

A CONCEPTUAL STUDY USING THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR TO DETERMINE MARTIAL ARTS LEARNING BEHAVIOR IN MALAYSIA: THROUGH AIKIDO PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This purpose of this study is to examine the factors that might encourage or discourage people in learning martial arts in Malaysia. We use Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as the theoretical framework in our study and Aikido, a modern Japanese martial art as our focus. TPB has been widely used in quite number of research areas such as health, transportation and environmental, to study the behavior of its targeted respondents (e.g. students, consumers, etc.). However, there is little research that has been conducted using TPB in martial arts, especially in Malaysia. Hence, we feel that it is time to use TPB to explore the martial arts learning behavior. Future researchers will be able to use this study as the foundation for future empirical research. It is hope that future research findings will be able help and assist Aikido instructors and practitioners to popularize and develop the Art further in Malaysia.

Keywords: Martial Arts, Physical Activity, Aikido, Theory of Planned Behavior, Malaysia

Introduction

It has been said that martial arts are combat systems with roots in Asia (Winkle and Ozmun, 2003), to be more precise China (Bu et al., 2010), which eventually include Western boxing in the later years (Pollock, 1978; Ribner & Chin, 1978). There are more than 30 types of martial arts exist in the world that makes it difficult to have a standardized definition as different researchers or martial arts schools have their own definitions due to different philosophies (Anshel & Payne, 2006). For example, Cunningham's (1998) definition emphasized that the 3 principles, intellectual, moral and physical as the embodiments of martial arts while Winkle and Ozmun (2003) defined it as empty hand fighting; the use of non-weapons such as kick, punch and throw. However, a common agreement was reached in 2012 where the definition by Cynarski was adopted as the standardized definition (Cynarski & Skowron, 2014). According to the definition, it is basically an armed or unarmed combat fighting system that focused on personal development at the physical and spiritual level (Cynarski, 2004).

This is consistent in practice where practitioners tend to take up martial arts for reasons such as for self-defense (Brown & Johnson, 2000; Angleman, Shinzato, Van Hasselt & Russo, 2009), for health (Woodward, 2009; Bu et al., 2010) and for spiritual pursuits (Maliszewski, 2012; Ediyono, 2018, May). However, little empirical research had been conducted to examine the reasons behind the reason of their chosen martial arts in Malaysia. For example, what makes some practitioners choose to learn Muay Thai over other forms of martial arts? Our focus here will be on the behavioral aspect of the practitioners. Hence, to examine this phenomenon, we will be using the famed theory

of planned behavior (TPB) as the theoretical framework and Aikido as the reference martial art in this particular conceptual study.

Aikido

Aikido is a Japanese modern martial art that was created by Morihei Ueshiba in the 1920s that emphasized on joint locking, unbalancing and throwing the attackers to the ground (Aikikai Foundation, n.d.). Kuek, Shum, Chen and Choong (2017) stated that Aikido is unique in the world of martial arts due to these 3 characteristics; (i) It resolved attack by minimizing injuries to both the defender and attacker – the concept of harmony (ii) It is a pure self-defense martial art (iii) There is no competition in Aikido. However, its growth and popularity that had increased throughout the world in the early 1950s (Pranin, 1996) started its decline after 2005 until now (Gold, 2017).

Although there were past research fields conducted on Aikido such as in ethics, psychomotor learning and spiritual aspects (Poloczyk, 2017; Santos, 2017, September; Lukoff&Strozzi-Heckler, 2017), there were little significant contribution in terms of explaining the decline of Aikido. This is the reason why Aikido is chosen as a reference martial art for this study – to explore its decline by examining the determinants that influence people behavior in learning Aikido.

Literature Review

TPB was introduced by Ajzen (1985) as the extension of an earlier theory – theory of reasoned action (TRA) by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). Basically, it attempts to explain that individuals will only behave if they have intention or motivation to do so after taking consideration of three antecedents; attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, as can be seen in Figure 1.

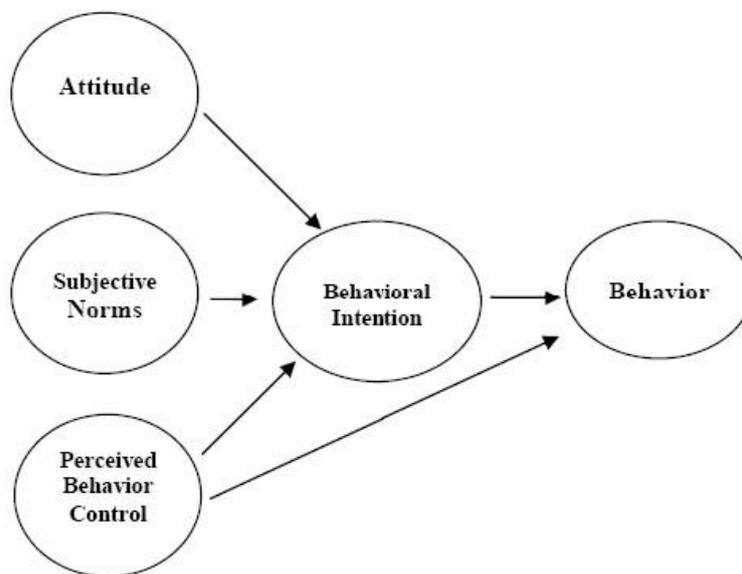


Figure 1 – Theory of Planned Behavior. Adopted from Madden, Ellen & Ajzen (1992)

Ajzen (2011) stated that TPB is one of the most influential human behavior predictive models since it was introduced and this was supported by the likes of Armitage and Conner (2001), Cooke and French (2008) and Cooke, Dahdah, Norman and French (2016). It can be seen that TPB has been widely used in different research areas such as in health related behavior (Godin & Kok, 1996; Sheeran, Conner & Norman, 2001), transportation related behavior (Bamberg, Ajzen & Schmidt, 2003; Elliott, Armitage & Baughan, 2003) and environmental related behavior (Han, Hsu & Sheu, 2010; Mahmud & Osman, 2010), just to name a few. However, little research that has been done in terms of martial arts related behavior, to be more specific the learning behavior. Hence, based on TPB’s good standing in predicting intention and behavior with utmost precision (Ajzen, 2011), this is the reason why we use TPB as our

theoretical framework.

Behavior

Behavior is basically a general term that refers to how one will act to certain situation and as mentioned earlier, we are interested in learning behavior. Learning behavior is actual behavior of students that are related to their learning situations (Thummaphan, Yoelao, Suwanmonkha&Damsuwan, 2013). There are three approaches within learning behavior where one can adopt, which are surface, deep and strategic (Miranda, Bates and Duggan, 2002). Deep is more relevant to our study as it occurs due to personal interest (Newble and Entwistle, 1986) and requires more interaction and concerns more on understanding the subject matters (Miranda, Bates and Duggan, 2002). Commonly there are two styles where one can have a meaningful experience in deep, which are active learning and social learning. According to Kyriacou, Manowe and Newson (1999), they defined active learning as 'that which gives students significant control over the learning process and the process of dealing with their learning activities' while social learning is where learning occurs due to interaction with others such as through imitation of behavior (Romero-Mujalli, Cappelletto, Herrera, &Tárano, 2017).

Behavioral Intention

A meaningful behavior will not occur unless one has the intention to perform it. As stated by Ajzen (1991), it is basically the essence of motivational factors that influence the behavior based on one's persistency and intensity in performing it. As in our study, it basically represents how dedicated one is to learn Aikido. Hence, a strong intention will increase one's likelihood to perform the behavior. Ajzen (2011) mentioned that the longer the time pass between intention and behavior, it might weaken the relationship as there might be other events in-between that can revise the intention. Hence, corrective steps should be taken should the relationship between the two become weak, such as through the use of implementation intention as suggested by Gollwitzer (1999).

Attitude

According to Ajzen (1991), attitude is an evaluation or appraisal of the behavior that one is considering to act. As Cheng, Lam and Hsu (2006) had pointed out; it is about cost-benefits analysis on the outcomes of performing such behavior. For example in our case, people could perceive Aikido as an effective self-defense, good exercise, platform for networking and etc which are beneficial to them. A favorable (benefits weights more than costs) attitude will increase the behavioral intention and vice-versa. Hence, behavioral belief that one holds plays an important role in shaping such attitude (Ajzen, 2011). Bagozzi, Lee and Van Loo (2001) mentioned that past research in TPB has always focused on the cognitive aspect and ignored the affective aspect of questions when measuring attitude. This was concurred by French et al. (2005) when they highlighted the need to consider affective determinants in the attitude measurements. However, Ajzen (2011) brushed it off by stating that there are no significant differences between the two as the affective outcomes in performing the behavior are still behavioral belief. This was supported by Wolff et al. (2011).

Subjective Norms

Subjective norms characterize a person's behavior in performing action that revolves around social or community acceptance (Ajzen, 1991). It is typical when one is being influenced or even pressured by close associates around him/her, one will likely to have a higher intention to perform the desired behavior. Past research findings establish that research participants' families and friends in Canada were found to influence them to practice tai chi as a healthy form of exercise (Desrochersa, Kairya, Pan, Corriveau & Tousignant, 2017). Similar scenario might occur in our study. For example, if Malaysian society in general has a positive impression on Aikido as a form of exercise, the intention to learn Aikido will be high.

Perceived Behavioral Control

Perceived behavioral control (PBC) can be defined as the belief of oneself in demonstrating a behavior by taking into the consideration its level of difficulty as well as one's control over it (Ajzen, 1991; Liñán & Chen, 2009; Papzan et al, 2013). For example, one need to consult within oneself whether the techniques practice in Aikido can be easily performed by one. The concept is about the same as the one advocated by Bandura (1986), which is on self- efficacy. As such, it is common for PBC to be replaced by self-efficacy as evident by Shook and Bratianu (2010), Moriano et al. (2011) and Schwarz et al. (2009). Yurtkoru et al. (2014) and Van Gelderen et al. (2008) stated that such replacement was acceptable among the scholars in this field, Lent and Hackett (1987) mentioned that self efficacy is important to persistence of performance in human beings to which Gist (1987) agreed as persistence can further enhance perceived control behavior through experience if one occasionally engaged in task related activities.

Conclusion

This paper is to introduce the theoretical framework that we will refer to in our subsequent future research, which will consist of qualitative and quantitative techniques. Focus groups will be conducted among Aikido and non-Aikido practitioners in order to find out the variables (if any) that might influence their intentions and learning behaviors. This will enable us to come out with a conceptual framework based on the TPB framework. Questionnaires with relevant variables measurement will be distributed to the targeted respondents and a structural equation model will be used for the data analysis.

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