



The Norm Activation Model: An exploration of the functions of anticipated pride and guilt in pro-environmental behaviour



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ABSTRACT

The Norm Activation Model (NAM; Schwartz, 1977) is a vested model that explains altruistic and environmentally friendly behaviour. Although research states that anticipated pride and guilt are associated with the NAM, these associations are not yet fully understood. The current study provides an overview of the literature that refers to anticipated pride and guilt within the NAM. Moreover, we aim to increase our understanding of these associations through theoretical arguments and a study conducted in the Netherlands. We hypothesised that anticipated pride and guilt cause individuals to behave themselves in a manner that is in line with personal norms. This proposition regarding the self-regulatory function of anticipated pride and guilt was confirmed by our study; anticipated emotions mediate the effects of personal norms on behaviour. These associations remained after including the Theory of Planned Behaviour in the NAM, although in the integrated NAM-TPB model, anticipated emotions affected behaviour via behavioural intentions. Implications regarding these findings are discussed.

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1. Introduction

Western societies face increasing environmental problems, such as climate change and environmental, water and air pollution. Although it can be safely assumed that most people prefer to have a clean and healthy environment, there are temptations to act in environmentally unfriendly ways (e.g., wasting energy and littering). Because these environmental issues are associated with individual lifestyles (Carlsson-Kanayama, 1998), it is important to understand people's decision-making processes regarding consumption behaviours related to the environment.

This paper aims to contribute to this understanding by assessing the role of anticipated pride and guilt within the Norm Activation Model (NAM) (Schwartz, 1977). Previous research underscores the importance of activated personal norms for understanding people's pro-environmental behaviour (e.g., Thøgersen, 2006). Several studies (e.g., Schwartz, 1977; Thøgersen, 2009) have proposed that anticipated pride and guilt are associated with personal norms within the NAM; however, this research specifies the relationship between anticipated emotions and personal norms in different ways. Because these proposed

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associations are rarely tested, it remains unknown precisely how these anticipated emotions are related to personal norms and behaviours within the NAM. The present study contributes to the understanding of the influence of anticipated emotions on norm activation and individual decision making. We provide an overview of the existing literature and formulate and test a proposition regarding the function of anticipated emotions within the NAM. Moreover, a stream of research integrates the NAM with the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). The current study therefore also explores how anticipated pride and guilt relate to personal norms and behaviour within the integrated NAM–TPB model.

To summarise, we aim to provide an overview of the different ways in which the association between anticipated emotions and the NAM is specified by previous studies. Moreover, we aim to clarify how anticipated pride and guilt are related to the NAM theoretically and in an empirical study.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Norm Activation Model (NAM)

Schwartz (1977) originally developed the NAM in the context of altruistic behaviour. Personal norms form the core of this model. Schwartz (1977) states that these norms are actively experienced “as feelings of moral obligation not as intentions” (p. 227). These personal norms are used in the NAM to predict individual behaviour. The model states that these personal norms are determined by two factors: the awareness that performing (or not performing) the particular behaviour has certain consequences, and the feeling of responsibility for performing the specific behaviour (Schwartz, 1977). Most studies interpret the NAM as either a mediator model or a moderation model. The mediator model suggests that awareness of consequences influences personal norms via ascribed responsibility. The moderation model suggests that the influence of personal norms on behaviour is moderated by both awareness of consequences and ascribed responsibility. We interpret the NAM as a mediator model because De Groot and Steg (2009) recently compared these two interpretations in five studies and provided strong evidence that the NAM is a mediator model. Their findings show that an individual must be aware of the consequences of a behaviour before feeling responsible for it. In turn, feelings of responsibility activate personal norms, and these personal norms induce individual behaviour (De Groot & Steg, 2009). See Fig. 1 for a representation of the NAM as a mediator model. We use this model as our basic model to explore how anticipated pride and guilt are associated with personal norms and behaviour within the original NAM.

2.1.1. NAM and TPB

Some studies (Bamberg, Hunecke, & Blöbaum, 2007; Bamberg & Möser, 2007) have integrated the NAM with the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB, Ajzen, 1991). The TPB is one of the most influential theories in social and health psychology (Armitage & Conner, 2001) and has also been validated in the context of pro-environmental behaviour (Arvola et al., 2008). The TPB states that intentions are determined by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control; behaviour is, in turn, determined by intentions and perceived behavioural control.

Previous studies that have integrated the NAM and the TPB have found that the influence of personal norms on behaviour is mediated by intentions. Moreover, these studies have found that including intentions in the NAM substantially increases the explained variance in behaviour (by approximately 17%, see Bamberg & Möser, 2007; Bamberg et al., 2007). This finding underlines Ajzen's (1991) views that intention is the most immediate and important predictor of behaviour, and that intention mediates the influence of other variables, even affective ones. Additionally, studies that include personal norms within the TPB show that personal norms increase the explained variance of behavioural intentions and behaviour in the TPB (Harland, Staats, & Wilke, 1999). Taken together, these findings imply that an integrated NAM–TPB model can best explain pro-environmental behaviour. Therefore, the current study not only explores how anticipated pride and guilt relate to personal norms and behaviour within the NAM, but also within an integrated NAM–TPB model.

2.2. Anticipated self-conscious emotions

Individuals do not only experience emotions, they are also capable of anticipating which emotions they will experience in anticipation of future outcomes. Anticipated emotions are often overestimated, such that the emotions one anticipates are more extreme than the emotions actually experienced after the event (e.g., Mellers & McGraw, 2001). These anticipated emotions, which have not been experienced yet, have been found to influence behaviour. They guide decision making (Mellers & McGraw, 2001) because individuals strive to experience positive emotions and avoid negative emotions (Frijda, 2007). Anticipated emotions are therefore highly relevant for understanding individual decision making. Studies on the effects of anticipated emotions on individual decision making have mainly been conducted in the context of rational choice models, such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). These studies show that anticipated emotions do not affect behaviour



Fig. 1. Graphical representation of the Norm Activation Model adapted from De Groot and Steg (2009).

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