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Underestimation or overestimation: what makes the social communication attach or detach the sustainable development with the role of perceived cost?

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Underestimation or overestimation: what makes the social communication attach or detach the sustainable development with the role of perceived cost?

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Abstract: Major purposes of this study are to analyse the pros and cons of social communication that prevent or exaggerate the meaning of sustainable development from being the part of common people's decision-making; and to demonstrate the role of perceived cost in civil society's engagement with sustainable development practices. This study followed descriptive research design, where extensive literature review, and common understanding of social communication and sustainable development paved the way for three research-questions to be addressed. Literature study regarding communication traits, its role in clear understanding of sustainable development and translation of the said understanding into day-to-day practices of sustainable development, and the logical linkages of these literatures gives rise to the development of three propositions. We believe that there is an interrelationship between social communications and the life-long practices of sustainable development. This will help public-planners for social-development plans, and is the main contribution/novelty of this study.

Keywords: social-communication; sustainable-development; perceived-cost; society; proposition; under-estimation; over-estimation; attachment; detachment.

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1 Introduction

Sustainable development has been the focal dimension for most of the academicians, researchers and industrial practitioners in the competitive-world since last two decades. Although, it has been promoted for quite some time as the ultimate strategy for solving global environmental issues, this concept has not gained widespread acceptance in the economic and business world, because sustainable development is that social development, which make us satisfy our needs without compromising the ability of offspring's to meet their own need (Keeble, 1988). Despite being such a widely researched issue and a widely known fact that environmental performance and social performance can be judged by predictive analyses (Dubey et al., 2019) and by information sharing and connectivity in society (Shibin et al., 2020), sustainable development has continued to be a challenge to practise in the day-to-day life of our society. One of the important factors behind the above challenge can be the inadequate and inappropriate social communication. Hence, an urgent research is needed on the understanding of common-men about sustainable development in our social system that has been mostly developed through social communication, because individual and the group are interdependent (Hovland, 1948) for communication being carried out in various types of social structure; and because sustainable development goals (SDGs) that are often confused with climate change, whereas it caters to a lot of issues like countering poverty, hunger, inequality and facilitating sanitation, health, education, clean water and clean energy, innovation, infrastructure, well-being along other goals (Our World in Data Team, 2023). So, it can be the social communication that will nullify such understanding-drawbacks regarding sustainable development, which deals with the focal issue of the present study. Further, the understanding-drawbacks may be due to difference in perspective and approach towards SDGs among different class of people in the society. Hence, a deliberate attempt by the public planners is required for comprehensive communication system especially in a country like India having high diversity as communication is a pre-requisite and a tool for effective policy making and public engagement that are aiming to negotiation, decision-making, plan-formulation, implementing, and tracking of results (Zusammenarbeit, 2006).

In the above line of discussion, the present study finds a place for contribution to the understanding of sustainable development through the deliberate/planned communication procedures as the social communication having both verbal and nonverbal cues contribute to the communication process that transmit the information from sender to receiver (Genç, 2017); and communication in various social systems channelises many factors including social changes that are studied since some decades along the concept of participatory communication (Dagron and Tufte, 2006). Therefore, it could be inferred that social communication can play an important role for connections between scholars and practitioners of communication studies, practitioners of communication in various technical fields, practitioners of communication and policymakers, practitioners and members of civil society, and between practitioners and residents of a given area (Servaes and Lie, 2015) that will lead to integration of 'human beings' and 'things' with digitalisation for sustainable practices (Kamble et al., 2022) of business organisations even. So, the business organisations can show the path sustainable development of the society as they are intended to acquire social competencies by initiating, expressing, and training of the human resource (Taminiau and Ferguson, 2016). Furthermore, the intellectuals approach the communications in their society with different ways than the

ones who lack knowledge and naturally lack cognisance. Thus, it may be the undesirable social communication that is causing detachment from the practices of sustainable development, which lead to a question that what attach to the sustainable practices? In this context, the problem statement of this study is defined as follows.

1.1 Problem statement of the study

Whether underestimation or overestimation of social communication attach or detach the civil society from practices of sustainable development with certain role of perceived cost?

1.2 Research questions

The purposes of this study are reflected by the following research-questions (RQ).

- RQ1 How social communications are underestimated or overestimated in Indian social systems?
- RQ2 Whether the underestimated and overestimated social communication drive (attach) or don't drive (detach) the common men towards practices of sustainable development in their daily life?
- RQ3 Whether perceived cost accelerate (or decelerate) the social communication process towards the practices of sustainable development in their daily life?

2 Research design and methodology

The nature of the social communication is such that it needs to be described along its context to know the developmental consequences of social communication process. So, this study followed descriptive research design. So far as methodology is concerned problem statement of this research-work is defined on the basis of common understanding of social communication, sustainable development of our society, and on the basis of fundamental research-works done in this regard. Thereafter, research questions are set under the context of research problem. As mentioned above, characteristics of social communications themselves visualised the consequences of such communication processes like understanding and practices of sustainable development. So, review of literatures paved the way for describing these characteristics aiming to the developmental consequences, which ultimately leads to the development of three propositions. By this way a conceptual model is resulted that can be adopted by the public planners for the SDGs and for integrating the commercial organisation with the sustainable practices of the common-men of society.

3 Discussion and results

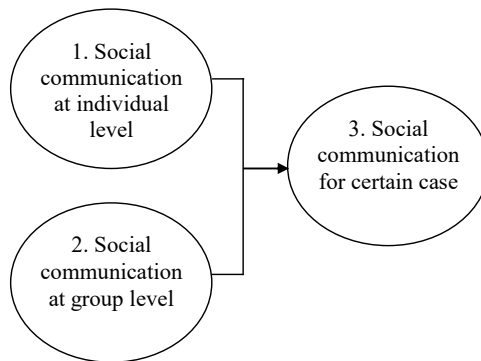
Keeping in view the problem statement of this study and the dimensions of research questions, relevant literatures are studied, and the extracted outcomes of the literature-

review are demonstrated in the direction of development of hypotheses and models that becomes the input for social implications of this study.

3.1 *Underestimation or overestimation of social communication*

Social communication process exchanges socially relevant information that includes both receptive and productive aspects (NIMH » Social Communication., n.d.). So, there is a chance of overestimation of communication that is generally encouraged by the pervasive complexity of language and the by centrality of interpersonal communication for effective daily living (Fay et al., 2008); or a chance of underestimation as any particular social attachment(s) has/have frequently been the normal course of adult development on the ground of identity, and intimacy (Stever, 2011). Individuals do not act as objective observers when they monitor their own statements. Instead, individuals tend to exaggerate the clarity of their established cues and understate the fuzziness of their own words. Any theory of language production worth its salt should account for the possibility that such exaggeration is a common cause of misunderstanding in everyday discourse (Keysar and Henly, 2002). So, intensive social communications across a wide spectrum of psychological phenomena says that 'bad' is stronger than 'good' (Baumeister et al., 2001).

Figure 1 Built-up social communication from its individual and group level dimensions



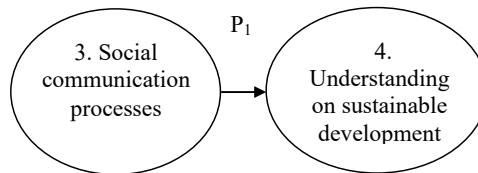
In the line of above discussions, it can be said that social communication can have positive association with well-being or can have opposite effect (Liu et al., 2019) on well-being along certain online habits that demand instant communication activities, having a clear understanding of social equivalence because the effect of low social equivalent groups could be overestimated and the effect of high social equivalent groups could be underestimated (Yu et al., 2023). On the other hand, ensuring personal and group communication, the well-being can be improved with a focus on economic and political issues (Saefudin, 2022). Thus, social communication can be underestimated or overestimated both at individual level and at group level of social interactions.

3.2 *Perception towards sustainable development*

Communication is crucial for civil society, business sector, and government for cooperation to peruse their objectives, because it helps people to share information,

acquire knowledge, make decisions, sharpen skills, and discover common ground among varying viewpoints and interests (Zusammenarbeit, 2006), where people get involved in their community through social changes with the efforts of various organisations and Government, who can make the public relation as public dialogue (Manda, 2014). So, information and communication technologies (ICT) can contribute to sustainable development that depends on widespread shift towards less material-intensive consumption behaviour, but the consumption is showing increasing trends which is against the idea of sustainability (Hilty and Ruddy, 2010); and ICT has negative relation with CO₂ emission that considerably enhances environmental sustainability along financial development, where financial development becomes helpful to attain environmental sustainability (Sahoo et al., 2021). This is the reason, it is referred (Kahouli et al., 2022) that the government must support environmental and ICT legislation, sustainable economic growth, and reduction of electric power consumption to achieve environmental sustainability, where communication, especially social communication processes can make the common-men understand clearly the sustainable development because sustainability is viewed (Fuchs, 2017) as an ideology that ignores questions of capitalism and class, according to critical social theory.

Figure 2 Clear understanding of sustainable development emerge from social communication process



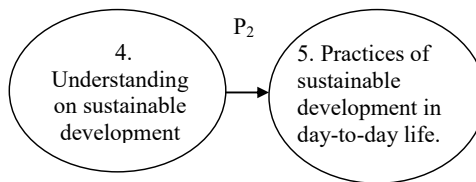
Embarking the above discussion on the business-world, it is said that improved infrastructure affects progress towards every sustainable development goal (Thacker et al., 2019) with increasing economic output and employment as primary drivers of investment, where the business organisations play their pivotal roles with their social responsibilities (Kumar et al., 2020) and with their response to the societal need (Halili and Fernando, 2022) in the way of acquiring competitive advantages. On the hand, it is a fact that social attachment is very much helpful for mobility of common-men during evacuation caused by any natural disaster (Bañgate et al., 2017). So, the environmental paradigm may integrate social and ecological variables but cannot solve environmental issues or promote sustainable development, where shifting societal and organisational standards for human and environmental well-being (Díaz-Rodríguez et al., 2019) can be in the focal point. Thus, a proposition (P1) can be put-forth here that planned social communication is significantly and positively influencing the desirable understanding of sustainable development.

3.3 Social communication and practices of sustainable development

The ability to communicate effectively in social situations (both verbally and nonverbally) has a significant impact on mental health across the lifetime and is especially susceptible to social adversity, because genetics and development influences social bonding, where sociality systems accommodate species (Carter et al., 2006).

Further, individual differences that indicate a social attachment has a significant effect on social communication. So, there is a chance that social communication can be underestimated or overestimated, although social communication has advanced greatly. Social communication is crucial for forming close, long-lasting bonds with others. Continuing this discussion, it can be said that people use those platforms for social communication, which made their understanding regarding social attachment with the use of social media (Yang et al., 2021); and regarding social detachment that affects social communication, where externally oriented thinking (EOT) of human being relates to social detachment (Vanheule et al., 2011). Hence, social communications make or break certain practices in our day-to-day life. Although, health-deterioration (Pascale et al., 1992; Jivraj et al., 2016) and stress (Caldwell et al., 2004) increases social detachment having two-way causal link among them; stir-up responses from others in the society on certain aspects can shape and reinforce the social attachment (Guerrero, 2021). Here, the mass media can play an important role that has tremendous impact on the developmental dimensions (Joel and Kasamba, 2015) of the society as it build the society's image. So, inference can be drawn that social communication can make the common-men involve (attachment) in those activities that carry some urgency or demand the serious attention like sustainable development.

Figure 3 Clear understanding of sustainable development leads to its regular practices



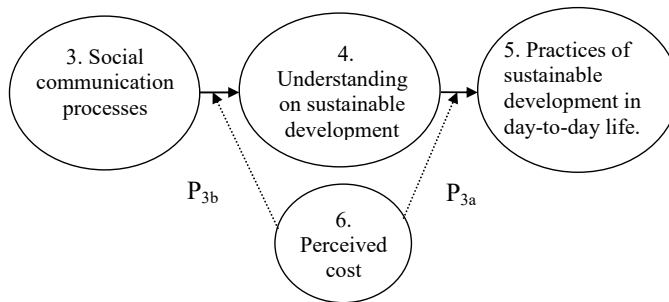
Discussing about the business community, it is widely accepted that business organisations have great roles in the practices of sustainable development in the society, because corporate social communication strategies that align with social responsibility-causes can elicit favourable responses from consumers (Casais and Sousa, 2019), and under the social sustainability context, customers' investment and commitments can moderate the performance of suppliers and supply-chain (Mani et al., 2018). Although business community understand that optimal human survival and wellbeing are possible with value sustainability through communication in the interests of customers and society that ultimately provide financial rewards and economic growth (Lee, 2017), corporate houses should communicate in a way that takes into account corporate social responsibility and strategic sustainability (Elalfy et al., 2020); and must improve the consistency of their communication strategies for sustainable development (Gonzalez-Lafayse and Lapassouse-Madrid, 2016) that enhance their credibility. Hence, a totality of awareness or knowledge in the society from every dimension can raise the urge of common-men to be involved in the sustainable development practices in their daily life, because reaching every single person in the country are extremely expensive, and results are unpredictable and not enduring (Borwska, 2017). Hence, public awareness campaigns that advocate for greener practises, a more sustainable way of life can heighten the understanding of environmental concerns, which can be possible by deliberate or planned social communication processes. This is the reason, some corporate bodies are communicating SDGs in a way that takes into account corporate social

responsibility and strategic sustainability (Elalfy et al., 2020), which can give rise to the long-term performance of those organisations (both social firms and commercial firms) with their contribution to the social capital (Anh et al., 2023). Thus, second proposition (P2) can be put-forth that an understanding of sustainable development with its actual meaning can put a significant positive effect on practices of sustainable development of their daily life.

3.4 *Role of perceived cost in the social communication process towards sustainable development*

Communication of social problems are becoming the instruments of daily actions having social change at heart, rather than remaining only as ideas (Volterrani, 2019). Hence, before adopting new ideas, people may evaluate its perceived cost that whether these new ideas are better than its alternatives that ignores the environmental considerations (Huijts et al., 2012); and may evaluate the environmental benefits, economic advantages in addition to the perceived cost for their decision making that whether the new idea (innovation/technique) is in the line of sustainability or not (Lubell et al., 2011). So, social communication process can translate the understanding of sustainable development to the daily practices of sustainable social development, if the perceived cost is not an hurdle; because preparedness of the individuals at the time of emergencies is generally developed on the context of emotional, cognitive, and cultural dimensions of their social life (Perez-Fuentes et al., 2016); perceived price of the resources of the society influence pro-environmental actions (Rajapaksa et al., 2018); lean manufacturing practices along the technology related to industry 4.0 put direct and indirect impact on sustainable performances of organisation (Kamble et al., 2020), and because perceived cost discourages, perceived benefits and social influence encourage self-disclosure in our social systems (Cheung et al., 2015) in the era of social media.

Figure 4 Sustainable development on the context of social communication and perceived risk



On the flip side, it can be said that lack of sustainability measures, no estimation of real and perceived costs, insufficient experience, and unnecessary use of powers are the hurdles (Williams and Dair, 2007) behind the success of sustainable development projects, where as sustainable development can solve complicated problems having crucial role of communication in development that is inclusive and involves everyone (Gillis, 2014). Thus, if the public planners can make the common-men understand through various social communication processes that the present cost of sustainable practices is negligible against the future benefits for the entire humankind, and make it

compulsory for the commercial organisations to supply substantial information about their goods and services with adequate attention to customers' voice that enable them to be successful in social media marketing (Sangwan and Sharma, 2022), then only people will engage themselves in the practices of sustainable development in their daily life. Hence, it's important to narrow down different definitions of sustainable development in the real-world decision-making that provide a new way of thinking (Pearce, 1988), where leadership, teamwork, IT resources, and external supports can impact sustainability (Jayashree et al., 2022). So, third proposition (P3) can be forwarded that perceived cost can moderate the effect of social communication process on the understanding of sustainable development; and can moderate the effect of latter on the practices of sustainable development.

4 Summary findings

Social communication for any long-term social programme or process is the resultant of complex whole of social communications at individual level and group level. If there will be a controlled effort by the public planners to strategise the said social communications, then the intended meaning of such programme or process can be understood clearly by the common-men of the concerned society as they realise gradually regarding the pervasive and long-term benefits of these programmes or process. On the context of such understanding and realisation, the common-men volunteer themselves in such social actions, which is the need of the hour for entire humankind. Hence, it is inferred in this study that sustainable development practices of common-men in the society can be the outcome of clear understanding and realisation of intended meaning of 'sustainable development'.

Social life of common-men always submerged in the balance facts of risk-and-return, where risk most of the time moderate the positive orientations also. If the risk is perceived on the apprehension of negative/adverse returns in future to the present ignorance or wrong-deeds, then such risk-perception can be imbibed in the mind of common-men through continuous social interactions/communications. Execution of such 'perceived cost' in the mind of the common-men can arouse the proper meaning of sustainable development, otherwise understanding of sustainable practices can underestimate or exaggerate the meaning such practices in their mind that refrain them from the practices of sustainable development in the daily life. By this way, the business organisations also can inculcate themselves with a set of non-economic ideals and a sense of being a part of the community (good for buyer, seller, and society) that is deeply ingrain in the minds of authorities, which can motivate them (Yamaoka and Oe, 2021) towards the sustainable practices. So, not only the Japanese but also rest of the world, especially the business organisations in India like developing countries can realise their integral duties for sustainable developments along their continuous involvements in the social communications. For the social and industrial implications and for the future researchers, three propositions are developed, which can be the input for the planning or strategies of social development. Further, these propositions can be approached by the future researchers to provide empirical strength to the varying implications of the outcomes of this study.

5 Novelty and social implications

Communications, interactions, and interrelationships are inevitable processes in the human-society. Still, significant numbers of studies have been conducted on the factors of communication and its consequences, especially on the ground of social communications. It is a much-needed social dynamism during any social urgency, where the sustainable development of society is unanimously agreed as a social urgency. So, the question that how the social communications make common-men engage in the practices of sustainable development in their daily-life, is broadly answered in this study, which is the most important contribution or novelty of this study. It is recommended through this study that the public planners must initiate, pursue, and continue indefinitely a deliberate or planned social communication that establish a clear understanding regarding the sustainable development within the thoughts of common-men. This type of understanding is ultimately leading to the day-to-day practices of sustainable development for their own social systems. In order to obtain exact application orientations of these arguments, three propositions are put-forth in this study that can be the guiding forces for the industry practitioners, social organisation and individuals, economists, and Government planners for sustainable development practices.

6 Limitations and future research avenues

With the descriptive research design, this study explained the characteristics of social communication and logically related these aspects to the practices of sustainable development, but empirical evidence of these connections with respect to the propositions can make this study more practical oriented. In addition to the above fact, some expert-opinions may be added to substantiate the arguments behind the link between the social communications, perceived cost, and practices of sustainable development.

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