Framing in Decision-Making for Malaria Policy Makers
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BACKGROUND

Goal of Study: To understand how the policy decision making choices of public health researchers and professionals are influenced by how these choices are framed.

Background:
Framing is the formatting of an issue within an appropriate context to achieve a desired interpretation from the audience. The audience might range from anyone to a doctor, policy maker, or a colleague. Information is understood through various cognitive, affective, and social filters. The subject taking in this information then uses his/her judgment and decision-making behavior to act accordingly to the information given (1).

Asian Disease Scenario:
We developed our questionnaire with the Asian Disease Scenario in mind (2). This study demonstrated the influence of framing of choice- where the people were prone to making risky choices when alternatives were phrased as “people dying” and are risk averse when alternatives are framed as ‘people saved’. In other words, individuals were risk-averse when choices between alternatives disease control programs are presented as gains (number of lives saved) but risk-seeking when these same choices are presented as losses (number of lives lost).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

• A questionnaire was posted on SurveyMonkey.
• It was sent out to experts from the International Society of Infectious Diseases.
• In the survey, the participants had to pick between two disease control interventions. It was sent out to experts from the International Society of Infectious Diseases.
• The survey presented two different frames to analyze what effect they would have on the participants’ decision of which intervention to implement.
• Each participant encountered two identical disease scenarios, but were given the possible interventions in terms of lives saved and in terms of lives lost.
• The participants afterwards wrote rationales to explain their choices and we analyzed these responses for key terms.
• We coded common words in their responses such as dying, saving, uncertainty, certainty, risk, guarantee, etc to see whether these concepts had an effect on their choices.

RESULTS

The initial framing effect was confirmed (participants were more likely to choose the certain option when worded in terms of saving and the risky when worded in terms of dying). These results were statistically significant.

• In participants’ open-ended responses, we found that many mentioned saving (35% of participants) or dying (19% of participants), but this was found to have no effect on their choice of intervention.
• They also mentioned risk (38% of participants) and certainty (10% of participants) in their responses. Those who talked about certainty were more likely to choose the certain option (A), while those who talked about risk were not more likely to choose the risky option (B).

NEXT STEPS

• These results, which confirmed the framing effect, set the groundwork for a similar survey to be done among malaria policymakers and researchers.
• Developing a comprehensive database to send a similar framing survey to malaria policy makers in mostly African countries.
• The findings from this survey will have potential implications for their decision to implement insecticide-treated nets or environmental management.

DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT PROJECT: WEBSITE

The objective of the malaria website project is to develop a web-based decision support tool for malaria policy makers in malarious countries. To achieve this objective, we:
• Will identify best format for presenting content (published articles, datasets, anecdotal observations, etc)
• Will identify which content is most relevant for malaria policy maker given the policy maker’s goals.

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REFERENCES