INTERNET AND PROMOTING FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM

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Abstract

Within more than a decade FP program movement in Indonesia seems to be dissipating. BKKBN as national FP agency in Indonesia have tried to revitalise and promote the program in many media. The internet, which is one of them, is as strategic as the conventional media. The proliferating number of internet users in Indonesia has given a potential opportunity to BKKBN in reaching them in order to deliver FP information, as part of their effort to promote FP program. However, BKKBN needs to focus in utilising the internet-based media platforms as well as to collaborate with other government agency such as Kemenkominfo to gain mutual benefit in order to achieve targets of both agencies.

Keywords: FP Program, Internet, media, collaboration

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The vast growing of Information Technology (IT) has developed the Internet in such manners. The Internet has been used widely in many aspects of life such as commerce, politics, networking, research, entertainment, activism, social movements, and government and public policy. The Internet has shifted the modes in accessing information and become an alternative tool to shape the society, and perhaps, the influence is much stronger than the conventional media. Digital era has initiated the engagement between IT and governance system, and has been transforming the mode of communication between government and citizens. Indeed, the government gains many benefits particularly in the process of policymaking and policy dissemination. This paper discuss the importance of the Internet and its relevant products as potential tools to promote government policy, particularly family planning (FP) policy, as one of many key factors to educate the society about the importance of FP program. Few aspects about the emergence of smart community and the properties of the Internet as a tool and a network, as well as a few recommendations in utilising the Internet as an FP media promotion will also be discussed.

II. BACKGROUND

During the New Order regime between 1968 and 1998, Indonesia received numerous aids from foreign institutions particularly in promoting FP program. As a result, according to The World Bank total fertility rate (TFR) declined sharply, from 4.4 to 2.5 between 1980 and 1998. As the Indonesian government agency, BKKBN (National Family Planning and Population Board) had a pivotal role in implementing FP policy (Hull 1987). The ultimate aim of FP policy is to build public awareness in population issues and family welfare. FP is not only promoting contraceptive usage but also suggesting the idea of having small family as the prerequisite of socioeconomic welfare, which lead to promoting the value and norms about FP in the society. Indeed, this had been successfully achieved during the New Order regime as the government controlled almost every sector in life which led to effective government communication.

Despite of the fact that the success of FP program in the past was because of the authoritarian style of the New Order regime, it is also noted the massive promotion by BKKBN was the key element in FP program promotion (Warwick 1986). After the fall of New Order regime, the FP program was somewhat halted as
a consequence of governmental system alteration from centralised to decentralised. Moreover, FP program in local government level is no longer the main priority due to the shrinkage of FP agency as it has been merged with other agencies which are not closely related to its organisational function, which leads to disrupted program continuity. BKKBN has been concerned about this matter and its impact towards the number of population as the program became less popular. Recent study has confirmed the concern, as the TFR in 2012 does not indicate any decrease and remains stagnant at 2.6 albeit the TFR target is 2.1 in 2014. Since early 2000, the FP strategy has been changed in accordance to changes in society and political system. Therefore, BKKBN has issued grand strategies in revitalising the FP program, and one major strategy is FP promotion through the media. Nonetheless, by only using mainstream media, the result is far from expectation, as it is indicated by TFR stagnancy.

FP program promotion can be optimised by using potential tool such as internet. It should be noted that in 2016 there is more than 322 million internet users in Indonesia and around 42 per cent of them are in 10 to 34 years of age. This figure is as predicted by media pundits who suggested that the number of internet user will grow at least over 100 million users in 2015 (Ramawy 2013). Thus, efforts to make the Internet accessible in remote areas have been conducted by Ministry of Communication and Informatics (Kemenkominfo), as they have launched programs such as “Internet literacy village” (desa melek internet) and “integrated rural broadband program” (program desa broadband terpadu).

Data source: APJII, 2016 survey (https://statistik.kominfo.go.id)

The proliferating number of internet users in Indonesia is not only potential as target in delivering the FP messages but also as valuable source to capture and evaluate the demand for FP services. It should be highlighted that the cost for seeking and exchanging information through the Internet becomes less (Margetts 2009). As a result, the internet is not only potential, but it may also reduce the cost of the media promotion. Therefore, the internet becomes a worthy option to be utilised as a promotion media, and can be as essential as other conventional media that have been used in the FP program. However, BKKBN seems only focus on using mainstream media such as television, radio, and other printed media.

III. INTERNET, BEYOND THE CHANGES IN SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION

A. Internet as a Tool

The challenge of digital era has forced the government to adapt, because public no longer depends on the government to fulfil their needs, particularly in retrieving the information, as in the past the access to information is limited to TV, radio, or printed materials. On one hand, the impact of the challenge could be overwhelming, as the government expenses more investment as a response of the challenge. But on the other hand, it also stimulates the government to adopt better governance system. Thus, digital era has created more demanding society (Coe et al 2001) which lead to self-sufficient information access through the utilisation of the Internet. Nonetheless, the digital era should be considered as a great opportunity for supporting the government policy.

The properties of government tool before and after digital era and the Internet remains the same, although government’s tools in terms of generating the policy and information (nodality, authority, treasure, and organisational capacity) are being challenged by external factors which have been driven by the development of the
The emergence of smart community and the Internet (Margetts 2009). Thus, the need for information in digital era has been increasing and the Internet becomes prominent source of information, leaving other traditional media behind its back. Margetts argued, the government nodality in providing information is also affected as the information that appears on the top-list depends on the algorithm of the search engine and their search strategy. In terms of the property of authority, to some extent the Internet has liberated people from government’s authority and shaped the relationship between state and citizen to become more balance and forced the government to be more authorised. For treasure, the Internet enables government to specifically identify the need of the citizens and also provides specific incentives as well as creates supplier public policy. In terms of organisational capacity, internet has shifted public expectation about the government organisation management, and stimulates the government to use technology in order to communicate with people and other organisations.

From these arguments, it is already clear that the Internet can be used or even should be used as a tool in government communication due to its benefit. Johnson et al (1999) suggested that the ability of the internet to increase public knowledge is as competitive as the ability of other conventional media. With regards to the FP policy, as its core objective is to promote society awareness by educating and transferring the FP information, the Internet has provided a strong basis to enhance the effectiveness of the program. However, it also depends on the ability and more importantly the enthusiasm of the government in using internet as the promotion media.

B. Smart Community

As mentioned earlier, the Internet has created a more demanding society, the result leads to an alteration of the relationship between government and society which becomes less vertical and to some extent put the relationship into a horizontal line. The environment enables partnership between government and society in basis of cooperation and collaboration. The process has led to the emergence of smart community and collective intelligence, following the result of a creative interaction and enhances the skill, intelligence, and competencies in both government and communities (Coe et al 2001). The rise of smart community, once again is affected by technology advancement where socially active people are connected to each other through mobile gadgets and the Internet connection, and it has created ‘smart mobs’ (Kahn & Kellner 2004). Albeit Wellman et al (2001) mentioned that the internet only has small contribution in social capital development, yet, the engagement of the Internet to the society also helps the development of capacity building, social capital, and initiates e-advocacy (Grierson et al 2006).

The emergence of smart community should be recognised as the valuable resource to attain the objective of the FP policy. It should be noted that BKKBN is also has responsibility to initiate smart communities. Smart community should be involved in the process of policy making because their contribution is essential. During the policy making process, the government may or may not capture the needs of FP in the society, so the contribution of smart community may provide not only vital information and knowledge, but also critics and opinions. The perception towards FP policy between government and society may not be the same. Nonetheless, government and smart community should share interest and belief in order to have a coherent perception (Howlett 2009). Yet, government should set up a conducive environment to create a form of partnership between government and community, as the partnership may build a mutual understanding and diminishes the bias in setting the policy objective, and it induces more significant benefit for both sides.

Smart community also induces social learning in relationship with collective intelligence, as the Internet has provided basis for the interaction between public, private, and academic organisations (Coe et al 2001). Brunstings and Postmes (2002) demonstrated that the Internet is an effective tool to instigate activism as well as mobilisation. In effect, it also awakes the hidden potential of collective behaviour and collective action, in order to be rose in society and becomes social movement. Goold et al (2003) concluded that the Internet should be utilised in educating the society particularly in reproductive health education to build sexual health awareness, and the Internet users should also be encouraged to actively participate. The effectiveness of the internet in FP education has been proven by Fehring et al (2011) in their pilot study as the unwanted pregnancy rates of the participants in the study is very low, indeed this is promising for FP policy albeit there are limitations on the study.

Moreover, Coe et al stated that social learning also stimulate the flourish of new ideas and innovations. However, new ideas and innovations can be achieved by providing sufficient information for public consumption. Starting at this point, government should provide the
information by making it accessible for public, particularly about specific policy to alter social behaviour (Howlett 2009, Abroms and Maibach 2008). For example, information about population census, population projection, population-related problems, surveys, the side effect of particular contraceptive method, and the number of cases of contraceptive failure. Such information may inspire the community to develop their ideas and innovations, and behaviour towards FP practice. BKKBN may actually gain more benefit from the emergence of smart community rather than the benefit for the community itself, as they are potential to voice the FP program.

C. Internet as a Public Network

The development of the Internet has altered the process of interaction and communication between individuals and public. The circumference of private and public areas becomes indistinct due to the amalgamation of these two domains, which has been driven by the Internet (Walther et al 2010). In effect, as Walther et al added, information can be disseminated in one-to-one mode and one-to-many mode simultaneously. Moreover, the dissemination modes also determine the degree of social influence, albeit there is no clear result which mode is more effective. In my perspective, in order to have social impact, the mode should depend on the message content and the receivers’ characteristics. Therefore, the effectiveness cannot be measured as the value becomes contextual. As an example, convincing local authority to implement FP policy requires intensive two-way communication (communication network), as the exchange of particular information is specifically directed between the two actors, and sometimes it requires personal approach such as personal meeting, dinner invitation, and sport activity. Whilst, the information for public can be published in a one-way communication (information network) through television, radio, and other mass media.

Indeed, the Internet as a public network cannot be separated with other properties of network such as affiliation network and social network. As an affiliation network, the Internet enables people to access information and at the same time enables people to contribute to the information dissemination without any connectivity between them other than sharing the same interest in particular information (Park et al 2001). This particular network, as Park et al further stated, has characteristics such as trustworthiness, expertness, and safety factors. Furthermore, this type of network may provide credible information that can be useful for individuals, groups, and organizations (Park 2003).

As a social network, the Internet has connected individuals, groups, and organisations. Consequently, the internet is also attributed with the properties of social network. According to Christakis and Fowler (2009), social network is a powerful tool to influence particular behaviour between actors in the network. Therefore, it is not surprising that numbers of users of social network media on the internet were proliferating within short period of time. Social network in its dynamic, in accordance with Christakis and Fowler’s arguments, can be modified by the actors and vice versa, and it is also unique in terms of characteristic as it cannot be controlled due to its autonomous nature.

IV. DISCUSSION

A. Internet as a Promotion Media

The properties of internet as communication network, information network, affiliation network, and social network is a valuable tool for policy promotion. The related product of internet such as social network sites, blogs, emails, telecommuting, and so forth can be used as tools for research, communication, interaction, dissemination of information, and more importantly as a tool to influence the society to alter their behaviour. Indeed, the Internet is arguably a suitable media in FP promotion. There are various ways for BKKBN to utilise the Internet as their media promotion. In my opinion, BKKBN should focus more in using social media network, blogs, and Wikipedia as other alternatives of BKKBN website.

B. Social Media Network

The idea of phone tree, which has been argued by Christakis and Fowler (2009), is the main idea of using social media network as a tool for FP promotion, despite of its limitation. Nonetheless, it enables viral communication in terms of spreading the FP messages to the audiences which is extremely useful to be utilised. Christakis and Fowler mentioned about the limitation of using phone tree pattern, as the Three Degree Rules may be applicable in delivering the content of the messages. Three Degrees of Influence Rule, as they explained, discusses about the impact of particular stimulation as an influence from an actor to his/her network, starting from an actor’s friends,
friends of actor’s friends, and friends of friends of actor’s friends’. Furthermore, the effect of the message will be diminishing in accordance to the degree of the network.

Christakis and Fowler (2009) used the term intrinsic-decay explanation, network-instability explanation, and evolutionary-purpose explanation to explain the diminishing effect of particular message to the network due to the Three Degrees Rule. In general, as the actors of the network pass the message from one degree to two degrees and from two degrees to three degrees, the message became less accurate and perhaps it has been deviated into other message which may be completely different from the original one. As the nature of the network is dynamic, the message may not be delivered because the ties in the network may be altered or vanished. People also tend to live in a group or a community, which can only be reached and influenced up to the three degrees connection.

However, in my perspective social media network on the internet to some extent may wipe out the Three Degrees Rule in terms of spreading the message. As the communication is not conducted in forms of verbal communication, social media network is able to deliver original content of the message by providing the link to the original site. Secondly, social media network enables people to stay in touch with their network, or even further by shifting the ties, as an example by changing the two degrees becomes one degree. Lastly, there are features in social media network which enable the message to be distributed beyond the degrees. For example, “share” feature in Facebook or “tweets/ retweets/ quotes” in Twitter. Perhaps, the best description of social media network is the argument from Gilbert and Karahalios (2009), where the ability of social media to make the network becomes “social” as it helps the improvement of network structure and strengthens the ties. Therefore, social media network is the best media to spread the message in viral manner and also effective to deliver brief information regarding FP program.

C. Blogs

In his article, Karpf (2008) explained about the expansion of blogging as it has been blended with traditional organisational structure due to a professionalization, and it has developed the community basis and allows wider opportunity to connect the author with the readers. The professionalization on the blogosphere allows the bloggers to be the source of information for media as well as creates a form of citizen journalism. Whilst as the community basis, blogging creates an opportunity to initiate collective action which leads to social movement. From these expansions, blogs can be categorized into four types, which are classic blogs, community blogs, institutional blogs, and bridging blogs. Karpf further explained that classic blog is only interested on publishing one’s opinion, community blog allows interaction between communities-of-interest and provides a medium for discussion as well as initiates collective action. Institutional blog enables organisation to amplify their message in order to be heard by the public. Bridge blog is a combination between institutional blog and community blog to induce prominent bloggers to participate in discussions, and to raise particular issue in public by influencing other media.

Blogs should be considered as media for advocacy, education, and dialogue (Merry 2010), as it has been used in public health sector. Therefore, blog can also be used in FP program promotion, particularly in specific FP program topics discussion. Merry further noted that blogs in terms of content may be richer than conventional websites because blogs may hyperlink with external sources, enable the readers to make comments, and they use simple language as it can be understood by people from different background. As a media advocacy, Wallack and Dorfman (1996) argued, blogs create another opportunity to educate the society by using media to encourage communities to participate in discussions and collaboration in policy making. More importantly, media advocacy instigates communities-of-interest to be more actively engaged in particular policy (Grierson et al 2006).

D. Wikipedia

Not only have more than 200 languages, Wikipedia as the source of information has provided information more than the Encyclopaedia Britannica (Kuznetsov 2006). Wikipedia has become a popular online reference site because it has thousands of writers as the contributors and became a useful reference for journalists and researchers (Lih 2003). The nature of Wikipedia as an open source liberates anyone who is interested in particular topic to write and edit the content. Indeed, there is also opportunity to vandalise the content. However, the system enable the content to be changed without disturbing the previous content as the system stores every edited article, and the content can be restored back to the proper version. Moreover, Lih stated that as the nature of Wikipedia is an open source, Wikipedia is a potential site to get
high-quality reference because it creates neutral environment. Therefore, Wikipedia may provide a space to distribute information about FP practice, and allows people to contribute to the richness of the information.

E. Enhancing the Internet coverage in remote areas

The Internet in some remote part of Indonesia is inaccessible. As a result, the utilisation of the Internet as FP media promotion in rural area may be ineffective. However, Kemenkominfo have put some efforts to make the Internet accessible in remote areas by launching Program Desa Melek Internet, a program that provides a mobile internet service in sub-district level. Indeed, BKKBN should perceive the effort as an opportunity to create collaboration between BKKBN and Kemenkominfo. Hence, the collaboration will bring benefits to both agencies as well as the communities in rural area.

With limited resource and budget, undeniably, BKKBN may not fully support the whole Kemenkominfo program and vice versa. Yet, BKKBN should carefully allocate the resource and budget by selecting targeted region as priority in aiding the program. For instance, by procuring FP mobile internet in selected areas as a strategy to both enhancing the Internet coverage and providing FP information. The idea is similar to the current BKKBN policy, which grant special allocated budget (Dana Alokasi Khusus) to provide Information Mobile Unit (Mobil Unit Penerangan) and Service Mobile Unit (Mobil Unit Pelayanan) to local FP agencies in district and municipality level.

V. CONCLUSION

As mentioned earlier, it is obvious that the role of the internet is quite strategic. A few factors such as the escalating number of internet user, bulky proportion of internet users in reproductive age group, and the FP program target population, BKKBN may have to consider utilising the Internet and its products more intensive.

It is well mentioned in some papers and research that the Internet is a proper tool to stimulate social activism and mobilisation and the impact may ignite collective action, collective behaviour, and social movement. Thus, many evidences also have confirmed the effectiveness of the Internet in policy promotion. In regards with FP program, the Internet can be effective in outlining community behaviour towards FP program, as it has been successfully shaping the society in general. Therefore, by utilising the Internet as a media promotion, the FP program may gain the success as it has been achieved in the past.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION

I propose that in order to revitalise the FP policy, the FP promotion in Indonesia should not only focus on conventional media. The internet and its properties as a tool and a network have provided a strong basis for policy making and policy dissemination. The growth of the Internet users in Indonesia and the bulky population of youth is an opportunity to utilise the Internet as the highway for policy promotion in Indonesia.

The development of social media network has created a platform to distribute the FP messages in viral manners, and it should be sought as an interesting project for BKKBN to work on social media network as a media to inform superficial topics regarding FP program to public. Other platform such as blogs should be recognised as a media to discuss more sophisticated topics in FP, as the environment of the blogosphere is suitable to initiate comprehensive discussion and encourage collective behaviour as well as social movement. More importantly, blogosphere can be used to capture the public aspiration from the society regarding FP practice. Yet, it creates opportunity to influence other mainstream media to discuss about the importance of FP program. Therefore, BKKBN should utilise blogosphere as media advocacy. Moreover, providing sufficient information to the public is also essential. Wikipedia can be the best alternative in providing FP information rather than only running BKKBN website and distributing printed materials.

BKKBN should consider developing a taskforce which specifically manage this matter as the nature of the internet is somewhat different from conventional media. Consequently, well-trained and well-equipped resources is needed. Thus, it also requires extra budget to be allocated, although the cost is much less than the amount of conventional media be demanded. Therefore, these aspects should not be overwhelming for BKKBN because these three aspects are already obtained. However, a solid strategy in utilizing these resources should be designed carefully.

Furthermore, collaboration with other agency such as Kemenkominfo should also be regarded. As an example, by integrating Family Planning Village Program (Program Kampung KB) with integrated rural broadband program, so the Internet as FP media promotion is accessible in remote areas. Yet, specific legal agreement between these two agencies should be designed comprehensively, not only to gain mutual
benefits and perhaps to share cost, but also to avoid any possible discordance in the future. Put it succinctly, utilizing the internet and its product is highly recommended for BKKBN to promote their program and achievement.

REFERENCES


