KICK DIABETES OUT OF SAUDI: THE FIGHT AGAINST DIABETES IN SAUDI ARABIA

Kick Diabetes out of Saudi

**Abstract**

Diabetes is one of the most common diseases in Saudi Arabia. As of 2015, the International Diabetes Foundation indicated that Saudi ranked third among the countries with the highest prevalence of diabetes. Diabetes is described as a disease or a condition in which the level of glucose in a person's blood is very high. Kick Diabetes out of Saudi is a campaign developed by the ministry of health of Saudi and is aimed at creating awareness about the condition. The awareness aims at informing the people of Saudi regarding the causes of diabetes as well as the different factors that predispose individuals to diabetes. To promote awareness about the condition among the people, this paper uses the information that is currently available to analyze the communication approaches that were developed by the Saudi Ministry of Health in a bid to inform the public on the prevalence of diabetes in the country. The paper uses the existing theories, frameworks and critical thinking to analyze the effectiveness of the program in addressing the problem in the country. The contents of the communication plan indicate both the strengths and weaknesses of the program and detail the various approaches that may be implemented to improve the efficiency of the program. In the long run, the paper meets the objective of making sure that the people of Saudi become conscious of the massive challenges that diabetes has caused in the country and the importance of taking precautionary measures to prevent diabetes.

**Kick Diabetes out of Saudi**

Risk communication is an essential aspect of any society. In a time where the world, communities, and groups of people are facing different challenges, problems or disasters, risk communication becomes an inevitable approach in seeking solutions to the myriad of issues that the communities face (Gutteling, 2015). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), risk communication entails the exchange of ideas, real-time information as well as expert opinions among professionals and groups of people that are faced with threats of different nature (Lundgren &MaMakin, 2013). According to this organization, the primary aim of risk communication is to enable the affected persons to have the information that would facilitate the process of making decisions that would allow them to make wise decisions on the best ways to protect their lives and those of their loved ones.

Risk, on the other hand, is a possibility that something dangerous or undesirable may happen. However, the understanding of the context must not be misconstrued to mean that the unwanted events will undoubtedly occur (Frewer et al, 2016). The idea in this concept is that the likeliness of the event happening is high although there are chances that the same may not eventually take place. In Risk Communication, a lot of techniques and approaches to reach the intended audience. Some of the strategies that are commonly used include social media, mass media platforms and specific forms of community engagement. Most importantly, risk management advocates for the understanding of the perception, knowledge as well as the belief system and practices of the intended audience. The knowledge of these aspects of the communities would help a great deal in determining the most suitable mechanisms to reach out to the members of the targeted communities.

In the case of Kick Diabetes out of Saudi campaign, the country's ministry of health desired to make sure that the citizens of Saudi and all the persons living within the boundaries of the nation. Due to the nature of the situation and the apparent lack of efficiency in the manner in which the program was rolled out by the Ministry of Health and decide on the best communication approaches that could be used to improve the relevance of the program to the intended audience. In the campaign, the ministry realized that while the case of diabetes had escalated to levels of national disaster, a lot of the residents still did not understand the severe ramifications of the problem in the society. Instead, a lot of the people always got involved in activities that predisposed them to diabetes. In return, the program examined the cultural issues, the lifestyles as well as the emerging issues that facilitated the rise in cases of diabetes in the country. While it appeared that the content of the program was noble, there were some weaknesses with regards to the delivery programs especially with regards to the timelines. Additionally, the communication channel that the ministry intended to reach the people appeared to be the weakest link. The program coordinators seemingly failed to examine the characteristics of the population that would have enabled them to develop the most appropriate communication channels for the program. Analyzing these complex issues would be important in giving direction to the next course of action by the stakeholders.

**What is ‘Kick Diabetes out of Saudi' campaign?**

As stated earlier in this presentation, Saudi is ranked third with regards to the prevalence of diabetes in the world (Wang et al, 2014). Diabetes is a condition in which individuals have excess unusually large amounts of glucose in their blood. While this situation is not new, the fact that it is widespread in Saudi makes it an issue of fundamental concern. A report by the International Diabetes Foundation provides statistics which indicate that in Saudi, the number of males with diabetes mellitus stands at 17.6% of the male population. In a July 2017 report, the World Health Organization puts the total world statistics at slightly over 8.5%. If the average prevalence in the world is 8.5% and yet the case in Saudi alone stands at 17.6%, it means that there is a problem that needs to be addressed. It is in the face of these realities that the Ministry of Health came up with a program that was aimed at educating the public on the various challenges that the country faces as a result of the increase in the cases of diabetes in the country. The social and economic impact of the condition is so huge that it becomes practically impossible to avoid it at all costs.

**Process initiation**

The primary role of any government is to protect the people (Cook, 2014). In fact, the architects of the concept of the state indicated that the fundamental principle behind the formation of the state was to come up with a central system unto which individuals would surrender their liberties in exchange for protection. The situation is not different in Saudi. The ministry of health of Saudi has a role of making sure that it promotes healthy living and practices and promote the health of the people. It is this responsibility that the government, through the ministry, sought to tackle the problem of diabetes in the country by advocating for the adoption of healthy living among the people. Previously, the department had provided free medical services to the people who have been suffering from the medical condition.

Moreover, in the past few years, the department had initiated several studies with regards to the cases of diabetes in the country. Instructively, the foundation of the success of any initiative is to research the causes of the problem and the various ways in which the issue can be handled. Most importantly, the studies showed that there are a lot of factors that contributed to the condition. While there were contributing genetic factors, there are indications that lifestyles of the Saudi citizens had roles to play in the escalation of the cases of diabetes in the country. It is in line with the findings of the paper that the ministry sought to come up with a program that would enable the people to have an understanding of the factors surrounding diabetes in the country. Out of the motivation that the challenges could be handled, and the severe ramification of the condition corrected, the ministry rolled out a plan whose aim was to make sure that there is a drastic reduction in the cases of diabetes in the country. Besides, the program was aimed at providing the individuals who have already been infected with information that could be useful to them in selecting medication approaches that would be useful in maintaining healthy lives.

**The goals of the campaign**

According to the ministry of health, the primary purpose of ‘Kick diabetes out of Saudi' was to improve public awareness about the alarming increase of diabetes in the country. While the statistics were clear that the situation was getting out of hand in the country, it was evident that most of the people with information were government officials and the general public did not have much information regarding the situation. Instructively, the primary step towards the solution of any problem is to obtain as much information as possible from the position. When the proper are made aware of the existence of a problem, the effects and the possible solutions to the issues, it is possible for them to start thinking of the ways through which they can get out of the situation. The contribution of culture and lifestyles of the people, coupled up with information regarding the economic ramifications become issues of critical concern to the ministry of health.

From the research conducted by the ministry of health, it emerged that men were more affected by the condition than women. In that regard, the program had a goal of reaching out to as many as possible in the country. It became essential to inform the men that they stood at risk of getting affected. There are biological characteristics in men that predispose them to diabetes. Without the knowledge of these natural factors, it became incredibly important to make sure that they are made aware so that they can take the necessary steps towards improving their lives.

Finally, the program had a goal of making sure that the persons that had already been affected obtain the best medication that can improve their lives. While it is challenging to treat diabetes, there are some medical options that individuals resort to and remain healthy. Over the years, there have been improvements in scientific studies that have allowed researchers to come up with advanced forms of medications that individuals can use in treating the diseases. There are a lot of people who are suffering because they lack knowledge on the ways they can address the problem. Moreover, the treatment of diabetes is expensive. A lot of people, especially those from low-income families may lack the finances that they may use in the treatment of the disease. The government has since come up with financing strategies that would allow even the most deprived persons in the society to obtain quality healthcare. Making the people aware of such medical schemes is vital in helping the individuals to regain their normal health. Going forward, there are critical questions that must be asked. Firstly, is the program achieving the objectives? If there are failures, what are the sources of these failures? And what can be done to eliminate the risks challenges that are posed by the inadequacies? The only way to verify this is to examine the development and strategy using existing theories.

**The theoretical evaluation of development and strategy**

It has never been comfortable communicating during the times of crises. Due to the nature of these periods, it usually becomes complicated to engage in any meaningful and constructive communication. The primary contributor to this fact is that during these times, emotions are high, and the audience may not be welcoming. The characteristics of the intended audience thus become critical in deciding the most appropriate approaches to reach out to the audience. Additionally, due to the sensitivity of the matter, it at times becomes essential that the program managers devise mechanisms that would best address the needs of the affected persons. A theoretical assessment of the nature of risk communication is vital in determining the manner in which the program ought to be run.

**Coppola and Maloney's three campaign goals**

In ‘communicating emergency Preparedness: strategies for creating a disaster resilient public' Coppola and Maloney (2009) defined three goals for risk communication. According to them, the primary goal of risk communication is to create public awareness of the situation at hand. The second goal is to guide the behavior of the members of the public while the last goal is to create a warning. It is critical to examine the ‘kick diabetes out of Saudi' campaign and see whether it meets the goals that have been set by Coppola and Maloney. However, even before going into the details of each purpose, it is essential to note that the primary reason for coming up with the program was to create public awareness of the deteriorating situation of diabetes in the country. That is not to say that the other goals were wholly left out in the plan.

*The first goal*

According to Coppola and Maloney (2009), the primary purpose of any risk communication program is to inform the people about the situation. Most precisely, the authors indicate that the first goal of risk communication is to inform the public about the risk and also tell them the manner in which the risk affects them personally. In the ‘Kick Diabetes out of Saudi campaign, the program aimed at bringing to the attention of the people, the risk of diabetes in the country. It had emerged that a lot of the people were continually becoming victims of the condition and that needed to be addressed. Additionally, the program aimed at telling the people about the effects of diabetes on the lives of the people. In this case, the program relied on the government statistics on the costs that are incurred in the provision of medical services to the victims of the disease.

*The second goal*

According to Coppola and Maloney, the second goal is to provoke behavior change among the people. In this regard, the program was consistently advocating for the change in the human habits that have been responsible for the increase in the cases of Diabetes in the country. In the same regard, it indicated that the persons who have not been seeking medications need to start seeing doctors since diabetes is a condition that is manageable.

*The third goal*

According to the same article, the third goal of risk communication is to provide a warning to the public. In the program, it is not very clear whether the information provided is sufficient to be called a signal to the public. For a message to be interpreted as a warning, Coppola and Maloney indicate that it needs to alert the people about the increased likelihood of occurrence and at the same time provide the necessary courses of action that the individuals need to take in the event these circumstances arise.

**The application of leadership and decision making ineffective campaigns**

Leadership plays an integral role in the determination of the success or failure of risk communication campaigns. When a group of people set out to accomplish some tasks, it is always indispensable that they incorporate principles of effective leadership that would allow the program to be implemented smoothly (Homes, 2016). An analysis of the program as designed by the Ministry of Health indicated that there was a proper structure with which the team members were going to operate. Most importantly, the presence of a leader from where most instructions come indicated that the ministry had put in place proper leadership arrangements that would meet the needs of the team.

In Risk communication, it is usually advisable to have a unique source of messages. Some cases have been reported in which risk communication broke down due to the failure by the failure by the responsible authorities to establish a single source of communication to the targeted audience. In the arrangement, it was notable that most of the information came from the same source and they were consistent. The lack of consistency in communication is one of the factors that have the potential of destroying the confidence of the public in the program (Hackman & Johnson, 2013). Throughout the Kick Diabetes out of Saudi campaign, it was notable that all the pieces of information being presented to the public were consistent and timely. That was evidence that the program had leadership that was stable and reliable.

**Strengths and weaknesses of the risk communication plan**

Like in any other program, the Kick Diabetes out of Saudi was not perfect. While it has a lot of strengths, there is the weakness that was noted that made it less efficient that it had been envisioned. For a start, one of the primary advantages of the program is that it had clear goals that were measurable. In some cases, programs are designed in such a manner that it leaves the people to guess what the end game could be looking like. However, the Kick Diabetes out of Saudi is apparently goal oriented, and that might have contributed to its likely success. Additionally, the presence of stable leadership for the program was essential in helping to push the agenda of the team. Finally, for any program to succeed there must be a plan that would be used to implement the ideas. Evidently, the ministry had put in place an elaborate project that would be used by the team to achieve the programs.

Even in the face of these strengths, there are a few notable weaknesses with the program. In the first instance, from the beginning, the program was rolled out using mass media. The team intended to use mass media as the only way of delivering the message to the people. While the application of mass media is capable of reaching a broad spectrum of audiences, it is also a fact that not all the affected individuals may be achieved through the mass media and that makes it incredibly valuable apply some other approaches such as community reach out as well as the organization of awareness programs.

**Conclusion**

Risk communication plays an essential role in finding solutions to some of the problems that societies face. One of the functions that risk communication plays in the communities is to provide information about the existence of some danger. Apart from that, the communication also makes the people aware of the steps that they need to take to protect themselves from the imminent hazards. One of the problems that Saudi Arabia is suffering from is the exceedingly high number of individuals with diabetes. To bring the awareness of the public to this matter, the ministry of health of Saudi came up with a plan to inform the people about the existence of this condition and the approaches that they could use to avoid the situation. Subsequently, a team was formed to spearhead the plan. An analysis of the program revealed that risk communication is a complicated affair. There are a lot of interests at play that needs to be balanced. In this plan, it merged that proper planning, effective leadership and understanding the audience are the ingredients for a successful risk management communication. Without these crucial details, it may probably be challenging to realize success in the risk communication program.

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