Attitude–behaviour correlation, social desirability and perceived diagnostic value

Lennart Sjöberg

The correlations between attitude scales and behavioural criteria were studied. A multiple act criterion was found to be more predictable than the average predictability of single criteria. The predictability of single criteria was related to the domain representatives of criteria and how much act performance correlated with rated social desirability of the act. Domain representativeness was uncorrelated with the correlation between act performance and social desirability. Perceived diagnostic properties of acts were also related to attitude–criterion correlations.

The first well-known attempt to study the relation between attitudes and behaviour (LaPiere, 1934) gave a quite negative result. There was no relation. A few additional attempts (see Schuman & Johnson, 1976, for a review) reached similar conclusions and the result was a widespread scepticism concerning attitudes, culminating in an influential review paper by Wicker (1969) in which it was argued that attitudes and behaviour are little related. However, the extensive review of the field by Schuman & Johnson (1976) demonstrated that attitudes and behaviour often are related, that the strength of the relationship is not particularly small, and that it, in the case of voting, may even be remarkably high. The early studies may have dealt with cases particularly likely, for various reasons, to produce low attitude–behaviour consistency.

The work by Fishbein & Ajzen is the most promising and systematic attempt so far to delineate under what circumstances behaviour–attitude correlations will be high or low. They showed (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1974) that high correlations can be obtained even with scales based on global, non-specific, attitude statements. They further discussed properties of behavioural criteria and suggested certain procedures for finding which criteria are predictable from attitudes.

Fishbein & Ajzen studied a large number of behavioural criteria and related all of them to attitudes. They found that criteria which correlated with the pool of all criteria also were more predictable from attitude scales. The pooled criterion score obtained by combining all criteria was much more predictable than single criteria. They also found that certain rated properties of criteria could be used to predict which criteria were most strongly correlated with attitudes.

An important question is raised by their central result that a multiple act criterion was easier to predict than single act criteria. The authors argued that an attitude may be expressed in various ways. For this reason no correlation is necessarily to be expected with any single way of expressing the attitude but a sum of different acts should be correlated with the attitude.

The reasoning on this issue is, however, unclear. Although not discussed at all by Fishbein & Ajzen there are at least two possible explanations for the greater predictability of multiple act criteria, which may be related to the distinction between disjunctive, conjunctive, and compensatory models (Coombs, 1964; Einhorn, 1970). The models are best conceptualized by considering attitude as the dependent variable and the several acts as independent variables. In a compensatory model the attitude is then a monotonic function of each of the acts and of their sum. A conjunctive model specifies that a certain
level of attitude is attained if all acts reach specified critical levels. The stepwise regression function implied is hard to establish on real data in a comparison with a compensatory model and it will not be further dealt with. In a disjunctive model a certain level of the attitude is expected to be reached if any act reaches a certain criterion level. If the Fishbein–Ajzen assumption of substitutability is correct, a disjunctive model is called for. In such a model, acts can be conceived as substitutes for each other. But an explicit model analysis is called for in order to distinguish between the compensatory and the disjunctive models, and such an analysis was not presented by the authors.

A relatively simple statistical test of the assumption that acts work as substitutes is the following. Assume, with Fishbein & Ajzen, that all behavioural acts express the same underlying latent trait (a behavioural disposition). Now, if two acts both have monotonically increasing trace lines they should be positively correlated. They can be considered as substitutes if they are negatively correlated at a given level of the latent trait. (Latent trait models usually assume zero correlation between any two items at a given level of the latent trait; Lazarsfeld & Henry, 1968.) To find such relations of substitutability one could estimate partial correlations between acts with some index of the latent trait (the multiple act criterion) held constant. Substantial negative partial correlations should be obtained if Fishbein & Ajzen were right in their explanation of why a multiple act criterion is easier to predict than single criteria.

The major alternative to a disjunctive model is a compensatory one. Several considerations speak in its favour. Simple addition of a number of predictors, as performed by the authors, often results in an increase of correlation which may in fact be well in advance of the multiple correlation to be expected in a cross-validation sample (Schmidt, 1971), particularly if the number of variables is large and the number of subjects is relatively small, as was the case in their study. If a number of variables, all having one factor in common, are added, the variance of the resultant sum is accounted for by the common factor to a larger extent than is the variance of the single variables. Error and specific factors are ‘averaged out’. In test theory it is well known that adding new items to a test results in a higher reliability of the total test score.

In forming the multiple act criterion one obtains a score which is largely accounted for by the common source of behavioural disposition in the pool of selected criteria. The pooled criterion could correlate less than single criteria with the attitude score only if there were many specific behaviour factors which each correlates strongly with attitude. But it is well known that one needs specific attitudes to predict specific criteria. Therefore, it is inconceivable that all of the criteria should separately correlate with the global attitude. The common-factor explanation of why a pooled criterion is easier to predict is, thus, consistent with the major thesis in another paper by Ajzen & Fishbein (1977), viz. that specific attitudes are needed to predict specific behaviours.

The correlation between a single act and the multiple act criterion is an indicant of Likert scalability of the single act. It is also a measure of the extent to which the single act is accounted for by the common factor variance, assuming a linear regression. Likert scalability should, therefore, be related to predictability. Criteria with high scalability (domain representativeness) should be easier to predict from attitudes. This is precisely the finding obtained by Fishbein & Ajzen.

Apart from these psychometric problems an important substantial problem must be added. The authors studied verbal behaviour, not behaviour in real-life settings. It is well known that verbal reports in self-inventories, such as the one used by the authors, may be affected by response style variability, in particular due to social desirability. This is an artefact that affects responses but not the attitude that they are assumed to reflect. The Fishbein–Ajzen model (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) assumes that attitudes are affected also
by subjective norms, a factor that should be distinguished from response bias due to social desirability.

Common variance in the self-reports of behaviour might have been due to social desirability, and so might also have been the case with the attitude scales. Then, a correlation between the common variance in the behaviour acts and the attitude scales is to be expected. The study would have been more convincing if it had included an attempt at controlling the social desirability. In the present study an attempt is made to study the role of social desirability in this way.

Fishbein & Ajzen also found that predictability could be predicted from their judgement data. In particular, their index of linearity was correlated with predictability. The subjects were asked to perform two different tasks: (a) they judged whether persons with a certain degree of the attitude were likely to perform the behaviour in question, and (b) whether persons who had performed the behaviour were more or less favourable in terms of attitude. These two types of judgements may reflect, basically, the same experienced relation. Judges may have had some (relatively correct) notion as to what extent a certain behaviour is indicative of a favourable attitude and expressed it in different ways. It would be interesting to find out whether this is actually the case. For this reason, judgements of diagnosticity of various types were included also in the present study, the expectation being that they would allow for predictions of the behaviour–attitude correlations and that they would have similar properties.

The purposes of the present study were: (a) to attempt to replicate the Fishbein–Ajzen results; (b) to study in what way the higher predictability of a multiple act criterion is best explained (substitution or common factor hypotheses); (c) to investigate the role of social desirability in attitude–behaviour relations, and (d) to investigate relations among various kinds of perceived diagnosticity of acts.

Method

Subjects

The total number of subjects who participated in the study was 317. Of these, 18 were discarded because their responses clearly indicated that they had not understood the instructions and five were discarded because they submitted questionnaires that were only very incompletely answered. All data analysis was performed on the 294 subjects who remained. The subjects were students at boarding high schools in the neighbourhood of Göteborg: 114 males and 180 females. Their age varied between 16 and 50 years, and the mean age was 22.5 years. The subjects were recruited on a voluntary basis after initial contact with the administration of the school. They were randomly assigned to the different subgroups described below.

Questionnaires

The domain of content studied was the one of attitudes and behaviour relevant to developing countries and aid to such countries. In order to construct an attitude scale 83 statements concerning the domain of content were initially tested on 48 undergraduate students. These data were factor analysed and 28 items were selected for the main study on the basis of their factors (three factors were obtained). The items were inserted into the final attitude questionnaire in a randomized order. Subjects were asked to state on a bipolar category scale with five categories to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the attitude statement. An example of a statement is 'The aid to developing countries should be increased drastically'.

In addition, a list was constructed of behaviour items of relevance to developing countries. Examples are: 'participated in Red Cross activities', and 'corresponded with a person in a developing country'. Seventy of the behaviour items were unique and 30 new items were constructed by reversing some of them, giving them a negative form. For example, reversing the item 'participated in Red Cross activities' gave the new item 'abstained from participation in Red Cross activities'. The final list of behaviour items thus contained 100 items.
Procedure

One group (A) consisting of 59 subjects first responded to the attitude questionnaire and then rated how often they had performed the different behaviour items. In the latter rating they could also indicate that they had not had the opportunity to perform a certain behavioural item. They were then asked to perform social desirability ratings. First, they rated for each attitude statement to what extent they found it socially desirable to agree with the statement. Second, they rated for each behavioural item to what extent they found it socially desirable to perform the item. A group of 39 subjects (B) only rated the social desirability of the behavioural items. A group consisting of 40 subjects (C) rated the simple probability of occurrence of each of the behavioural acts.

Two groups of 40 subjects each (D and E) rated, in percentage, the probability of having performed each behaviour given (a) a positive attitude and (b) a negative attitude. In one of these groups, ratings were first made of the probability of the first 50 behavioural items given a positive attitude and then of the last 50 items given a negative attitude. The second group made the ratings in the reverse order.

Another group consisting of 37 subjects (F) rated the expected attitude of someone given that he had performed a certain behaviour. Half of the group first rated the attitude of someone given that he had performed each of the 100 behavioural acts and then the attitude given that a person had not performed each of the behavioural acts. The other half of the group made the ratings in the reverse order. The ratings were made on a bipolar category scale consisting of 11 categories.

Finally, a group consisting of 39 subjects (G) rated, for each of the behavioural items, to what extent one could infer a person's attitude, knowing that he had performed the item. The ratings were made on a category scale of five categories going from 'very certain conclusions' to 'very uncertain or no conclusions at all'.

All the instructions were very brief and stressed that there were no right or wrong answers, but that the subject should give his true opinion and try to respond even if he found it was difficult to answer.

The questionnaires were distributed to the subjects in groups and on each occasion several of the different questionnaires were distributed to different subjects on a random basis.

Results

Preliminary analysis

In group A, the 28 attitude items were factor analysed, using squared multiple correlations as communality estimates, and the factors were rotated to simple structure according to the varimax criterion. Three factors emerged, but the third factor was weak and not quite meaningful. There were nine items uniquely defining the first factor. Summing them, after appropriate reversal in two cases, resulted in a variable with a homogeneity coefficient (Kuder-Richardson formula 20) of 0.88. The second factor was defined by seven variables giving a coefficient of 0.78. The first factor consisted of items exclusively concerned with the attitude to aiding developing countries while the second factor expressed a socialist or Marxist perspective on the problems of developing countries.

In addition to the factor scores of the ordinary responses to the items, the social desirability responses to the items were also scored and, hence, two new sets of attitude scores were obtained. The correlations between corresponding variables, i.e. ordinary responses and social desirability responses to the same items, were quite high, indicating that subjects rated their own attitudes as socially desirable. The scores between factors also correlated considerably.

Eight behaviour items were deleted from all further analyses because they had zero variance. Thus, all subsequent analyses were based on the 92 remaining behaviour items. The rating category 'no opportunity' was used rather frequently and, whenever used, was treated as equivalent to missing data. In this way, an attempt was made to control for variation of availability of possibility to act which was especially important because behavioural intentions were not explicitly obtained in this study.

The Thurstone-type ratings of the behaviour items were used to determine their
directions. All items were then scored in a consistent manner, a high score indicating a favourable act, and sums were obtained for all 92 acts for each individual both for his frequency and for his social desirability ratings. The frequency score was the multiple act criterion.

**Predictability of the multiple act criterion**

All separate behaviour items were correlated with the two attitude factors. The mean absolute correlations were 0.21 and 0.22 for factors I and II, respectively. The two factors correlated much higher with the multiple act criterion: 0.49 and 0.43, as expected. Interestingly enough, the attitude factors correlated even higher with the pooled social desirability of all behaviours: 0.76 and 0.54 for the two factors.

The 11 items which were correlated most strongly with the multiple act criterion ($r > 0.5$) were selected for a detailed investigation. These items should, if any, be able to yield negative partial intercorrelations, as expected from the substitutability hypothesis, since their correlations with the variable to be partialled out were especially high. There were, however, very few, and weak, negative partial correlations but many substantial and positive ones. The hypothesis of substitutability must be rejected for these data.

Since these results clearly suggest that these behaviours have more than one factor in common, a principal components analysis was performed. Three components were extracted and rotated obliquely. The suggested contents were: (a) personal contacts with someone living in a developing country, (b) job experience of some relevance and (c) involvement in discussions concerning the area. Though data are insufficient for a closer look at all of the behavioural items, these factors make sense. There was no indication of negative correlations among factors, nor of any substitutability within factors. When all three factors were extracted, the residuals dropped to approximately zero, with only a few exceptions. The common factor explanation of multiple act predictability was, thus, supported.

**Effects of social desirability**

The correlations between attitude and the pooled criterion can largely be accounted for by social desirability of behaviours. When the pooled social desirability of behaviours was kept constant, the partial correlations between attitude and the multiple act criterion decreased to 0.10 and 0.18 for the two factors. This statistical control does not, of course, say anything about the direction of causal influence. It shows, however, that the attitude–behaviour relationship may be better understood if the social desirabilities of the behavioural acts are considered. This issue will be treated in more detail later.

The behaviour item frequency ratings were scored as given originally, i.e. without the reversal of some items to yield a multiple act criterion. A number of analyses were performed at the level of behaviour items, based largely on mean ratings of items or correlations between behaviour items and other variables, most importantly attitudes.

The mean social desirability ratings had been obtained both for an independent group (B) and for the subjects who also gave attitude responses (A). The two sets of means correlated 0.97, giving support to the use of social desirability ratings above. However, the subsequent analyses were based on the ratings by the independent group, unless otherwise stated. As another consistency check, the correlation between perceived frequency of behaviours (group C) and the mean self-reported frequency was found to be 0.80.

**Prediction of attitude–behaviour correlation**

Behavioural items varied considerably according to how well they could be predicted from attitudes. The question now arises if it is possible to explain why some criteria are
predictable and some are not. The Fishbein-Aizen approach was to scale the behaviour items using standard Likert, Thurstone and Guttman techniques. Since the straightforward Likert approach seemed most justified and promising, correlations were obtained here between the multiple act criterion and each item. The absolute values of these correlations were, in turn, correlated with behaviour-attitude correlations over the 92 behaviour items. The values obtained for the two factors were 0.48 and 0.45.

This relationship could not be accounted for by social desirability, dispersion of social desirability or perceived frequency of behaviour. These variables were held constant by multiple partial correlation technique but they had virtually no effect.

It was suggested above that it may be profitable to study to what extent behaviours are related to social desirability. Correlations were computed, for each item, between its reported frequency and its social desirability (in the group of subjects who gave both types of responses). These correlations* were then correlated with behaviour predictabilities, giving the values of 0.45 and 0.46 for the two factors. We will here assume that these correlations reflect to what extent behaviour is under the influence of value control. The frequency-value correlations were unrelated to the item-composite correlations ($r = 0.03$). The two sets of correlations were pooled to obtain multiple correlations of predictabilities in the two factors, giving the estimated multiple Rs 0.61 and 0.61, respectively. Thus, two virtually independent aspects may, together, fairly well explain the variability of predictability. (The efficiency of frequency-value correlation in accounting for a share of that variance was virtually untouched by multiple partialling out of mean and standard deviation of social desirability, as well as of perceived frequency.)

It is of some interest to note significant correlations of 0.26 ($P < 0.05$) and 0.33 ($P < 0.01$) between mean self-reported behaviour frequency and behaviour predictability, in accordance with Flay's catastrophe model of social behaviour (Flay, 1978; see also Songer-Nocks, 1976). No success was obtained in other approaches to account for predictability, e.g. the dispersions of social desirability correlated only 0.16 and 0.03 with predictability.

Summing up, it was found that behaviour predictability was related to the domain representativeness of behaviour acts and to how strongly they were related to social desirability, these two aspects being virtually independent.

Perceived properties of criteria and attitude-behaviour correlation

Perceived properties of behaviour items were found by Fishbein & Aizen to be related to predictability. They obtained ratings of attitude given performance (A/B) or non-performance (A/B-) of an item, of behaviour given a positive (B/A+) or negative (B/A-) attitude, and of perceived behaviour frequency $P(B)$. In the present study separate subjects also rated diagnosticity (abbreviated diag.)$, the extent to which the

*Another possibility would be to consider the absolute values of these correlations. However, only four out of 92 were negative and the correlation between original and absolute correlations was 0.97 so there is no reason to expect different results by using absolute rather than raw values in this case. Note that most other correlation vectors contained a substantial number of both negative and positive correlations. In these cases it was important to consider whether raw or absolute correlations should be used.

$The 39 subjects were first intercorrelated. It was then found that seven subjects correlated negatively with the others, most probably because they had misunderstood the instructions or been careless. They were deleted from the group. The results for diagnosticity are, thus, based on 32 subjects.
performance of an act was seen as diagnostic of the attitude. The intercorrelations among
the perceived behaviour properties and mean desirability are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Correlations among certain ratings of the diagnostic value of acts and mean
social desirability of acts

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soc.Des.</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.911**</td>
<td>0.582**</td>
<td>0.280**</td>
<td>-0.356**</td>
<td>0.291**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A/B</td>
<td>0.911**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.633**</td>
<td>0.178</td>
<td>-0.474**</td>
<td>0.350**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A/B-</td>
<td>0.582**</td>
<td>0.633**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.185</td>
<td>-0.136</td>
<td>0.118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B/A+</td>
<td>0.280**</td>
<td>0.178</td>
<td>0.185</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.532**</td>
<td>-0.328**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B/A-</td>
<td>-0.356**</td>
<td>-0.474**</td>
<td>-0.136</td>
<td>0.532**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>-0.515**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagn.</td>
<td>0.291**</td>
<td>0.350**</td>
<td>0.118</td>
<td>-0.328**</td>
<td>-0.515**</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P(B)</td>
<td>0.101</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>0.094</td>
<td>0.826**</td>
<td>0.703**</td>
<td>-0.376**</td>
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**P<0.01.

Several comments are in order. It is remarkable that both A/B and A/B- correlated
positively with social desirability. Why is it seen as positive not having performed a
positive act? One explanation is an effect of implicit suggestion. Even if it is denied that
someone carried out an act he is at least mentioned in connection with it, implying a
possibility that he at least tried it or will in the future carry it out. The hypothesis that
the ratings of attitude given behaviour and behaviour given attitude reflect the same
relation was not supported. Rather, A/B and A/B- were independent of frequency of
behaviour while B/A+ and B/A- largely reflected frequency, P(B). Diagnosticity seemed,
as expected, to be a compromise, reflecting both social desirability, as did A/B and A/B-,
and frequency, as did B/A+ and B/A-. Behaviours were seen as more diagnostic to the
extent they were rare and socially desirable.

It thus appears that behaviour items were distinguished mostly in two perceived aspects:
frequency and social desirability. In turn, it is of interest to see if those aspects were
related to the sources of explanation for predictability, i.e. domain representativeness and
value control. The more representative behaviours tended to be also seen as desirable
(r=0.22, P<0.05), but not as frequent, and the behaviours related to value were seen as
more frequent (r=0.39, P<0.01), but not necessarily as more desirable on the average.
The latter finding suggests that people more often perform behaviours that are
predictable from their values rather than behaviours that are, on the whole, seen as
desirable.

Fishbein & Ajzen formed two indices from the absolute values of (B/A+ — B/A-) and
(A/B — A/B-) and termed them the linearity and validity indices. The correlations of the
indices with predictability are seen in Table 2. Only the linearity index yielded a positive
result here. Fishbein & Ajzen in fact obtained their best results with the linearity index,

Table 2. Correlation between various derived indices and predictability of behaviour items
from the two attitude factors

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<tr>
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<th>Factor I—behaviour</th>
<th>Factor II—behaviour</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linearity index</td>
<td>0.275**</td>
<td>0.361**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity index</td>
<td>0.107</td>
<td>0.075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnosticity</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td>0.104</td>
</tr>
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**P<0.01.
but also some more promising results with the validity index than the present ones. In spite of the fact that diagnosticity did seem to catch the different perceived properties of behaviours (see Table 1) it could not predict attitude–behaviour correlations in the present data.

Fishbein & Ajzen applied Bayes' theorem to predict the values entering the linearity index \( B/A+ \) and \( B/A- \) from \( A/B \), \( A/B- \) and \( p(B) \), as a check on internal consistency. They obtained very high correlations (around 0.93) between observed and predicted values. The same analysis was performed here with the correlations of 0.83 and 0.81 for \( p(B/A+) \) and \( p(B/A-) \), respectively. These values, and the plots of predicted versus obtained values, indicate substantial consistency in the judgement data.

Discussion

Some major findings of the Fishbein–Ajzen study were successfully replicated here. The higher predictability of the multiple act criterion, as compared to the predictability of single items, was clearly supported. Also, it was found that the more scalable the items were according to a Likert criterion the better could they be predicted from attitudes. And, finally, the linearity index could to some extent be used to predict the predictabilities of behaviour items. Failure to replicate occurred only for the validity index.

The finding of the higher predictability of a multiple criterion appears to be quite robust. It has, by now, been reported in several additional papers (e.g. Epstein, 1977, 1979). The question is how it should be explained. Fishbein & Ajzen did not support their hypothesis of substitutability with any explicit statistical analysis. The analysis presented here suggests, rather, that the composite is more predictable because its variance is to a smaller extent contaminated by specific and error factors.

Social desirability was found to be strongly correlated with the attitude scale scores themselves. And the same was to a large extent true of the multiple act criterion. Most of the relationships between the criterion and attitudes could be explained by a common component of social desirability. However, this does not necessarily mean that the relationship is purely artificial. It could still be real, people judging their own attitudes and acts as being socially desirable. One way of resolving this issue is to study actual behaviour rather than self-reports. The study by Weigel & Newman (1976) successfully replicated the finding that a multiple act criterion was more predictable than single items, thus supporting the validity of self-report data used here and by Fishbein & Ajzen. The suspicion that the finding can be explained simply by questionnaire and social desirability response bias is thus hardly justified. Further work with social desirability may profit from modelling its assumed influence explicitly (cf. Bentler & Speckart, 1979, 1981, for stimulating examples of modelling attitude–behaviour relations).

Two aspects can now be suggested for understanding which types of behaviour may be expected to be predictable: domain representativeness (Likert scalability) and how closely behaviour is tied to social desirability, here termed value control. Values and frequencies of performance may correlate because one performs acts considered to be valuable or because one is rewarded for carrying out acts, or both. Combining domain representativeness with value control resulted in rather high multiple correlations in accounting for behaviour predictability. And these correlations could not be decreased by holding mean or variability of social desirability constant, nor by perceived frequency. It would be of interest to see how much can be gained in predictability by adding Norman's (1975) aspect of belief-evaluation consistency.

Behaviours high in value control need not be, on average, socially desirable. However, they are judged to be more socially desirable by those who have more experience with
them. It seems quite reasonable to assume that performance of the acts may have contributed to the build-up of value. The flow of causation between attitude and behaviour constitutes an elusive problem (Kelman, 1974; McGuire, 1976), however, and recent results by Kahle & Berman (1979) and Bentler & Speckart (1979, 1981) suggest a strong causal influence of attitudes on behaviour. It would probably be profitable to distinguish more clearly among different types of actions in trying to determine the direction of causal flow (cf. Bentler & Speckart, 1981).

The perceived factors found to distinguish various behaviour items here were frequency and social desirability. They were both taken into account in judging diagnosticity but this variable was a poor predictor of predictability, as was the Fishbein–Ajzen index of validity. Further development of scales for rating behaviour items is called for. One possibility may be to ask for ratings of value control as distinguished from e.g. external control and impulsiveness. In fact, the linearity index could be conceived as a measure of value control (and that index was, to some extent, efficient in predicting predictability), since it is a measure of the difference in probability of behaviour given a positive attitude or a negative attitude. Presumably, if subjects give quite different ratings under these two instructions, they should consider values to be important in generating behaviour, but to resolve this issue more data are needed. (The linearity index correlated in the present data with the behaviour frequency–behaviour desirability correlation: \( r = 0.37, P < 0.01 \).)

Ajzen & Fishbein (1977) demonstrated that a high correlation between attitudes and behaviour requires that they should refer to targets and actions at corresponding levels of specificity. The requirement is consistent with the present findings concerning the importance of domain representativeness and with the present results with multiple act criteria, such criteria being more predictable from a global attitude measure than single act criteria. Finally, the present concept of value control may be related to the subjective norm concept of Fishbein & Ajzen. Possibly, behavioural items under high value control are also under high subjective norm control. If the global attitude measure is, in turn, related to the behavioural norms one would expect that value control should be related to predictability. Data on the perceived degree of ‘shoulds and wants’ involved in performing various behavioural items are needed to decide on the role of the norms and values in accounting for predictability.

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