

Pro-Environmental Behavioral Intention of Mountain Hikers to the Theory of Planned Behavior

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Abstract : The aim of this study is to determine Pro-Environmental Behavioral Intention of Mountain Hikers to the Theory of Planned Behavior. According to many researchers nature-based recreation activities play a significant role in the tourism industry and have provided myriad opportunities for the protection of natural areas. It is essential to investigate individuals' behavior during such activities to avoid further damage to precious and dwindling natural resources. This study develops a robust model that provides a comprehensive understanding of the formation of pro-environmental behavioral intentions among climbers of Mount Damavand National Park in Iran. To this end, we combined the theory of planned behavior (TPB), value-belief-norm theory (VBN), and a hierarchical model of leisure constraints to predict individuals' pro-environmental hiking behavior during outdoor recreation. It was used structural equation modeling to test the theoretical framework. A sample of 787 climbers was analyzed. Among the theory of planned behavior variables, perceived behavioral control showed the strongest association with behavioral intention ($\beta = .57$). This relationship indicates that if people feel they can have fewer negative impacts on national resources while hiking, it will result in more environmentally acceptable behavior. Subjective norms had a moderate positive impact on behavioral intention, indicating the importance of other people on the individual's behavior. Attitude had a small positive effect on intention. Ecological worldview positively influenced attitude and personal belief. Personal belief (awareness of consequences and ascribed responsibility) showed a positive association with TPB variables. Although the data showed a high average score in awareness of consequences (mean = 4.219 out of 5), evidence from Damavand Mount shows that there are many environmental issues that need addressing (e.g., vast amounts of garbage). National park managers need to make sure that their solutions result in awareness about proenvironmental behavior (PEB). Findings showed that negative relationship between constraints and all TPB predictors. Providing proper restrooms and parking spaces in campgrounds, strategies controlling limiting capacity and solutions for removing waste from high altitudes are helpful to decrease the negative impact of structural constraints. In order to address intrapersonal constraints, managers should provide opportunities to interest individuals in environmental activities, such as environmental celebrations or making documentaries about environmental issues. Moreover, promoting a culture of environmental protection in the Damavand Mount area would reduce interpersonal constraints. Overall, the proposed model improved the explanatory power of the TPB by predicting 64.7% of intention compared to the original TPB that accounted for 63.8% of the variance in intention.

Keywords : theory of planned behavior, pro-environmental behavior, national park, constraints

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