

Factors Influencing Continuing Professional Education Compliance Behavior among Accountants in Malaysia

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Purpose – This paper examines the factors influencing continuing professional education compliance behavior.

Design/methodology/approach – An online survey of professional accountants in Malaysia was carried out, yielding 228 valid responses. Theory of planned behavior (TPB) is used to develop the theoretical framework. The study used partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) to validate the study's instruments, examined the structural model and the predictive relevance of its model.

Findings – The outcomes confirm the suitability of both the TPB and PLS_SEM in the study of CPE compliance behavior among accountants in Malaysia. Result reveals CPE compliance behavior is significantly determined by intention, as well as significant relationship between attitude and perceived behavior control with CPE compliance intention.

Practical implications – Relevant authorities and CPE organizers may use the findings of the study to further understand the factors that could influence the intention and behavior of accountants with regards to CPE compliance, thus helps to generate a more effective strategies and policies to boost the CPE compliance rate among accountants.

Originality/value – This study investigates TPB in the context of CPE compliance behavior among accountants. In addition, the suitability of PLS=SEM as a statistical tool in examining the TPB as well as its implication for theory and practice were also deliberated.

Keywords – Accountants, Continuing professional education, Theory of planned behavior.

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1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of knowledge and technology have raised concern on professional obsolescence among the professionals. The issue of professional obsolescence arises due to changes in the required knowledge and skills to fulfill professional obligation in the current environment (Clayton, Jonas, Harding, Harris, & Toze, 2013; Meyer, 2007). As with other professionals, accountants are also facing similar obsolescence issue (Muhammad Syahir, Mohamad Hisyam, &

Ram Al-Jaffri, 2013). Accountants provide various important services such as accounting, auditing, taxation and management consulting, both to the government and public. Professional accountants need to be up to date and competent to ensure they could fulfill their obligation effectively and efficiently, thus uphold the interest of their clients. Due to this, learning activities are very important to the professionals in accounting profession (Hicks, Bagg, Doyle, & Young, 2007).

Currently, numerous professionals in various professions have engage in continuing professional education (CPE) programs to ensure they remain current (De Lange, Jackling, & Suwardy, 2015). CPE activities is vital to develops and maintains professional competence which enable accountants to perform competently, thus protect the interest of their clients and the public (IAESB, 2012). CPE is an essential need for accountants as it ensures that members continue to participate in learning activities that will uphold and build their competencies; and to retain the high regard and respect it has earned in the profession(MIA, 2015). On top of that, these learning activities are also vital to help uplift the image of the profession in addressing the loss of public confidence due to major fraud cases involving accountants such as Enron and Worldcom(Yuthas, Dillard, & Rogers, 2004). Meanwhile, Muhammad Syahir et al. (2013)contended that CPE is vital to accountants because it could help to address several issues, i.e. (1) to overcome professional obsolescence, (2) to keep abreast with changes in financial reporting practices, (3) to curb accounting malpractices, (4) to distribute knowledge and expertise, and (5) to overcome competitive pressures.

Professional accountants in Malaysia have to comply with the CPE requirements as imposed by the Malaysian Institute of Accountants (MIA) code of ethics (MIA By-Laws, 2017). The CPE audit report by MIA, however, reveals that 70 percent or 7521 members not in practice and 30 percent or 648 members not in practice have failed to comply with the imposed CPE requirements. Member in practice refers to a member who provides or is engaged in public practice services and holds a valid practicing certificate (MIA By-Laws, 2017). Results of the CPE audits by the MIA's CPE Compliance Unit from 2011 to 2014 reveals some not so encouraging result, with compliance rates of 40 percent for year 2011, 35 percent for 2012 and 40 percent for 2013(MIA, 2015).

Failure to comply with the CPE requirement among professional accountants is a serious issue which need to be urgently addressed. Such incompliance could affect professional competency level, thus affecting abilities to perform professional duties effectively and efficiently (The Committee to Strengthen the Accountancy Profession, 2014).Even though MIA has made it compulsory for professional accountants to engage in CPE programs and activities, more than a third of its members still fail to comply with such requirements. Current literatureshave not specifically discussed this phenomenon. Therefore, it is crucial for a specific study to be conducted to explain the issues related to CPE compliance among accountants in Malaysia. This study would be able to generate better understanding on determinants affecting CPE compliance so that proper measures could be taken to improve the issue in the future.

The rather low CPE compliance rate among accountants could resulted from various factors such as management or behavior factors. Muhammad Syahir, Ram Al-Jaffri, & Mohd. Amir (2016) reveals that factors that inhibit accountants from engaging in CPE activities are behavioral. These behavioral factors are explained in the prominent phycology social model by Ajzen (1991), the theory of planned behavior (TPB). TPB is a well-researched model that has been shown to successfully predict behavior across various settings (Pavlou & Fygenson, 2006). As a general model, it is designed to explain most human behaviors (Ajzen, 1991). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that a TPB-based model could effectively explain CPE compliance behavior among accountants.

The purpose of this study is twofold. First, to study the influence of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control towards CPE compliance behavioral intention. Second, to study the relationship between CPE compliance intention and behavior. The paper will proceed as follows: the next section discusses past literature. The following section proposes the theoretical

framework for the study. The next two sections present the research methodology and the results. The final section discusses the findings and conclusion of the study.

2. Literature review

This section discusses past literature related to the CPE compliance behavior. There are two parts in this section, i.e. past studies on TPB and the importance of TPB in behavioral studies, and past literature related to CPE.

2.1 The theory of planned behavior

TPB is an extension of the theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). This theory suggests that behavioral intentions are the key determinants of behavior. According to Ajzen (1991), intention is a form of motivational factors that capture how hard a person is willing to perform or engage in certain behavior. In the context of CPE compliance, the accountants' decision to comply with the CPE requirements would depend on their intention. The stronger the intention to comply with the CPE requirements, the higher the probability of CPE compliance.

TPB explain that behavioral intention is determined by three components. The first component, attitude toward the behavior, reflects the positive or negative evaluation of person regarding the behavior's potential outcomes. The second component, subjective norms, reflects the

person's perception of social support for or disapproval to the performance of such behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). This component of behavioral intentions is determined by the extent to which the actor believes the behavior is desired by significant referent others, multiplied by the person's motivation to comply with those referents. The final component, perceived behavior control, reflects the person's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behavior. Behaviors are more likely to result from intention when people believe they have the resources to perform the behavior. Perceived behavioral control comprises control beliefs, or the belief that required resources and opportunities are available to carry out the behavior, and perceived facilitation, or the assessment of the importance of those resources to successfully completing the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Figure 1 illustrate the TPB model.

TPB is a general model that has been proved to successfully predict a wide range of behaviors in various environments, from determinants of *zakah* (Islamic tax) (Ram Al-Jaffri & Roszaini, 2014), tax compliance (Bobek & Hatfield, 2003), motivation to learn (Osten, 1997), predicting electronic commerce adoption (Pavlou & Fygenson, 2006), as well as predicting intention to participate in CPE (Masiah, 2006).

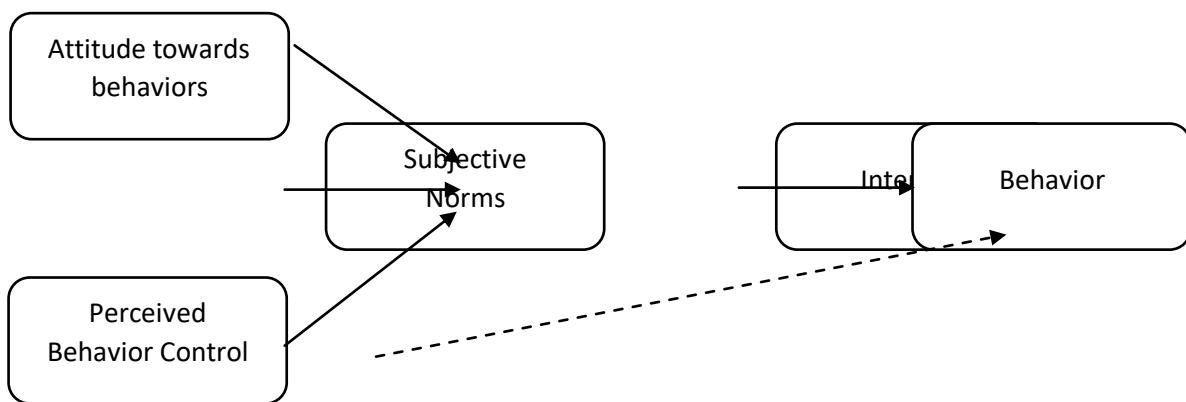


Figure 1. Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991)

2.2 Continuing professional education

Numerous professional bodies and associations provide CPE programs to their members (Puteh & Kaliannan, 2016). In accounting profession in Malaysia, bodies such as MIA and The Malaysian Institute of Certified Public Accountants (MICPA) offers various CPE programs in accounting, auditing, taxation, accounting information systems, corporate governance and other related programs (MIA, 2016; MICPA, 2016). To retain and develop professional competency of the accountants, the Internal Federation of Accountants (IFAC) requires its professional accounting bodies to make CPE as mandatory for their members (IAESB, 2012).

MIA requires professional accountants to complete at least 60 CPE credit hours in form of verifiable structured activities, for every rolling three calendar year period, of which 60 CPE credit hours should be structured and verifiable, and at least twenty (20) CPE credit hours of such structured and verifiable CPE learning should be obtained each calendar year (MIA By-Laws, 2017). This requirement is in line with IFAC's International Education Standard 7 (IAESB, 2012). Realization of the importance of CPE in ensuring professional accountant ability to retain and develop their competency and ability in accounting profession, brings the need for a study on factors that could influence the intention and behavior of professional accountant to comply with the CPE requirements.

Studies on CPE compliance behavior in Malaysia is very limited. A study on CPE in accounting profession was conducted by Muhammad Syahir & Mohd 'Atif (2013), however its scope was limited to types of CPE programs conducted by the MIA. Another study by Muhammad Syahir et al. (2016) only focuses on inhibitors of CPE's informal learning. Meanwhile, Masiah (2006) conducted a study on factor that influence CPE engagement. However, the study did not focus on compliance behavior and only covers government auditors. Therefore,

findings from this study is hoped to contribute not only to TPB in CPE environment, but also towards better understanding on factors that influence CPE compliance intention and behavior among accountants in Malaysia.

3. Hypotheses development and research framework

This section discusses the relationship between variables of the study, i.e. attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control and behavioral intention towards CPE compliance. At the end of this section, hypotheses and research framework are developed.

3.1 Attitude and behavioral intention

In TPB, attitude is the key factor which determine a person's intention to engage in certain behavior. Attitude is defined as positive or negative evaluation a person holds about the behavior's possible outcome (Ajzen, 2005). A positive or favorable evaluation of potential outcome would encourage stronger intention to engage in certain behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Instead, a negative or unfavorable evaluation would impede intention and behavior. Similar condition is believed to exist in the context of CPE compliance. A positive or favorable evaluation of potential benefit of CPE programs and activities would motivate accountants to engage in such programs, thus leads to compliance of the CPE requirements.

In this study, attitude denotes perceived benefits of complying with the CPE requirements. Thus, attitude in this study refers to how accountant perceived CPE compliance could yield benefits or positive outcomes to their professional career such as advancement in knowledge and expertise, job promotion etc. The connection between attitude and intention has been reported in numerous previous literatures in various field. In education and training field, a study by Osten (1997) founds significant relationship between attitude and intention to study. Meanwhile,

Masiah (2006) reported significant relationship between attitude and intention to engage in CPE among government auditors. A study on training programs by Chen (2004) reveals that attitude significantly affect intention to engage in language training programs. Numerous studies supported the influence of perceived benefits towards engagements in continuing education (Childers, 1997; Gray, 1982; Laksmi, 2015; Mendoza, 2013; Minnock, 1986). Therefore, this study predicts that attitude towards CPE programs would affect the intention to comply with the CPE requirements.

H1: Attitude towards CPE program has positive significant relationship with CPE compliance intention.

3.2 Subjective norm and behavioral intention

Subjective norms refer to perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior of interest (Ajzen, 1991). Subjective norms is also defined as an individual's perception of whether important referents would expect the individual to perform or not perform the behavior of interest, and the extent to which the individual is motivated to conform to the important referents' expectation, in respect of that behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Some commonly acknowledged referents include spouses or partners, family members, close friends and/or employees, depending on the behavior under study. This study denotes spouse or partners as the subjective norms. Spouse or partners are found to have significant influence towards behavioral intention in various studies. Spouse was found to have significant influence in CPE engagement (Masiah, 2006; Samardzija, 2005). In zakat literature, Ram, Zainol, Kamil, & Md Hairi, (2010) and Zainol (2008) suggest significant influence of towards behavioral intention. Therefore, this study expects subjective norms would influence CPE compliance intention.

H2: Subjective norm has positive significant relationship with CPE compliance intention.

3.3 Perceived behavioral control and behavioral intention

Perceived behavioral control (PBC) is the third determinant of behavioral intention in TPB. Perceived behavioral control refers to the perceived ease or difficulty in performing the behavior of interest (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen & Madden, 1986). The path from PBC to behavioral intention reflects the motivational influence of control on the behavior, through intention. Persons who believe that they have the necessary skills and resources, and the necessary opportunities (or lack of obstacles) to perform the behavior, will perceive a high degree of behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). In this study, PBC is represented by self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is frequently measured in terms of an individual's confidence in their ability to perform the behavior (Bandura, 1986). Thus, PBC in this study denotes the accountants' confidence and belief in complying with the CPE requirements. Individuals with high self-confidence or self-efficacy to comply with the CPE requirements would regards themselves as having a high perceived behavior control and therefore would be more inclined to perform the behavior. Numerous studies of TPB demonstrated significant contribution of self-efficacy towards the prediction of behavioral intention. In a study on academic performance, self-efficacy was found to influence how much effort students will expend on an activity, how long they will persevere when confronting obstacles, and how resilient they will be in the face of adverse situations (Pajares, 2002). Meanwhile, a study on lifelong education founds positive and significant influence between self-efficacy and tendency of engaging in lifelong education (Garipağaoğlu, 2013). Masiah (2006) reveals significant influence of self-efficacy towards intention to engage in continuing professional education among government auditors. Hence, this study assumes perceived behavioral control would influence CPE compliance intention.

H3: Perceived behavioral control has positive significant relationship with CPE compliance intention.

3.4 Behavioral intention and CPE compliance behavior

TPB aims to predict and understand individual's behavior(Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The influence of attitude, subjective norms and PBC on behavior is mediated through behavioral intention. The intention to perform the behavior is an immediate antecedent of actual behavior and signifies a person's motivation or decision to exert the necessary effort to perform the behavior(Ajzen, 2002). Intention measures how much effort they would exert to perform the behavior(Ajzen, 1991) Thus, the stronger a person's intention to engage in a particular behavior, the more likely they will perform that particular behavior. The TPB posits that

behavioral intention is the most influential predictor of behavior. Therefore, this study predicts a positive intention to comply with CPE requirements will positively influence CPE compliance behavior.

H4: CPE compliance intention has positive significant relationship with CPE compliance behavior.

3.5 Research framework

The conceptual model for CPE compliance behavior is formulated based on the theory of planned behavior as discussed earlier. In this model, behavioral intention is predicted to be the closest determinants of CPE compliance behavior. Meanwhile, it is also predicted that intention would be affected by the accountants' attitude towards CPE requirement, subjective norm, and perceived behavior control. The conceptual model is drafted in Figure 2.

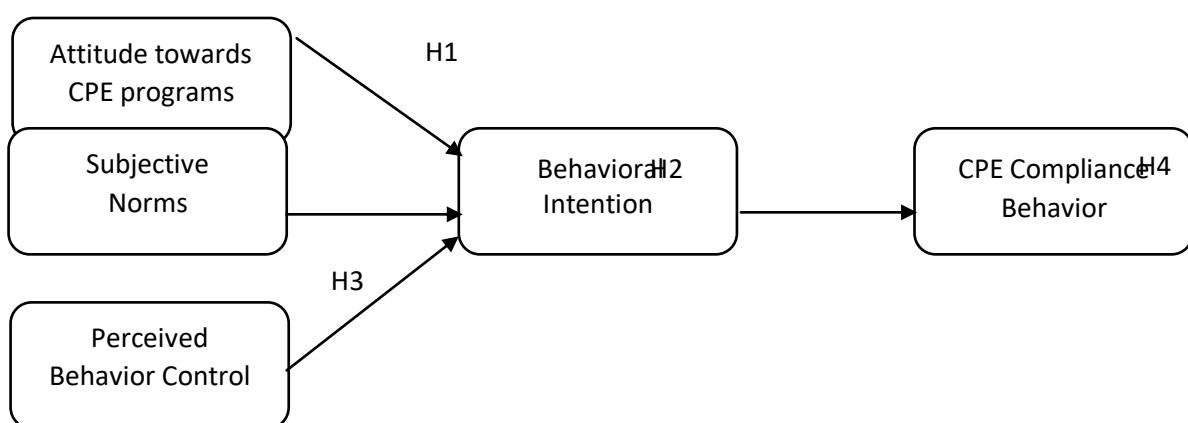


Figure2. CPE compliance behavior conceptual model framework

4. Methodology

The analysis unit in this study are chartered accountants who are members of MIA in public accountant firms in Malaysia. Chartered accountants are selected since they are required by MIA to comply with CPE requirement. On top of that, chartered accountants have a very important responsibility which involve public interest in relation to various type of services such as

auditing, preparation of financial statements, tax and management consultation, and other important duties(Hicks et al., 2007). In 2017, there are 7,300 MIA members in public accountant firms in Malaysia (MIA, 2017). Proposed sample size is 367 respondent for population between 7,000 to 8,000 respondent based on Krejeie & Morgan (1970) sample size table. Sample size for distribution of questionnaire is 700 to compensate the possibility of non-response that is normally

experience in the process of data collection (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). This study adopt simple random sampling methods to ensure every elements in population is considered and have equal chance to be selected as sample, thus a broader utilization scope for its findings (Sekaran, 2003). Respondent data for sampling process is acquired from the MIA Membership Department. Questionnaires were distributed to selected respondent through mails.

This study utilize SPSS and partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) to summarize and analyze the data. PLS-SEM is used to axaminethe relationship between the independent and dependent variables in the study. Smart PLS software is chosen as a tool for data analysis due to its friendly graphical user interface

4.1 Measurement of variables

This section discusses definition and measurement of relevant variables. In this study, dependent variables are behavioral intention and CPE compliance behavior. In TPB, intention influences behavior, while intention is influenced by independent variables. Items to measure each variable in this study are adapted based on previous relevant studies in TPB as well as studies in CPE environment.

Items to measure attitude variables towards CPE compliance are adapted Yang (1992) dan Edward William (1986), consisting 5 questions with positive statement. Example of item for attitude is "CPE helps to enhance new professional knowledge". Subjective norm and perceived behavior control variables are also measured using 5 items each. The items to measure subjective norm and perceived behavior control are both adapted using instruments from Ram Al-Jaffri & Roszaini (2014). Meanwhile, items used to measure intention are adapted from Pavlou & Fygenson (2006)and Ram Al-Jaffri & Roszaini (2014), while items for CPE compliance behavior are adapted from Ram Al-Jaffri &

Roszaini (2014). Items for all the variables in this study is based on 5-point Likert. Scale is categorized as 1 point for "strongly disagree" to 5 point for "strongly agree". 5-point Likert scale is used due to its suitability for this study. Among its advantages are reduced level of respondents' frustration, increased response rate, and increased response quality (Babakus & Mangold, 1992; Sachdev & Verma, 2004). All the questions used have passed the reliability and validity test in pilot study before being distributed to respondents.

4.2 Analysis technique

This section discusses data analysis technique and hypothesis testing. The data was analyzed using SPSS and PLS software in stages. The first stage comprises data screening and transformation. This include scrutiny of response rate, treatment of missing values, identification of outliers, validity and reliability of measurement items and constructs, presentation of demographic data, descriptive statistics of the constructs, non-response bias test, normality test and multicollinearity test. Second stage involves usage of PLS data analysis software to validate the direct and indirect relationship as hypothesized in the conceptual model. PLS is utilized due to its suitability for this study. PLS is appropriate where the main objective of the research is theory development and prediction (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2014).

PLS comprises measurement model representing relationship between latent variables and observed data, and structural model representing relationship among variables (Hair, Hult, et al., 2014). In PLS, problem of normality of data is taken care of as the data need not necessarily be normal. In multivariate analysis, PLS provides various advantage including capability to test many relationships at a time, as well as able to analyze small sample.

5. Research findings

From 700 questionnaire emailed, a total of 232 responses was recorded after duration of about

four months yielding a response rate of 33.1 percent. However, only 221 can be used for analysis purpose. Data screening and cleaning were done to ensure accuracy. This involved treatment of missing values and outliers. The reliability and validity for each of the constructs in the study is reported in Table 1 and 2. There are five constructs tested for reliability and validity, i.e. behavior, intention, attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavior control.

5.1 Measurement model

The evaluation of the measurement model aims at assessing the reliability and validity of the apparent variables. This involve examining internal consistency reliability, ascertaining indicator reliability and determining convergent and discriminant validity (Hair, Hult, et al., 2014). The analysis consists convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity refers to internal consistency of items of each construct and is achieved when the items of the constructs are in harmony, did not contrast each other and contribute in building a conceptual meaning of the construct (Hair, Hult, et al., 2014). Convergent validity measures the loadings, cross loadings, composite validity and average variance extracted (AVE). Meanwhile, discriminant validity assesses factor loading and latent variable of correlation. Consequently, content validity is attained through the examination of convergent validity and discriminant validity. Factor loadings of the individual items could be used to confirm the content validity of the measurement model (Hair, Hult, et al., 2014).

Internal consistency reliability is measured using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. For internal consistency to be established, Cronbach's alpha/composite reliability coefficient should be at least 0.70 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014). As shown in **Table 1**, both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability are all above 0.70, indicating a high level of internal consistency.

Indicator reliability signifies the percentage of indicator variance that is explained by the latent variable. Loadings of above 0.70 is recommended, though 0.50 is considered acceptable provided its AVE is no less than 0.50 (Hair, Hult, et al., 2014). Higher values signify higher reliability values. Accordingly, values between 0.70 and 0.95 are satisfactory to good, whereas values between 0.60 and 0.70 are deemed acceptable (Hair, Hult, et al., 2014). **Table 1** indicates the outer loadings for manifest variables of the conceptual model depicts loadings above 0.6, thus imply that individual item reliability condition has been achieved.

Convergent validity indicates the extent to which items truly represent the intended latent construct and correlate with other measures of the same latent construct (Hair, Black, et al., 2014). AVE may be used as a test of convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As shown in **Table 1**, the AVEs were all above the suggested 0.5, hence suggested the study demonstrates adequate convergent validity.

Latent variable	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Behavior	GK1	0.942	0.961	0.972	0.895
	GK2	0.944			
	GK3	0.962			
	GK4	0.937			
Intention	NT1	0.960	0.956	0.968	0.885

	NT2	0.966		
	NT3	0.926		
	NT4	0.909		
Attitude			0.830	0.881
	TM1	0.809		0.599
	TM2	0.782		
	TM3	0.674		
	TM4	0.861		
	TM5	0.730		
Subjective norms (SN)			0.979	0.984
	PS1	0.980		0.940
	PS2	0.988		
	PS3	0.983		
	PS4	0.925		
Perceived behavior control (PBC)			0.939	0.956
	KK1	0.960		0.845
	KK2	0.939		
	KK3	0.896		
	KK4	0.887		

Table 1. Construct reliability and validity

Discriminant validity is the extent to which items measure different concepts or differentiate among constructs (Hair, Black, et al., 2014). Fornell-Larcker criterion are checked for discriminant validity. The square root of the AVE of each construct should be higher than the

construct's highest correlation with any other construct in the model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The result of the Fornell-Larcker criterion in **Table 2** show that the square root of AVE for each construct is higher than other correlation, therefore suggesting discriminant validity.

	Attitude	Behavior	Intention	PBC	SN
Attitude	0.774				
Behavior	0.542	0.946			
Intention	0.555	0.745	0.941		
PBC	0.554	0.810	0.724	0.919	
SN	0.304	0.315	0.277	0.404	0.969

Table 2. Discriminant validity

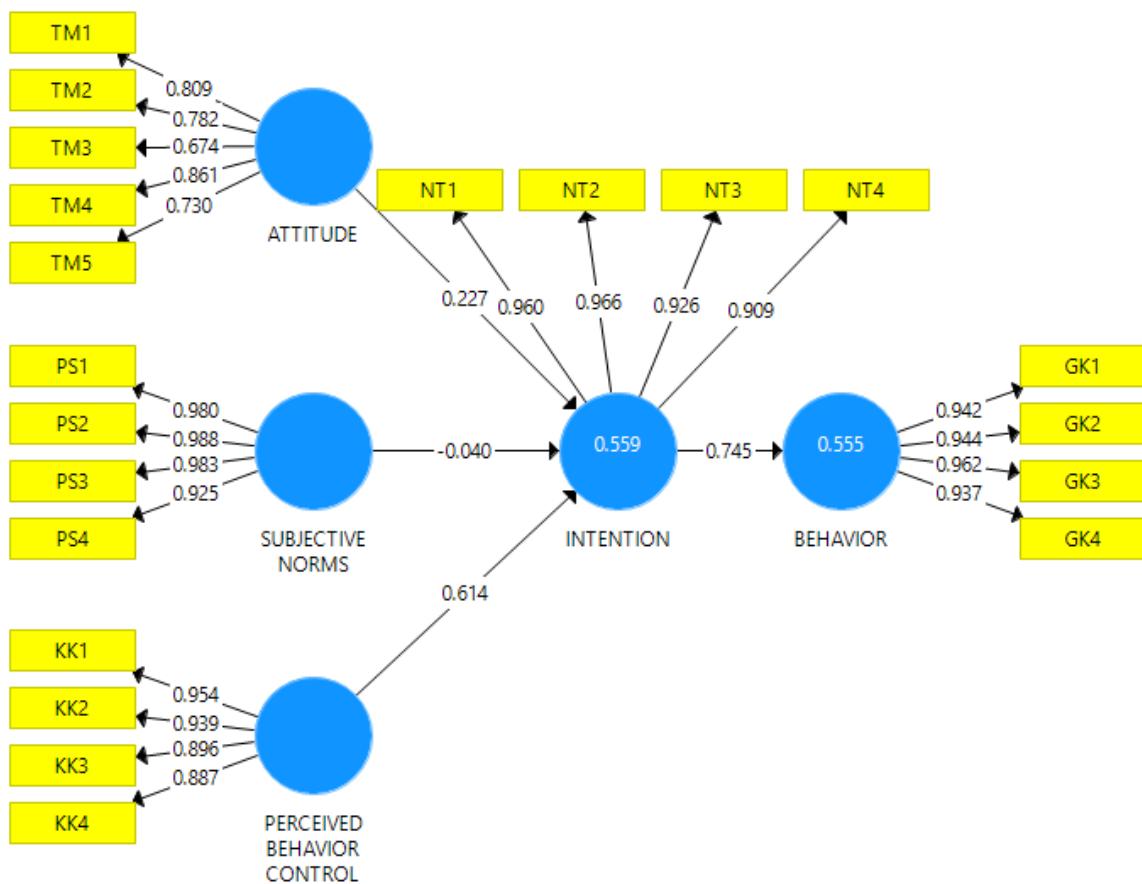


Figure 3. Measurement model (algorithm)

5.2 Structural model

After analyzing the measurement model for validity and reliability, the proposed structural model (**Figure 4**) is examined. The objective of analyzing the structural model is to assess the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable (Hair, Hult, et al., 2014). This study applied bootstrapping method (5000

bootstrap samples) to measure the significance of the path coefficients. The estimates for the full structural model is revealed in Figure 3 as PLS algorithm/measurement model, and **Figure 4** as structural model. **Table 3** indicates that the research model explains 55.5 percent of the total variance in CPE compliance behavior and 55.9 percent in CPE compliance intention.

Latent Variables	Variance Explained (R^2)	Adjusted R^2
Behavior	0.555	0.553
Intention	0.559	0.553

Table 3. Variance Explained in the Endogenous Latent Variables

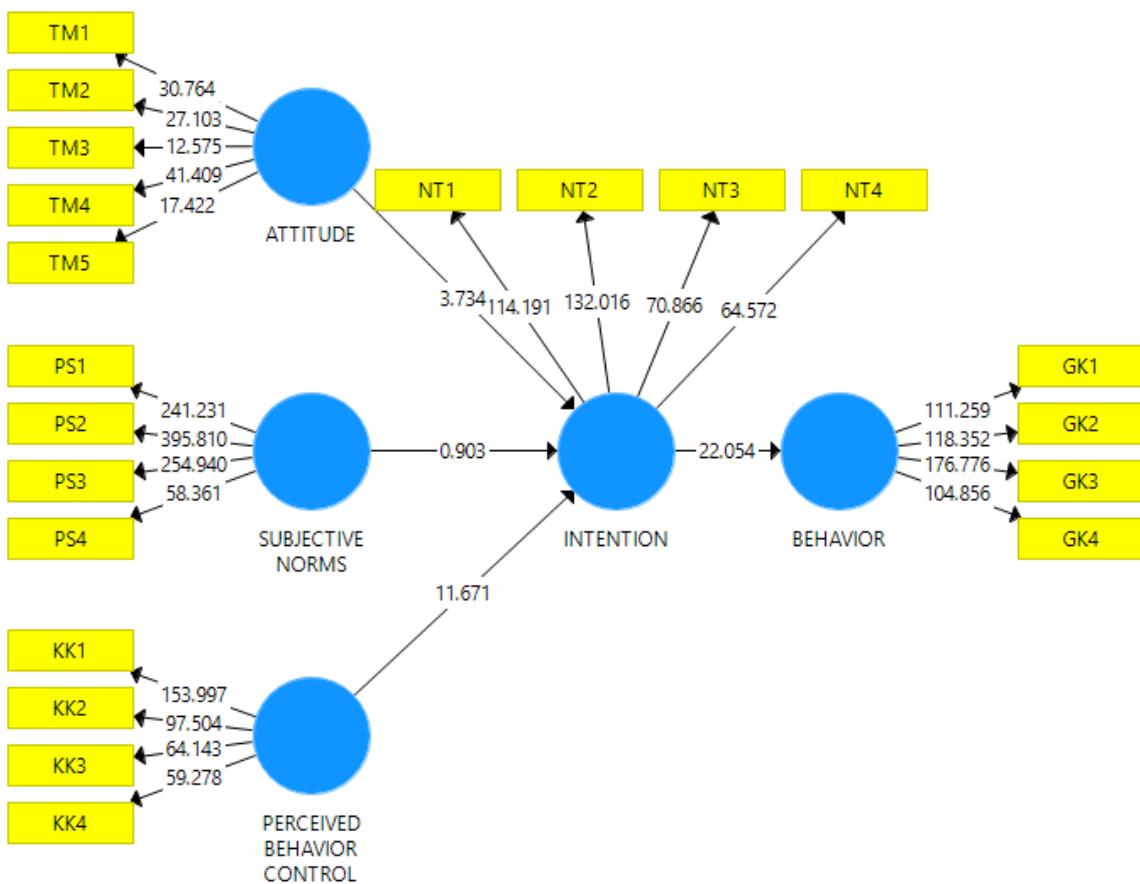


Figure 4. Structural model (bootstrapping at 5,000 samples)

Path coefficient	Beta	Standard error	t-value	p-value	Decision
Attitude -> Intention	0.234	0.061	3.734	0.000***	Supported
SN -> Intention	-0.039	0.044	0.903	0.367	Not supported
PBC -> Intention	0.614	0.053	11.671	0.000***	Supported
Intention -> Behavior	0.745	0.034	22.054	0.000***	Supported

Note: H1, H3 & H4 are significant at 1% (**p-value @ 1%)

Table 4. Structural model (bootstrapping)

Collinearity is examined to evaluate structural model. In Figure 4 and Table 4, the results of direct relationship assessment disclose positive significant relationship between attitude and behavior intention ($\beta = 0.234$; $t = 3.734$; $p = 0.000$). Likewise, perceived behavior control is also found to have positive significant relationship with behavioral intention ($\beta = 0.614$; $t = 11.671$; $p = 0.000$). Another positive significant relationship

revealed in the study is between behavioral intention and behavior ($\beta = 0.745$; $t = 22.054$; $p = 0.000$). Therefore, three hypotheses, i.e. H1, H3 and H4 are supported. However, relationship between subjective norms and intention (H2) is not supported ($\beta = 0.039$; $t = 0.903$; $p = 0.367$) since t-values is below the accepted standard of 1.96 (Hair, Black, et al., 2014).

R^2 denotes the proportion of variation in the dependent variable(s) that could be explained by one or more predictor/independent variable. Hair, Hult, et al., (2014) suggested that R² values of 0.75, 0.50, or 0.25 for endogenous latent variables can, as a rough rule of thumb, be respectively described as substantial, moderate or weak. **Table 3** provides the R² value obtained in the study indicating that CPE compliance intention explains 55.5% of the variance in the CPE compliance behavior. Meanwhile, attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavior control explain 55.9% of the variance in the CPE compliance intention. Therefore, the R² of this study can be considered as moderate strength.

6. Discussion

This study use theory of planned behavior to understand the CPE compliance behavior among accountants. Basic factors in this theory such as attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control and intention are tested to assess their relationship with CPE compliance behavior. Two model, i.e. CPE compliance behavior and CPE compliance intention have been tested. Findings from the study shows that CPE compliance behavior among accountants in Malaysia are significantly determined by intention, which explains 55.5% of the variance in CPE compliance behavior. This result displays better predictive capacity compared to studies based on TPB such as Pavlou & Fygenson (2006) and Ram, Zainol, Kamil, & Md Hairi (2010). Meanwhile, the result also confirms the role of attitude and perceived behavioral control towards intention. These two factors significantly explained 55.9% of the variance in CPE compliance intention among accountants in Malaysia. The result is consistent with studies in continuing education environment (Chen, 2004). Overall, findings from this study shows the suitability theory of planned behavior in predicting and understanding CPE compliance behavior. The findings illustrate the importance of behavioral intention in influencing CPE compliance behavior. The result also confirms the significant influence of attitude and

perceived behavior control factors on CPE compliance intention. This is inconsistent with a study by Chen (2004) on continuing education regarding language training.

Generally, behavioral intention is the main indicator to the readiness of accountants to comply with the CPE requirements. Therefore, in order to enhance CPE compliance among accountant, it is important to understand the motivational and non-motivational factors that could influence the CPE compliance intention. Findings from this study supports the significant influence of attitude and perceived behavioral control on CPE compliance intention. Attitude refers to the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question(Ajzen, 1991). In the case of CPE compliance, the more favorable the attitude with respect to CPE, the stronger the intention to comply with the CPE requirements. One of the factors that could influence the accountants' attitude towards CPE is the perceived benefits of CPE. Therefore, relevant authorities and organizations such as MIA and CPE programs organizers should ensure that CPE programs and activities should be tailored to meet the needs and requirement of accountants. The organizers of the CPE programs should also take into accounts the suitability of location and proper schedule and timing of such programs.

Perceived behavioral control is another significant factor that influence the CPE compliance intention. Perceived behavioral control 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(Ajzen, 1991). The greater the perceived behavioral control, the stronger the accountant's intention to comply with the CPE requirements. Therefore, to encourage CPE compliance intention, relevant parties should facilitate the accountants to ensure easier engagement in CPE programs. Sponsored CPE programs and reduced fees would help to further increase CPE compliance rate. On top of that,

employers should be encouraged to financially support their staffs on CPE engagement cost. They should also provide ample time for their staff to engage in CPE programs.

7. Conclusion

This study aims to understand the CPE compliance behavior using the factors in the theory of planned behavior. Findings from this study confirm the influence of CPE compliance intention towards CPE compliance behavior. The results also support the role of attitude and perceived behavioral control in influencing CPE compliance intention. The findings are consistent with theory of planned behavior and recommendation of various studies in CPE environment. The findings strengthen the assumption that theory of planned behavior is suitable to understand CPE compliance behavior in the unique environment of mandatory education.

Findings from this study contributes to the accountants' CPE compliance literature which has not been extensively studied compared to other professionals such as nurses and teachers. In terms of practice, findings from the study could contribute to enhance and further develop the organization and implementation of CPE programs and activities. However, further research should also investigate compliance issues among non-practicing accountant, which is not covered under this study.

On a final note, other contribution of this study is the hope that the inputs would be useful for relevant authorities and bodies to further understand the factors that could influence the intention and behavior of accountants with regards to CPE compliance, thus helps to generate a more effective strategies and policies to boost the CPE compliance rate among accountants in Malaysia.

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