

Health Education Innovation Strategy: Developing Sustainable Practices and Preparing Health Workers in Health Communication for the Indonesian National Program

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Abstract. Innovation strategies in health education are vital to developing skilled health professionals equipped to meet the demands of national health initiatives in Indonesia. This article explores a range of innovative educational approaches, focusing on integrating sustainable practices and enhancing health communication competencies. Central to this discussion is how these educational innovations can elevate health professionals' abilities to deliver effective, efficient, and community-centered services. Sustainable practices, such as case-based learning and interactive simulations, are designed to sharpen practical skills and foster adaptability among health workers in real-world settings. Moreover, cultivating communication skills, particularly in engaging with patients and communities, is crucial for ensuring that national health messages are conveyed effectively and resonate with diverse populations. By implementing these strategies, health professionals are better prepared to communicate, adapt, and innovate—ultimately contributing to the success of national health programs and driving positive impacts on public health. Effective health communication strategies are essential for improving health outcomes and behaviors across communities. These strategies must be tailored to the specific needs of target audiences, taking into account cultural, socio-economic, and literacy differences. Despite the potential of digital media in expanding access to health information, challenges such as misinformation and digital literacy gaps remain. Key strategies to enhance communication effectiveness include expanding internet access, improving health literacy, and investing in training for health professionals. Furthermore, Indonesia's health communication strategies, especially in addressing critical health issues such as communicable and non-communicable diseases, emphasize community empowerment, advocacy, and partnership-building to foster positive health behaviors. As healthcare infrastructure continues to evolve, integrating digital tools and media will further enhance the quality and accessibility of health services, contributing to better health outcomes for diverse populations.

Keywords: Health education, innovation strategy, health communication, Indonesia, diseases

Introduction

Communication is a key part of human life, as humans are naturally social beings who depend on interaction to manage daily activities and relationships. According to Laurence D. Kincaid, communication is a process through which two or more people exchange information and give feedback to each other (Cangara, 2014). This interaction is crucial not only for personal connections but also for the smooth operation of society as a whole. Therefore, communication is one of the main pillars in shaping human experiences, supporting both individual and collective growth. One of the most important forms of communication in human life is health communication. According to Indonesia's Health Law No. 23 of 1992, health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being that allows individuals to live productively in social and economic settings. Health is often viewed through four main dimensions: physical (bodily), mental (emotional and psychological), social, and economic well-being (Notoatmodjo, 2007).

This comprehensive view of health emphasizes the importance of effective health communication, which plays a crucial role in raising awareness and encouraging behaviors that support these four aspects of health. Ultimately, this improves quality of life and boosts the social and economic productivity of individuals. The purpose of health communication is to serve as a means of conveying information or messages about health to the public. Health communication is defined as the study of how communication strategies can be used to distribute health-related information or messages. The goal is to influence individuals and communities, helping them make informed decisions about their health and well-being. According to Liliweri (2007: 46), health communication is a powerful tool that shapes behaviors and encourages better healthcare choices. Effective health communication not only shares information but also promotes understanding, motivating individuals to take actions that improve their health. This process is fundamental to health education, public health campaigns, and overall management of health issues within communities (Rimal & Lapinski, 2009). By using targeted communication strategies, health messages can be customized for different audiences, ensuring they are both impactful and actionable.

Innovation strategies in health education are vital for training competent health workers who can tackle both global and national health issues. As Indonesia's national health program expands, the need for skilled health workers capable of providing effective, evidence-based care is increasing rapidly. A key area needing improvement is health communication, which is crucial for effectively conveying health messages to the public. To achieve this, developing sustainable health education practices is essential. These practices should include innovative approaches that not only improve theoretical understanding but also enhance practical skills and communication abilities, especially in interactions with patients and communities. Incorporating technology and community-based strategies into health education will help develop health professionals who are not only well-versed in scientific advances but also responsive to Indonesia's social and cultural contexts.

This innovative approach provides a foundation for improving the effectiveness of national health programs, ensuring that health messages are communicated clearly, understood, and embraced across different segments of the population. Strengthening health communication skills among health workers is therefore essential for enabling them to act as effective agents of change. This article will

examine how innovation strategies in health education can promote sustainable practices and prepare Indonesian health workers to contribute to the success of the national health program.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research approach, as described by Bogdan and Taylor (in Moleong, 2002: 3), who define qualitative research as the process of collecting descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words, or observable behavior. The focus of this approach is on gathering qualitative data that provides detailed descriptions of phenomena. Qualitative research aims to explore the meaning behind a phenomenon or issue, whether current or historical (M. Djamel, 2015: 9). By using this descriptive method, the study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of social realities from the perspectives of the participants. The qualitative approach enables researchers to capture the complexities and nuances of human experiences, allowing for a more comprehensive interpretation of the subject under investigation.

This research combines a literature review and in-depth interviews. The literature review involves gathering and analyzing data from credible sources such as journals, books, research reports, and articles focused on digital media's role in health communication in Indonesia. This helps identify trends, patterns, challenges, and opportunities related to digital health communication in the region. Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders actively using digital media for health communication in Indonesia, offering valuable insights and context to supplement the literature review findings.

Alongside the literature review, this study included in-depth interviews with a range of stakeholders, such as health practitioners, developers of health applications, users of health services, and health communication experts. Interviews were conducted in person and via teleconference to accommodate participants' schedules and preferences. These interviews aimed to gather detailed insights into stakeholders' experiences, perspectives, and attitudes regarding the use of digital media in health communication. Each interview was conducted under the researcher's supervision, recorded with participants' consent, and analyzed afterward for thematic content. The data from both the literature review and interviews were analyzed using thematic content analysis, which involved coding, identifying themes, and interpreting results to reveal key patterns and trends in digital health communication practices in Indonesia. This study received approval from the Research Ethics Committee, and all participants gave informed consent before taking part. All data collected were kept strictly confidential and used only for this research. Ethical principles, including privacy, confidentiality, and participants' right to withdraw at any time without penalty, were carefully maintained throughout the study.

Results

Health communication strategies

Effective health communication strategies are grounded in a systematic process that leverages behavioral theory to design and execute communication efforts that foster and sustain healthy behaviors. By utilizing evidence-based approaches, these strategies are tailored to address the specific needs and motivations of target audiences, ensuring that health messages are both impactful and enduring (K4Health Project, 2019). Health communication strategies encompass three key sub-topics: (1) the characteristics of effective health communication, (2) barriers that hinder effective communication, and (3) strategies to enhance communication effectiveness. Each sub-topic plays a crucial role in understanding how to design and implement communication efforts that successfully promote health awareness and behavior change.

1. Characteristics of Effective Health Communication: Effective health communication is essential for equipping communities with the knowledge and resources to respond appropriately in the event of a health crisis. Key characteristics include:
 - a. Impact on Behavior Change: Effective health communication not only drives individual behavior change but also inspires widespread change across communities, much like a snowball effect.
 - b. Content Quality: To be effective, content must be:
 - i. Accurate: Free from errors in facts, interpretation, or judgment.
 - ii. Accessible: Easily reachable across different media platforms, enabling communicants to engage from any location.
 - iii. Balanced: Presents both benefits and risks in an unbiased way.
 - iv. Consistent: Remains stable and unaltered over time.
 - v. Culturally Relevant: Adapted to be appropriate and acceptable across diverse ethnic, racial, and linguistic backgrounds, including accommodations for individuals with disabilities.
 - vi. Evidence-Based: Scientifically validated and rooted in credible research.
 - vii. Affordable: Designed to reach a wide audience, potentially extending beyond the initial target.
 - viii. Reliable: Comes from trusted sources, regularly updated to maintain credibility.

- ix. Repetitive: Delivered multiple times to reinforce impact and reach new audiences.
- c. Multi-Pronged and Multi-Level Approaches: Effective communication strategies often integrate with other health interventions and operate on multiple levels to maximize reach and impact.
- d. Socio-Cultural Consideration: Content should be tailored to the target audience's socio-cultural norms, language, and preferred media to enhance relevance and engagement.

These characteristics collectively enhance the effectiveness of health communication in promoting and sustaining healthy behaviors across diverse communities.

2. Barriers to Effective Health Communication: Effective health communication faces several challenges, including:
 - a. Low Health Literacy: Limited literacy, particularly among audiences who struggle with written communication, makes it difficult for some groups to access and understand health information. This barrier underscores the need for diverse media channels and alternative delivery methods to ensure inclusivity.
 - b. Limited Internet Access: In regions where internet access is unavailable or unaffordable, audiences are further isolated from health information. This barrier calls for government efforts to expand internet infrastructure and potentially offer free access to underserved communities.
 - c. Insufficient Research and Development: A lack of investment in research and development restricts the evolution of innovative communication strategies and the creation of more effective media tools tailored to specific audiences.
 - d. Proliferation of Low-Quality Information: The spread of inaccurate or misleading information can overshadow accurate health messages, making it difficult for audiences to identify reliable sources. Addressing this issue requires robust strategies to improve information quality and visibility.
 - e. Limited Communication Skills of Health Personnel: Some health workers may lack the skills to convey information effectively, especially through audiovisual media. Training and upskilling initiatives for health personnel can help ensure that health messages are delivered clearly and impactfully (Unite For Sight, 2010; Haran Ratna, 2019).

These barriers highlight the need for comprehensive solutions to improve the accessibility, clarity, and reliability of health communication.

3. Strategies to Improve Health Communication: Effective health

communication strategies must be appropriate, impactful, and efficient for the target audience (Hopkins Bloomberg, 2003). At a macro level, the government can implement several general strategies to enhance the quality of health communication:

- a. **Expand Internet Access through Collaboration:** The government should work with technology companies to broaden internet access, focusing on providing free or subsidized internet access to underserved households.
- b. **Tailor Information for Low-Literacy Audiences:** Health information should be crafted at a readability level that matches the audience's literacy skills. Additionally, combining written information with audio content and supporting literacy improvement programs can make health messages more accessible for individuals with limited reading skills.
- c. **Establish and Support Training Centers for Health Communicators:** The government should create regional training centers or mandate access to online training programs to equip health promotion officers and other health professionals with essential communication skills. This ensures that health workers possess the necessary competencies to deliver clear, effective health messages.

These strategies collectively help improve the reach, clarity, and accessibility of health communication across diverse populations.

4. **Micro-Level Strategies to Improve Health Communication:** At the Health Service Agency or community level, targeted strategies can enhance health communication through approaches like Workplace Guidelines and Community Comedy Dramas. By gaining insight into local attitudes and cultural norms, health workers can design interventions that are culturally resonant and effectively influence specific behaviors. For instance, community comedy dramas that incorporate health messages can engage audiences in an entertaining and relatable way, fostering greater acceptance and understanding of health practices. Similarly, clear and accessible workplace guidelines provide staff with consistent messaging tools, helping to reinforce desired behaviors within the community.

In addition to the macro and micro strategies mentioned above, health communication approaches should be tailored to local contexts, taking into account specific community conditions and needs. These strategies also depend on the experience and professionalism of health workers, who play a crucial role in developing creative, context-appropriate solutions to effectively engage their target audiences (Unite For Sight, 2010).

1. **Advocacy:** Advocacy is a key health communication strategy that involves engaging policymakers (at both central and regional government levels) through various methods, tools, and resources. The goal is to secure a strong commitment from government leaders, ultimately resulting in the creation of health-focused regulations and policies.

2. **Community Empowerment Movement:** Community empowerment is an ongoing and sustainable process of health communication aimed at individuals, families, and groups. The objective is to move the community through a series of stages: from unawareness to awareness, from awareness to desire, and from desire to the ability to actively implement the introduced health programs (Ratih Gayatri Setyabudi; Mutia Dewi, 2017).
3. **Partnerships:** Partnerships are an essential strategy in health communication, particularly in health promotion programs. They involve collaboration with the private sector, companies, community organizations, and religious institutions to provide necessary resources, such as funding, equipment, and materials. Partners actively contribute to implementing activities, working as part of a collaborative team.
4. **Build Good Condition:** Build Good Condition is a health communication strategy that focuses on intensively engaging various societal elements, such as community leaders, health cadres, and other stakeholders. The aim is to build support and foster a collective commitment to health promotion initiatives.

Health Indonesian National Program Communication Strategies

Indonesia faces a range of demographic and health challenges, including multiple epidemics and a nutritional crossroads. Communicable diseases, particularly neglected infections like filariasis, remain a persistent issue within the health system. Tuberculosis detection varies significantly across regions, and the HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to grow, predominantly affecting high-risk groups despite low prevalence rates in the general population. Additionally, the rising incidence of non-communicable diseases, such as cardiovascular conditions, metabolic disorders, and cancer, has become a major cause of death. Although substantial investments by the government and international partners have improved access to healthcare, concerns about the quality and efficiency of services persist. Weak health system performance highlights ongoing inefficiencies, with health service delivery heavily reliant on the public sector. While the private sector plays a significant role, oversight remains inadequate. Access to quality care is often restricted, particularly for underserved populations in remote areas, due to a shortage of qualified health workers.

Over the past 25 years, Indonesia has made significant strides in expanding health service accessibility, leading to notable improvements in certain health outcomes. However, some health indicators remain suboptimal, suggesting that further advancements in the quality of healthcare workers are necessary. The Health Professional Education Quality Project aims to accelerate progress in achieving key health outcomes in Indonesia by enhancing the overall value of healthcare. This will be achieved by improving the quality of education for healthcare providers, including doctors, dentists, nurses, and midwives. The project is addressing this gap by strengthening accreditation and certification systems, which will ultimately enhance the educational standards for these health professionals, leading to better healthcare services across the country. Each year, approximately 5,000 doctors, 1,350 dentists, 34,000 nurses, and 10,000 midwives

graduate from Indonesia's network of 70 medical schools, 23 dental schools, nearly 600 midwifery schools, and over 500 nursing schools, all of which fall under the Ministry of National Education and Culture's oversight. The quality of these institutions varies significantly, with many newer schools still struggling to provide a high standard of education. Research indicates that between 1997 and 2007, there was minimal improvement in the quality of training for doctors, nurses, and midwives, which has contributed to ongoing challenges in healthcare service delivery. Although recent reforms have begun to lay the foundation for better health professional education, their implementation is still in the early stages.

The Ministry of Health's strategy is built around four key pillars: community empowerment, health financing, access to services, and oversight. One of the main objectives of this strategy is community empowerment, which is being achieved through initiatives like the Desa Siaga program, aimed at assigning health workers (midwives and/or nurses) to each village by 2009. Decentralization has brought both challenges and opportunities to the sector. While responsibilities among different levels of government need clearer definition—especially in managing health personnel—the increased public health spending at the regional level after decentralization has been a positive development. However, issues like private spending and the efficiency of budget allocation remain important. A large share of health funding still comes from private sources, which raises the risk of impoverishment due to catastrophic health events. Health insurance coverage for the poor, initially through Askeskin and now under JAMKESMAS, has expanded to cover over 30% of the population, with plans to eventually include all citizens. This expansion requires careful assessment of existing schemes and consideration of institutional and fiscal capacities to ensure sustainability.

The National Communication Strategy employs a behavior-focused approach to help individuals, families, groups, and communities adopt healthier practices. This strategy acts as a guide for shaping behaviors and social norms across various sectors vital for positive health outcomes. It aligns with the Roadmap to Health and Immunization Services framework by incorporating a multi-level approach within the communication planning process. Key strategies include: (1) social and behavior change through social mobilization, (2) capacity building, (3) enhancing community relations, and (4) advocacy to motivate individuals and communities to adopt and sustain desired health behaviors. To deliver targeted, systematic, and effective communication that encourages and maintains the desired behaviors related to immunization, the National Communication Strategy for Immunization will concentrate on five main approaches to promote health improvement programs at both the national and regional levels. These approaches are: Advocacy, Public Relations, Social Mobilization and Community Engagement, Mass Media and Social Media Campaigns, and Health Worker Capacity and Skills.

Advocacy involves educating and motivating key influencers to take specific actions that support the immunization program. This may include advancing regulations, policies, funding, or planning large-scale child immunization efforts. Public relations efforts address and correct misinformation, helping to clarify unclear information and adjust public perceptions. Social mobilization and community involvement activities work to increase engagement from institutions, community networks, and civil society organizations, fostering changes in attitudes, structures, and norms toward health goals. Campaigns across mass and social media extend the program's reach for greater impact. Additionally, the capacity and skills of healthcare workers and volunteers are strengthened,

equipping them with adaptive communication skills and inclusive values to deliver high-quality, accessible health services.

This National Communication Strategy targets groups that influence parents and/or primary caregivers of children to adopt recommended health behaviors. Communication interventions will be customized based on the characteristics of different target groups. A monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework has been developed to oversee and ensure the implementation of the communication and demand generation strategies stays on track, to identify issues for improvement during implementation, and to measure the impact of the communication efforts. At all levels of government, a designated person or team should be assigned to monitor and complete the communication strategy monitoring checklist. The M&E framework includes various proposed indicators that are measured to achieve the communication objectives and specific goals.

Education Strategies

1. *Strengthening Accreditation Policies and Procedures.* The project preparation phase will focus on creating a shared understanding of accreditation policies, standards, and processes through a series of meetings with key stakeholders from each profession. The implementation phase will support the execution of an action plan that aligns with these accreditation standards. Resources for this component will be allocated to technical assistance, workshops, training, and the purchase of essential equipment to facilitate the accreditation process.
2. *Ensuring Educational Quality through National Competency-Based Certification.* In the preparation phase, a consensus-building process will involve stakeholders to agree on a framework for developing and implementing national competency-based exams at the school level. The project will allocate resources to technical support, workshops, training, and the essential equipment required to conduct competency-based exams and issue certifications for graduates.
3. *Improving School Quality via Outcome-Based Grants.* While forming a consensus on accreditation and certification is a fundamental aspect of project preparation, the project will utilize outcome-based grants to support schools in meeting accreditation standards. These grants will also assist leading schools in helping less developed institutions improve their progress. This approach will draw on successful implementation models from previous higher education projects, including the Quality of Undergraduate Education (QUE) Project.
4. *Utilization of Digital Media in Health Communication.* The study revealed that digital media has significantly reshaped how Indonesians access and comprehend health information, with websites, mobile apps, and social media commonly utilized by healthcare providers and the public to share diverse health topics, including chronic diseases and healthy lifestyle promotion. Digital media also fosters interaction between healthcare providers and the public, enabling users to ask questions, share experiences, and receive support, which enhances health knowledge and behaviors. Nonetheless, challenges persist, particularly regarding the reliability of information, as inaccurate content can spread rapidly, and

digital literacy, as some users lack the skills to evaluate and effectively use health information. Strengthening digital health communication could be achieved through digital literacy education, particularly for older and underserved populations, along with regulatory measures to ensure the accuracy and trustworthiness of health information online.

Digital media acts as a valuable platform for sharing ideas, providing feedback, and engaging in health policymaking, thereby increasing public participation and acceptance of health initiatives. The results of this study support previous research emphasizing the crucial role of digital media in health communication (Neiger et al., 2013; Smailhodzic et al., 2016). In Indonesia, specifically, digital media has revolutionized how people access and understand health information, with websites, mobile apps, and social media becoming the main channels for spreading health details. This aligns with the Diffusion of Innovations theory (Rogers, 2003), which explains how innovations like digital media spread through societies. Despite its advantages, the rising use of digital media in health communication brings challenges. A major concern is the reliability and credibility of health information. The "Spiral of Trust" theory (Metzger et al., 2010) indicates that trust in information is strongly affected by the credibility of its source. With digital media, users encounter large amounts of health information, much of which may be inaccurate or untrustworthy. This study highlights the dangers of misleading or false health data, which can quickly spread and potentially harm public health (Fagherazzi et al., 2021). Another significant challenge is digital literacy. According to Information Literacy Theory (Bawden, 2001), the skill to find, understand, and effectively use information is essential to benefit from digital media fully. However, this study found that not all Indonesians have sufficient digital literacy skills, which could limit the positive effects of digital media on health communication.

Digital platforms and apps now enable patients to communicate directly with healthcare professionals, such as doctors and nurses, which is especially helpful for those in remote areas or with limited access to healthcare facilities. Telemedicine allows virtual consultations, making it easier for individuals to receive health services without traveling to clinics. Apps like Halodoc and Alodokter offer virtual consultations, prescriptions, and even home care services, proving particularly valuable during times when in-person access is limited, such as during pandemics. As internet infrastructure and digital literacy improve, public access to health services through digital media is expected to increase, improving healthcare access and quality in Indonesia. Digital media has become an essential tool for training and educating healthcare professionals, helping them stay up to date on the latest knowledge and skills. Through digital platforms, healthcare workers can access a wide range of resources, including scientific articles, webinars, and online courses, and engage with them at their own pace. Webinars enable real-time learning from experts and interaction with global peers, while online courses offer a wide range of healthcare-related content. As internet infrastructure and digital literacy improve, digital media will play an increasingly vital role in healthcare training and professional development.

Conclusion

Health communication strategies aim to promote healthy behaviors through evidence-based, tailored efforts. These strategies focus on three areas: characteristics of effective health communication, barriers to effective communication, and ways to enhance communication effectiveness. Effective Health Communication involves clear, accurate, and accessible messaging. It must be culturally relevant, consistent, evidence-based, and repeated to maximize impact. Multi-level approaches integrating with other health interventions improve reach. Barriers include low health literacy, limited internet access, unreliable information, and insufficient communication skills among health workers. Overcoming these requires diverse media, better training for health workers, and enhanced infrastructure. Strategies for Improvement involve expanding internet access, tailoring content for low-literacy groups, and establishing training centers for health communicators. At the micro level, community engagement through methods such as workplace guidelines and community dramas can strengthen health messaging. National Communication Strategies in Indonesia address behavior change, focusing on immunization and other health practices. Advocacy, public relations, social mobilization, and media campaigns are key to influencing health behaviors. Healthcare worker training and monitoring ensure these strategies are effective. Education Strategies include strengthening accreditation, ensuring competency-based certification for healthcare providers, and improving school quality through outcome-based grants. Digital media plays an increasing role in health communication, providing platforms for interaction and education but also posing challenges related to information reliability and digital literacy. In Indonesia, the use of digital media has transformed health communication, though challenges remain in ensuring the credibility of information and addressing digital literacy gaps. Digital tools like telemedicine improve healthcare access, particularly in remote areas.

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