

Scenario on Health Information Seeking in Malaysia: A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

Information is the essence of knowledge in life. With information, individual will have the opportunity to turn themselves around and create a better life. Human seek information for a variety of needs and reasons. The information that has increasingly becoming a trend nowadays is on health. To acquire information on health, individuals need to look through a various sources such as friends, family, media and electronics, medical experts and internet. Health information seeking is a manifestation of the effort to alter the health status of individuals. Thus, this article aimed to review systematically on the issue and trends in health information seeking from Malaysian perspective. This research is based on past researches by employing the systematic review approach. 10 out of 762 articles has been identified for analytical purposes in tandem with the observed theme; health information seeking in Malaysia.

Keywords: health information, knowledge, Malaysia

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Health information seeking behaviour can be defined as "seeking and receiving messages or information to reduce the uncertainty associated with health status and build confidence in the context of health (Cotten & Gupta, 2004). Niederdeppe et al. (2007) explained that health information seeking behaviour is an activity aims to obtain information on health treatments, alternative medicine, nutrition, and physical exercises These two definitions further elaborated that individuals will use a variety of complex resources to seek information which is beneficial to be used as a remedy for the sickness, to diagnose as well as to prevent it from becoming chronic (Beaudoin & Hong, 2011).

Health information seeking behaviour is now gradually gaining attention among people worldwide. In the U.S., every 8 out of 10 people use the Internet in their daily lives to find information pertaining to health (Fox, 2011a). With the advent of social media, the information seeking behaviour seem to take a new height because not only it increases the activity, but also gives them experience, attract more users to join forums related to health issues (Ellison et al., 2007). Besides that, the information search behaviour also makes each of 4 individuals with chronic diseases to discover contacts with mutual illness to exchange views and information. (Fox, 2011b).

Information is an important element and it is the first stage in shifting health-related behaviours (Freimuth et al., 1989). Information may reduce feelings of uncertainty and increased ability to control and it can also be a cause to change the attitudes of individuals (Johnson, 1997). Positive changes will ensure success when there is an effective information seeking. The more exposure that the individuals are exposed to health-related information, the higher the level of satisfaction of health status changes that occur in everyday life (Luker et al., 1995; Schou et al., 2005).

Health information can help patients to cope with health problems, it is used as input for the patient to communicate with paramedics, moreover it help individuals to decide on a medical context (Freimuth et al., 1989, Marshall, 1993). For some patients, health information is a factor that can be used as self-monitoring to help them to overcome health problems through experience (Elf & Wikblad, 2001). Various studies have shown that when patients attained more information concerning his health, it actually can help them coping with chronic diseases particularly related to the analysis of illnesses, behavioural changes and increased capacity in overcoming the health problems itself (Rutten et al., 2005).

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The systematic review is comprehensive method and it synthesize either towards the topic of the research or the inquisition of the research. The importance of deploying the systematic review is that it could further clarify the research question/s as oppose to the traditional review. The past research outcomes could be synthesized based on the researcher's need. In this sense, the synthesize method is required to ensure the researcher is able to produce a thorough and quality data. The method used for the systematic review is explained as follows (Khan et al., 2003).

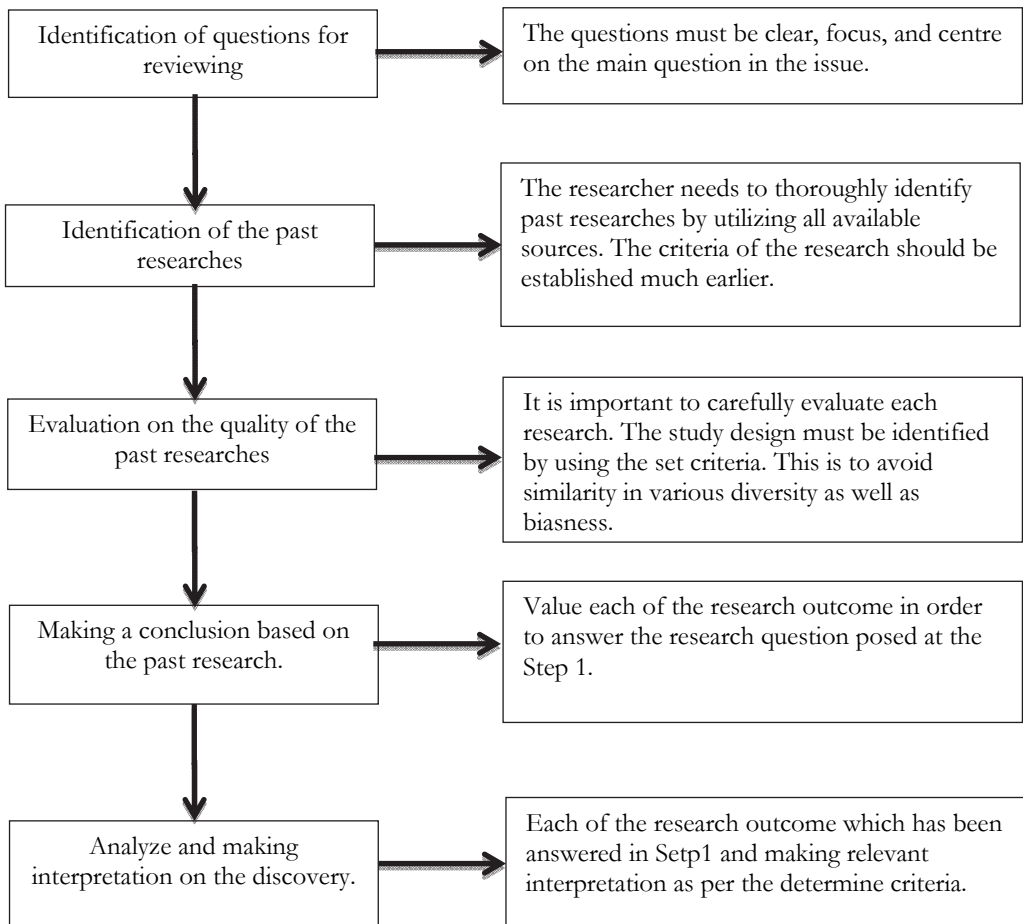


Figure 1: Process of Systematic Review Approach

For this research, the systematic review approached was primarily based upon the online articles published via the internet. The researchers had determined the attributes of the research as a guide to obtain the online articles. The keywords used to search for the related articles were health information seeking and Malaysia, and information seeking. The following provide the process flow employed in this research.

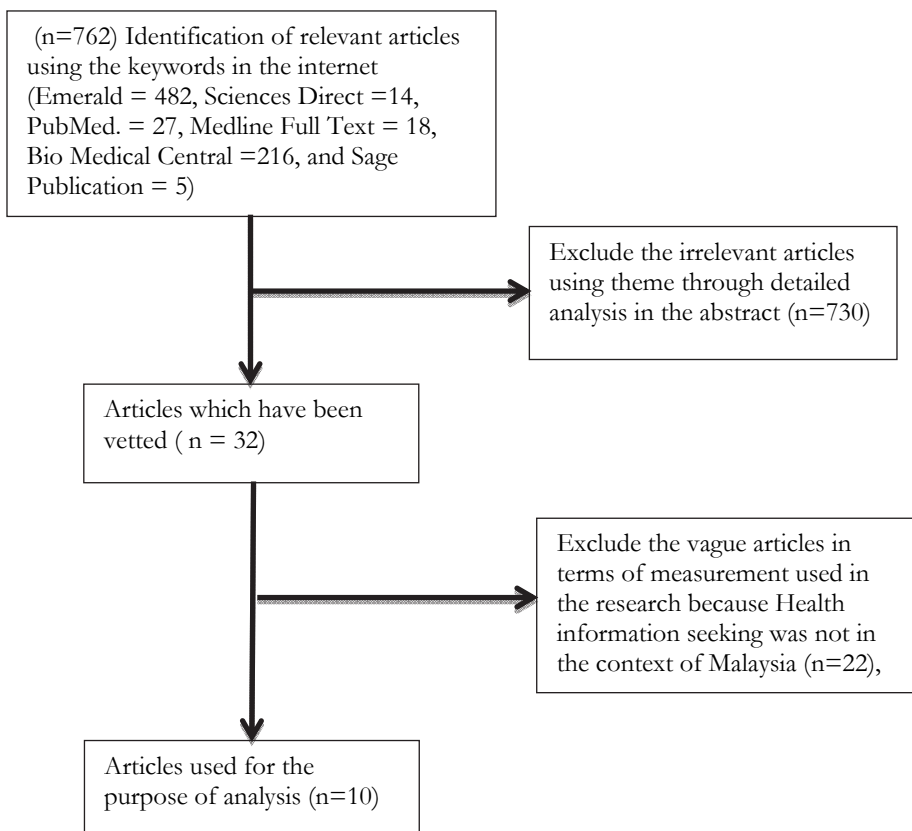


Figure 2: Selection Process for Studies Included in Analysis

The systematic review approach in this research is further validated using below criteria:

1. Issue: Trends on information seeking
2. Type of research: cross-sectional or longitudinal.
3. Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative
4. Group of respondents: any diseases
5. Scope: Malaysia Contexts
6. Language: English and Malay
7. Article: Full Text only

3.0 FINDING

A total of 762 articles were successfully obtained using the keyword search via the internet. However, upon vetting through the abstract of the said articles, only 32 articles were qualified as it focused on health Information seeking. Meanwhile the remaining articles only touched on generic information in multidisplinary area. From the total of 32 qualified articles, it has been discovered that 10 articles (refer table 1) had conducted the research on the health Information seeking from malaysian perspective and the rest of 22 articles focused was out of the theme.

Table 1: Studies Relating Health Information Seeking in Malaysia

Authors	Research Design	Respondent	Findings
Farooqui et al. (2011)	qualitative	20 cancer patients In Malaysia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Information seeking patent are reflected by patient's experiences. ii. Ground information is important to educational programme formulation. iii. Increase awareness of information seeking related to cancer diseases
Low, B. Y et al. (2006)	Quatitative (survey)	2732 women with female lower urinary tract symptoms (FLUTS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Majority of the respodents did not seek medical help because of low understanding of the disorder. ii. Thus systematic and effective dissemination of information regarding FLUTS is of paramount importance.

Table 1: Continue...

Zaheer-Ud-Din Babar et al.	Focus group interview and survey	51 undergraduate students	50% of the respondents showed interest in getting more information about a specific topic, including New Trends in Drug Promotion, Roles and Responsibilities of Public Health Pharmacist, and Essential Drug Concept (EDC).
Wong, L. P. (2011).	focus group discussions	172 participants (Adolescent girls aged 13-19 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. major findings focused on the channel selected by the respondents and comparison was made in term of location of the respondent ii. The main source of information about menstruation-related matters was through informal communication obtained from mothers, followed by female family members, peers, and teachers, magazines and the Internet. iii. Urban participants cited teachers as a source of information. Internet was a more common source among urban girls.

Table 1: Continue...

Saad, Z. A (2013)	Quantitative (Survey)	80 samples (IBM Damansara and Petronas Human Resource Department, Kuala Lumpur)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">iv. Rural respondents were more likely to obtain information from women's magazines. They are also feel embarrassed in acquiring menstruation-related information. they preferred to gather information from peers.i. topic searched by the respondents were diet, nutrition, vitamins, or nutritional supplements, specific disease or medical problem.ii. The internet was found to be a convenient tool and popular channel to retrieve information and to seek health information.iii. Majority of health information seeker was female. The average age of the health seekers is from 18-29 years old (young adult).iv. The most popular
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Table 1: Continue...

Loo, J. L et al. (2013)	Quantitative (Survey)	965 students	The findings focus on the obstacles in Seeking Medical Advice and information. The main barrier category that was identified was emotional barriers, which included “too scared” (62.3%), “worried about what the doctor may find” (61.5%), “would not feel confident talking about symptom” (48.4%) and “too embarrassed” (44.1%).
Muhamad, M., et al. (2011)	Quantitative (Survey)	400 breast cancer survivors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The findings showed that only 22.5% of breast cancer survivors used Internet to get information about breast health issues. ii. The type of information obtained by the repondents were about treatment options especially on radiotherapy, chemotherapy, health management, treatment side effects and dietary practice.

Table 1: Continue...

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii. Four reasons why the respondent used the Internet; 1) to know more about their problem, 2) to get general information, 3) to find other solution to solve problem, and 4) to reduce anxiety
Bakar, (2011)	Quantitative (Survey)	51 respondents, Rural area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The findings explained that Only 68.9 % of the respondents seek health information. ii. The most preferred information sources to obtain health information are magazine, family and newspaper.
Mohd-Nor et al. (2013)	Quantitative (Survey)	193 spondents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The findings demonstrated that the use of ICT among the respondents to seek, obtain and share online health information is still low. ii. It was found that only 46% of respondents were actively seeking online health information

Table 1: Continue...

Ahmad, N., (2011)	Quantitative (Survey)	245 respondents	<p>i. In the study, it was found that some channels such as newspapers, televisions, posters and pamphlets are main information sources of mass media for them to seek health information.</p> <p>ii. Other channels to obtain information on health are health staff and doctors. these can be categorized as interpersonal channel.</p>
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4.0 CONCLUSION

The study of the health information seeking in Malaysia is still minimal. From empirical analysis perspective, there has not been much study on various issues arising in the context of health information seeking. Scholars mentioned that although there are no significant differences pertaining to information seeking in a different context in health, it however must be noted that the issues inherent in the health context is different. This is due to the various subject of analysis such as type of disease, the environment, and psychology, culture and health status.

Most of the researchers involved in research are Malaysians. However, there are collaboration among international researchers and local to participate in the study. Generally, most of the research design was used by the researchers is quantitative surveys meanwhile questionnaire is the tool to collect data from respondents. In term of type of the respondent, there are various respondents involved in the studies such as cancer patients, cancer survivors, youth, adults, and students. The selection of the respondent is actually depending on the research problem and objectives.

In summary, most of the studies conducted were mostly survey study and the analysis of the method used is descriptive. In addition, the focus of the research with regards to health information seeking are mainly focusing on the type of information sought, medium or channel that is used to find information and the number of respondents involved in the search for health information.

Understanding health information seeking behavior in the context of Malaysian society provides an edge in several aspects. Researchers can better understand the level of knowledge, attitudes and practices among respondent particularly patients with chronic diseases. This is because the finding not only gives the current status of the diseases but also to explain the gaps that may exist in this area, particularly if the comparison based on demographic factors. In addition researchers can also find out the type of information that has been sought or what patients really need to know. Currently, too many health information is available either in the country or overseas. The existence of new media technologies such as social media has made it easier for patients or public to abundantly and proactively seek information, fast and up to date. Social media is an agent for the dissemination of information in a quicker manner, easy and its potential can be highlighted for optimum usage in the community at all levels and locations. Indirectly researchers also know that popular information sources used among respondents. Researchers are also able to know and understand the factors that influence the respondents to seek health information. These factors can be used as an indicator to understand the phenomenon of health information seeking behavior among Malaysian.

The study of health Information seeking is highly relevant to be carried out in the context of Malaysian society. A study on the understanding of information seeking behavior is not only vital to public health, but more importantly, it will have an impact on people's ability to self- manage their health. The practice of finding good information is instrumental that can affects individual behaviour in order to improve the existing health status, particularly for those with chronic diseases such as diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular. Health information seeking behavior is a manifestation of self- health management into current lifestyle. Dependence on health services provided by the government has its own

limitations such as lack of paramedics and doctors to provide more effective consultation. Understand the information seeking behavior among chronic diseases can help any responsible parties such as the government and NGOs to provide content or with more information, fast, compact, and easily understood by ordinary people.

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