

Communication For Social And Behavior Change

Tulika Goswami Mahanta

Professor, Community Medicine Department, Assam Medical College and Hospital, Dibrugarh, Assam, India

Correspondence: Dr. Tulika Goswami Mahanta, Email : drtulikagoswami@gmail.com


Communication For Social And Behavior Change (CSBC)

Plato stated, "Human behavior flows from three main sources: desire, emotion, and knowledge." This quote encapsulates, essence of human nature, summarizing the driving forces behind our actions and decisions. At its core, it suggests that our behavior is shaped by our desires, emotions we experience and knowledge we acquire.^[1] CSBC is applying the principles of communication to trigger, catalyze and sustain social and behavior change. It's a set of positive transformations, an approach to programming to address the cognitive, social and structural determinants; a field of expertise, with its workforce.^[2]

Several theories emerged from individual level perception in the form of health belief model (1950), reasoned action, fear management theory, diffusion of innovation at community level (1960) to principles of social learning (1970), theory of gender and power (1995) at interpersonal and community level.^[3,4] Basically, behavioural and normative beliefs—referred to as cognitive structures—influence an individual's attitudes and subjective norms.^[5] Theories which explain individual behaviors are health belief model (HBM), theory of planned behavior (TPB), and trans-theoretical model (TTM) while theories which explain group behaviors are

social comparison theory, social impact theory, and social cognitive theory.^[6] No theory is perfect and has certain limitations. Integrated behavioral model utilizing two or more theories operating at individual, inter-personal, and community level may yield better results.^[7] Socio-ecological model acknowledges that behaviour is mediated by individual, interpersonal, community, organizational, social and global forces. It helps understanding behaviours and designing interventions (McLeroy et al, 1988); includes both individual and environmental factors that affect practice or non-practice of behaviours and acts in three strategy: advocacy, social mobilization and behaviour change communication to achieve the tipping point of change. Another framework known as Actor Network Theory (ANT) states that everything in social and natural world exists in networks of relationships that are constantly shifting. It considers objects, ideas, processes and any other relevant factors to be as important as humans in creating social situations.^[5]

Globalization or affirmation of market-based economy intensified inter-connectivity through consolidation of financial, industrial, political and cultural networks. Economic and political reforms; including decentralization and advances toward liberal democracy have raised expectations about

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community/local participation and take into consideration individual along with his/her environment. It encompasses elements of social marketing and advertising, behavioural economics, social and cognitive psychology. In 1980s, researchers Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, developed Prospect Theory (PT63); a Nobel-prize winning behavioral economic theory, explains decisions among alternatives under uncertainty by taking into account human psychology. Investors' value gains and losses differently; when presented with a choice, both equal, will choose the one presented in terms of gains. Prospect theory (Loss aversion theory) is a part of behavioral economics, suggesting investors to choose perceived gains, because losses cause a greater emotional impact. Certainty effect says individuals prefer certain outcomes over probable ones, while isolation effect says individuals cancel out similar information when making a decision.^[8]

Another advancement, was by Richard Thaler on understanding nudges and choice architecture. As defined by Thaler and Cass Sunstein, in their book 'Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth and Happiness (2008)' a nudge is any aspect of a choice architecture that alters people's behaviour in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives. Nudges are not mandates or laws that can be imposed on people. Nudges gained significant attention in public policy-making; with four thematic approach i.e, behavioral interventions - efficacy and effectiveness, dietary habits, general healthcare and sustainable choices with exponential growth in publications related to health, food consumption, and diet management policies that apply nudges and choice architecture.^[5,9]

Bounded rationality (BR) means when individuals make decisions, they are "bounded" or

limited because of inadequate information, cognitive limitations inherent in human mind and time constraints. Bounded rationality describes, way humans make decisions that departs from perfect economic rationality, because our rationality is limited by our thinking capacity, information that are available to us and time. Instead of making best choices, we often make satisfactory choices.^[10,11]

Systems Theory proposed by Kahneman in his book "Thinking Fast and Slow" states that two systems, system 1 and system 2, influence decision-making. System 1 is automatic, fast and often unconscious, requires minimal energy or attention and prone to biases. System 2 on the other hand, is effortful, slow and controlled. It cannot work without attention and can curb system 1 instincts when properly engaged.'

^[12,13] Because of emergence of system 2, humans can pursue their own goals rather than goals of genes.^[14]

Domain-general mechanisms is needed to deal with novelty, unpredictability and variability.^[15,16] Human decision-making shows systematic simplifications and deviations from tenets of rationality ('heuristics') which may lead to sub-optimal decision outcomes ('cognitive biases'). Cognitive biases have three theoretical perspectives: a cognitive-psychological, an ecological and an evolutionary perspective. However, these perspectives are mainly descriptive and don't provides an explanatory framework for mechanisms of cognitive biases. Neural network framework was proposed which explains why our brain systematically tends to default to heuristic ('Type 1') decision making which is again based on four basic neural network principles: association, compatibility, retention, and focus.^[17] Term social proof, coined by Robert Cialdini, in his landmark book Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion; defines social proof as "People doing what they observe other people doing". People change behaviour based on social proof bias, ex. influence from family and friends, expert social proof,

celebrity social proof, customers and users, wisdom of the crowd and certification.^[18]

Future of healthcare is digital, and universal access to these innovations must be promoted to prevent them from becoming another driver for inequity as stated by Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General.^[19] Digital adoption in India in 2023 report shows internet penetration stood at 48.7%, 32.8% social media user and 56% of new internet users were from rural India, with 1.1 billion active cellular mobile connections (77%).^[20] CSBC via mobile phones proved viable and contributed to standardization and scalability.^[21]

Behaviour change techniques (BCTs), component of intervention designed to alter or redirect causal processes typically have modest effects and more effective if grounded in appropriate theory.^[22] Transforming quality criteria into forms, such as reliable scales or response options can be used in evaluating theories, is a complex task, needs primary research and evidence syntheses.^[23] CSBC, systematic and scientific ways to use communication processes for bringing desired change in human behavior by combining theory and practice and involving multiple stakeholders, to design health program and policies by attracting attention of policy-makers to unattended health issues and for framing health issues for public debate, regulation, and resolution.^[24] Poverty, discrimination, less opportunities to get education and employment, living in substandard housing and environment, and less opportunity to access primary health care are underlying assumptions of inequality in health. To achieve sustainability, health communicators should possess essential knowledge and skills of intercultural communication. Malikhao adapting from framework of Martin and Nakayama elaborates on intercultural competency in health in five aspects: First, understanding personal and contextual way of

communication, second, understanding the differences and similarities between cultures, third, understand the local cultural context in which we are operating, fourth, understanding the privilege and disadvantage in the socials and fifth, history and past understanding.^[25]

Three notions from constitution of WHO: that “rights to health care,” “health inequality reduction,” and “health for all” are essential to devise good communication strategies to achieve health goals.^[25] CSBC strategies to become sustainable stakeholder analysis, recognizing and defining the public health problem, setting goals and objectives, identifying resources, and maintaining control of the problem are useful steps for participatory action research on health-related issues also known as C-planning.^[26] Health communicator should possess interdisciplinary skill to create an enabling environment and influence decision making process by empowerment and advocacy along with empathy and intercultural communication skills, experience in public health, journalism, development communication, sociology, anthropology, environmental science, and management.^[27] India's Human Development Index (HDI) value has increased to 0.644 in 2022, placing country 134 out of 193 in 2023/24 Human Development Report (HDR) indicating that India has a long way to go in terms of social inclusion. Digital public goods, open-source software, artificial intelligence (AI), standards and contents offer opportunities for economics and social development. Rapid development of AI, led to concerns for misinformation needing future path to be decisively shaped.^[28,29] Increased penetration of cable and satellite television featured contents relevant to 'rural' populations, and presented social issues such as child marriage, female foeticide, gender-based violence, and women's empowerment, rather succinctly. Initiatives such as National Optical Fibre Network and Digital India, aim to improve

India's internet-dependent infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. Audio-visual content on smart phones provides access to immediate and constant communication.^[5]

Global education development agenda reflected in Goal 4 (SDG4) of 2030 for sustainable development, adopted by India in 2015 - seeks to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education” by 2030. CSBC skill is a perfect fit under National Education Policy (NEP-2020) to converts ideological commitment of “The Greater Common Good” into key performance indicators (KPIs) for self and society; can be made competency-based with right mix of theory, practice, application and experience.^[30]

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