

# The Source and Message Appeal in Perceiving Family Planning Topics

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**Abstract.** The family planning is important issue in Indonesia. The Indonesian government has continuous effort to establish Indonesian healthy families through numerous strategies and tactics over more than 40 years. Fertile-age woman or couple with unmet need become an issue to be tackled with the program. In the rise of information and communication technology and borderless medium, the epicenter of family planning rest on the implementation of multi-mediated and direct communication. Strategic communication is used in determining specific targeted public, and the messages being conveyed. Advertising, digital media, community socialization, and local community centers have been used, by BKKBN (National Family Planning Coordinating Agency), to endorse the ideas of healthier family. Each communication tool is used as a different way of communicating, in this instance different source and messages to appeal the reader. This article used a qualitative thematic analysis, to understand how source of the message and the message appeal contributed on how the recipient perceived family planning topics. The findings conclude three things, 1) the importance of understanding targeted individuals' belief of a health issue, 2) the persuasive message exposure, and 3) the suitable modes of communication in delivering the intended message.

**Keywords:** family planning, health communication, strategic communication, digital media, unmet need

## Introduction

Family planning program in Indonesia is managed by the National Family Planning Coordinating Agency or BKKBN. The agency devised *Program Pembangunan Keluarga, Kependudukan dan Keluarga Berencana* (Program for Family Development, Population, and Family Planning), as its 2020-2024 primary strategic plan [1]. Advocacy, communication, and community development are implemented to target various issue one of which is woman/couple with unmet need. The concept of unmet need involves fertile age couple or woman who are not receiving or implementing family planning methods for various reasons [2]). Nationally, in 2017, 99% number of women being surveyed know contraception; but only 57.9% made decision to perform family planning, others

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experienced unmet need; in East Java only 62% women undergo the process of applying the procedure [15]. Family planning program *Banggakencana* according to the agency is in conjunction with the concept of a family with certain qualities ; family who are happy, striving and resilient [1]. Hence, spousal communication is a key in the process of accepting Family Planning (FP) program. Spouses whose husband has good communication and are accepting FP use, influence the overall use of FP [3]. In this case both parties need to be in sync for the decision of performing FP. Culture, the views of gender roles and religion also play a significant role for adopting FP in rural areas, especially in a patriarchal society, in which the man of the family might not think it is important to deal with FP since it is the female's affair [4]. The role of mass media, television and newspaper, are significant in informing the rural areas and family of low income about the importance of family planning program especially contraceptive adoption, however, mix of communication strategies need to be devised [5]. In recent years, online communities and various online platform are used as a means of information seeking for couples who are trying to conceive ; the platforms enable couples to gain information such as conception techniques (position, frequency) and how to seek medical help [6]. This study is conducted to further understand about the role of information source, message, and modes of communication in disseminating information about family planning program.

## **Research Questions**

This research will provide answers on questions of:

1. How source credibility encourages the target to listen and accept the family planning message?
2. How persuasive messages influence the target to decide on family planning program?

## **Purpose of the Study**

Data shown the significant number of couples, or specifically fertile-age women, did not receive or decide to avoid the family planning products and procedure. Family plan involves the aspects of reproductive system, child planning and rearing, contraceptive methods, and maternal and children health. Those topics are communicated by the government agency. Hence, to understand what are required to sustain the message and retain it in the mind of the target we must investigate the factors which might influence the acceptance of messages. This research aims on procuring some insights on the abovementioned factors.

## **Conceptual Models**

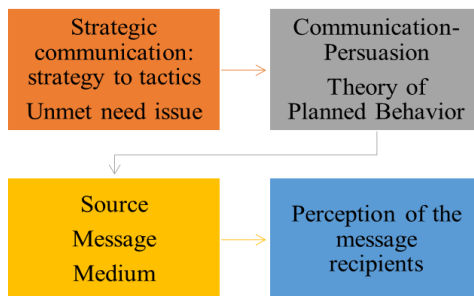
Family planning program is a government's public policy enacted by the National Family Planning Coordinating Agency. Communication has a relevant and important role in the program. One of the issues addressed is the issue of unmet need. Unmet need is when fertile age couple or women do not conduct family planning, such as using contraceptives (personal communication with BKKBN representative, 13 July 2021, via WhatsApp), This issue has become a concern and focus for BKKBN's strategic planning [1].

Strategic health communication can be considered crucial in communicating any public policy regarding health and life planning situation. According to Thomas [7], effective

communication is crucial to “(a) improve the health outcomes of acute and chronic conditions, (b) reduce the impact of racial, ethnic, disease-specific and socioeconomic factors in care, and (c) improve the effectiveness of prevention and health promotion.” The purposes of health communication itself are to increase awareness, increase knowledge, change attitude, and alter behavior toward the desired outcome of a health communication program.

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) [8] indicated that the human behavior is determined by three aspects. These aspects are beliefs about the likely outcomes of certain behaviors and evaluations of the outcomes; beliefs about the expectations and actions of referents and the importance to comply with these referents; beliefs about factors that may help or hinder the behaviors. It is highlighted the notion the more amiable the attitude, subjective norm and the person’s perceived control on the situation, the greater the intention to conduct the behavior. By understanding the accessibility of beliefs, we obtain an information about the individual’s consideration which guide their attitude, subjective norm, and perceptions of control; those consideration may influence intention and action of the individual [8].

Communication campaigns are various in formats and serving different agendas, often times as a part of government initiatives [9]. Communication campaign can be understood from the perspective of communication-persuasion model created by McGuire in 1976. The communication-persuasion theory often employed in understanding health messages using mass media and advertising. This model stated that there are three factors which influence how people make decision, such as external factor (price or location), internal directive factors (individual attitudes), and internal dynamic factors (characteristic of demographics) [10]. McGuire divided it into five communication input factors and 13 persuasion output factors. Source credibility and attractiveness, message appeal and organization, and types of communication media are crucial aspect in the input factors [10]. Thus, strategic health communication needs to determine the target audience, how to reach them, with what messages and with what types of communication media. Thus, campaign is a form of strategic communication comprised of stages of research, planning, implementing and evaluating [11].



**Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Strategic Health Communication regarding Unmet Need**

## Research Methods

A qualitative case study integrated with thematic analysis was conducted to obtain the results. This method was used as an examination that is intensive and holistic, and utilizing

various sources of data, it is bounded by time and place; the subject of a case can be group of people, events, or campaign of a single phenomenon [12]. Thematic analysis combines inductive and deductive process of thinking. An inductive process of Thematic Analysis can be seen as the coding arrive from familiarization; coding and theme development are an interpretive process [13] The steps of thematic analysis [14] are as follows, 1) familiarizing ourselves with the data; 2) generating initial codes; 3) searching for themes; 4) reviewing the themes; 5) defining and naming the themes; and 6) producing the report. The data was compile using in-depth interview with 4 fertile age married couple, a focus group discussion with the government agency BKKBN and secondary analysis on documents evidence. Because of the Covid 19 pandemic, the data collection was conducted via online meeting device.

## Findings

The researchers categorize the data found into codes and themes. Several themes can be depicted in the table below.

**Table 1. Data themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Examples of interview excerpts and other sources</b>
Communication campaign	“The information is targeted to not only inform and raising awareness but information for making decision” [15]
Reaching unmet need couple	“99% women know about contraceptives, but only 62% enact it”
	“Rise on the number of unmet need, they supposed to do family planning but for various reason not do it”
	“To intensify the advocacy and family planning promotion and communication to the potential demand” [1]
Media and technology	“an application which provide information about contraceptives options and how to conduct them”
	“the information provided will supply the women the access all things about family planning...in regards to reproductive rights”
Credible source	“the hospital provide necessary information”
	“we receive information from the health advisor at the local health center”
	“friends whose wives are nurses inform us how to become healthy”
Message appeal	"good visualization"
	"to the point and not going around the bush"
	"humor and then facts"
Family planning	“more on go with flow”

decision	“my health condition (PCOS) required immediate pregnancy, but I decided to move slowly”
	“family planning by the agency only mentioned two children is enough”

The table depicts the themes found in a case study of communication campaign regarding the issue of unmet need for fertile-age couple. From the themes found, we analyze them from the perspective of strategic communication concepts and health-related theories.

### The source and perception about the source

The agency has a national campaign to actualize Indonesian quality family, as supposed to the ‘planning family with two children’ of previous campaigns (9). From the perspective of strategic health communication, there are steps in communicating messages in the form of campaign. First, conduct research to determine the problem, targeted audiences, and overall planning; second, to plan the campaign starting with stating four level of information, stating the goals, objective, strategy and tactics (13). In the case of unmet need issue, the research process has been conducted by the agency through its community partners. They found that, nationally, only 57.9% fertile-age women, are using family planning aka contraceptives (9). The rest of population (42,1%) did not use contraceptives or plan the pregnancy for various reasons. This percentage become a concern and the target of the campaign.

This study found that the agency has established the goal through to the tactics of the campaign, as stated on its strategic plan 2020-2024 [1]. Key performance indicator has been placed to measure the success of the program, one of which is for women or fertile-age couple to use family planning procedure. Because the strategic plan has just started in 2020, this research unable to show the level of success of the program.

The couple decision making to know, enact and adopt family planning is the result expected. However, this study found that the couple being interviewed did not based their family planning on the agency program. One couple stated, *‘family planning (two children are enough) in the 90s? we never know about their (BKKBN) events or promotional media’*. Other couple stated their knowledge about the agency, but not about the program, *‘we know BKKBN, but not the pregnancy program’*. Answers from the other couples also reveal their lack of awareness about the family planning program. The couple also stated their plan for children based on God’s will and not plan it systematically. Some answers can be seen in the Table 1. However, they also include the influence of medical practitioners, their peers and social media-based information as the go-to information source.

In this case, in regards to communication-persuasion model [10], there is a discrepancy between the source message delivery with the individuals’ acceptance. The agency carried out the message campaign, but the first level persuasion output in the form of exposure of the message did not occur as intended to. When the message failed to be exposed, the topic of family planning (the use of contraceptives and pregnancy planning) would not reach the intended public. Moreover, from the perspective of theory of planned behavior [8] the underlying belief of the individuals can provide insight on how the interviewee decide to postpone family planning or decide to eliminate the unmet need tendency under the

influence of peers or medical practitioners. The source considered credible is suited with a previous research which found a credible source might not be as persuasive as average people in communicating health message; individuals might turn to multiple sources to find answers [16]. Hence, this issue might be solved during the evaluation process, in which the next step to encourage actions can be created to ensure high level of campaign exposure [17]

### **Perception about the message and modes of communication**

The program is utilizing the combination of traditional printed media and internet-based medium, such as Instagram account and Facebook. The interviewee responded with how they perceive campaign messages, some excerpts can be read on Table 1.

Overall, the key interviewee chose to read messages with rational approach, contain facts and figure. Humor is also a keen factor in receiving the message. However, fear appeal, did not interest them,

*'I prefer to get optimistic story instead of something fearsome, it is easier to remember' (Y)*

*'I prefer no nonsense, straight to the point' (M)*

*'I like to read pages with funny designs' (V)*

*'The image given to us was abstract and not in detail' (I)*

Regarding modes of communication, the informants were varied with most of them utilizing social media and websites, others were more convenient to see a real doctor or medical practitioners. Social media and other internet-based media has enabled public policy to be shared to a wider audience. The agency declares the use of social media such as Instagram and Facebook as tools to reach women (in the context of married couple) with unmet need. Nevertheless, the interviewee mentioned that the family planning-specific messages did not being communicated thoroughly on the social media. However, they still use the social media to seek information about child-rearing and maternal children health related matter.

The availability and suitability of message using the right medium with the target audience, especially in regards to health issue was proved to be crucial, an example was the use of social media to promote health issue to youth [18]. Theory of planned behavior indicated that underneath people's behavior toward health issue, one must understand the person's belief of the consequence in conducting certain behavior, how he/she perceived whether the behavior easy or difficult, and how his/her significant other perceive the behavior [19]. Thus, the message needs to address the important facts of family planning, such as the consequence, the possibility to be conducted and how both individuals have significant rôle in the process. A recall process after a long period of time hiatus from the campaign message can happen if the message was also discussed by the community residence, depend on the family income and psychological aspect of the recipient [20]. Thus, this explains why the informant remember '*dua anak cukup* (the two children are enough)' campaign compared to the unmet need-related campaign. The lack of intention to use a method of family planning may be resulted from the condition of the person, such as her insusceptibility to get pregnant [21], this correlated with the informant answers regarding the 'go-with-the-flow' attitude prior to their pregnancy. Having said that, the visualization and appeal of the persuasive message needs to be taken into consideration.

## Conclusion

Overall, this research highlighted three things. First, any organization must determine the purpose of the campaign, in this case what the organization wanted to do regarding the issue of unmet need. Second, to determine credible source, the organization must consider the background situation of the target. Some targets might perceive health experts differently to average person in terms of health information. Third, the message needs to address the problem clearly, visualized it with the suitable appeal, and conveyed by the correct medium of communication. The public's exposure of the message is the first path on retaining attention and building understanding. At the end, the decision-making process to adopt the health behavior is also influenced by the specific condition of the information recipients.

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