

Self and Collective Efficacy in Letters Written to a Radio Soap Opera on Gender Equality and Family Planning in India*

by

Sweety Law

and

**Arvind Singhal
School of Interpersonal Communication
Ohio University
Athens, OH 45701, USA**

Direct correspondence to Singhal (e-mail: singhal@ouvaxa.cats.ohiou.edu)

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Abstract

The present paper investigates dimensions of individual and collective efficacy in the letters written to radio soap opera, “Tinka Tinka Sukh” (Happiness Lies in Small Things), broadcast in India in 1996-1997. We argue that audience letters represent a possible approach to measuring efficacy. Letters written by listeners can help us understand how they know what they hear and with what psycho-social consequences.

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The present paper investigates dimensions of individual and collective efficacy in the letters written to radio soap opera, “Tinka Tinka Sukh” (Happiness Lies in Small Things), broadcast in India in 1996-1997. The 104-episode soap opera, broadcast by All India Radio (AIR), had an estimated listenership of 40 million people in the Hindi-speaking States of North India, and promoted gender equality and small family size norms (Singhal & Rogers, in press). Some 150,000 letters were received by All India Radio in response to “Tinka Tinka Sukh”, during its one year of broadcast. A sample of these letters serve as the bases for this study.

Efficacy

Bandura’s social cognitive theory (1986; 1989; 1992; 1997) and its cornerstone construct of efficacy has gained prominence as an explanatory model of behavior change in the social sciences, especially in health education interventions. Bandura argues that individuals will act in accordance with their perceived abilities to achieve what they desire. He distinguishes between self and collective efficacy. Self-efficacy is an individual’s perception of his/her capability to deal effectively with a situation, and his/her sense of perceived control over the situation. Collective efficacy is the degree to which individuals in a system believe that they can organize and execute courses of action required to achieve collective goals.

¹ This paper draws upon Law and Singhal (1998).

Self-Efficacy

What are the effects of self-efficacy? Bandura (1995) identified four major efficacy effects: (1) cognitive, (2) affective, (3) motivational, and (4) selection processes. Cognitive processes are the functions of thought, such as being able to predict events and to develop ways to control those events. For example, a letter-writer, Pradip Kumar Goutom of Badayun village in the state of Uttar Pradesh, wrote: "I have been provoked to think a lot about the practice of dowry in our country. Why is this practice still rampant? Will it continue to thrive and grow? Those who take dowry are a burden and in fact rob the country." The radio drama serial provoked these pertinent questions about dowry and offered some solutions to its problems.

Efficacy enables coping with ruminative or disturbing thoughts and feelings. For example, many letters expressed affective states ranging from disappointment and disgust with anti-social practices, to fervent entreaties for recognition and change, to a renewed sense of confidence or assurance at having learned new ideas. Strong, deep feelings had been stirred regarding both personal and social issues and the individual's capabilities in coping with these issues.

People motivate themselves by anticipating valued outcomes. For example, a young letter-writer, who had given up her studies, decided to return to school after listening to the radio drama. Efficacy encompasses these dimensions of belief as well as a behavioral aspect that actuates beliefs, goals and expectancies.

Collective Efficacy

Collective achievements are also rooted in self-efficacy. Bandura (1995) described collective efficacy as a united effort required to dislodge entrenched detrimental practices. It is concerned with people's beliefs in their joint capabilities in getting things done collectively. We articulate that collective efficacy is more than organizing individual efforts directed at behavioral change. Collective efficacy is a belief that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. It is embedded in the beliefs, knowledge, and behaviors of members of certain societies (Earley, 1993, 1994; Oettingen, 1995; Singhelis & Brown, 1995), and is not always activity-based. In some societies, personal efficacy is valued in so much as it contributes to both self-directedness as well as group directedness. Before any organizing for community empowerment can take place, individuals must have a two-fold awareness: The need for (1) individual action for social good, and (2) personal change for social reasons. Rationally speaking, transformation of consciousness

must precede any structural transformation. On the flip side, collective efficacy beliefs are a component of the social mind-set, and precedes any rational effort at creating beliefs about collective efficacy.

In some situations, collective efficacy beliefs override self-efficacy beliefs as the primary influence in one's assessment of capability to achieve a desired outcome. Where adoption of new health behavior concerns making a personal choice, the influence of self-efficacy would be high. Behavioral concerns such as condom use would be ideally addressed by targeting the individual or couple. However, for social practices that involve many participants, emphasizing individual self-efficacy might not be very effective. The practice of dowry giving and taking during marriages in India are an example. An individual's decision to take or not to take dowry during marriage can be mediated strongly by prevailing custom and other contingencies. Advocating the change in a well-entrenched norm of social conduct involves opposing people's existing social beliefs and attitudes. Not only do initiatives like the abolition of dowry invite opposition from the community, the claimed benefit accrues only when large numbers of the target community accept the proposed change. In these circumstances, it would be appropriate to assess both self-efficacy as well as collective efficacy.

Letter-Writing as Communication

Letters are both a medium of communication as well as the message. They can provide rich insights on the effects of entertainment-education media programs. In particular, they can describe in highly-individualized detail how the listeners' sense of efficacy was influenced and with what consequences.

The act of writing is a communicative act, and from that perspective is an indicator of efficacious behavior that expresses efficacious beliefs. When listeners write on their own initiative, they display "agency", that is, self-directed activity. Human agency is central to the causal processes governing change (Bandura, 1989). This display of agency is an important fact of efficacy expressed at the belief as well as behavioral levels. Of all beliefs, self-efficacy is the most influential arbiter of self-directed change (Bandura, 1986). According to Chafe and Danielwicz (1987), letter-writers are more involved with themselves and with concrete reality than are conversationalists or academicians. This involvement exhibited by letter-writers makes the letters an important testimonial of efficacy.

The motivations for writing letters are varied. Some individuals write because they are “registered listeners”² of the radio program, although they need not. Some individuals simply wish to hear their names broadcast, although there is no guarantee or set policy for that on the part of All India Radio. Certain people are interested in gaining access to the radio actors and producers for themselves. Many write to celebrate and identify with a favorite radio program or with certain actors. Thus, letter-writing, whether voluntary or prompted, is an important activity by listeners and can be a key to an enhanced understanding of the extension of issues central to their lives that the mass-media intervention seeks to mediate and change.

Research Questions

Our investigation of letters written in response to a popular India radio serial centered around three research questions:

- (1) What specific dimensions of efficacy emerged in the letters that were written by listeners in response to the entertainment-education radio drama serial in India ?
- (2) In what ways is self-efficacy displayed as belief and as behavior in the letters that were written by the listeners in response to the entertainment-education radio drama serial in India?
- (3) In what ways is collective efficacy expressed as belief and as behavior in the letters written by the listeners in response to the entertainment-education radio drama serial in India?

Method

To answer the research questions, we especially draw upon three types of data that were collected to understand the effects of the Indian radio soap opera, “Tinka Tinka Sukh”: (1) Personal interviews with key officials involved in the production of “Tinka Tinka Sukh”, including its executive producer-director, writers, and actors, (2) a content analysis of the educational themes in the 104 episodes of “Tinka Tinka Sukh”, and (3) a quantitative and qualitative content analyses of a random sample of 237 listeners' letters (out of the 150,000 letters received in response to “Tinka Tinka Sukh”).

From our interviews with key officials of AIR, the Indian national radio network, we gathered that “Tinka Tinka Sukh” was a 104-episode entertainment-education radio drama serial broadcast twice weekly, from February 19, 1996 to February 15, 1997, over 27 radio stations of

² Listeners who wrote to be included on AIR’s mailing list.

AIR, covering seven Indian states in the population-dense Hindi-speaking area of northern India: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Delhi.

The Educational Content of "Tinka Tinka Sukh"

Our analysis of the scripts showed that "Tinka Tinka Sukh" (Happiness Lies in Small Things) tells the story of how everyday, ordinary acts of human interaction are what happiness is all about. Navgaon is a farming community struggling to understand the value of modern traditions, and moving in progressive directions. Suraj, his father Chaudhri, and mother Chaudhrian, represent an ideal family. Chaudhri and his wife understand, on one hand, the role of tradition, and, on the other, the progressive ways that are of growing importance. The couple represent pro-women's causes -- anti-dowry, marriage and divorce, women's empowerment -- and the importance of creating an integrated harmonious community based on cooperation and self-sufficiency. They raised their son Suraj to appreciate the importance of agriculture and individuals' relationship with their environment, particularly the community. This family's virtuous ways earn the loyal support of their workers Jumman and his wife Rukhsana. A poor couple, Jumman is a farmhand in the Chaudhri's fields, while Rukhsana does household work.

Chacha, his wife Chachi, and their children Ramlal, Nandini, Sundar, Suman, and Pappu, are the antithesis of the Chaudhri's family. Chacha believes he is absolved of all parental responsibilities since he is the breadwinner. Chachi is domineering, blindly traditional, and very vocal. She is the village gossip of Navgaon. She is indulgent of her eldest son Ramlal, a delinquent, and critical of her daughters. Her eldest daughter Champa quietly grows out of the family's shadows to become a famous singer, with the help of her friends.

The lives of Gareebo (a widow) and her daughters Nandini, Kusum, and Lali show the trials of being a woman in a patriarchal society. Gareebo feels societal pressure to get her daughters married since they have come of age. Nandini, the eldest, will not marry until she

becomes self-dependent as a teacher. Kusum gets married early and dies in childbirth. Lali becomes a medical doctor, the first in Navgaon.

A tragedy occurs in Navgaon when Poonam is abused by her husband and his parents because her family does not pay an adequate dowry. She commits suicide. Sushma, sister-in-law of Kusum, finds herself abandoned by her husband, also for dowry. Encouraged by Nandini, Champa, and Suraj and supported by her parents, Sushma overcomes her trials and establishes a sewing school, which provides her with economic independence.

Ramlal is transformed by the quiet determination of Nandini, and realizes how his delinquent acts upset the peace of the community. He becomes a Block Development Officer in Navgaon so that he can contribute to his village. Champa starts an adult night-school, while Sushma's school expands and creates economic opportunities for more women. Jumman is momentarily swayed by urban glamour, contracts AIDS, and disrupts his family's harmony, but he finally accepts his wife's view that life's happiness lies in small things.

Table 1 lists the 33 major educational themes that were identified by our content analysis of "Tinka Tinka Sukh". Consistent with the storyline, the most emphasized educational themes dealt with issues of community harmony and cooperation, gender equality, women's empowerment, small family size, family harmony, the ills of dowry, and youth delinquency. These main themes provided a contextual guideline to identify the various dimensions of efficacy.

Listeners' Letters to All India Radio about "Tinka Tinka Sukh"

Some 150,000 letters were received by AIR in response to "Tinka Tinka Sukh" during its one year of broadcast. Clearly, audience members who wrote letters to "Tinka Tinka Sukh" represent a highly-involved audience group, and are atypical of the total audience. We obtained a sample of approximately 5,000 letters from AIR, from which we randomly selected 260 letters. These 260 letters were then quantitatively and qualitatively content-analyzed (23 had to be discarded due to illegibility). The quantitative analysis was intended to uncover the extent and levels of audience involvement. As Katz, Liebes, & Berko (1992) emphasized, letters as artifacts of audience involvement represent "empirical data on how they (audience individuals) decode what they see and hear; how they help each other to do so; whether and how they weave the

Table 1: Educational Themes Promoted in “Tinka Tinka Sukh”.

Educational Themes	Percentage of Episodes in Which The Theme is Promoted * (N=104)
Community Harmony	
1. Pride in one's community	90%
2. Individuals should help each other in time of need	80%
3. Individuals should learn importance of voluntary service	43%
4. The bad effects of urban migration	19%
5. Importance of adult education	54%
6. Cleanliness in neighborhoods	15%
7. Sustainable agriculture and environmental practices	17%
Status of Women in General in Developing Skills and Capabilities	
8. Women should be empowered so that marriage is not their only option	41%
9. Ways of restoring self-confidence in suppressed women	86%
10. Women should be allowed to receive an education	51%
11. Women should be able to earn their own living	32%
12. Women and men should be allowed equal nutrition	18%
13. Women and men should have equal access to health care	15%
Status of Women – Pre-Marriage	
14. Parents should not be pressured to marry off their daughters	26%
15. Women should be empowered so marriage is not their only option	28%
Status of Women – Post-Marriage (Relation With Husband's Parents)	
16. Negative consequences of dowry	21%
17. Husband's parents should not torture daughter-in-law for dowry	25%
18. Harmonious relations between woman and husband's family	41%
Marriage and Fertility	
19. Harmful effects of early marriage	22%
20. Harmful effects of early pregnancy	17%
21. Divorce is not the only solution to family problems	10%
22. Legal recourse for social evils related to marriage	12%
Family Life/Communication	
23. Both parents have a role in children's' upbringing	65%
24. Importance of spousal communication	71%
25. Parents should talk to their children on important matters	62%
26. Families should eat together	24%
Preferential Treatment for Boys and Men	
27. Boys and girls should be treated equally	50%
28. Sons should be prepared in all spheres and share domestic chores	29%
Family Planning	
29. Disadvantages of a large family	26%
30. Overpopulation leads to depletion of community resources	10%
Substance Abuse	
31. Bad effects of alcohol, tobacco, and drug use	11%
Youth Issues	
32. Reasons for delinquency among the youth	72%
33. The importance of creating positive role models for the youth	71%

* Only those educational themes that were promoted in more than 10 percent of all “Tinka Tinka Sukh” episodes are reported here.

experiences of viewing into their social and political roles; and whether they have categories for criticism, and if so, what are these" (p. 163).

The content-analysis process proceeded in the following manner. First of all, 10 percent of the letters were randomly selected and read to give us a sense of what themes were most prominent in the minds of the listeners. Next, a draft content analysis code sheet was generated from this subset of listeners' letters.

Among the results of our quantitative analysis of the 237 letters, we learned that some 60 percent of the letters were less than 100 words in length, 30 percent were between 100 to 250 words, and 10 percent were over 250 words. Some letters were as long as 16 single-spaced pages; and three letters from Lutsaan village in the state of Uttar Pradesh were poster-sized (21 inches by 24 inches), and signed by 184 members of the village community, including men and women, youth, and elders. Some 90 percent of the 237 letters were written by individuals, and the remaining 10 percent were written by groups and organizations.

The qualitative content analysis of the 237 listeners' letters that we conducted was intended to identify dimensions of efficacy in the narratives of the listeners. In addition to identifying dimensions of efficacy, one of our goals was to examine in what ways the educational themes of the radio drama serial were applied in re-assessing beliefs or initiating change. That is, whereas our quantitative analysis aimed to measure audience involvement, our qualitative study aimed to assess some of the consequences of that involvement.

The first level of analysis for the present study involved developing a framework for evaluating the various efficacy dimensions: (1) belief/behavioral, and (2) individual/collective. The next level of analysis centered around examining the specific factual and linguistic evidences as well as the overall tone of the letters.

Dimensions of Efficacy

Research Question # 1 asked: What specific dimensions of efficacy emerged in the letters that were written by listeners in response to the entertainment-education radio drama serial in India?

It was difficult to categorize the evidence of efficacy effects in the communication of letter-writers into 'cognitive, affective, motivational and behavioral' (Bandura, 1986) dimensions. On more than one occasion, the distinction between self-efficacy and collective efficacy for social

change was blurred along both belief and behavioral levels. Perhaps the source for this indistinction lay in the fact that the letter writers were either/both chronicling what they were perceiving as efficacious dimensions external to themselves and/or describing and articulating the experiential changes they were undergoing as causal agency in their own participation.

Second, the letters' narratives reveal not only cognitive, affective, motivation, and behavioral levels of efficacy but also strength, magnitude and generality facets of efficacy. Strength is the degree to which letter-writers are confident or how certain people are that they can perform a particular behavior. For example, Ashok Singh Bhatoria, a male listener of Antarsuma village in the state of Madhya Pradesh wrote how Tinka Tinka Sukh inspired him and "drove out any self-doubts and anxiety" that he harbored and "gave new meaning and purpose" to his life. Clearly, this individual's sense of efficacy was strengthened in significant ways.

Magnitude is the degree to which a task is simple or difficult. Sangita, a female listener from Samastipur district in the state of Bihar, wrote: "Even if I do not win the listener-letter writer competitions, Tinka Tinka Sukh has taught me to win the battles of life." This comment indicates an overall enhancement of the sense of efficacy for undertaking any task whether simple or difficult.

Generality is the degree to which the sense of mastery is specific or general. Chandra Yadav, a male listener of Maner Khurd village in the state of Uttar Pradesh noted "Our village seems to have moved from darkness to light on the issue of dowry mainly because of what Suraj³ says." In this case, generality of the sense of mastery extended to an entire village!

In almost every letter, the various dimensions (cognitive, affective, motivational, and behavioral) of efficacy effects emerged, either separately as a salient characteristic of efficacious effects or inter-related with other efficacious dimensions. Foremost, the strongest efficacy effects were cognitive and cognitive-affective. One may describe this phenomenon as a kind of consciousness-raising through increased information and emotional stirring. Many letters also describe new plans and goals and new-found self-confidence. Our study of the listeners' letters reveal that motivational effects, such as planning, draw upon beliefs and are also affective in nature. With respect to behavioral effects, the letters indicate behavioral change for both personal as well as collective goals.

³ A pro-social character in the drama.

Self-Efficacy as a Belief and Behavioral Construct

Research Question # 2 asked: In what ways is self-efficacy displayed as belief and as behavior in the letters that were written by the listeners in response to the entertainment-education radio drama serial in India?

Perhaps the most direct observable impact on changes in self-efficacy beliefs are at the cognitive level. An increase in knowledge makes an individual better informed. This fact is easily perceived by the participants themselves, who consequently feel more competent. For instance, Gopal Kumar Rai, a male listener from Bhagalpur village in the state of Bihar, wrote: “Tinka Tinka Sukh has explored family and social issues quite thoroughly. I find every episode informative and highly educative.” Another male listener, Anil Kumar Sahoo from Raisen village in the state of Madhya Pradesh, wrote: “I enjoyed learning about child-marriage and the consequences of young motherhood from the scientific perspective.” Both of the above statements are belief statements of personal competence, effected by enhanced knowledge.

At a general level, “control ideology” (Gurin et al, 1978), or the degree to which one’s judgment of how much control people in general have over their situations, is reflected in the following observations made by a male listener, Bhom Singh Rathore of Khirja Khas village in the state of Rajasthan. He points to the role of the family in mediating an individual’s sense of efficacy:

I was compelled to think about all women who are restrained by their families from pursuing their ambitions - such as Champa was discouraged by her family from auditioning for All India Radio (AIR). Many women are discouraged by family resistances. However, Champa persuades her family and overcomes the obstacles. In my opinion, education is key to women’s progress especially in facilitating and overcoming obstacles.

Bandura (1986) emphasized that “What people think, believe, and feel affects how they behave”. The behavioral dimension of efficacy is manifested in explicit revelations of changes in efficacy such as these personal narratives show. Anupam Ushni, a listener from Bhanulipur village in Hardoi district, wrote: “Champa’s family situation is exactly like mine...I had given up studies but after listening to Tinka Tinka Sukh, I started to study again.” Motivation theories in social psychology tend to emphasize the experience of causal agency and control, which is apparent in the statements of a highly-involved male listener, Birendra Singh Kushwaha of Lutsaan village.

I’ve learned a lot from listening to this radio drama serial. For the past ten years I had lost my way but “Tinka Tinka Sukh” showed a new path of life. In this letter, I am going to share with you what I learned and how “Tinka Tinka Sukh” changed my life.

I quit drug use which had poisoned my life and was ruining me. Often times I would initiate fights and quarrels, sometimes as a way of gambling or as a challenge. Also, I would gossip and carry tales, and add my own two pennies to everything. All that has been changed by “Tinka Tinka Sukh” as I now promise not to be mean-spirited.

I was quite a delinquent, aimless and a bully. Particularly I would harass the girls. I was sent to prison for five years. I came home unreformed. After listening (to the radio), my life underwent a change. That day onward I stopped stealing. I went and bought myself a radio and started to listen regularly.

Once I started listening (to “Tinka Tinka Sukh”), all my other drawbacks and negative values were transformed. I saw myself, in fact many of my antisocial ways, reflected in Ramlal (one of the main characters in “Tinka Tinka Sukh”) who is also reformed.

This narrative of personal change embodies an enhanced sense of efficacy that is evoked at multiple levels. Overlapping efficacy effects in the cognitive, affective, and motivational realms are further exemplified in these comments by a female listener, Firdaus Salfi of Mathura in the state of Uttar Pradesh:

Nandini has inspired me with her firm determination and courage to deal with life’s struggles. Champa has shown how to persist in fulfilling one’s wish and individuality. Suraj showed how it is necessary to fight superstition sometimes...Having listened to 94 episodes has encouraged me and given me directions by opening up new perspectives so much that now I have become more self-assured.

Given the tone and choice of words used above by Salfi, -- 'inspired', encouraged', 'self-assured' -- one can perceive the sense of efficacy most strongly on the affective level. The comments of listener Ashok Singh Bhatia of Antarsuma village in the state of Madhya Pradesh demonstrate the ultimate level in self-efficacy leading to collective efficacy through cognitive, behavioral, affective, and social pathways of belief and action.

I particularly remember Jumman's remark to Suraj who expressed his concern that often times he is misunderstood for trying to do good for his community: 'Is it possible to climb mountains and reach the top without soiling your shoes?' This idea has inspired me and given me new strength....In the 58th episode, Nandini advises Ramlal how the village needs a Ram⁴ who would make the village proud. Simply, one can do something useful for the community in a small individual way for example by planting a tree that could provide shade for any traveler. Do something that will bring good name to your family and community. These words inspired me and drove out any self-doubts and anxiety I harbored and gave new meaning and purpose to my life.

The most direct observable impact on changes in self-efficacy beliefs are at the cognitive level by way of new knowledge. Most of the 237 letters expressed how they had learned new information on family and social issues such as the importance of education and being a good citizen. Many wrote to say that the radio program had caused them to think and see personal issues differently. As the examples demonstrated earlier, changes in self-efficacy beliefs with regard to motivational, affective, and behavioral aspects also emerged.

Collective-Efficacy as a Belief and Behavioral Construct

Research Question # 3 asked: In what ways is collective efficacy expressed as belief and as behavior in the letters written by the listeners in response to the entertainment-education radio drama serial in India?

Collective efficacy, like individual self-efficacy, has several dimensions. While its cognitive and motivational dimensions can be easily perceived intellectually and behaviorally, it is the sub-conscious, socialized and cultural characteristics that beg definition and demonstration. The following excerpts characterize our definition that collective efficacy is both a belief as well

⁴Ram is the legendary king of Ayodhya who was reputed to be a good king for his service and dedication to his subjects.

as an organized activity. The latter position, indicating the unified effort produced by rational organizing of collective effort towards some deliberate goal, is the general view of collective efficacy. We advocate that collective efficacy beliefs may be also said to characterize nameless altruistic acts at the individual level. As a belief system, collective efficacy in certain cultures precedes any rational organizing for group goals. Communicatively, this holds significance for development organizers for they can make their entree in a society that has attained a certain threshold in group orientation.

The following accounts reveal some of the ways the radio program stimulated collective efficacy to deal with social issues such as dowry practice. There is a clear indication of change both in outlook as well as behavior in this letter describing how certain people who *contemplated* taking dowry eventually changed their minds. Social traditions such as wedding rituals, because they are well-entrenched in value systems, are difficult to change unless there is a group orientation to change. In this case, the radio drama serial provided the impetus, acknowledges a writer-listener, Chandra Bhaan Yadav of Maner Khurd village in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

There were 2-3 weddings in our village recently, but those who contemplated taking dowry were so influenced by Tinka Tinka Sukh that they did not even raise the issue. Even my elder brother's wedding took place without any dowry. Our village seems to have moved from darkness to light on the issue of dowry mainly because of what Suraj says.

That the flipside of collective efficacy could also be negative in its impact in certain situations is borne out by this letter writer and listener, Sangita of Lohagir village in the state of Bihar.

Poonam⁵ was driven to commit suicide not by her husband alone. He was assisted by his mother and so a woman is equally responsible for her death. In fact the shocking part is that a woman encouraged the wrongful mistreatment of another woman...What is necessary today is for every woman to vow that they will not tolerate mistreatment and also that they will not mistreat others nor would they silently witness wrong deeds of mistreatment. Ultimately such an attitude would compel men to treat women with respect.

Our argument for a cultural perspective on collective efficacy is especially evinced in these narratives. Listener Sayed Sayeed Hussain of Darbhanga district described that:

⁵ Poonam, a female character, is violently abused by her husband and his parents for not bringing adequate dowry.

Listening to Tinka Tinka Sukh gives me a sense of satisfaction and inspiration. I am a student but I schedule my studies such that I can listen to every episode of Tinka Tinka Sukh and can also share this inspiration with other people of my community. For this social work, I arranged for a loudspeaker so that Tinka Tinka Sukh can be broadcast to a larger audience. And my community members are very thankful to me for this service. Inspired by Tinka Tinka Sukh, many people vowed not to take drugs and similar intoxicating substances; many people also vowed not to take or give dowry in marriage.

Not only has the radio program impacted the individual listener's sense of self-efficacy, they are also nudged to actuate pro-social behavior at the group or community level by individual initiatives. Kanhaiya Tripathi of Maheshpur in the state of Uttar Pradesh wrote: "I have been listening to every episode of Tinka Tinka Sukh. And each and every episode has inspired us to do some good deed. And truly we have tried to do some good deed after every episode; and have been successful in some of those attempts...Illiteracy is truly debilitating. Every parent should try to ensure that their children receive some education that is more than the mere 3R-s." The listener-writer then outlined a group pledge (for a festival) whose content can only result from self-reflection and social concern. Deepawali, or the Festival of Lights, is a big occasion in north India. It is significant fact that the festivities inspired and motivated these community thoughts in this listener.

Friends, let us vow on this auspicious occasion to celebrate with respect to others and law and order for the benefit of all. The fireworks we set up must be handled carefully. Equally, we must be careful about substance-abuse, the practice of dowry, child-labor, oppression of women, family planning, youth delinquency, casteism and fundamentalism. It is our duty to be aware of these social issues and to try to individually fight them. We owe this to our country. Then only can we experience life's little joys and pleasures.

Not only have individual listeners recorded for us some significant details of how the audience mindset was affected as a group, the next few accounts take the change one step further. They record pledge ceremonies organized as a public ritual to change old rules and behavior or to adopt new ones. The same listener Kanhaiya Tripathi of Maheshpur, writes:

A meeting of women representatives from three leading associations in our district was organized at the local women's college to celebrate Human Rights Day and inspired by Tinka Tinka Sukh especially Episodes 83-85. Mrs. Prema Tripathi (Chief of Women's Problem Operation Club, one of the invitees) advised that each and every woman would have to vow to awaken self-confidence, self-esteem, and other beliefs in self-efficacy so

that once again Durga⁶ and Sita⁷ will emerge amongst women and we can solve not only our problems but also problems facing our society and country.

A copy of the above pledge letter, which was countersigned by 10 attendees, was attached to the letter. In addition to cognitive and motivational enhancement at the level of collective efficacy, some listeners acted upon their renewed sense of confidence. From Birpur village in the state of Bihar, Sukumar Sahni wrote:

I am a regular listener of “Tinka Tinka Sukh” and find it extremely educative, entertaining and informative. In fact, it is like a new life-guide for youth like me - for which I am very grateful. Inspired by “Tinka Tinka Sukh”, we have established a youth self-help association with the sole purpose of tackling and eradicate social evils. Superstition and dowry are some of the problems we aim to tackle. We have also started to educate all children in our village about these social evils. In fact, “Tinka Tinka Sukh” has awakened a lot of people and provoked them to rethink their attitudes.

These benchmark events of collective efficacy, a consequence of the radio program, are reported not from one state or district but from different villages in different states. They are voluntary efforts and initiated by private citizens, some of whom are very ordinary people such as a village tailor.

Conclusions

The purpose of the present study was to tap the efficacious dimensions in the communication behavior of letter-writers to an entertainment-education radio drama serial. Each letter we analyzed was a highly personalized narrative that reflected the ways in which the radio drama influenced the listener’s efficacy at an individual as well collective level, and at the belief and behavioral levels. There is evidence in these letters of the cognitive rehearsal and application of the educational issues promoted by the radio drama.

The letters written by listeners represent private unbiased research journals. In addition to rich information on themselves and their reaction to the radio drama as it unfolded, the personal accounts relate small details of the impact that would otherwise have been impossible to know. Many of the narratives bring new insights to our knowledge of efficacy as it is enacted and

⁶ A mother goddess, consort of Shiva; they are among deities widely worshipped by followers of the Hindu religion.

attained communicatively. A number of them reinforce what is generally known about self-efficacy and collective efficacy. What is less known is how the two might be interrelated. This approach of understanding efficacy effects through letters was novel in certain ways. It raised for us personally many questions about efficacy, only some of which were answered in the letters themselves.

The letters examined for this paper were written by a highly involved set of individuals and do not represent the characteristics of the general audience for Tinka Tinka Sukh. We are aware of this respondent bias; but in the absence of any reliable apparatus to assess the communicative dimensions of efficacy, these reports of the letter writers are still significant for many reasons. They are informally written and the writers are not aware of a grand research design or motive. For this paper, in our view, these listeners served as historians-at-large.

Most studies on self-efficacy are quantitative, quasi-experimental, and conducted post-facto or using hypothetical indices. Personal accounts in the form of letters, written by the consumers themselves (actual listeners/audience individuals), we argue represent an alternative and highly insightful approach to studying efficacy effects stimulated by a mass media program - as our analysis has shown.

⁷ Wife of King Rama and widely considered to be a model of Indian womanhood.

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