



Jumping into Jim Smiley: A Character Analysis through Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior

Dyah Ayu Ratna Jelita

Universitas Dr. Soetomo, Indonesia
dyahayuratnajelita@gmail.com

Axlinabila Annisa Annasai

Universitas Dr. Soetomo, Indonesia
Axlinabilaa@gmail.com

Michelle

Universitas Dr. Soetomo, Indonesia
michelle2002.mg27@gmail.com

Salsabila Safa

Universitas Dr. Soetomo, Indonesia
sbilasafa@gmail.com

Rommel Utungga Pasopati

Universitas Dr. Soetomo, Indonesia
rommel@unitomo.ac.id

Abstract

Abstract. This study applies the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by Icek Ajzen to analyze the peculiar behavior of the main character, Jim Smiley, in the story *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County* Mark Twain. This study explores the motivations, intentions, and behaviors of Jim Smiley through TPB's main elements, namely attitudes towards behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. By analyzing Smiley's beliefs, evaluating societal norms, and assessing his perceived agency, the study unravels the intricacies of Smiley's character, contributing valuable insights to the intersection of literature and psychology. The findings showcase the versatility of psychological frameworks in enhancing the understanding of complex fictional personalities, which often refers to literary works that delve deeply into the human condition, exploring intricate social, political, or emotional situations. These narratives are typically character-driven, featuring multi-faceted, dynamic characters who evolve over time. The plot may contain subtext that alludes to broader themes tied to society or humanity, and the story structure may not follow a conventional formula, adding to the complexity. This approach offers a nuanced perspective on the timeless appeal of Mark Twain's literary creations.

Keywords: *Icek Ajzen, Mark Twain, The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County, Theory of Planned Behavior*

INTRODUCTION

Published in 1865, Mark Twain's *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County* is a short story that stands as a literary masterpiece known for its humor and insightful commentary on human nature. One of its main characters, Jim Smiley, captures readers' imaginations with his eccentric and obsessive involvement in gambling, especially in frog-jumping contests (Twain, 1867). He is famous for his clever and misleading betting schemes that often involve animals that do not appear like they have any special skills, like Dan'l Webster, his famous frog that he trained to jump very high. The narrative unfolds in the form of a frame story as the narrator encounters Simon Wheeler, an old acquaintance of Smiley, who recounts the curious tale of the jumping frog. As the narrative progresses, Jim Smiley emerges as a compelling character whose idiosyncrasies invite readers to ponder the underlying psychological forces driving his actions. While literary scholars have explored various facets of Twain's work, a psychological lens, particularly Icek Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), provides a unique perspective for understanding the motivations behind Smiley's peculiar behavior.

Literary characters serve as windows into the human psyche, allowing readers to explore the motivations, beliefs, and behaviors that shape fictional personalities (Webber, Wilkinson, Duncan, & McGeown, 2022). With his peculiar obsession with frog-jumping contests and gambling, Jim Smiley presents an intriguing case study for character analysis. Understanding the psychological underpinnings of his actions not only enriches the reading experience but also contributes to a broader appreciation of Mark Twain's narrative craft.

The theory of Planned Behavior, pioneered by Ajzen, offers a structural approach to understanding and predicting human behavior by dissecting the intricate web of beliefs, social influences, and perceived control that shape an individual's intentions and actions (Ajzen, 1991). Applying this theory to literary analysis opens a pathway to unraveling the complexities of characters' behaviors in fictional narratives. By analyzing Jim Smiley's attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control within the context of Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior, the underlying psychology behind Smiley's dedication to the frog-jumping contest can be unveiled.

This character analysis enriches our understanding of Jim Smiley and contributes to the broader discourse on the intersection of literature and psychology. By applying Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior to a literary context, this study aims to demonstrate the versatility of psychological frameworks in uncovering the depths of fictional characters. Moreover, the insights gained from this analysis may foster discussions on the broader implications of employing psychological theories in literary criticism.

Meanwhile, the application of the Theory of Planned Behavior in literary analysis is not something new (Conner, 2020). Several previous studies have successfully applied the Theory of Planned Behavior in literary contexts to reveal the motivations and reasons behind the actions of fictional characters. However, not many have studied the use of the Theory of Planned Behavior in

the context of classic stories such as *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*.

This study endeavors to bridge the realms of literature and psychology, offering readers a nuanced exploration of a character whose idiosyncrasies continue to captivate audiences over a century after their inception. Through the lens of Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior, we embark on a journey to decipher the intricacies of Jim Smiley's mind, shedding light on the timeless appeal of Mark Twain's literary creations. Hopefully, this research can provide new insights into the characters in these classic stories and enrich our understanding of the factors that motivate human behavior in literary contexts.

METHODS

This research uses the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by Ajzen with a literary analysis approach. This approach will allow us to deepen the interpretation and understanding of the characters in the story. The first stage is to read and understand the story carefully, identifying relevant scenes and character interactions. Next, focus will be given to the key elements of the Theory of Planned Behavior, namely attitudes toward behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, and how these elements can be applied to analyze character motivations and actions. In addition, a search will be carried out for secondary sources that support the Theory of Planned Behavior analysis in a literary context, especially in character analysis. Data and findings from secondary sources will be used to support and compare the research carried out. During the analysis process, emphasis will be placed on developing solid and in-depth arguments to support character interpretations based on the Theory of Planned Behavior. Finally, the analysis results will be summarized in a research report, providing new insights into the factors that motivate the characters' behavior in this classic story.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Theory of Planned Behavior is a theoretical framework that was first introduced by Ajzen in 1991. The theory of Planned Behavior was developed as an evolution of the Theory of Planned Action, which was previously proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein in 1980 (Ajzen, 2011). The theory of Planned Behavior provides a systematic view in understanding and predicting human behavior in various contexts.

Analysis based on the Theory of Planned Behavior of the story *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County* brings a deeper understanding of the main character's behavior in this narrative. The theory of Planned Behavior consists of three main components that influence individual behavior, namely attitudes toward behavior (A), subjective norms (SN), and perceived behavioral control (PBC). Attitude toward behavior is a key concept in the Theory of Planned Behavior which reflects an individual's subjective evaluation of a behavior or action.

In the context of the Theory of Planned Behavior, attitudes toward behavior include two important dimensions: first, the individual's assessment of whether the behavior is considered beneficial or detrimental from a personal perspective. Second, the individual's evaluation of the extent to which the behavior is connected to their personal goals, values, or beliefs. Therefore, understanding attitudes towards behavior

allows us to deepen an individual's evaluation and view of action, allowing for more appropriate influences and interventions to influence desired behavior.

Attitudes Towards Behavior (A)

Attitude toward behavior is a subjective evaluation made by an individual towards an action or behavior. This understanding focuses on how individuals conclude whether a behavior is profitable or not, both in terms of values, morality, or expected results (Ajzen, 1991). Within the framework of the Theory of Planned Behavior, attitudes toward behavior have a central role in forming an individual's intention to act. A positive attitude towards behavior tends to increase the individual's likelihood of committing to and carrying out the action, while a negative attitude can become an obstacle to its implementation (Minderop, 2010).

“-he was the curiosest man about always betting on anything that turned up you ever see, if he could get anybody to bet on the other side; and if he couldn't he'd change sides. Any way that suited the other man would suit him--any way just so's he got a bet, he was satisfied” (Twain, 1867)

The quotation above refers to the character Jim Smiley, who is defined by his constant drive to place bets on anything and everything. He is more concerned with the act of betting than with the specifics of the bet. He is willing to switch sides to engage in a bet, demonstrating a flexible and opportunist attitude towards his behavior. The Theory of Planned Behavior suggests that Smiley's betting is driven by his attitudes regarding gambling, lack of concern for cultural norms, and strong perceived behavioral control.

In behavioral attitudes, individual attitudes towards behavior are formed based on belief about consequences and appraisal of those consequences. Jim Smiley's primary behavior in the story is his engagement in betting competitions. He is known for training and betting on animals for these competitions.

“He ketched a frog one day, and took him home, and said he cal'lated to educate him; and so he never done nothing for three months but set in his back yard and learn that frog to jump. And you bet you he did learn him, too.” (Twain, 1867)

Jim Smiley exhibits overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward training frogs and participating in frog-jumping contests. Jim Smiley consistently exhibits a positive attitude toward training frogs, which is evident in his dedication and enthusiasm. Smiley's positive evaluation of frog jumping as an enjoyable and worthwhile pursuit contributes to his active engagement in these competitions. This positive self-perception is evident in his confidence in training frogs and achieving success in competition. His attitude reflects a conviction that his efforts and expertise will yield favorable outcomes. This belief in his abilities contributes to a positive attitude towards frog jumping, shaping his consistent involvement in this activity.

A notable aspect of Smiley's attitude is his emotional attachment to his frogs, particularly Dan'l Webster. This emotional connection goes beyond mere participation in competitions, underscoring genuine affection for the animals. Smiley's positive emotional responses and attachment to his frogs contribute to a deeper layer of attitudes

influencing his behavior. The emotional aspect adds a nuanced dimension to his motivations in frog jumping competitions.

“But still he was lucky, uncommon lucky; he most always come out winner. He was always ready and laying for a chance; there couldn't be no solit'ry thing mentioned but that feller'd offer to bet on it, and take ary side you please, as I was just telling you.” (Twain, 1867)

His positive attitude is rooted in believing that winning contests bring prestige and social recognition. Positive outcomes such as recognition and financial gains reinforce his positive attitude. In the realm of gambling, Jim Smiley exhibits an optimistic outlook, reflecting positive attitudes towards this form of entertainment. Despite the unpredictability inherent in gambling activities, Smiley maintains a confident and positive demeanor. His willingness to place bets and engage in various gambling scenarios suggests an underlying belief in the potential for favorable outcomes. Smiley's positive attitude towards gambling contributes to his persistent participation in these activities.

Attitude about the target behavior can be direct or indirect (Jhangiani & Tarry, 2022). A direct attitude of Smiley's penchant for winning odd bets may be his overall assessment about whether he can win his frog-jumping competition with the stranger. An indirect attitude involves how a person believes a peripheral outcome will occur as a result of performing the behavior, coupled with an assessment of that outcome. In this instance, Smiley believes that he will likely win the bet because he has trained his frog, Dan'l Webster.

Consideration should be given to the impact of the narrator's interpretation on the analysis of Smiley's attitudes. The narrative is presented through the perspective of the narrator's encounter with Simon Wheeler, who recounts Smiley's stories. The narrator's interpretation of Smiley's attitudes may influence the portrayal of his emotional responses and evaluations. Acknowledging the narrative framing is crucial for a comprehensive analysis of Smiley's attitudes toward behavior.

Subjective Norms (SN)

Subjective norms are an individual's perception of the expectations or opinions of people who are considered important in their environment regarding a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In the Theory of Planned Behavior, subjective norms are one of the three main components that influence an individual's intention to take an action. When individuals feel that people who are respected or considered influential expect or support a behavior, this can strengthen their intention to carry out that action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Millenia, et al., 2023). Subjective norms also include individuals' feelings of social or moral pressure that encourage or discourage them from carrying out certain behaviors (Akbar, et al., 2023; Endraswara, 2013). Therefore, understanding and manipulating subjective norms can be an effective strategy for influencing individual decisions and actions.

Smiley's participation in frog jumping competitions is influenced by the social environment of the town, where such competitions are popular. During the Gold Rush era in California (1848–1855), gambling was a prevalent and integral part of the social and economic landscape. The discovery of gold in 1848 drew a massive influx of people from all walks of life to California, creating a diverse and bustling society (Khoury, 2012).

“Lots of the boys here has seen that Smiley, and can tell you about him. Why, it never made no difference to him--he'd bet on any thing--the dangdest feller.” (Twain, 1867)

The quotation above depicts Jim Smiley as someone who bets on anything, regardless of the circumstances or opinions of others. Jim Smiley's interactions with other characters, particularly Simon Wheeler, contribute to the analysis of subjective norms. Wheeler serves as a storyteller who recounts Smiley's tales to the narrator. Smiley's behavior, as narrated by Wheeler, reflects a certain social norm within their interpersonal relationship. The act of storytelling itself can be seen as a social convention, and the way Wheeler presents Smiley's character reflects a shared understanding of societal expectations. The narrative structure, framed through interpersonal relationships, influences the reader's perception of subjective norms surrounding Smiley's actions.

“But still he was lucky, uncommon lucky; he most always come out winner. He was always ready and laying for a chance; there couldn't be no solit'ry thing mentioned but that feller'd offer to bet on it, and take ary side you please, as I was just telling you.” (Twain, 1867)

The narrative suggests that Jim Smiley has a reputation in the community as an eccentric and skilled individual, particularly in the realms of frog jumping and gambling. This reputation contributes to the subjective norms that influence Smiley's behavior. The desire to maintain or enhance his reputation as a successful frog jumper and gambler motivates his actions. The expectations tied to his established image within the community serve as subjective norms, guiding his choices in the narrative.

“The feller took the box again, and took another long, particular look, and give it back to Smiley, and says, very deliberate, ‘Well,’ he says, ‘I don't see no p'int about that frog that's any better'n any other frog.’” (Twain, 1867)

Jim's engagement with frog-jumping seems more self-driven than influenced by external norms. However, the stranger's skepticism about Jim's frog may indirectly influence subjective norms.

Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)

Perceived Behavioral Control reflects the individual's perception of the extent to which they have control over the behavior in question. It includes factors such as the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior, the presence of obstacles or facilitators, and the person's confidence in their ability to carry out the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). According to the TPB, the stronger an individual's perceived control over a behavior, the more likely they are to form a positive intention to perform that behavior. Additionally, the stronger the intention, the more likely the individual is to engage in the behavior.

Perceived Behavioral Control incorporates both subjective and objective elements. The subjective component involves the individual's perception of their ability to perform the behavior, while the objective component considers actual factors that might facilitate or hinder the behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

“He ketched a frog one day, and took him home, and said he cal'lated to educate him; and so he never done nothing for three months but set in his back

yard and learn that frog to jump. And you bet you he did learn him, too.” (Twain, 1867)

The quotation above describes a circumstance in which subjective norms, as outlined by the Theory of Planned Behavior, have a role in molding the characters' behaviors and beliefs. Smiley's continued betting despite the other man's skepticism and independent appraisal of the frog demonstrates the influence of subjective norms on their actions. Jim perceives a high level of control over training frogs due to his skills and experience. The narrative suggests that external factors, such as the availability of suitable frogs, influence his perceived control. Despite challenges, Jim maintains a sense of optimism and control over his frog-jumping endeavors.

“And you bet you he did learn him, too. He'd give him a little punch behind, and the next minute you'd see that frog whirling in the air like a doughnut--see him turn one summerset, or may be a couple, if he got a good start, and come down flatfooted and all right, like a cat.”

“He got him up so in the matter of ketching flies, and kep' him in practice so constant, that he'd nail a fly every time as fur as he could see him. Smiley said all a frog wanted was education, and he could do 'most anything--and I believe him.” (Twain, 1867)

Jim Smiley exhibits a high level of confidence and perceived control in his ability to train frogs for jumping competitions. The narrative describes his meticulous methods, including feeding strategies and creating specific conditions for the frogs. Smiley's belief in his ability to influence the outcome of the frog jumping contests underscores a high level of perceived behavioral control. His confidence in training frogs suggests that he perceives himself as capable of achieving success in this specific domain, contributing to his active participation in such competitions.

“-and then all of a sudden he would grab that other dog just by the jint of his hind leg and freeze to it--not chew, you understand, but only just grip and hang on till they throwed up the sponge, if it was a year.” (Twain, 1867)

Smiley's engagement in gambling activities also reflects a sense of perceived behavioral control. The narrative portrays him as an adaptable and strategic gambler, adjusting his tactics based on the circumstances (Ajzen, 1991; Millenia, et al., 2023). Whether betting on frog jumping or engaging in other forms of gambling, Smiley's actions suggest a belief in his ability to navigate the complexities of change and influence the outcomes. This adaptability contributes to his perceived control over the gambling scenarios in which he is involved.

“And he ketched Dan'l by the nap of the neck, and hefted him, and says, 'Why blame my cats if he don't weigh five pound!' and turned him upside down and he belched out a double handful of shot. And then he see how it was, and he was the maddest man--he set the frog down and took out after that feller, but he never ketched him. And----” (Twain, 1867)

Despite unforeseen challenges, such as the stranger who fed his frog buckshot, Smiley remains undeterred and participates in frog jumping competitions. This resilience suggests a high level of perceived behavioral

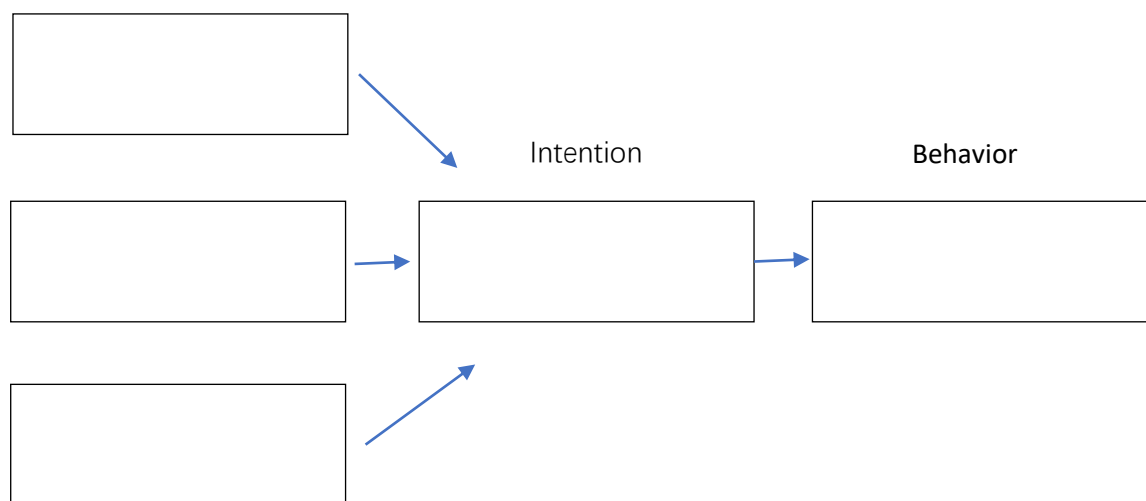
control, as Smiley is not easily discouraged by external obstacles (Ajzen, 1991; Twain, 1867). His determination to overcome challenges and continue participating in activities he values reinforces his belief in his ability to control the outcomes, contributing to his persistent engagement.

While Smiley may exhibit a high level of perceived control in certain aspects of his activities, the narrative also introduces elements of unpredictability. For example, the stranger's interference in the frog jumping competition disrupts Smiley's expectations. This unexpected event introduces an element of uncontrollability, challenging Smiley's perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991; Twain, 1867). The character's response to such unforeseen circumstances provides nuanced insights into the interplay between perceived control and external factors.

It is also important to recognize the interplay between attitudes and perceived behavioral control in shaping Jim Smiley's behavior. While his positive attitudes contribute to his active engagement in frog jumping and gambling, his perceived control over these activities reinforces and complements his favorable attitudes (Ajzen, 1991; Twain, 1867). The alignment of positive attitudes and a high level of perceived control contributes to the consistency in Smiley's participation in these pursuits.

Intention and Behavior

Smiley's strong positive attitude toward frog jumping, alignment with societal norms, and perceived control over the behavior lead to clear intentions. He intends to win bets and competitions by showcasing Dan'l Webster's jumping ability, which aligns with his positive attitude and the societal acceptance of frog jumping (Ajzen, 1991; Twain, 1867).



(Figure 1. Graphic Model of Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior)

Integration of Attitudes, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Behavioral Control

The integration of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control is a central concept in Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (Conner, 2020). This theory explains that an individual's intentions and subsequent behaviors are influenced by these three factors. Attitudes play a crucial role in shaping intentions. Positive attitudes toward a behavior increase the likelihood that an individual will form a favorable intention to engage in that behavior. Subjective norms integrate social influences into the decision-making process. If an individual perceives those others important to them endorse or oppose a specific behavior, this influences their intention to engage in that behavior (Akbar, et al., 2023; Ajzen, 1991). Perceived behavioral control is integrated by considering the individual's assessment of their ability to overcome obstacles and perform the behavior. High perceived behavioral control enhances the likelihood of forming a strong intention.

Attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control collectively contribute to the formation of intentions. Positive attitudes and perceived behavioral control increase the likelihood of forming strong intentions, while favorable subjective norms contribute to the social context of these intentions (Salsabila, et al., 2023; Ajzen, 1991). Intentions, in turn, predict actual behavior. The stronger the intention, the more likely an individual will engage in the behavior. However, the actual execution of the behavior may be influenced by factors beyond the individual's control. These factors do not operate in isolation. There is a dynamic interaction between attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991; Twain, 1867). For example, an individual's positive attitude toward a behavior may be reinforced by supportive subjective norms, which, in turn, may enhance their perceived behavioral control.

The integration of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control forms the basis of Jim Smiley's consistent engagement in frog jumping and gambling (Twain, 1867). His positive attitudes create a motivational foundation, while the subjective norms within his community and the perceived control he feels over these activities further reinforce his intentions.

The interplay between attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control is consistent throughout the narrative (Ajzen, 1991; Twain, 1867). Smiley's positive attitudes influence his perceptions of subjective norms, and his perceived control reinforces his positive attitudes and alignment with societal expectations.

While not explicitly outlined in Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior, Jim Smiley's emotional attachment to his frogs adds a unique layer to integrating factors (Twain, 1867). This emotional element contributes to his positive attitudes, strengthens his perceived control over frog jumping, and potentially influences subjective norms within his immediate social context.

Jim Smiley's character exhibits a complex integration of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. His motivations and actions are driven by a harmonious alignment of positive attitudes towards frog jumping and gambling, adherence to subjective norms within his community,

and perceived control over these activities (Michelle, et al., 2023; Twain, 1867). This integration provides a nuanced understanding of the psychological forces shaping Smiley's character in Mark Twain's narrative.

CONCLUSION

By applying the Theory of Planned Behavior in the character analysis of the story *The Celebrated Jumping Frog Calaveras County*, we gain a deeper understanding of the motivations and behavior of the main characters in this narrative. This study helps us identify the psychological and social factors that influence a character's decisions and actions. Attitudes towards behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are the main elements that interact with each other to shape individual behavior. Attitudes toward behavior influence how a character evaluates an action or decision. A positive or negative attitude towards a behavior influences an individual's tendency to carry out that action. Subjective norms include influences from people around the character, such as expectations or social pressure regarding a behavior. This influences the individual's intention to carry out the action. Applying the Theory of Planned Behavior in the analysis of the story *The Celebrated Jumping Frog Calaveras County* provides new insight into the complexity of the character's behavior. By understanding the psychological and social factors that influence characters' decisions and actions, we can better appreciate the depth of these literary works and enrich our interpretation of the stories.

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