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PEN-3 Model

The PEN-3 theoretical framework entails an approach to public health that centers on culture as a key determinant of behaviors related to health outcomes at the population level. A model based on the framework was first utilized for public health campaigns based in the African continent and more recently, has been adopted in the United States for tackling public health concerns that have proven difficult to address with other strategies. For example, although public health campaigns based on the social marketing framework have successfully altered health-related behaviors, outcomes have stalled in tobacco and other substance use domains. As such, the PEN-3 model emphasizes the cultural context in which public behaviors are shaped and has been used to tackle issues such as inadequate nutrition and smoking rates.

Often, the most challenging public health concerns for experts and policymakers are those where the outcomes of various behaviors are determinable by a complex interaction between clinical and cultural influences. The PEN-3 framework recognizes this complexity and offers researchers an opportunity to examine practices in communities that explicate the underlying process of positive health behaviors. Furthermore, the framework allows for an understanding of the specific cultural norms or practices that have no impact on health outcomes or potentially negative influences. Thus, the PEN-3 framework is used by Hiratsuka et al., to contextualize the patterns of tobacco use and cessation amongst communities of American Indian and Alaskan Native ethnicity.

The PEN-3 model has been utilized for thematic analysis of qualitative data and to unpack descriptions of the various concepts and beliefs in specific domains, to help develop impactful interventions that help promote healthy behaviors. As such, Hiratsuka and colleagues are justified in their use of this framework, seeking to understand the specific behaviors that determine and influence behaviors related to tobacco use. Also, the PEN-3 model can be used to contextualize various forms of messaging related to public health campaigns, allowing for assessment and interpretation of messaging efficacy. The-3 model also helps to identify how individuals perceive such contexts. Hiratsuka et al., therefore, use the PEN-3 model to describe tobacco use through three interconnected domains of cultural empowerment, cultural identity, and relationships and expectations. Themes related to these three domains can then be beneficial for researchers seeking to develop targeted public health campaigns to reduce tobacco use rates in communities of concern.

The strength of the PEN-3 model pertains to its ability to focus on culture in examining public health outcomes. The framework achieves this by highlighting the significance of context, the importance of exploring culture as a positive influence on health behaviors, and the role that family plays in behavior entry points. For example, research has shown that more traditional perspectives on masculinity shape their outlook on health and health-related behaviors, especially in minority communities such as the African American community in the United States. Furthermore, social norms based on cultural identity can often impede efforts to alter adverse health behaviors, and the PEN-3 model also helps to identify such aspects (Iwelunmor et al.). On the other hand, since culture is the focus of efforts such as those by Hiratsuka et al., the analysis level is oftens limited to qualitative data. There remains little to no research that attempts to provide a quantitative analysis of the domains of the PEN-3 framework. As such,

there remains a gap in evidence of the reliability and efficacy of the PEN-3 model in understanding the cultural context of health-related behaviors. Finally, another limitation of the PEN-3 framework is the inability to transfer thematic descriptions of cultural context related to health to other contexts (Iwelunmor et al.). So, Hiratsuka and colleagues may report useful descriptions of tobacco use amongst American Indians and Alaskans, but the interpretations and evaluation of interventions will remain specific to these communities.

Works Cited

Hiratsuka, Vanessa Y., et al. "Application of the PEN-3 Model to Tobacco Initiation, Use, and Cessation Among American Indian and Alaska Native Adults." *Health Promotion Practice*, vol. 17, no. 4, July 2016, pp. 471–81, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524839916648909>.

Iwelunmor, Juliet, et al. "Framing the Impact of Culture on Health: A Systematic Review of the PEN-3 Cultural Model and Its Application in Public Health Research and Interventions." *Ethnicity & Health*, 2013/11/22 ed., vol. 19, no. 1, Feb. 2014, pp. 20–46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13557858.2013.857768>. PubMed, 24266638.