

## A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF INTENTION (NIYYAH) IN THE THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOUR AND ISLAMIC JURISPRUDENCE

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<b>Abstract</b>	<p><i>This article compares the concept of intention (niyyah) in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) with its treatment in Islamic jurisprudence, assessing the capacity of TPB to reflect Islamic legal and spiritual dimensions. Using qualitative comparative analysis, it addresses four key questions concerning the definitions, epistemological bases, and practical implications of niyyah in both frameworks. The study finds that TPB conceptualises intention as a rational, cognitive predictor of behaviour, whereas Islamic jurisprudence regards niyyah as a legal and spiritual condition that determines the validity and reward of actions. The paper argues that TPB is inadequate in religious contexts and calls for a Maqāṣid al-Sharīah-based model that integrates theological, ethical, and behavioural elements. It recommends the contextual adaptation of behavioural theories, and the development of models rooted in Islamic epistemology.</i></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> <i>Niyyah, Jurisprudence, Theory, Behaviour, Spiritual.</i></p>
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### INTRODUCTION

The concept of intention (*niyyah*) plays a central role in both behavioural sciences and Islamic legal thought. In contemporary psychology, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), developed by Icek Ajzen, is among the most widely adopted frameworks for explaining how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control influence intention and action (Ajzen, 1991). TPB has been applied across various domains including health, consumer behaviour, and public policy.

However, the application of TPB in religious contexts -particularly within Muslim societies- raises critical questions. In Islamic jurisprudence, *niyyah* is not merely a cognitive precursor to behaviour; it is a theological, legal, and ethical requirement that determines the validity and reward of human actions (al-Ghazālī, 2000; al-Zuhaylī, 2007). Rooted in Qur'anic instruction and Prophetic traditions, *niyyah* is addressed extensively in the works of classical jurists and carries implications that transcend the utilitarian focus of modern behavioural models. For Muslims, intention underpins acts of ritual worship (*ibādāt*) and daily transactions (*mu'āmalāt*), forming the basis for accountability before God (al-Bukhārī, no. 1).

This article critically compares the concept of intention as articulated in TPB (Ajzen, 1991) and Islamic legal theory (al-Ghazālī, 2000; al-Zuhaylī, 2007), focusing on their

definitional, epistemological, and normative foundations. It addresses the following research questions:

1. How is *niyyah* conceptualised in TPB and Islamic jurisprudence?
2. What are the key definitional, functional, and epistemological differences?
3. To what extent can TPB accommodate the spiritual and legal dimensions of Islamic *niyyah*?
4. Can a Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah-based model offer a more suitable framework for understanding intention in Muslim contexts?

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By addressing these questions, this article contributes to the dialogue between contemporary behavioural theory and Islamic legal philosophy. It advocates for context-sensitive models grounded in Islamic ethical and legal frameworks, providing more appropriate tools for analysing human behaviour in Muslim societies.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), developed by Ajzen (1991), is one of the most influential models in behavioural science for predicting human action. It conceptualises intention as the outcome of three belief categories: behavioural beliefs (which shape attitudes), normative beliefs (which shape perceived social expectations), and control beliefs (which shape perceived ease or difficulty of action). These components collectively inform an individual's readiness to perform a given behaviour.

The model builds on rational-choice assumptions, positing that individuals make decisions by evaluating anticipated outcomes, social pressures, and perceived self-efficacy (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). It has been widely applied in domains such as health behaviour, environmental decision-making, and consumer psychology, and continues to influence policy-oriented behavioural interventions (Ajzen, 2005).

### 2. Adaptations of TPB in Muslim Contexts

Although TPB was developed within a secular framework, researchers have increasingly applied it to Muslim contexts, particularly in consumer behaviour and health-related studies. These adaptations often incorporate religious variables—such as halal awareness, religiosity, or perceived Islamic norms—to enhance cultural relevance (Lada et al., 2009; Alam & Sayuti, 2011). For example, studies on halal product consumption include measures of Islamic belief and practice as moderators of behavioural intention.

However, these adaptations generally preserve the TPB's underlying assumptions about agency, rationality, and individualism. While they acknowledge the role of religion in shaping attitudes or subjective norms, they rarely interrogate the model's epistemological basis. Intention is still framed as a predictive, volitional state divorced from spiritual accountability or legal obligation. As a result, such studies often misrepresent *niyyah* by reducing it to a functional construct measurable through secular instruments.

This methodological limitation reflects a deeper philosophical tension: the TPB is rooted in empirical psychology and behavioural predictability, whereas Islamic conceptions of intention emphasize metaphysical accountability, divine command, and legal validity. Without addressing these differences, TPB-based studies risk misaligning behavioural measurement with Islamic normative frameworks.

### 3. Islamic Jurisprudential Conceptions of *Niyyah*

In Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), the centrality of *niyyah* is firmly rooted in the Qur'an. Allah declares: "To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. Whether you disclose what is in your hearts or conceal it, Allah will call you to account for it" (Q 2:284), affirming accountability for inward resolve. Likewise, "And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, being sincere to Him in religion, inclining to truth, and to establish prayer and to give zakat. And that is the correct religion" (Q 98:5), and "They give food in spite of love

for it to the needy, the orphan, and the captive, [saying], 'We feed you only for the countenance of Allah. We wish not from you reward or gratitude'" (Q 76:9). These verses emphasise sincerity (*ikhlas*), exclusive devotion, and intention directed solely to Allah as indispensable conditions of worship.

This Quranic foundation is echoed in several prophetic reports. As reported in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*: "Verily Allah does not look at your bodies or your forms, but He looks at your hearts and your deeds" (Muslim, no. 2564), which underscores that the true value of an act lies in its inward sincerity rather than its outward appearance. Complementing this is the well-known *ḥadīth*: "*Innamā al-ʿamal bi-l-ḥiyyāt*" ("Actions are judged by intentions") (al-Bukhārī, no. 1), which is regarded as foundational across all Sunni schools of law and functions as a general legal maxim (*qāʿidah fiqhīyah*), articulated as *al-umūr bi maqāṣidihā* ("matters are determined by their objectives"), governing both *ʿibādāt* (rituals) and *muʿāmalāt* (transactions). Taken together, these reports demonstrate that *niyyah* is not merely a psychological inclination but a foundational spiritual and legal requirement for the validity (*ṣiḥḥah*) and reward (*thawāb*) of actions.

From the practical jurisprudence perspective, the intention distinguishes one prayer from another (such as *ẓuhr* from *ʿaṣr*) even though they are identical in form with four *rakaʿāt*, or separates an obligatory prayer from a voluntary one. The same applies to fasting, without *niyyah* directed toward Allah, it amounts merely to enduring hunger and brings no divine reward. Likewise, the giving of wealth is counted as *zakāt* only if accompanied by the explicit intention, otherwise it remains mere charity. These concrete applications show that *niyyah* determines not only the inward sincerity of the act but also its juristic ruling, which is a dimension not accounted for in the behavioural treatment of intention in TPB.

Building upon these scriptural sources, classical authorities such as al-Ghazālī (2000), al-Nawawī (2001), and Ibn Qudāmah (1996) consistently describe *niyyah* as an act of the heart (*qaṣd al-qalb*) directed solely toward Allah. It is inseparable from sincerity (*ikhlas*) and is essential in distinguishing ritual acts from mere habits.

More recently, contemporary jurists such as Kamali (2008) and al-Raysūnī (2006) have further positioned *niyyah* within the framework of *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah* (objectives of Islamic law). This approach links *niyyah* not only to individual responsibility but to broader goals such as justice (*ʿadl*), sincerity (*ikhlas*), and public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*). Thus, *niyyah* functions as both an inward spiritual orientation and an outward legal criterion, integrating divine purpose with human agency.

#### 4. Critical Gaps in the Literature

Despite the growing number of studies applying TPB to Muslim settings, few have critically examined its compatibility with Islamic legal and ethical frameworks. Most empirical works simply incorporate religious variables without interrogating the underlying assumptions of TPB regarding agency, intentionality, and moral accountability (Lada et al., 2009; Alam & Sayuti, 2011). This results in surface-level adaptations that overlook deeper jurisprudential concerns.

Classical Islamic jurisprudence treats *niyyah* as a prerequisite for both legal validity and divine reward. However, TPB's empirical orientation frames intention solely as a predictor of behaviour, omitting its normative and theological functions. This gap highlights a lack of integration between behavioural science and Islamic legal theory. As a result, models that rely on TPB risk producing culturally incongruent or doctrinally incomplete analyses of Muslim behaviour.

Emerging literature on *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah* suggests the need for alternative behavioural frameworks grounded in Islamic epistemology and values (Kamali, 2008; al-Raysūnī, 2006). These works propose that intention must be analysed not only in terms of observable action but also in relation to divine purpose, sincerity, and legal categorisation. However, an integrated model that systematically compares TPB and *niyyah* in Islamic jurisprudence remains underdeveloped. This article addresses that gap.

**Table 1: Overview of Prior Literature and Identified Gaps**

Focus Area	Key Contributions	Identified Gaps
<b>Application of TPB in Muslim contexts</b>	Introduced religious variables such as halal awareness and religiosity (Lada et al., 2009; Alam & Sayuti, 2011)	Superficial integration; lacks engagement with the legal-theological notion of <i>niyyah</i>
<b>Classical <i>uṣūl al-fiqh</i> perspectives</b>	Defined <i>niyyah</i> as a legal and spiritual requirement (al-Ghazālī, 2000; al-Zuhaylī, 2007)	Rarely compared with contemporary behavioural theories like TPB
<b>Contemporary <i>maqāṣid</i> discourse</b>	Positioned <i>niyyah</i> within objectives of <i>Shari‘ah</i> (Kamali, 2008; al-Raysūnī, 2006)	Lacks operational behavioural models grounded in Islamic legal ethics

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study employs a qualitative comparative content analysis to examine the concept of *niyyah* as presented in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and Islamic jurisprudence. It integrates insights from behavioural science with both classical and contemporary Islamic legal scholarship to construct a context-sensitive analytical framework.

### Source Selection

The study draws on four categories of sources:

- 1. Behavioural Science Literature:** Foundational works by Ajzen and collaborators (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Ajzen, 1991, 2005) provide the conceptual and empirical basis for TPB, including its applications in predicting human behaviour and decision-making.
- 2. Classical Islamic Legal Texts:** Authoritative sources such as *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* (al-Ghazālī, 2000), *al-Mughnī* (Ibn Qudāmah, 1996), and *al-Majmū’* (al-Nawawī, 2001) offer comprehensive discussions on *niyyah* in the context of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and legal theory.
- 3. Contemporary Islamic Scholarship:** Works by Kamali (2008) and al-Raysūnī (2006) frame *niyyah* within *Maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah* and provide methodological tools for normative evaluation of human action.
- 4. Applied Studies on TPB in Muslim Contexts:** Empirical studies such as Lada et al. (2009) and Alam & Sayuti (2011) illustrate how TPB has been adapted—often superficially—for Muslim behavioural settings.

### Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeded in four steps:

- 1. Textual Extraction:** Core definitions, parameters, and conceptual structures of *niyyah* were extracted from selected texts. Where applicable, both Arabic originals and reliable English translations were consulted to preserve terminological accuracy.
- 2. Comparative Mapping:** Key concepts were mapped across five analytical dimensions: epistemology, ontology, operationalisation, legal function, and ethical implications. Comparative tables were used to visualise areas of convergence and divergence.
- 3. Thematic Analysis:** Thematic coding was applied to identify recurring patterns in how intention is framed with respect to validity, reward, moral responsibility, and conformity to divine objectives (*maqāṣid*).
- 4. Critical Synthesis:** Findings were synthesised to assess the epistemological compatibility and normative adequacy of TPB when applied in Islamic contexts. The

analysis foregrounds Islamic legal reasoning while acknowledging the empirical strengths of TPB.

### Reflexivity and Limitations

The study maintains methodological transparency and adheres to mainstream Islamic legal discourse. Classical juristic sources are interpreted within their doctrinal contexts, and care is taken to avoid anachronism in comparison. The analysis is interpretive, not empirical, and is intended to inform theoretical refinement rather than behavioural prediction.

### Rationale

This method allows for a rigorous and doctrinally grounded comparison between TPB and Islamic understandings of *niyyah*. It supports the development of a conceptual framework that aligns with Islamic values, legal structures, and spiritual objectives—thus contributing to a more integrated understanding of human intentionality.

## RESULTS

### 1. Intention in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

In TPB, intention is defined as “a person’s readiness to perform a given behaviour” (Ajzen, 1991). It is shaped by three main belief structures:

- **Behavioural beliefs:** expectations about outcomes, forming attitudes.
- **Normative beliefs:** perceived social expectations, forming subjective norms.
- **Control beliefs:** beliefs about capability, forming perceived behavioural control.

TPB treats intention as a rational, future-oriented predictor of action. It is a cognitive commitment, formed through deliberation, and aimed at maximising utility. The model is empirical, secular, and predictive, abstracted from ethical or theological considerations.

### 2. Niyah in Islamic Jurisprudence

Islamic jurisprudence defines *niyyah* as the internal resolve of the heart (*qaṣd al-qalb*) to perform an act for the sake of Allah. It is both a legal prerequisite (*shart*) for ritual and civil acts and a spiritual condition for divine reward (al-Ghazālī, 2000; al-Zuḥaylī, 2007). Unlike TPB, *niyyah* carries theological weight and is integral to the classification of acts in terms of validity (*ṣiḥḥah*) and accountability.

### 3. Juristic Parameters of Niyah

To systematise the juristic view, key parameters of *niyyah* are summarised below:

**Table 2: Juristic Parameters of Niyah in Islamic Law**

Parameter	Explanation
<b>Place</b>	Located in the heart ( <i>qalb</i> ); not verbal by default (al-Jurjānī, 2007).
<b>Time</b>	Must precede or coincide with the act, especially in rituals (Ibn Ḥazm, 2001).
<b>Form</b>	Primarily internal; verbalisation is recommended by some but not obligatory (al-Shirbīnī, 2001).
<b>Conditions</b>	Requires clarity, sincerity, and absence of conflicting motives.
<b>Types</b>	Includes <i>niyyah fi’līyyah</i> (at initiation) and <i>ḥukmiyyah</i> (during performance) (al-Qarāfī, 1994).
<b>Levels</b>	Progresses through stages: knowledge ( <i>‘ilm</i> ), purpose ( <i>ghāyah</i> ), concern ( <i>ḥam</i> ), desire ( <i>raghbah</i> ), will ( <i>irādah</i> ), and final resolve ( <i>‘azm</i> ) (Ḥanā’ al-Muhājir, 2011).

Commented [R2]: Be consistent in transliteration (al-Sharbinī vs. al-Shirbini)

These dimensions reveal that *niyyah* is more than motivational; it is a multilayered spiritual-legal construct that governs the lawfulness and rewardability of human acts.

#### 4. Comparative Summary

**Table 3: Comparative Summary of *Niyyah* in Islamic Law**

Aspect	TPB	Islamic Jurisprudence
Source	Cognitive psychology	Revelation ( <i>wahy</i> ) and juristic reasoning ( <i>ijtihad</i> )
Orientation	Secular, rational-choice	Theocentric, normative
Function	Predicts behaviour	Validates acts and determines reward
Evaluation Standard	Utility and outcome	Sincerity and Shariah compliance
Accountability	Social/psychological	Moral, spiritual, and legal

#### DISCUSSION

##### 1. Ontological and Epistemological Divergence

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and Islamic jurisprudence approach *intention* from fundamentally different epistemological and ontological premises. TPB, rooted in empirical psychology, treats intention as a quantifiable construct derived from observable beliefs and external behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). It assumes agency is exercised within a secular, rational-choice paradigm that seeks behavioural predictability.

By contrast, Islamic jurisprudence treats *niyyah* as an act of the heart (*amal qalbī*) grounded in divine accountability and spiritual sincerity. Its legitimacy derives not from empirical observation but from *wahy* (revelation), *ijmā'* (juristic consensus), and *ijtihad* (reasoned interpretation). This theological foundation assigns *niyyah* metaphysical significance beyond behavioural outcomes.

**Table 4: Ontological and Epistemological Contrast**

Dimension	TPB	Islamic Jurisprudence
Source of Knowledge	Empirical psychology	Revelation ( <i>wahy</i> ), <i>ijtihad</i>
Aim of Intention	Predict future behaviour	Attain divine pleasure ( <i>riḍā Allāh</i> )
Standard of Evaluation	Utility, efficiency	Sincerity ( <i>ikhlas</i> ), Shariah compliance
Accountability	Social, legal	Spiritual, legal, eschatological

##### 2. TPB's Inadequacy in Religious Contexts

TPB is ill-equipped to account for the theological and legal significance of *niyyah* in Islam. It cannot evaluate:

- Legal validity (*ṣiḥḥah*): whether the act meets juristic requirements.
- Spiritual accountability (*ajru/wizr*): whether the actor earns divine reward or blame.
- Compliance with *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*: whether the act fulfils divine purposes such as justice, sincerity, or welfare.

For example, a person may give zakat purely for tax avoidance. Under TPB, this would still register as successful "behaviour." But in Islamic law, the act is invalid without sincere *niyyah* (al-Zuhaylī, 2007). This illustrates the epistemic gap between the models.

### 3. Towards a *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*-Based Behavioural Model

To address the limitations of TPB in Muslim contexts, this study proposes a *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*-based behavioural model. This model comprises three key dimensions:

- i. First, it recognises inner states such as *ikhhlās* (sincerity), *taqwā* (God-consciousness), and *'azm* (firm resolve) as epistemically relevant. Unlike TPB which treats intention as a cognitive predictor, the *maqāṣid* approach affirms that inward dispositions shape the moral and legal quality of action and must be included in behavioural assessment.
- ii. Second, it integrates three elements: knowledge (*'ilm*), intention (*niyyah*), and accountability (*mas'ūliyyah*). Knowledge provides awareness of divine commands and their higher objectives; while intention transforms this awareness into conscious resolve directed toward Allah; and accountability frames human action within responsibility both society and God.
- iii. Third, it evaluates action not just by outcome, but by its alignment with divine purpose and ethical intent. This shifts the focus from utility and prediction to sincerity and conformity with the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*.

In behavioural studies, this model can be operationalised by introducing *maqāṣid*-based variables alongside conventional ones. For instance, a study on fasting in Ramadan would examine not only attitudes, social norms, and perceived control, but also the individual's knowledge of the rulings of fasting (*'ilm*), the sincerity of intention to fast for Allah's sake (*niyyah*), and the sense of moral-spiritual accountability for the validity (*mas'ūliyyah*). The framework would further capture inner states such as *taqwā* (God-consciousness), *ikhhlās* (sincerity), and *'azm* (firm resolve), which give the fasting meaning beyond simply restraining oneself from food and drink. In this way, fasting is studied not simply as endurance, but as a practice that is both legally valid and spiritually meaningful.

By operationalising these dimensions, the model can bridge classical *fiqh* and modern behavioural theory, enabling policy, education, and research initiatives that respect both empirical and theological integrity. It aligns with calls by scholars like al-Raysūnī (2006) and Kamali (2008) to reform contemporary frameworks through the lens of Islamic legal objectives.

### CONCLUSION

This study examined and compared the concept of intention (*niyyah*) in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and Islamic jurisprudence. It found that TPB conceptualises intention as a rational, cognitive construct, oriented toward predicting behaviour based on attitudes, norms, and perceived control. In contrast, Islamic jurisprudence treats *niyyah* as a legal and spiritual imperative rooted in revelation, sincerity, and divine accountability.

The analysis identified fundamental differences between the two frameworks in terms of epistemology, legal function, and ethical purpose. TPB's secular orientation limits its capacity to evaluate religiously motivated actions, especially where inward sincerity is required for legal validity. Islamic jurisprudence, by contrast, views *niyyah* as essential to both ritual and moral conduct, linking it directly to accountability and divine judgment.

To answer the research questions:

- i. TPB and Islamic law conceptualise *niyyah* in fundamentally distinct ways.
- ii. The models differ in their ontological bases, operational mechanisms, and evaluative criteria.
- iii. TPB is not adequate to capture the full meaning and function of *niyyah* in Islamic contexts.
- iv. A *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*-based framework offers a more coherent and normatively grounded alternative.

**Commented [R3]:** The conclusion calls for a *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* model but leaves it vague.

The paper should explain:

- What are the main elements of this model?
- How would it function in behavioural studies?

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. **For Researchers:** Develop behavioural models anchored in Islamic epistemology, integrating concepts such as *taqwā*, *ikhlās*, and *maqāṣid* to assess moral and spiritual dimensions of intention.
- ii. **For Practitioners:** Exercise caution in applying TPB-based tools in Muslim contexts without theological validation. Ethical dimensions should be foregrounded in religious and educational interventions.
- iii. **For Policymakers:** When designing behavioural frameworks for Muslim populations, incorporate Islamic principles of accountability and legal-spiritual alignment into public ethics, law, and policy.
- iv. **For Future Research:** Empirically test the proposed *Maqāṣid*-based model in domains such as zakat compliance, Islamic education, and ethical consumption to evaluate its operational potential.

Ultimately, this study contributes to a growing body of interdisciplinary scholarship that seeks to harmonise empirical behavioural science with Islamic legal and ethical thought. By centring *niyyah* within the broader objectives of the Sharī'ah, it invites scholars, educators, and policymakers to move beyond secular paradigms and adopt frameworks that respect the normative richness of Islamic tradition. Such integration is not only methodologically necessary but ethically urgent in contexts where behaviour is inseparable from spiritual accountability.

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