



## Understanding the Success and Challenges of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in India: A Comprehensive Review of Research Studies.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.5.0224.0629>

### ABSTRACT:

Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) is a transformative government flagship program aimed at revolutionizing sanitation standards in India. In an effort to prioritize sanitation, the government restructured the erstwhile Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA) to launch SBA on 2nd October 2014. This ambitious initiative has led to an unprecedented scaling up of sanitation-related activities. This transformative Jan-Andolan has brought about a significant impact, touching the lives of millions of citizens and elevating sanitation, hygiene, and cleanliness standards across India. Sanitation policies play a crucial role in addressing the challenges of inadequate sanitation and promoting public health in India. This paper presents a comprehensive review of research studies to gain insights into the challenges and successes of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in the country. The review covers a wide range of studies conducted on various aspects of sanitation. It examines the key challenges faced in the implementation of sanitation policies, such as improper execution of plans, limited expenditure on Information, Education, and Communication (IEC), and societal cooperation. Furthermore, the review highlights the successes achieved through these policies, including a significant increase in household toilet construction and the attainment of Open Defecation Free (ODF) status by several states.

**Key words:- Rural Sanitation, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Open Defecation, Behaviour Change, Information, Education and Communication etc.**

### 1. Introduction:-

"Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi emphasized that a clean India would be the most fitting tribute India could offer to honour Mahatma Gandhi on his 150th birth anniversary in 2019. With this vision in mind, he launched the Swachh Bharat Mission on 2nd October 2014 by restructuring earlier existing Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan 2012.<sup>1</sup> The central government Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is a comprehensive program with aim of accomplishing universal hygiene, cleanliness and sanitation across the nation on based well-defined principles and is structured into two sub-missions:-

- i. Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin/Rural) and
- ii. Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban).<sup>2</sup>

### 2. Exigency of Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin:-

Despite the widely recognized importance of sanitation and personal hygiene, India faced a significant challenge with its sanitation coverage until 2014, which was reported to be as low as 39%. Before 2014, approx. 55 Crore people in India were deprived of basic toilet facility. This situation posed a considerable public health risk, environmental degradation, and hindered the nation's progress towards achieving better living conditions for its citizens. Back in 1986, the sanitation coverage in India was alarmingly low, standing at a mere 2%. Therefore, the government of India launched Central Rural Sanitation Scheme in 1986 but it focused mainly on toilet construction and allocation of funds, no attention was given towards changing attitude and behaviour of people. Consequently, the scheme could not attain its desired goals, though sanitation coverage increased from 2% to 9%. Seeing the limited impact of this programme. Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) in 1999 and Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan in 2012 were launched. Due to the limited impact of the existing efforts, the Indian government launched subsequent initiatives to address the sanitation challenges more effectively. In 1999, the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) was introduced, followed by the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan in 2012. Despite their introduction, both policies faced considerable challenges due to the lack of strong political will, effective leadership, and a comprehensive behaviour change approach. As a result, these programs struggled to achieve the desired impact in addressing the sanitation and hygiene issues, and the sanitation coverage in India continued to be inadequate.

<sup>1</sup> Teja, B. (2015). Schemes and programmes of Government of India on Human Rights Related Issues .

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/major\\_initiatives/swachh-bharat-abhiyan/](https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/major_initiatives/swachh-bharat-abhiyan/)

Hence, realizing the challenges and economic burden faced by nation due to poor sanitation, SH. Narendra Modi launched Swachh Bharat Mission in 2014 with the objective of making India open defecation Free by 2019.

### 3. Development and Impact from Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin:-

The Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) is arguably the world's largest behaviour change program; a JanAndolan which transformed the lives of crores of citizens and improved sanitation, hygiene, and cleanliness across the country. The effectiveness of the program hinges on the generation of demand for toilets leading to their construction, and sustained use by all the household members. SBM (G) has achieved the seemingly impossible task of 100 percent rural sanitation coverage and transformed India into an Open Defecation Free (ODF) country in a time-bound manner during Phase I (2014-19)<sup>3</sup>. Under the Mission, a total of 10.28 crore toilets have been constructed across the country. During 2014-19, a significant number of villages i.e. 603175 have been declared as open defecation free. More than 30 crore people participated in the behaviour change component of the mission and around 5.4 crore school children have participated actively under Swachhata Pakhwada in "Swachh Sankalp se Swachh Siddhi"<sup>4</sup>.

### 4. Objective of Study:-

The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan-Gramin, launched by the Indian Government, has been hailed as one of the largest behaviour change campaigns globally. This ambitious initiative aimed to bring about a significant transformation in the sanitation and hygiene practices of millions of citizens across the country. While the government claims notable achievements, it is essential to critically examine the ground challenges and actual impact of the program. This article delves into various research studies conducted to assess the effectiveness of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan-Gramin, exploring both its accomplishments and the hurdles it faces in realizing the vision of safe sanitation in India. Despite the notable achievements of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan-Gramin claimed by Government, it's a long way to reach practice of safe sanitation in India. Hence, an attempt has been made in this article to review the research studies on Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and find the challenges while implementing and success of SBM-G.

### 5. Review of Articles on Swachh Bharat Mission:-

**Blackwell (2004)** in his study emphasizes that several factors like improper way of disposal of human excreta, use of contaminated drinking water, lack of adequate hygiene practices, unsuitable way of disposing of liquid and solid wastage etc. contributes to the pervasiveness of the diseases in India. Resultantly, almost 30 million citizens of India suffer through water borne diseases. To address these issues and mitigate the prevalence of water-related diseases, it is imperative for India to implement comprehensive strategies. These strategies should focus on improving access to clean and safe drinking water, promoting proper sanitation facilities, raising awareness about personal and food-related hygiene practices, and implementing effective waste management systems. India can significantly lessen the burden of diseases and poor health of its population by addressing these issues.

**The Report by Corporate Social Responsibility by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry & IPE Global Centre for Knowledge and Development (2015)**, throws the light on the world wide rising concern of safe sanitation has not received appropriate attention in India. It is alarming to note that out of the one billion people worldwide who lack access to toilets, India accounts for nearly 600 million individuals facing this challenge. The report also highlights data from the 2011 Census, which reveals that over 67 percent of rural households in India do not have access to a toilet. In absolute numbers, this means that more than 110 million rural households lack proper sanitation facilities. When examining the situation within different states, Jharkhand stands out with the highest percentage of rural households without toilets and Kerala has the lowest with merely 5.6% households lacking access to lavatories. The figures mentioned emphasize on the dire urgency of addressing this issue since this may lead to significant health risks.

A comprehensive approach is essential to effectively tackle this issue. It involves not only the construction of toilets but also creating awareness about the importance of sanitation, promoting behaviour change and ensuring proper waste management. Adequate allocation of resources and collaboration between the government and private sectors are vital for addressing this pressing issue.

**Iyer (2016)** in his article titled as "*Rural Communities Embrace Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin)*" highlights the significant behavioural changes and increased awareness of sanitation issues within society. The author attributes this positive transformation to the efforts of social volunteers who are chosen from the local community to influence the habits of the people. The Swachh Bharat Mission actively involves children, youth, and women, considering them as Swachhta heroes. In order to spread awareness and change old habits of people, the agents of sanitation are covering extra miles. Some villages have implemented a weekly cleaning day to ensure the upkeep of their surroundings, while others have taken a proactive approach by appointing sanitation agents, known as Swachhta Doots, to spearhead cleanliness initiatives. The commendable efforts of these villages have garnered significant support and appreciation from local officials. The administration has duly recognized that the successful implementation of these initiatives would not have been possible without the active involvement of the local community at every level. The sanitation agents have emerged as catalysts for change, actively working to create a safe and clean environment. They diligently monitor and address issues related to cleanliness within their respective areas. This study has shed light on the significant impact that the appointment of responsible local individuals for specific local causes can have on bringing about change

<sup>3</sup> Swachh Survekshan Grameen (2022). Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India.

<sup>4</sup> [doc202191721.pdf \(pib.gov.in\)](https://pib.gov.in/doc202191721.pdf)

in traditional practices. This study underscores the transformative power of involving dedicated individuals who are invested in their community. This finding emphasizes the potential of local champions to drive meaningful change in their communities.

**Sinha (2017)** in his study titled *Assessing Latrine Use in Low-Income Countries: A Field Study in Rural India* discovered that the average reported latrine use was higher than the average passive use recorded by a latrine monitor across all four categories examined in the study. This finding aligns with previous literature indicating that survey-based reports of sanitation behaviour may be influenced by courtesy and recall biases, potentially affecting the behaviour being monitored. Furthermore, the study found that the magnitude of this observed bias varied depending on the type of latrine use measure. The greatest bias was observed in the category that assessed the "usual" number of times participants reported using the latrine per day. This could be attributed to a higher recall bias when respondents were not restricted by a specific definition, such as when reporting their "usual" latrine use practices. Despite these limitations, this study contributes to the advancement of research on methods for assessing latrine use in low-income settings. It also adds to the growing body of evidence supporting the feasibility of instrumented monitoring of sanitation behaviour at the household level. Based on the study's data, we can conclude that all categories of reported latrine use are biased compared to passive monitoring.

**Garg and Aggarwal (2018)** in their article "*Status of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in India with Possible Challenges*" has attempted to analyse the obstacles faced while implementing Swachh Bharat Mission. The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, initiated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014, is a pioneering step towards the development of the Indian economy. It stands as India's largest cleanliness drive to date, marking a significant milestone in the nation's history. The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has set ambitious objectives to eliminate open defecation entirely by constructing individual, cluster, and community toilets. The mission has made significant progress in achieving these goals, with approximately 48% of the targeted areas being declared Open Defecation Free (ODF). The present study aims to assess the current status of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan since its inception. It also addresses potential challenges faced by the mission, including issues related to plan execution, inadequate expenditure on Information, Education, and Communication (IEC), and lack of cooperation from society, among others. The study reveals a substantial increase in the number of household toilets constructed under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, indicating progress in achieving its objectives. In addition to the assessment, the study provides policy actions and suggestions to enhance the effectiveness of the mission. These recommendations aim to address the identified challenges and improve the overall impact of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. They may include strategies to improve plan execution, allocate adequate resources for IEC activities, foster greater community participation, and address any existing gaps in implementation.

**Jain, Wagner, Rood and Ray (2018)** focused their research study titled "*Understanding Open Defecation in the Age of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan: Agency, Accountability, and Anger in Rural Bihar*" to draw insights from social epidemiology and political ecology to delve into the structural determinants of latrine ownership and use. Contrary to the prevailing belief that rural residents prefer open defecation, the researchers discovered that people were actually aware of the numerous risks associated with this practice. The researchers' findings challenge common assumptions in sanitation research and "behaviour change" campaigns. They emphasize that reluctance to adopt latrines should not be conflated with a preference for open defecation, as this is an erroneous conflation. It indicates that individuals may have reasons beyond personal preference that influence their decision. Furthermore, the researchers note that subsidies can be effective in assisting households with latrine construction. However, the amount of the subsidy and how it is disbursed play crucial roles in determining its usefulness. The study also highlights widespread resentment among rural residents towards what they perceive as a development bias against rural areas. This resentment reinforces a general sense of distrust towards the government and specifically towards latrines funded under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. The authors further conclude that social and structural explanations for the slow uptake of sanitation in rural Bihar, and potentially in other regions as well, warrant greater attention in sanitation research and promotion efforts.

**Dandabathula (2019)** in his article "*Impact assessment of India's Swachh Bharat Mission – Clean India Campaign on acute diarrheal disease*" throws light on occurrence of diarrheal disease outbreaks because of defecating in open and practicing unsafe methods of sanitation. Open defecation poses a significant health risk as it facilitates the transmission of pathogens. Pathogens present in human waste can contaminate fluids, water sources, and objects (fomites), leading to the potential infection of individuals. In 2014, the Indian government took a proactive step to address the harmful consequences of open defecation by launching the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), a comprehensive pro-sanitation program. Since its inception, over 95 million toilets have been constructed in both rural and urban areas of India. The researcher in his study reveals that this has had impact on various aspects of public health. This articulation synthesizes the analysis of Acute Diarrheal Disease (ADD) outbreaks in a time period of 9-year which emphasis on changes due to the building of toilets under the clean India campaign. During the investigation period, it was observed that the number of ADD outbreaks in the years 2017 and 2018, under the SBM regime, were significantly lower compared to any other year within the study duration. Specifically, a notable reduction in ADD outbreaks was observed during the peak season months of May, June, July, and August. In 2017, seasonal variations accounted for approximately 55%–60% of ADD outbreaks.

**Mohapatra (2019)** in his research work "*Behavioural Change in Swachh Bharat Mission: A Public Policy Perspective*" has emphasized on the shift Swachh Bharat Mission has made on behaviours of rural people while practicing sanitation which in turn leads to rigorous verification and sustainability of the benefits accrued to rural communities. The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) set a significant goal of achieving an Open Defecation Free (ODF) India by 2019, coinciding with the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. This ambitious objective aimed to eliminate the practice of open defecation throughout the country and ensure that every individual has access to proper sanitation facilities. Furthermore, the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) aligns with and contributes to India's commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6, which aims to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. This article presents a critical analysis of sanitation services, with a particular focus on the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) in India, from a public policy perspective. It aims to examine the interconnections between public health and sanitation while highlighting the challenges posed by open defecation and its health implications. The article further offers an analysis of behavioural change techniques employed in the community-led total sanitation (CLTS) approach and its application in achieving the Swachh Bharat (Clean India)

goal of constructing 30 million toilets. The article further provides a comprehensive overview of the sanitation situation in colonial and post-independence India, followed by a detailed analysis of the formulation of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM). Furthermore, it examines the current status of SBM implementation and explores the emerging issues and concerns that need to be addressed to achieve an Open Defecation Free (ODF) India.

**Subudhi and Padmanaban (2019)** in their study titled as “*Sanitation Facilities and Hygiene Practices in Rural India: Critical Analysis of Swachh Bharat Mission*” states Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) to be the country’s colossal cleanliness campaign with the prime motive to lessen or mitigate open defecation by focusing on construction of individual, public or cluster toilets. The researcher has used a total of 28 descriptive research design for this study and made it more an investigation to discover facts with the interpretation. The study took place specifically in Kovilpathu village, located within the Thiruvudacherry Panchayath of Thiruvarur district in Tamil Nadu, India. The researcher employed a random sampling method to carry out the study, ensuring that the selection of households was done without any bias. Information was collected from a total of 60 households, representing a diverse cross-section of the community. Notably, all 60 respondents, constituting 100% of the sample, confirmed their awareness and knowledge about the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), a government campaign in India aimed at promoting cleanliness and sanitation. Out of the respondents surveyed, 83.3% (50 individuals) acknowledged observing behavioural changes after the implementation of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), while 16.7% (10 individuals) reported no noticeable changes. Regarding the practice of open defecation, the findings indicate that 13.4% (27 individuals) still engage in open defecation, 45% (3 individuals) sometimes practice it, 5% (22 individuals) rarely do so, and 36.6% (22 individuals) reported that they never practice open defecation. The researcher adopted a random sampling method to conduct the study.

The researchers found that, the overall implementation of SBM have the positive impact on sanitation and hygienic practices in rural India. These figures suggest that there is still progress to be made in completely eliminating open defecation practices in the surveyed community. However, the significant percentage of individuals who reported never practicing open defecation indicates a positive shift towards improved sanitation practices within the community as a result of the SBM implementation.

**Kumar (2022)** in his research article titled “*Impact of Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) on Rural Sanitation: A Study of Rural Areas of Reasi District of Jammu and Kashmir*” has attempted to assess the impression and footprint of Swachh Bharat Mission on improvising the sanitation standards in rural regions of Resai district, Jammu and Kashmir. The researcher in its study has scrutinized the status of various components of the Mission like construction of latrines in the rural households, ventures under Information, Education & Communication (IEC) component, public cleanup, managing of solid and liquid wastage etc. The findings of the present study present a mixed picture regarding the impact of the Swachh Bharat Mission on rural sanitation in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). While the mission has succeeded in achieving the target of providing universal sanitation coverage in terms of individual household latrines, it is evident that many people in rural villages lack awareness about the purpose of toilets and continue to practice open defecation. Therefore, the overall objective of the Swachh Bharat Mission is not fully realized. Additionally, the study reveals that solid and liquid waste management, an important component of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin), has not received adequate attention thus far. This neglect contributes to poor sanitation conditions in villages, leading to health problems and the spread of diseases. By disseminating awareness about the objectives of the Swachh Bharat Mission among the masses, people can better understand the importance of proper sanitation practices and the use of toilets.

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## 6. Key Findings from the Literature Review and Conclusion:-

Swachh Bharat Abhiyan-Gramin has undoubtedly achieved significant milestones, transforming the sanitation landscape in India. However, the journey to safe sanitation is far from over, as ground-level challenges persist. The effectiveness of the program hinges on addressing these challenges and continuously engaging with communities to ensure the sustained success of the initiative. There is lot of scope available in India to conduct studies on Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and other aspects of cleanliness, hygiene and sanitation. Action oriented research is needed in Rural Areas of India on cleanliness and sanitation.

The findings from the review provide valuable insights into the existing challenges and successes of sanitation policies in India, offering a comprehensive understanding of the current state of affairs. Moreover, the review presents policy actions and suggestions to address the identified challenges and further enhance the effectiveness of sanitation policies. These recommendations aim to improve plan execution, allocate adequate resources for IEC activities, and foster greater community participation.

In conclusion, the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has emerged as a transformative and impactful initiative aimed at revolutionizing sanitation standards in India. This comprehensive review of research studies sheds light on both the successes and challenges faced in its implementation. The mission's Jan-Andolan approach and community involvement have played a crucial role in driving behaviour change and promoting the adoption of proper sanitation practices. Notably, the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) has achieved remarkable milestones, however, the review also highlights the ground challenges that hinder the mission's progress, such as proper plan execution, limited expenditure on Information, Education, and Communication (IEC), and the need for sustained societal cooperation. The studies underscore the significance of addressing these issues to ensure the sustained success of the initiative and reach the ultimate goal of safe sanitation practices for all citizens. The research studies reviewed here provide valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders to enhance the program's effectiveness further. With sustained commitment, collaboration, and innovative solutions, India can continue to build upon the achievements of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and march towards a sustainable future for its citizens.

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