

Original article

How can the impact of implementation intentions as a behaviour change intervention be improved?

Comment l'impact de l'implémentation d'intention, comme intervention de changement comportemental, peut-elle être améliorée ?

A. Prestwich^{a,*}, I. Kellar^b

^a Institute of Psychological Sciences, University of Leeds, Leeds, LS2 9JT, UK

^b University of Cambridge, UK

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Abstract

Interventions requesting individuals to form implementation intentions, specific plans regarding how and when to enact behaviour, have been shown to be effective in changing a wide range of health, social, and organisational behaviours. A small proportion of studies have sought to identify, within full-factorial designs, under what circumstances and for whom implementation intention-based interventions are most effective. This review covers this issue. A number of potential moderators of the effects of implementation intentions on behaviour were identified (intentions, motivation type, collaboration, plan reminders, goal type, plan type, conscientiousness, perfectionism, procrastination, stress). Of these, the strength of one's intentions have been tested, and supported, most often as a moderator of implementation intention effects. For some of these moderators (e.g., conscientiousness, goal difficulty) the results were contradictory but for others the results were more consistent (e.g., motivation type, plan reminders). Additional moderators might be identified by comparing effects of implementation intentions across studies.

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Keywords: Implementation intentions; Motivation; Reminders; Moderators; Conscientiousness; Perfectionism; Goals; Collaboration; Text message

Résumé

Les interventions invitant les individus à former des implémentations d'intention, programmes spécifiques concernant comment et quand réaliser un comportement se sont avérées efficaces dans le changement de nombreux comportements relatifs à la santé, au social et au domaine organisationnel. Peu d'études ont cherché à identifier dans le cadre de plans factoriels complets, les circonstances de l'efficacité de l'implémentation et quel type d'implémentation est le plus efficace. Plusieurs modérateurs potentiels des effets de l'implémentation sur les comportements ont été identifiés (intentions, type de motivation, collaboration, rappel des plans, type de buts, conscience, perfectionnismes, procrastination, stress). La force de l'intention a été testée et vérifiée comme un modérateur des effets des implémentations d'intention. Pour certains de ces modérateurs (e.g., conscience, difficulté des buts), les résultats sont contradictoires mais pour d'autres les résultats sont plus cohérents (e.g., type de la motivation, rappel des plans). Des modérateurs complémentaires sont identifiables en comparant les effets de l'implémentation des intentions au fil des études.

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Mots clés : Implémentation des intentions ; Motivation ; Rappels ; Modérateurs ; Conscience ; Perfectionnisme ; Buts ; Collaboration ; Texte

1. Introduction

Implementation intentions (Gollwitzer, 1993) are a self-regulatory strategy that involves an individual planning, in

advance, the situation in which he/she will perform a particular behaviour. When applied as a behavioural intervention, participants are often required to decide when (e.g., time of day, day of the week) and where (e.g., bedroom) they will act. These manipulations have been effective in promoting desirable behaviours such as increasing fruit and vegetable intake (e.g., Kellar and Abraham, 2005) and reducing more negative actions such as saturated fat intake (e.g., Prestwich et al., 2008). Reviews have

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: a.j.prestwich@leeds.ac.uk (A. Prestwich).

Table 1

Studies testing (via interaction terms) moderators of between-subjects manipulated implementation intentions (IMPs).

| Authors | Dependent variable | Self-report? | Follow-up period | Moderation effect size <i>d</i> | Conclusion regarding IMPs effectiveness |
|--|----------------------------|--------------|------------------|--|--|
| Moderator: intention (measured) | | | | | |
| 1. de Nooijer et al. (2006) | Daily fruit intake | Yes | 1 week | Not calculable (ns) | Similar effect at high/low intention |
| 2. Elliott and Armitage (2006) | Speed-limit adherence | Yes | 1 month | .35* | More effective for high intenders |
| 3. Sheeran et al. (2005b) | Hours studying | Yes | 1 week | .29* | More effective for high intenders |
| 4. Van Osch et al. (2008) | Sunscreen use | Yes | 5 months | .23* | Only effective for high intenders |
| 5. Verplanken and Faes (1999) | Healthy eating | Yes | 5 days | Not calculable (ns) | Similar effect at high/low intention |
| Moderator: intention (manipulated) | | | | | |
| 1. Milne et al. (2002) | Testicular self-exam | Yes | 1 month | .96* | Only effective with motivational intervention |
| 2. Prestwich et al. (2008) | Fat intake | Yes | 1 month | .35*, Standard IMP .03 (ns), reason. IMP | Standard IMPs (not Reasoning IMPs) more effective with motivational intervention |
| 3. Sheeran and Silverman (2003) | Workplace safety | No | 3 months | .03 (ns) | Effective with/without motivational intervention |
| 4. Sheeran et al. (2005b) | Training attendance | | | | |
| | Puzzle task speed | No | < 1 day | .68* | Only effective when relevant goal was primed |
| Moderator: conscientiousness (measured) | | | | | |
| 1. Walsh et al. (2005) | Watching an exercise video | Yes | 3 days | .09 (ns) | Conscientiousness negatively related to behaviour in control and unrelated in IMPs condition |
| 2. Webb et al. (2007) | Lecture attendance | No | 1 semester | -.41* | More effective for low conscientious |
| Moderator: self-concordance (measured) | | | | | |
| 1. Chatzisarantis et al. (2008) | Vigorous exercise | Yes | 5 weeks | -.42* | More effective for non-concordant goals |
| 2. Koestner et al. (2002) | Meeting goals | Yes | 2.5 days | .49* | More effective for concordant goals |
| 3. Koestner et al. (2002) | New Year resolutions | Yes | 1 month | .53* | More effective for concordant goals |
| Moderator: perfectionism (measured) | | | | | |
| 1. Powers et al. (2005) Study 1 | Goal progress | Yes | 3 weeks | -.68* | Negative impact for high social perfectionists |
| 2. Powers et al. (2005), Study 2 | Goal progress | Yes | 3 weeks | -.69* | Negative impact for high social perfectionists |
| 3. Powers et al. (2005), Study 2 | Goal progress | Yes | 3 weeks | .44* | Positive impact for self-oriented perfectionists |
| Moderator: goal difficulty (measured) | | | | | |
| 1. Koestner et al. (2002) | Goal progress | Yes | 3 weeks | .44* | More effective for difficult goals |
| Moderator: stress (measured) | | | | | |
| 1. Budden and Sagarin (2007) | Exercise | Yes | 1 week | .07 (ns) | Not effective at high/low stress |
| Moderator: experimenter demand (manipulated) | | | | | |
| 1. Chapman et al. (2008) | Fruit/vegetable portions | Yes | 1 week | .09 (ns) | Effective with low and high experimenter demand |
| Moderator: procrastination (measured) | | | | | |
| 1. Owens et al. (2008) | Attending an appointment | No | - | .09 (ns) | Effective for high and low procrastinators |
| Moderator: text message reminders (manipulated) | | | | | |
| 1. Prestwich et al. (2009) | Exercise frequency | No | 4 weeks | .28† | More effective when combined with reminder |

Note: † $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ns = non-significant.

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