

Theory of planned behavior (Icek Ajzen 1991)

As every student of psychology knows, explaining human behavior in all its complexity is a difficult task.

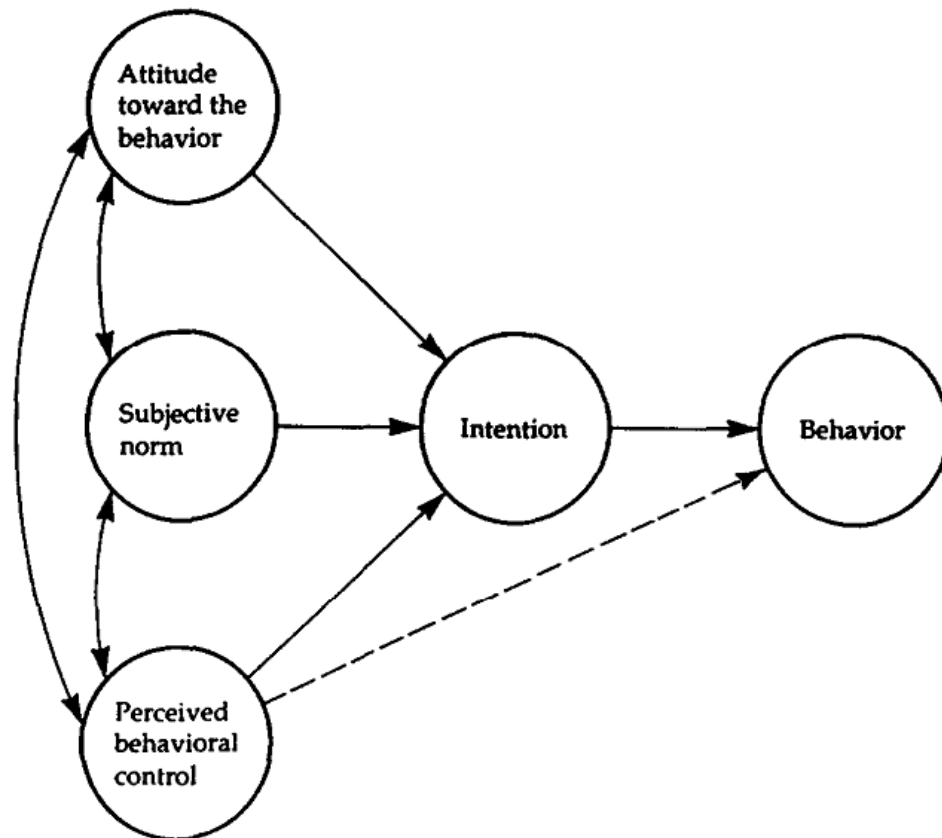


FIG. 1. Theory of planned behavior.

Predicting Behavior: Intentions and Perceived Behavioral Control:

As in the original theory of reasoned action, a central factor in the theory of planned behavior is the individual's intention to perform a given behavior. Intentions are assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence a behavior; they are indications of how hard people are willing to try, of how much of an effort they are planning to exert, in order to perform the behavior. As a general rule, the stronger the intention to engage in a behavior, the more likely should be its performance. It should be clear, however, that a behavioral intention can find expression in behavior only if the behavior in question is under volitional control, i.e., if the person can decide at will to perform or not perform the behavior. I.e. time, money, skills, cooperation of others; see Ajzen, 1985, for a discussion). Collectively, these factors represent people's actual control over the

behavior. To the extent that a person has the required opportunities and resources, and intends to perform the behavior, he or she should succeed in doing so.'

The idea that behavioral achievement depends jointly on motivation (intention) and ability (behavioral control) Thus, intentions would be expected to influence performance to the extent that the person has behavioral control, and performance should increase with behavioral control to the extent that the person is motivated to try.

Perceived behavioral control.: Of greater psychological interest than actual control, however, is the perception of behavioral control and its impact on intentions and actions.

These investigations have shown that people's behavior is strongly influenced by their confidence in their ability to perform it (i.e., by perceived behavioral control).

According to the theory of planned behavior, perceived behavioral control, together with behavioral intention, can be used directly to predict behavioral achievement. At least two rationales can be offered for this hypothesis. First, holding intention constant, the effort expended to bring a course of behavior to a successful conclusion is likely to increase with perceived behavioral control. For instance, even if two individuals have equally strong intentions to learn to ski, and both try to do so, the person who is confident that he can master this activity is more likely to persevere than is the person who doubts his ability.

First, the measures of intention and of perceived behavioral control must correspond to (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977) or be compatible with (Ajzen, 1988) the behavior that is to be predicted. That is, intentions and perceptions of control must be assessed in relation to the particular behavior of interest, and the specified context must be the same as that in which the behavior is to occur. For example, if the behavior to be predicted is "donating money to the Red Cross," then we must assess intentions "to donate money to the Red Cross" (not intentions "to donate money" in general nor intentions "to help the Red Cross"), as well as perceived control over "donating money to the Red Cross."

The relative importance of intentions and perceived behavioral control in the prediction of behavior is expected to vary across situations and across different behaviors. Intentions and behavior. Evidence concerning the relation between intentions and actions has been collected with respect to many different types of behaviors, ranged from smoking marijuana, and choosing among candidates in an election. As a general rule it is found that when behaviors pose no serious problems of control, they can be predicted from intentions with considerable accuracy

PREDICTION OF BEHAVIOR (*B*) FROM INTENTION (*I*) AND PERCEIVED
BEHAVIORAL CONTROL (PBC)

Study	Activity	Correlations		Regression coefficients		<i>R</i>
		<i>I</i>	PBC	<i>I</i>	PBC	
van Ryn & Vinokur (1990)	Job search, 10-activity index 1-month behavior post-test ^a	.41	.20	.38	.13	.42
Doll & Ajzen (1990)	Playing six video games Mean within-subjects	.49	.48	.14	.12	.51
Schlegel <i>et al.</i> (1990)	Problem drinking—frequency —quantity	.47	.48	.28	.32	.53
		.41	.60	.29	.43	.64
Ajzen & Driver (in press, a)	Five leisure activities Mean within-subjects	.75	.73	.46	.37	.78
Locke <i>et al.</i> (1984) ^b	Performance on cognitive task ^a	.57	.61	.34	.42	.66
Watters (1989)	Election participation Voting choice	.45	.31	.39	.19	.49
		.84	.76	.80	.05*	.84
Netemeyer, Burton, & Johnston (1990)	Election participation ^a Losing weight ^a	.41	.15	.52	.18*	.43
		.18	.22	.08*	.18	.23
Schifter & Ajzen (1985)	Losing weight	.25	.41	.09*	.39	.44
Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen (in press)	10 common activities Mean within-subjects	.38	.28	.34	.17	.42
Ajzen & Madden (1986)	Attending class Getting an 'A' in a course	.36	.28	.30	.11*	.37
	Beginning of semester	.26	.11*	.26	-.01*	.26
	End of semester	.39	.38	.27	.26	.45
Beck & Ajzen (in press)	Cheating, shoplifting, lying—mean	.52	.44	.46	.08*	.53
Netemeyer, Andrews, & Durvasula (1990)	Giving a gift—mean over five items	.52	.24	.52	.02*	.53

Predicting Intentions: Attitudes, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Behavioral Control

The theory of planned behavior postulates three conceptually independent determinants of intention. The first is the attitude toward the behavior and refers to the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question. The second predictor is a social factor termed subjective norm; it refers to the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior. The third antecedent of intention is the degree of perceived behavioral control which, as we saw earlier, refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior and it is assumed to reflect past experience as well as anticipated impediments and obstacles. As a general rule, the more favorable the attitude and subjective norm with respect to a behavior, and the greater the perceived behavioral control, the stronger should be an individual's intention to perform the behavior under consideration.

The relative importance of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control in the prediction of intention is expected to vary across behaviors and situations. Thus, in some applications it may be found that only attitudes have a significant impact on intentions, in others that attitudes and perceived behavioral control are sufficient to account for intentions, and in still others that all three predictors make independent contributions.