

How does perceived severity and susceptibility influence individual cognitions? Investigating the theoretical basis of the 'threat' construct in alternative contexts.

Contemporary research has focused on cognitive factors' influence on behaviour change. Health Psychology models such as the Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM), comprised of threat, self- and response-efficacy constructs, have been successful in predicting health behaviours. Little research has been conducted on how this model can be applied to the environmental context.

The project focused on water sustainability practices within the Townsville region (North Queensland, Australia) whose water supply was under threat at the time of research. A survey was formulated based on the EPPM constructs and a sample of 363 participants were recruited.

A hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to examine if the constructs within the EPPM as well as demographic variables were predictors of water conservation behaviour. Results found gender, age and the three EPPM constructs were significant predictors of higher levels of water saving behaviour.

This research demonstrates the applicability of the EPPM in the environmental context, however the conceptual differences between health and environmental threats should be considered. There is currently no clarity around the theoretical composition of 'threat' and how it plays to one's intentions to act in this context.

The second part of this research considered this issue. The research focused on exploring proximal, social, temporal and hypothetical distance to measure threat severity and what is susceptible to the negative outcomes of the threat, in terms of individual, community and global effects. This research thus provides further understanding of the construct of 'threat' and its relationship to behaviour.