

Theory of Planned Behavior Constructs in Predicting Iron Supplement Consumption Adherence among Female Adolescents in Kudus, Central Java, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Background: Anemia among female adolescents remains a significant public health problem in Indonesia. One of the main strategies to prevent anemia is the routine provision of iron supplementation tablets (TTD) for female adolescents. However, compliance to iron tablet consumption remains suboptimal. This study aimed to analyze the influence of the constructs of the Theory of Planned Behavior, on adherence to iron tablet consumption among female adolescents.

Subjects and Method: This study employed a quantitative research design with a cross-sectional approach. The study was conducted among 275 female adolescents attending senior high schools at Ngembal Kulon and Jekulo sub districts, Kudus, Central Java, Indonesia. Participants were selected using proportional sampling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using logistic regression to determine the influence of attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and intention on adherence to iron tablet consumption.

Results: The results showed that attitude (OR=0.78; 95% CI=0.45–1.37; p=0.397) and intention (OR=0.82; 95% CI=0.44–1.51; p=0.520) was not significantly associated with compliance to iron tablet consumption. In contrast, subjective norms (OR=1.80; 95% CI=1.03–3.15; p=0.040) and perceived behavioral control (OR=4.67; 95% CI=2.40–9.10; p<0.001) were significantly associated with adherence to iron tablet consumption. Among these variables, perceived behavioral control was identified as the strongest determinant in non-smoking behavior than male respondents (AOR = 2.52; 95% CI = 1.22 to 5.21; p = 0.012).

Conclusion: Subjective norms and perceived behavioral control significantly influence adherence to iron tablet consumption among female adolescents.

Keywords: anemia, adherence, iron supplementation tablets, female adolescents, theory of planned behavior

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BACKGROUND

Anemia is a condition in which the hemoglobin (Hb) level in the blood is below the normal threshold, generally identified through laboratory examination. Hemoglobin is a protein contained in red blood cells (erythrocytes) that plays an important role in transporting oxygen from the lungs to all body tissues and carrying carbon dioxide from tissues back to the lungs for excretion (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023). Groups highly vulnerable to anemia include children, female adolescents, and pregnant women. Iron deficiency anemia is the most common form of anemia and primarily results from inadequate dietary iron intake. Its consequences include reduced concentration, impaired academic performance, and an increased risk of pregnancy-related complications among women of reproductive age. Female adolescents are categorized as anemic when their hemoglobin level is below 12 g/dL (World Health Organization, 2021).

In 2023, the global prevalence of anemia was estimated at 30.7% among women aged 15–49 years and approximately 35.5% among pregnant women (World Health Organization, 2023). In Indonesia, based on the 2023 Indonesian Health Survey, the prevalence of anemia among pregnant women was 27.7% (Health Development Policy Agency, 2024). Meanwhile, in Kudus Regency, the proportion of female adolescents experiencing anemia reached 44.74% in 2023 and decreased to 30.93% in 2024 (District Health Office of Kudus Regency, 2023; District Health Office of Kudus Regency, 2024). These figures indicate that anemia remains a serious public health issue because its impact affects not only individuals but also the quality of future generations.

Female adolescents are at high risk of iron deficiency due to increased nutritional

needs during growth and blood loss during menstruation. The risk becomes greater when dietary iron intake is insufficient. As a result, iron stores in the body decrease and may lead to anemia (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2018). To address this problem, the Indonesian government initiated a program to provide iron supplementation tablets regularly to female adolescents through School Health Units and Community Health Centers. The supplementation is administered once weekly, containing 60 mg of elemental iron and 400 mcg of folic acid per tablet. The program is implemented continuously for one year or approximately 52 weeks and is intended for female adolescents aged 12–18 years (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023).

According to the Indonesian Health Profile in 2023 and 2024, the national coverage of iron tablet distribution among female adolescents reached 78.9% and increased to 90.69%, respectively. In Central Java Province, the reported coverage was 59.3% in 2023 and increased to 101.88% in 2024, indicating that the number of tablets distributed exceeded the estimated target population (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024; Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2025). In Kudus Regency, the proportion of female adolescents receiving iron tablets was 60.53% in 2023 and increased to 74.22% in 2024. Adherence to complete iron tablet consumption reached 61.36% in 2023 and increased to 78.1% in 2024. Despite these improvements, disparities among community health centers remain. Several areas, including Ngembal Kulon, Jekulo, and Bae Community Health Centers, still reported relatively low adherence rates (District Health Office of Kudus Regency, 2023; District Health Office of Kudus Regency, 2024).

This condition indicates that many female adolescents still do not consume iron tablets regularly according to recommendations, suggesting that the implementation of the program has not yet been optimal. Previous studies have also shown that adherence to iron tablet consumption among female adolescents in schools remains low, indicating that behavioral factors continue to influence the effectiveness of the supplementation program (Hamranani et al., 2020).

Several studies have identified factors associated with iron tablet consumption behavior among female adolescents, including socioeconomic status, parental education, parental income, attitudes, family support, peer support, teacher support, health worker support, and access to health information. In addition, sensory characteristics and side effects of iron tablets, such as unpleasant odor or nausea, may discourage adolescents from consuming them. Misperceptions regarding iron tablets, such as believing they are only for sick individuals or that they may cause dependency, also contribute to low adherence (Rahayuningtyas et al., 2021).

To comprehensively explore factors influencing adherence to iron tablet consumption, a behavioral theory approach is required. One widely used framework for explaining and predicting health behavior is the Theory of Planned Behavior proposed by Icek Ajzen in 1991. This theory explains that individual behavior is strongly influenced by behavioral intention. Intention is formed through three main components: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. These components collectively determine whether an individual performs or avoids a health-related behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

Attitude toward the behavior reflects how individuals evaluate an action in terms

of its benefits and risks, which may shape their intention to consume iron tablets. Subjective norms relate to social pressure or support from parents, teachers, peers, and health workers that encourage adherence to iron tablet consumption. Meanwhile, perceived behavioral control refers to the extent to which individuals feel capable of consuming iron tablets regularly, influenced by the availability and accessibility of the tablets (Ajzen, 1991, 2002).

Evidence regarding the determinants of adherence to iron tablet consumption among female adolescents in Kudus Regency remains limited, particularly in the working areas of Ngembal Kulon and Jekulo Community Health Centers. Therefore, this study aimed to identify and analyze the influence of Theory of Planned Behavior constructs on adherence to iron tablet consumption among female adolescents in the working areas of the Ngembal Kulon and Jekulo Community Health Centers, Kudus Regency.

SUBJECTS AND METHOD

1. Study Design

This study employed a quantitative research design with a cross-sectional approach. The research was conducted from January to February 2026 in four schools located in the working areas of Ngembal Kulon and Jekulo Community Health Centers, Kudus Regency, Central Java, Indonesia, namely Keramat TBS Senior High School, State Senior High School 1 Jekulo, Raudlatut Tholibin Islamic Senior High School, and Muhammadiyah Vocational High School Jekulo.

2. Population and Sample

The population in this study consisted of all female adolescents in the working areas of Ngembal Kulon and Jekulo Community Health Centers, Kudus Regency. The total po-

pulation in this study was 963 female adolescents. The source population consisted of female adolescents enrolled in Keramat TBS Senior High School, State Senior High School 1 Jekulo, Raudlatut Tholibin Islamic Senior High School, and Muhammadiyah Vocational High School Jekulo. A total of 275 respondents were selected using stratified proportional sampling. The sample distribution was as follows: Keramat TBS Senior High School (n= 24), State Senior High School 1 Jekulo (n= 198), Muhammadiyah Vocational High School Jekulo (n= 33), and Raudlatut Tholibin Islamic Senior High School (n= 20). The inclusion criteria were female adolescents aged 15–18 years and actively enrolled as students. The exclusion criteria were female adolescents who were not willing to participate as respondents.

3. Study Variables

The dependent was adherence to iron supplementation tablet consumption among female adolescents. The independent variables included attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and intention based on the Theory of Planned Behavior framework.

4. Operational Definition of Variables

Adherence to iron tablet consumption was defined as the regular consumption of iron supplementation tablets according to the recommended schedule.

Attitude referred to the respondent's positive or negative evaluation regarding iron tablet consumption.

Subjective norms were defined as perceived social support or pressure from parents, teachers, peers, and health workers related to iron tablet consumption.

Perceived behavioral control referred to the respondent's perception of their ability and ease in consuming iron tablets regularly.

Intention was defined as the respondent's willingness and readiness to consume iron tablets consistently.

5. Study Instruments

The instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire based on the Theory of Planned Behavior constructs. The questionnaire was self-developed using indicators for each variable and consisted of 37 items. It had been tested for validity and reliability in a pilot study conducted at PGRI 1 Mejubo Vocational High School, Kudus. Data were collected using this questionnaire.

6. Data analysis

Univariate analysis was conducted to describe the characteristics of the study participants and the distribution of study variables. Bivariate analysis was performed using simple logistic regression to determine the association between each independent variable and adherence to iron tablet consumption. Multivariate analysis was carried out using multiple logistic regression to identify the most dominant factors influencing adherence to iron tablet consumption among female adolescents. Statistical significance was determined at $p < 0.05$ with a 95% confidence interval (CI).

7. Research Ethics

Research ethical issues including informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality, were addressed carefully during the study process. The research ethical clearance approval letter was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee at Universitas Kusuma Husada Surakarta with ethical clearance number 3236/UKH.Lo2/EC/I/2026, on January, 2026.

RESULTS

1. Sample Characteristics

The characteristics of the study participants, including age, grade level, and

school distribution, are presented in Table 1, while the distribution of the study

variables is shown in Table 2.

Table 1. characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
15 years	73	26.5
16 years	93	33.8
17 years	86	31.3
18 years	23	8.4
Grade		
Grade X	96	34.9
Grade XI	91	33.1
Grade XII	32	32

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the study participants. Most respondents were 16 years old (33.8%), followed by 17 years old (31.3%), 15 years old (26.5%), and 18

years old (8.4%). Based on educational level, most respondents were in grade X (34.9%), followed by grade XI (33.1%) and grade XII (32.0%).

Table 2. Distribution of study variables

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Attitude		
Negative	159	57.8
Positive	116	42.2
Subjective Norms		
Low	141	51.3
High	134	48.7
Perceived Behavioral Control		
Weak	109	39.6
Strong	166	60.4
Intention		
Weak	131	47.6
Strong	144	52.4
Adherence to Iron Tablet Consumption		
Non-adherent	134	48.7
Adherent	141	51.3

Table 2 presents the distribution of the study variables. Most respondents had negative attitudes toward iron tablet consumption (57.8%). More than half of the respondents had low subjective norms (51.3%). Strong perceived behavioral control was found in 60.4% of respondents, while 52.4% had strong intention to consume iron tablets. In terms of adherence,

51.3% of respondents were categorized as adherent to iron tablet consumption.

2. Bivariate Analysis

Bivariate analysis was performed to examine the relationship between each independent variable and adherence to iron tablet consumption among female adolescents. The results of the bivariate analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Bivariate analysis of factors associated with adherence to iron tablet consumption

Variables	OR	95% CI		p
		Lower limit	Upper limit	
Attitude	1.31	0.81	2.12	0.270
Subjective Norms	2.98	1.82	4.87	<0.001
Perceived Behavioral Control	4.94	2.92	8.36	<0.001
Intention	1.93	1.19	3.12	0.007

Table 3 shows the results of bivariate analysis using simple logistic regression. Attitude was not significantly associated with adherence to iron tablet consumption (OR= 1.31; 95% CI= 0.81 to 2.12; p= 0.270). In contrast, subjective norms (OR= 2.98; 95% CI= 1.82 to 4.87; p<0.001), perceived behavioral control (OR= 4.94; 95% CI= 2.92 to 8.36; p<0.001), and intention (OR= 1.93; 95% CI= 1.19 to 3.12; p= 0.007) were significantly associated

with adherence to iron tablet consumption among female adolescents.

3. Multivariate analysis

Multivariate analysis was conducted to identify the most dominant factors influencing adherence to iron tablet consumption among female adolescents after controlling for other variables. The results of the multivariate analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Multiple logistic regression analysis of adherence to iron tablet consumption

Variables	OR	95% CI		p
		Lower limit	Upper limit	
Attitude	0.78	0.45	1.37	0.397
Subjective Norms	1.80	1.03	3.15	0.040
Perceived Behavioral Control	4.67	2.40	9.10	<0.001
Intention	0.82	0.44	1.51	0.520
N observation= 275				
-2 log likelihood= 337.17				
Pseudo R ² = 11.52%				

Table 4 presents the results of multiple logistic regression analysis. Perceived behavioral control was the most dominant factor associated with adherence to iron tablet consumption (OR = 4.67; 95% CI = 2.40 to 9.10; p < 0.001). Female adolescents with strong perceived behavioral control were 4.67 times more likely to adhere to iron tablet consumption compared with those with weak perceived behavioral control. Subjective norms were also significantly associated with adherence (OR = 1.80; 95% CI = 1.03 to 3.15; p = 0.040). However,

attitude (OR = 0.78; 95% CI = 0.45 to 1.37; p = 0.397) and intention (OR = 0.82; 95% CI = 0.44 to 1.51; p = 0.520) were not statistically significant in the multivariate model.

DISCUSSION

Association between Attitude and Adherence to Iron Tablet Consumption

Attitude was not significantly associated with adherence to iron tablet consumption among female adolescents in the multi-

variate analysis (OR = 0.78; 95% CI = 0.45 to 1.37; $p = 0.397$). This finding is consistent with previous studies. Damayanti et al. (2025) reported no significant relationship between attitude and adherence to iron tablet consumption among female adolescents at SMAN 02 Gunung Putri, Bogor Regency ($p = 0.245$). Similarly, Lindawati (2023) found no correlation between attitude and adherence to iron tablet consumption among female adolescents at SMA N 3 Serang City ($p = 0.138$). These consistent findings suggest that attitude alone may not be a determining factor of adherence behavior when other psychosocial variables are considered. According to (Ajzen, 2005), attitude does not directly translate into behavior unless it is supported by strong intention and perceived behavioral control. Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that attitude is not a key determinant of adherence to iron tablet consumption among female adolescents, particularly when other psychosocial factors are taken into account.

Association between Subjective Norms and Adherence to Iron Tablet Consumption

Subjective norms were significantly associated with adherence to iron tablet consumption (OR = 1.80; 95% CI = 1.03 to 3.15; $p = 0.040$). The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies. Research conducted by Yusriani et al. (2023) showed that support from peers, teachers, and family was significantly associated with adherence to iron supplementation tablet consumption ($p = 0.000$). In addition, a study by Mukharomah and Budiono (2024) found that teacher support (OR = 3.325; $p = 0.024$) and peer support (OR = 9.088; $p < 0.001$) significantly influenced adherence to iron supplementation tablet consumption among female adolescents at SMAN 6 Semarang. These findings indicate that so-

cial influence from significant others, such as teachers, peers, and family, plays an important role in shaping adherence behavior among female adolescents. Therefore, subjective norms can be considered an important determinant of adherence to iron tablet consumption in this study.

Association between Perceived Behavioral Control and Adherence to Iron Tablet Consumption

Perceived behavioral control was the most dominant factor associated with adherence to iron tablet consumption among female adolescents (OR = 4.67; 95% CI = 2.40 to 9.10; $p < 0.001$). The findings are consistent with Lismiana and Indarjo (2021), who reported significant associations between components of health perception and adherence to iron tablet (TTD) consumption among female adolescents at SMPN 27 Semarang, including perceived susceptibility ($p = 0.00$), perceived severity ($p = 0.01$), perceived benefits ($p = 0.01$), perceived barriers ($p = 0.01$), and self-efficacy ($p = 0.023$). Similarly, Bahtiar et al. (2023) found a significant relationship between perceived behavioral control and adherence among female adolescents at the Al-Ikhlâs Islamic Boarding School, Ujung Bone ($p = 0.001$). These findings indicate that female adolescents with stronger perceived behavioral control are more likely to adhere to iron tablet consumption. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, perceived behavioral control reflects an individual's confidence in their ability to perform a behavior, which can directly influence actual behavior (Sulaeman, 2025). Therefore, perceived behavioral control is identified as the strongest predictor of adherence in this study.

Association between Intention and Adherence to Iron Tablet Consumption

Intention was not significantly associated with adherence to iron tablet consumption in the multivariate analysis (OR = 0.82; 95% CI = 0.44 to 1.51; $p = 0.520$). This finding is consistent with previous studies by Rohma *et al.* (2025), who reported no significant relationship between intention and adherence to iron tablet (TTD) consumption among pregnant women in the working area of the Kenjeran Community Health Center, Surabaya ($p = 0.0826$; OR = 3.01), and Laferani *et al.* (2025), who also found no significant direct association between intention and actual behavior in consuming iron tablets and nutritious food ($b = 0.210$; $p = 0.122$). These consistent findings suggest that intention alone is not sufficient to predict adherence behavior, particularly when perceived behavioral control and external barriers are present. Although intention reflects readiness to perform a behavior and is shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Sulaeman, 2025), actual behavior among adolescents may still be influenced by factors such as forgetfulness, fear of side effects, and lack of supervision. Therefore, it is concluded that intention does not have a significant direct effect on adherence to iron tablet consumption in this study.

This study is limited by its cross-sectional design, which does not allow causal inference between variables. In addition, the use of self-reported questionnaires may introduce recall and social desirability bias, while the study setting in selected schools within two health center areas in Kudus Regency limits generalizability. Future research is recommended to employ longitudinal or experimental designs to establish causal relationships between

Theory of Planned Behavior constructs and adherence behavior. Expanding the study population to broader and more diverse settings is also suggested to improve external validity. Furthermore, the use of objective measures such as pill counts or health record verification is recommended to complement self-reported data and reduce reporting bias.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

PPK contributed to study conception and design, data collection, data analysis, and manuscript drafting. RGHN and ISS contributed to providing guidance in study design, data interpretation, and critical revision of the manuscript. OPA and AEP contributed to providing critical review and important intellectual input to improve the manuscript.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest.

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