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Application of the Theory of Reason Action in Public Acceptance Towards Physical Activity Participation Among People with Disabilities

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Abstract

Being supported and accepted in communities is essentials for people with disabilities to get involved in physical activity together with community members. The theory of reasoned action (TRA) by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) was adopted as the fundamental for this study because people's intention or motivation was the determinant of their behavior. To further study this problem, the present research aims to examine the influence of public's attitude and subjective norms on acceptance towards people with disabilities participation in physical activity. An exploratory model of public acceptance was developed. Using convenience sampling technique, a total of 444 responses were collected from the public (without disabilities), who were exercising at four urban public recreation parks located in Klang Valley. Correlation analysis was used to analyze the data collected and identify the relationship of the attitude and subjective norms with the public acceptance. Correlation coefficient showed that there was a low relationship (.270), p=.001<.05 between the attitude construct and public acceptance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Future study can include meaningful assessment of other different factors, including their moderating effects. Implications of the result for future practice and directions of research were discussed.

Keyword: Theory of Reason Action (TRA), People with Disabilities (PWD), Attitude (ATT), Subjective Norms (SN), Public Acceptance

Introduction

People with disabilities benefit from access to leisure, recreation, sports, and exercise. It is important not just for physical health, but also for social connectivity and emotional

wellbeing. Participation in physical activity can increased psychological, emotional, and physical benefits for PWD (Kim et al., 2022). However, disparities exist in physical activity levels for people with and without disabilities. To get PWD to be actively involved in physical activity, many health promotions programmes have recommended and focus to enhance self-confident, dependency, self-concept and avoid social isolation from the society (Aida et al., 2016; Lui & Hui, 2009; Tussis, 2021). In addition, PWD may find it more difficult to meet the physical activity guidelines compared to people without disabilities because they need additional environmental assistance such as facilities that meet the standard by Americans with Disabilities Act to actively participation in physical activity (Cho et al., 2022).

There are several approaches in increased the participation of PWD in physical activity which can enhancing communication skills, create self-confident, developing a positive self-concept, and increased self- independence (Aksatan & Sel, 2017). In addition, when programs are inclusive, PWD can possess normal behaviour, confident to engage in social response with their peers who are not disabled and learn how to use appropriate language (Waltz & Schippers, 2021; Werner & Grayzman, 2011). Moreover, peers without disabilities can develop positive attitudes, increased their appreciation and acceptance towards PWD in their life (Keiichi, 2005; Ong & Aida, 2019). Therefore, inclusive physical activity programs are beneficial not only for PWD, but also for those without disabilities. Ultimately, inclusive programs play an important role in developing a normalized society for PWD to be more accepted either in daily, routine activities or physical activity.

Acceptance is a willingness to be associated, blend, recognize, live near or doing activities together with a certain group of people (Helene et al., 2010; Ong & Aida, 2017). The society who are equipped with the special purposes of education towards the PWD emerge as an important issue in developing the social acceptance and self-esteem level. According to Dalbudak and Yasar (2021), social acceptance as an attitude that reflects the collective values of group members' feelings towards individuals either positive or negative. All people feel the need for a positive and continuous social relationship. PWD often feel excluded or rejected from society because of their differences. Thus, it will make them confront with stress, anxiety and have physical health problems more than others. Alvarez et al (2021), reported that, to influence more active lifestyles among children with disabilities, experience situations where one comes into direct contact with them, parental motivation, be a role model and support them are important.

If the relationship of PWD with the society is vital, the attitudes, understood as the social constructs also play a key role in the development and future of them especially as a support system to get actively participation in physical activity. The attitude dimension is a learnt predisposition to consistently respond to groups of people, individual, situations, and objects favorably or unfavorably (Zaluska et al., 2020). The attitude dimension is built upon three components; the affective, made up of emotions; the cognitive, made up of beliefs and the behavioral, willingness to engage in actual behaviors based on the emotions and thoughts (Findler et al., 2007; Lirios, 2019). For example, individual who have positive attitude towards PWD, for him/her, PWD like a normal person (cognitive) and feel comfortable (affective) towards PWD. Thus, it will increase their acceptance towards PWD participation in physical activity (behavior). Based on these three components, society still shows them in the form of disaffected social beliefs and their associated behaviors, predominantly negative and

pejorative attitudes which stigmatize PWD. In addition, it is important to investigate the factors that influence societal attitudes in increasing their acceptance towards PWD participation in community especially in physical activity.

Referring to existing related study, the researchers have explored the influence of subjective norms on intention to involve in physical activity together with PWD (Lui & Hui, 2009; Song et al., 2021). The results showed that, individuals who were influenced by the social pressure (family, friends, spouse) would exhibit stronger intention to engage in physical activity together with PWD rather than personal influences. Moreover, motivation to accept PWD participation in physical activity was consistent with their reference group's belief. However, Shen et al (2022), have revealed that subjective norms having fewer roles to influence on acceptance intention in adolescents compared to adult. This indicates that, children need more support and motivation to have strong intention in acceptance PWD participation in physical activity rather than the adults. Therefore, further research is required in relation of individual intention to accept PWD participation in physical activity in Malaysia either social cognitive influences or themselves.

According to Field et al (1997) there are several internal and external factors that increased public acceptance towards PWD participation in physical activity and community. To identify more predictors of the acceptance of public towards PWD participation in physical activity, the theory of reasoned action was used as a theoretical framework in the present study. The most frequently used theories were theory of reasoned action (TRA) and theory of planned behaviour (TPB). TRA and its extended model, TPB, have been widely adopted as the theoretical basis for explaining human behaviour especially in physical activity research (Blue, 1995; Ong, 2012; Werner & Grayzman, 2011). TRA, is the best predictor of volitional behavior intention. Behavioral intention in turn is based on two types of antecedents' which are attitude and subjective norm. The TRA is an expectancy value model with emphasis on subjective norms, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors directed to a specific focus (Ajzen, 1985; Didarloo et al., 2011). Based on the TRA, intention to accept PWD participation in physical activity is normally performed under volitional control of the participants (publics without disabilities).

However, the behaviour construct was excluded from the framework in this current study. This is because, the study based on the assessment of respondent decision or motives that guiding the current intention to accept PWD participation in physical activity but not referring to future behaviour (involve together with PWD in physical activity). Moreover, engaging in the behaviour might not involve a conscious decision on the part of actor or their performance might not be voluntary (Downs & Hausenblas, 2005; Sarbazi et al., 2019). In addition, several situational, individual or society barriers have been identified as having a significant impact on the translation of intentions or attitudes into behaviours, including personal self-efficacy, money, time constraint and the cooperation of other people (Stehr et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2020). Thus, the TRA possesses adequate predictive validity. Interestingly in the study by Armitage and christian (2003); Ezati et al (2022), the behavioural intention construct is considered sufficiently predictive of behaviour use it as a dependent variable, because intention consistently led to behaviour.

Methods

Sample size determination table by Baumgartner and Hensley (2006), for 3,350,000 million of adults in Klang Valley, the sample size is 384 respondents. Taking into consideration of possible missing data, additional 20% (76) of sample will be considered. So that, the total numbers of respondents that involve in the current study become 460, but only 444 have being collected. Respondent were given the set of questionnaires at their rest time after participating in physical activity at the selected public recreational park. Four public recreation parks will be chosen. The public recreation parks criteria were selected based on their facilities, transportation and activities that were provided at these parks and it is user friendly for PWD. Public recreation parks that were chosen are, Taman Tasik Titiwangsa Kuala Lumpur, Wetland Putrajaya, Taman Tasik Shah Alam, Shah Alam and Taman Subang Ria, Subang Jaya.

The questionnaire used in this study has been adapted, adopted, and developed from previous similar studies which be found to be reliable and will achieve the objectives in this study. Some questions were modified to make it simple and easy to understand by the respondents. All variables in the questionnaire, except for questions on demography, were measured on a 7-point Likert scale. This section consists of a standard list of demographics with six questions in total, including gender, marital status, age, race, education level and occupation all of which have been noted as important variables in the examination of public acceptance towards PWD participation in physical activity. Three attitude dimensions described as a cognitive, affective and behaviour were included in the questionnaire. This section consists of seventeen items. Question on attitude are adopted and adapted from Findler et al. (2007). Respondents were asked to indicate the agreement with the statements in each item on 7-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Meanwhile, four items on subjective norms were adopt and adapt from Werner and Grayzman (2011). Subjective Norms were measured using 7-point Likert Scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Intention was rated the items in each scale on a 7-point Likert Scale ranging from very probably not (1) to definitely yes (7). This section consist of 6 items adapted from the previous literature by Bebetsos et al. (2013). A reliability analysis was carried out to validate and operationalize the three related variables which include attitude, subjective norms, and public acceptance. The results of the reliability for attitude dimension (α = .762), subjective norms (α=.816) and public acceptance (α=.913). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha reliabilities for all factors were above the .70. Overall, the pilot test confirmed that the measurement that used in the current study has achieved an adequate of reliability.

Findings

Based on Multidimensional Attitudes Scale toward PWD, attitude construct was represented by three dimensions namely, cognitive (CON), affective (AFF) and behaviour (BHV) as shown in Table 1 below. As the whole mean score of respondents were higher for the dimension of behaviour (5.96±.481) followed by cognitive (5.85±.507) and affective (5.66±.590). Cronbach's alpha value for the overall internal consistency of the Attitude construct indicated a high level of suggested Cronbach's alpha value of .762.

Table 1
Attitude Dimension

Attitude Dimension	**Mean (5.22)**	**SD (.798)**
Affective (AFF)	5.66	.590
Cognitive (COG)	5.85	.507
Behavior (BHV)	5.96	.481

According to Table 2 showed mean and standard deviation for the subjective norms and acceptance construct. The results revealed that subjective norms (5.76±.1.118) and acceptance (5.21±.1.199) were rated highly by the respondent. The Cronbach's alpha value of subjective norms showed acceptable internal consistency (.816). The finding revealed that, important people in respondent's life will support their decision to accept PWD participation in physical activity. The results indicated that, respondent had quite strong a willing to accept PWD participation in physical activity. The reliability construct indicated a high level of threshold value of Cronbach's alpha (α= .913).

Table 2
Subjective Norms and Acceptance Construct

Construct (Items)	**Mean**	**SD**
Subjective Norms (SN)	5.76	1.118
Acceptance (ACC)	5.21	1.199

The correlation significant for Spearman's rho is $p < 0.05$. Based on Table 4 below, it is shown that the correlation of this finding is .001 (2-tailed). Through that, there is a significant relationship between Theory of Reasoned Action Component and Public Acceptance towards PWD participation in Physical Activity at the level of significance (0.01, $p < 0.05$). In Table 3, it also showed that the TRA component and public acceptance have a significant value of correlation coefficient which is .435. To decide a high, moderate, or low relationship between two factors, the Rule of Thumb introduced by Guilford and Fruchter (1973) was taken on for deciphering the relationship strength. Based on this rule, there was moderate positive relationship between the two variables (.435). Therefore, the result was to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 3
Results of Correlation Analysis for Relationship between Theory of Reasoned Action Component and Public Acceptance

		Attitude Dimension	Subjective Norms	TRA
Public Acceptance	Correlation Coefficient	.270	.406	.435
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.001	.001	.001
	N	444	444	444

Discussion

This empirical study has attempted to establish a link between the factors and public acceptance with a view to expanding the body of knowledge in this research area. At the causality level, the results reported in the preceding one chapter to seek which factors will be the dominant factors of public acceptance in this study. In terms of gender the results indicated that there are slightly more female respondents (55.4%) than male respondents (44.6%). This representation is consistent with other physical activity studies, whereby more females are beginning to involve in physical activity compared to males (Costa & Fernandes, 2019; Fuhrmann, 2018; Metcalfe & Lindsey, 2020). This may reflect that females are beginning to be more health conscious and are more eager to maintain their self-image and body mass index compared to male.

In addition, in relation to marital status about two-thirds (62.6%) of the respondents were still single, 36.7% respondents were married followed by 0.7% of the respondents belong to 'others' (i.e., divorced, widowed). Married individuals are less frequent to involve in physical activity compared to single respondents. Married couples have a lot of responsibility such as to do the house chores, cooked for family and taking care of their children. The positive changes in physical activity participation are when the person is still single. Besides that, single person more interested to get involved in physical activity because they need to socialize with other people surrounding to get more friends besides keeping healthy lifestyles (Berki & Tarjanyi, 2022).

With reference to empirical objective, conclusion was drawn based on findings section. Adapted from (Ezati et al., 2022) this study confirmed that the existence of the three broad dimensions of attitude trait which is affective, behavior and cognitive that can influence public acceptance towards PWD. A review of literature shown that, attitude has been consistently correlated positively with intention and be a good predictor of intention. Many studies in the physical activity domain found attitude to be significant predictor of acceptance intention and emerged as the stronger predictor. In the present study, it was observed that, the attitudes component of behavior (5.96±.481) was the highest followed by cognitive (5.85±.507) and affective (5.66±.590). This finding is consistent with the previous study by Ong and Aida (2019) whereby respondents showed more favorable attitudes towards peer with disabilities on measure of behavioral dimension compared to cognitive and affective dimension.

Based on the findings, there was moderate positive relationship between the two variables which are subjective norms and public acceptance (.406). Result showed that subjective norms have a direct influence on the public acceptance. This means that as level of

subjective norms increased the more, they accept PWD participation in physical activity. Given the important of family, parent support and peer influence, level of acceptance is also a matter of socialization and social support. Family social support is the stronger predictor to influenced someone decision to accept PWD either in physical activity or in their socialization life (Cho et al., 2022; Dalbudak & Yasar, 2021). This finding is consistent with the study of (Ly et al., 2021), in which social influence and support from family and peers were associated with greater participation in physical activity and increased the level of acceptance towards disabled people.

As background to the present study, a brief review of the TRA is provided. The present study applied TRA to predict public acceptance (intention) towards PWD participation in physical activity. This is because, whether to accept disabled people or not is not entirely under a person's volitional control. Intentions are assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence a behavior. According to the TRA, intention is the most immediate and important predictor of behavior. Hence, it is deemed to be necessary to examine beyond the attitude and subjective norm construct in the TRA and to explore further the control factor that possibly influence individual's behavioral intention that led to behavior.

Conclusion

The present study empirically explored several internal (attitude) and external (subjective norms) constructs as independent variables. All the constructs that involve in the current study were found to be the pertinent factors in influencing the level of public acceptance towards PWD participation in physical activity. These dimensions provide us better understanding about the factors that will influence public acceptance towards PWD. The main theoretical contribution of this study is the exploration of the dimension of attitude as an independent variable. This study confirmed the existence of three core components of specific public attitudes. These are cognitive component (an individual thought, idea, beliefs, opinion towards PWD), behavioral (individual intent or willingness to behave in certain manner towards disabled people or the actual response) and affective (reflect the emotional of individual towards PWD).

The current study showed that, subjective norms are directly related to public acceptance toward PWD participation in physical activity. Subjective norms construct which reflects the perceived social pressure from significant others to accept disabled people has the most influence on the public acceptance. This association indicates that individuals without disabilities (i.e., parents, family members, friends, colleagues, teacher/lecturer, and spouse) have positive influence on public acceptance that may lead to inclusion in physical activity together with disabled people. The findings revealed that, family members have the greatest influence on public acceptance. It is the followed by influence of parents.

The present study makes a unique contribution to the literature by evaluating the measures and effects among TRA construct in influencing public acceptance towards PWD participation in physical activity. A primary conclusion of this research is that the TRA is a suitable starting point to examine public acceptance toward disabled people that may be led to them to get involve in physical activity together (inclusion) with disabled people. For future recommendation, the scope needs to be expanded by added more factors that can contributed to public acceptance toward PWD participation in physical activity.

In addition, this study contributes to the body of knowledge and the identification of relevant issues which are related to public acceptance together with the strength of the factors influences. Success in molding the acceptance of public towards PWD requires a collective effort of various stakeholders which include public without disabilities, government agencies, policy makers, responsible organization, and recreational practitioners. In conclusion, the results of present study offered support to consider the suggested variables of personality, exposure, ethnicity, attitude, and subjective norms as antecedents that effect public acceptance towards PWD participation in physical activity and all these constructs have significant positive effects on public acceptance.

Contribution of the research

The present study empirically explored internal (attitude) and external (subjective norms) constructs as independent variables. All the constructs that involve in the current study were found to be the pertinent factors in influencing the level of public acceptance towards PWD participation in physical activity. These dimensions provide us better understanding about the factors that will influence public acceptance towards PWD. The main theoretical contribution of this study is the exploration of the dimension of attitude as an independent variable. This study confirmed the existence of three core components of specific public attitudes. These are cognitive component (an individual thought, idea, beliefs, opinion towards PWD), behavioral (individual intent or willingness to behave in certain manner towards disabled people or the actual response) and affective (reflect the emotional of individual towards PWD). The study provides methodological contributions expanding on previous knowledge and literature in physical activity and public acceptance toward PWD. In the process of discussing the implications, references will be made based on the previous studies in the same field. Therefore, the model can be employed as a study framework for future research in the inclusive physical activity area.

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