

Extending the Theory of Planned Behavior: Evidence of the Arguments of its Sufficiency

Norazlan Hasbullah

Prof. Dr. Abdul Jumaat Mahajar

Dr. Mad Ithnin Salleh

Faculty of Management and Economics
Sultan Idris Education University
35900 Tanjong Malim, Perak
Malaysia

Abstract

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) has been parsimonious, empirically supported, widely cited, most prominent, most compelling and well established model for predicting intentional behavior. Despite its comprehensive and valid prediction on behavior, TPB has received many debates and criticism on its narrow sufficiency of the three original components constructs of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. This article discusses on the empirical support of various authors that recognized other relevant external factors to be considered in addition to the original model and considerations for future research context to enrich the existing theoretical contributions.

Keywords: Theory of Planned Behavior, Theory of Reasoned Action, Attitude, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioral Control, TPB, TRA

1.0 Introduction

The Theory of Planned Behavior or also referred to as TPB (Ajzen, 1985) has been useful and considered one of the most influential models in predicting social behaviors (Ajzen, 2011). It were found to be widely cited across domains to help in the understanding of many issues and problems of the societies (Armitage & Conner, 1999; Arnscheid & Schomers, 1996; Bansal & Taylor, 2002; Boldero, Sanitioso, & Brain, 1999; Conner, Black, & Stratton, 1998; Conner, Sherlock, & Orbell, 1998; De Vroome, Stroebe, Sandfort, de Witt, & Van Griensven, 2000; Giles & Pringle, 2004; Hillhouse, Adler, Drinnon, & Turrisi, 1997; Kaiser, Woelfing, & Fuhrer, 1999; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Morrison, Gillmore, Simpson, & Wells, 1996; Norman, Conner, & Bell, 1999; Oh & Hsu, 2001; Pavlou, 2003; Quine & Rubin, 1997; Quine, Rutter, & Arnold, 1998; Sparks & Guthrie, 1998; Trafimow & Finlay, 1996; Vincent, Peplau, & Hill, 1998; Warburton & Terry, 2000). As people may lack complete volitional control over behavior, TPB becomes the successor of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) by adding the Perceived Behavioral Control constructs (Ajzen, 2002) and PBC thereafter has improved the predictions of intentions (Ajzen & Madden, 1986).

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 The Constructs of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

TPB consists of three constructs, the first construct is Attitude which is define as the degree to which a person evaluate or appraise the behavior in question to favorable (Crano & Prislin, 2006) or unfavorable captured in a dimension of pleasant or not pleasant, good or bad, harmful or beneficial like or dislike (Ajzen, 2001).

According to Rosenberg (1960), the person's attitude toward the object will mediate all responses to that object. Many researchers have found the strength of relationship of attitude to explain behavior (Ajzen & Driver, 1992; Crano & Prislin, 2006). Behavior was found to be stemming from attitude but not part of attitude (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Lutz, 1977; Verplanken, 1998; Zajonc, 1982). Attitude may suggest and be the primary determinant of intentions (Rise, Astrom, & Sutton, 1998; Sheeran, Norman, & Orbell, 1999; Sparks & Guthrie, 1998).

Subjective Norms (SN) is the second construct, explained as different social references that exert influence or social pressure to perform a behavior (Dulany, 1968). TPB suggested that one can form a belief based on what other people (important others) expect us to do or based on the observation on the action of the important others. People will possess favorable attitude on certain object, but if the important others pressures not to do it, people will then have negative attitude towards the behavior (Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). The Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) was an addition to the previous model of Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Madden, 1986) and became the third construct of TPB. Perceived behavioral control indicates the perceived belief of easiness or difficultness in performing behavior. It is also a reflection of beliefs of the availability of resources and opportunities in order to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Taylor & Todd, 1995). It explains that, when a person does not have volitional control, it may limit the prediction of behavioral intentions and behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Taylor & Todd, 1995). Therefore the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) has been proposed to remedy this problem which was not addressed in the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) earlier (Ajzen, 1985). Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) is important in explaining people's behavior especially when they do not have whole control due to situational factor (Chiou, 1998). For example, in carrying out a purchase, people needs to find more resources before committing to buy, for instance time, information, knowledge, self-confidence and so on.

In the investigation of 169 undergraduates' psychological students' intention to attend lectures, Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) has improved intentions predictions with correlation R increasing up to 24 %. Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) has also gained significant prediction in other studies (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Godin & Kok, 1996; Notani, 1998; Rise et al., 1998; Sheeran & Taylor, 1999). TPB has also been witnessed to be more superior model as compared to the previous Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Armitage & Conner, 1999; Mummery, Spence, & Hudec, 2000; Netemeyer, Andrews, & Durvasula, 1993; Norman, Conner, & Bell, 2000; Symons, Taber, Evenson, Leiferman, & Yeo, 2012).

Despite its strength to predict intention, TPB has been much argued and debated on the sufficiency and the need for external variables that can help to further improve the prediction of intentions. The discussion comes as follows.

2.2 Evidence of the Arguments of TPB's Sufficiency

Even though TPB has well been accepted as a model with strong predictive utility (Sheppard, Hartwick, & Warshaw, 1988), well established model for prediction of intention (Biddle & Nigg, 2000), good empirical support (Godin & Kok, 1996) meta-analyses evident in its predictive ability (Conner & Armitage, 1998; Rise et al., 1998; Sheeran & Taylor, 1999), existence of PBC as non-volitional behaviors that eliminates the need for external variables (Ajzen, 1991) parsimonious model (Abraham & Sheeran, 2003), some researchers on the other hand, insisted on their arguments on the narrow view of the TPB's sufficiency and suggested relevant external factor by modifying the existing theory to increase the predictive ability on intention (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Ravis & Sheeran, 2003). For example, TPB was modified by including additional predictors such as moral norms (Ajzen & Driver, 1992); social support (Courneya, Blanchard, & Laing, 2001; Rhodes, Courneya, & Jones, 2002), past behavior (Bamberg, Ajzen, & Schmidt, 2003); self-identity (Sparks & Shepherd, 1992; Terry, Hogg, & White, 1999) personality traits (Conner & Abraham, 2001) anticipated regret (Richard, de Vries, & van der Plicht, 1998) moral obligation (Beck & Ajzen, 1991).

A study on additional external variable of self-identity on low fat diet consumption among UK consumers has improved intentions (Sparks & Guthrie, 1998). The result was also likewise in a similar survey done in Denmark and Finland, and therefore TPB was even suggested to add self-identity as a core component of the theory in predicting behavioral intentions (Sparks & Shepherd, 1992). On the other hand, past behavior has also been witnessed to predict intentions beyond the three components of the TPB model (Bagozzi, Baumgartner, & Yi, 1991).

Conner and Armitage (1998) has also evidenced the meta analysis support for including six variables into the original TPB model, which is the moral norms, self-identity, past behavior habit, self-ability, affective beliefs, belief salience measures.

Acknowledging this limitations, Ajzen (1991) summarized "... the theory of planned behavior is, in principle, open to the inclusion of additional predictors if it can be shown that they capture a significant proportion of the variance in intention or behavior after the theory's current variables have been taken into account".

This suggestion has provided flexibility and encouragement to numerous future research in various context of the societies. Furthermore, with significant research findings in the future, this theory can be expanded from its original components and promotes to the reliability and accuracy in predicting intention and behavior.

3.0 Conclusion

TPB has well been accepted as a model with a strong predictive utility and a well-established model for prediction of intention. Despite its valid prediction, some researchers have argued and criticized on the narrow view of the TPB's sufficiency and suggested relevant external factors beyond the three component model to help in improving the predictive ability on intention. Recognizing this limitation, Ajzen (1991) has suggested that TPB may include external predictors beyond the three core components of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. Thus, future studies may incorporate additional external variables, as long as it resembles a significant proportion of the variance in intentions after all the existing variables of TPB have been taken into considerations.

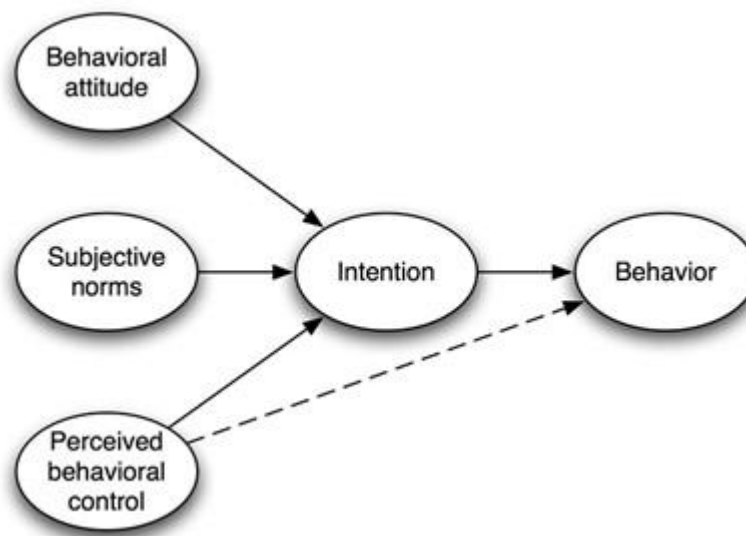


Figure 1: The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985)

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