

**UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA**

**DETERMINANTS OF PUBLIC'S  
ACCEPTANCE TOWARDS PEOPLE  
WITH DISABILITIES  
INVOLVEMENT IN PHYSICAL  
ACTIVITY**

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## ABSTRACT

Involvement in physical activity regularly for people with disabilities (PWD) has been shown to positively contribute to physical fitness, psychological health, personal development and quality of life. However, PWD often faced many obstacles to their involvement in physical activity, particularly acceptance by people without disabilities towards their involvement in physical activity. To further understand these issues of social acceptance, the present study aims to examine the factors that influence public acceptance towards PWD involvement in physical activity. An exploratory model of public acceptance was developed involving five key of antecedents identified from previous literature. The antecedents identified were personality, attitude, exposure, ethnicity and subjective norms. 460 responses were collected from people without disabilities, at four urban Public Recreational Parks located in Klang Valley. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach was used to analyze the data. The model showed good fit ( $\chi^2/df=2.10$ ,  $p=.00$ , CFI=.901, RMSEA=.054, SRMR=.074) with the collected data. The finding indicated that, subjective norms ( $\beta=.360$ ,  $p<.01$ ) is the most important factor in influencing public acceptance followed by public attitude ( $\beta=.335$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and exposure ( $\beta=.112$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Meanwhile, personality traits ( $\beta=.031$ ,  $p>.05$ ) and ethnicity ( $\beta=.056$ ,  $p>.05$ ) did not have significant relationship with public acceptance. Results showed that attitude has mediating role in the relationship between external factors (ethnicity, exposure) and public acceptance. A pertinent contribution of the current study is the introduction of the extended model of public acceptance developed by integrating theory of reasoned action (TRA), big five model (BFM), contact theory and culture values theory which, contributed to better understanding of public acceptance towards PWD. Further understanding of these factors towards PWD involvement in physical activity is essential to promote social inclusion in creating a better community for the PWD. Hence, this study contributes to the body of knowledge as it provides validated instruments for future research.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Involvement in physical activity during leisure time is an important part of human needs. Involvement in physical activity had been shown to positively contribute to health, quality of life, physical fitness and psychological benefits, among PWD (Manus, Corcoran, & Perry, 2008; Ribeiro et al., 2005). Physical activity involvement offers physical benefits for PWD (PWD) which enhancing better balance, developing good body structure and coordination, boosting better blood circulation and building stronger muscles (Lui & Hui, 2009). In addition, it also provides a platform for acquiring life skills. People who participate in sports and recreational activities enjoy psychological benefits such as positive emotion, confidence, good self-esteem and belief in their skills and abilities. Furthermore, it can promote valuable life skills and encourage positive social interactions.

To be accepted by others people is one of the basic human needs who live in the community. Social stigmatization, rejection or public isolation is very stressful to PWD (Lloyd, Tse, & Deane, 2006). Social acceptances by people without disabilities towards physical activity involvement for PWD play a vital role in motivating them to increase their involvement in sport and recreational activities. Negative societal perceptions of disability can devastate impact upon the self-confidence and self-image of PWD. It can decrease the involvement of PWD in physical activity. A review of literature indicated that there were several factors that influenced public without disabilities acceptance towards PWD's involvement in physical activity. Basically, past research often approached these issues from two perspectives, which focused on the external and internal factors. The external factors included previous experience, knowledge, cultural background and subjective norms (Blue, 1995; Rimmer, Rilley, Wang, Rauworth, & Jurkowski, 2004; Tachibana, 2005; Wagner & Thomas, 1992). Attitude was the main internal factor that related to the public's acceptance towards PWD's involvement in physical activity (Blue, 1995; Rimmer et al., 2004).