

Understanding social norms

'Log Kya Kahenge' & Beyond

Dr Vikas Choudhry



Vikas is a **medical doctor and a social epidemiologist with 15 years of experience in implementation science** that focus on SBC interventions in sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people in LMICs. He has authored over 15 peer-reviewed articles and editorials.

Currently he is the **research lead for South Asia** in Agency for All, a five-year USAID funded project that is working to generate and apply evidence on the role of agency in effective social norms focused SBC programming to help improve the health and well-being of individuals and community. **He also leads the public health vertical at Sambodhi** Research and Communications Pvt Ltd and has in the past worked with a wide array of organizations, including academia, UN agencies, philanthropic foundations, multi-lateral agencies, National and State Governments, and policy think tanks.

Shikha Rana



Shikha is a Senior Manager Research at Sambodhi. She is a young evaluator with over 7 years of experience in MERL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Research & Learning) primarily across domains of maternal and child health, nutrition, health systems, and water, sanitation and hygiene, and capacity building.

She has extensively engaged in complex evaluations and research studies developing skillset in cross-cutting methodologies, and analytical approaches towards solution driven evidence generation. She wishes to contribute towards designing monitoring and evaluation frameworks and strengthening systems and structures in an efficient and sustainable manner.

Drishti



Drishti is a seasoned development sector professional with three years of experience in the field. She has worked across diverse domains, including maternal and child health, social norms, family planning and SBCC. She holds a Master's in Population Studies from the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai, and a Master's in Arts (Geography) from Delhi School of Economics (DSE), University of Delhi.

Her technical skills include proficiency in software applications such as STATA, ArcGIS, Q-GIS, Open Data Kit (ODK), and NVivo. **With expertise in mixed-method research and spatial analysis, Drishti currently serves as a Program Officer at Project Concern International, India.** In her current role, she is responsible for overseeing the management information system, digitizing survey tools, conducting sample surveys, performing data quality checks, and conducting both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. She has contributed significantly to the academic field, having published six research articles in reputable national and international peer-reviewed journals.

Dr Shobhit Srivastava



Shobhit is a public health professional with a Ph.D. in Population Studies from the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai. He has worked in domains such as maternal and child health, social norms, and family planning. He possesses a strong foundation in large-scale data analysis, advanced statistical and spatial analysis, sample surveys, and scientific writing.

Currently serving as an Assistant Manager at Project Concern International, India, **he manages MIS data and assists in conducting sample surveys for projects, notably contributing to the Prerna Technical Support Program funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.** With 2.5 years of experience, his skill set includes proficiency in using various statistical techniques and software like STATA, QGIS, and GeoDA. His publication record boasts over 150 research articles in various international peer-reviewed journals, showcasing his commitment to advancing knowledge in the field. He is also an early career fellow with FP2030.

Vineha Tatkar



Vineha is a Program Associate with PCI India. She leads the activities of SNALC and facilitates knowledge sharing and learning among its members. She has a Master's degree in Psychology (Social) from the University of Mumbai, and is UGC-NET & JRF Qualified.

Her research has been presented at conferences and has also won the best paper award. Her primary interests revolve around the role of social norms in shaping pro-environmental behaviours in urban environments such as consumption, waste management, and use of public transport.

LET'S HEAR FROM YOU

What does the term “social norms”
mean to you?



Social norms **create a shared understanding of what is and is not acceptable across all types of human collectives**—from groups of friends to organizations to nations.

Indeed, adherence to such norms is a foundation of well-functioning communities and the glue that holds society together.

-(Gelfand, Gavrilets & Nunn, 2024)



Defining social norms

- Beliefs about what most people **actually** do
- Beliefs about what people **should** do



Empirical Expectations

- *Beliefs about what some, most, or all community members 'do' regarding a particular practice.*

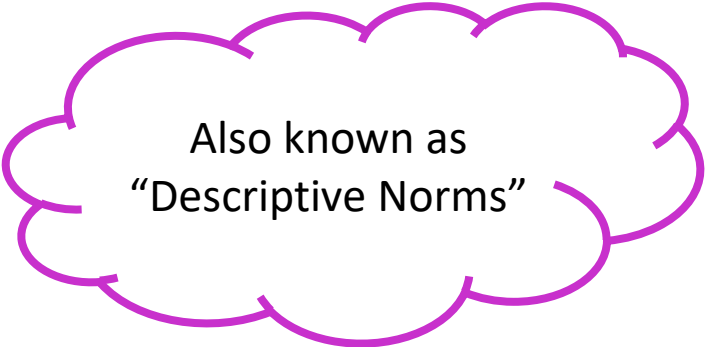
I believe...

"most parents in my community hit their kids to discipline them."

"women do all the housework in all families."

"students at my college like to party a lot"

- *Can differ from actual prevalence of behaviour*



Also known as
"Descriptive Norms"

Normative Expectations

- *An individual's beliefs about what community members, or members of a reference group 'think' should be done*

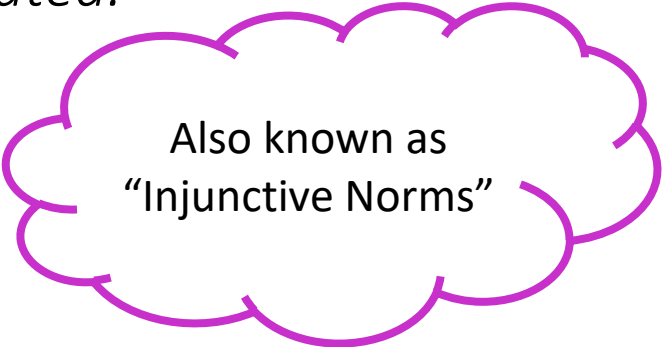
I believe that...

"My friends expect me to party with them every weekend."

"My family expects me to marry within our caste."

"People in my community expect everyone to get vaccinated."

- *What happens if I comply?*
- *What happens if I don't?*



Also known as
"Injunctive Norms"



Meta Norms

- Meta-norms describe **social expectations that are deeply rooted and closely tied with beliefs, values, and attitudes** and that are foundational to many other norms and behaviors
- *For example – gender roles (income earning v/s household chores)*

COVID-19 appropriate behaviour



Gender Norms

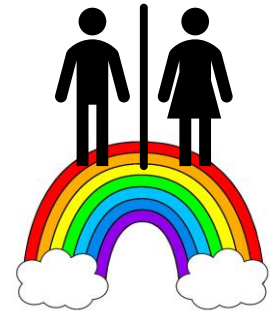
- Rules I **perceive** that dictate how I should behave based on my biological sex and social perceptions of my gender

- *I believe...*

“I am expected to help out my mother with chores first before doing anything else”

“I can’t wear pink because I am a boy”

“I should be attracted only to the ‘opposite’ sex.”



PUT YOURSELF IN THE SHOES

1. I believe other </> do ...
2. I believe other </> expect me to ...
3. I believe that if I don't do as they want me to, they will ...

Conditional Preferences

- *“I would change my behaviour if others do”*

I believe that...

“ We will marry off my daughter early only because others in our community expect us to”

“ I would not cheat in exams if students in my class also stopped and expected me to score by fair means”

“ Although I consider my wife as my equal in our house, if she speaks up in public, I would have to admonish her.”



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Influence of social norms on attitudes and behaviours

Attitude

*Attitude pertains to a person's beliefs about what is favorable or unfavorable and what should be. An individual's attitudes shape **how they perceive and react to the world**, existing as mental states within their mind. The attitude is **Individually Driven**.*

*Attitudes emerge through **social learning or socialization processes**. They can be shaped through **reinforcement**, associations of stimuli and **responses**, or by **observing** the behaviors of others.*

Behaviour

*Behavior refers to the **actions, reactions, or conduct** of an individual or group in response to circumstances. It refers to "**what I do**" It encompasses observable activities and can be influenced by individual characteristics, social context, and environmental conditions. **(Individually and socially driven)***

*Behaviors emerge through a combination of factors, including **individual experiences, social influences, and environmental cues**. They develop through processes such as **learning, observation, and adaptation** to help individuals navigate and interact with their surroundings.*

How social norms influence Attitude and Behaviour?

*The influence of social norms on attitudes and behaviors is a powerful force that shapes how individuals **perceive and interact** with the world around them.*

*These norms guide individuals in understanding what is considered **appropriate or inappropriate**, thereby shaping both attitudes and behaviors.*



*Social norms play a crucial role in shaping behavior by providing a framework for **acceptable conduct**. Individuals often conform to these norms to be accepted and avoid social disapproval.*

*These implicit guidelines and expectations shape how people **perceive and engage** with the world, **impacting everything** from individual decisions to the structures of society.*

Influence on Attitude through Examples



Career Choices

Social Norm: In a community where certain professions are traditionally associated with specific genders (e.g., nursing for women, engineering for men), individuals may develop attitudes that align with these norms.

Influence on Attitude: A woman growing up in this environment may develop the attitude that pursuing a career in engineering is unconventional or discouraged for females, influencing her career choices.



Parenting Roles

Social Norm: In communities with traditional gender norms regarding parenting, there may be expectations that women should be the primary caregivers, while men should focus on providing financially.

Influence on Attitude: Individuals raised in this environment may develop attitudes that align with these norms, impacting their expectations and roles as parents in the future.

Influence on Behaviour through Examples



Dress Code

Social Norm: In certain workplaces or communities, there may be established norms regarding dress codes, influencing expectations for professional attire.

Influence on Behavior: Individuals conforming to these norms will adjust their behavior by dressing in a manner considered acceptable, aligning with the social expectation.



Queueing

Social Norm: Many societies have norms regarding queuing or standing in line, promoting fairness in waiting for services.

Influence on Behavior: Individuals conforming to this norm will queue in an orderly fashion, demonstrating adherence to the expected social behavior.

Influence on Attitude and Behaviour through Examples



Expressions of Emotion

Social Norm: In cultures where men are expected to suppress emotions like sadness or vulnerability, adhering to the norm often means developing attitudes that discourage the open expression of such feelings.

Influence on Attitude: A man in this society may internalize the norm, leading to the attitude that expressing emotions like vulnerability is a sign of weakness.

Influence on Behavior: Men in such cultures are likely to suppress expressions of vulnerability or sadness, conforming to societal norms of emotional restraint and strength.

Social Norms and Reference Groups

Social Norms and Reference Groups

What are reference groups and their importance in social norms?

Reference groups

The people who matters to individual and the way they behave/the people whose opinions matter to me.

For example: In case of “use of family planning”, **mother-in-law, sister-in-law, relatives etc.** can be the reference group!

However, each reference group or say individual will have **different magnitude of influence.**

Priority groups

Priority Groups are those who perform a behavior or are directly affected by a social norm.

For example: In case of “use of family planning”, if we want to change the behaviour of MILs than our priority groups will be **MILs.**



How to identify Reference group?

Any suggestion?

Develop a set of questions for each behavior to be explored using rapid interviews

- 1. Who people trust to talk about an issue? (for e.g., use of FP methods)**
- 2. Who people receive advice and assistance from?**
- 3. Who they seek advice from?**
- 4. Who actually gives them advice?**
- 5. Who supports them in other ways?**



Main Population Group: Women aged 18-24 without children

Responses:	Mother	Mother-in-law	Husbands	Friends from Church	Cousins	Neighbors
Individual 1	1	1	1	--	--	1
Individual 2	1	--	1	1	1	--
Individual 3	1	--	1	1	1	1
Individual 4	1	1	1	1	--	--
Individual 5	1	1	1	1	1	--
TOTAL	5	3	5	4	3	2

Activity

- Identifying reference Groups and priority groups for zero-low parity couples to use/not use contraception
- Norm- Having a first child in first year of marriage is important, in part for social recognition and status of the women in the family

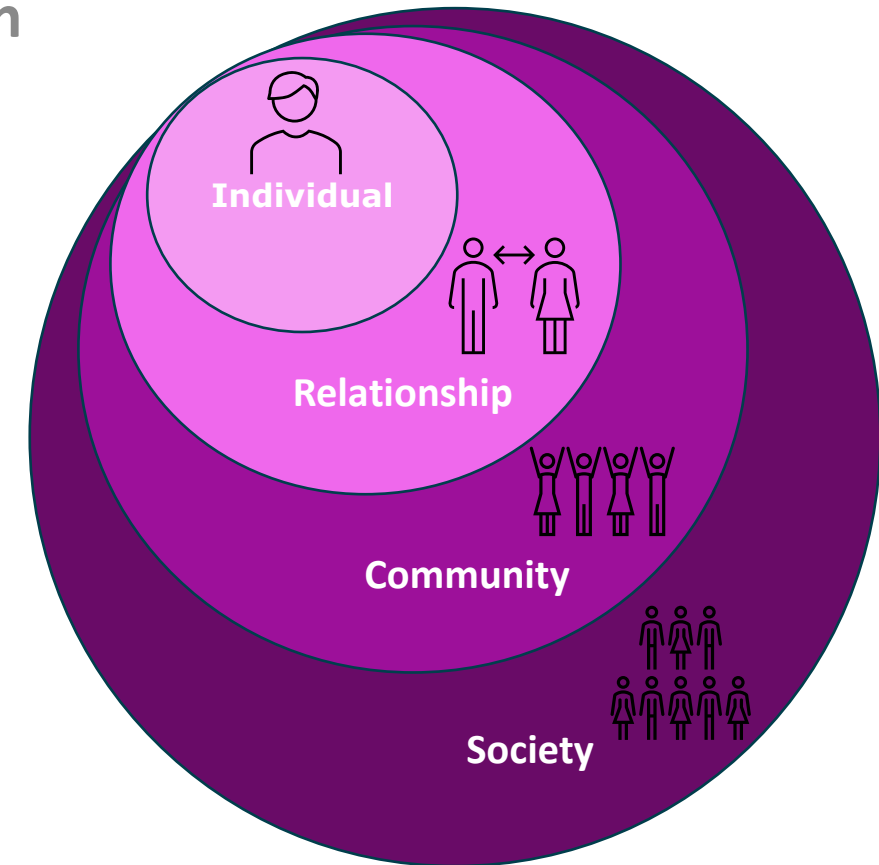
Importance of reference groups

What do you think, why reference groups are important when one has to address social norms in the community?

In order to tackle harmful social norms, interventions need to create new shared beliefs within an individual's reference group, which in turn change expectations around behavior.

A violent behavior can be said to 'be a social norm' (or more accurately 'held in place by social norms'), when there are shared beliefs that the violent behavior is both typical and appropriate, and consequent expectations in a reference group that the behavior will be adhered to.

For. e.g., there is a growing body of evidence about the role of social norms in sustaining FGM/C. In the case of FGM/C, if a family's daughters do not undergo the practice, there may be severe sanctions and even ostracism by the wider community, including a refusal to sanction a marriage.



TERM		DEFINITION
Behavior		<i>What I do.</i>
Attitude or belief		<i>What I prefer and what I know.</i>
Social and gender norms	Descriptive norm	<i>What I think others do.</i>
	Injunctive norm	<i>What I think others will approve/disapprove of me doing.</i>
Reference group		<p><i>People whose opinions matter to me (for a particular behavior or context).</i></p> <p><i>People who reward or sanction me for my behavior.</i></p>

Activity

Instructions:

1. We all saw a video at the end of Day 1, February 19,2024.
2. Here is the link to the video - <https://youtu.be/UlnluJo9kDE>
3. Now that you have seen it again, keeping this video in mind, reflect over the entire day and what we discussed today.
4. Refer to the worksheet on the next page.
In the first column identify one or two key/specific practice or behavior from the video. List those down.
5. In next column, for each of the specific behavior identify the social norms around those behaviors.
6. Thereafter, identify the stakeholders/group whose behavior we want to see a change in, with regards to the identified social norm (from column 2)
7. Then for each of the stakeholder, identify who would be the reference groups i.e. whose opinions would be most influential.
8. Finally, in the last column identify what would be some of the social sanctions, if there is deviance from the norm.

Worksheet

Practice/Behavior	Social Norm	Whose behavior do we want to change? <i>Who makes decisions about the norm?</i>	Reference Groups <i>Whose opinion is most influential to decision maker?</i>	Social Sanctions <i>If deviating from norm</i>



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THANK YOU