Chapter 6
Theory of Reasoned Actions (TRA) and its Relation to ICT Adoption

ABSTRACT

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) sheds light on the attitudinal behaviour related to acceptance, use, and adoption of technology in organisations. The TRA was developed by both Fishbein and Ajzen way back in 1975 and 1980 from previous studies on attitude and behaviour in organizations towards performing certain actions. The theory argues that intention to perform certain behavioural action is a function of both attitude and subjective norm. Subsequently, when a positive intention is developed, a person tends to really involve in performing the actual action. However, according to the findings of this chapter, one of the weaknesses of this theory is its inability to be applied to non-volitional acts such as those that become obligatory. When a public organization has endorsed the adoption of ICT as new way of performing tasks, it becomes a non-volitional act that everybody must follow to carry out tasks.

INTRODUCTION

One of the potential challenges in public sector is the acceptance of technological innovation. The challenge lies in the fact that application of technology devices brings a different way on how employees or civil servants used to work in the past. Technology, therefore, needs to be accepted by employees and must be fully used to actualise its purposes. As such, Dias (2002) argues that electronic way of executing works reflects a new model in the dissemination of the information in an organisation and must be fully explored. However, such acceptance and full adoption of technology is a function of users’ attitudinal behaviour towards information systems and/or technological devices.

There are some existing theories, such as, TRA that sheds light on the attitudinal behaviour related to acceptance, use and adoption of technology in organisations. The TRA was developed by both Fishbein and Ajzen way back in 1975, and 1980 from previous studies on attitude and behaviour. According to Hale et al. (2003), it was derived out of “frustration with traditional attitude-behaviour research, much of which found weak correlations between attitude measures and performance of...
The theory of reasoned action (TRA) focuses on how a person's intention depends on his or her attitude towards behaviour and subjective norms. In other words, the theory suggests that if a person intends to perform certain behaviour, it is likely that he or she does it based on his or her attitude towards such behaviour. Hence, behavioural intention in attitude measures a person's relative strength of intention to perform such behaviour.

Basically, there are four components or elements in the TRA that need to be explained clearly in relation to ICT applications. They are attitude, subjective norms, intention, and behaviour as shown in Figure 1. The TRA is of the assumption that every individual human being will always consider the behavioural consequences of intention to do anything before engaging in such behaviour. As such, intention to perform certain act becomes an important element that determines behaviour. Ajzen and Fishbein (1975) opined that intentions are developed from individual’s perception of a particular behaviour as either positive or negative depending on one’s interpretation of the way the society perceives the behaviour. In other words, the theory contends that personal attitude and social pressure from the surrounding have influence on intention, which is essential to the performance of one’s behaviour. To put the relationship simple, the theory holds to a fact that a person’s volitional (voluntary) behaviour is predicted by his or her attitude towards that behaviour and how he or she thinks other people around him will view the behaviour if he finally performed the behaviour.

Thus, a person’s attitude always combines with subjective norms to form the person’s behavioural intention towards an action. In this theory, Fishbein and Ajzen (1980) also concord that the presence of an unequal weightage for consideration between attitudes and subject norms in predicting behaviour of human beings towards certain acts. In the same vein, Miller (2005) equally expressed the view that “Indeed, depending on the individual and the situation, these factors might carry... different effects on behavioral intention; thus a weight is associated with each of these factors in the predictive formula of the theory. For example, you might be the kind of a person who cares little for what others think. If this is the case, the subjective norms would carry little weight in predicting your behavior,” (p.127). With regard to the fact that behavioural intention is associated with attitudes and subjective norms, Miller (2005) illustrated by explaining that your attitude combined with the subjective norms and each with its own weight, will lead you to your intention to exercise (or not), which will then lead to your actual behavior. According to Oliveira (2006), the people choose to perform certain behaviour, even though they are not in agreement with it and its consequences, simply because they want to please that person.