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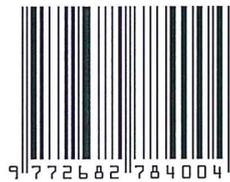
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PUBLIC INTENTION TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE IN MALAYSIA: A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Child abuse is a prevailing problem for Malaysia and the evidence has shown that the reporting level is still low and most of the child abuse cases go unreported due to stigma and attitudes of most Malaysians (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2020). Thus, this study aims to identify the factors associated with public' intention to report child abuse by testing a hypothetical model and (2) to investigate the significant predictor on with public' intention to report child abuse. A convenience sample of 252 respondents was used. The research instruments were adapted from Child Abuse Report Intention Scale (CARIS) and the results of Pearson correlation and multiple regression were presented. Our finding first discovered that attitude ($r = -0.380$, $p = 0.000$), subjective norm ($r = 0.410$, $p = 0.000$), and perceived behavioural control ($r = 0.440$, $p = 0.000$) were significantly associated with the intention to report child abuse. Second, subjective norm emerges as the strongest predictor towards intention to report for child abuse ($\beta = 0.36$, $p = 0.000$). Research and managerial implications are provided.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Child abuse cases have become widespread across countries. According to Malaysian Child Act 2001, child is defined as anyone under the age of 18 where under Section 17(2) stipulates that a child is considered abused when there are substantive and overt signs of abuse on the child. According to Ministry of Health Malaysia (2020), child abuse can be categorized into four different types of abuse which are: (1) physical abuse, (2) sexual abuse, (3) emotional abuse, and (4) neglect. From the health perspective, World Health Organisation (1999) defines child abuse as all forms of physical abuse and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm, to the child's health, survival, and development (as cited in Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2020)

Child abuse is prevalent in Malaysia. Based on newspaper reports and studies, one in 10 children in Malaysia has been sexually abused and almost 95% of the abusers are known and family related to the victims (Indramalar, 2019). Based on the recent statistics produced by Department of Social Welfare Malaysia (2018), there are 6,274 cases of child abuse that have been reported. Most of child abuse cases occurs due to family dispute (refer to Table 1).

Table 1: Children in Need of Care and Protection by Cause of Abuse (2018)

Cause of Abuse	No. of Cases
Family Dispute	958
Alcoholic	59
Hyperactive	58
Care by others during childhood	120
Formerly abused	18
Mental problem	116
Gambler	24
Step child/Adopted child	111
Naive believe/Tradition	26
Addict	518
Carelessness parent/Guardian	815
Financial problem	870
Illegitimate child	181
Involved with crimes	146
Sex Crazy	113
Deformed baby/child	10
Follow boyfriend	742
Unknown	477
Others	912
Total	6,274

Source: Department of Social Welfare Malaysia (2018). Children in Need of Care and Protection by Cause of Abuse, 2018. Retrieved from <http://www.jkm.gov.my/>

In the efforts to address child abuse, the government introduce Child Act 2001 and Child Sexual Offences Act. A Special Child Sexual Crimes Court was also launched to handle sexual crimes against children. Offenders may be liable to a maximum fine of RM50, 000 or to imprisonment of up to 20 years, or both depending on the offence. Offenders may also be punished with whipping in addition to the fine and/or imprisonment (Child Act 2001, 2001).

Even though child abuse be regarded as trivial matter in Malaysia, however, the number of cases reported has continue to increase every year. The number of unreported cases also still being debatable due to lack of studies, statistics, and evidence. Feng and

Levine (2005) study has revealed that 86% respondents said they had never reported a child abuse case and 80% respondents never had any child abuse education. In a similar vein, Tiyyagura et al. (2017) highlighted several factors hinder people to report for child abuse. These include: fear of being wrong; fear of caregiver reactions; and lack of time and resources. Based on a narrative review study of 56 papers, Azizi and Shahhosseini (2017) organized barriers to reporting for child abuse into four categories. These include: individual barriers (knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs, inadequate experiences, and uncertainty of the cases), interpersonal barriers (fear of violation of privacy and secrecy principles), organizational barriers (poor communication and weak legal processes for reporting), and situational barriers (victims' characteristics and available evidence).

Thus, employing theory of planned behaviour, the aim of this study is to examine factors that influence public intention to report for child abuse cases. In particular, this study aims to examine the influence of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control towards reporting intention. In addition, this study also aims to identify the most significant predictor among the identified determinants. The present study adds to the literature in three ways. First, based on theory of planned behavior, this study provided insights to academics and practitioners on an overview of the defined factors that can potentially determine public' intention to report child abuse. Second, the application of the study within the context of Malaysian public advanced the current knowledge in the behavioural literature by providing the management and researchers with a reliable tool to assess or further develop the extent of the identified factors. Thus, this study aims to produce an empirically tested model from the context of the Eastern setting (Malaysia). Furthermore, the findings from previous studies might be no longer valid since certain demographic characteristics have changed due to changes. Hence, a new research is justified.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) is used as underlying theory for this study. TPB asserted that behavioural intention is depends on three factors: 1) attitude; 2) subjective norm; and 3) perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). Ajzen (1988) developed the Theory of Planned Behavior as an off-shoot of the Theory of Reasoned Action. Attitude refers to the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question (Ajzen, 1988). Subjective norm refers to a person's beliefs that specific individuals or groups think he or she should or should not perform the behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Finally, perceived behavioral control refers to volitional control means a person must have the resources, opportunity, and support available to perform a specific behavior (Ajzen, 1991). TPB has been adopted by many studies in evaluating people intention (e.g., Cho & Kim, 2016; Christodoulou, Abakoumkin, & Tseliou, 2019).

2.1 Attitude, Subjective Norm, and Perceived Behavioral Control, and Intention to Report

Based on the review of empirical literatures, Ayling, Walsh, and Williams (2020) identified that knowledge and training, attitudes, thresholds for reporting, work experience and context, inter-organisational co-operation and self-efficacy can act as barriers and facilitators to effective reporting practice. Cho and Kim' (2016) descriptive study towards 202 nursing students found that attitude towards punishment of parents, professional responsibility, and perceived behavioral control have significant influence towards child abuse reporting. Then, Kim and Park (2005) towards 171 nurses has found that the respondents are unwilling to report for child abuse if they have negative attitude towards child discipline and vice versa. Walsh et al. (2012) study on a sample of 470 teachers has found that intention to report child abuse are influenced by knowledge of reporting legislation and policy, attitudes, and reporting practices. In this case,

when people has negative attitude towards child abuse in which they do not believe child abuse is serious case or issue, therefore, they tend to ignore child abuse cases.

In term of subjective norm, Malaysia also has been facing some taboos on child abuse. For instance, whipping is something has been practiced by our parents as to teach children, therefore, community is unaware or tend to ignore child abuse. Child abuse is regards as unserious cases in Malaysia. Furthermore, due to lack of control or barrier (perceived behavioural control) such as resource, rule and regulation, guidance, and facilities, people unwilling to report for child abuse. For instance, Silva-Oliveira et al. (2020) discovered that there is a high frequency of non-reporting behaviour and reporting was associated with a willingness to be involved in detecting abuse, and knowing where to report. In Malaysia, even though mandated report has been introduced under Child Act 2001, in which people need to report for child abuse, if not they will be fine with fine not more that RM5000 or jail sentence not more than 2 years or both (Child Act 2001, Section 27-29), the enforcement of these laws are still weak and low. McTavish et al. (2017) study towards 42 studies has found that 14% described positive experience from mandated reporting (14%). On the other hand, 73% articles found negative consequences from mandated reporting.

Therefore, barriers for reporting need to be overcome by providing more resources, platforms, facilities, and supports to public for assisting them to report for child abuse. For instance, Lee and Chou (2017) discovered that nurse self-efficacy in reporting child abuse and neglect cases would improve after completing the Child Abuse and Neglect Training Program for Nurses. Therefore, we proposed the following hypotheses:

- H1:** There is significant relationship between attitude and intention to report for child abuse
- H2:** There is significant relationship between subjective norm and intention to report for child abuse
- H3:** There is significant relationship between perceived behavioral control and intention to report for child abuse

From the theoretical model and the previous related studies, a research hypothesis model adopted in this study is given in Figure 1

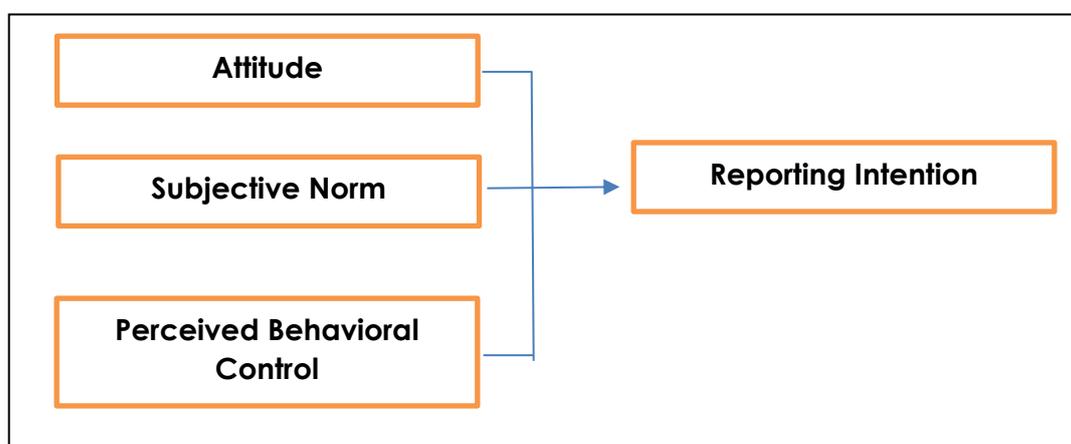


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researchers used a convenience sampling as the sampling technique. The rationale of this sampling was easily accessible, quick, and convenience (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). A self-administered questionnaire was given to the respondents, this study received a return feedback of 252 respondents. The participants' demographic characteristics are presented in Table 2. Most of the respondents were females (n=196, 77.8%) and the remaining of respondents represent were males (n=56, 22.2%). Then, most of the respondents were coming from age group of 19-28 years old (n=187, 74.2%). This follows with 29-39 years old (n=40, 15.9), 40-50 years old (n=12, 4.1), 51-60 years old (n=10, 4.0), above 61 years old (n=2, 0.8), and below 18 years old (n=1, 0.4). Next, it shows that most of the respondents was unemployed at (n = 155, 61.5%) follows by 52 respondents from private sector (10.6%), 27 respondents from government sector (10.7%), and self-employed at (n = 18, 7.1%).

Table 2: Demographic Profile

Profile		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	56	22.2
	Female	196	77.8
Age	Below 18 years old	1	0.4
	19-28 years old	187	74.2
	29-39 years old	40	15.9
	40-50 years old	12	4.1
	51-60 years old	10	4.0
	Above 61 years old	2	0.8
Employment Sector	Government Sector	27	10.7
	Private Sector	52	20.6
	Self-Employed	18	7.1
	Unemployed	155	61.5

In this study, the questions were adapted from Child Abuse Report Intention Scale (CARIS). Items were derived from the qualitative study, the TPB theoretical model, and the literature (Giovannoni & Becerra, 1979; Hong & Hong, 1991; Zellman, 1992). Items are scored from strongly disagree=1 to strongly agree = 5. Following are items for each variable:

Attitude

- I do not know much about child abuse
- Reporting for child abuse cases is not my responsible
- I am not interested in the idea of reporting for child abuse cases
- I do not think reporting for child abuse cases has many positive effects in the society
- I will not make a great personal effort to report for child abuse cases as much as possible

Subjective Norm

- Most people who are important to me think that I should report for child abuse cases

- Most people who are important to me would approve if I do report for child abuse cases
- Most people who are important to me want me to engage in reporting for child abuse cases
- Most of my family think that reporting for child abuse is a good thing to do
- If more people would be reporting for child abuse cases I would also do the same

Perceived Behavioural Control

- There are plenty of alternatives for me to make a report nearby my place
- The authorities at my place provides satisfactory resources for reporting child abuse cases
- I know where to make a report on child abuse cases at my place
- I know what steps to take to report a case of Child Abuse if I am aware of one

Reporting Intention

- I intend to report for child abuse cases if it happens around me
- I intend to report for child abuse cases even though I do not know where the victim is
- I will try to report for child abuse cases if it happens in my family

Prior to commence a hypothesis analysis, the reliability analysis was first conducted. Nunnally (1978) highlighted that reliability value between 0.50 until 0.60 is sufficient for the early stages in any research (i.e., pilot study). Sekaran (1992) also provided that the minimum acceptable reliability coefficient level was at 0.60. Then, in examining the normality of the data, the value of skewness should fall within the range of -2.0 to +2.0 and the value of kurtosis should fall within the range of -7.0 to +7.0 to indicate the normal distribution (Mardia, 1985). Finally, to test hypothesis, Pearson correlation coefficients and multiple regression analyses were used to determine the relationships among the variables.

4. RESULTS

Table 3: Reliability Results

Variable	Cronbach Alpha	Number of Items
Independent Variables:		
Attitude	0.70	6
Subjective Norm	0.81	5
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.81	6
Dependent Variable:		
Reporting Intention	0.90	5

Table 3 shows the Cronbach's Alpha values for the study variables are Attitude (0.70), Subjective Norm (0.81), Perceived Behavioral Control (0.81), and Reporting Intention. The reliabilities less than 0.60 are considered to be poor, those in the 0.70 range are acceptable, and those over 0.80 are good (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013, p. 293), therefore, the reliability assumptions are fulfilled.

Table 4: Normality Results

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis (Kline 2003)
Independent Variables:				
Attitude	2.11	0.54	1.61	4.00
Subjective Norm	4.46	0.63	-1.22	1.39
Perceived Behavioral Control	3.8	0.76	-0.28	-0.09
Dependent Variable:				
Reporting Intention	4.38	0.68	-1.47	3.62

The value of skewness should fall within the range of -2.0 to +2.0 and the value of kurtosis should fall within the range of -7.0 to +7.0 to indicate the normal distribution; otherwise the distribution for the respective items departs from normality (Mardia, 1985). Based on the results of the normality test, this study fulfilled the assumption of normality (refer Table 4).

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Results

		Intention to Report
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	-0.380**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	0.000
	N	252
Subjective Norm	Pearson Correlation	0.410**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	0.000
	N	252
Perceived Behavioral Control	Pearson Correlation	0.440**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	0.000
	N	252

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

Based on Table 5, there are significant positive relationships between attitude ($r = -0.380, p = 0.000$), subjective norm ($r = 0.410, p = 0.000$), and perceived behavioral control ($r = 0.440, p = 0.000$) towards intention to report for child abuse. Therefore, H1, H2, and H3 were accepted.

Table 6: Regression Results

Variable	Beta	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Attitude	-0.22	0.00	0.88	1.14
Subjective Norm	0.36	0.00	0.69	1.45
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.07	0.00	0.69	1.45
R ²	0.39			
Adjusted R ²	0.38			
F Change	33.27			
Sig.	0.00			

Multiple linear regression was used to assess the degree to which the independent variables were associated with public' reporting intention. It revealed that a linear combination of the three independent variables explained 39% of the variance in public' intention. The beta value of attitude was $\beta = -0.22, p = 0.000$, subjective norm was $\beta = 0.36, p = 0.000$, and perceived behavioral control was $\beta = 0.07, p = 0.000$ (refer Table 6). Therefore, subjective norm emerges as the strongest predictor towards intention to report for child abuse.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In summary, the present findings serve as preliminary evidence on the factors that influence of public' intention to report child abuse. Attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control has been discovered to influence public intention to report for child abuse case. These findings are consistent with previous studies such as Ayling, Walsh, and Williams (2020), Cho and Kim (2016), and Kim and Park (2005). Subjective norm also was found as the most significant factor affects public' reporting intention on child abuse. In other word, this mean people is relying on others' opinions in making decision to report for child abuse. For instance, Atencion et al. (2019) study revealed that 94% of the participating nurses agreed that they will issued report of they had strong social support. Thus, professional counselling and social support should be offered to public community to help them in making child abuse report.

The government, local authorities, responsible bodies, or NGOs also need to educate the public on the extent of harm or seriousness of abuse. In this case, the information on reporting procedures should be continuously disseminate to the public. These are to overcome several perceived barriers such as uncertainty about the requirements of current legislation, unsure about the indicators of abuse, or being afraid to make false reports that would lead to negative consequences and civil liability. Specific training course and workshops need to be provided to the social workers or volunteers to train them in identifying child abuse, reporting procedures, reporter responsibilities, types of child abuse, and child abuse legislation (Bryant & Baldwin, 2010).

These findings are significant contributions to the existing literature, but several limitations of the present study need to be addressed. First, the cross-sectional design did not permit us to draw causal inferences. Therefore, future studies should adopt longitudinal design where the data is collected from the same sample continuously over a period of time. Further, all the variables were assessed using self-report measures, which create response biases. Future

research is encourage to adopt more objective measure such as observation, interview study, and triangulation study. Finally, our model is limited since we only focus on three determinants which are attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control. Future research can build the current model by adding other variables such as demographic factors, mediating and moderating variables, and other factors which should be further examined.

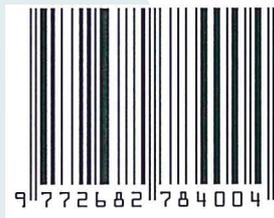
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