

# **THE INTEGRATED THEORY OF SOCIOPRENEURIAL BEHAVIOUR: SOCIOPRENEURIAL BEHAVIOUR FORMATION AND IMPACT**

**Shafie Sidek**

School of Business and Economics,  
Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) Selangor, Malaysia

**Muhammad Iqbal Arrasyid**

International Marketing Management,  
Politeknik Tempo, Jakarta, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author's Email: gs58948@student.upm.edu.my*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Social entrepreneurs focus on gaining social benefits rather than maximization of business profit. A number of theories and models have been proposed by prior researchers to expound on sociopreneurial behaviour. This article aims to integrate the existing theories and those models into an Integrated Theory of Sociopreneurial Behaviour, which combines both formation and impact of sociopreneurial behaviour. The theory states that, firstly, external support(s) and/or hindrance(s) are significant moderator(s) to strengthen or weaken the prediction of sociopreneurial intention conversion into successful sociopreneurial behaviour. Secondly, the sociopreneurial behaviour should foster direct and/or indirect improvement to both the community and the sociopreneur without conflict of interest. This article discusses the literature support and proposes future research approaches.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Sociopreneurship, Theory Of Planned Behaviour, Social Entrepreneurial Intention Model, Entrepreneurial Event Model

## **INTRODUCTION**

The relatively recent phenomenon of social entrepreneurship provides the possibility of practical and innovative answers to society's most urgent social difficulties (Choi & Majumdar, 2014; Hossain & Kauranen, 2016). Mair & Martí (2006) defines social entrepreneurship (sociopreneurship) as a process of creating value innovatively for social improvement. Social entrepreneurs (sociopreneurs)

are individuals who consistently seeking for welfare opportunity (Thompson et al., 2000); innovate sustainable way out financially, socially, organizationally, and environmentally (Zaremohzzabieh et al., 2018) for the social justice of their community (Brinckerhoff, 2001; Thake & Zadek, 1997; Zahra et al., 2009). Based on the definition by Mair and Martí, the two most important aspects of social entrepreneurship (sociopreneurship) are, first, the formation process of sociopreneurial behaviour and, secondly, its impact on the community (Mair & Martí, 2006). A number of theories and models have been proposed to expound on the formation process of sociopreneurial behaviour, such as the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1985), entrepreneurial event model (Shapero, 1982; Krueger & Carsrud, 1993) and social entrepreneurial intention model (Mair & Noboa, 2006).

Based on a recent meta-analysis, Zaremohzzabieh et al. (2018) have revealed that most empirical studies ended at the intention to form a social enterprise, and factors associated to it focus entirely on psychological factors. A good reason for this problem is that most of the models and research frameworks in sociopreneurship studies are based on the Theory of Planned Behavior. The researchers are seemingly unaware that the theory of planned behaviour is only applicable if the probability of success and control over external factors is less than perfect. Ajzen (1985), in his theory of planned behaviour, noted the importance of several factors that may prevent the conversion of intention to behaviour, such as limitation of skill, information, time and others.

Therefore, scholars should look into further investigation of these external factors as well as explore the outcome of the sociopreneurial behaviour. To date, only the Social Entrepreneurial Intention Model (Mair & Noboa, 2006) proposed a narrow outcome of the sociopreneurial behaviour, namely the establishment of social enterprise, which is less stimulating for further research.

In the effort to extend and flourish more research in the sociopreneurship field, this article attempts to draw researchers' attention to both causality and outcome of sociopreneurial behaviour through the Integrated Theory of Sociopreneurial Behaviour. The theory states that, firstly, external support(s) and/or hindrance(s) are significant moderator(s) to strengthen or weaken the prediction of sociopreneurial intention conversion into successful sociopreneurial behaviour. Secondly, the sociopreneurial behaviour should foster direct and/or indirect improvement to both the community and the sociopreneur without conflict of interest.

The abovementioned propositions have not been systematically or comprehensively tested in the past. The external support(s) and hindrance(s) may involve multidisciplinary studies such as economics, finance, technology, human resources and so on, in a single inquiry. This paper, therefore, attempts to provide a systematic researchable and action-oriented model to encourage further validation and investigation into the theory.

The proposed model may provide benefits to three main parties. For scholars, the model may stimulate the identification and validation of various types of external supports and resources that potentially support or hinder the

immediate sociopreneurial intention-behaviour conversion process. Further, from the outcome perspective, the model may drive more effort to examine whether the social changes or innovations provide direct benefits to the community and measure if a conflict of interest exists. Social innovation project evaluation could be carried out for funders based on the impact objectives set for various types of resources provided. For sociopreneurs, it provides guidelines for them to carry out social projects in such a way to avoid conflict of interest.

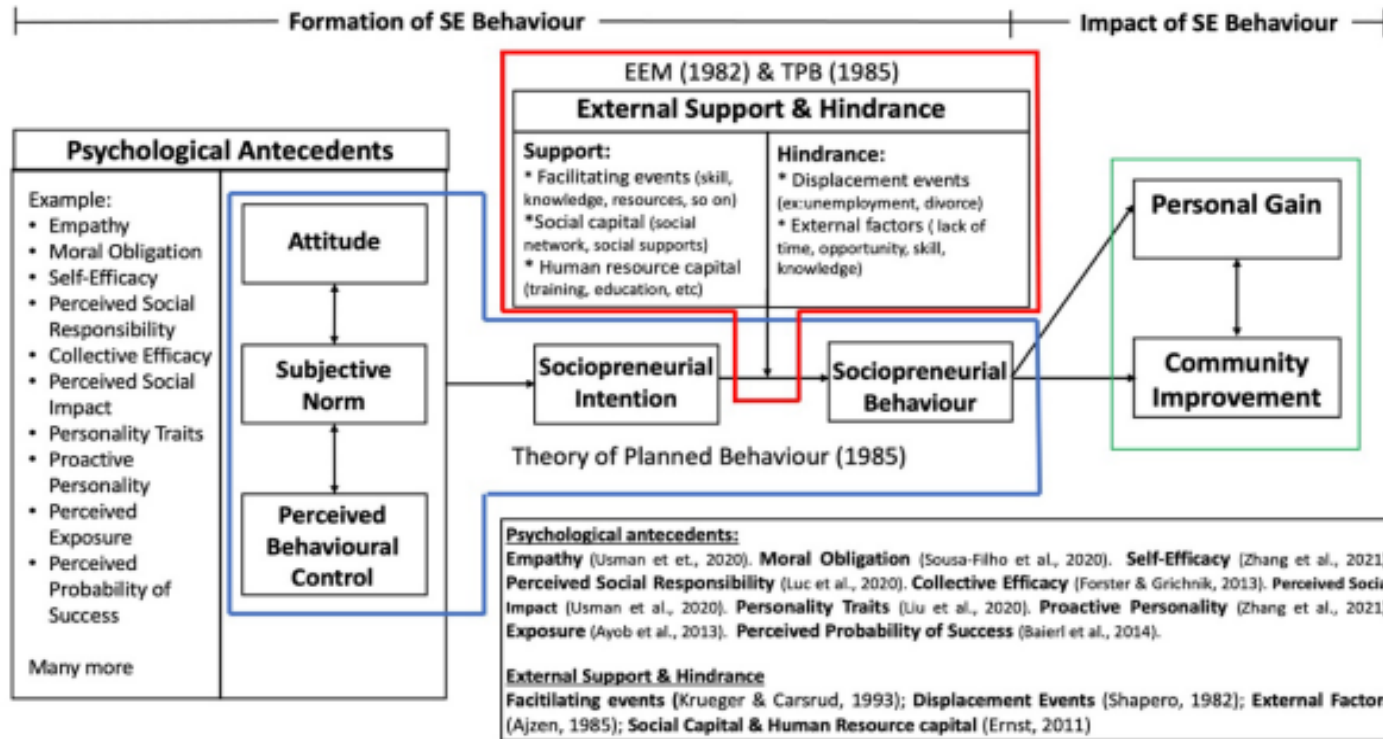
The paper has three main objectives. Firstly, to present a model that represents the links between the antecedents of sociopreneurial intention, the external support (moderator) of sociopreneurial intention to sociopreneurial behaviour and the impact of sociopreneurial behaviour on both community and sociopreneur. Secondly, to find literature that supports the theory and proposed model. Thirdly, to stimulate further inquiry on the Integrated Theory of Sociopreneurial Behaviour by identifying relevant methodologies for measurement of variables, propositions of research questions and hypotheses.

## **MODEL DEVELOPMENT**

The word “integrated” here is chosen because of two reasons; first, it combines the psychological antecedents and multidisciplinary moderators (external supports and/or hinders) in the formation of sociopreneurial behaviour with its impact on both parties involved. Secondly, the model integrates established theories and models from prior studies. The proposed model is as in figure 1 below, which clearly depicts the integration.

## **CONVERSION OF SOCIOPRENEURIAL INTENTION TO BEHAVIOUR**

The first view taken here is that external support(s) and/or hindrance(s) are significant moderator(s) to strengthen or weaken the prediction of sociopreneurial intention conversion to successful sociopreneurial behaviour. Zaremohzzabieh et al. (2018) result of sociopreneurial intention meta-analysis found that most studies on the determinants of sociopreneurial intention and behaviour are purely psychological factors such as perseverance, Proactive Personality, Concern for Social Problems, Social Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy, Life Satisfaction (Zhang et al., 2021), Empathy, Social Worth, Social Network (Usman et al., 2021), Perceived Social Impact (Baierl et al., 2014; Usman et al., 2021), Prosocial Motivation, Creativity in Social Work (Yu et al., 2020), Positivity, Empathy (Younis et al., 2020), Dispositional Optimism, Entrepreneurial Alertness, (Urban, 2020), Moral Obligation, SelfEfficacy (Liu et al., 2020; Sousa-Filho et al., 2020), Social Entrepreneurial Personality (Ernst, 2011), Proactive Personality, Hope (Prieto, 2011), Empathy, Exposure, Perceived Desirability, Perceived Feasibility (Ayob et al., 2013; Forster & Grichnik, 2013)



**Figure 1:** Proposed model for the Integrated Theory of Sociopreneurial Behaviour

This problem is partly related to the opinion that in TPB, the intention would automatically create behaviour (Aker et al., 2020). Although Ajzen has stated that the intention to perform a behaviour may be changed before the actual action takes place due to many external factors such as change of information or lack of skill, knowledge, time opportunity, etc. The existence of external factors that influence the stability of behavioural intention, and therefore the conversion of intention to behaviour is not an automatic process (Ajzen, 1985).

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985) emerged to extend the theory of reasoned action, TRA (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), by introducing perceived behavioural control (PBC) as another determinant of intention to explain the involvement of individual evaluation on his/her ability to perform the behaviour successfully (Ajzen, 1991; Bandura, 1997; Ernst, 2011). Ajzen (1985) explained that the success of an attempt to execute a behavioural plan depends not only on the effort invested but also on the person's control over other factors which are of limited control. The theory of Planned Behaviour is only applicable when the probability of success and actual control are less than perfect, which implies that external supports are needed to deal with limited control over internal and external hindrances.

In addition to TPB, another prior model which noted the existence of exogenous factors as moderators between entrepreneurial intention and behaviour is called the Entrepreneurial Event Model (Krueger & Carsrud, 1993; Shapero, 1982). Shapero (1982) argues that strong intention still requires precipitating events called "displacement event", such as unemployment and divorce, to trigger actual entrepreneurial behaviour (Krueger & Carsrud, 1993; Shapero, 1982). Krueger and Carsrud redefine the precipitating event concept positively as facilitating events such as actual skill, knowledge and availability of resources (Krueger & Carsrud, 1993).

A recent study by Ernst (2011) introduces a model which includes external or exogenous factors, including human capital (such as education and experience) and social capital (such as network and supports) as determinants of all three antecedents of intention in TPB. However, these external factors are measured from a psychological perspective through perception and analyzed as determinants of the three antecedents of intention. The external factors are not suggested as moderators for intentionbehaviour conversion.

Other examples of constructs related to the external triggers or support/hindrane of sociopreneurship behaviour formation extracted from recent studies of sociopreneurial intention and behaviour include conditional resources (Nsereko, 2020); entrepreneurial education support (Seyoum et al., 2021), social support (Urban, 2020) and Covid-19 Crisis (Ruiz-Rosa et al., 2020).

## **SOCIOPRENEURIAL BEHAVIOUR OUTCOMES**

The second part of the Integrated Theory of Sociopreneurial Behaviour urges researchers to evaluate the sociopreneurial behaviour impact on both parties involved, the community and sociopreneur, to ensure that conflict of interest does

not exist. Bahena-Álvarez et al. (2019) argue that sociopreneur and social venture capitalists are different based on their aims, where sociopreneurs aim to solve the social problem while social venture capitalists aim for a return on investment from their innovation. It is clear that sociopreneurs prioritise the social problem over personal financial gain.

Based on the difference between sociopreneur and venture capitalist, any behaviour performed should not be considered as sociopreneurial behaviour unless the benefit impacts the community is maximised while giving zero or minimum gain for the performer in such a way that the sociopreneur gain does not jeopardise the objectives of impact for the community.

For instance, Professor Yunus's Grameen Bank initiative of providing financial support would not be considered sociopreneurial behaviour if the bank imposes a high-interest rate on the borrowers while aiming for a high return to the bank's stakeholders. The high-interest rate may cause Bangladesh villagers to refuse financial assistance, and therefore objective to reduce poverty is jeopardised. Currently, Grameen Bank always prioritises the poor, rootless, landless, and vulnerable. As a result, Grameen Bank provides financial services that impact 7.95 million borrowers from 84,691 villages in Bangladesh, reducing poverty (Shukran & Rahman, 2011).

Attention to the impact of sociopreneurial behaviour is recognized by the Social Entrepreneurial Intention model (Mair & Noboa, 2006), which places social enterprise as the outcome of sociopreneurial behaviour. Analysis of the questionnaire found that items to measure sociopreneurial intention in prior studies are related to the intention to start a social enterprise or social business. This is too rigid and has no potential for proliferation. The formation of social business also does not guarantee any impact on the community unless the main activity is identified.

## **FURTHER RESEARCH APPROACH (FRA)**

Prior to the emergence of this integrated theory of sociopreneurial behaviour, most research in the field of sociopreneurship ended at sociopreneurial intention or at most until sociopreneurial behaviour of forming social enterprise through models based on the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1985), which are either purely psychological perception (Luc, 2020; Urban, 2020; Usman et al., 2021; Younis et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021) or mixed with extraneous factors (Nsereko, 2020; Ruiz-Rosa et al., 2020; Seyoum et al., 2021).

Past studies appear to overlook the role of individual external factors such as resources/events that help or hinder the conversion of intention to behaviour. Further research should attempt to explore sociopreneurial intention and behaviour beyond the establishment of social enterprise (Mair & Noboa, 2006) toward other types of prosocial behaviours addressing social problem solving and innovation.

The introduction of this theory provides a clear direction and encouragement for scholars and practitioners to explore and gain better insight

into sociopreneurial behaviour and its outcome. This article attempts to provide some methodological guide in the planning and conducting of sociopreneurship research based on the model proposed in figure 1.

Although the proposed model incorporates both formation and impact of sociopreneurial behaviour, future research could be carried out separately or in a combination of any two or all in one, depending on whether the scholar and practitioner aim to validate the theory, to evaluate project implementation or other similar purposes. Potential research is suggested but not limited to these aspects:

- i. Conversion of sociopreneurial intention to sociopreneurial behaviour in the presence of external factors referred to as facilitating events (Krueger & Carsrud, 1993), displacing events (Shapero, 1982), external factors (Ajzen, 1985); Social Capital & Human Resource capital (Ernst, 2011) which acts as a helper or barrier (moderator).
- ii. Direct impact of the sociopreneurial behaviour on the community
- iii. Direct impact of the sociopreneurial behaviour and the executor / sociopreneur.
- iv. Indirect impact of the sociopreneurial behaviour and sociopreneur

### **FRA - Sociopreneurial Behaviour formation**

Researchers who are interested in continuing investigation on completed or implemented sociopreneurial behaviour will most probably find that intention is no longer included as a factor in the study. Most studies of completed or implemented behaviour eliminate intention as a factor because the behaviour has already occurred, and the probability of failure is zero. Therefore, the process of conversion from intention to actual sociopreneurial behaviour is no longer a major issue. The good news for researchers in this area, the solution for this problem is suggested here.

The first step to extending this kind of study further is to improve the measurement of the sociopreneur behaviour parameters. Instead of interpreting sociopreneurial intention or behaviour as the establishment of a social organization, future research should identify various prosocial and innovative activities, programs or projects conducted by sociopreneurs targeted at the various community to improve different social aspects such as finance, health and wellbeing.

Community projects are often funded by organizations that provide a variety of resources to support their implementation. The support provided can be translated as a facilitating event (Krueger & Carsrud, 1993) which has an essential role as a moderator to the success of such a community project. In addition, human capital and social capital support (Ernst, 2011) can also be considered positive moderators. In contrast, displacement events (Shapero, 1982) and uncontrollable external factors (Ajzen, 1985) that prevent success can also be considered negative moderators.

Funding organizations usually require sociopreneurs to submit a proposal to describe in detail about their intention and how will the project be carried out successfully for consideration by a panel of judges. Only successful proposals are granted with the support for execution. In such a project, the activities planned in the proposal studied can be used as a source of measurement for sociopreneurial intention. Meanwhile, the extent of success in meeting the project objectives can be measured as actual behaviour. In this way, the first statement of the theory, related to the role of the moderator in the process of conversion from sociopreneurial intention to sociopreneurial behaviour, can be validated.

For the purpose of data collection, respondents of similar studies comprised the successful receivers of community grants. For example, if the study is interested in evaluating the role of funding provided in the Malaysia Social Impact Matching Grant (DNA, 2020) in the success of community projects, the approach explained above is appropriate, and the respondents can be selected among the recipients of the funds.

Regardless of whether it is a qualitative or quantitative study, research hypotheses are important to achieve the research objectives. Some examples of reasonable hypotheses to be tested by managers from funding organisations in such studies are as follows:

For provision of financial resources (facilitating event)

H1: The financial resources provided in this program significantly support the sociopreneurs in achieving the objectives of their proposed community project.

For provision of relevant training (human capital support)

H2: Project management training provided in this program significantly assists the sociopreneur in implementing their proposed community project.

For displacing event

H3: MCO during Pandemic Covid-19 enforced in the implementation period of this project has prevented the sociopreneur from achieving his/her proposed community project goals.

Meaningful research hypotheses for theorists or academicians are usually found in the form of theoretical validation, such as:

H4: Facilitating events positively moderate the relationship between sociopreneurial intention and sociopreneurial behaviour.

H5: Financial support strengthens the relationship between sociopreneurial intention and sociopreneurial behaviour.

H6: Covid-19 pandemic weakened the relationship between sociopreneurial intention and the sociopreneurial behaviour



H7: Lack of experience among sociopreneur negatively moderate the conversion of sociopreneurial intention to sociopreneurial behaviour?

### **FRA - Sociopreneurial Behaviour Outcome**

Further efforts in the study of sociopreneurship should be continued toward the impact of prosocial behaviour. As suggested in the second statement of the theory, there are three important aspects to note in every social development activity, namely the direct and indirect impact on the community involved; the direct and indirect impact on sociopreneurs and lastly, the existence of a conflict of interest. Future studies do not necessarily include all three aspects in one study. Besides all in one study, it can be broken down or combined into any two of the three depending on the study's objective.

In terms of impact on the community, the introduction of this theory could encourage the identification of more beneficiary groups of prosocial activities. Instead of being stuck with studies among students of higher learning institutions only (Ayob et al., 2013; Chandra et al., 2020; Ernst, 2011; Hockerts, 2017; Prieto, 2011; Usman et al., 2021), more research could be initiated to create product or services that benefit various communities such as farmers, villagers, citizens of a country, members of cooperatives, members of NGOs or others. Primary data on the benefits enjoyed by the community can be obtained easily from members of the community through interviews or questionnaire surveys.

The beneficial outcome from the product or services created from sociopreneurial behaviour or prosocial activities (community projects) has been conceptualized using different terms such as social performance (Nicholls, 2008), social value (Santos, 2012), social returns (Emerson, 2003), social return on investment, SROI (Hall et al., 2015), and social accounting (Nicholls, 2009).

The appropriate hypothesis for the study should revolve around the direct impact of prosocial activities or sociopreneurial behaviour on target communities such as villagers, cooperative members and others.

Examples of appropriate hypotheses for project funder's usage, which reflects the benefit for the target community:

H8: Bridge construction increases the mobility of villagers.

Examples of appropriate hypotheses for academic validation:

H9: Sociopreneurial behaviour is directly associated with community improvement.

For studies interested in gaining further insight on the benefits gained by the project implementer (sociopreneur), some examples of the benefits gained indirectly from the implementation of community activities such as experience and skills. In some cases, the executor is a member of the community and, at the

same time, is a manager of the funding organization. For example, a farmer who is also the chairman of the cooperative in the village. He is responsible for purchasing a machine for a rental by farmers. Conflict of interest happens if, under his command, the cooperative charges a high rental rate that only he can afford to hire the machine due to the large size of his land compared to other farmers. Therefore, the main purpose of his behaviour, which is purchasing the machine to increase the yield of every farmer, cannot be achieved.

In the case mentioned above, the magnitude of social impact enjoyed by the target community needs to be studied (measured) and compared with the personal gain received by the change agent (sociopreneur) to determine if a conflict of interest exists. There are many more isolated cases where conflicts of interest exist. When managing any social project, a sociopreneur should consider the four ethical rules (Jones & George, 2021) as a guideline to avoid conflict of interest.

On the other hand, if all farmers have the same opportunity to use the machine, then there is no conflict of interest. In the case where no conflict of interest exists, a mediator study or indirect benefit received by both beneficiary receiver parties may be investigated.

Examples of some appropriate hypotheses in the academic study are as follows;

H10: Direct benefits of the project on sociopreneurs (community members) fully mediate the relationship between sociopreneurial behaviour and direct benefits to the community

Or from a different direction

H11: Direct benefits to the community fully mediate the relationship between sociopreneurial behaviour and direct benefits of the project on sociopreneurs (community members)

While for practitioners who provide funds or organizers of the project, more specific outcomes or impacts should be spelt out in the hypotheses, such as:

H12: The purchase of harvesting machines by cooperatives has increased the income of farmers (cooperative members) directly and indirectly by increasing the income of cooperatives.

or from the opposite direction

H13: The purchase of harvesting machines by the cooperative has given direct benefits to the cooperative as well as indirect benefits to cooperative members

For data collection in this kind of study, the appropriate respondents comprised of the member of the community who, at the same time, hold an influential position in the cooperative in the decision to purchase and rent the machine.

## **CONCLUSION**

In order to extend research in sociopreneurship, the proposed integrated theory of sociopreneurial behaviour provides a researchable, action-oriented and stimulating model to extend the research in the field of Sociopreneurship. Researchers are encouraged to validate the theory in different contexts by finding the best approach suitable to the phenomenon of interest.

The proposed theory pays attention to external factors in the conversion of sociopreneurial intention to sociopreneurial behaviour. Successful sociopreneurial behaviour from its intention could be better predicted with the presence of external support (e.g., facilitating events, social capital, human resources capital) or weakened by the presence of hindrance (e.g., displacing events, time, opportunity, skill).

The result of an individual performing sociopreneurial behaviour should maximise benefits to the community while gaining minimum return for themselves. Otherwise, the person is categorised as a social venture capitalist instead of a sociopreneur because they are aiming for a better return on investment. Conflict of interest between personal and community benefits may jeopardise the impact of sociopreneurial behaviour, which is to improve the community's condition.

The first statement of the integrated theory of sociopreneurial behaviour (ITSB) is supported by the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) and the entrepreneurial event model (EEM). In TPB, the moderator of the intention to behaviour conversion is referred to as external factors, while in the EEM model, it is referred to as facilitating or displacement events. The second statement of ITSB is proposed based on the definition of sociopreneur, which pay attention to solving society's problem instead forming social enterprise as an outcome as proposed in SEIM.

The moderator, external support and/or hindrance measurement should be based on the actual event instead of perception. Examples of events include grants received, training provided, free covid-19 pandemic vaccine, divorce, unemployment and others. Further, the impact of sociopreneurial behaviour should be measured from both community benefit and the sociopreneur's personal gain with verification of conflict of interest.

## **AUTHOR STATEMENTS**

Muhammad Iqbal Arrasyid collected all the literature support and provided the article's first draft. Shafie Sidek provided the ideas to propose the integrated theory based on the gap found in the literature support and significantly improved the draft made by Muhammad Iqbal Arrasyid.

## DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article.

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