

Modelling The Idea Of Intention Of Al-Ghazali And Comparative Review With Modern Theory Of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

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Abstract

This study discusses a comparative idea of intention between al-Ghazali and modern perspective of intention based on the notable Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). Using a multi-methods qualitative design, this study found that there were some significant differences between the concepts adopted by al-Ghazali and TPB. Although both theories validate the intention as mediating factor to actual behavior, the factors that influence the intention are disparate. Al-Ghazali emphasizes knowledge as the main trigger to intention, while modern theory of TPB emphasizes perceived behavioral control as the main predictor. This study shows how the differences between these two theories can be consolidated and integrated practically because the underlying concept of intention as a mediator to actual behaviour is identical. From the findings of this study, the model of intention from al-Ghazali's thought has been built which clearly demonstrates the differences with that of the theory of intention from the modern perspective. Although both theories are different in terms of major emphasis, nevertheless, it can be integrated into a more ethical and dynamic model of intention and behavioural action.

Keywords: intention, Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), ethics, al-Ghazali, knowledge.

Introduction

There have been numerous studies conducted on the topic of intention. It is a widely researched area in various disciplines, including psychology, sociology, philosophy, and neuroscience. Over the years, researchers have explored various aspects of intention, such as its relationship with motivation, decision-making, goal setting, and behavior. In the context of social science, the variable 'intention' is often the focus for researchers as it provides insights into how individuals make decisions and act. Intention focuses on an individual's goal or purpose in carrying out an action, and plays an important role in understanding human behavior.

Ajzen (1991) states that intention variable plays an important role in understanding human behavior. In the Theory of Reasoned Action, intention is viewed as the main factor influencing an individual's actions. As for Bratman (1987), he stated that a deliberate act was carried out with a specific purpose as a desire of intention to give meaning and significance to the action.

Other researcher like Johnson-Laird *et.al* (1995); Basnight-Brown *et.al* (2018); and Maia (2018) argue that intention is a mental state that represents the purpose, desire, or motivation of the individual. Although views are different, this scientific theory is geared towards understanding behavior and decision-making for a particular action.

For al-Ghazali (1058-1111), a renowned scholar of the mediaeval Islam, he discusses intention in the context of ethics and philosophical standpoint rather than scientific. Al-Ghazali's ideas on intention are discussed in the Book of Intentions (*Kitab al-Niyyah*) in his magnum opus - the "The Revival of the Religious Sciences" (al-Ghazali, 1990) or remarkably known in its original language as *Ihya' Ulumuddin*. In *Ihya'*, the concept of intention is very important that leads to contentment or vice versa depending on its good or bad intention. In this book, al-Ghazali uses narrative and hermeneutics approaches to elucidate the concept of intention. He also engages with related narration from the real life of righteous people to reinforce the arguments on the importance of intention in one's life.

The general idea of intention, according to al-Ghazali, is the starting point of all actions, whether religious or worldly. He argued that intention is a conscious decision to do something and is what distinguishes between actions that are worship and those that are not. Further, according to him, intention forms the essence of an action and determine its legal status, either good or bad.

Al-Ghazali further defined intention as the key element in the performance of religious practices such as prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage, and it is the factor that determines their acceptability to God. He believed that there are three degrees of intention. The first degree is the intention of the heart or the "inferential sense" which provides direction to human thought and desires. The second degree is the intention of the tongue or the "vocal sense," which articulates human desire and determination.

Finally, there is the intention of action, or the "real intention" which is driven by the first two intentions.

Al-Ghazali's concept of intention differs from the modern concept of intention in several ways. While modern psychology and cognitive sciences view intention as a mental state that refers to one's conscious decision to act, al-Ghazali's concept of intention extends beyond the cognitive realm and encompasses spiritual and religious dimensions. Al-Ghazali's concept of intention is rooted in the spiritual realm and is closely linked to morality and ethics. In contrast, the modern concept of intention tends to focus more on individual motivation and self-determination.

The debate on the fundamental differences between the concept of intention by al-Ghazali and modern is essential because it reveals how different epoches and traditions approach the same concepts differently. It is also important because overlapping and divergent beliefs about intention can lead to conflicts in various settings, such as legal, cultural, academic and religious circles.

1.1 Problem statement

There are significant differences between al-Ghazali and some contemporary views on the concept of intention. The differences can be observed such as in Fishbein *et.al* (2017), Bratman (1987), and Johnson-Laird *et.al* (1995) which lies in the approaches and theories they use in explaining the concept of intention. Generally, al-Ghazali's views intention from ethical aspects as a very important element in a person's life to seek the blessing of God. Al-Ghazali stresses that intention should be grown and developed from training and spiritual awareness through the mastery of true knowledge (al-Ghazali, 2017), whereas contemporary scholars view intention as an important factor that influences one's behavior without emphasizing on ethical context such as in al-Ghazali, but rather focusing on its practicality on how a person makes decisions based on the factors that have been identified as predictors. For example, according to Fishbein *et.al* (2010), intention is the result of interaction between attitudes, subjective norms, and perception of control. This theory emphasizes that intention is an important factor in predicting a person's behavior and that behavioral control play a larger role in determining intentions follows by attitudes and subjective norms (Fishbein *et.al*, 2010; Sheeran, 2002; Strobe *et.al*, 2006). All these differences demand a clear framework that needs to be developed to show how these differences occur both from al-Ghazali and contemporary scholarship in the field of social sciences including ethics.

Literature Review

In a contemporary context, intention is accepted by most scholars as central to a behavior. Rogers (1983) defined intention as an internal motivation of oneself to act or achieve a goal as an internal process of self. While Sheeran *et.al* (2016) express intention as an option for

commitment to behave in a certain pattern as a mental and emotional act. For Fishbein *et.al* (2010), intention is the only determinant of any reasoned action as a result of the interaction between three factors, namely attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control.

For Coner *et.al* (2022), there is rarely a literature that examines variance in intention as a gap to intention and behaviour. Coner *et.al* further suggested several moderators to the relationship of intention-behaviour, for instance, goal dimensions, basis of intention, structure of intention, past behavior/habit, personality and socio- demographic factors, and temporal stability to study variance in intention. Coner *et.al* also suggests attitude strength as the main predictor that plays the role of influencing intensity to intention.

In the study on intention from the perspective of ethics and religiosity, several studies have been conducted to demonstrate the role of intention to the formation of internal ethics such as positive psychology and good value and spiritual goals (Sharaf al-Din *et.al*, 2016; Mohammad, 2016; Saritoprak, 2023), and the role of intention to draw closer to the God as pre-requisites to an act of worship (Norliana *et.al*, 2019; Abdullah *et.al*, 2021).

Apart from the aspect of religiosity, intention from an Islamic perspective is also discussed by Norliana *et.al* in the aspect of entrepreneurship by linking worldly activities as a bridge to hereafter (*ukhrawi*), intention to use Islamic estate planning (Kamarudin NS *et.al*, 2019), impact of Islamic values towards social entrepreneurship (Parisa *et.al*, 2020), intention to adopt halal cosmetic (Nurafni *et.al*, 2022) , intention to adopt Islamic Banking in Pakistan using TPB (Shahab *et. al*, 2018) and so forth. In the context of social *muammalat*, many of the studies on intention lent a framework from Ajzen or from other western scholars and applied to the field of contemporary Islamic *muammalat*.

In terms of the role of knowledge and its contribution to intention, most contemporary studies have shown that knowledge are debated as an antecedent to intention using Theory of Reason Action (TRA) instead of Theory of Planned Behaviour such as Eltahir *et.al* (2020), Okyere-Kwakye *et.al* (2020) and Rahab (2013), who discusses the role of knowledge towards intention for the purpose of knowledge sharing. The same goes to Muhammad *et.al* (2019) who uses TRA when discussing the influence of knowledge on intention to purchase Islamic takaful products. From the perspective of knowledge and its relevance to intention, most of the debates are discussed from the aspect of knowledge itself and its role in ~~all~~ worldly activities and generally separated from the intention. For instance, Kabuye (2022) discusses the role of knowledge towards the formation of individual morals, while Mostofa *et.al* (2020) discusses on the knowledge management from an Islamic perspective whereas, Adeela (2020) writes about knowledge in the Islamization of knowledge perspective.

The debate on the influence of knowledge towards intention in the worldview of Islam can be found extensively in the book of *Ihya*, however, still lacking in the modern-day discourses. This may be due to some lacking in certain areas such as a lack of interest in such a small matter, or there may be a lack of suitable resources due to the diverse range of knowledge in Islamic thought and the difficulty of obtaining reliable sources that reflect contemporary views on this relationship.

Among other possibilities, debating this topic requires skills in interdisciplinary knowledge as the link between knowledge and intention is a very complex issue that requires the integration of various disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, theology and social sciences which is a big challenge that can deter some researchers from exploring this particular topic. Thus, this research paper clearly leaves a considerable gap to be discussed in this study on the theory of al-Ghazali on knowledge and how it can affect intention.

Methodology

This comparative study uses multi-methods design which is a combination of qualitative methods which are hermeneutics, narrative and meta analysis. The primary source of this study is from the magnum opus al-Ghazali, *Ihya Ulumuddin*. The researcher uses the hermeneutics research approach as a method of text interpretation to understand the meaning in religious texts. In this view, the book of *Ihya* in the translated version of English (al-Ghazali, 1990) and in Indonesian language (al-Ghazali, 2017) have been used. In addition, the researcher also uses the literature analysis method that involves synthesizing and analyzing existing research on a particular topic and also meta-analysis that involves combining the results of multiple studies to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon that uses Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) specifically.

Findings

4.1 The concept of intention from contemporary perspective

The concept of Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) has evolved from the concept of Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). TRA describes the relationship between attitude and subjective norm and its influence on intention, and subsequently actual behaviour which was developed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1967). TRA was later improved to TPB by Ajzen (1998) by adding a variable that is perceived behavioral control as the third variable and this theory later became a very important theory for many researchers to date in the study of human behaviour. In modern social sciences study, this TPB theory has been studied in several key domains such as healthcare, technology, advertising, consumer behaviour, human resource, administration and many others that make TPB almost dominant to most research in the field of behavioural studies.

The TPB explains that each of this behavior starts from a self-belief system consisting of three main triggers which are behavioral belief, normative belief and control belief. Behavioral belief triggers individual attitude, normative belief causes subjective norms and control belief activates perceived behavioral control. Of these three self-belief components then influence intention which is the main cause for human behavior.

In terms of behavioral belief, it is an individual's thinking towards the consequences of a particular behavior based on the subjective possibilities that may be generated. From this belief, it will produce attitudes towards that particular behavior. Specifically, the assessment of each outcome contributes to a subjective decision depending on the individual's knowledge and experience in assessing the outcome.

The theory used in controlled belief systems is the result of an extension of the self-efficacy theory originally developed by Bandura *et.al* (1977). Self-efficacy is a belief in oneself to act. A person with high self-efficacy tends to see a challenge as something that needs to be overcome and will strive to defeat all obstacles and have a strong mental preparation to face any risk. On the other hand, low self-efficacy tends to see a challenge as threat and will not want to take such risks. Low self-efficacy indicates that a person has low motivation and high prevalence to cope with depression in the event of failure. From this level of self-efficacy, then, it triggers perceived behavioral control.

Whereas from the aspect of normative belief, it is an individual's belief in another person or a particular cluster that is thought to be important and influences the individual to perform or not a certain behavior (Ajzen *et.al*, 1972). It is based on value, rooted in the perspective of an individual with a certain belief that he belongs to this cluster so that this individual can be accepted. In social psychology, normative behaviour has three approaches which are obedience, conformity and compliance (Elsenbroich *et.al*, 2012). From these three approaches, then subjective norms will be generated and will affect the intention of an individual.

4.2 The concept of Intention in al-Ghazali

Al-Ghazali, a prominent Islamic philosopher and theologian of 11th century, argued that intention is an important part of achieving spiritual truth in his writings in *Ihya Ulum al Din* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences). He defined intention as "the desired love (*mahabbah*) that lies in the heart of the believer," which, for Al-Ghazali, it is an important aspect of intention. Al-Ghazali explains that the true love of God should be the main motivation behind all actions of a believer, and it should be reflected in their intentions. He argues that when a person truly loves God, they will naturally strive to perform actions that are pleasing to Him, and their intentions will be pure and sincere. Additionally, he stated that "intention from the heart is like a pilot of a ship who steers it through the ocean." This implies that intention is a form of mental navigation and it's the key to reaching true spiritual success.

Al-Ghazali further stressed that the intention lies between knowledge and deeds. Thus, it is understood that intention is the mediator between knowledge and deeds. In the text of *Ihya'*, he uses the term 'intention' and 'will' to describe both identical ideas. However, both terms are not always used interchangeably. Al-Ghazali sees intention as a mental process, while will (*iradah*) as the power of decision and determination to carry out an action. In addition, al-Ghazali also categorizes knowledge, will and ability as an accompaniment to the deeds. However, for al-Ghazali, even though the three factors are fulfilment to the deeds, knowledge and will always interact because people do not want to something unknown. The same goes for ability.

The dimension of knowledge, according to al-Ghazali, is created in the form of identification (*makrifah*) and indication (*hidayah*) to know and recognize the benefits or harms. Whereas for the dimension of will, it is created together with the three types of dimensions which are lust, inclination and desire. Al-ghazali analogically makes the parable of a terminally ill person lacking desire and tendency towards fulfilling the desires of lust. In terms of ability, without it, the will cannot be fulfilled as the paralyzed person cannot afford to take food to satisfy his will.

The ability is driven by knowledge and conjecture (*dzan*) of knowledge and determination (*i'tikad*) of will. When a will arises, then awaken the ability accompanied by determination. Al-Ghazali uses an analogy in which a person who is chased by a wild beast will arouse the ability and intention to escape the danger. Thus, it can be concluded that ability also affects intention.

This is in line with the findings obtained from Liao *et.al* (2020) in a study about entrepreneurial knowledge and cognition as antecedents of entrepreneurial intention found that entrepreneur's knowledge has significant influence on intention to drive performance of the firms. This means that a person's cognitive abilities, such as knowledge, memory, reasoning and problem solving abilities, can influence one's intention to perform a certain task or behavior. Jiatong *et.al* (2021) study on the student intention to pursue entrepreneurship also found that the knowledge as a result of cognitive process influence intention to engage a career in entrepreneurships.

From the explanation of the concept of intention in TPB, the researcher is able to draw a comparison between the modern approach and al-Ghazali's method in explaining the concept of intention as presented in the following table, thus developing the concept model of intention from the perspective of al-Ghazali:-

Table 1

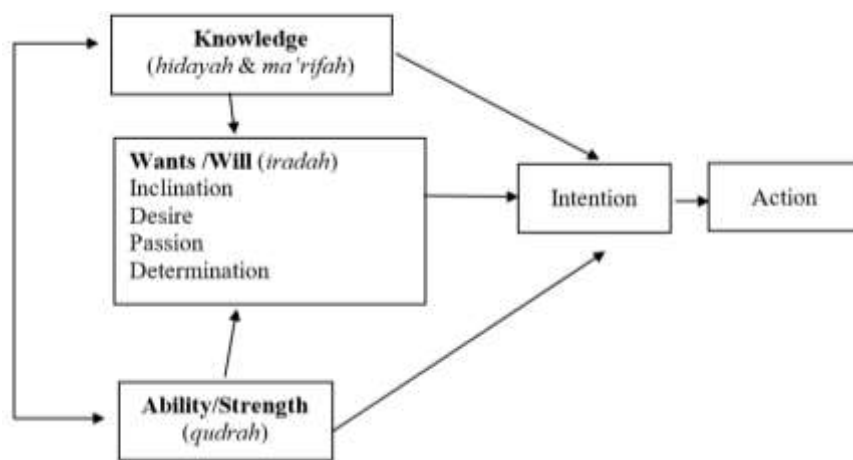
General classification of the theories related to intention

Authors	Abu Hamid al-Ghazali	Ajzen (1985) – Theory of Planned Behaviour Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980), Theory of Reasoned Action Bandura <i>et.al</i> (1977) – Self-Efficacy Theory
Civilization	Medieval Age	Modern Western
Century of Origin	11th century	20 th Century
Philosophical Paradigms	Interpretivism, narrative	Positivism
Purpose	To explain the important role of knowledge in influencing every desire and ability to produce intentions in the context of the religious framework	To explain the role of intention on actual behavior that are triggered by certain stimulus at a specific time and place and different from each other.
Type of Source	Hermeneutics and narrative	Empirical through survey research on the respondents
Major Themes	Intention is influenced largely by individual knowledge, followed by wants/will and ability. Ability and knowledge are strongly interconnected to influence wants/will. The intention will incline to bad decision if not supported with proper knowledge. Knowledge is the strongest trigger that leads to intention and behavior. Man will not want or do anything if he has no knowledge about what he actually wants or wanted to do.	Intention is influence by attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. Many research indicate that perceived behavior control is the major determinant of intention. Whereas, direct experience from external stimuli is the major factor that form the attitude. Subjective norms depend on external association of approval of disapproval that leads to rational or emotional behavior.
Emphasis	The role of knowledge on shaping behavior and character development through good intention	Perceived behaviour control is the largest antecedent that influence intention in determining actual behavior. Knowledge though influence attitude, but only with small contribution.
Outcome	Inner character (ethics and morality) development to underpin own actual	Identify the strength of the tendency to act in certain way as a result of internal and

	behavior as a result of internal qualities.	external antecedents/ stimulus.
Summary points	Knowledge plays an important role for wants and abilities so that the intention produced leads to commendable behavior.	Individuals act based on sense-making stimuli to produce rational or emotional actions due to internal and external influences

To facilitate the understanding of al-Ghazali's theory of intention, the researcher have built a framework that explains the position of each variable written by al-Ghazali in *Ihya*. Although al-Ghazali's description uses narrative and intepretive methods, it does look at the role of intention on behavior. By comparing with that of the the modern concept of TPB, it clearly demonstrates that there are differences and at the same time close relevance. Al-Ghazali theory of intention takes a religious approach to understanding human actions based on spiritual strength, importance of perfection and spiritual soul for a change in attitude. While the modern theory of intention relates to cognitive, sociological and social behavior to understand how people take fundamental decisions. However, both theories acknowledge that intentions have a significant impact on the behavior of an individual. Following is the framework that demonstrates al-Ghazali's theory of intention.

Figure 1 : The model of intention of al-Ghazali



Conclusion

Observing the two frameworks presented by both past and modern scholars, there is a huge gap in the concept of intention. For al-Ghazali, the intention of always producing good deeds must be included in the context of religion, which should always be in harmony with oneself by not being inclined to fulfill his passions alone. In other words, al-Ghazali explained the concept of intention based on the framework of ethics which started from knowledge as the most important trigger, in

accordance with the beginning chapter of his magnum opus, where al-Ghazali deals with knowledge as the system of ethics as way of life.

It also can be said that every antecedent and dimension in influencing intentions and actions as shown in the modern TPB theory has nothing in common with the theory of intention put forward by al-Ghazali. Psychologically, TPB explains how an action goes through a process of rationalization to internal and external stimuli that are rational or emotional, based on scientific methods and does not position knowledge as the main antecedent, but rather attitude as the main trigger to the formation of intentions, followed by subjective norms and perceived behavioural control, as many research suggest.

Between these two theories, researcher suggests that the demarcation between these two concepts is very obvious yet significant but still has the space to be organized as an integrated framework between these two traditions. The justification for integrating al-Ghazali and TPB can be seen through the role of knowledge as a moderator or predictor, and wants or will as mediation to the intention. This is for the reason that both al-Ghazali and TPB theories indicate that intention is a trigger for behaviour. The outcome of this integration can even be a factor that promotes ethical behaviour especially in the current state of society with a thirst for positive and universal values.

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