

## Cultural Shifts and Policy: How Government Actions Shape Social Behavior

Nguyen Minh Trang<sup>1</sup> | Pham Nhat Minh<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam

<sup>2</sup>Marie Curie Hanoi School

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### Abstract:

Shaping social behavior through public policy is a basic yet complex process, necessitating a delicate balance between government intervention, societal norms, and individual rights. Policies are created to address a wide array of social issues, such as public health and safety, economic inequality, and environmental sustainability, in an attempt to influence societal behavior for the greater good. However, most of those policies are usually opposed by resistance to change, unintended consequences, and difficulties in enforcement. This paper examines some of the main challenges to the use of policy in designing social behavior: cultural resistance, policy misalignment with social realities, ethical concerns, and political opposition. In addition, it considers the need to consider long-term impacts on society, ensure resource allocation, and adapt policies to evolving needs. This paper reviews challenges in depth and consequently underlines the complexity of using policy to achieve behavior change; it underscores the need for thoughtful design, public engagement, and ongoing adaptation in the quest for successful outcomes from social policy.

**Keywords:** Policy, Government Actions, Social Behavior

### 1. Introduction

The 20<sup>th</sup> century has witnessed the rapid growth of the globalization, which also promote cultural shift. The development of globalization is also demanding changes in the way the community point of view of the importance of original value culture allowed for settlement (Kafaa, K. A, 2018). The popping up of cities, and the development of more organized social systems that further developed into shaping art, religion, laws, and customs. Globalization has changed the world so that values and traditions from other cultures are exchanged and incorporated. This has presented both challenges and opportunities regarding the

molding of societal expectations. For instance, in multicultural societies, common values might exist amidst diverse traditions, creating more inclusive expectations and sometimes friction between the norms that conflict. With increased global communication and travel, some values, like human rights, environmental sustainability, and democracy, have become accepted globally. Shared global values shape national and local norms and help people across the world have similar expectations for society (Shokef, E., & Erez, M., 2006). The spread of human beings to different parts of the world brought about all this

diversity in culture that uniquely resulted in different languages, traditions, and practices. Culture just keeps on changing over time, based on things like the environment, tech improvements, and how we mix with other cultures.

Cultural shifts are those big changes in what people value, believe, do, and how they act in society (Varnum, M. E., & Grossmann, I., 2017). These may come in the form of changed gender roles, family structures, political ideologies, use of technology, and our attitudes toward things like race, equality, and environmental conservation. Cultural changes sometimes take time to develop, but at times they can be prompted by major events, movements, or crises: technological changes, social movements, or political revolutions. The change in the shared beliefs, values, customs, behavior, and social ways of a society or group may be termed as a cultural shift, which happens along a timeline. These often occur as a result of changes due to technological change, social movements, political change, economic transition, or even contact with other cultures. Cultural changes can affect the way people interact with each other, the way communities' function, and the way institutions in society, such as education, family, and government function (Inglehart, R., 2020). For example, the invention of social media has made a cultural shift in communications: the way people relate and the way information is relayed. Similarly, the Civil Rights Movement of the 20th century created a cultural shift in the perspective of people regarding issues dealing with race, equality, and justice. These changes in culture may be gradual or come about with the help of a single traumatic event. In this light, cultural changes may sometimes be unifying or divisive forces in society depending on the situation and magnitude of change.

Public policy plays a very significant role in how people act and how they relate to one another and the rules of society. It consists of patterns of actions taken over time by the Government (Smith, K. B., & Larimer, C., 2018). The government puts these policies in place to address all sorts of social issues: public health, education, taking care of the

environment, and economic inequalities. Policymakers use laws, rules, and public programs in an attempt to guide behavior, encourage positive changes in society, and create a setting that allows all individuals to thrive. Policy instruments offer concrete opportunities for governments to stimulate behavior change (Lars Tummors, 2019). However, trying to change how people act with policies isn't easy, and it comes with its own set of problems. While such policies are intended to lead to certain behaviors—such as reduction in smoking, making workplaces safer, or getting people to be more environmentally friendly—they often run into resistance from individuals, groups, or even entire industries. Furthermore, the unanticipated policy consequences, along with the cultural diversity in norms, values, and beliefs of a society, can work to defeat the realization of the intended consequences.

Social behavior describes the actions, interactions, and conduct of people within a society or group, conforming to social norms, values, and expectations (Bicchieri, C., Muldoon, R., & Sontuoso, A., 2011). It involves how people interact with others, how they develop relationships, and how they follow societal roles and rules. Social behavior may be determined by a number of different factors, including cultural norms, socialization, group dynamics, and individual psychology. Social behavior involves a very wide range of activities; examples include communication, cooperation, competition, conflict, altruism, and aggression. It can be individual actions, such as a person helping a stranger or group interactions, such as teamwork, group decision-making, or public demonstrations. Social behavior is not only guided by personal motivations and desires but more often regulated by societal expectations, legal systems, and cultural customs. As societies are more globalized, individuals from different cultures may come together and influence each other's norms. This can be in the form of hybrid cultural practices or the adaptation of new behaviors that merge several cultural influences, which is the continuing evolution of social behavior. It is obvious that social behavior is under great influence by cultural

shift and public policy. Governments play a significant role in shaping social behavior through various mechanisms, including legislation, regulation, and public programs (Kettl, D. F., 2000). These tools are used to promote social order, protect public welfare, and encourage specific behaviors that align with national or community goals.

## 2. Main content

### 2.1. Legislation

Laws, in particular, are enactments of the legislature, parliament, or congress that delineate the mode of behavior through the establishment of rights, duties, and frames of governance (Vermeule, A., 2004). Laws influence social behavior directly and formally by way of imposing positive duties, prohibitions against certain conduct, or even the protection of individual rights. It establishes what people accept and consider as standards of behavior or conduct. For instance, civil rights laws allow for equal treatment, whereas criminal laws prohibit stealing, violence, or fraud. Some significant laws like the Civil Rights Act of 1964 or the Marriage Equality Act in many countries have completely redefined societal norms about race, gender, and relationships. The laws can enforce fairness, also protect the vulnerable groups so that expectations in society coincide with the values of justice and equality.

Anti-smoking legislation, like the banning of smoking in public places, is the result of laws enacted to reduce health risks and change social attitudes toward smoking. Anti-smoking laws are legislative measures that are intended to reduce the prevalence of smoking and protect public health through control of tobacco use. Over the years, anti-smoking laws have undergone many changes to meet growing concerns about health risks due to smoking, the effects of second-hand smoke, and the economic consequences of tobacco-related diseases. In general, the analysis of anti-smoking laws can be done based on their objectives, impact, effectiveness, and challenges. Anti-smoking laws have several major goals such as public health protection; Reduction in exposure to secondhand

smoke; Discouraging the initiation of smoking and promoting smoking cessation. Some of the most important purposes are the reduction in the rates of smoking to avoid tobacco-related diseases such as lung cancer, heart diseases, and other respiratory diseases. These are designed to safeguard both smokers and non-smokers against the hazardous outcomes of tobacco. Anti-smoking policies can protect nonsmokers, through decreasing involuntary exposure to smoke resulting in a series of disorders among children, pregnant women, and people suffering from any previous health complications. Anti-smoking laws target smoking at younger ages and regulate tobacco advertising with the hope of preventing future generations from taking up the habit, especially through marketing restrictions. Some laws are paired with public health campaigns and programs that offer resources and support to help individuals quit smoking.

There are various facets to anti-smoking regulations, but the following are some of the most important ones:

**Public place smoking bans:** Several countries and states have banned smoking in public enclosed areas, restaurants, bars, public transportation, and places of employment. The rule aims to reduce passive smoking exposure, but it is also intended to make smoking inconvenient enough to persuade smokers to quit.

**Bans on Advertising Tobacco Products:** Many of the antismoking laws ban advertisements for tobacco products from appearing in media to which young people may be exposed, including the internet, print media, and television. The restrictions on the allure of smoking reduce the possibility of young people starting smoking.

**Tobacco Product Packaging Regulations:** Most countries require health warnings and graphics depicting the health effects of smoking to appear on cigarette packaging. These warnings are intended to raise awareness of the hazardous nature of smoking in an attempt to discourage potential smokers.

**Taxation and Pricing:** Most governments have increased the price of tobacco through tobacco taxes, making cigarettes an unaffordable commodity for the majority of young people and the population with low incomes. Indeed, the evidence indicates that increasing the tax reduces smoking, particularly in those populations who are most sensitive to the price.

**Programs on the Dangers of Smoking and Smoking Cessation:** Laws can make sure smoking cessation programs and resources, such as Quitline, counseling services, and nicotine replacement therapies, are made available to the public.

The effectiveness of anti-smoking laws depends on the comprehensiveness of the laws and their implementation strategies. Successful enforcement of smoking bans and restrictions is the key to anti-smoking initiatives. Restrictions may not be as effective in places with lax enforcement because smokers may not follow them. For instance, smoking in public areas may persist if penalties are not appropriately implemented. Anti-Smoking policies are even more effective if they incorporate public health awareness. It is possible to change people's attitudes and behaviors if media campaigns highlight the health risks of smoking, hence increasing the potential for more people to observe the law. In the U.S, about half of adult smoke in the 1940s and the rates began to decline in the 1960s. Recently, in 2016, the smoking rate decreased to 15.5% and about 12.5% in 2020 and 2021 (Jen Christensen, 2023). In Vietnam, after 10 years of anti-smoking law enforcement, the number of smokers decreased from 54% to 39% (Duong Lieu, 2023). Anti-smoking legislation has been an effective tool to reduce smoking, improve public health, and alter social norms. Such laws have reduced tobacco consumption and protected non-smokers from second-hand smoke through public smoking bans, advertising restrictions, increased taxes, and support programs for cessation. Anti-smoking legislation continues to be an essential part of public health policy that aims to lessen the burden of smoking-related diseases, despite obstacles like opposition from the tobacco industry and the introduction of new products like

e-cigarettes. Future public perceptions of smoking will be significantly influenced by their continued development and implementation.

## **2.2. Regulation:**

Regulation means the rules made by the governmental agencies to regulate individual and institutional behavior, including businesses (Gunningham, N., & Rees, J., 1997). These are usually more specific than legislation and carry detailed instructions on how laws shall be applied. Regulations ensure that the laws are translated into practice. For instance, regulations in the environmental field relate to the limits of emissions and waste management, impacting corporate behavior as well as the actions of individuals. Bodies charged with regulation make sure that standards are implemented in various industries, including healthcare, finance, and food safety. The FDA (Food and Drug Administration), for example, enforces food safety standards to safeguard the health of the public. Regulations also influence behavior through the availability of incentives or the imposition of sanctions. For instance, tax regulations that reward green energy use or penalize carbon emission encourage environmentally responsible practices. One of the most popular regulations applied in all countries around the world is Workplace safety regulations.

Workplace safety regulations, such as those set by OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration), affect employer behavior by guaranteeing safe working conditions. Workplace safety regulations refer to the various legal guidelines and standards established by governments and regulatory agencies aimed at protecting employees from possible hazards and risks in the workplace. The purpose of these regulations is to make sure that employers provide a safe and healthy working environment for their employees, thereby minimizing the risk of accidents, injuries, and long-term health issues. Workplace safety laws and regulations stretch from construction and manufacturing to healthcare and office environments. Regulations pertaining to workplace safety have multiple purposes in order to safeguard both employers and employees. The

main goal of workplace safety rules is to prevent accidents, injuries, and fatalities. By establishing criteria for safe procedures, regulations help to reduce the number of mishaps that occur at work. These regulations also address safeguarding employees against occupational illnesses such as exposure to hazardous chemicals, repetitive strain injuries, and respiratory issues. Establishing a healthy workplace is just as crucial as preventing physical mishaps. Some regulations address psychological safety, including measures against workplace harassment, stress management, and creating environments that promote mental well-being. Work safety legislation sets the legal limits within which organizations must operate. The regulations make it binding on employers to ensure occupational safety, with sanctions attached to non-compliance.

Workplace safety regulations have had a profound impact on both employees and businesses. regulations have tended to reduce the number of workplace injuries and fatalities. In the United States alone, since OSHA was created in 1970, workplace deaths and accidents have fallen dramatically. In the U.S, there were approximately 14,000 workplace fatalities and 2.5 million injuries in 1970 and these numbers had dropped significantly, with 5,486 fatal work injuries and injury rates falling from 10.9 incidents per 100,000 workers in 1972 to 2.7 in 2022 (Daxgarzalaw, 2024). With regulations removing workplace hazards, they maintain the health of the workers by reducing their absences from work due to such accidents or other illnesses. Healthy employees are more productive; a safe working condition complements overall job satisfaction.

### 2.3. Public Initiatives:

Public programs are often those created by the government with the goal of resolving social issues and promoting particular social behaviors. In order to change behaviors on a large scale, these initiatives primarily offer information, resources, and support. Public programs, such as unemployment insurance, food assistance, or public housing, redress economic disparities and reduce social inequality. These programs influence

individual behavior by providing support in times of need and encouraging compliance with social norms, such as employment or family care. Such government programs may include campaigns on public health, such as anti-drug, anti-smoking, or vaccination drives, for the promotion of healthier life. Such initiatives usually rest on changing attitudes and behaviors to achieve betterment in public health. There are public programs that utilize incentives, tax breaks, perhaps for those who use renewable energy technologies or financial subsidies for education. They make an intervention at a social norm end by providing incentives to perform certain positive behaviors.

The ACA (Affordable Care Act), or "Obamacare," is one of the most ambitious public programs undertaken in the United States to reshape access to healthcare and to influence social behavior. This 2010 law was designed to reform the US healthcare system by making healthcare more affordable and accessible, reducing disparities in health coverage, and dealing with the rising costs of healthcare. It represents an especially powerful example of the ways in which public programs can shape social behavior in health care decisions, economic behaviors, and broader social outcomes. Before the ACA took effect, millions of Americans lacked health insurance or had inadequate insurance. This set the basis for large disparities in health and economic burdens. The core purpose of the ACA was, among other things, to shrink the population of uninsured American citizens through Medicaid expansion eligibility and state-based health exchanges where individuals and families would buy affordable health plans at a lower cost. The ACA aimed at decreasing general healthcare spending, out-of-pocket costs for individuals included. It sought to control the cost of health insurance premiums, eliminate lifetime and annual limits on coverage, and make healthcare more affordable for low- and middle-income Americans. The ACA tried to improve the quality of healthcare by incentivizing value-based care, improving preventative care, and reducing unnecessary hospital readmissions. The initiative barred private insurers from denying people for reasons of pre-existing illness and required that all U.S. citizens

have a minimum health coverage, under the threat of tax penalty—a provision later repealed in 2017. Also included was a list of what all insurance plans now are required to cover as minimal, called essential health benefits. The ACA introduced several major components that have had a direct influence on social behavior, especially concerning health insurance coverage and healthcare-seeking behaviors.

The ACA created online marketplaces where individuals and families could purchase health insurance. There were subsidies provided for people whose earnings are between 100% to 400% of the federal poverty level. It expanded the eligibility criteria to a greater number of low-income adults, thus increasing those that qualified for public health care programs. Medicaid could have been expanded at their own discretion by each individual state, and most did while others opted out. In order to encourage people to obtain health insurance, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) originally mandated that the majority of Americans either have health insurance or pay a tax penalty. By guaranteeing a bigger, healthier risk pool, this clause sought to stabilize the insurance market and raise the number of insured people. The ACA initially obligated large employers (50+ full-time employees) to provide health insurance coverage for their employees or suffer through penalties. This action aimed to ensure that staff members of large businesses benefited from access to affordable care. Under the ACA, most health insurance plans are required to cover certain preventive services at no cost-sharing, including screenings, vaccinations, and well visits. This would also shift the focus to preventing rather than treating the condition and would improve health outcomes overall.

The ACA's implementation had significant effects on both individual behavior and broader social outcomes. The number of Americans with health insurance increased dramatically as a result of the ACA. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that the percentage of people without insurance decreased from 16% in 2010 to approximately 8.6% in 2016 and reached an all-time low of 7.7 percent in early

2023 (HHS, 2023). In particular, Medicaid expansion was crucial in helping low-income people get more coverage. As more people gained access to health insurance, there was an increase in preventive care and health screenings. People who previously could not afford healthcare began seeking regular medical care, resulting in improved health outcomes for many, particularly in underserved communities. Medicaid expansion and subsidized health insurance plans meant that people were less likely to face catastrophic medical costs. This lowered the financial burden for many families and helped them avoid medical bankruptcies—a major problem before the ACA. The Affordable Care Act has paved the way for a broader national culture change that views health care as a right rather than a privilege. More people are talking about health fairness, the need for mental health treatment, and the need for more healthcare system reforms as a result of easier access to healthcare. Medicaid expansion provided coverage to millions of low-income adults, improving health equity. The Affordable Care Act offers a powerful example of how public programs can influence social behavior and shape social outcomes—through expanded access, insurance market regulation, and prevention incentives—the ACA has improved the health of millions of Americans. In reality, actual outcomes have been mixed from political opposition, unaffordability by some, and unequal implementation of Medicaid expansion across states. Generally, the ACA underlines how public programs can change social behaviors, especially those dealing with access to health, financial security, and social equity.

Public education programs feature in most countries due to the fact that they offer free primary, secondary, and sometimes post-secondary education to children and adults, with major implications for individuals and society. In most countries, publicly supported education is usually financed through government taxes, ensuring that all children from families of any socioeconomic status have the opportunity to receive basic education. They represent a cornerstone in social policy in many countries, with their purpose being to foster social mobility, reduce inequality, and

improve the general welfare of societies. Public education is dedicated to providing all students, regardless of family income, race, or location, with free and equal access to school. The idea that education is a basic human right is based on this. Programs of public education work toward building essential cognitive and social skills in students, such as reading, writing, critical thinking, and solving problems, for personal growth and to enable their engagement in a knowledge-based economy. Public education systems are essential for fostering students' civic ideals, social behavior, and cultural awareness in addition to academic learning. In order to become informed, active citizens, students study democracy, accountability, and social ethics at school. Public education strives to reduce social inequalities through public-spirited endeavors. As it is free of charge, these initiatives in providing free education tend to accord all children equal opportunities so as to break the poverty culture. Education is one of the drivers of economic growth. It means a more productive workforce, and it enhances innovation and competitiveness at the global level. Public education programs are vital for preparing the next generation of workers, entrepreneurs, and leaders.

Public education programs provide an avenue for children from lower-income families to rise above their socio-economic status (Mitra, D., 2011). By offering free access to quality education, these programs help level the playing field for students who might otherwise be left behind due to financial barriers. As more children receive an education, the social norms surrounding wealth and class begin to change. An increase in education levels, particularly in underserved communities, helps break down the perception that a person's socioeconomic status defines their potential. Education has a long-term effect on reducing inequality by creating opportunities for upward mobility. It reduces the wealth gap by equipping individuals with the skills necessary to compete in higher-paying job markets. Public education programs have been linked to better health outcomes. Educated individuals tend to have healthier lifestyles, higher life expectancy, and reduced rates of chronic diseases. Moreover,

education programs often include health and nutrition lessons, encouraging healthier behavior from a young age. Public education programs encourage and build democratic values by teaching children about government, the law, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Educated citizens are also more likely to vote, work in their communities, and participate in civic issues. A properly planned public education program educates students about their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society, thus helping them to be better electorate and active participants in the civic way of life. Public education helps merge fragmented societies through its teachings of tolerance, respect, and harmony among fellowmen. The school curricula allow students to work together with diversified backgrounds that help them adjust. In Vietnam, the literacy rate of people aged 15-60 in Vietnam reached 98.85% at level 1 and 97.29% at level 2 in 2023 thanks to public education programs (Ngoc Ha, 2023).

A well-educated workforce is one of the most important factors contributing to economic growth (Berger, N., & Fisher, P., 2013). Public education programs provide the foundation for students to acquire the skills necessary to succeed in the workforce and contribute to the economy. The countries that have a good public education system enjoy a high level of employment. Once the availability of education becomes well within reach, the majority will strive to pursue further and even vocational training; thus, making other more rewarding job opportunities available. Educated employees are typically more inventive, creative, and able to adjust to technological advancements. Thus, by guaranteeing that the workforce possesses the skills required in a changing job market, public education programs contribute to the creation of a more competitive economy. Education has a very long-lasting effect on the behavior of society, as it molds the way people interact with each other and make decisions. Public education systems expose students to a variety of cultures, beliefs, and ideas, fostering open-mindedness and tolerance. As students grow up in diverse, inclusive environments, they are more likely to adopt these

values in their adult lives. There is a strong correlation between education levels and crime rates (Lochner, L., 2020). Higher levels of education are linked to lower levels of violent crime and incarceration. By offering education, public programs help reduce the social costs of crime and improve safety in communities. Public education is fundamental in influencing social behavior and further contributes to improved outcomes within the social spectrum. It will give people the tools of economic, social, and political success while furthering greater general interests such as equality, health, and democratic participation. Public education tends to have a net positive impact on citizens' lives and the broader society. That is despite lingering concerns regarding unfair allocation of resources, piling pressure of standardized tests among students. In reality, universal education has invaluable, potential long-term benefits on intelligent, healthy, and more equitable society.

These three mechanisms of Legislation, Regulation, and Public Programs often act together to support changes in society (Gunningham, N., 2009). Laws establish the bounds of the law by outlining what is permissible under the law. Regulations ensure the proper application of laws and the maintenance of conformity. Public programs offer direct assistance or rewards that encourage conduct in line with societal and political objectives. All these mechanisms put together have contributed to shaping the behavior of individuals through ensuring access to healthcare, maintaining healthy behavior, and regulating health practices that contribute to preventing disease. Through laws, rules, and public initiatives, governments provide a regulated environment to help develop cultural norms and influence the behavior of both individuals and businesses. Governments create laws, enforce norms, and provide resources to help guide social behaviors in ways that align with the objectives and values of the broader population. The advancement of social well-being, economic stability, and cultural growth all depend on these kinds of activities.

#### **2.4. Challenges in shaping social behavior through policy:**

Public policy is a powerful tool for shaping social behavior, influencing how individuals and groups act within society. Policies can change societal norms, encourage positive behavior, and address various social issues. However, implementing policies to change social behavior presents numerous challenges. These challenges arise from various factors, including resistance from individuals and groups, unintended consequences, and the complexity of human behavior. Below are some key challenges in shaping social behavior through policy.

One of the biggest challenges to setting social behavior by policy and practice is people's resistance to change (Eagly, A. H., & Kulesa, P., 1997). Beliefs, traditions, habits, and all those things that usually mold the behavior of an individual or a community cannot easily be changed by outside interventions, even if commanded by the government. Plans and policies run opposed to the long-held cultural norms resist strongly. For instance, anti-smoking laws or campaigns against gender discrimination may oppose those that view these actions as threats to lifestyle, culture, or personal freedom. Those policies involving financial sacrifice through taxation, increased pricing, including carbon tax and sugar drink taxes are resisted from businesses or people because it is not economically beneficial according to them. Political ideology can also impact policy reception. Social policies seen to run against the values of certain political parties or their constituencies may be resisted and hard to implement.

Another challenge is that public policy sometimes produces results that were unintended or unexpected (Roots, R. I., 2004). Even worse, policies can sometimes make the problems they are intended to solve worse. These come because human behavior is not easily changed or predicted and because policies operate within a vast social, economic, and cultural system. Policies that are supposed to benefit society as a whole may actually favor certain groups at the expense of others. For



example, reforms in education aimed at increasing literacy for all may actually increase the gap between rich and poor students if the latter do not have access to the resources they need to succeed, such as technology or support. Sometimes policy leads to behaviors that are contrary to those the policy intended, a kind of behavioral backlash. For instance, programs aimed at cutting car emissions by increasing fuel taxes might spur some to use less-efficient kinds of transport-like worse-emission older cars-to save money or cut usage of now costlier public transportation.

Even when policies are well-designed, their enforcement is usually the big challenge. With lack of mechanisms for enforcement not being strongly imbued nor cooperation by the public, policies fail to succeed in their desired outcomes. There are cases where people or groups simply refuse to adhere to the new policies, especially if they are not realizing some immediate benefits. For example, the ban on smoking in public places may face resistance, especially in regions where smoking is deeply embedded in the culture. The laws and regulations that are not consistently enforced lead to violations. For example, even though there are laws against workplace discrimination, if they are not well enforced, the practice will still continue.

Policies can be designed based on idealized models of behavior that do not conform to the realities of people's lives (Yee, A. S., 1996). For a policy to effectively shape social behavior, it has to be realistic and feasible within the social, economic, and cultural context in which it is implemented. Policymakers have not taken proper cognizance of the needs or priorities of those for whom the policies are designed and implemented. Public health education campaigns may be designed on the premise that everyone has equal access to resources in health matters or that specific lifestyle changes can be affected. This would mean neglecting the barriers marginalized groups face regarding access to healthcare-for example, low-income families. Without adequate funding, infrastructure, and education to support policies, their failure may be imminent. For instance, policies on health matters would not be effective in

a case where there is an increase in demand for services but the personnel or hospitals are few.

Policies that try to alter social behavior often have to strike a balance between short-term gains and long-term objectives (Jacobs, A. M., 2011). Social change is usually gradual, and policies attempting to achieve immediate results may fall short of producing lasting or sustainable effects. Behavioral changes in social habits that are well entrenched, such as smoking, eating, or deeply ingrained gender roles, take a long time. A short-term focus in policy may be self-defeating in the long term. For instance, if obesity rates are to be reduced by regulation of food products by a government, the results may be temporary since cultural shifts in attitudes toward health and well-being must occur if there is going to be a permanent effect. Constant investment in community involvement, support networks, and education is necessary for long-term behavior change. For example, smoking bans and anti-smoking initiatives may appear to be quite effective in the short term, but maintaining a culture of non-smoking takes time and effort.

Shaping social behavior through policy raises ethical issues, mainly when government intervention has been regarded as an infringement on private freedoms or personal autonomy (Sunstein, C. R., 2016). Policies for behavioral change might be seen as paternalistic or authoritarian; therefore, these face resistance. Policies that try to control personal habits (such eating, drinking, or having sex) frequently cause concerns about the rights of the individual. Governments find it challenging to strike a balance between upholding individual liberties and safeguarding the public's health. Behavioral change policies, with attempts to affect change on seemingly cultural or moral matters, can be seen by opponents as a form of "social engineering." Policy opponents cite the promotion of particular forms of family composition-say, policies intended to help reduce single-parent families with incentives or disincentives-as being contrary to pluralism.

In increasingly polarized political climates, policies aimed at changing social behavior can become subjects of intense debate, leading to

gridlock and delays in implementation. Social policies might be politically polarized and serve as a source of ideological disagreement between the opposing parties. For example, political decisions regarding environmental regulations, healthcare reform, or welfare benefits often lead to heated clashes between opposing views, making it very hard to reach a concrete conclusion. Politicians may not pursue policies in which they believe because of the volatility of public opinion, fearing to lose votes. This is particularly true when the proposed policies are either economically adverse or unpopular. Such is the case with major industries like beverage companies, which can be opposed to legislation to tax sugary drinks or ban certain chemicals.

### 3. Conclusion:

Shaping social behavior through public policy is a complex and multifaceted process that requires careful consideration of numerous factors. While policies have the potential to significantly influence societal norms and individual behaviors, they often face substantial challenges, such as resistance to change, unintended consequences, enforcement issues, and the complexities of human behavior. Policies that aim to change social behavior must navigate cultural, economic, and political realities, as well as address ethical concerns about individual autonomy and personal freedoms. Moreover, policies often need to balance short-term gains with long-term objectives, as meaningful and lasting social change typically occurs over time. The success of such policies also depends on their alignment with the lived experiences and needs of the populations they aim to serve. A critical aspect of policy effectiveness is the ability to adapt to new information, evolving societal dynamics, and unexpected challenges. Despite these challenges, public policies can create significant positive changes in behavior and contribute to broader societal goals, such as public health, economic development, and social justice. The key to success lies in thoughtful design, inclusive implementation, and ongoing public engagement. When executed effectively, policies can foster environments that encourage healthier,

more equitable, and more sustainable behaviors, ultimately shaping a better future for individuals and society as a whole.

### 4. Methodology:

- **Conceptual Framework:** The study applies theoretical models such as: Behavioral economics to analyze how incentives and penalties shape decisions; Social learning theory to explore how behavior is modeled and adopted from authority figures and institutions.
- **Data Collection Methods:** The authors collect policy documents to make analysis of historical and current government policies and behavioral data to make deep research on national statistics, public change, and other relevant datasets.
- **Comparative Analysis** is used to make cross-cultural or temporal comparisons to identify patterns of influence.
- **Policy Analysis** is used to evaluate the design, implementation, and outcomes of policies relating to specific regulation, law and incentives by the governments.

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