Can the theory of planned behaviour explain Allied Health professionals' likelihood to engage in EBP? A focus group study

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Background

Research has found that allied health professionals generally agree with the concept of evidence based practice (EBP), and feel that it can improve patient care and outcomes. However, implementation of research findings into clinical practice remains inconsistent with numerous barriers identified as impacting individual clinicians' ability and capacity to be evidence-based in their practice. Implementation science research suggests that a theory driven approach is critical when attempting to modify behaviour of healthcare professionals.

Objectives

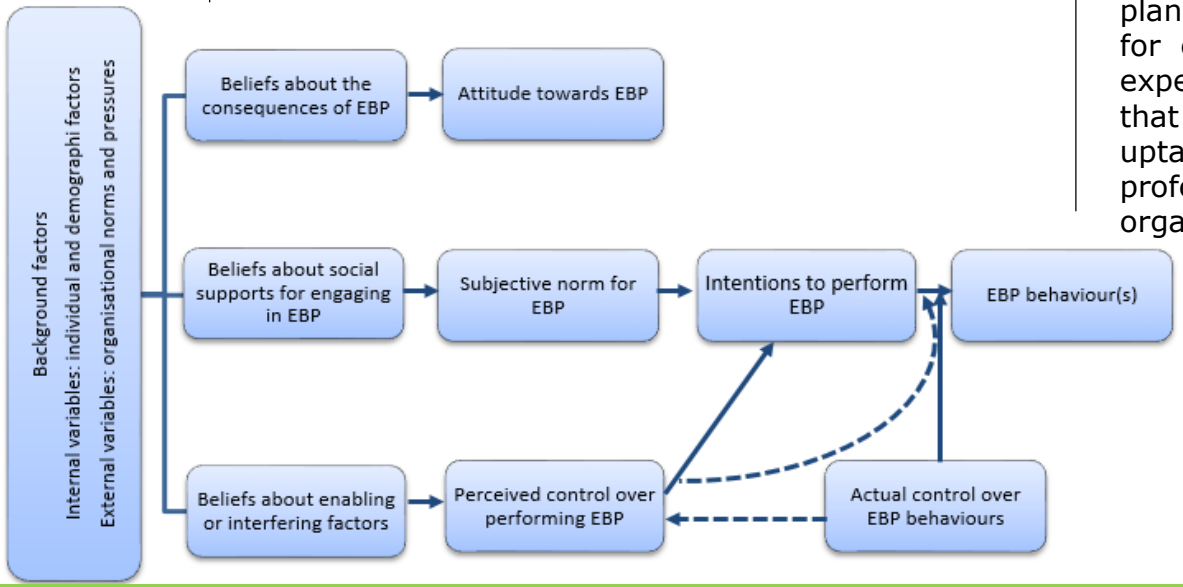
To explore allied health professionals' EBP behaviours utilising the theory of planned Behaviour (TPB).

Methods

Study design: Focus groups
Participants and setting: Allied health professionals from an Australian public metropolitan health service
Sampling: Criterion → disciplines, groups and settings
Instrument: Questions developed according to the manual for TPB research
Data analysis: Thematic using constructs from the TPB

Results

Ten focus groups with a total of 49 participants were conducted and consisted of discipline specific and multidisciplinary teams. Participants were found to have positive attitudinal beliefs but low normative beliefs, particularly in relation to the perception that the workplace did not value engagement in evidence-based practice activities, such as presenting results from research activities at conferences. The organisational context was a strong moderator of perceived behavioural control, more so than internal variables such as skills.



An additional theme was identified and related to the sense of dissonance participants experienced due to their awareness of the knowledge-behaviour gap.

Guilt sets in a little bit because of the… potentially knowing that I might not have done as much ongoing research to make sure that what I'm doing is always evidence-based.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated that the theory of planned behaviour is a useful framework for explaining allied health professionals' experience of EBP. The findings suggest that interventions aimed at enhancing the uptake of EBP with allied health professionals should target the organisational context along with skills.

If you're back to back with clients all day, that's when you get frustrated. I feel like I don't know what I'm doing here, I want some more information but I haven't got time to get it.

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