THE MODIFICATION OF THE THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR AND ITS SIMILARITY WITH MORAL DEVELOPMENT AND ETHICAL SENSITIVITY

[1]NIKI LUKVIARMAN, [2]ARIEF PRIMA JOHAN MARUF, [3]REBI FARA HANDIKA

(Faculty of Economics – Andalas University – Indonesia)

Abstract- Extensive previous studies have investigate the use of the theory of planned behavior. Many of those investigate in the context of ethical behavior intention. This paper argued that such theory should be modified according to the flow of mental and cognitive process of ethical reasoning. This paper provide such modification and proposed competing model of ethical intention behavior. The competing model was the combination of moral development and ethical sensitivity, and apparently both variables have similarity with the variables in the TPB model.

Keywords- Theory of Planned Behavior, Moral Development, Ethical Sensitivity, Ethical Intention Behavior.

I. INTRODUCTION

While ethic issue have received significant amount of attention from scholars and practitioners, the question of how a person behave ethically is still untapped. Most scholars argued that since ethical behavior was the reaction of the interaction between multidimensional external stimuli and core value ideology, it is difficult to explain such behavior rigorously from only single perspective.

Theory of planned behavior (TPB) have been widely use to explain people behavior including in ethics issue(Kashif, Zarkada, & Thurasamy, 2017; Ferdous & Polonsky, 2013). The theory explained the reason why people have intention to behave especially the cognitive process of behavior intention (Ajzen, 1991). The process comprehend both personal value and rational reason of conducting a certain behavior. Personal value was represented by attitude toward behavior and subjective norm while the rational reason was reflected by perceive behavior control. According to extensive work of previous scholars, the three variable could explained partially or analyzed in interaction model. The model suggested that attitude toward behavior, subjective norm, and perceive behavior control will lead to intention of behavior. However, this theory has limitation when implemented in the ethical context. Ethical decision are more concern on the personal value and put such value as foundation and starting point for evaluating ethical dilemma.

Other scholars suggested that ethical behavior as well as ethical decision could be most determined by individual moral value and sensitivity(Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977; Shawver & Shennetti, 2009). Both variables could construct competing model on explaining ethical choices and intention behavior. Moral value related to the philosophical question of right or wrong. The answer of such question could be diverse among person as it contains of abstract meaning and understanding. Specifically the answers are derived from personal judgment(i.e. evaluation and perception)of surrounding. Personal judgment as a process of evaluating right or wrong was constructed in moral judgment. Furthermore, moral judgment was determined by level of personal moral which reflected from personal moral development.

Ethical sensitivity could be categorized as "situational ethic". This variable is an interaction of personal judgment of situation and the conformity of such situation with their personal value while in the same time predicting causal relation of the situation. In the process of judgment, a person with high ethical sensitivity will evaluate series of causal relation of event, establish interpretations of the event, and make ethical decision or behavior. However, this process was first determined by the level of moral judgment (i.e. moral development).This paper will discuss the potential modification of TPB in accordance with ethical context. Next, competing model of ethical intention behavior will be proposed which derived from merging moral development and ethical sensitivity. Finally this paper will discuss the similarity and the differences between two model and its containing variables.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Moral reasoning is the primary focus of scholars for last to decade. The process of moral reasoning will take a person into moral judgment (i.e. moral decision of particular issue)(Spitzeck, 2009). A stream of previous studies have emphasized on the inquiry of moral reasoning process. Other attempts were focusing on the determinant of moral reasoning. Although the investigation on such topic were extensive, the results are not yet consistent either the theoretical foundation of moral reasoning process or the variables of its determinant.

Moral reasoning could be defined as the ethical decision making process(Chao & Li, 2016). It contains of multi-stages process from recognizing

ethical issue, interpreting, and arriveat moral judgment. Once moral judgment was constructed, intention to take action or not taking action was appeared, and finally come into particular decision of behavior. As explained by Chao and Li (2016), moral reasoning usually follow the stage of affective evaluation, cognitive interpretation, and behavior response on business dilemma.

Theory of Planned Behavior

Theory of Planned Behavior was introduced by Ajzen (1991) and have become prominent and popular theory on explaining people intention behavior. The model suggested that individual intention to behave was depend on three factors. The factors were attitude toward behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavior control. Those variables will deter whether a person has high or low level of intention to behave. This models have been using in significantly various stream of research including business ethics.

Despite of its popularity, TPB should consider to modify when dealing with ethical issue. Contrast to with other decision, ethical choice placed more consideration on value and norm. In the ethical decision process, people will first asked to their core value and norm before considering another factors. Moreover, people will use their core value as assumption on how they considered such other factors. Therefore, value and norm should be accounted as the initial process of ethical reasoning.
Different with original TPB model, this paper suggested that subjective norm as single independent for ethical decision model. Since core value and norm are subjective which distinct among people, the variable should be the starting point of ethical consideration. Such personal values will followed by people attitude toward certain ethical behavior and their perception on behavior control. Positive and strong ethical value will produce linier relation with people attitude. Similarly, such ethical value will encourage people to take control on the consequences or difficulties to conduct ethical behavior. Finally attitude toward behavior and perceive behavior control will lead to decision of intention behavior. Proposed modification for ethical decision making is explained below.

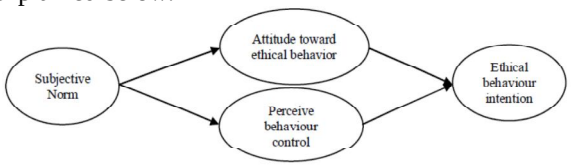


Figure.1. Modified TPB

Moral Development and Ethical Sensitivity

Moral development related to level of moral judgment. The development was considered as a reflection of individual cognitive transformation which in turn affected their moral judgment (Martynov, 2009). Moral development contains of three level and five stages. The level indicated individual gradation on their cognitive structure while the stages reflected the individual expected orientation on the outcome of their ethical decision. Level and stages point out how a person evaluate, perceive, and adapt into their surroundings (Martynov, 2009). The level and its stages are explained in the table. 1.

Person in the pre-conventional level tend to release self-serving behavior. The orientations on this level were focused on the avoiding bad consequences and punishment, as well as followed certain behavior that only favored their own interest. Behavior orientation on the conventional level tend to maintain harmony either seeking for social comfort or social order. In the final level of moral development, a person favors his/her personal ideology and related with social condition. People tend to behave ethically after arrived at this level.

Ethical sensitivity related to the process of being aware of ethical dilemma in a decision making. Sparks and Hunt (1998) conceptualized ethical sensitivity as the ability to identify that the decision making has ethical content. They argued that ethical sensitivity depends on the personal value recognition and experiences on dealing with decision making and ethical dilemma. Hence, the higher level of core value related to the goodness and virtue interacted with high level of experience, the higher sensitive a person to recognize ethical dilemma(Sparks & Hunt, 1998).

Since ethical sensitivity is an ability, Endicot (2001) explained that there are three skill should interact in ethical sensitivity. First is the ability on acquiring information. People who usually conducting large amount of information before making decision tend to easily identified problems related to the decision including problems with ethical content. Next skill should interact in ethical sensitivity is organizing information by categorizing, listing, or putting information in certain priority matrix. Finally, ethical sensitivity should contend with the ability to interpret and using the information.

In most recent conceptualization, Shawver and Shennetti (2009) explained that ethical sensitivity is a multidimensional construct. The construct called as multidimensional ethical scale (MES). MES contains of five dimensions which are moral equity, relativism, egoism, utilitarianism, and contractualism(Shawver & Shennetti, 2009). Those dimensions are accounted in composite manner which in turn resulting higher or lower score of ethical sensitivity. This measurement has been tested in accounting students, and indicated rigorous procedure on evaluating personal ethical sensitivity level.
Kohlberg and Hersh (1977) proposed moral development as the determinants of ethical behavior.

Different level of moral hold by people will produce particular judgment of ethical situation which in turn affected their ethical intention behavior. Slightly different,Shawver and Shennetti (2009) and Sparks and Hunt (1998)used ethical sensitivity to explain ethical choices and decisions. They argued that since ethical sensitivity was the reasoning process considering causal effect of ethical dilemma and planned behavior based on attitude, this concept should represent the determinant of ethical behavior intention.

Based on the concept, there is similarity between both models with TPB. Moral development stress on the level of value and norm hold by people and personal orientation dealing with expected results of certain decision or behavior. Such level or moral will established people ability to recognize and identify the existence of ethical dilemma in a situation while in the same time weighted the casual effect of alternative decision and behavior. Since people ability on weighted comprehensively ethical dilemma is the concept of ethical sensitivity, the level of person moral development should able to influence the level of ethical sensitivity. Finally, this mental and cognitive process will arrive at ethical decision or intention to behave ethically. The competing model of ethical intention behavior explained on the figure below.

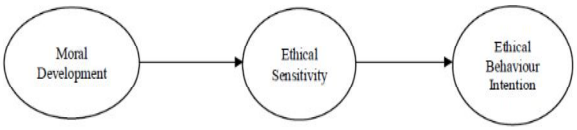


Figure 2. Competing model of ethical behavior intention

This paper argued that both models, - modification of TPB and moral development-ethical sensitivity model -, could deliver better explanation of ethical intention. Both models have similarity which is taking personal value and rational weighted process into consideration on predicting behavior intention. Furthermore, those models proposed core value as starting point which is in line with behavior construction (i.e. value-attitude-behavior). Core value will determine how people judge on the situation either their attitude or their ability to take action, and hence lead to ethical behavior intention.

Similarity between variables also appeared on both models. This paper suggested that subjective norm has similarity with moral development. Both variables measure personal value which was derived from people core value. However, moral development has more comprehensive explanation which accounted the expected orientation as well as the level of personal value. Such variable also have more complicated measurement than that of having by subjective norms. Although less comprehensive explanation and measurement, subjective norm are more widely used in the research.

Ethical sensitivity could comprehend the attitude toward behavior and perceived behavior control. There is an interaction of attitude judgment and rational judgment when people consider ethical dilemma. Both ability was explained, accounted, and measured in ethical sensitivity. In line with similarity between subjective norm and moral development, attitude toward behavior and perceived behavior control are more well-used and recognized in any stream of research. However, ethical sensitivity has comprehensive explanation and measurement.

CONCLUSION

This paper provide explanation of two model on mental and cognitive process of ethical reasoning. Using popular foundation of the theory of planned behavior and the cognitive moral development theory this paper argued that previous models should be modified based on ethical context. This paper proposed modification on TPB with placing subjective norm as independent while both attitude toward behavior and perceived behavior control as intervening. In other hand, this paper merged moral development and ethical sensitivity into an integrated model. Using the rational theory of TPB, moral development should be placed as independent while ethical sensitivity as intervening. Both model could be used as determinant of ethical behavior intention.

There is potential similarity between variables of two competing models. This paper concluded that moral development and subjective norm is similar in the substantive meaning. Such similarity also appeared on ethical sensitivity with combined of attitude toward behavior and perceived ethical behavior. However, this paper was produced based on the critical review of previous studies, and in turn it is lack of empirical evidence and support. Further investigation should focus on confirming this model using empirical data.

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