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Factors Influencing the Intention to Collaborate in Inclusive Teaming with Visually Impaired Peers: A Theory of Planned Behavior Approach

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Abstract: This study examined the factors influencing non-disabled university students' intention to collaborate with visually impaired (VI) peers in inclusive team settings. Guided by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the research focused on four key variables: attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control (PBC), and awareness. A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 113 non-disabled students at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Puncak Alam using convenience sampling. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using SPSS version 27 to assess the correlation between the independent variables and students' intention to collaborate with VI peers. Findings revealed that non-disabled students generally demonstrated high levels of intention to collaborate, with awareness being the most influential factor. While attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control were positively associated with intention, only awareness was found to be a significant predictor, highlighting students' recognition of the importance of understanding the needs and challenges faced by VI individuals. The study emphasizes the crucial role of awareness in fostering inclusive behavior. It suggests that increasing disability-related awareness through education and campus initiatives could significantly enhance inclusive collaboration practices among university students.

Keywords: *Visually Impaired, Theory of Planned Behavior, Attitudes, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioral Control, Awareness, University.*

1. Introduction and Background

In recent years, inclusive education has gained momentum as a vital approach to ensuring that all students, regardless of capability, are provided with equitable chances to be involved in academic and social life. However, for students with visual impairments (VI), navigating higher education remains a significant challenge, particularly in environments that demand peer collaboration. Visually impaired students often face not just academic obstacles, but also barriers to social interaction that can lead to isolation and exclusion. According to Manitsa and Doikou (2020), limited social engagement in educational settings can negatively impact the socioemotional development of visually impaired individuals. At the university level, these barriers are compounded by a lack of awareness among peers, resulting in misunderstanding and social distancing. A recent report from the Department of Services and Development for Disabilities, UiTM (2024), revealed that at the Puncak Alam campus alone, 17 out of 49 registered students with disabilities are visually impaired, further underscoring the importance of addressing inclusive practices at the institutional level.

Research by Baepler (2023), Lourens and Swartz (2016) and Firat (2021) highlights that students with visual impairments are often excluded from group work because their peers feel uncertain, uncomfortable, or ill-equipped to engage with them. In classroom settings where collaboration is essential, this discomfort can translate into avoidance, which reinforces exclusion. As noted by Delgado-Gil et al. (2023), inclusive attitudes require reinforcement through sustained awareness-building programs. Yet, as Brewer et al. (2023) observed, the social dimension of disability is still underappreciated in higher education discourse.

The consequences of this exclusion extend beyond academics. Social rejection and judgmental attitudes not only undermine visually impaired students' self-esteem but can also lead to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression (Kızılaslan & Kızılaslan, 2018). When peers treat visually impaired students as incapable or burdensome, it perpetuates harmful stereotypes and discourages meaningful social interaction.

Miyauchi and Paul (2020) also found that feelings of not being accepted or fully aware of their social environments can intensify VI students' sense of loneliness. Addressing these multifaceted challenges requires more than policy—it demands proactive cultural change. As the student research highlights, increasing awareness, debunking stereotypes, and providing targeted support can dramatically improve the educational and emotional well-being of VI students.

This study, therefore, seeks to examine the factors that influence non-disabled students' intention to collaborate in inclusive teaming with visually impaired peers. By applying the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the research examined how attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and awareness contribute to this behavioral intention. The findings aim to inform strategies that not only enhance inclusive practices but also foster a campus culture grounded in empathy, understanding, and mutual respect.

2. Literature Review - Intention to Collaborate with Visually Impaired Peers: A TPB Approach

Attitudes towards individuals with disabilities profoundly influence interaction and collaboration. Students with positive perceptions tend to be more inclusive, while those with doubts or fear of the unknown may withdraw. According to the project, "some non-disabled students display favoritism...and leave them in vain," reinforcing the need for intervention. Meanwhile, subjective norms referring to a peer and societal expectations were found to shape intentions subtly, as students often act based on what is perceived as acceptable. Likewise, perceived behavioral control captures whether students feel confident and prepared to collaborate, while awareness elevates that intention into action.

Concerning intention, as conceptualized by Ajzen (1991), captures the motivational factors that influence a behavior. It indicates how much effort individuals are willing to put into performing a given act. In inclusive teaming, intention is a strong predictor of whether students will engage with visually impaired peers. Brookes (2023) emphasizes that the stronger the intention, the higher the likelihood of behavioral performance. Thus, to relate, the stronger the intention, the higher the intention of individuals to collaborate with visually impaired (VI) peers. This is particularly important in collaborative learning environments, where the presence of intention can lead to supportive behaviors such as including VI peers in group activities. Such participation not only facilitates academic engagement but also boosts the social skills, acceptance, and self-esteem of all involved students (Acheampong et al., 2020; D'Allura, 2002). However, intention alone is not always sufficient. The study by Mulu and Geta (2023) noted that some non-disabled students who initially expressed supportive attitudes later displayed favoritism or exclusionary behaviors, and as a result, left their VI peers further isolated. This indicates that without supportive environments and awareness-building interventions, good intentions may not always translate into inclusive actions.

As discussed above, attitude has long been a central topic in behavioral research due to its predictive power over actions. In the TPB framework, it refers to an individual's judgment of performing a behavior and, in this case, collaborating with a VI peer. Attitudes can be favorable or unfavorable and are shaped by past experiences, perceived outcomes, and emotional responses (Altmann, 2008). Another research by Albarracin and Shavitt (2018) describes attitudes as being directed toward an object or target, perhaps, be concrete (e.g., a peer) or abstract (e.g., inclusion). These evaluations can also generalize across contexts, explaining why some students might consistently avoid collaborating with disabled peers, regardless of specific experiences (Hepler & Albarracin, 2013).

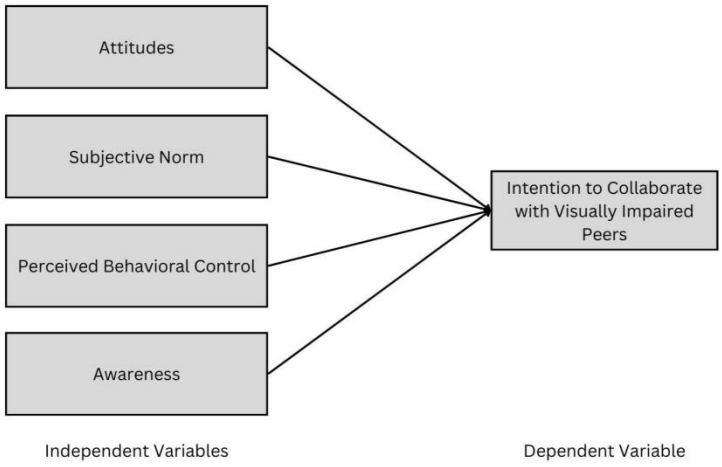
Another significant aspect of intention is subjective norm, which refers to perceived social pressure to perform or refrain from a particular behavior (Ajzen, 1991). It encompasses both injunctive norms—beliefs about what others expect—and descriptive norms—beliefs about what others do (Ajzen, 2020). For this study, which took place in the university context, these norms manifest through classroom dynamics, faculty expectations, and peer behaviors. When students believe that their lecturers or close friends support inclusion, they are more likely to follow suit. Conversely, in environments where inclusion is not openly discussed or practiced, students may hesitate to engage, even if their attitudes are neutral or favorable. Previous studies confirm the importance of fostering positive social expectations through awareness campaigns, peer-led training, and inclusive policies. As Ajzen (2020) noted, normative influence is strongest when the referent group (e.g., classmates or instructors) is emotionally significant to the individual.

Turning now to experimental evidence on perceived behavioral control, it refers to an individual's belief about their capability to execute a behavior. It incorporates both internal factors (self-efficacy) and external constraints (resources, time, support) (Ajzen, 2002). In academic settings, students may support inclusion in general but feel unprepared to collaborate with VI peers due to unfamiliarity, lack of training, or perceived communication barriers. According to Bandura (1986), self-efficacy is one's belief in their ability to perform a task that drives motivation and persistence. If students lack confidence in their ability to include VI peers meaningfully, they are less likely to initiate or sustain collaboration. On the other hand, it is also important to distinguish between real and perceived limitations. Parkinson et al. (2025) emphasize that perceived behavioral control (PBC) largely reflects external constraints and situational controllability; meanwhile, self-efficacy captures internal resilience and confidence in one's abilities. Therefore, universities must create environments that enhance both actual capability and students' perceptions of control.

What follows is an account of awareness, though not a traditional component of TPB, which is a crucial addition in this study. It refers to a person's conscious understanding and sensitivity to a particular issue or group and in this study, refers to the lived experiences of VI individuals. Spunt (2015) defines awareness as "the extent to which the subject has conscious access to the stimulus that initiates a process, the operation of the process itself, and/or the output of the process". Reinhardt et al. (2012) describe six forms of awareness: activity, cultural, social, workplace, location, and knowledge. In inclusive teaming, social and knowledge awareness are especially relevant—students must understand both the social context of disability and the specific needs or strengths of their VI peers. As Straw (2024) points out, awareness helps individuals better navigate social spaces and relationships. When students are informed and empathetic, they are more likely to challenge stereotypes, respond appropriately, and engage meaningfully with their disabled peers.

Based on the literature discussed above, the four factors that are expected to directly affect the intention to collaborate with VI peers are illustrated in the conceptual framework below.

Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework



The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), introduced by Ajzen (1991), provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the psychological and social underpinnings of human behaviour. At its core, TPB proposes that an individual's intention to initiate a specific behaviour is influenced by three main constructs: attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. This study extends the TPB model by introducing 'awareness' as an additional variable, based on the understanding that knowledge and sensitivity toward disability can significantly influence inclusive behaviour.

In the context of higher education, particularly within team-based academic tasks, these constructs help explain why some students are willing to collaborate with visually impaired peers while others hesitate. Attitudes

capture a student's evaluation of inclusive collaboration, whether they view it as positive or burdensome. Subjective norms reflect the influence of peers, lecturers, and institutional culture in shaping perceived expectations. Perceived behavioural control considers whether students feel confident and capable of engaging meaningfully. Awareness, in turn, deepens the model by recognizing the role of empathy, understanding, and familiarity with diverse abilities. Despite its relevance, a noticeable gap in the literature concerning the application of TPB to inclusive teaming with students with disabilities, especially visually impaired peers, is arguable. To date, few empirical studies have examined the behavioural intentions of non-disabled university students in this context using TPB. Thus, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring how these four constructs collectively influence students' intention to collaborate inclusively.

3. Research Methodology

Guided by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the study aimed to examine the four above-mentioned factors within the real-life context of university group interactions. The investigation employed a correlational, cross-sectional approach, focusing on a single sample of students from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Puncak Alam. The research maintained minimal interference, as no experimental manipulation was introduced. UiTM Puncak Alam was selected as the research site due to its diverse student population, which provided a meaningful backdrop for studying inclusive practices. The field-based design facilitated data collection within students' regular academic environment, supporting the reliability and relevance of findings. To ensure sufficient statistical power, G*Power software (Faul et al., 2009) was used to determine the appropriate sample size. Based on parameters including a medium effect size (0.15), a significance level of 0.05, and a power of 0.80, a minimum of 92 participants was recommended. Anticipating incomplete responses, the survey was distributed to 113 students. This strategy helped preserve data integrity and allowed for more robust hypothesis testing.

The study employed convenience sampling, a non-probability technique where participants were recruited based on accessibility. Although this limits generalizability, efforts were made to distribute the survey across multiple faculties to reduce bias and improve respondent diversity. The questionnaire consisted of Section A for demographics, Section B for assessing the four TPBs. Section B utilized closed-ended questions with a fixed range of possible answers using a 5-point Likert scale with the following values: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree options to measure all variables. The items were modified to get the required responses to answer the research questions. The study applied descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation). The questionnaire items were adapted and adopted from previous validated instruments developed by Faúndez and María (2018) and Madhesh (2022), which were tailored to fit the study's context of inclusive teaming in higher education. These sources provided well-established measures aligned with the TPB constructs and ensured the content validity of the survey. Meanwhile, in section C, this section measured the intention to collaborate with visually impaired peers, integrating several factors from the TPB model, using a consistent 1 to 5 rating scale. The questions were structured similarly to "I am ready to collaborate with visually impaired peers." Changes include "I intend to," "I am willing to," and "I am motivated to," replacing "am ready to" in other items (Faúndez & María, 2018). These statements aimed to assess the respondents' readiness and commitment to collaborate.

4. Results

This section discusses results relating to the demographics of respondents' intentions towards collaboration with VI peers, the characteristics of the total sample, and the comparison of participants based on demographic and geographic characteristics (gender, age and background of studies).

Profile of Respondents: Table 1.0 presents the demographic profile of the 113 respondents from UiTM Puncak Alam, categorized by gender, age group, faculty affiliation, and academic program. A female student comprised a substantial majority (75.2%, n = 85), compared to male students (24.8%, n = 28). This gender distribution may reflect broader enrolment trends within the institution and could influence the overall attitudinal and behavioral responses captured in the study, particularly given the documented gender differences in empathy and inclusive behavior in educational contexts. In terms of age distribution, the data show that the sample group is largely composed of students aged 21–23 years (80.5%, n = 91), who are likely in the mid to final

stages of their undergraduate programs. This maturity level may correlate with greater exposure to collaborative projects and more developed social awareness, potentially affecting their readiness to engage in inclusive teaming. In contrast, quite a small number of respondents fell into the younger (18–20 years; 9.7%) and older (24–26 years; 8.0%) age brackets, with just 1.8% of students above 26 years old, suggesting that findings may primarily reflect the perceptions of students in early adulthood. A significant concentration of respondents were originated from the Faculty of Business and Management (63.7%, n = 72), including Accountancy and Education (8.8%, n = 10 each), Creative Arts and Health Sciences (6.2%, n = 7 each), Hotel and Tourism Management (3.5%, n = 4), and Pharmacy (2.7%, n = 3).

Table 1: Demographic and Geographic Information of Respondents (N-113)

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Gender		
Male	28	24.8%
Female	85	75.2%
Total	**100**	**100%**
Age		
18-20 years old	11	9.7%
21-23 years old	91	80.5%
24-26 years old	9	8.0%
>26 years old	2	1.8%
Total	**113**	**100%**
Faculty		
Accountancy	10	8.8%
Business and Management	72	63.7%
Creative Arts	7	6.2%
Education	10	8.8%
Health Science	7	6.2%
Hotel and Tourism Management	4	3.5%
Pharmacy	3	2.7%
Total	**113**	**100%**

Descriptive Statistics: Descriptive statistics for the non-disabled students pertaining to their intentions to collaborate with the VI were conducted and Table 2 below displays the results. These provide the average mean scores of the students regarding their attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, awareness and intentions to collaborate with VI peers at the campus.

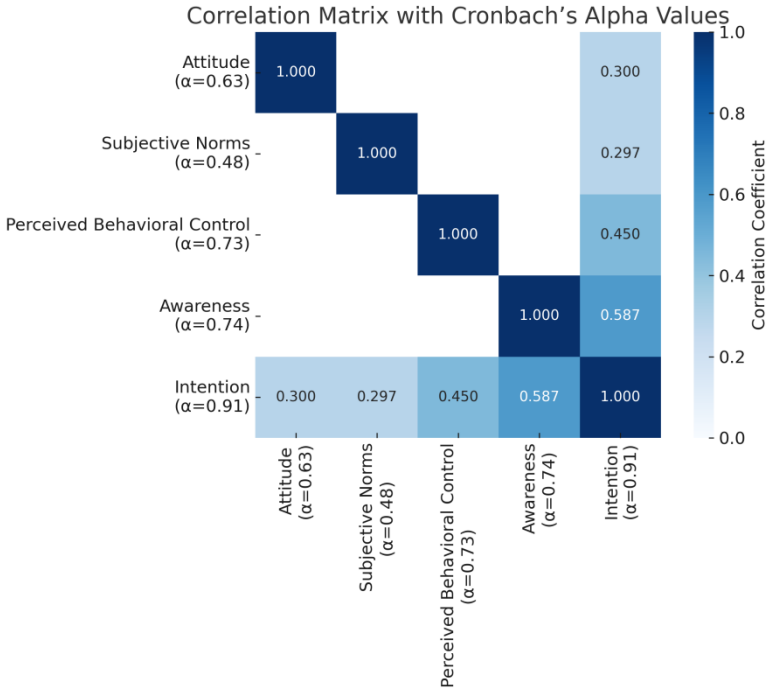
Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

	Descriptive Statistics		
Variable	**Factor Name**	**Mean**	**Std. Dev.**
A	Attitude	3.20	0.49
SN	Subjective Norms	2.60	0.48
PBC	Perceived Behavioral Control	3.62	0.56
Aw	Awareness	3.64	0.45
I	Intention	4.00	0.66

Among all variables, intention scored the highest mean (M = 4.00, SD = 0.66), indicating a strong willingness among respondents to collaborate with VI peers. This was followed by awareness (M = 3.64, SD = 0.45), suggesting a good level of understanding regarding the needs of visually impaired individuals. Perceived behavioral control also showed a relatively high mean (M = 3.62, SD = 0.56), reflecting confidence in respondents' ability to engage in inclusive behavior. Attitude scored moderately (M = 3.20, SD = 0.49), while subjective norms had the lowest mean (M = 2.60, SD = 0.48), indicating limited influence of social pressure on students' intentions.

Reliability and Correlation:
Table 3 presents an overview of the Correlation matrix displaying relationships between key variables; Attitude (α=.63), Subjective Norms (α=.48), Perceived Behavioral Control (α=.73), Awareness (α=.74), and Intention (α=.91). All correlations with Intention to collaborate with VI peers are statistically significant at p < .01. However, except for subjective norms, the variables scale showed insufficient reliability due to its low Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.486. Despite this, previous research, such as Fathy & Fouad (2022), has shown that subjective norms could still be a significant predictor of intention. Their study demonstrated that hotel managers with hiring authority were strongly influenced by the views and opinions of their colleagues regarding the hiring of people with disabilities (PWDs) (Fathy & Fouad, 2022). This finding aligns with earlier studies, supporting the continued use of subjective norms in this study, despite the lower reliability score. This finding was important for interpreting survey data because scales with low internal consistency, such as Subjective Norm, should be handled with caution when concluding respondents' intentions to collaborate with visually impaired peers.

Table 3: Results of Reliability and Correlation - Correlation Matrix



Notes: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed); * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed Cronbach's alphas in the parentheses along the diagonal; N=113

Regression Analysis:
Further analysis in Table 4 illustrates the results of the regression analysis for this study. A multiple regression analysis was used to identify the students' intention to collaborate with VI peers. The regression analysis showed that the predictive coefficient was statistically significant, as indicated by the F-value (p-value < 0.001). This suggested that the independent variables: Attitude, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioural Control, and Awareness were together accounted for a significant percentage of the variance in the dependent variable, that is, Intention to Collaborate with VI Peers. The R^2 score of 0.359 showed that the regression model explained roughly 35.9% of the variation in the dependent variable. However, the adjusted R^2 value, which accounted for the number of variables, was significantly lower at 33.6%. This adjustment prevented the regression model from exaggerating its explanatory power as a result of the inclusion of several variables.

Furthermore, Awareness was the only significant variable (coefficient = 0.820, p < 0.001), indicating that it was positively correlated with the dependent variable. This shows that as awareness grows, so does the willingness to work with visually impaired peers. On the other hand, Attitude (coefficient = -0.053, p = 0.692),

Subjective Norms (coefficient = 0.183, p = 0.227), and Perceived Behavioral Control (coefficient = 0.209, p = 0.168) were not statistically significant since their p-values surpassed the standard p-value criteria of 0.05. These data suggested that these variables had no significant impact on the dependent variable in this model. Overall, the regression model was statistically significant, although only one variable, which was Awareness, had shown to be statistically significant in predicting the dependent variable. Hence, the model accounted for roughly 33.6% of the variation in the dependent variable. However, it also implies that the remaining 64.1% of the variance is influenced by other unmeasured factors not captured within the current model, which is further discussed in the discussion section.

Table 4: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis

Variables	Std Beta Coefficients
Attitude	-0.053
Subjective Norms	0.183
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.209
Awareness	0.820
R^2	0.359
Adjusted R^2	0.336
F value	15.144
Sig. F value	<.001

Notes: ** significant at the 0.05 level

Discussion

This section examined the key findings by evaluating the relationships and significance between the independent variables: Attitude, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioral Control, and Awareness and the dependent variable, which was the Intention to Collaborate with VI Peers. It was also connecting these findings to the research questions and existing literature.

	Hypothesis	Results
H^1	There is a significant relationship between the attitudes and intention to collaborate with visually impaired peers.	Supported
H^2	There is a significant relationship between subjective norm and intention to collaborate with visually impaired peers.	Supported
H^3	There is a significant relationship between perceived behavioural control and intention to collaborate with visually impaired peers.	Supported
H^4	There is a significant relationship between awareness and intention to collaborate with visually impaired peers.	Supported

Based on the results, this study confirmed that attitude had a low positive relationship with intention to collaborate with visually impaired peers. Attitude could be either positive or negative. This finding is consistent with a study by Kersh (2011), the idea of the word "haters" reflects how individuals consistently have negative feelings regardless of the object. This result further supports that when a person has a positive attitude, the intention to collaborate with visually impaired peers increases. For instance, a study on employers' intentions to hire visually impaired individuals. The findings showed that the employers had a negative attitude towards hiring visually impaired individuals due to doubts about their capabilities in the workforce and they believed that it might be economically disadvantageous. Hence, it is proven that attitudes significantly influence someone's intention to collaborate with visually impaired peers and H1: There is a significant relationship

between attitudes and intention to collaborate with VI peers is supported.

What follows is an account of the subjective norm that shows a low positive relationship with intention to collaborate with visually impaired peers. Based on Ajzen (1991), subjective norms are related to the sense of social obligation to perform or avoid a given behavior. In this situation, it meant that non-disabled students felt obligated either to collaborate or not to collaborate with VI peers because they were influenced by their environment. It is encouraging to compare this finding with found in an article from the United Nations mentioned that students' intentions to participate in collaborative procedures with VI peers were reinforced when they believed that their teachers and friends encouraged these practices together. So, it was evident from the example that a person's intention to work with visually impaired peers was greatly influenced by the subjective norm; thus, H2: There is a significant relationship between subjective norms and intention to collaborate with VI is supported.

Turning now to the result of the perceived behavioral control, which had a moderate positive relationship with the intention to collaborate with visually impaired peers and supported H3. Based on Ajzen (2002), PBC refers to an individual's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing a particular behavior. When a person had a positive perceived behavioral control, they highly believed that they could perform a behavior with ease. A study by McDonnall & Lund (2019) highlighted that perceived behavioral control was one of the factors of intention to hire employees with visual impaired. The study indicated that when individuals felt more in control and confident about their abilities to interact in these situations, they were more likely to actively participate and engage with people with disabilities. Therefore, these results further support the idea that perceived behavioral control could influence the intention to collaborate with visually impaired peers.

Another significant aspect of the variables is awareness. In contrast to the previous findings, this study highlights its important role in shaping inclusive behavioral intention. Results indicated that Awareness had a moderate positive relationship with the intention to collaborate with visually impaired peers, which later supported H4: There is a significant relationship between awareness and intention to collaborate with VI peers. This result findings may be related to, who are more adjusted to the needs, experiences, and challenges of VI individuals who are more likely to engage positively in collaborative settings. This aligns with R.P. Spunt (2015), as cited in Cook & Polgar (2014), the level of awareness depended on the integrated brain function, which involved receiving and selectively processing sensory information and relating it to memory and emotion to fully appreciate the value of sensory input. It seems possible that these results are due to, when people increased their level of awareness, their understanding and sensitivity toward others also improved. Another possible explanation for this is, having friends or family members who have suffered from a particular condition can significantly boost one's awareness of their surroundings and the challenges faced by others (Lu & Liu, 2022). This study clearly illustrated how awareness could influence the intention to collaborate with visually impaired peers.

About the results of this study, the findings showed that the three independent variables, attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, were collectively explained by 35.9% of the variance in non-disabled students' intention to collaborate with their visually impaired peers (R^2 = 0.359). This indicates a moderate level of predictive power and indicates the partial applicability of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) in the context of inclusive education at the university level.

However, the model also left 64.1% of the variance unexplained, suggesting the presence of additional factors beyond those discussed by this study via the TPB construct. These unmeasured influences may include prior personal experiences with disability, exposure to inclusive environments, institutional or policy-level support, levels of empathy or altruism, or sociocultural norms surrounding disability. The above-mentioned unexplained variance may reflect the multifaceted nature of inclusive intention, indicating that non-disabled students' willingness to engage with visually impaired peers may be shaped by a broader array of cognitive, emotional, and contextual factors.

5. Future Research and Recommendations

Writing at this level, it is worth noting that this highlights the importance of extending future research beyond

the TPB framework to include more diverse and situational predictors. For example, variables such as disability-related awareness training or knowledge, peer or buddy modeling, inclusive academic exposure, and past interaction with persons with VI could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of inclusive behavior, especially for VI peers. Perhaps, addressing these factors could significantly improve the design of interventions aimed at fostering a more inclusive and empathetic learning environment in higher education institutions for VI.

Furthermore, these findings perhaps underscore the importance of intentional awareness-building. As students shared, they were often unsure how to help or include peers with VI. This suggests a need for targeted programs such as workshops that involve VI peers or peer-led dialogues that normalize inclusion. The disability center at the university could also actively host campaigns that "promote the advantages of helping people with visual impairments among family and friends.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while TPB constructs of attitude, norms, and perceived behavioral control matter, awareness closes the gap between intention and action. This research not only affirms TPB's utility in educational contexts but also invites stakeholders to foster a culture where all students and the campus community, regardless of ability, to feel seen, valued and included in the system.

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