

Intercultural Perceptions on Universal Ageing Needs to Empower Older Persons: Does This Strategy Work to Develop IEC Materials?

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Introduction

Indonesia is currently experiencing major upheaval in its social institutional development. The democratization process is transforming this nation into a democratic, institutional and humanistic state. One major prerequisite of this transformation is the recognition of individual rights and obligations as well as the transparent implementation of law and order, all characteristics of modern and civil societies. This process will eventually have an impact on existing societal structures, institutions, visions, and missions, as well as social strategies and policies. Ultimately, the democratization process will be a universal concept for all liberated individuals and groupings in the great global society of the next millennium.

Recently, InResAge conducted a rapid social cultural appraisal using the SCOR Technique on the Ageing population in Indonesia. This activity was funded by UNFPA through the RI State Ministry of Population/ BKKBN, presently known as the RI State Ministry of Transmigration and Population. The objective of this study was to determine variations in inter-cultural perception on universal needs among the older population in various ethnic regions of Indonesia.

Method

The SCOR Technique is an abbreviation of Social Cultural and Operation Research Technique. It is a qualitative rapid social cultural appraisal. It had been designed to provide a social cultural perspective on the national action program of the ageing population in Indonesia. This technique as its name implies has two components namely (1) a rapid social cultural appraisal and (2) an operation or action research component. In our case, the action program was the development of social culturally sensitive IEC materials based on needs of older persons. These were used to complement existing IEC materials from the *Bina Keluarga Lansia* or Family Older Person Guidance program of BKKBN.

Rapid social cultural appraisal was based on ethnography interactively compiled by facilitated group participatory consensus. In our case, informants were older persons aged between 60-70 years old and their adult children who served as informal caregivers. The groups formed were differentiated based on age, gender, and social economic status (refer to Scheme 1). The latter criteria used both national and local criteria.

Three hundred informants participated in the study divided into groups of ten in five ethnic areas namely *Pangururan* (North Sumatra), *Kraton* (Yogyakarta), *Patokan* and *Kotakan* (Situbondo, East Java), *Banjar Tegal* (Buleleng, North Bali), and *Mario* (Wajo, South Sulawesi). Location selection criteria was based on (1) represented major ethnicity in the locality, (2) high number and proportion of older person in the area, and (3) location area coincides with source of ethnic culture. As a result of these criteria, older person informants were mostly randomly selected from rural areas, except informants from *Kraton* (Yogyakarta) who were mostly from the heart of the city.

Two meetings were conducted for each group, except for the adult children groups. Topics discussed in the meetings were related to (1) village kinship system, and (2) older person basic needs in the village. A facilitator who used a theme discussion guide matrix to ensure that all relevant items for discussion were covered and not left out of the meeting led discussion. Each meeting lasted between 1-2 hours. The idea behind a short meeting was in consideration of older persons limited concentration and the fact that important issues would be spontaneously

raised during the earlier part of discussion. The older persons met twice, while adult children focused their discussion on older parent needs only met once. This type of discussion group being structured by the use of an ethnographic flow chart and theme discussion guide matrix, as well as done within a limited time period is known as a semi-structured group discussion or SSGD. In-depth interviews were also conducted by researcher to complement SSGD in the case of difficult topics such as reproductive health through the identification of knowledgeable resource persons among group informants. This approach greatly contributed to the richness of qualitative information derived from this study.

Results

Regarding the role of the family on older persons welfare, children were urged to always take care of older parents (Batak), always respect their elders (Javanese and Balinese), and it was always their duty to make older parents happy (Buginese).

Among the Batak of Pangururan in north Tapanuli, most of the daughters compared to sons, provided additional assistance and care to their older parents. In Java and Bali where SSGD was done, the eldest son was economically responsible for his older parents, while daughters were in charge of care giving in the family, especially those living nearby their parent's home. Among the Buginese of south Sulawesi, responsibility for taking care of older parents was given to children who were employed or children who had jobs, especially those living near the vicinity of the parents. In the Batak community of Pangururan, older informants regarded health maintenance better than treatment to alleviate disease. In Java and Bali, the theme of health was conveyed in various ways. It could be related to behavior in the sense of being healthy should be through eating good food and having regular health check ups. Being healthy was also being patient and tolerant to each other. If an older person could be consistent with these principles, then he or she would be a complete older person.

Regarding the need for communication among older persons, the Batak of Pangururan encouraged good relationships with neighbors and other members of the community, because by doing so, it would be more advantageous for older people. In Java and Bali, frequent opportunity to meet other older people means frequent conversation that often make them feel happy and have a clear conscience. Both informants – older persons and adult children — agreed that there should be inter-generation communication between old and young people. Among the Buginese in Wajo, traditional arts was promoted to encourage older person's active participation, which makes them feel younger and comfortable in this festive atmosphere.

Regarding the need to live a productive old age, Batak informants practiced it because they had to support their family economy in the village. In Java and Bali, being

productive means being independent, active, and creative. In the family, being productive in ageing is to adopt a role as family facilitator, advisor, and motivator. All these traits would eventually form an older person who is active and whose services are productive both in the family and in the community at large. While Buginese informant especially adult children showed strong feelings of always fulfilling their older parents needs even though they were in fact far away in another island.

Among the Batak in Pangururan on Samosir Island surrounded by Lake Toba, older persons generally sought for medical assistance from the local health provider. In this district, older persons did not receive special public services such as discounts, transportation, and health care. In most of Java and Bali, informants complained of insufficient drug availability and special discounts were not applied universally especially among transport operators. Among the Buginese in Mario village of south Sulawesi, family care provided to older parents was the basis for treatment of illness in the family.

Discussion

There seemed to be consensus on themes being discussed by both older persons and their adult children in mostly rural areas. Ideally, IEC material development should be based on local issues and not merely on local interpretation of universal ageing themes. However, this type of strategy would have differed from the original objective of this action program research on how different ethnic groups perceive and convey universal themes in ageing based on a social cultural context.

On a larger scale, the contribution of this technique on the development of regional autonomy, as part of the democratization process in Indonesia, would be through the rapid deciphering of cultural ideas on modern concepts related to regional autonomy. These concepts are among others empowerment, consensus, participation, justice, individual as well as community rights and obligations.

Regarding empowerment initiatives within the context of regional autonomy should be directed both at the individual as well as community level. People whatever their race, color, and beliefs are, should have equal rights and obligations. At the community or public level, individuals entrusted with power by the people, should not abuse it. They should consider it a mandate fully entrusted to them by the people and for the people. They should be accountable not only to themselves and the people, but, most importantly, to God in whom they believe. Empowerment also means sustainable public programs where people are able to take care of themselves, not rely too much on government handouts or subsidies, and greatly believe in their own local capacity and productivity. In the case of IEC development for instance, cadres should not only be able to do promotional activities, but, most importantly, to identify their community's needs

and develop their own culturally sensitive IEC materials. Do we as policy makers and programmers, ready to relinquish this capability to the local people? Do we have the courage to make this happen in regional autonomy?

Regarding consensus and participation seems to be a two-pronged issue. There will be no consensus if there is no participation. There will be no participation if consensus is not achieved. Anyway, no matter how you explain it, consensus should be the end and participation should be the means. How do we promote community participation?. The SCOR Technique may provide an answer. How did the informants manage to participate and come to a consensus about their local kinship system and identification of their basic needs in the village? It was mostly done through facilitation by someone who studied the social cultural background of the informants from ethnography in the anthropological literature. So, in order to solve social culturally based problems in the community, one should attempt to better understand the dynamics of people's culture in the study location. In fact, our results of people's norms and values did not greatly differ from those several decades ago derived from the existing anthropological literature. At least this was within the context of cultural sources of informants in the rural areas.

Thus, this technique will have an impact not only on social structure and function, but, most importantly, on the future building of a strong, modern, civil society in Indonesia. This could be a subject of future deliberation and study from the social cultural context especially in areas of disputes such as Aceh, Sambas or Maluku.

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