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THE EFFECT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE BUYING BEHAVIOR IN COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE PRODUCTS: A STUDY IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

With the Covid-19 pandemic process, it is thought that people who want to be protected from the negative effects of the virus will turn to complementary and alternative medicine products with modern medicine in order to increase their body resistance and stay healthy. It will be important for businesses to track changes in consumer purchase intention and behavior towards these products. This study aims to examine the behavior of buying complementary and alternative medicine products of the Covid-19 epidemic within the framework of theory of planned behavior. In the research, an online questionnaire was applied to 402 people using the convenience sampling method. The structural equation modelling was used to determine the factors affecting buying behavior. As a result of the structural equation modelling, it was confirmed that attitude and perceived behavioral control variables have a positive and significant effect on the intention of buying complementary and alternative medicine. It was determined that subjective norms did not have a positive and significant effect on the intention to purchase complementary and alternative medicine. It was concluded that buying intention and perceived behavioral control had a positive and significant effect on buying behavior for complementary and alternative medicine products.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Covid-19, Theory of Planned Behavior, Complementary and Alternative Medicine, Buying Behavior, Confirmatory Factor Analysis.*

JEL Kodları: *D12, D19, M31*

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COVID-19 PANDEMİSİNİN TAMAMLAYICI VE ALTERNATİF TIP ÜRÜNLERİ SATIN ALMA DAVRANIŞINA ETKİSİ: PLANLI DAVRANIŞ TEORİSİ ÇERÇEVESİNDE BİR ÇALIŞMA

ABSTRACT

Covid-19 salgın süreci ile virüsün olumsuz etkilerinden korunmak isteyen kişilerin vücut direncini arttırmak ve sağlıklı kalmak için modern tıp ile tamamlayıcı ve alternatif tıp ürünlerine yöneleceği düşünülmektedir. İşletmelerin bu ürünlere yönelik tüketici satın alma niyet ve davranışlarındaki değişiklikleri takip etmeleri önemli olacaktır. Bu çalışmada, Covid-19 salgınının tamamlayıcı ve alternatif tıp ürünleri satın alma davranışlarını planlı davranış teorisi çerçevesinde incelenmesi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada kolayda örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak 402 kişiye çevrimiçi anket uygulanmıştır. Satın alma davranışını etkileyen faktörleri belirlemek için yapısal eşitlik modeli kullanılmıştır. Yapısal eşitlik modellemesi sonucunda tutum ve algılanan davranışsal kontrol değişkenlerinin tamamlayıcı ve alternatif tıp satın alma niyeti üzerinde olumlu ve anlamlı bir etkiye sahip olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Öznel normların tamamlayıcı ve alternatif tıp satın alma niyetinde olumlu ve anlamlı bir etkisinin olmadığı belirlenmiştir. Satın alma niyeti ve algılanan davranışsal kontrolün tamamlayıcı ve alternatif tıp ürünlerine ilişkin satın alma davranışı üzerinde olumlu ve anlamlı bir etkiye sahip olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Keywords: *Covid-19, Planlı Davranış Teorisi, Tamamlayıcı ve Alternatif Tıp, Satın Alma Davranışı, Doğrulayıcı Faktör Analizi.*

JEL Codes: *D12, D19, M31*

1. INTRODUCTION

Theory of planned behavior (TPB) is a model that is widely used in social sciences and examines the consumers' intentions and behaviors according to events or situations. The TPB model is widely seen in many studies examining the consumers' decision-making processes and in the social psychology literature (Taylor & Todd 1995; Venkatesh & Davis 2000; Lee at al. 2007; Alam & Sayuti 2011; 2015; Öztürk et al., 2016; La Barbera & Ajzen 2020). According to Lim and Dubinsky (2005), theory of planned behavior is considered to be the simplest and most understandable model compared to other models that explain human behavior.

The Covid-19 virus, which emerged in Wuhan in December 2019 and has affected the world in a short time, has caused radical changes in people's daily lives. The closure of shopping malls and some areas in the entertainment sector and the prohibition of domestic and international travel have had effects on many areas and sectors. Some of these effects can be as in the following: shareholder activism (Mans-Kemp & Zyl 2021), tourism (Acar 2020), income distribution (Bayar et al., 2020), consumer behavior

(Kayabaşı 2020), consumer spending (Dunn et al., 2020), education (Daniel 2020), e-commerce (Hasanat et al., 2020), health (Bambra et al., 2020), social life (Üstün & Özçiftçi 2020), etc.

According to a survey conducted by the UN Trade and Development Agency (UNCTAD) with the participation of approximately 3,700 consumers in nine developing and developed economies, it was determined that the Covid-19 outbreak changed online shopping behavior forever. The study named "COVID-19 and E-commerce" examined the changes in e-commerce and digital solutions in consumers during the Covid-19 pandemic process. The research was conducted with consumers who live in Brazil, China, Germany, Italy, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Switzerland and Turkey. In this process, the product categories with the highest increase in consumer demands are: information and communication technology / electronics, gardening / do-it-yourself, pharmacy, education, furniture / household and cosmetics products / personal care. The countries with the most increases of online shopping are Turkey and China while the least increases are Switzerland and Germany. According to another result of the survey study, it was determined that small businesses in China are equipped and prepared to sell their products online, but those in South Africa are not ready for this process. Deliveries of products in each country are preferred as home delivery by the participants. As an alternative to home delivery, participants from China, Italy and Russia evaluate the pick-up point from a logistic provider option, while participants in South Africa and Turkey have preferred delivery to my workplace option. (UNCTAD, 2020, Viewed: 19.04.2021).

When the effects of the Covid-19 process are examined, it is seen that the most important effects are the changes in consumer spending. In order to protect the health of citizens, reasons such as the enforcement of curfews by the public and the closure of stores and shopping malls have led to a further increase in online and shopping with credit card. According to December 2020 data from Turkey Economic Policies Research Foundation (TEPRF), the total spending by credit card has increased by 15% compared to the previous year. In March, when the first cases were seen in Turkey, the monthly increase in online shopping was 10%. This rate increased to 62% in December. According to the expenditure groups, the highest decrease was in casino / drinking places with 91%, and the highest increase was in electrical-electronic equipment and computer expenditures with 93% (TEPAV 2020: 2-5, Viewed: 13.02.2021). On the other hand, the current lack of a cure and the psychological effects brought about by the anxiety because of the disease have led to an increase in interest in complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) products. More than 80% of the world's population uses CAM, and the worldwide herbal medicines market is projected to grow between 5% and 15% annually. In addition, it is estimated that this market, which is 62 billion dollars, will increase to 5 trillion dollars by 2050 (Nilashi et al., 2020:893). In the US, CAM has been used by about 38% of adults and 12% of children. According to the World Health Organization, it is estimated that there are more than 100 million CAM users in Europe (Niveditha et al., 2020: 113).

While consumer buying behavior changes according to economic, social, cultural, and some legal rules applied by countries, it also changes in times of crisis such as natural disasters, earthquakes, or epidemic processes that affect daily life. In this study, consumers' buying behaviors of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) products in the Covid-19 pandemic were analyzed within the framework of Ajzen's (1985, 1991) theory of planned behavior (TPB).

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on consumers' product preferences and buying behavior. The literature review consists of explanations about complementary and alternative medicine products and related dimensions in the theory of planned behavior.

2.1. Covid-19 and Complementary and Alternative Medicine Products

Throughout history, humanity has had to deal with many epidemics such as plague, cholera, typhus, smallpox, Ebola, and flu. 75-125 million people died in Europe, Eurasia and North America due to the Black Death that occurred in Italy in the 1300s. It is estimated that 17-50 million people died during the Spanish Flu epidemic in 1918-1920. (TUBA 2020:21-22, Viewed: 16.02.2021). Finally, the Covid-19 emerged in Wuhan, the capital of China's Hubei region, in December 2019. It was understood that a new coronavirus caused the disease called SARS-CoV-2, when pneumonia that developed without an identifiable reason and did not respond to treatment and vaccines. With its spread to Asia-Pacific countries, Europe, North America, and the whole world, the epidemic was declared as a "pandemic" on March 11, 2020 (Aslan 2020:39). At the time this article was written, approximately 166 million COVID19 cases were detected worldwide, and more than 3 million people died. The number of cases in Turkey, the first of which was detected on March 10, 2020, has exceeded 5.3 million, and about 46 thousand people lost their lives (https://covid19.who.int/, Viewed: 22.05.2021). As the numbers are increasing day by day and there is no cure yet, people have sought alternative methods to protect themselves, even if their accuracy is not scientifically proven. Nutrition is vital for people to survive, strengthen their immune system, and stay healthy (Doğan & Doğan 2020:43). There is no medicine, vitamin, or nutritional supplement for a healthy and strong immune system. However, in addition to adequate and balanced nutrition, herbal products such as turmeric, echinacea, ginger, tea, and carob can have supportive effects on the immune system when consumed in appropriate amounts and times (TUBA 2020:71, Viewed: 16.02.2021). Although there is no evidence to support its usefulness in reducing the disease, many countries have started to try CAM methods along with standard methods for the prevention/treatment of COVID-19. (Shankar et al., 2020:565).

CAM is accepted as all kinds of applications related to human health, which aim to understand the unity of mind-body-soul, except for modern medical practices. It includes a wide range of mega-

vitamins, herbal medicines, various diets, massage, acupuncture, physical therapy, music therapy, hypnosis, meditation, yoga, and prayer (Çetin 2007:91). According to the US National Centre for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH), if a non-mainstream practice is used in conjunction with traditional medicine, it is considered "complementary". If a non-mainstream practice is used instead of traditional medicine, it is considered an "alternative". CAM is divided into 3 groups according to NCCIH. These are listed below:

Natural products; Plants, Vitamins, Minerals, etc.

Mind and Body Applications; Yoga, Meditation, Acupuncture, Relaxation Techniques, Pilates, etc.

Other Complementary Health Approaches; Practices of Traditional Healers, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Functional Medicine, etc. (nih.gov 2021, Viewed: 02.02.021).

Authorities in China recommend Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) for the treatment of the Covid-19 outbreak. Traditional Chinese medicine TCM was widely used in China during the pandemic process (López-Alcalde, et al., 2020:1). In addition to the practices in China, clinical trials for both new vaccine studies and new interventions are ongoing in India, where there are a lot of Covid-19 cases. As in countries with a rich history of traditional medicine, the effectiveness of traditional methods in the treatment of Covid-19 disease is being investigated in India. The study was conducted with 495 participants who went through the isolation process. 25.8% of the participants stated that they used CAM products or home remedies both during and after the treatment. More than half of the participants consumed Kadha, an Ayurvedic drink containing herbs and spices that can help fight seasonal infections, for treatment during this period (Charan et al., 2021:108). In Norway, a study was conducted with providers of CAM products in the Covid-19 pandemic process. As a result of the study, it is recommended to support and train CAM providers in the efficient implementation of infection prevention and control measures. During this period, CAM providers in Norway have advised patients to use mostly vitamin C, ginger, and Omega 3, 6 and 9 to prevent Covid-19 infection (Stub, 2020:18).

TCAM use of traditional, complementary and alternative medicine is increasing, especially in the treatment of chronic diseases. Sometimes, bio-medical practitioners suggest TCAM to patients. The increase in demand for TCAM has led to the inclusion of some Asian countries in the curriculum of medical schools as well as in some western medical schools (Fenton and Morris, 2003). Although TCAM knowledge has been known for some time to aid in childbirth practices, acute injuries, infectious diseases and treatments for parasites, it has been overlooked in large-scale international health programs (Hollenberg et al., 2008). The growing interest in TCAM / CAM treatment method and products in many parts of the world makes it valuable to study the buying process of consumers for these products.

Before conducting research on CAM, it is important that the participants know about this subject and use these products. Participants were informed about the group of natural products among CAM products which are herbal products (linden, mint lemon, ginger, etc.), herbal medicines (cream, ointment, etc.), additional vitamins and foods believed to increase body resistance (onion, garlic, honey, vinegar, etc.) were taken into consideration in the questionnaire prepared for the study. The questions in the study are about the consumers' use of CAM products in the natural products group within the framework of TPB.

2.2. Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) was developed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). It is a theory of behavior designed to explain and predict human behavior in a particular context (Küçük 2011). The main purpose of the theory is to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the determinants of consumer behavior. This theory focuses on consumer behavior in relevant situations rather than investigating the overall evaluation or utility of a good or service (Ajzen 2015:125). Within the framework of TPB, we can find studies on consumers' food preferences (Verbeke et al., 2004; Honkanen et al., 2005), studies using the theoretical model of consumer habits (Armitage & Conner, 2001), online buying behavior (George 2004; Suh & Han 2003), or studies investigating consumers' attitudes towards halal products (Alam & Sayuti 2011; Öztürk et al., 2016) in the literature. When TPB is examined, it is seen that its foundations are based on the theory of reasoned action (TRA). It is the extended version of TRA (Ajzen 1985, 1991). The most prominent and important difference between these two models is the presence of perceived behavioral control as a determinant of behavioral intention in TPB. TPB is a model used by many psychologists to predict behavioral intention (Norman et al., 2007; Fielding et al., 2008).

Within the scope of the theory, there are three main factors that affect behavioral intention, which is the premise of an individual's behavior. These factors are attitudes towards behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, also known as self-efficacy perception (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975), which are explained below.

2.2.1. Attitude

Attitude is the positive, negative, or indifference of people's evaluations about a subject, idea, or object and their tendency to act in a certain way according to these evaluations (Koç 2013:272). Attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors are closely related concepts, and they are extremely important in terms of consumer behavior. For example, positive or negative experiences as a result of purchasing decisions play a role in changing attitudes (İslamoğlu & Altunışık 2013). Consumers' green hotel choices (Han et al., 2010; Chen & Tung 2014), preferences in green purchasing (Yadav & Pathak 2017), recyclable

products (Wan et al., 2012), halal food (Alam & Sayuti 2011; Öztürk et all. 2016), the positive and significant effects of attitude on intention are seen. During the pandemic process, it is expected that consumers who think that CAM products will increase body resistance exhibit a positive attitude towards these products. In this direction, the first hypothesis as follows:

H1: There is a significant and positive relationship between attitude and intention to purchase complementary and alternative medicine products

2.2.2. Subjective Norm

Subjective norm refers to the social pressure an individual will face if the behavior is performed or not (Fishbein & Ajzein 1975). Subjective norms are values shaped by the people's beliefs, judgments, and thought values, as well as the social customs, traditions, pressures, and rules of the society in which the individual lives (Çetinkaya 2014). In some studies, conducted within the framework of marketing research and consumer behavior, it was found that the subjective norm is determinative of behavioral intention (Wan et al., 2012; Alam & Sayuti 2011). Due to relatives who use CAM products during the pandemic or give recommendations for the use of these products, people may think that they should use these products. In this direction, the second hypothesis is as in the following:

H2: There is a significant and positive relationship between subjective norm and intention to purchase complementary and alternative medicine products

2.2.3. Perceived Behavioral Control

Perceived behavioral control is the belief that how easy or difficult it will be for the person who will show the behavior to exhibit the behavior in question. It refers to an individual's perception of possible difficulties that may arise while performing a certain behavior (Ajzein 1991). This perception is thought to have an effect on the intention to use TAT products. In this direction, the third hypothesis is below:

H3: There is a significant and positive relationship between perceived behavioral control and intention to purchase complementary and alternative medicine products

Perceived behavioral control is also thought to have an effect on actual behavior (Ajzein 1991). In this direction, the fourth hypothesis is given below:

H4: There is a significant and positive relationship between perceived behavioral control and behavior to purchase complementary and alternative medicine products

2.2.4. Intention

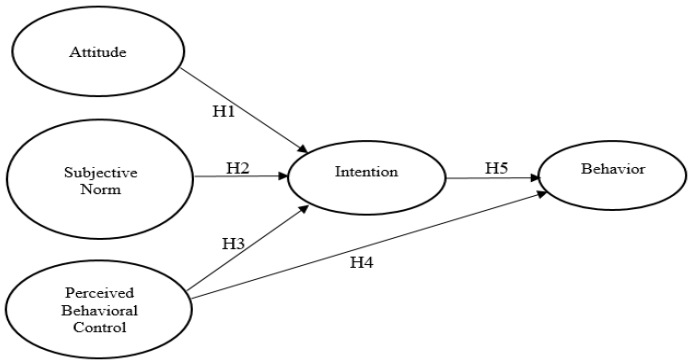
Intention is defined by Ajzen (1991) as the amount of effort an individual will spend to achieve a goal. Considered as the energy that a person will spend to realize his behavior, it is the determinant of the actual behavior. In this direction, the fourth hypothesis is as follows:

H5: There is a significant and positive relationship between intention and behavior to purchase complementary and alternative medicine products

The increase in the risk perception that consumers will not be able to obtain basic needs due to the curfews in the Covid-19 process affects their attitudes towards behavior. Again, from the beginning of the process, the pressure that each individual faces from his/her environment in order to prevent the disease from exhibiting or not exhibiting certain behaviors affects subjective norms. Controls over the purchasing behavior of individuals, such as the curfew imposed by the state, social distance, and suspending the activities of certain business lines, affect the perceived behavioral control (Baltacı & Akaydın 2020:61).

Within the framework of the TPB model, the research model according to the hypotheses formed above is as in Figure 1. The intention to purchase complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) products precedes the actual purchase. Intention is considered as an indicator of future behavior. Within the framework of the theory of planned behavior, attitude, subjective norms, and behavioral control are assumed to have a direct relationship with intention.

Figure 1. Research Model



2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data needed to test the research hypotheses and examine the relationship between variables were collected with an online questionnaire. In the first part of the questionnaire, there are expressions for measuring variables, while the second part includes questions about the demographic characteristics of the participants. The questionnaire form was created by using the original questionnaire expressions developed for the TPB model by Beck and Ajzen (1991) and the expressions in other studies using this model (Han at al. 2010; Taylor & Todd 1995; Chen & Tung 2014; Lee at al. 2007).

A pilot study was conducted with a group of 40 people to test the suitability of the questionnaire design and the comprehensibility of the statements. As a result of the feedback from the pilot test participants, the expressions in the online questionnaire form were finalized. The questionnaire was designed according to the five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, … 5 = Strongly Agree) to measure the participants' level of agreement in the statements in the questionnaire. The research population consists of people who use CAM products in Turkey. Since it was not possible to reach the population, the link of the online questionnaire was sent to people who used CAM products by the researchers with the convenience sampling technique. Participants were asked to share this link with people who used CAM products before. The online survey application was completed between 25 January 2021 and 25 February 2021 with the participation of 402 people. For the analysis of the working model and the hypothesis tests, the necessary analyses were made using the SPSS 22 and AMOS 21 programs.

3.1. Analysis of Data and Descriptive Statistics

The demographic information of the participants is as follows: 54.5% of the participants are women and 45.5% are men. 45.5% are married and 54.5% are single. 25.1% were in the 18-25 age range, 36.1% in the 26-35 age range, 29.6% in the 36-45 age range, and 9.2% in the 46 years and above. In terms of education, 34.1% of the participants have high school or lower degree, 42.3% have a university and 23.6% have a postgraduate education degree. 44.3% of the participants are public employees, 17.2% are private sector employees, 13.2% are self-employed, 9.5% are students, and 15.9% are unemployed. 26.1% of the participants have 3000 TL and less income, 12.7% earn 3001-4500 TL, 16.2% have 4501-6000 TL income, 12.9% earn 6001-7500 TL, 12.7% of them earn 7501-9000 TL and 19.4% of them have an income of 9001 TL and above.

In the study, natural products group was considered as CAM products. Therefore, the participants were first asked how they perceive CAM products with a 5-point Likert and the average definitions obtained are as follows: It means herbal products (linden, mint, lemon, ginger, etc.) (3,80), additional vitamins (3.78), the product used in traditional therapy (3.61), herbal medicines (cream, ointment, etc.) (3,51), foods that I believe increase body resistance (onion, garlic, honey, etc.) (3,43), a healthy product (3.47), organic product 3.25), a reliable product (3.23).

The values of the participants regarding the use of CAM products before, during and after the Covid-19 outbreak are listed. According to these values, it is seen that the use of herbal products from CAM products before the Covid-19 epidemic was 82%, and the use of foods believed to increase body resistance was 78.8%. The same products are planned to be used at high rates (91% and 89.6%, respectively) by the participants even if the epidemic ends. It is seen that the use of herbal medicines

(45%) and additional vitamins (39.6%), whose usage rates were relatively lower before the epidemic, are planned to increase after the epidemic (49.3% and 51.2%, respectively).

3.2. Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Structural Model

Explanatory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to determine whether the variables in the research model, 20 expressions measured with a 5-point Likert scale, would come together in the desired dimensions for the study and to determine whether these dimensions would be compatible with the model. According to the analysis results, the PBC1 variable, which was found to disrupt the factor structure, was removed, and the analyses were performed with 19 statements. Then, by combining each variable in the research model, confirmatory factor analyses, goodness of fit and modifications were applied in the necessary parts. First, covariance was added between the error terms e15 and e16, and then between the error terms e6 and e7. The factor analysis and goodness of fit in the research are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Factor Analysis of Variables, AVE, CR, and R^2 Results

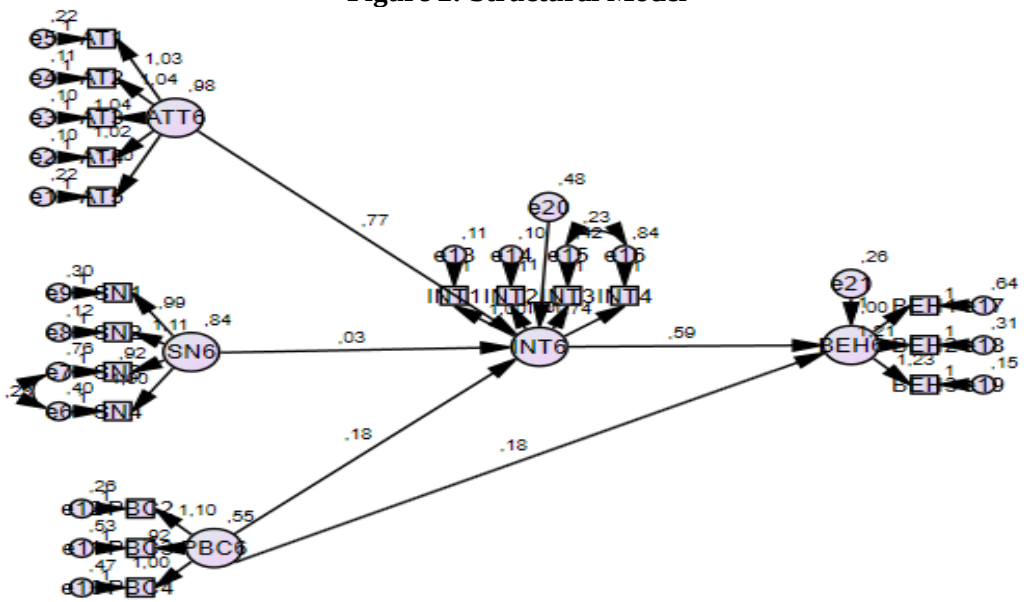
	Average Participation	Factor Load	Cronbach Alfa	AVE	CR	Variance Explained	R^2
Attitude			,972	,876	,972	21,878	
AT4	3,58	,812					
AT3	3,56	,806					
AT2	3,60	,799					
AT1	3,48	,738					
AT5	3,49	,730					
Subjective Norms			,907	,706	,905	18,016	
SN2	3,58	,834					
SN4	3,44	,816					
SN1	3,69	,764					
SN3	3,32	,741					
Perceived Behavioral Control			,802	,577	,802	12,596	
PBC3	3,88	,856					
PBC2	3,72	,748					
PBC4	3,83	,704					
Intention			,922	,746	,920	17,896	,55
INT3	2,97	,793					
INT4	2,75	,782					
INT2	3.25	,739					
INT1	3,28	,708					
Behavior			,887	,743	,896	12,417	,62
BEH2	3,00	,762					
BEH3	3,22	,708					
BEH1	3,16	,682					

KMO: ,941 Explained Variance: % 82,803 Goodness of fit: $\chi 2$=476,278, df=140, CMIN/DF=3,402 p= 0.000, GFI= ,888 AGFI= ,849 NFI= ,933 TLI= ,949 CFI= ,958 RMSEA= ,077

The Cronbach's alpha values of the variables used in the study are $\alpha = 0{,}972$ for attitude, $\alpha = 0{,}907$ for subjective norms, $\alpha = 0{,}922$ for intention, $\alpha = 0{,}802$ for perceived behavioral control, and $\alpha = 0{,}887$ for behavior. The reliability analysis results found are far above the acceptable value of ", 70" and show

that the scales used in the questionnaire are reliable, in other words, the questionnaire can measure the subject it wants to measure safely and consistently (Coşkun et al., 2015:126). The fact that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test result is 0,941 indicates that the data set is suitable for the analysis. According to the goodness of fit in the table, it is seen that the research model is an accurate model and works smoothly. It is expected to be Average Variance Extracted (AVE) > 0,50 and Composite Reliability (CR) > 0,70, which indicate the reliability of the model (Hair et al., 2014). Values obtained with goodness of fit in the confirmatory factor analysis and reliability tests (AVE and CR) for each dimension are within the desired range. The structural model was tested and presented in Figure 2 for testing the relationships between variables or, in other words, research hypotheses.

Figure 2: Structural Model



Structural equation modelling prepared to determine the behaviors of consumers using CAM products was examined within the framework of the planned behavior theory. To interpret the relationships and hypotheses between variables, the standardized direct impact coefficient and p-value will be considered. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Hypotheses and Standardized Direct Effects

Hypotheses	Relationship	Standardized Regression Weights (β)	P	Results
H1	INT<---ATT	,733	***	Accepted
H2	INT<---SN	,024	,511	Rejected
H3	INT<---PBC	,125	,002	Accepted
H4	BEH<---PBC	,163	***	Accepted
H5	BEH<---INT	,748	***	Accepted

p< 0.05, (ATT: Attitude, SN: Subjective Norm, PBC: Perceived Behavioral Control, INT: Intention and BEH: Behavior)

According to the results, there is a significant and positive relationship between attitudes and perceived behavioral control of CAM products in terms of purchase intention. Therefore, H1 and H3 were accepted. There is no significant and positive relationship between the subjective norm and the intention to purchase CAM products (p=0,511). Hence H2 is rejected. There is a significant and positive relationship between the perceived behavioral control and purchase intention of CAM products with purchasing behavior. Thus, H4 and H5 were accepted.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Traditional and complementary medicine practices around the world are gaining more and more attention. Even if these applications are passed down from generation to generation, various studies are carried out in terms of putting them on scientific grounds. Within the scope of the World Health Organization 2014-2023 Traditional Medicine Strategy, it encourages legal regulation in this field and the integration of modern health systems with traditional and complementary medicine practices (WHO 2013:17, Viewed: 01.02.2021). It is known that CAM products are widely used in the prevention and treatment of diseases in different cultures around the world. Considering that individuals with high body resistance are less affected by the negative effects of Covid-19 (Güneş et al., 2020:127), it is expected that there will be an increase in the preference for CAM products besides modern medicine.

In the study, it was determined that the participants perceived CAM products as herbal products (lime, mint lemon, ginger, etc.) and additional vitamins. While the rate of using herbal products before the epidemic was 82%, the rate of those who stated that they will continue to use these products after the epidemic increased to 91%. While the rate of using additional vitamins before the epidemic was 39.6%, the rate of those who stated that they would continue to use these products after the epidemic increased to 51.2%. These results meet the expectation for an increase in the use of CAM products.

In this study, the buying behavior of consumers in complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) products in the Covid-19 pandemic was examined within the framework of the planned behavior theory. According to the R^2 values, it is seen that 55% of the intention is explained by Attitude, Subjective Norm, and Perceived Behavioral Control. Intention and Perceived Behavioral Control explain 62% of the behavior.

Similar to other studies on food products in the literature, attitude and perceived behavioral control have a positive effect on the intention of buying CAM products. However, contrary to the studies in the literature, no positive and significant relationship was found between the subjective norm and the intention of buying CAM products (Alam & Sayuti 2011; Öztürk et al., 2016). The reason why the subjective norm has no effect on intention could be that the participants in the study did not feel social pressure to use CAM products. Furthermore, intention and perceived behavioral control have been found

to have a positive effect on the behavior of buying CAM products, similar to the literature (Alam & Sayuti 2011; Öztürk et al., 2016).

Millions of people around the world have been affected differently by the Covid-19 process. One of the reasons for this being affected is that their immune systems are not strong. Although people tell each other that CAM products are beneficial to the immune system, it can be thought that people pay less attention to the suggestions of those around them due to the devastating effect of Covid-19. Since the subject is health, it is thought that people will take into account the suggestions and warnings made by experts in the field. Thus, it is recommended that experts in the field share their opinions and suggestions with consumers, while herbalists or businesses selling CAM products are making their promotion efforts in this process.

When the Standardized Regression Weights are examined, it is seen that a one-unit change in attitude will cause a change of 0.733 in intention, and a one-unit change in perceived behavioral control will cause a change of 0.125 in intention. In addition, a one-unit change in intention will cause a 0.748 change in behavior, and a one-unit change in perceived behavioral control will cause a 0.163 change in behavior. According to the results of this research, people who want to increase their body resistance and protect their health in Turkey were found to be in order to their intention to buy the CAM products.

It is seen that CAM / TCAM is used as a treatment method despite its deficiencies in many parts of the world, especially in China (López-Alcalde, et al., 2020), India (Charan et al., 2021), Sub-Saharan Africa (James et al., 2018). In this study, it was determined that consumers in Turkey have the same tendency to prefer CAM products as consumers in other countries of the world.

According to the expectation that the global CAM products market will increase and the participants' utterances that they will use CAM products more after the pandemic process, these products should be given importance by the enterprises. In this direction, businesses that produce food and health products in the production line can benefit from the increasing market share by creating a new line containing CAM products. In addition, it is recommended by governments to further supervise businesses producing these products and protect people against counterfeit products by relevant legal regulations.

In this study, buying behavior of CAM products was examined according to the planned behavior theory. Further studies can be conducted on the intention of buying CAM products using perceived trust and perceived risk dimensions in future studies on CAM products.

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