



Communication Theory

March 12, 2023



Bangladesh
Center for
Communication
Programs

What influences behavior



What influences behavior ?

Many factors:

- Personal/individual
 - Social
 - Environmental/structural
- ...that interact in a complex way.

★ We need to understand our audience in a holistic context.





What is Theory?



- An explanation of a process or phenomenon based on systematic observation and provide a road map for communication.
- SBCC theories guide - SBCC program design and help to focus on what or whom to address in the program.





How theory helps?

- Theories are stories that help us
 - Organize our **ideas**
 - Structure our **thinking**
 - Learn from the collective **wisdom**
 - Plan **what** expect to happen and **why**.





How to use theories

- **Guide audience and program analysis**
 - Who is likely to be the most important audience?
 - Understand the audience - how they make decisions, seek information, talk about a particular issue (health/social), etc.





How to use theories...

- **Guide program positioning**
 - Which program approach is likely to be effective?
- **Guide program design**
 - What kind of messages and activities are most likely to influence behaviors?
- **Guide research**
 - What should we measure?





Some examples of Theories





1. Theory of Planned Behavior

- aka Theory of Reasoned Action
- Behavior is guided by decisions based on logical thinking processes
- What will happen to me if I choose this behavior?

How will others respond?

Is the behavior easy or difficult?





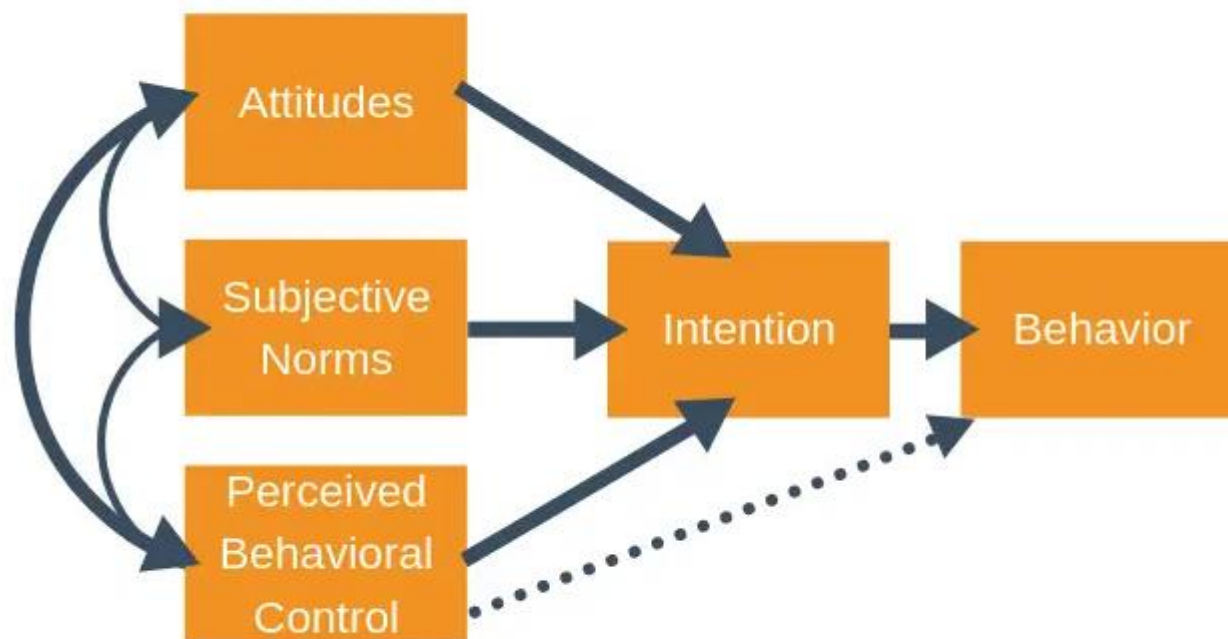
Theory of Planned Behavior

- Behavior as an individual choice
- A person's behavior is determined by his/her ***intention*** to perform the behavior.





Conceptual Model



QUT



BRAIN GEAR



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Theory of Planned Behavior

Example : Practice exclusive Breast feeding — is a result of the individual's:

Attitudes: An individual's beliefs about the attributes and outcomes of exclusive breast feeding for six months (or providing milk substitute)

Subjective Norms: An individual's beliefs regarding important others' approval or disapproval of practicing EBF (normative beliefs)

Perceived Behavioral Control: An individual's perceived control over practicing EBF in the presence or absence of facilitators and barriers to quitting.

Breast





2. Risk Perception Processing

- aka Extended Parallel Processing Model
- Intersection of **logic** and **emotion**
- Fear can motivate or paralyze
- The fear is called “**threat**,” and the belief that one can do something to avoid the threat is called “**efficacy**”
- This Threat/Efficacy relationship is like an equation that must be balanced on either side.





Risk Perception Processing

- Two components in the model

Threat => emotional response Efficacy => logical response

How serious is the threat?

**Susceptibility to Threat - Can
it happen to me?**

Am I at risk?

Does the response work?

Can I do it?

What are the barriers?





Risk Perception Processing

- The threat we communicate must be balanced by a doable action the audience can take to avoid the threat.

Example: Ebola

What is the difference between these two messages?

“Ebola is real! If you get it, you’ll die!”

“Ebola is real! If you seek the treatment, you have a fifty percent chance of recovery.”

<http://ebolacommunicationnetwork.org/ebola-is-real-using-theory-to-develop-messaging-in-a-health-crisis/>





Risk Perception Processing

Fear Appeals (Risk Message)

- Will this message work?



If what happened on your inside
happened on your outside,
would you still smoke?

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CANCER
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3. Diffusion of Innovation

- How new ideas are spread among groups of people.
- New ideas and practices (*innovations*) spread through social networks over time
- The speed at which an innovation spreads depends on
 - Perceived characteristics of the innovations
 - Characteristics of the social network,

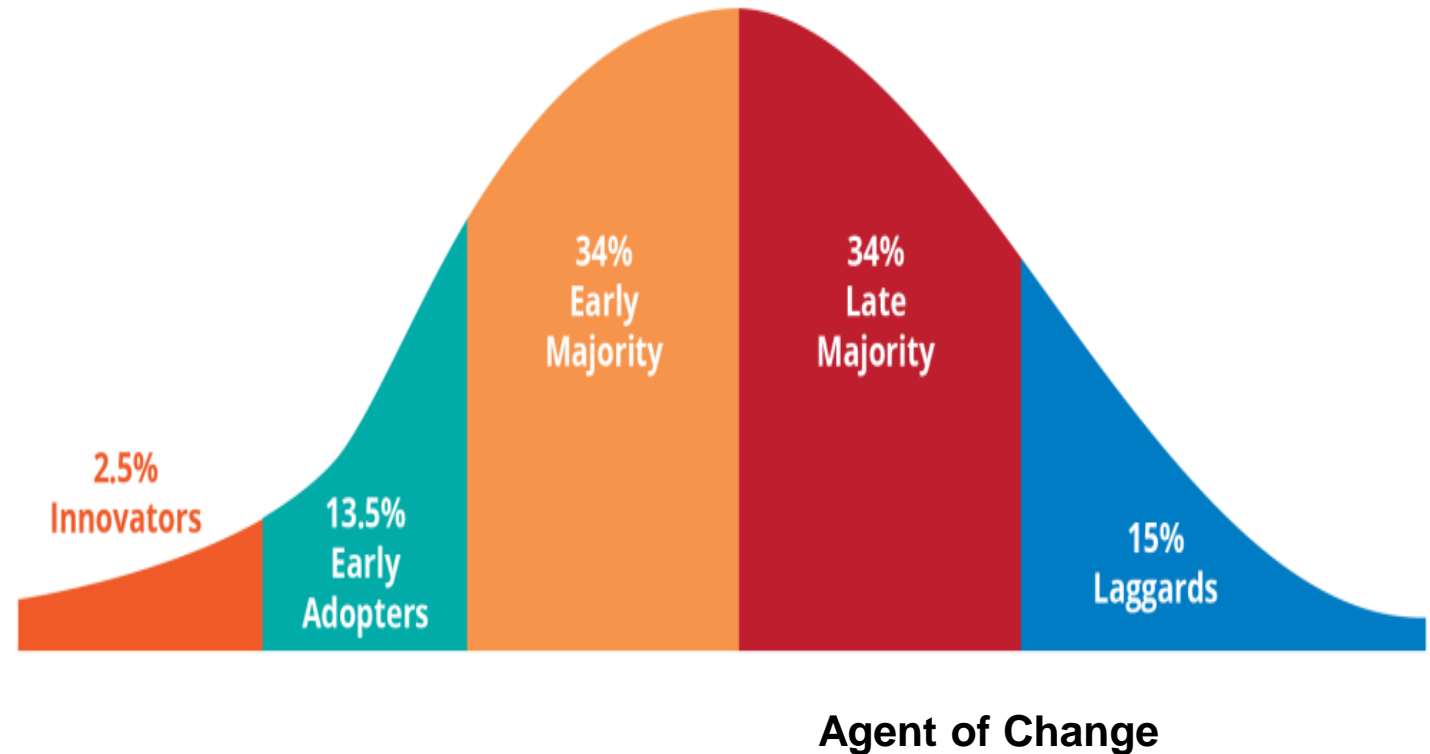




Diffusion of Innovation

Characteristics of an innovation

- a. Relative advantage
- b. Compatibility
- c. Complexity
- d. Trial ability
- e. Observability





Diffusion of Innovation

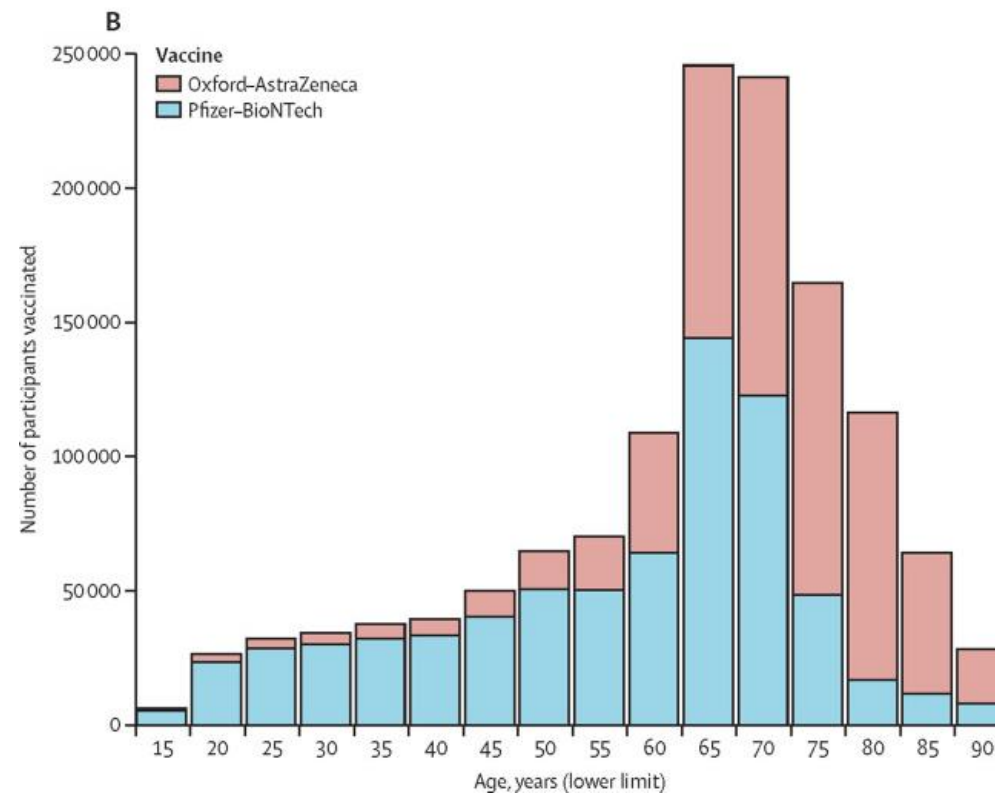
- Behavior is guided by
 - perception of the behavior in the context of their own life
 - What they see other people doing
 - How people talk about and share information about the behavior
- Bell curve: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, laggards





Diffusion of Innovation

COVID-19 vaccine uptake





4. Social Learning Theory

- Behavior is guided by
 - Observing the actions of others and the results of the actions
 - Evaluating the consequences for their own life
 - Rehearsing then performing the behavior
- “Others” can include celebrities and fictional characters.

Application: modeling desirable behaviors, interaction



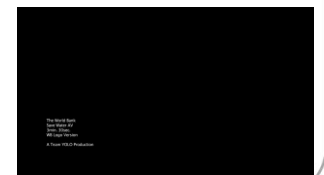


Social Learning Theory

- Role modeling improves **self-efficacy** (key concept)

Four sources:

- **Mastery** : Personal success; overcoming/managing failure
- **Other's success**: Observing the success of others
- **Persuasion**: Convinced by others that success is possible
- **Physical/emotional feedback**: Reading one's own emotions.



Safe and clean water





5. Ideation

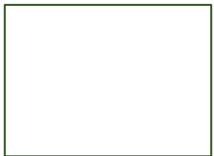
- Behavior is guided by psychological and social factors, and by skills and environmental conditions
- Needs to be culturally adapted
- Ideational factors:
 - Cognitive
 - Emotional
 - Social



Ideation

Example:

NUHRI FP program



COMMUNICATION

Instruction

Directive
Dissemination
Promotion
Prescription

Nondirective
Dialogue
Counseling
Entertainment
Social Networks

Public
Advocacy
Regulatory

SKILLS AND
KNOWLEDGE

IDEATION

Cognitive

Beliefs
Values
Perceived Risk
Subjective Norms
Self-Image

Emotional

Emotional Response
Empathy
Self-Efficacy

Social

Support and Influence
Personal Advocacy

ENVIRONMENTAL

Supports and Constraints

Reinforcement

Confirmation

Enabling

INTENTION

BEHAVIOR



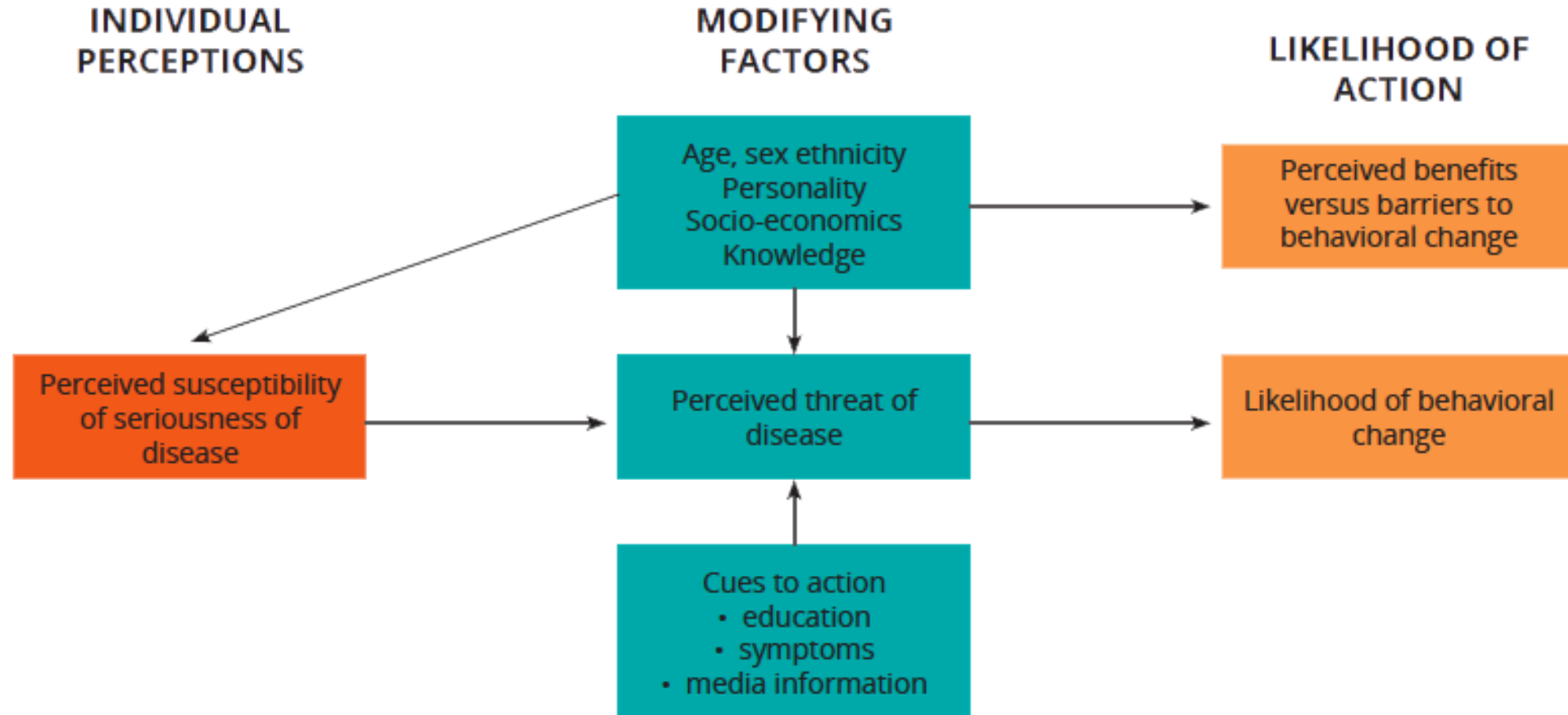
6. Health Belief Model

- Consider individual beliefs about the problem being addressed
- Focuses on the **beliefs** and **perceptions** of the individual, so it is appropriate to change behaviors that are not heavily influenced by society and social norms.





Health Belief Model





7. Stages of Change

1. Pre-contemplative
2. Contemplative
3. Preparatory
4. Action
5. Maintenance
6. Advocacy



Awareness of
avian flu

Knowledge of
transmission
modes & realistic
risk perception

Decision to
cage birds

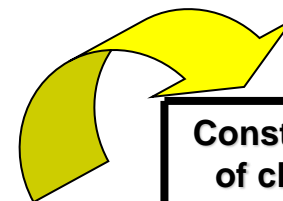
Intention to
purchase wire
fencing

Construction
of chicken
coops

Consistent
caging,
maintenance
of coops &
advocacy to
neighbors

Audience:
poultry farmer

?



Where is your audience on the path from awareness to behavior?

What factors (variables) help or hinder progress at that stage?





Human centered design

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NBu1kkSCHfs>





Example

- Theory Picker
- Health issue: Drowning is the #1 cause of death among children age 1-5 in Bangladesh
- Desired behavior: Adults and older children supervise small children near bodies of water

<http://www.orau.gov/hsc/theorypicker/picker.html>





How to use theories

- Identify a theory that matches your understanding of what influences the behavior you are trying to promote
- No one theory is sufficient on its own
 - Use different theories in different circumstances
 - Different aspects of your program may use different theories
- Choose a theory based on evidence about the audience and its context.
- The better your message is matched to the theory, the more likely that behavior change will occur.

