1	PREDICTING AND EXPLAINING BEHAVIORAL INTENTION AND HAND
2	SANITIZER USE AMONG U.S. ARMY SOLDIERS
3	According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health

Organization, simple hand washing is one of the most effective methods to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.^{1,2,3} The literature shows a strong and consistent association between personal hand hygiene and reduced gastrointestinal disease, respiratory illness, and absenteeism in the work force.^{1,4,5} Hands are the primary mode of transmission for many infectious diseases, particularly among military personnel.⁶ Hand hygiene is a proven measure of controlling

infection in military settings.⁷

The lack of hand hygiene and resulting illness has economic consequences for the military because of increased sick leave among soldiers and the resulting loss of training time.

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Implementating hand sanitation programs has significantly reduced communicable diseases in many congregate settings, including schools, 11,12 university campuses, 13 healthcare facilities, 9,14,15,16 and military bases. 7,17 Hand sanitizers have proved useful in decreasing transmission of some resistant microorganisms and preventing cross-transmission of bacteria from person to person. Even with alcohol-based hand sanitizers, compliance with hand hygiene remains problematic. 2,20

Barriers often hinder hand hygiene compliance within the military environment.^{7,19}
Conflicting hand hygiene recommendations often cause confusion among military personnel

- about what products should be used or how to best wash hands.²⁰ Little research has been
- 2 conducted to identify the cognitive stimulants and barriers of using hand sanitizers among
- 3 military personnel in the dining facility, where the possibility of hand-to-mouth transmission of
- 4 infection is high.

The Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) proposes that human action is guided. It predicts explicit behavior, provided the behavior is intentional.²¹ The TPB has three direct variables: attitudes towards the behavior, perceptions of approval by important others to performing the behavior (subjective norms), and perceived behavioral control over performing the behavior. In general, the more positive the attitude and subjective norm toward a behavior, the stronger the perceived behavioral control, the more an individual will want to perform the behavior.²¹

The TPB assumes that human social behavior is reasoned or planned in the sense that people take into account the likely consequences (behavioral beliefs), normative expectations of important referents (normative beliefs), and whatever facilitates or impedes performance of the behavior (control beliefs).²¹ Behavioral beliefs are considered the prevailing determinants of a person's intentions and actions, influencing attitudes toward the behavior. Normative beliefs, which establish the underlying determinants of subjective norms, explain why individuals from different cultures and social categories see different social expectations. Lastly, control beliefs, on which deliver perceptions of behavioral control are based, help in estimating facilitating or impeding factors of behavior.²¹ Attitudes, subjective norms, and perceptions of behavioral control are thought of as automatic, reasonably forming beliefs and producing a corresponding behavioral intention that enables or inhibits the performance of the behavior.²¹

Furthermore, soldiers who absolutely intend to perform a behavior (i.e., those who score
a maximum intention score) differ from those who are not firmly committed (i.e., those with less
than a maximum intention score). ²² According to the transtheoretical model of behavior change,
we must differentiate between soldiers with absolute intention of performing behaviors and those
with less intention to do so across qualitatively distinct motivational stages, then researchers can
begin to explain how soldiers differ in their beliefs about using hand sanitizer. ²²
As TPB suggests, the purpose of this study was to explore the cognitive stimulants and
barriers to using hand sanitizer among soldiers in the dining facility. Specifically, this study
explores the behavioral intention (low and absolute), attitude with behavioral beliefs, subjective
norm with normative beliefs, and perceived behavioral control with control beliefs towards hand
sanitizer use among U.S. Army soldiers. ²¹
Hypotheses
The hypotheses to test specific objectives are listed below:
H _{1:} Behavioral beliefs about hand sanitizer are significantly associated with attitudes
about hand sanitizer.
H _{2:} Normative beliefs about hand sanitizer are significantly associated with subjective
norms about hand sanitizer.
H _{3:} Control beliefs are positively associated with perceived behavioral control in using
hand sanitizer.
H _{4:} A soldier's attitude about hand sanitizers is significantly and positively related to
their behavioral intention.
H _{5:} A soldier's subjective norm about hand sanitizer is significantly and positively
related to their behavioral intention.

H_{6:} A soldier's perceived behavioral control about hand sanitizer is significantly and positively related to their behavioral intention.

METHODOLOGY

4 Participants, Setting and Measures

The population of interest in this study was non-trainee soldiers stationed at one of largest U.S. Army bases in the Midwest. The participating army facility and the university institutional review board approved the study protocol. The initial questionnaire was created using a literature review and previous health research guidelines to define the target behavior using action, target, context, and time.²³ The questionnaire included both direct belief measures and indirect belief measures, both assessed using a survey of 41 scaled questions and demographic items.

Direct belief measures are attitude, subjective norms, percieved behavioral control,

behavioral intention, and self-reported behavior. Three items of attitude were measured based on endorsement, likeliness, and provablity. "Using hand santizer is a good idea" is an example attitude that was measured. Three items of subjective norms were drawn from important people, social pressure, and general expectation. One example of such items used to measure subjective norms is "It is expected that I will use hand sanitizer before each meal". Perceived behavioral control was measured using three items from confidence, self-efficacy, and ease of use. As an example, "I am confident that I can use hand sanitizers whenever I want to". Behavioral intention was measured using four items similar to "I want to use hand sanitizer every day". Finally, self-reported behavior was measured using two items; an example is "I use a hand sanitizer every day before meals".

Indirect belief measures included constructs from behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, 1 and control beliefs with related outcome evaluations. A total of six questions of behavioral 2 belief strength with related outcome evaluations of strength was measured. Example questions 3 are "If I use hand sanitizer every day, I will be less likely to become ill" and "It is very important 4 for me to avoid illness". Normative beliefs were measured using eight questions. Example 5 6 questions are "Other soldiers think that I should use hand sanitizer" and "Doing what other soldiers do is important to me". Lastly, six items measured control belief, specifically control 7 belief strength and control belief power. A set of example questions include "The hand sanitizer 8 9 dispenser is difficult to find" and "I am more likely to use hand sanitizer if it is easily available". All direct and indirect variables were measured with a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 10 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). 11 *Procedure (pilot phase and final phase)* 12 Two pilot studies were conducted before the main study. Before pilot study one, a panel 13 14 of five experts and veterans checked the face validity of the questionnaire. The group made recommendations for questionnaire wording and layout. 15 The first pilot study was conducted with soldiers at a dining facility on the military base. 16 17 A total of 40 copies of the survey were distributed, 18 copies with valid answers were returned, for a response rate of 45%. Based on feedback from participants in the first pilot study, the cover 18 19 page was revised to ensure instructions on how to complete the survey were clear and to 20 highlight that all collected data remained anonymous. The second pilot study was conducted at a second dining facility during lunch hour. A total of 50 copies of the survey were distributed, and 21 22 17 copies with valid answers were returned, for a response rate of 30%. After the second pilot

study, the survey was modified into booklet form for easy accessibility with a quick response code and web address linked to online duplicates of the paper survey to encourage participation.

The final paper survey introduced participants to the purpose of the study with instructions on how to complete the survey. A cover letter with the three-page questionnaire was printed and distributed to soldiers as they arrived at the dining facility during lunch hours (11:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.). If the soldiers preferred to complete the questionnaire online, the provided website link or a quick response code directed the participants to the electronic version of the survey. During the main data collection period, a total of 550 surveys were distributed with complimentary snacks as incentives to encourge responses. Several data collectors ensured that each solider could be targeted when they entered the facility. Data collectors gathered the surveys as solders left the facility, and a collection box was also available.

Sample size

Of the 550 surveys distributed, 255 were collected on-site, with 10 collected online. After purging those that were incomplete, those with a plotted response, or questionnaires submitted by non-active duty soldiers, the final number of surveys collected was 201 (40% response rate). Using the statistical sample size estimator, this study achieved a medium heterogeneity at 95% confidence level with a minimum confidence level of 89.5%. Statistical analysis

All data analysis used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (version 21.0). Double entry comparison was used to ensure input validity. Descriptive statistics were used to explain the mean and standard deviation of all direct and indirect belief items.

Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the internal reliability of all seven constructs. A

threshold of 0.70 was used to demonstrate internal consistency. Simple linear regressions were

- 1 used to identify the correlation between each TPB indirect measure (behavioral belief, normative
- 2 belief, and control beliefs) and its related TPB direct measure (attitude, subjective norms, and
- 3 perceived behavioral control). Multiple linear regressions were used to regress the TPB direct
- 4 measure variables (attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control) on behavioral
- 5 intention. Independent t-tests were conducted to test the differences in beliefs between absolute
- 6 intenders and lower intenders.

RESULTS

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- Of the 201 surveys collected, 186 were male (92.5%), 15 were female (7.5%). Most were
- 9 18 to 34 (92.5%, mean = 27.4); 72% of the respondents had household incomes less than
- \$30,000 per year. Most were single (83.6%) with a high school education (70%).
- A descriptive summary of individual belief items describes mean and standard deviation
- in terms of behavioral strength and evaluation with that beliefs in Table 1. After an initial
- review, two behavioral belief items "It causes a lot of worry and concern for me to use hand
- sanitizer" and "Causing a lot of worry and concern for me is desirable" were removed from
- further analysis because the response rate was low, and those responses we did receive had low
- 16 reliability.
- Principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted on all major
- 18 TPB constructs. Based on a minimum eigenvalue of 1.0, the direct measurements of attitude,
- subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, behavioral intention, self-reported behavior, and
- 20 indirect measurements of normative, behavioral, and control beliefs all yield one factor within
- 21 each variable. The means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for all study variables are
- presented in Table 2. We found a strong correlation between the attitudes, subjective norms,
- 23 perceived behavioral control and behavior, normative, and control beliefs items.

Table 1. Descriptive Summary of Belief Items (N = 201)

	Strength	Evaluation	Overall Beliefs
Belief Items	$Mean \pm SD^a$	$Mean \pm SD^b$	$Mean \pm SD^{c}$
Behavioral Beliefs (a = 0.75)	bb _i *	be _i *	bb _i be _i *
To do something positive for			
myself	5.2 ± 1.6	2.0 ± 1.2	10.9 ± 7.7
To avoid illness	4.9 ± 1.6	1.9 ± 1.5	10.3 ± 8.0
Composite Score	10.1 ± 3.2	3.9 ± 2.7	24.0 ± 16.2
Normative Beliefs (a = 0.82)	nb _i *	mc _i *	nb _i mc _i *
My family and friends	4.5 ± 1.6	1.2 ± 1.6	6.6 ± 7.5
Doctor and nurses	5.5 ± 1.4	1.0 ± 1.5	6.4 ± 9.0
Army leadership	4.9 ± 1.5	0.9 ± 1.8	5.2 ± 9.7
Other soldiers	4.3 ± 1.6	-0.4 ± 1.8	-0.8 ± 8.5
Composite Score	19.2 ± 6.1	2.7 ± 6.7	17.4 ± 28.0
Control Beliefs (a = 0.73)	cb _i *	pp _i *	cb _i pp _i *
Availability of hand sanitizers	3.7 ± 1.9	1.4 ± 1.5	5.7 ± 7.0
Cause dry skin	3.5 ± 1.8	0.4 ± 1.7	3.2 ± 5.5
Smell of hand sanitizer	3.0 ± 1.7	0.9 ± 0.9	2.1 ± 6.5
Composite Score	10.2 ± 5.4	2.7 ± 4.1	11.0 ± 15.4

^a Strength means were measured on a 1 to 7 scale, SD = Standard Deviation.

Table 2. Simple Bivariate Correlation Matrix (N = 201)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Behavioral Beliefs	24.0	16.1	1.0	0.4**	0.2*	0.6**	0.3**	0.3**	0.5**	0.4**
2. Normative Beliefs	17.4	28.0		1.0	0.2**	0.5**	0.5**	0.3**	0.4**	0.5**
3. Control Beliefs	11.0	15.0			1.0**	0.4**	0.2**	0.4**	0.4**	0.3**
4. Attitude	16.5	3.9				1.0	0.5^{**}	0.3**	0.8^{**}	0.6^{**}
5. Subjective Norms	12.0	4.5					1.0	-0.1	0.5**	0.7**
6. PBC	17.7	3.2						1.0	0.2**	0.2^{*}
7. BI	20.0	6.2							1.0	0.7^{**}
8. SRB	8.7	3.3								1.0

Note: BI = Behavioral Intention; PBC = Perceived Behavioral Control; M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; SRB = Self-reported Behavior

^b Evaluation means were measured on a -3 to -3 scale.

^cOverall belief mean represents the mean of each strength item multiplied by each of the responding evaluation items; total score possible ranged from - 21 to + 21.

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^{*}Note: bb = Behavioral Beliefs, be = Behavioral Beliefs, nb = Normative Beliefs, mc = Motivation to Comply, cb = Control Beliefs, pp = Perceived Power

^{**}p < .01; and *p < .05 (all two-tailed).

Simple linear regressions were used to test the hypotheses (H₁, H₂, and H₃) for

2 significance. All three hypotheses were supported. The correlation coefficients of the

behavioral beliefs on attitude (H₁, r = 0.6, F = 129.8, $\rho < .01$), normative beliefs on subjective

4 norm (H₂, r = 0.5, F = 66.2, $\rho < .01$), and control beliefs on perceived behavioral control (H₃, r =

5 0.1, F = 30.5, $\rho < .01$) were all significant.

6 Multiple linear regression was used to test hypotheses H₄, H₅, and H₆ as presented in

7 Table 3. The multiple regressions of attitude (H₄, β = .70, ρ < .01) and subjective norm (H₅, β =

.18, ρ < .01) on behavioral intention were significant, with the overall regression model

explaining 64% of the total variance within behavioral intention ($F = 117.1, R_a^2 = 0.64$) with

small to medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.24$).

An independent sample t-test was used to differentiate indirect beliefs among soldiers who have low intention to use hand sanitizer and those with an absolute intention to do so (i.e., those who score a maximum intention score) (Table 4). Soldiers with an absolute intention to use hand sanitizer have significantly stronger attitudinal beliefs (p < .01) and stronger social

Table 3. Multiple Regression Model for Predicting Behavioral Intention Based on Direct Measures

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	4953.3	3	1651.1	117.1	0.00
Residual	2748.7	195	14.1		
Total	7702.0	198 ^a			

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Standardized Coefficients							
Model Beta t Sa							
(Constant)		-0.70	0.49				
Attitude	0.70	13.49	0.00				
Subjective Norm	0.18	3.84	0.00				
Perceived Behavioral Control	-0.01	-0.10	0.92				

Note: Dependent Variable, Behavioral Intention; df =degree of freedom; F = F-statistic; Sig = Significance; T = T-statistic

^a Total intender may not equal to N = 201 due to non-response to questions.

Table 4. Means, Standard Deviation, and Independent Samples T-Test of Behavioral Beliefs among Soldiers with Lower Intention and Absolute Intention to Perform Hand Sanitation Behaviors (N = 201)

				Hand Sanitation Behavior (Mean ± Standard Deviation)					
	Overall $(N = 201)$	Lower Intenders $(n = 172)^a$	Absolute Intenders $(n = 28)^a$	$ \begin{array}{c} \text{T-Test} \\ (N=201)^{a} \end{array} $					
Behavioral Belief Items	$M \pm SD$	$M \pm SD$	$M \pm SD$	F	Sig.	t	df	95% <i>CI</i>	
Overall Attitude Beliefs	24.0 ± 16.2	5.3 ± 1.3	6.8 ± 0.5	21.8	0.00	-12.0	110.7	[-1.82, -1.30]	
To do something positive for									
myself	10.9 ± 7.7	9.4 ± 7.1	19.6 ± 4.2	19.1	0.00	-10.5	55.7	[-12.11, -8.22]	
To avoid illness	10.3 ± 8.0	8.7 ± 7.6	19.4 ± 7.2	1.3	0.15	1.5	32.9	[-0.79, 5.03]	
Overall Subjective Norm									
Beliefs	17.4 ± 28.0	3.8 ± 1.4	5.1 ± 1.6	0.871	0.00	-4.0	33.5	[-1.97, -0.63]	
My family and friends	6.6 ± 7.5	5.7 ± 6.7	12.5 ± 9.2	1.4	0.00	-3.6	33.3	[-11.49, -3.23]	
Doctor and nurses	6.4 ± 9.0	5.3 ± 8.5	12.7 ± 10.2	2.9	0.01	-2.8	32.3	[-2.77, -1.81]	
Army leadership	5.2 ± 9.7	4.3 ± 9.0	10.8 ± 11.8	7.6	0.00	-3.7	31.8	[-3.95, -3.11]	
Other soldiers	-0.8 ± 8.5	-1.3 ± 7.5	2.2 ± 12.9	19.6	0.18	-1.4	30.0	[-0.04, 1.67]	
Overall Control Beliefs Items	11.0 ± 15.4	5.8 ± 1.0	6.3 ± 1.2	0.950	0.95	-2.1	33.3	[-1.03, -0.02]	
Availability of hand sanitizers	5.7 ± 7.0	5.6 ± 6.9	6.8 ± 8.2	2.1	0.42	-0.8	33.4	[-4.64, 1.98]	
Dries out my hands	3.2 ± 5.5	1.8 ± 6.1	3.9 ± 8.0	0.1	0.12	-1.6	35.7	[-4.13, 0.50]	
Smell of hand sanitizer	2.1 ± 6.5	2.9 ± 5.5	4.8 ± 5.6	2.5	0.19	-1.3	32.4	[-5.31, 1.10]	

Note: The absolute intender category represents employees scoring strongly agree on behavior intention to use hand sanitizer, and the lower intender category represents employees with who scored less strongly to use hand sanitizer.

Note: The possible range of scores for all individual indirect belief entries (all except those labeled "Overall") is -21 to +21, with a higher number indicating a more positive belief.

Note: The possible range for overall attitude is -42 to +42, subjective norm is -84 to +84, and perceived behavioral control is -63 to +63.

Note: F = F-statistic; Sig. = significance level; t = t-statistic df = degree of freedom; CI = confidence interval

^a Total intender may not equal 100% if no response was given to questions.

- norms (p < .01) than soldiers with low intention to use hand sanitizer, but perceived relatively the
- 2 same amount of behavioral control as soldiers with low intention to use hand sanitizer. More
- 3 specifically, soldiers with absolute intentions to use hand sanitizers hold significantly higher
- 4 positive attitudes (p < .01), have significant more perceived social support from families (p < .01)
- 5 .01), health professionals (p < .01), and from their leadership (p < .01) than soldiers with lower
- 6 intentions to use hand sanitizer.

DISCUSSION

Importance of attitude and social inferences in the use of hand sanitizer

Attitudes were the strongest predictor among all variables. Our results confirmed a positive linear relationship between overall behavioral beliefs and the attitude in the use of hand sanitizer. By explaining and measuring behavioral beliefs related to attitude, we gain insight into what guides a soldier's decision to use hand sanitizer. Two of the behavioral beliefs "to do something positive for myself" and "to avoid illness" were among the most important attitudinal constructs for a strong attitude. It should be noted that although these beliefs are strong among soldiers, they could be still stronger. For example, using volitional and motivational intervention that targets the efficacy and positivity of hand sanitizer use will likely promote behavioral beliefs, and thus effectively improve hand sanitation among soldiers.

The intention to use hand sanitizers among soldiers was guided by subjective norms. The results also showed that overall normative beliefs were positively related to the subjective norms of soldiers using hand sanitizer. By identifying and measuring the specific normative beliefs within the military population, we identified three normative beliefs (family and friends, healthcare professionals, and Army leadership) as important in guiding the decision to use hand sanitizer. However, other soldiers provided negative normative belief, indicating soldiers felt a

- 1 negative social influence from their peers. Specifically, soldiers are willing to act out of the
- 2 norm and separate themselves from their peers. In practice, changing these normative beliefs
- and motivating soldiers to act indifferently from their peers will effectively change their
- 4 perceived social norms, thus enhancing the intention to use hand sanitizer. Some of these
- 5 referent groups (e.g., family and friends) could be used to encourage positive normative beliefs
- 6 to mitigate any negative influences to soldiers using hand sanitizer.
- 7 Importance of targeting specific beliefs during behavior change

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This study identified specific behavioral beliefs underlying the attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control among soldiers who absolutely intend to perform the behaviors and those with low intention to do so. Specifically, absolute intenders were more likely to consider hand sanitation as positive and perceive significant different social inferences than lower intenders. These beliefs can be targeted in intervention studies to improve cohort strategies by using the significant predictors of behavioral intentions (i.e., attitudes, subjective norms, or perceived behavioral control). To bring all soldiers' beliefs in line with those who already intend to use hand sanitizer would be an important stage of change that could lead to better operational intentions and eventually compliance with hand sanitation behaviors. For soldiers to contemplate intention to use hand sanitizer involves improving attitude, and interventions should target the behavioral belief that stresses the positive aspects of using hand sanitizers (e.g., using the hand sanitizers helps reduce the spread of microorganisms and reduces the possibility of getting sick). Targeting subjective norms is also important, and interventions should emphasize that family, friends, doctors, and commanders want soldiers to use hand sanitizers more. Healthcare professionals and army leaders can help improve the behavioral intention to use hand sanitizers by focusing on positive normative beliefs while reducing the

- 1 effect of the negative motivation from other solders. This can be done by focusing not on
- 2 individual soldiers, but on the benefits to the army as a whole, which should eventually improve
- 3 the preventive control structures within the military.

4 Limitations

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5 All data were collected on one military installation over a relatively short time (less than

three weeks), and the current study used only self-reported behavior of hand sanitizer use.

Future studies could gather aggregated data from past and actual behavior to enrich the current

model and better explain the beliefs items related to behavioral stage information. In addition,

using the self-reported survey introduces some of the commonly perceived social psychology

biases like memory bias, thus improving the accuracy of the instrument will likely improve the

quality and validation of the study of hand sanitation behavior.

CONCLUSION

This study has explained 64% of the variance in the determinants of behavioral intention to use hand sanitizer among soldiers and supported the significant relationship between the attitudes of soldiers toward the use of hand sanitizer and subjective norms. More specifically, we have examined various specific beliefs that affect hand sanitation behavior. These specific beliefs (behavioral, normative, and control), if targeted during interventions, can improve compliance with intention, and thus enhance current disease prevention within the military environment. Although past studies^{1,9,18,24,25} have demonstrated the importance of hand hygiene in the military, our study has identified the important behavioral factors that can help improve behavior that prevents illness in the military and helps the military create control structures that encourage use of hand sanitizers.

- This study is among the very few to systematically explore the stimuli and barriers
- 2 soldiers see in using hand sanitizers. The U.S. military places a high value on the health of their
- 3 personnel. The results of this study can help healthcare professionals and military leaders
- 4 improve current preventive control guidelines by targeting specific behavioral beliefs related to
- 5 the intention to use hand sanitation devices like hand sanitizers. Practical implications will likely
- translate into reduced health care costs, improved mission readiness, and the overall health of the
- 7 military.

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