication event is an impossible thing. Even when researchers write this report, thinking of what will be contained in the sheets of this report is basically a process of communication. A communication within yourself or intra-personal communication. The KB ambassadors in this study for example, even though they access new media to gain knowledge about the government program, the intra-personal communication was actually done, which can be said as follows:

“... indeed ... we the millennial generation is more closer to the internet, with the new media ... information about KB is clearly accessed from the media ... but as an ambassadors for KB, we have to think too ... because before we told fellow colleagues ... how come from the official website is still lacking ... the material ... so we reflect also on how to develop the material .... more or less is like that ... but on the other hand we are also obliged to consciously have internal awareness about the program ... basically we fix our cognition before ... spread this knowledge ...”

From the expression in the opinion quotation above, it appears that when someone or a family planning instructor wants to direct a person's actions, the event of intrapersonal communication becomes inevitable. Now when someone already has provision that is felt for example, then it relates to his task, for example, will communicate at a certain level. In this case someone can do an interpersonal communication. A KB ambassador can be directly involved in interpersonal communication with their friends in this framework

“...If it was an interpersonal communication, it is of course happening ... we often meet with our neighbors, personally we are often involved in talking about the family planning ...this is also the consequence of our duties and functions as family planning ambassadors..”

As we know that interpersonal communication, definitively can be interpreted as communication between people face to face, which allows each participant to capture the reactions of others directly, whether verbally or nonverbally. Interpersonal communication is communication that happening with only two people, such as husband and wife, two colleagues, two close friends, teacher-students and so on (Mulyana, 2000: 73).

From that definition, it manifests in the construction of community / individual / human interaction that in terms of family planning programs, adolescents who are also a couple of childbearing age and as free individuals, will get a communication message from a KB cadre or acceptor. That's where the process of interpersonal communication occurs between acceptors and other parties who have become acceptors or other KB cadres, while in this study, it’s withing KB ambassadors and teenagers of the generation who surrounded them. The mission delivered to the KB ambassador is to provide symbols about the KB program. In this interpersonal communication there are at least two important messages that are conveyed, namely the message of the cadre who said to follow the KB program and the message in the form of symbols that are present through how physical, appearance, and lifestyle appear directly from the acceptor.
Humans Act towards Something Based on Meanings

In his first premise, Blumer said that “Humans Act towards Something Based on Meaning”. This means that human actions are carried out as a form of response to stimuli. Humans do not necessarily act on an object or social reality. Humans act by interpreting and defining objects or social realities that they encountered. The object in question includes physical, social and object objects that are abstraction (Poloma, 2007: 264). Thus social reality or object will never have a single meaning, because it will depend on people who will give meaning to it. This is what makes people's actions different - even if they are in contact with one object or the same form of excitement. It can be illustrated that according to Poloma, snakes for some people are very disgusting and frightening animals, but for some other people snakes can actually be enjoyed by the color of their scales, some people call snakes a beauty (Poloma, 2007: 259). Furthermore, it can be guessed that the difference in meaning will lead to differences in treatment of the snake. For those who feel disgusted and afraid, they will avoid or get rid of the snake, or with other forms of response and negative actions. But for those who interpret it as beauty, there are those who then make it a pet or give a positive reaction to snakes as something that is interpreted. KB Ambassadors, who are also a teenager themselves undoubly have a field experience when carrying out their duties, they can said:

“... the response we get from our friends about adolescent health and family planning actually depends on how they respond to what I say to them. Some people consider the information to be one thing that has an important weight so that the meaning is positive ... some are flat, for example ... ‘ahh, we still didn’t need it right now’ or ‘we still only a teenager, don’t need to do that’... something like that...”

So what about the messages of active acceptors about the family planning program? Messages and symbols about family planning for some people will be interpreted as something that should be responded positively, because it is a concrete effort to manage our life from the dimensions of the number of family members. People who think like this will associate their thinking with benefit in health, economy, the quality of intra-family relationships, and the probability of achieving a prosper family more easily in a positive framework. For children who think that they are ‘so smart’, indeed the message is interpreted negatively, so that the choice of words and arguments for rejection may also seem strange to our ears in general. According to KB ambassador some of them will said:

“…there’s even some pretentious kids that said that....a message and symbol in family planning is against and opposing god’s will, because marriage has a sacred mission, which is to carry out or continuing our descendants...”

In a religious terminology where the sacred duty of marriage is to maximizing the procreation and reproduction of family member, or some would even connecting it to the cultural dimension where they said ‘lot of kids means lot of fortune’ as said and advised by our ancestors.

Thus, what has reversed the younger generation above the KB ambassadors is indeed true, from a religious perspective. Furthermore, from the first assumption of Blumer, every couple of childbearing age and society in general, will interpret the message and symbol brought by KB acceptors, KB extension workers, and other people who participate in discussing the KB agreement before taking an action.

Meanings in Family Planning Message and Social Interaction

So, how will the second Blummer premise explain the practice or implementation of this family planning program? The discussion will be described in the following paragraphs below. Blummer's second premise says: “The meaning comes from someone's interaction with the others” The way of thinking from the perspective of symbolic interaction must believe that the meaning is created because of
the interactions happens with the other people (West & Turner, 2008: 100). The meaning for someone about something comes from the ways other people act on it in relation to that thing. Their actions will produce boundaries for others (Poloma, 2007: 259). If so, the two people who behave differently about the snake, their behavior actually come from their residual experience whose the essence is the result of their interaction with the environment.

Makna bagi seseorang mengenai sesuatu berasal dari cara - cara orang lain bertindak terhadapnya dalam kaitannya dengan sesuatu itu. Tindakan - tindakannya akan menghasilkan batasan - batasan sesuatu bagi orang lain (Poloma, 2007 : 259 ). The first person who hates snakes may have experienced bites or got information about snakes that are indeed dangerous. While the second person who loves snakes must be because their living and hanging out in an environment that is is accustomed to the presence of snakes, or born in the midst of animal life and so on. Each meaning is manifested through symbols, where the symbol itself is a stimulus for certain meanings and values for each person (Griffin, 2000: 55). The level of human understanding for objects or social reality will depend on the extent to how the available symbols are able to represent the intended meaning. This is similar to what the following KB ambassadors can say:

"... as KB ambassadors, me and my friends will certainly be involved in programs related to the socialization of family planning programs for young people ...the information revealed by new media is indeed very helpful ... but the symbols that contained in the message as a content from that new media it is not just taken for granted by us ... so, when we ask about how they access KB information from the internet .. their meaning will still be influenced by their live and connection, such as friends and family..”

Herbert Blumer's second premise will be used to see the phenomenon of the implementation of the Family Planning program in the community. In the case of welfare, children management, the ease of raising a small family, success stories of the children, and how difficult to raising a large number of children that has a close birth, perhaps already interpreted as a well-known message that aimed for directing the pendulum in the fertile couple minds, the majority of people, or even in any individual that has the knowledge about it. If we look in the perspective that according for some people or family planning acceptor and family planning officer telling the prosper family stores, and how easy the life for family that has accepted the birth planning program, the majority of people already know the answer. It’s left on whether the action will be carried out in accordance with the message that sent by family planning agents and active acceptors or will not be considered with other people in association or social interaction.

Furthermore, there is another meaning expressed by a couple of childbearing age, in the Y and Z generations, according to the success storied and prosperity of the family planning participant that has been given by that said agent. The meaning that for example that family planning can affect the health, tarnish the function of human pro-creation and replace it with recreation. Deconstructing sex functions and other meanings that develop in interactions with other human beings. That meaning shows the point of view, the association and social interaction of the child of childbearing age influence how something means to someone. Family planning programs are considered to be a detrimental thing, a mere population innovation that is negative. It is even considered excessively as a disgraceful practice that reduces clean and elegant human values, let alone uphold human rights in this country.

The Meaning in the Symbols is Modified through Interpretation

This discussion will be continued on Blumer's third premise which says that: “the meaning of a symbol for individuals is modified through interpretive processes”. For humans, the meanings that arise in something are not necessarily just internalized, because in reality humans always meet with so many meanings. This means that the individual chooses, selects restraint, checks, rearranges and changes the meaning to find out the situation in which he is placed and the direction of their actions. For Blumer, this
is a manifestation of what is called self-indication, namely the ongoing process of communication where the individual knows something, evaluates, gives meaning, and decides to act on the basis of that meaning (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005: 155; Poloma, 2007 : 259). Furthermore, in the interpretation there is something called the thought process. In the scope of symbolic interactionalism the process of thinking is an embodiment of inner conversation. More specifically Herbert Mead calls this dialogue in self as minding, which is a pause or gap in one or two seconds just before an individual carries out an action (Griffin, 2000: 56).

So, how can Blumer's third premise explain the phenomenon of family planning program implementation in this study? Symbols and messages about family planning programs is residing in the interpersonal communication, for example, something will certainly be responded differently by each individual recipient. Using Blumer's third premise, there are some data that have been collected by researchers that shows an evidence of how Blumer is true about how internalization takes place and results in decisions and action. An active family planning agent or an acceptor or an ambassador for a family planning program says how much people will still weigh in before making a decision that will be reflected in their actions.

“…so in my opinion, the information about family planning in the new media and other digital source, with so many explanation, example, symbols, and an image about other welfare, can make our generation, the teenagers and young people, or even the young fertile age couple confused…because, for start we didn’t personally know any of the acceptor so the truth about the information is questionable to us…”

Furthermore it can be said that the influence from the socialization and other symbolic exposure for the younger generation and a young fertile couple of course can become a stimulant and can be easily persuaded to them. But, for the young children and fertile couple that has been married for a longer time or the other that has an experience and involved in family planning program counseling of course it will not affect them. That means, they have already been used with that thing and information, so they will not consider it as an important matter.

From all the active acceptor or a family planning agent empirical experience that has been organizing and processing the message to the grass root of young people in the society, it was revealed that the all messages that has been served to them were actually responded differently according to the level of intimacy of acceptors to the young fertile couple and also the credibility of the family planning agent/instructor himself. One attitude that might be manifested in action is the tendency to choose to join a family planning program. For those who choose that action in a certain perspective of a fertile age couple is a process that has gone through selection. The most visible selection is a selection according to the symbol of prosperity that has been seen subjectively by the prospective acceptor/ fertile age couple. The basis of this selection a dialogue inside their own individual minds. Before they decide to take action to become an acceptor or not, the young fertile age couples, have reflected Blumer's third premise. Prospective acceptor from the young fertile age couple in responding to stimuli have conducted selection, dialogue within themselves, and also minding as Herbert Mead said.

Conclusion

The KB (Family Planning) ambassadors who is also from a Y and Z generation, see that the family planning information from the new media are a things that need to be addressed while also minding their social environment and social interaction that they and their generation have and do. In the end, it can be denied that the connection between the three entity, which is a young generation, new media, and family planning information, is inevitable. That thing is a positive manifestation from the
existence of new media as an important part from the progress in human civilization. In the contemporary sociology context, the new media has taken a role. The young generation and new media has work hand in hand empowering the society according to their own function and role in the family planning program. The things that will be a challenge in the future is precisely, the ethics of it. How the young generation displaying their ability to using the new media for empowering the society with the polite and educating content, that surrounding the family planning fields. The theoretic reflection has produced a belief that everything that enter in that three entity relation is inevitably framed in ethical perspective.

References


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