



The Racial and Cultural Effects on Willingness to Wear a Facemask in the Time of COVID-19

Changhyun (Lyon) Nam, Florida State University, U.S.A.

Juyoung Lee, Mississippi State University, U.S.A.

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors (pandemic/epidemic concerns and moral obligation) that can significantly affect behavioral intention to wear a facemask in different cultures (e.g., Western vs. Eastern) and races (European American, African American, and Asian) during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This study's proposed conceptual framework will be constructed by adapting the theoretical factors from the TPB and additional factors (pandemic/epidemic concerns and moral obligation) and CRT, a conceptualization of culture and race. The authors anticipate finding that attitude toward wearing a facemask and subjective norms will positively affect behavioral intention to wear a facemask regardless of cultures and races. This study has significance in understanding racial and cultural issues in the behavioral intention in wearing a facemask.

Keywords: Facemask, Race, Culture, COVID-19 Pandemic

Introduction and Background. Scholars believe that cultural contexts and race influence his or her willingness to wear a facemask in the initial stage of the COVID-19 Pandemic in the United States (McKelvey, 2020). For example, the Asian population in the United States is more willing to wear a facemask compared to other races (Zheng, 2020) because wearing a facemask against air pollution (e.g., dust and smoke) and prophylactic medical viruses (e.g., mouth-borne germs) in public has been a more culturally accepted behavior in their home countries (e.g., South Korea, China, Hongkong Japan, etc.). However, wearing a facemask has gained notoriety as it has cultural connotations to crimes, especially in the African American population, in the same U.S. context (Zheng, 2020). Because of that, there has been higher reluctance in wearing a facemask in the early stage of the COVID-19 Pandemic in the United States compared to other countries with generous attitudes towards facemask wearing. Race and ethnicity are related to a significant risk of testing positive for COVID -19 rather than the other fundamental conditions (e.g., socioeconomic status, health care, occupation), according to the centers for disease control and prevention (2021). Even though the difference in facemask wearing attitudes in different cultural and racial contexts in the Pandemic was noted, there has been no study to investigate the factors that affect behavioral intention to wear facemask among cultural and racial differences during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the factors (pandemic/epidemic concerns and moral obligation) that can significantly affect behavioral intention to wear a facemask in different cultures (e.g., Western vs. Eastern) and races (European American, African American, and Asian) during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Theoretical Framework. The Critical Race Theory (CRT) is defined as a "form of oppositional scholarship, the CRT challenges the experiences of whites as the normative standard and grounds its conceptual framework in the distinctive experiences of people of color" (Taylor, 2009, p.122). The CRT is a useful tool for equipping social justice to present racial and ethnic minority communities (Taylor, 2009) and is rooted in the racism perspective (Abrams & Moio, 2009). This research explores a sample of

practitioner's racial competency while promoting the possibility to incorporate critical race theory (CRT) and the theory of planned behavior (TPB), an extension of the theory of reasoned action represented an individual's actual control over the behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Therefore, this study's proposed conceptual framework will be constructed by adapting the theoretical factors from the TPB and additional factors (pandemic/epidemic concerns and moral obligation) and CRT, a conceptualization of culture and race. Based on the literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1*: Pandemic/epidemic concerns have a positive effect on (a) attitude toward wearing a facemask, (b) subjective norms, and (c) perceived behavioral control among cultures and races.
- H2*: Moral obligation has a positive effect on (a) attitude toward wearing a facemask, (b) subjective norms, and (c) perceived behavioral control among cultures and races.
- H3*: Attitude toward wearing face-covering has a positive effect on behavior intention to wear facemask among cultures and races.
- H4*: Subjective norms have a positive effect on behavior intention to wear facemask among cultures and races.
- H5*: Perceived behavioral control has a positive effect on behavior intention to wear facemask among cultures and races.

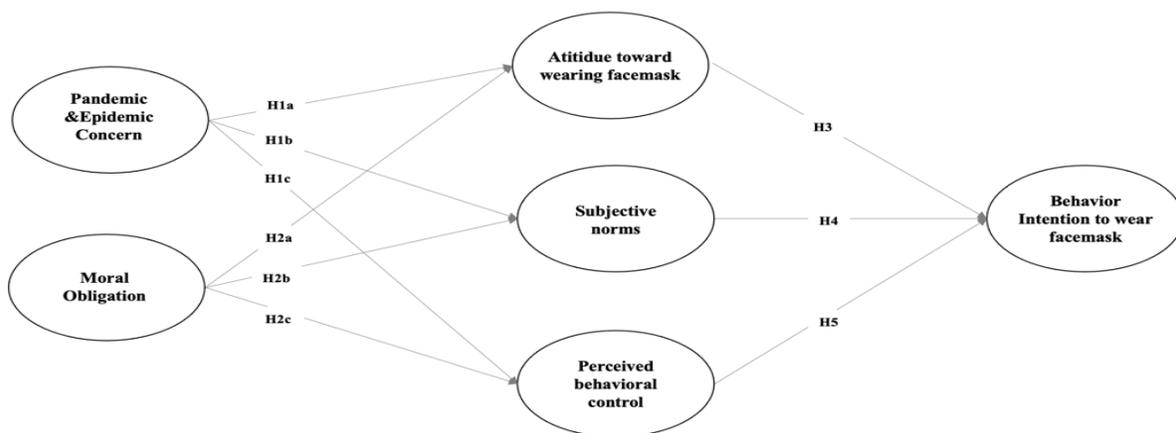


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual framework.

Methods and Data Analysis. The study will recruit participants in the United States and South Korea, aged 18 years old, via Amazon Mechanical Turk as an empirical study. Based on 80% power with $d = 0.3$ ($\alpha < 0.05$) in statistical power criteria (Cohen, 1988), over 600 sample sizes, including three racial groups such as European American, African American, and Asian (each group, $n = 200$), recommended the minimum sample size for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), will be recruited in this study. The constructs with multiple-item measurements (pandemic/epidemic concern, moral obligation, attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, and behavior intention to wear facemask) are adapted and modified from previous research (Beck & Ajzen, 1991; Chen & Tung, 2014). SEM will be performed to

test the hypothesized paths in the proposed conceptual framework. The cultures and races will be categorized as two and three groups for comparative model testing, respectively.

Excepted Results and Implications. This study's proposed conceptual framework will contribute to developing the extending TPB adding to pandemic/epidemic concern and moral obligation based on CRT in both cultural and racism studies. It will reveal the differences in behavior intentions to wear facemask among culture and races because the cultural backgrounds and races are significant factors to understand consumers' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control toward facemask through pandemic/epidemic concerns and moral obligations. The authors anticipate finding that attitude toward wearing a facemask and subjective norms will positively affect behavioral intention to wear facemask regardless of cultures and races. This study has significance in understanding racial and cultural issues in the behavioral intention in wearing a facemask, especially to identify how race and cultural contexts play a role in shaping attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in the behavior intention wear a facemask.

References

- Abrams, L. S., & Moio, J. A. (2009). Critical race theory and the cultural competence dilemma in social work education. *Journal of social work education, 45*(2), 245-261.
- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1980). *Understanding attitudes and predicting social behavior*. Prentice-Hall Inc.
- Beck, L., & Ajzen, I. (1991). Predicting dishonest actions using the theory of planned behavior. *Journal of Research in Personality, 25*(3), 285-301.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2021, March 12). Risk for COVID-19 infection, hospitalization, and death by race/ethnicity. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html>
- Chen, M. F., & Tung, P. J. (2014). Developing an extended theory of planned behavior model to predict consumers' intention to visit green hotels. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 36*, 221-230.
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences*. Laurence Erlbaum Associates.
- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior: An introduction to theory and research*. Addison-Wesley.
- McKelvey, T. (2020, July 20). Coronavirus: Why are Americans so angry about masks? Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-53477121>
- Taylor, E., Gillborn, D., & Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). *Foundations of critical race theory in education*. Routledge.
- Zheng, Sarah (2020, March 7). West, changing this deep-seared cultural aspect long-term will be difficult. Retrieved from <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3075211/face-masks-and-coronavirus-how-culture-affects-your-decision>