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Research Article

THE UNREGISTERED DRUGS COVERAGE IN THE MEDIA IN MALAYSIA: CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE PUBLIC NEWSPAPERS

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Abstract:

Newspaper is the most common media that can be used as a reference to know the current issues that happened in the countries. Also, there are a lot of articles about unregistered drugs published in newspapers in Malaysia. The purpose of this research to explore the content of the unregistered drugs in Malaysia based on the interviewee statements in the articles or news in the selected newspapers. The two most popular newspapers online available chosen (Kosmo and Utusan Malaysia newspaper online). About 56 articles identified for the year 2000 until 2014. The selected data was analysed using content analysis method. The production of unregistered drugs articles are increasing trend since 2000 until 2014. The findings from the content analysis indicate that majority of the articles are finally sub-categorized to certain themes which are, contributing factors, the impact of unregistered drugs and management of the unregistered drugs. The limited of references in this scope made these findings as benchmark findings. This findings used as the problem statement in designing research for the future to combat unregistered drugs in order to achieve authorities' aims which are to provide the quality, safety and effective pharmaceutical products to the public.

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INTRODUCTION:

The pharmaceutical products are the poison or medicine for human in raising people's health and boosting wellbeing. The improvement of health management and health care among consumers throughout the world has encouraged the production of counterfeit drugs [1, 2]. Also, the advertisements through internet made the user are easy to access any health product via internet. In Malaysia have Medicines (Advertisement and Sale) Act (MASA) 1956 that act to prohibit certain advertisement and to control the sale of substances recommended as a medicine [3]. The existing of these act are advertising related to the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of 20 diseases, including cancer, high blood pressure, diabetes and loss of sexual function [3]. The prohibited of the illegal advertisements provide the consumers to read or access the correct information of the products. This regulation is one of the governments' efforts to provide the beneficial information and advertisement about health products and services to consumers.

The newspaper is the medium for the public to get accurate information and updates about current issues [4]. There are a lot of articles about unregistered drugs published in newspapers in this country. The biggest problem to get the

overview of unregistered drugs is lack and limited research on the unregistered drugs in Malaysia [5]. Therefore, this made the newspaper as a reliable reference to get the information or an overview of unregistered drugs in Malaysia.

The used of newspapers to get the overview of unregistered drugs is via people that interviewed in the articles in the papers. The people that interviewed gave the information and viewed about unregistered drugs in Malaysia. These are the first study in Malaysia aimed to determine whether the content of interrogated in the articles on unregistered drugs that published in the selected newspaper in 2000 until 2014 can be explored to get the information about unregistered drugs from the articles in the newspapers. Therefore, the purpose of this study is hoped to contribute to the development of the future research by identifying the problem and gaps.

There was little research which has used the qualitative approach in the developed countries [6,7]. This study is following a qualitative approach design. References for this study sourced from the online electronic newspapers which

are Utusan Malaysia and Kosmo. Three papers online were selected after the author did the inclusion criteria screening and only these two newspapers company produce enough articles to be analysed. The reason to choose online newspapers is to be more practical and save the time during analysed because the hard copy of newspapers need longer screening and need focusing during the reading of every article in the press. These two papers published in the Malay language. The others paper in English and others languages didn't have enough articles to be include in this study.

The search for related articles from both papers' databases had utilised keywords in the Malay language such as 'ubat tidak berdaftar' (unregistered drugs) and 'ubat palsu' (fake drugs). All of the articles and news reporting about counterfeit or unregistered drugs that content any person being interviewed or recorded by the newspapers' authors included. The exclusion is the replicated of the news and articles and the news is outside of Malaysia. The range of data that extracted is the main idea of the articles from the interviewed people, year of the articles, the position of the people interviewed and type of the materials.

The total number of articles in both newspapers is 56, varied in the published year from the year 2000 until 2014. The primary researcher will read all of the information and selected any statements from the people interviewed in the articles and made note of the codes [8, 9]. Based on the codes of the initial reading, a data collection sheet was designed and each of the articles was read for the second time and analysed for accurate information and main themes were developed [10]. The second reading also extracted the year of those articles published, the position of the people interviewed and type of the articles. Then, the main themes were divided into three categories which are contributing factors of unregistered drugs existence, the impact of unregistered drugs and management of unregistered drugs.

A total of 25 articles in the Kosmo and 31 articles in the Utusan Malaysia identified and their publication years are from 2000 until 2014. Utusan Malaysia has published more articles related to unregistered drugs compared to Kosmo. The types of articles are divided into three which are articles that give information to the readers, news that provides information about current issues such as cancellation of products and amendment of the law. Finally, the news is also providing updates about enforcement activities such as inspection, raided and any management of unregistered drugs in the market. Based on Figure 1, Kosmo had published more updated news whereas Utusan Malaysia had published more information-related news.

Kosmo had published more on the latest news regarding enforcement activities such as inspections and raided whereas Utusan Malaysia is more prone to post information related news to create awareness and to educate the public about unregistered drugs. The majority of people interviewed are enforcement officer, followed by (Figure 2); Ministry of Health's staffs, staffs from other agencies, Health Minister and wrongdoer.

There is an increasing trend of publication for articles on unregistered drugs by both newspapers from 2000 until 2014 were recorded (Figure 3). The growing trend of articles was possibly one of the indicators that showed the increasing trend of unregistered drugs in the market. It is found that, most of the articles published in 2000 until 2014 have the similar scope of central themes. The emerging theme which can be regarded as 'latest' was noticed in 2012 until 2014 is about international collaboration.

All of the themes were divided by main themes as tabulated in Table 1. The final themes mentioned in the articles are contributing the factor of the unregistered drugs existence, followed by management of unregistered drugs and impact of unregistered drugs.

Newspaper can be a medium to get the information that related with the certain phenomena. This study is about unregistered drugs phenomena in Malaysia. The themes emerged from the newspaper indicated that many factors contributed to this issues and many management or solution in managing this problem implemented by the government and the enforcement Pharmacy department. Although there is full support from the government, enforcement pharmacy, awareness and education programme given to the public, this problem remained. There are many of obstacles that need to be highlighted. The biggest obstacle is technology. The advancement of technology and the management of unregistered drugs also need to be upgraded and updated [5]. The recommended solution to this problem is to access or improve the current awareness programme and to ensure that the knowledge given to the public is well comprehended and can be practically applied by the public. The government or the health policy makers also need to ensure that the information given to the public are equal and sustainability.

The manufacturers, the consumers, and retailers' perceptions and attitudes towards unregistered drugs need to be concerned. According to the data analysed, most of the articles mentioned that manufacturers and retailers' attitudes and perceptions contributed in manufactured and sold the unregistered drugs. Their attitudes are irresponsible because they only care about their profits without feeling guilty when selling harmful products to the public. One of the articles published by Kosmo has included an interview with the wrongdoer in their premises. The article is about the perceptions and beliefs of the retailers who did the offence [12]. They believed that the products that they sell were good because the products are natural products. Moreover, they also believe that they did not make any offence by doing that. Their attitudes and perceptions have given the enforcers a more challenging task.

The creative and strategic business strategy of unregistered drugs mentioned in the articles is another obstacle that needs the cooperation and commitment from different agencies and not just depends on Ministry of Health and pharmacy enforcement unit to combat this problem alone. The strategic plan and collaboration from various agencies can lead to a better management in solving this problem. The articles have also mentioned the commitment and collaboration of the

different organisations such as customs, police, maritime, city council, communication and consumer agency. The full commitment from various agencies in Malaysia can produce the best solution and management in different aspect and fields.

The content of the articles on unregistered drugs that were published in Kosmo and Utusan Malaysia from 2000 until 2014 has included the important themes. This overview also contributes to gives an idea to the authorities to manage and develop a better management to combat unregistered drugs to achieve their aim which is to provide the quality, safety and effective pharmaceutical products to the public. Furthermore, these findings also can help future study to design other research with the different approach in contributing to getting or dig information about the unregistered drugs phenomena in Malaysia.

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Table 1: Themes of the Newspaper Contents

Factor contributing the existing of the unregistered drugs	Impact of unregistered drugs	Management of unregistered drugs
business strategy	bad effect	awareness
manufacturer benefit, attitude and perceptive	national image and economy	enforcement effort and strategy
consumer attitude and perceptive	obstacles	education
demand	-	government effort
weak borders	-	publics' role
retailers' perceptive and attitude	-	existing law
foreigner influenced	-	other agency cooperation
technology influenced	-	international cooperation
lack of law	-	surveillance
smuggle strategy	-	-
lack of technology	-	-
lack of enforcement	-	-
unethical healthcare professionals' attitude	-	-
corruption	-	-
lack of man power and money	-	-

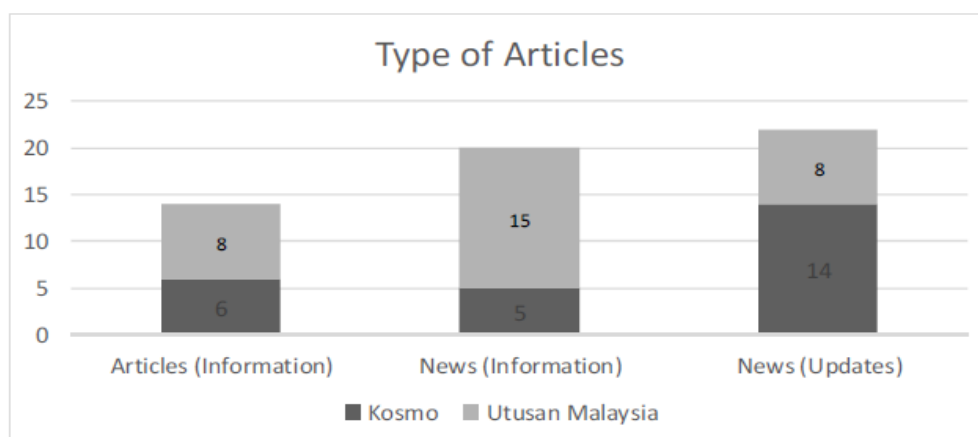


Figure 1: Type of Articles

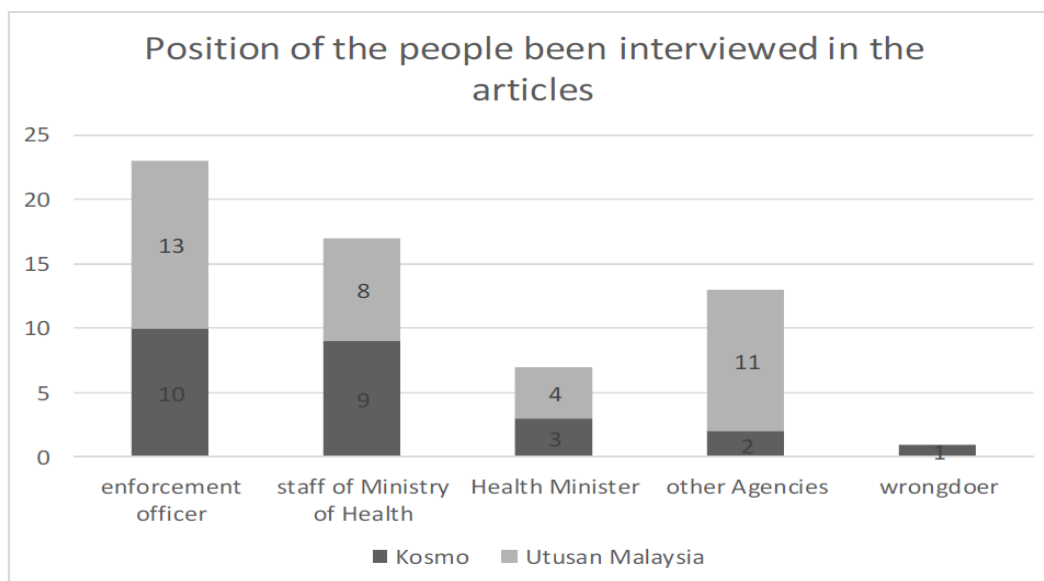


Figure 2: Position of the People Been Interviewed in the Articles

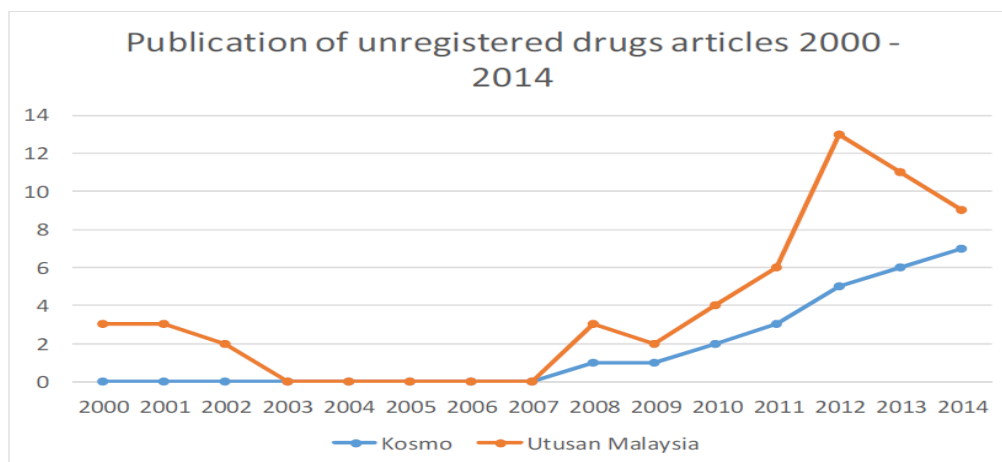


Figure 3: Publication of Unregistered Drugs Articles 2000-2014

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