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Integrating Trust in Agents into the Theory of Planned Behavior: A Conceptual Framework for Family Takaful Demand in Malaysia

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Abstract: This conceptual study explores the factors influencing family takaful demand in Malaysia, emphasizing the integration of trust in agents into the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). While attitude and subjective norm remain central to the TPB framework, this study introduces trust as a moderating factor, alongside demographic and contextual control variables such as gender, income, education and digital readiness. The study responds to recent developments in Malaysia's takaful landscape, where participant rates continue to grow but overall penetration remains modest at approximately 20% despite over 6.6 million active certificates recorded in 2024. Empirical findings from Bank Negara Malaysia and the Malaysian Takaful Association highlight the rising importance of digital adoption and agent networks in driving new business contributions. By recognizing the agent-customer relationship as a cornerstone of trust, this study positions trust not only as an interpersonal construct but also as a mechanism for reducing uncertainty in financial decision-making. Post-pandemic shifts in consumer awareness, particularly among the younger demographics, further reinforce the relevance of integrating digital competence and health consciousness into takaful participation models. The proposed framework offers a theoretically robust and practically relevant foundation for future empirical testing, employing quantitative approaches such as PLS-SEM to assess moderating effects. This study contributes to both academic discourse and industry practice by extending TPB, providing actionable insights for policymakers, takaful operators and agents seeking to enhance market penetration. Thus, it emphasizes the need for holistic strategies that combine behavioral, relational and technological factors to strengthen Malaysia's position as a global leader in family takaful.

Keywords: *Penetration, Trust, Attitude, Agents, Takaful*

1. Introduction

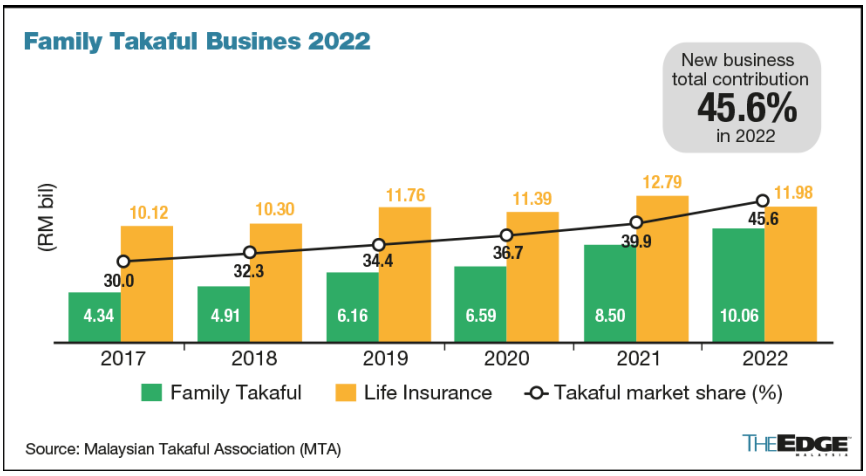
In the early 1980s, Malaysia's takaful sector grew out of the Muslim community's desire for an Islamic insurance as a substitute for conventional insurance. Despite that, the existence of Islamic insurance is to assist the operations of Malaysia's Islamic financial services industry particularly the Islamic banking. At that particular time, the government of Malaysia under the Malaysian National Fatwa Committee had issued, determination that life insurance in its current form is a void contract with the presence of the elements of Gharar (uncertainty), Riba (usury) and Maysir (gambling). Consequently, in 1982, the government formed a Special Task Force to investigate the feasibility of establishing an Islamic insurance firm. According to the suggestion made by the Task Force, an Act, known as the Takaful Act, was passed and implemented in 1984, and the first takaful operator was established in Malaysia in November 1984. Islamic insurance, or known as Takaful, is a shariah-compliant insurance that suits the demands of the Muslim community in Malaysia. The companies that work in accordance with the current insurance business necessitate the adoption of unique Islamic insurance legislation. Based on the success of Islamic insurance companies in other countries, the committee decided that establishing Islamic insurance companies in Malaysia would be a profitable endeavor (Takaful Annual Report, 1986).

Over 20 years ago, Malaysia's takaful business has seen to have a fast growth and transformation. It has evolved from one Takaful operator with restricted basic items to a sustainable industry that has been integrated into the mainstream banking system. This was accomplished through the collaborative efforts of the Central Bank of Malaysia, known as the Bank Negara Malaysia. Takaful operators are to create a dynamic, resilient, and efficient takaful business. (MTA, 2004). Referring to the Bank Negara Malaysia annual report for 2024, from the insurance and takaful sector, Malaysia remains a global leader in family takaful with over 6.69 million active certificates and RM52.3 billion in managed assets. Despite the penetration rate that is still around 20%, it eventually shows an enormous untapped potential market. Malaysia's takaful industry has shown a robust and growing market; however, it still faces the challenges of limited market penetration. According to the Malaysian

Takaful Association 2024, data shows that only 20% of the Malaysian population is covered by family takaful products.

Referring to Figure 1, from the Takaful Industry 2022 report, the Malaysian Takaful Association (MTA) has indicated that Malaysia's Family Takaful performance is at a positive level in Malaysia's takaful business in 2022. This has shown the rising demand for Islamic financing products. Thus, the adoption of takaful products is preferred as protection plans. From RM8.5 billion in the previous year, the family takaful new business industry increased by 18.3% to RM10.06 billion in gross contributions in 2022. Based on the number of certificates in force against the entire Malaysian population, the segment attained a penetration rate of 20.1% in 2022, up from 18.6% the previous year, an increase of 6.63 million compared with 6.07 million in 2021.

Figure 1: Performance of Family Takaful Business 2022



According to the chairman of MTA, Mr Elmie Aman Najas, The Edge Market reported that Takaful products are in high demand as more Malaysians appreciate the necessity of safeguarding themselves and their family from financial hazards. In addition, the increasing number of agents has contributed to the increased number of new businesses registered under family takaful. This scenario has helped the takaful industry to achieve a better penetration rate in the year 2022. The research objective and research question are as follows:-

RO1: To examine the relationship between attitude and the demand for family takaful.
RO2: To examine the relationship between subjective norm and the demand for family takaful.
RO3: To analyse the effect moderating factor on the perceived trust of the agent on the demand for family takaful.

- Does attitude have a positive relationship with the demand for family takaful?
- Does subjective norm have a positive relationship with the demand for family takaful?
- Does trust in the agent affect the demand for family takaful?

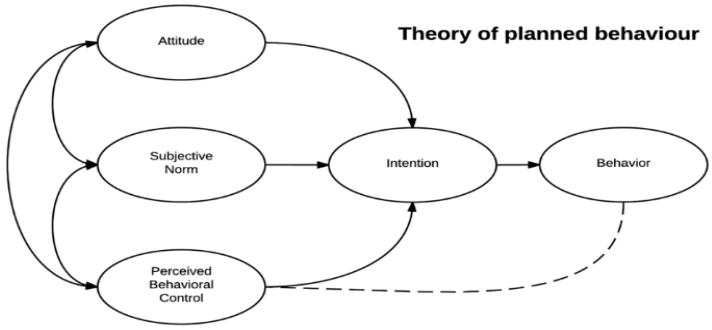
The results of this study can strengthen and provide insight for MTA to optimize the role of the takaful industry in its performance growth of the industry thus, will enabling the association to nourish the takaful industry not only in Malaysia but in the region. The prospect of Malaysia as the main player of takaful in our region, as well as in the world besides Arab countries, is recognized. On the other hand, for the government, the discussion and output of the research can be the catalyst for local governments in determining policies, directions, and strategies for the performance and development of the takaful industry. As for the academician, it will provide a broad understanding of takaful industry performance and can be referenced for future research.

The main research limitation in this study is the other variables that can contribute towards determining factors in the demand for family takaful among Malaysians. The other variables, such as technology and the readiness of customers to adapt to the technology, can be tested.

2. Literature Review

Underpinning theories are referred to by Gregor (2006) as theories for understanding social context in Information Systems studies. The theories are intended to explain "how" and "why" things happen in the way that they do. In understanding the behavioural intention that led to family takaful participation, this study adopts the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) as its foundation framework.

Figure 2: Theory of Planned Behaviour; Ajzen, 2011



According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 2011), as illustrated in Figure 2, some behaviours can be begun more easily than others. Perceived behavioural control, which includes the ease (or difficulty) of engaging in these behaviours, experiences relevant to a specific scenario, attitudes, and subjective norm, was critical in determining behaviour change. On the other hand, the intention influences behaviour, which is driven by attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control.

The dependent variable depends on other factors that are measured. The central focus of this study is the demand for family takaful in which refers to the intention and behaviour of individuals in subscribing to Shariah-compliant protection plans. These variables are expected to change because of an experimental manipulation of the independent variable or variables. It is the presumed effect. (Cramer, Duncan, Dennis Howitt, 2004).

Recent studies showed that people are more likely to consider family takaful with their beliefs in ethical compliance, security and religious adherence. Zuki et al (2025) highlighted that after the pandemic, younger individuals have improved their perceptions of protection; thus, this has positively influenced their view of takaful. Arifin et al. (2014) found that religious commitment, reputation and image are the most important elements that influence a person's demand for family takaful products. However, in a broader perspective study by Akhter et al. (2017), who have analysed data from 14 nations from 2005 – 2014, displaying findings of regression modelling in assessing demand for takaful and insurance in ASEAN and Middle Eastern countries. The study findings revealed that income, urbanisation, and the financial industry have a substantial beneficial impact on demand for takaful products. Nevertheless, education has a negative and insignificant impact on the demand for takaful policy. This condition appears to be related to a lack of public knowledge and awareness of takaful products. Gustina and Abdullah (2012) found that GDP per capita, education, savings and religion all had a substantial impact on family takaful demand. However, the consumer pricing index and the banking industry have a detrimental impact on the demand for family takaful.

In relation to independent variables, this study examines the two key independent variables of TPB, which are attitudes and subjective norm. Attitude reflects an individual's positive or negative evaluation of engaging in family takaful, whilst subjective norm looks into the perceived influence of important focus groups. Both factors are shaping the intention towards takaful participation.

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) defined attitude as an individual's favourable or negative evaluation of a specific behaviour. The Theory of Reasoned Action and the Theory of Planned Behaviour have consistently shown that attitude is a good predictor of both behavioural intentions and actual behaviours (Golnaz et al., 2010).

Meanwhile, Huda et al. (2012) discovered that attitude has a significant and favourable influence on the intention to pay alms. Similarly, research by Syed and Nazura (2011) showed that people's perceptions towards halal cuisine have a direct impact on their inclination to buy such products. Based on these findings, it is possible to conclude that an individual's attitude towards participation in a family takaful program may have a similar impact on their intention to do so. Zuki, Abdullah and Latiff (2025) found that post-COVID-19 health awareness significantly enhanced attitudes among younger consumers, leading to increased interest in family takaful. The findings support attitude as a primary element of takaful demand.

According to Ajzen (1991) and Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), subjective norms refer to the social pressures an individual perceives to either engage in or refrain from a specific behaviour. A subjective norm is when a person's belief about what others will think about the specific behaviour. Significant others might include anyone related and close to the person, such as family members, friends, peers and supervisors. Previous studies have shown that the impact of subjective norms plays an important role in shaping behavioural intentions (Pedersen, 2005; Golnaz et al., 2010; Hanudin and Rosita, 2011; Echchabi and Olaniyi, 2012). Echchabi and Olaniyi (2012) demonstrated through a study involving 168 participants that subjective norms have a significant influence on determining the intention to adopt Islamic banking services. Similarly, Hanudin and Rosita (2011) found that subjective norms had a direct, positive relationship between subjective norms and the intention to use an Islamic pawnshop.

Although the main constructs of the Theory of Planned Behaviour explain much of the intention of takaful participation, and the trust in agents is introduced as a moderating variable, recognising the interpersonal dynamics between consumers and takaful operators. This is to strengthen or weaken the influence of attitude and subjective norm on an individual's intention to participate in family takaful.

Trust is widely recognised as one of the key factors influencing the quality of relationships, customer loyalty and the longevity of buyer-seller interactions. According to Zainordin, Nor and Rahman (2023), trust in takaful agents enhances adoption intentions. In the family takaful context, the agents not only served as product promoters but also as a trusted advisor who reduces uncertainty and carries the ethical credibility of the takaful system.

Trust can be defined as the belief that a service provider will act with integrity, fulfil promises and not take advantage of the customer's vulnerability (Poan et al., 2022)

Latest research continuously emphasizes the critical role of trust in driving the essential marketing outcomes, particularly in the services industry such as Takaful. Trust is significantly influenced by brand loyalty, purchase intention, commitment and repurchase behavior (Poan et al.,2022; Qazi and Md Husin, 2024). Trust has also contributed to positive word-of-mouth communication and greater acceptance of financial products such as family Takaful (Aziz and Md Husin, 2023; Springer, 2023). In the case of family Takaful, trust acts as the foundation element that determines an individual's willingness to engage with the Takaful providers (Zainordin et al., 2023). This is supported by Aziz and Md Husin (2023), from the context of family takaful, which reflects consumers' confidence in the ethical conduct and reliability of takaful operators and their agents. This belief system influences not only trust intentions but also shapes overall perceptions of provider trustworthiness (Qazi and Md Husin, 2024).

Thus, guided by Ajzen's (2002) theory of planned behavior, this study positions trust within a structured framework that includes a clear target, action, context and time. The target is family takaful, the action is the purchase decision, the context involves the agent-customer interaction and the time frame refers to the moment of decision making. Trust, within this framework emerges as a key determinant of whether individuals move from intention to actual behavior.

In addition to the TPB constructs, several control variables are included as the external influence on family takaful demand. It includes demographic factors such as gender, income, education and digital readiness in which have become increasingly relevant in the post-pandemic and technology-driven environment. Previous research findings between gender and the demand for takaful or insurance have yielded inconsistent and sometimes conflicting results (Husin and Ab Rahman, 2013; Eling, Pradhan and Schmit, 2014; Soualhi and Al

Shammari, 2015; Luciano, Outreville and Rossi, 2016; Bageant and Barrett, 2017). Husin and Ab Rahman (2013) found that gender significantly influences the behavioural intention that leads to individual decisions. This aligns with Soualhi and Al Shammari (2015), who observed that women in Kuwait demonstrate greater awareness of takaful plans as compared to men, although men also express intentions to engage in Shariah-compliant insurance at similar rates. However, Luciano, Outreville and Rossi (2016) reported that women are less likely to be insured than men. Conversely, Bageant and Barrett (2017) suggested that gender differentiated demand is positively correlated with the likelihood of purchasing insurance.

The demand for life insurance, as a long-term financial decision, tends to be positively correlated with income levels. As an individual's income increases, life insurance products become more affordable and the need for such products intensifies, especially in protecting dependents against the loss of expected future income due to premature death or permanent disability of the wage earner (Yaari, 1965; Hakansson, 1969; Fortune, 1973; Fischer, 1973; Lewis, 1989). However, in higher-income countries, the elasticity of insurance consumption with respect to income growth is less as compared to that of income per capita (Hussels et al. 2005).

The level of education plays an important role in determining insurance demand. As it influences an individual's awareness of available insurance options (Browne and Kim, 2015; Li et al., 2007; Dragos, 2014). Several studies have shown a positive relationship between education and insurance demand (Beck and Webb, 2003; Huber, 2012). In particular, Sherif and Shaairi (2013) found that education is positively correlated with the demand for family takaful. Dragos (2014) had used panel data to indicate that education positively influences the demand for non-life insurance, but it was not significant for the life insurance sector.

The research literature that explores the connection between financial literacy and the demand for takaful or insurance is still limited. Cole et al. (2010) conducted large household surveys in India and Indonesia, and they discovered a strong relationship between financial behaviour and financial literacy. Which, in turn, influences the demand for financial services in emerging markets. Lin et al. (2017) explored the effects of financial literacy on life insurance demand in Taiwan, using a logistic regression model and found that individuals with higher financial literacy are more likely to purchase a life insurance policy. Similarly, Awel and Azomahou (2015) used cross-sectional household data from Ethiopia and showed that people with high financial literacy are more inclined to seek insurance, emphasising the importance of strengthening financial literacy programmes. Lin, Liao and Li (2023) further emphasised the role of financial literacy in influencing insurance penetration in emerging markets, making the control variable relevant.

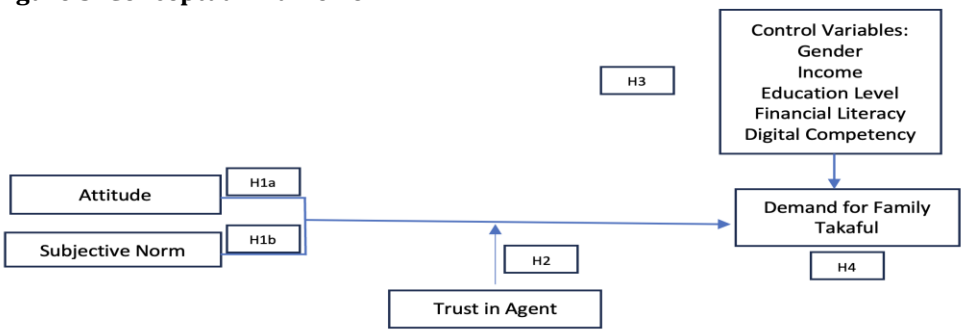
Digitalisation is the process of converting information from analogue to digital form. According to Rafidah (2024), the utilisation of digital technologies has made business operations more efficient and created more opportunities. Muradova (2024) stated that the impact of digital financial technologies on Islamic insurance through blockchain, AI and big data; however, it is more important that the consumer's digital literacy and shariah digital readiness critically affect the operational efficiency, together with the customer experience and the regulatory compliance within the Islamic financial institutions, including the takaful sector.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework aims to enhance the understanding of factors influencing family takaful demand in Malaysia. Based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), the framework integrates the key constructs of attitude and subjective norm with the addition of trust in agents as the moderating variable. This extension reflects the growing recognition in post-pandemic literature that trust plays an important role in consumer decision-making of financial services. This is supported by empirical findings from Zuki et al. (2025) and Zainordin et al. (2023), mentioning that awareness and relevance of agent trust in shaping takaful participation. Moreover, the adoption of digital platforms and the need for digital literacy (Muradova, 2024; Rafidah, 2024) served as essential control variables within the framework.

The proposed model presents a theoretically robust and practically relevant framework for examining behavioural intentions toward family takaful participation in Malaysia. Thus, contributes to both theoretical expansion and practical insights for policymakers and industry stakeholders within the Malaysian context in aiming to enhance the takaful market penetration.

Figure 3: Conceptual Framework



Independent Variables	Moderating Variable	Dependent Variable
Attitude	Perceived Trust in Agent	Demand for Family Takaful
Subjective Norm		

3. Research Methodology

As this is a conceptual study, this section briefly outlines the theoretical constructs and potential methodological direction. The proposed framework leverages the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and incorporates trust in agents as a moderating variable along with control variables on income, gender, education and digital competency. These inclusions are grounded in recent findings by Zuki et al (2025) and Lin et al. (2023), which suggested that agent trust and digital readiness significantly influence takaful adoption behavior.

This future empirical study may adopt a quantitative approach using survey-based research with cross-sectional data collection from potential takaful customers and takaful agents. Partial Least Squares or PLS-SEM may be used to test the hypotheses' relationships, particularly in testing the moderating role of trust in agents and the role of control variables that will support the recommendations of the findings.

4. Conclusion

An increase in takaful participation has a significant impact on the overall development of the takaful industry. As more individuals engage with takaful products, it will not only foster the growth of the sector but also contribute to the expansion of the takaful market share. However, before strategies can be effectively implemented to encourage further participation, stakeholders must understand the underlying factors that drive individuals' decisions. The application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) in the context of takaful participation offers valuable insights into these factors. By utilising TPB, researchers and industry professionals can gain a deeper understanding of the attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural controls that influence individuals' intentions that engage with takaful. Thus, understanding can lead to the development of policies and initiatives that support increased participation, thereby enhancing the overall performance and sustainability of the takaful sector.

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