Effective Communication on Tobacco Product Risk and FDA Authority
Enhancing Source Credibility in Tobacco Regulatory Communications (Project 3)
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Abstract:

Under the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (Tobacco Control Act), the
Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has regulatory authority over tobacco product
manufacture, marketing, and distribution. The FDA seeks to foster new communications
research on tobacco regulation. The Center for Regulatory Research on Tobacco
Communication (CRRTC) addresses communication components of the FDA’s Center for
Tobacco Products (CTP) messaging by: a) determining factors that influence public perceptions
of information sources (e.g., the FDA), b) exploring ways to engage tobacco users, c)
investigating communication issues within vulnerable populations, and d) evaluating how source
message characteristics impact tobacco use. The study aims of this research are to 1)
characterize perceptions of FDA tobacco regulation, 2) examine variations in message frames
(i.e., source sponsor, source depiction, and source engagement) that increase source credibility
(i.e., trustworthiness) of tobacco regulation messaging, and 3) assess the degree to which
optimizing source credibility affects behavioral intentions. Aim 1 will characterize perceptions of
the FDA regulatory authority, credibility, and tobacco control communication campaigns among
adolescents, young adults and adults, and vulnerable populations (Black and gay, lesbian, and
bisexual (GLB)). We will conduct seven focus groups with members of these populations in
North Carolina (NC) to assess existing perceptions of the FDA. We will conduct a national,
cross-sectional survey in years 2 and 4 to collect data from 3800 young adult and adult tobacco
users and non-users, and 800 adolescents. The survey will collect data to monitor changes in
public perceptions of the FDA, and determine which source sponsors are deemed most
credible. Aim 2 will examine determinants of source credibility in FDA regulatory
communication messages to create and test optimally framed messages with current smokers.
We will conduct 10 focus groups with young adult, adult, Black and GLB smokers to design
communication messages with high source credibility. Multiple combinations of source credibility
determinants will be reduced to two optimal message frames. Using a within-subjects
experimental design and eye-tracking technology, we will interview 300 NC young adult, adult,
Black and GLB smokers to determine if optimally framed messages improve message
effectiveness compared to sub-optimally framed messages. Aim 3 will use a randomized control
trial of 352 young adult and adult smokers to test the impact of optimally framed FDA cigarette
constituent messages on intentions to quit. We hypothesize that FDA messages with optimal
source credibility will lead to stronger behavioral intentions compared to messages with sub-
optimal source credibility.