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Behavioral intention toward urban eco-land performance assessment models using TPB tests☆

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ABSTRACT

Constructing and promoting an innovative urban eco-land performance assessment model are important issues for local environmental governance. Local government employees play a key role in executing environmental planning and management policy. Government employees' behaviors and attitudes are critical factors for the effective execution of governance models, especially new governance models or new policy instruments. This study applies the theory of planned behavior (TPB) to predict the behavior of government employees when deciding whether to adopt a new governance model. The aim of this research is to explore key factors of behavioral intentions and attitudes to determine which factors influence behavior. To employ partial least square (PLS) statistical analysis to investigate government employees' behavioral intentions to adopt a new eco-land performance assessment model. The study yields some interesting findings. Government employees' attitudes and subjective norms influence behavioral intentions. Some external variables also exert significant influence on behavioral intentions.

1. Introduction

Devising urban governance tools that respond to eco-environmental demands is a critical issue nowadays. Studies show that innovative tools for local urban governance (e.g., ecological footprint, ecosystem services assessment, ecological niche, and landscape pattern) offer good ways of assessing and measuring performance. The value of these tools owes to their close ties to ecology fundamentals. The tools' quantifications make monitoring the model relatively easy.

This paper examines new management tools that integrate ecological assessment and land functional management. The name for such tools is eco-land performance assessment models. The objective of the paper is to investigate government employees' acceptance of new assessment models, and to identify factors that may affect behavioral intentions toward such models. The Taiwan government has already implemented several new urban governance policies such as floor area control, urban renewal, and e-government. However, research must analyze the process of promoting these policies to provide insight into the benefits of their creation and promotion. The eco-land performance assessment model in this research includes the use of quantitative indicators to measure eco-land characteristics, and the use of tools for monitoring, predicting, and managing urban land use. Hence, this research explores key factors that might influence local public employees' adoption of new tools. This research also identifies government employees who actively promote green, low-carbon projects, and who may pioneer this eco-land performance assessment model in years to come. The target region for this research is the area with relatively low population density surrounding the cities of Tainan and Kaohsiung.

2. Literature review and research hypotheses

2.1. Promoting eco-land performance assessment models

Much research (Honnay, Endels, Vereecken, & Hermy, 1999; Mörtberg & Wallentinus, 2000; Thompson et al., 2003) endeavors to show that a city's biodiversity depends in part on the amount, size, shape, type, and distribution of urban eco-land. The more types of land on which living beings depend, the greater the species diversity. Therefore, conservation and management of urban habitats are becoming more important than ever in maintaining biodiversity. Sandstrom, Angelstam, and Khakee (2006) argue that conservation of the urban habitat system is an important issue and should in fact be a priority because local governments lack sufficient information with which to plan for biodiversity. Costanza et al. (1997) indicate that wetlands, water areas, woodlands, grasslands, dry land, paddy fields, and even desert each has its own ecological value.

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Local government employees play an important role in environmental governance. Under an administrative system, local environmental government employees actually use eco-land performance assessment models and are the major promoters and executors of environmental governance. Findings from studies in the public sector disagree somewhat with expectations from studies in the private sector (Whelan, Davies, Walsh, & Bourke, 2010). Hence, influential factors of employees' behavioral intention are crucial to the implementation of system management.

2.2. Research hypotheses

This research explores key factors that influence the executors (i.e., local government employees) in the adoption and application of systems of innovative eco-land performance assessment models. Understanding the true needs and behavioral intentions of local environmental government employees is the only way to grasp these key complementary measures and to reduce potential resistance when attempting to implement systems and policies in the future. This idea is consistent with predictions of human behavior under the theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985, 1989; Kulviwat, Bruner, & Al-Shuridah, 2009). Hence, this study tests a series of research hypothesis that build on three perspectives: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. The first three hypotheses (H1, H2, and H3) posit that, as variables, these three perspectives exert a direct positive influence on behavioral intention (see Fig. 1). The perspective of behavioral attitude experiences an influence from environmental attitudes (H4), behavioral belief (H5), and outcome valuation (H6). Subjective norm undergoes an influence from behavioral norm (H7), social norm (H8) and motivation to comply (H9). Finally, influences on perceived behavioral control come from self-efficacy (H10) and facilitation (H11). All variables are also under the influence of external variables (H12) such as government employees' personal characteristics including place of work, education, age, profession, sex, seniority, job type, and leisure preferences (see Fig. 2).

2.3. Research method

2.3.1. Sample

Participants in this research are local government employees from Tainan and Kaohsiung, two cities in southern Taiwan. The sample design employs stratified purposeful sampling. The sample consists of 185 participants. All participants received questionnaires, with 154 respondents returning valid, completed questionnaires. The overall

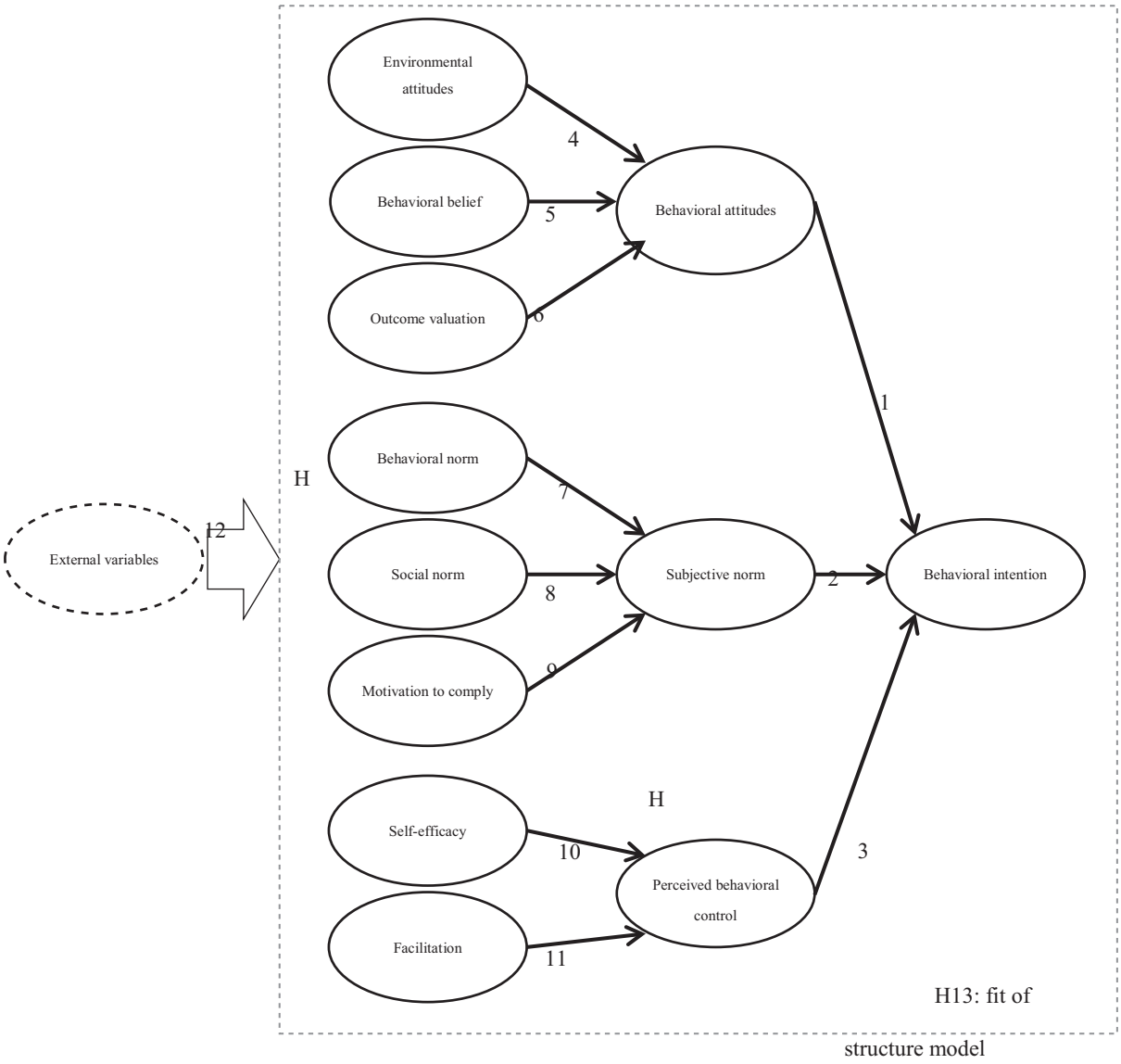

Fig. 1. Diagram of the theoretical model and hypotheses.