
Research Article

Social and Behaviour Change Communication as a Tool for Sanitation Awareness: Insights from Swachh Bharat Mission

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ABSTRACT

Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) is a participatory strategy that facilitates sustained behavioural change among youth. As a vital tool for public health, SBCC plays a significant role in initiatives such as the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), launched by the Government of India in 2014. SBM's objective of universal cleanliness aligns closely with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 6, which ensures universal access to water and sanitation. This article employs secondary data analysis to examine the importance of SBCC within SBM, highlighting key challenges that hinder the mission's progress toward universal cleanliness. It further explores specific SBCC strategies employed in SBM, including multimedia channels, community mobilisation, celebrity endorsements, SBCC material development, and interpersonal communication. These approaches have demonstrated considerable effectiveness in driving lasting behavioural change and advancing SBM's objectives.

Keywords: *Community Mobilisation, Interpersonal Communication, Multimedia Channels, Public health, Sustainable Development Goal*

Introduction

Communication is essential for human existence, as no human relationship can be sustained without it. It plays a critical role in all facets of human life, from the micro to the macro level, and its influence is pervasive across all domains. Recognizing the omnipresence of communication in every aspect of life, various approaches, strategies, models, and interventions have been developed, with communication serving as the foundational philosophy. These communication-driven strategies, models, and interventions significantly influence and modify individuals' decision-making processes, thereby fostering positive life experiences. However, for these positive life

experiences to be enduring, sustained change is imperative. Behavior Change Communication (BCC) is one such tool that has proven effective in maintaining behavior change among individuals and communities. Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) interventions are central to overcoming social and cultural barriers in achieving the objectives and goals outlined by Indian health policies and programs. SBCC has demonstrated efficacy in addressing major public health issues such as family planning, maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS, and the prevention of communicable diseases. The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) emphasizes the importance of altering public attitudes and recognizing the universal

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right to a clean and healthy environment. SBCC is integral to achieving the goals of SBM by promoting behavior change and encouraging communities to adopt hygienic practices.

Review of literature

Sanitation and behavioral change are critically interconnected, with the utilization of toilets being more significant than their mere construction (Jangra, Majra & Singh, 2016). An empirical study conducted in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh highlighted that sanitation issues are not solely dependent on infrastructure or financial resources but are fundamentally linked to individuals' mindsets and cultural practices (Singh, Kunwar, & Sharma, 2018). This paper also emphasized the importance and implementation of Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) strategies to alter public attitudes towards hygienic practices. The study of the Kanpur district in Uttar Pradesh argued that the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) has resulted in noticeable improvements in cleanliness (Swain & Pathela, 2016). However, this study did not explicitly examine SBCC but briefly mentioned its strategies in influencing behavioral change among the residents of Kanpur district. Nonetheless, the aspect of behavior change in SBM concerning SBCC is not adequately reflected in existing studies.

The existing literature on the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) highlights extensive analysis of the media's role in generating public awareness about SBM. Social media platforms, particularly Twitter, have been widely utilized in SBM campaigns through tweets (Raj & Kajila, 2015). Print media has played a significant role in increasing public awareness of SBM, followed by television and social media (Pradhan, 2017). Other studies have similarly asserted that media campaigns have fostered positive public opinion regarding SBM (Maheshwari & Vij, 2019). Despite these findings, SBM remains an under-researched area from the perspective of Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC).

SBCC is a potent tool for raising awareness and inducing sustained behaviour change, particularly in the context of SBM. This paper addresses key questions, including how SBM has

employed SBCC to achieve universal cleanliness and what specific SBCC strategies have been adopted. These questions are examined through the analysis of secondary data.

Objective Of The Study

The primary objective of this study are:

- To Examine the importance of Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) in assisting to implement Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM).
- To Study how effective SBCC strategy implemented in the context of Swachh Bharat Mission is to create awareness on sanitation and behaviour change.
- To Determine the key social, cultural and behavioural issues which hinder successful and sustainable implementation of Swachh Bharat Mission.
- To Measure the role of SBCC interventions in the attitudes, social norms and sanitation practices of communities.

Research Methodology

The paper primarily utilizes secondary data analysis to explore the importance and effectiveness of Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) within the context of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM). This approach allows for a comprehensive examination of existing information to address the study's objectives.

Data Analysis Approach

The paper primarily relies on secondary data analysis to explore the role of Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) in the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM). While the paper does not explicitly list all individual secondary data sources analysed, it refers to various types of existing literature and reports to support its findings.

Types of Secondary Data Utilized

- Existing Literature on SBM and SBCC: The study draws upon a "plethora of literature analysing the role of media in creating awareness regarding SBM". This includes studies that discuss the effectiveness of media campaigns, social media usage (like

Twitter), print media, and television in raising awareness about SBM.

- **Government Reports and Data:** The paper references data released by the government and various international agencies related to the status of sanitation in India. This includes reports on toilet coverage in rural India, which improved significantly between 2014 and 2019, largely attributed to SBM.
- **International Organization Reports:** Data from organizations like the World Health Organization/United Nations Children's Fund Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) are cited, providing statistics on access to privately owned and safely managed sanitation services in India.
- **National Health Surveys:** Findings from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4 and NFHS-5) are used to show progress in improving sanitation facilities.
- **Empirical Studies and Research Papers:** The paper refers to specific empirical studies that highlight challenges and successes in SBM implementation, such as those discussing the importance of toilet usage over construction, the link between sanitation and people's mindset and cultural practices, and the impact of SBM on cleanliness in specific districts.
- **Media Campaigns and Public Opinion Studies:** Observations from studies on media campaigns creating positive public opinion about SBM are also incorporated.

Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)

Inadequate sanitation poses significant risks to public health, environmental sustainability, and economic stability, hindering the overall development of the country. The issue of sanitation has gained importance in India's public policy, starting with the Central Rural Sanitation Programme (CRSP) in 1986, followed by the Total Sanitation Campaign in 1999, and culminating in the launch of the 'Swachh Bharat Mission' in 2014. The SBM focuses on achieving a 'Clean India' by October 2, 2019. Currently, SBM- Gramin phase II and SBM- Urban 2.0 are running. Key aspects of the SBM include toilet construction, the elimination of manual scavenging, and effective solid

waste management (Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, GOI, 2015). The SBM encompasses initiatives for both rural and urban areas. The aims of SBM are:

- **Elimination of Open Defecation:** To eliminate the habit of open defecation by providing universal access to toilets in households, communities, and public spaces in both rural and urban environments.
- **Improvement of Sanitation facilities:** To develop, maintain, and expand sanitation facilities, including toilets, drainage, and garbage disposal.
- **Promotion of Behavioural Change.** To promote sustainable information, education, communication, (IEC) and BCC strategies of sanitation and hygiene practices using Information, Education, and Communication.
- **Solid and liquid waste management:** To establish effective scientific management practices for both solid and liquid waste, which includes segregation, composting, recycling, and treatment.
- **Sanitation in public place:** To improve cleanliness in public areas such as streets, markets, schools, restrooms, railway stations, and other commonly used locations.
- **Community participation and ownership:** Promote community participation through the engagement of Citizens, Self Help Groups, NGOs and PRIs in all phases of planning, implementation and monitoring of Sanitation Services.
- **Strengthening capacity of local bodies.** Build the institutional and technical capacities of urban local bodies and rural institutions sustainable sanitation management.
- **Utilization of information & communication technologies and innovation:** Leverage digital tools, mobile applications and innovative technologies for monitoring, feedback and service delivery.
- **Improving public health and quality of life:** Reduce the incidence of sanitation related diseases and improve overall public health and dignity and living conditions particularly for women and children.
- **Environment sustainability:** Promote environmentally friendly sanitation practices

that will support resource conservation and align with the SDGs.

The current state of sanitation in India is reflected in the findings of research on the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) and data provided by the government and various international organizations. It is clear that toilet coverage in rural areas of India significantly increased from 39% to over 95% between 2014 and mid-2019, mainly due to the SBM (Curtis, 2019).

According to the World Health Organization/United Nations Children's Fund Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP), 46% of India's population had access to private sanitation services in 2020. The JMP also estimated that 71% of the population had access to basic or safely managed sanitation services during the same year (WHO & UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme, 2021). The Government of India reported that sanitation coverage rose from 39% in 2014 to 100% in 2019 (GoI, Swachh Bharat Mission).

The NFHS-5 survey also showed a notable enhancement in sanitation facilities, rising from 49% in NFHS-4 to 70% in NFHS-5 (IIPS & ICF, 2017, 2022). The importance of the SBM in this significant progress is vital, as such a substantial change without marked alterations in behaviour would be improbable.

Challenges Faced

SBM has been instrumental in greatly enhancing sanitation across India. However, despite its impressive achievements, the mission continues to confront several daunting challenges that pose significant obstacles to its sustainability and effectiveness. Inconsistent planning strategies, unreliable political and financial backing, and overlapping jurisdictions serve as major impediments to SBM's success (Narayan, Maurer, & Lüthi, 2021). Furthermore, inadequate water supply represents a considerable challenge for sanitation efforts in India (Routray, Schmidt, Boisson, Clasen, & Jenkins, 2015). Additionally, sustainable waste management remains a critical issue affecting SBM, with a large portion of India lacking a proper sewage system (Prasad & Ray, 2019). Mehta (2018), in his research, emphasized that

waste management continues to be a neglected aspect within SBM.

Additionally, apart from all the challenges, entrenched cultural traditions and widespread social norms, especially in rural regions, are seen as significant barriers to the success of the mission. The Government of India, in its 51st Standing Committee Report on Rural Development, highlighted that changing people's behaviors is a vital progression for SBM, emphasizing the need to focus more on the behavioral change component of SBM (GoI, 2018). It is crucial to recognize that the reluctance to embrace new sanitation methods is often linked to factors such as a lack of awareness, perceived inconvenience, and commitment to cultural customs. Cultural traditions can profoundly influence the effectiveness of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBA) by shaping public attitudes and behaviors regarding sanitation. Perceived social norms also have a positive effect on individuals who are willing to engage in SBM (Sia, 2019). As a result, longstanding practices and beliefs frequently obstruct the adoption of hygienic behaviors. For instance, the notion that impurity is tied to human waste also influences perceptions of sanitary practices.

Addressing these cultural challenges requires active engagement with communities to grasp their unique practices and beliefs, while also crafting solutions that honor these traditions and encourage proper sanitation. The participation of the community, the guidance of local leaders, and education that aligns with cultural values are vital in breaking down these obstacles and fulfilling the objectives of the Swachh Bharat Mission. In this regard, SBCC serves as a powerful approach to enhance public awareness and facilitate lasting changes in behavior within the framework of SBM.

Social And Behaviour Change Communication

Behaviour Change is an engaging process where individuals gain insight into their concerns and challenges. The Behaviour Change Communication strategy promotes enduring personal behaviours via active participation of the community at different levels. As per USAID (2002), "Behaviour change communication (BCC) is an engaging process involving

communities (as part of a broader program) to create customized messages and strategies through various communication channels to foster positive behaviours; encourage and uphold individual, community, and societal behaviour change; and sustain suitable behaviours." Padero (2013) proposed that "Participatory Communication for Development (PCD) fundamentally involves creating community connections and enabling collaborative efforts for social transformation." It enables local communities to talk about and tackle their issues and methods while involving other parties in creating a better policy framework. To be effective, communication needs to incorporate various viewpoints and expertise from all participants to guarantee that local communities embrace it for sustainable social change, while simultaneously impacting policy and decision-making at every level (family, community, local, and national). Recognizing the significance of BCC as an effective strategy for positive results in traditional societies such as India, it has been included in numerous programs and policies. Nonetheless, a significant change has occurred in the communication approach utilized in different programs in India throughout the years. This transition signifies a move from "Behaviour Change Communication to Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC)." Rao (2013) indicated that "in recent years, there has been a shift from occasional awareness-raising information, education, and communication (IEC) activities to strategic, evidence-driven behaviour change communication (BCC) strategies." The addition of an 'S' to BCC reflects the deliberate attempt to address the need for systematic, socio-ecological considerations in communication efforts (Vyas, 2016). SBCC acknowledges the significance of individual, community, and ecological elements to promote lasting transformation.

SBCC Strategies & SBM

SBM has effectively implemented SBCC strategies to achieve its objectives. Below are the coordinated SBCC strategies utilized to reach SBM's goals.

Multi-channel communication

SBM has actively utilized various media platforms such as TV, radio, print publications, and hashtag initiatives on social media to raise awareness. These initiatives aimed to instigate behavior change by informing individuals about the significance of sanitation, the health risks associated with open defecation, and the advantages of utilizing toilets. The hashtag #My Clean India on Twitter exemplifies social media's role in SBM. Several accessible mobile applications were also created to assist the public with SBM. Individuals from various social levels have actively engaged in the SBM. Through various media channels, both electronic and print, numerous popular mass media articles, television shows, and films were created to increase awareness about sanitation challenges. An illustration of this is the NDTV-Banega Swachh India Campaign featuring Mr. Bachchan, who advocates for SBM by engaging in a 12-hour televised cleanathon. Another significant national TV program, 'Chalo Saf Karein,' which focused on Sanitation, was broadcast in 2019. The well-known Hindi film 'Toilet-Ek Prem Katha,' featuring prominent Hindi actors, has brought the topic of open defecation into the realm of popular mainstream discussion. The utilization of multimedia communication platforms has produced a widespread foundational impact. Dobson and Sukumar (2019) claimed in their research that messages on SBM via social media could influence grassroots efforts, as seen in local cleanliness initiatives in both urban centres and distant villages in India

Community Mobilisation

Community mobilisation is a fundamental component of the SBM strategy, as it encourages a sense of ownership over sanitation efforts. At the community level, SBCC strategies involve engaging various stakeholders through local activities aimed at interacting with communities via meetings, rallies, street plays, and other events to increase awareness and drive behaviour change from the grassroots up. Large-scale community and social mobilisation efforts include initiatives such as the 'Swachhata Filmon ka Amrit Mahotsav' (Open Defecation themed film contest), the

'Gobardhan Sachcha-dhan' campaign (processing of cow dung), the 'Swachh Swasth Evam Samruddh' campaign (promoting public sanitation and hygiene), 'Swatantrata aur Swachhata se Garima' (sanitation meetings for elected female Panchayat members), the 'Gandagi se Azadi Shramdaan' campaign (citizens volunteering to improve sanitation), 'Swachhata Samvad' (monthly ODF Plus talk series), and the observance of significant days like 'Swachh Bharat Diwas', Global Handwashing Day, World Toilet Day, 'Swachhata Mahotsav', 'Swachhata hi Seva', and 'Swachhata Pakhawada'. These campaigns aim to bring together various stakeholders, strengthen the community's sense of ownership of the initiative, and ensure effective social mobilisation. These strategies are essential for involving stakeholders, fostering community ownership of the program, and ultimately transforming SBM from a cleanliness initiative into a people-driven movement.

Interpersonal Communication:

Interpersonal Communication (IPC) methods such as door-to-door outreach, community events (including those held in schools), and public gatherings have proven to be very effective in spreading the message of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) to the general public. A key aspect of these IPC activities is that they are interactive, thorough, and tailored to the needs of the local population (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2019). Health workers, Anganwadi workers, and Swachhagrahis (sanitation ambassadors) played a vital role in delivering personalized messages and addressing community concerns. The Swachhagrahis are a core component of interpersonal communication efforts at the community level (Pawar, 2021).

Direct, one-on-one communication, especially with ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, SHGs, and similar personnel, is the main source of awareness about SBM. It has also been noted that interpersonal communication methods have a broader impact than mass media, especially among women and those living in rural areas (Paul & Mandal, 2019).

Celebrity Endorsements:

Celebrity endorsement plays a vital role as a strategic component of SBCC within SBM. Well-known individuals and public figures promote the significance of sanitation and cleanliness through public service announcements, social media initiatives, and their involvement in SBM events. For instance, the 'Darwaja Band' campaign features Mr. Amitabh Bachchan and a young child advocating for toilet use over open defecation. Another example of celebrity involvement in SBM is the 'ice-bucket challenge,' in which nine prominent figures such as Bollywood stars Salman Khan, Kamal Haasan, and Priyanka Chopra, cricketer Sachin Tendulkar, businessperson Anil Ambani, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, Goa's governor Mridula Sinha, yoga teacher Baba Ramdev, and members of the popular TV series 'Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah' were encouraged to take part by sharing "before and after" videos and photos of their sanitation-related efforts. These celebrities were also asked to nominate nine others to continue the challenge. This approach, leveraging the influence of well-known individuals, has shown promising outcomes and is making a meaningful impact on improving sanitation conditions in India (Times of India, 2014).

Social Behaviour Change Communication Materials:

SBM created and distributed SBCC materials like posters, brochures, videos, and audio messages in several languages to reach a wide range of audiences in different parts of India. These resources emphasized important sanitation messages and promoted changes in behavior. One notable effort is the 'Shaucha Singh' Radio Campaign, a multilingual behavior change initiative featuring 'Shaucha Singh' as the main character to raise public awareness about safe and sanitary practices by challenging myths and traditional hygiene beliefs. To reinforce the SBM message, thematic mobisodes on various aspects of safe sanitation were developed and used as SBCC materials. In addition, short videos specifically designed for WhatsApp were created to spread messages about safe and sanitary practices. SBM also keeps a regularly updated and detailed blog on WordPress to further promote success stories,

local campaigns, and mobilization efforts. This shows how SBCC materials are used to support and advance SBM's goal of achieving a 'Clean India' and promoting safe and sustainable sanitation practices throughout the country.

Conclusion

SBCC is an important communication approach that involves individuals and communities to promote joint efforts for social transformation. SBCC has been shown to be very effective in fostering lasting behaviour change, especially regarding matters closely linked to ingrained cultural customs. The application of SBCC strategies in SBM has improved public knowledge of sanitation and fostered ongoing behavioral change. Utilizing multi-channel communication allows information to connect with various audience segments, ranging from urban to rural regions, thus enhancing the campaign's reach and effect and greatly aiding in achieving universal sanitation coverage as a tangible reality. The custom SBCC materials are culturally pertinent and easily understandable, offering clear and persuasive messages while motivating individuals to embrace and sustain safe sanitation habits at the same time. This is especially vital for establishing trust and promoting behavior change on an individual basis. The data SBM supported via SBCC strategies targets various audience segments, spanning urban and rural areas, and enhances the campaign's reach and effectiveness. The SBCC strategies implemented through SBM guarantee that the sanitation message connects profoundly with the community, fostering ownership and ongoing involvement for 'Clean India'

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