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Health literacy in preventing the spread of COVID-19 based on community

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Abstract---Health literacy is not only a concept that provides an understanding of health to the public, but has become a strategic approach to promote and improve the quality of health and encourage health related decision-making in a broad sense. The aim of this study was to provide a brief overview of efforts to prevent the spread of community-based COVID-19 in the context of health literacy. It not only promotes the concepts of health literacy and education; it also describes the importance of health literacy in community-based efforts. An example is its application in the efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Keywords---community-based, COVID-19, health literacy, health education, strategy.

Introduction

COVID-19 has been declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) and designated as a non-natural disaster by the government. In the form of a disease outbreak, it requires comprehensive countermeasures while involving all elements of the society (Kemenkes RI, 2020). In this case, the involvement of community components to prevent the spread of COVID-19 was carried out through efforts to explore its potential therefore; the community has an active role to play. This global pandemic is not new to the world community, but is a challenge that requires the participation of all parties to overcome (St.Amant, 2020).

Many programs have been carried out by institutions, organizations, groups and individuals to prevent the spread of COVID-19 although, with various challenges including the success of overcoming the pandemic in the community. The main key to preventing this disease lies in the awareness of the community and their willingness to help themselves out of an epidemic situation. Therefore, to stimulate public awareness and understanding in dealing with COVID-19, various approaches have been taken to create public awareness on the dangers and impacts of COVID-19.

There are various strategies, approaches, methods and concepts aimed at creating awareness of COVID-19 which includes health education, community empowerment, community participation, capacity building, etc. Each of these strategies has different objectives, scope, advantages and limitations, with the same goal which is to create awareness on the position of people experiencing a pandemic. Presently, people are required to have the capacity to deal with extraordinary situations, which requires an effort that is also unusual. The Task Force for the Acceleration of Handling COVID-19 had put forward 4 methods to create public awareness which includes 1). To know: obtaining information about COVID-19 2). To understand: understanding efforts to prevent the spread and handling of COVID-19 3). Deeply Awareness: planning activities that need to be carried out in an effort to prevent the spread and handling of COVID-19 and 4). Action: taking action both individually and collectively in preventing the spread and handling of COVID-19 (Lestari et al., 2020).

In order to open people's minds and insights, it is necessary to make efforts to create awareness and ensure that they have correct information about COVID-19 in the context of health literacy. This would enable them take appropriate action to prevent its spread. People who were aware and understood the concept of this disease planned and took actions according to their circumstances and needs in helping themselves from exposure. Therefore, this study described efforts to prevent the spread of community-based COVID-19 in the context of health literacy. The description was complemented by the meaning and needs of health literacy, the importance of community-based efforts and case studies of efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Literature Review

Health Literacy Concept

Health literacy is broadly associated with efforts that involves knowledge literacy, motivation and competence of the community to access, understand, assess and apply health information in order to evaluate and make decisions in everyday life regarding health care, disease prevention and health promotion to maintain or improve quality throughout its life cycle (Kanj & Mitic, 2009; WHO Europe, 2013). Furthermore, it enhances personal, cognitive and social skills which determines an individual's ability to access, understand and use the information to promote and maintain their health. In this case, it was specifically meant to cause an increase in knowledge and understanding of the determinants of health, changes in attitudes and motivation related to health behavior and increase self-efficacy of the health issues at hand (Nutbeam, 2015).

The Relationship between Health Literacy and Health Education

Nutbeam (2000) suggested that health literacy was the result of the concept of health education and communication through a behavioral approach that aimed to modify lifestyles and achieve awareness of both individuals and communities in a bid to overcome health problems (Nutbeam, 2000). Based on this understanding, there was a close relationship between literacy and health education, where health literacy was a more targeted and specific health education product. The Nutbeam concept which considered health literacy as part of health education was different from the description of Stars (2018) which stated that health literacy was actually a challenge for health education which was based on five factors, namely 1). Health literacy as an outcome related to health education interventions 2). Health literacy has many layers and levels 3). The concept of health literacy in all its understanding 4). A paradigm shift from passive education to more interactive and empowering 5). The cultural context of health literacy and health education (Stars, 2018). This indicated that health literacy with its conceptual model was more complex, comprehensive, socially oriented, culturally sensitive and participatory than health education.

Why Health Literacy?

Based on the arguments put forward in the previous discussion, it was obvious that health literacy was more appropriately used as a strategy or method to create awareness on the spread of COVID-19. If parsed, based on point 2 in Stars (2018), the level of health literacy is as follow (Nutbeam, 2015; Sørensen et al., 2012; Stars, 2018):

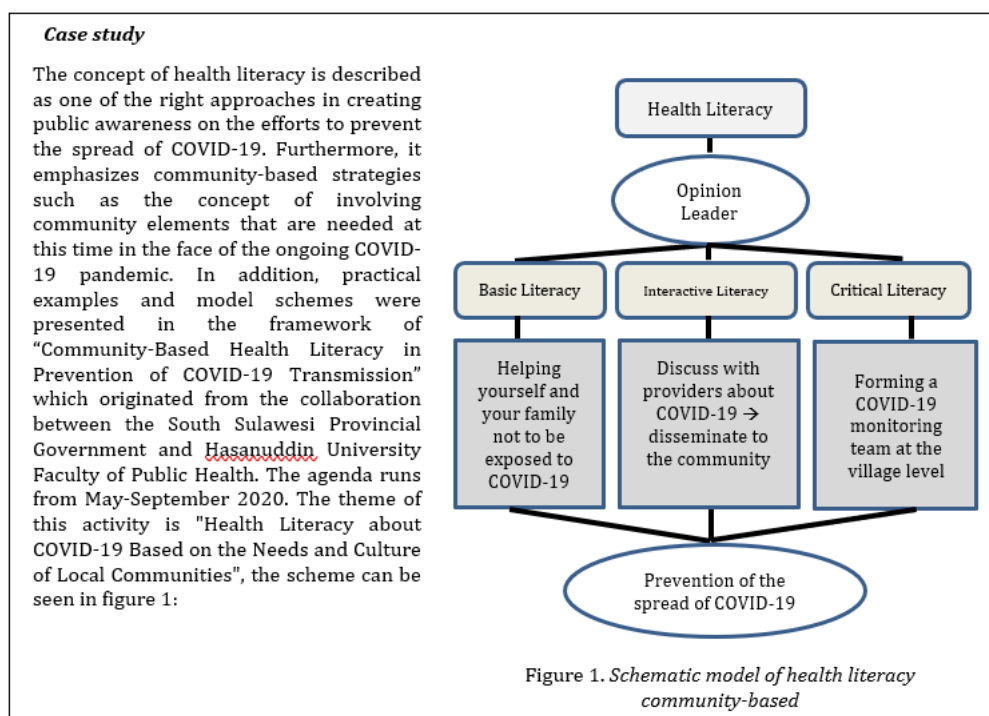
1. Basic functional health literacy, is the basic health literacy level people have to obtain health-related information. For example, basic insights about the risk of COVID-19, how to access health services if presented with symptoms of the disease, the ability to read and understand the health material and be able to apply this understanding in the form of activities.
2. Communicative or interactive health literacy, is a health literacy level better than the basic, which allows people interpret forms of communication in the form of interpersonal, group and mass communication. Furthermore, it is able to apply new information obtained to change circumstances. In this case, people already had the capacity to act independently on new information received and were more confident in building relationships with providers. For example, someone who is exposed to information about COVID-19, discovers valid sources, discusses it with health workers and communicates it to family and society in person or through social media.
3. Critical health literacy, is the form of literacy level that describes more advanced cognitive skills accompanied by social skills, being able to process and criticize information and being able to use the information to control conditions in everyday life. For example, an individual who has a good understanding and awareness of COVID-19 uses this capacity to organize the community in his / her environment to create an alert team, through which he/she coordinates the community to monitor the enforcement of health protocols in their areas. Furthermore, it provided understanding and

prevented residents from forcibly taking bodies positive for COVID-19 by explaining the consequences, procedures and provisions relating to it.

Results and Discussions

Community Based Efforts

As stated earlier, the main factor in preventing the spread of COVID-19 is the community. Therefore, the community needs to be actively involved in whatever efforts made by the government and providers in overcoming this outbreak, else the results will be mediocre and ineffective. Health literate people who are aware of and specifically understand the impact of COVID-19, will help themselves and their environment from been exposed to this outbreak. The community engagement framework may be in the form of empowerment, participation, capacity building and community organizing, but the main strategy is that they have the right literacy about COVID-19. The following are examples of community-based interventions that have been carried out (see case study box).



Based on the scheme in figure 1, it was explained in this model that health literacy related to COVID-19 was carried out by elements of opinion leaders in society. The opinion figures referred to in this context were community leaders, religious leaders, providers and Posyandu cadres. All components of society were those essentially in the midst of society and have been exposed to information related to COVID-19 (Sul-Sel & Unhas, 2020; Suriah & Nasrah, 2020). The stages of the health literacy process applied to opinion leaders were as follow:

1. Identification and common perceptions about current issues related to COVID-19 held by opinion leaders and the public
2. Focus group discussion (FGD) and brainstorming to enrich media literacy
3. Feasibility test for media literacy
4. Initiating the formation of a COVID-19 monitoring team at the village and sub-district levels
5. Monitoring and evaluation of the process of disseminating information to the public

In the early stages, health literacy was carried out by opinion leaders who were divided into 3 literacy levels and each role was carried out according to that level. To increase literacy levels, 3 attempts were made namely; 1). Complementing with the availability of literacy media that were in accordance with the needs and culture of the local community, where media content was prepared based on the results of the recommendations at the FGD / Brainstorming stage and a feasibility test was carried out. 2). Encourage them to take the initiative to become a COVID-19 monitoring team in their area, according to their literacy skills. and 3). Monitor the process and results of health literacy carries out in their community.

Conclusion

Although, many efforts have been made to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as a public health problem that is of concern to various groups today, it would be ineffective if it ignores the involvement of the community. This perspective provided practical solutions for working hand in hand with communities that positioned them as the main actors. Therefore, implementation of the health literacy approach was the right strategy in community-based efforts because it provided room for the involvement of all parties in preventing the spread of COVID-19, where the community became the foundation for efforts to overcome this pandemic.

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