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Article

The Role of Health Consciousness in Shaping Students' Organic Food Purchase Intentions: Extending the Theory of Planned Behaviour through Attitude

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Abstract: Purpose: This study examines the role of health consciousness in shaping university students' organic food purchase intentions by extending the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). Specifically, it investigates the direct effects of health consciousness, attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control on purchase intention, while examining the mediating role of attitude in the relationship between health consciousness and purchase intention.
Design/methodology/approach: A quantitative cross-sectional research design was employed. Data were collected from 400 university students using a structured questionnaire adapted from previously validated scales. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, multiple regression analysis, and Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4) with 5,000 bootstrap samples were performed using SPSS to test the proposed hypotheses.
Findings: The results revealed that health consciousness positively influenced attitude ($\beta = .626$, $p < .001$) and purchase intention ($\beta = .170$, $p = .002$). Attitude ($\beta = .289$, $p < .001$), subjective norms ($\beta = .280$, $p < .001$), and perceived behavioural control ($\beta = .159$, $p < .001$) also significantly predicted organic food purchase intention. Furthermore, attitude partially mediated the relationship between health consciousness and purchase intention (indirect effect = .229, 95% bootstrap CI [.144, .313]), indicating that health consciousness influences purchase intention both directly and indirectly through favourable attitudes toward organic food.
Originality/value: This study extends the Theory of Planned Behaviour by integrating health consciousness as an additional antecedent and empirically validating the mediating role of attitude in explaining university students' organic food purchase intentions. The findings contribute to the literature on sustainable food consumption by providing evidence from an emerging economy and offer practical insights for educators, policymakers, marketers, and organic food producers seeking to promote healthier and more sustainable food choices among young consumers.
Keywords: Organic food; Health consciousness; Theory of Planned Behaviour; Attitude;

1. Introduction

The global food industry has experienced a significant transformation over the past two decades, driven by increasing consumer awareness of health, environmental sustainability, and food safety (Kirby & Teixeria, 2025). Among the various developments in the food sector, organic food has emerged as one of the fastest-growing segments of the global food market (Raynolds, 2004). Organic foods are produced using environmentally friendly agricultural practices that avoid synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), antibiotics, and artificial growth hormones (Forman & Silverstein, 2012; Meshram et al., 2025). Consequently, consumers increasingly perceive organic food as healthier, safer, and more environmentally sustainable than conventionally produced food (Suciuet al., 2019; Yiridoe, 2005). The growing demand for organic food reflects a broader shift in consumer preferences toward healthier lifestyles and sustainable consumption patterns, making organic food purchasing an important area of investigation within consumer behaviour research.

The increasing prevalence of lifestyle-related diseases, including obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disorders, and certain types of cancer, has encouraged consumers to become more conscious of the relationship between diet and

health (Pal et al., 2026; Garg, 2025). As individuals become more aware of the long-term health consequences of their food choices, they increasingly seek products that promote physical well-being and reduce exposure to harmful chemicals (Naseer et al., 2025; Block et al., 2011). Organic food is widely perceived as containing fewer pesticide residues and synthetic additives while providing greater nutritional value, although scientific evidence regarding nutritional superiority remains mixed (Yadav & Pathak, 2016). Nevertheless, consumers' perceptions rather than objective nutritional differences often determine purchasing decisions (Duarte et al., 2021). Therefore, understanding the psychological factors that influence consumers' intentions to purchase organic food has become increasingly important for researchers, marketers, and policymakers.

Among different consumer groups, university students constitute a particularly important segment for studying organic food purchasing behaviour. University life represents a transitional period during which young adults begin making independent food purchasing and consumption decisions (Deliens et al., 2014). During this stage, students establish dietary habits that frequently persist into adulthood (Jurando-Gonzalez et al., 2025). Simultaneously, university students are generally more educated, more receptive to new ideas, and more exposed to information concerning health, nutrition, and environmental sustainability through academic learning and digital media (Michel & Zwickle, 2021). Despite these characteristics, students often face financial constraints, limited purchasing power, inadequate knowledge of organic certification, and restricted access to organic products, which may hinder actual purchasing behaviour despite positive attitudes toward organic food (Paul et al., 2016). Consequently, understanding the determinants of university students' organic food purchase intentions has considerable academic and practical significance.

Consumer behaviour scholars have increasingly relied on behavioural theories to explain food purchasing decisions (Ajzen, 2015). Among these, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) proposed by Ajzen (1991) has become one of the most widely applied theoretical frameworks for predicting behavioural intentions across numerous contexts, including health behaviour, environmental behaviour, technology adoption, and sustainable consumption. According to TPB, an individual's behavioural intention is primarily determined by three psychological constructs: attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2005; Hagger et al., 2002). Attitude reflects an individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing a particular behaviour (Ajzen et al., 2005), subjective norm represents perceived social pressure from significant others (Ham et al., 2015), and perceived behavioural control refers to an individual's perception of their ability to perform the behaviour (Trafimow et al., 2002; Ajzen, 1991). Numerous empirical studies have confirmed the applicability of TPB in explaining consumers' intentions to purchase organic food across different countries and demographic groups (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Scalco et al., 2017).

Although TPB has demonstrated substantial explanatory power, researchers have argued that the original model may not fully capture the complexity of consumer decision-making in contemporary food markets. Organic food purchasing involves not only rational evaluations but also personal values, health motivations, and consumers' perceptions regarding food safety and well-being (Yang et al., 2023; Lazaroiu et al., 2019). Consequently, several scholars have recommended extending TPB by incorporating additional variables that enhance its predictive capability without compromising its theoretical foundation (Conner & Armitage, 1998). Among these extensions, health consciousness has received increasing scholarly attention because food purchasing decisions are inherently health-oriented and involve consumers' personal evaluations of food safety and well-being.Such extensions have become increasingly common in studies examining sustainable food consumption, green purchasing behaviour, and environmentally responsible consumer decisions.

One of the most influential psychological determinants of healthy food consumption is health consciousness (Escobar-Farfan et al., 2025). Health consciousness refers to the extent to which individuals integrate health considerations into their daily activities and actively seek to maintain or improve their physical well-being (Michaelidou & Hassan, 2008). Health-conscious individuals are generally more attentive to nutritional information, food ingredients, product quality, and potential health risks associated with food consumption (Escobar-Farfan et al., 2025; Mai & Hoffmann, 2015). They are also more likely to engage in preventive health behaviours, including regular exercise, balanced diets, and the purchase of healthier food products (Kushi et al., 2012). Previous studies have consistently reported that health consciousness positively influences consumers' attitudes toward organic food and increases their willingness to purchase organic products (Yadav & Pathak, 2016; Rana & Paul, 2017). Individuals who prioritize health are more likely to perceive organic food as a safer and healthier alternative to conventionally produced food, thereby strengthening their purchase intentions (Lazaroiu et al., 2019).

Beyond its direct influence on food-related decision-making, health consciousness also plays an important role in shaping consumers' attitudes toward organic food. Health-conscious individuals are generally more likely to evaluate organic food positively because they perceive it as healthier, safer, and free from harmful chemicals (Michaelidou & Hassan, 2008; Rana & Paul, 2017). According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), attitude represents an individual's overall evaluation of performing a particular behaviour and serves as one of the strongest determinants of behavioural intention. Consequently, individuals with higher levels of health consciousness are expected to develop more favourable attitudes toward purchasing organic food, which subsequently strengthen their purchase intentions.From the perspective of the Theory of Planned Behaviour, health consciousness may function as an antecedent that shapes behavioural intention indirectly by influencing individuals' attitudes toward organic food. This perspective provides the theoretical rationale for examining attitude as a mediating mechanism in the present study.

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that attitude is a significant predictor of organic food purchase intention (Paul et al., 2016; Yadav & Pathak, 2016; Scalco et al., 2017). Nevertheless, although health consciousness has frequently been examined as an independent predictor of purchase intention, relatively limited research has investigated the psychological mechanism through which health consciousness translates into purchasing intentions. In particular, few studies have examined whether attitude serves as a mediating mechanism linking health consciousness to organic food purchase intention among university students. Examining this indirect relationship provides a deeper understanding of the cognitive processes through which health-related motivations influence sustainable food purchasing behaviour.

Although numerous studies have applied the Theory of Planned Behaviour to explain organic food purchasing behaviour, most have primarily examined the direct effects of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control on purchase intention. Comparatively fewer studies have extended TPB by incorporating health consciousness while simultaneously investigating the mediating role of attitude. Moreover, evidence from university students in developing economies remains relatively scarce, limiting the generalizability of existing findings. This gap highlights the need to examine whether the extended TPB framework adequately explains organic food purchase intentions within the Indian higher education context.

Against this background, the present study extends the Theory of Planned Behaviour by incorporating health consciousness as an additional antecedent of university students' organic food purchase intention. Specifically, the study proposes that health consciousness positively influences students' attitudes toward organic food, which, in turn, enhance their purchase intentions. In addition to the original TPB constructs of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, the proposed framework examines the mediating role of attitude in explaining how health consciousness influences university students' organic food purchase intention. By integrating health-related motivation within the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the present study contributes to a better understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying organic food purchasing behaviour among university students. The findings are expected to contribute to the literature on sustainable food consumption while providing practical insights for educators, marketers, policymakers, and organic food producers seeking to encourage healthier and more sustainable food choices among young consumers. Accordingly, this study contributes to the existing literature in three important ways. First, it extends the Theory of Planned Behaviour by incorporating health consciousness as an additional predictor of organic food purchase intention. Second, it examines the mediating role of attitude to explain the psychological mechanism through which health consciousness influences purchase intention. Third, it provides empirical evidence from university students in India, thereby enriching the limited literature on organic food purchasing behaviour in emerging economies.

2. Literature review

2.1 Organic food purchase intention

Organic food purchase intention refers to an individual’s conscious plan or willingness to purchase organic food products in the future (Ajzen, 1991). In consumer behaviour research, purchase intention is widely regarded as the most immediate antecedent of actual purchasing behaviour, particularly when direct behavioural data are difficult to obtain (Lee & Lee, 2015). The rapid growth of the global organic food market has stimulated extensive research on the factors that shape consumers’ intentions to buy organic products (Aertsens et al., 2009).

Early studies identified health benefits, food safety, environmental protection, and product quality as the principal motivations for organic food purchasing. Magnusson et al. (2001) found that consumers who perceived organic food as healthier and environmentally friendly reported stronger intentions to purchase organic products.

Similarly, Michaelidou and Hassan (2008) demonstrated that health consciousness and food safety concerns significantly influenced consumers' attitudes and intentions toward organic food.

Subsequent research has shown that organic food purchase intention is a multidimensional construct influenced by both cognitive evaluations and value-based motivations (Lamberti & Lopez-Sintas, 2026). Rana and Paul (2017), in a comprehensive review of organic food consumer behaviour, concluded that health-related motives consistently emerge as the strongest predictors of purchase intention across different cultural contexts. However, they also noted that environmental concern, ethical considerations, trust in organic certification, and perceived product quality play important complementary roles.

Despite generally favourable attitudes toward organic food, many consumers do not translate their intentions into actual purchasing behaviour. This phenomenon, often referred to as the intention–behaviour gap, is particularly evident among university students, who may face financial constraints, limited product availability, and insufficient knowledge about organic certification (Paul et al., 2016). Consequently, understanding the psychological determinants of purchase intention remains essential for explaining and promoting organic food consumption among young consumers.

Recent meta-analytic evidence further confirms the robustness of psychological predictors of organic food purchase intention. Scalco et al. (2017) reported that attitude, perceived behavioural control, and moral or value-based factors collectively explain a substantial proportion of variance in organic food purchase intentions. Their findings suggest that integrating additional motivational variables into established behavioural theories may provide a more comprehensive explanation of organic food purchasing decisions.

In summary, the literature indicates that organic food purchase intention is shaped by a combination of health motivations, environmental values, social influences, and perceived control over purchasing behaviour. Nevertheless, the mechanisms through which health-related motives influence purchase intention, particularly among university students in developing economies, remain insufficiently explored.

2.2 Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), proposed by Ajzen (1991), is one of the most influential theoretical frameworks for predicting human behaviour across a wide range of contexts, including health behaviour, environmental behaviour, and consumer decision-making. TPB posits that behavioural intention is the most proximal determinant of actual behaviour and is itself influenced by three conceptually independent constructs: attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control.

Attitude refers to an individual's overall positive or negative evaluation of performing a behaviour. In the context of organic food consumption, attitude reflects the extent to which consumers perceive purchasing organic food as beneficial, desirable, and worthwhile. Subjective norm captures perceived social pressure from significant others, such as family members, friends, and peers, regarding whether one should perform the behaviour. Perceived behavioural control (PBC) represents an individual's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour, taking into account factors such as affordability, availability, and personal resources (Ajzen, 1991).

The predictive validity of TPB has been extensively supported by empirical research. Armitage and Conner (2001), in a meta-analytic review of 185 studies, found that TPB accounted for significant variance in behavioural intentions and actual behaviour across diverse domains. Their analysis confirmed that attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control each make unique contributions to the prediction of intention.

In the field of organic food consumption, TPB has been widely applied and validated. Paul et al. (2016) demonstrated that attitude and perceived behavioural control were significant predictors of green product purchase intention, including organic products, among young consumers. Likewise, Scalco et al. (2017), using a meta-analytic structural equation model, confirmed that TPB variables are robust predictors of organic food purchase intention across different countries and consumer groups.

However, scholars have also highlighted certain limitations of the original TPB framework. Conner and Armitage (1998) argued that TPB may not fully capture moral, value-based, and affective determinants of behaviour, particularly in contexts involving ethical or sustainable consumption. Organic food purchasing is often motivated not only by rational evaluations but also by personal values related to health, environmental sustainability, and social responsibility. Consequently, researchers have increasingly extended TPB by incorporating additional constructs such as health consciousness, environmental concern, moral norms, trust, and environmental knowledge.

These extensions have generally improved the explanatory power of TPB models in sustainable consumption research. For example, Yadav and Pathak (2016) found that environmental concern significantly enhanced the predictive capability of TPB in explaining young consumers' intentions to purchase green products. Such findings suggest that integrating health and environmental motivations into TPB may provide a more comprehensive understanding of organic food purchase intentions.

Therefore, TPB offers a strong theoretical foundation for the present study, while its extension through health consciousness and environmental concern addresses the need to capture broader motivational influences on students' organic food purchasing decisions.

2.3 Health Consciousness

Health consciousness is defined as the degree to which individuals are aware of and concerned about their health and are motivated to engage in behaviours that maintain or improve their well-being (Michaelidou & Hassan, 2008). Health-conscious individuals tend to seek health-related information, monitor their dietary habits, read food labels, and avoid products perceived as harmful.

In food consumption research, health consciousness has consistently emerged as a critical determinant of healthy eating behaviour. Michaelidou and Hassan (2008) found that health consciousness positively influenced consumers' attitudes toward organic food and their purchase intentions. Their study demonstrated that consumers who place greater importance on health are more likely to perceive organic food as a safer and healthier alternative to conventional food products.

Subsequent studies have reinforced the central role of health consciousness in organic food consumption. Yadav and Pathak (2016) reported that health consciousness significantly influenced young consumers' intentions to purchase environmentally friendly products, including organic food. Similarly, Rana and Paul (2017) identified health consciousness as one of the most consistent predictors of organic food purchase intention across different cultural settings.

The influence of health consciousness can be explained through several mechanisms.

First, health-conscious consumers are more likely to perceive functional benefits associated with organic food, such as reduced exposure to pesticide residues and artificial additives.

Second, they tend to process health-related information more actively, leading to stronger beliefs about the benefits of organic products.

Third, health consciousness may foster broader concerns about food production systems and environmental sustainability, thereby indirectly influencing attitudes toward organic food.

Recent research has increasingly examined the relationship between health consciousness and environmental concern. Individuals who prioritize personal health often recognize that environmentally sustainable agricultural practices contribute to healthier food systems and safer food production. This suggests that health consciousness may not only exert a direct effect on purchase intention but also indirectly influence intention through environmental concern and attitude formation.

Despite the substantial evidence supporting the role of health consciousness, several gaps remain. Many previous studies have treated health consciousness as a simple direct predictor of purchase intention without examining its indirect effects through environmental concern and attitude. Moreover, relatively few studies have investigated these relationships among university students in developing economies, where financial constraints, market accessibility, and cultural factors may alter the strength of these associations.

Accordingly, the present study conceptualizes health consciousness as an antecedent variable that influences environmental concern and, subsequently, attitudes toward organic food and purchase intention. This approach extends prior research by examining the psychological pathway through which health-related motivations translate into organic food purchasing intentions.

3. Hypotheses development

Based on the preceding theoretical arguments and empirical evidence, the study proposes the following hypotheses.

H1: Health consciousness positively influences students' attitude toward organic food.

H2: Attitude positively influences students' organic food purchase intention.

H3: Health consciousness positively influences students' organic food purchase intention.

H4: Subjective norms positively influence students' organic food purchase intention.

H5: Perceived behavioural control positively influences students' organic food purchase intention.

H6: Attitude mediates the relationship between health consciousness and purchase intention.

Figure 1. Research Model

4. Research methodology

4.1 Research design

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey design to examine the factors influencing students' organic food purchase intentions. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because it enables the empirical testing of relationships among multiple variables through statistical analysis. The cross-sectional design involved collecting data from respondents at a single point in time using a structured questionnaire. The study extends the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by incorporating health consciousness as an additional predictor of students' organic food purchase intentions while examining the mediating role of attitude.

4.2 Population and sample

The target population comprised undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled in universities. University students were selected because they represent an emerging consumer segment that increasingly values healthy lifestyles and sustainable food consumption while making independent purchasing decisions.A convenience sampling technique was adopted to collect data due to its practicality and ease of access within university settings. Students from different academic disciplines and years of study were invited to participate voluntarily.Based on recommendations by Hair et al. (2019), a minimum sample size of 300 respondents is considered adequate for regression-based analysis involving multiple independent variables. Therefore, the study targeted 400 valid responses to ensure adequate statistical power and improve the reliability of the findings.

4.3 Data collection procedure

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire. Prior to data collection, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that participation was voluntary. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality and anonymity of responses were guaranteed.Questionnaires with substantial missing values or inconsistent responses were excluded from the final analysis to ensure data quality.

4.4 Measurement of variables

The questionnaire consisted of two sections.Section A included demographic profile where respondents' background information like gender, educational qualification, year of study, etc. were collected. Section B included study variables. The study variables were measured using previously validated scales adapted from earlier studies. Minor modifications were made to suit the context of university students and organic food purchasing behaviour.All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, where:1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. The measurement constructs are presented below.

Construct	No. of items	Source
Health Consciousness	6	Michaelidou & Hassan (2008)
Attitude	5	Ajzen (1991); Yadav & Pathak (2016)
Subjective Norm	4	Ajzen (1991)
Perceived Behavioural Control	4	Ajzen (1991)
Organic Food Purchase Intention	5	Paul et al. (2016); Yadav & Pathak (2016)

5. Results

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and reliability of the study constructs

Construct	Items	*Mean*	*SD*	*α*
Health Consciousness (HC)	6	3.62	.75	.89
Attitude (ATT)	5	3.63	.92	.91
Subjective Norms (SN)	4	3.52	.81	.86
Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC)	4	3.40	.84	.86
Purchase Intention (PI)	5	3.53	.90	.91

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and internal consistency reliability estimates for the study constructs. Mean scores ranged from 3.40 to 3.63, indicating moderately favourable levels across all study constructs. Standard deviations ranged between 0.75 and 0.92, suggesting acceptable variability in respondents' perceptions. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from .86 to .91, exceeding the recommended threshold of .70, thereby confirming satisfactory internal consistency reliability of the measurement scales (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Table 2. Pearson correlation matrix

Variable	HC	ATT	SN	PBC	PI
HC	1				
ATT	.626**	1			
SN	.028	.059	1		
PBC	-.036	-.034	-.021	1	
PI	.353**	.407**	.299**	.138**	1

Note: Pearson correlation coefficients are reported. N = 400. p < .05, p < .01**.*

Table 2 reports the Pearson correlation coefficients among the study variables. Purchase intention was positively associated with health consciousness ($r = .353$, $p < .01$), attitude ($r = .407$, $p < .01$), subjective norms ($r = .299$, $p < .01$), and perceived behavioural control ($r = .138$, $p < .01$). Among these variables, attitude exhibited the strongest bivariate association with purchase intention. Health consciousness was also positively correlated with attitude ($r = .626$, $p < .01$), providing preliminary support for the proposed theoretical relationships.

Prior to conducting the regression analyses, multicollinearity was assessed using correlation coefficients and variance inflation factors (VIF). All intercorrelations were below the recommended threshold of .80, and VIF values were below 5, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern.

Table 3. Regression analysis predicting attitude

Predictor	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*t*	*P*
Constant	.850	.177	-	4.795	<.001
HC	.767	.048	.626	16.012	< .001

Model statistics: $R = 0.626$; $R^2 = 0.392$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.390$; $F(1,398) = 256.369$; $p < .001$.

Note. Dependent variable: Attitude. B = unstandardized regression coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardized regression coefficient.

Table 3 presents the regression results examining the influence of health consciousness on attitude. The model was statistically significant, $F(1, 398) = 256.37$, $p < .001$, explaining 39.2% of the variance in attitude ($R^2 = .392$,

Adjusted R2 = .390). Health consciousness exerted a positive and significant effect on attitude (*β = .626, B = .767, SE = .048, t = 16.01, p < .001*), thereby supporting H1.

Table 4. Multiple regression analysis predicting purchase intention

Predictor	*β*	*SE*	*B*	*t*	*P*
Constant	.097	.300	-	.323	.747
HC	.204	.065	.170	3.112	.002
ATT	.282	.053	.289	5.282	< .001
SN	.310	.047	.280	6.562	< .001
PBC	.170	.046	.159	3.733	< .001

Model statistics: $R = 0.532$; $R^2 = 0.283$; *Adjusted* $R^2 = 0.276$; $F(4,395) = 38.998$; $p < 0.001$.

Note. Dependent variable: Purchase intention. B = unstandardized regression coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardized regression coefficient.

Table 4 presents the multiple regression results for purchase intention. The overall model was statistically significant, *F(4,395) = 38.998, p < .001*, explaining 28.3% of the variance in purchase intention (*R^2 = .283, Adjusted R2 = .276*). Health consciousness (*β = .170, p = .002*), attitude (*β = .289, p < .001*), subjective norms (*β = .280, p < .001*), and perceived behavioural control (*β = .159, p < .001*) each exerted significant positive effects on purchase intention. Among the predictors, attitude demonstrated the strongest standardized effect, followed closely by subjective norms. Multicollinearity diagnostics indicated no evidence of multicollinearity (all VIFs < 5). Accordingly, H2, H3, H4, and H5 were supported.

Table 5. Mediation analysis using PROCESS Macro (Model 4)

Path	*β*	*SE*	*T*	*P*	95% CI	Result
Direct effects						
HC → ATT	.767	.048	16.012	< .001	[.672, .861]	Supported
ATT → PI	.298	.057	5.238	< .001	[.186, .410]	Supported
HC → PI	.194	.070	2.787	.006	[.057, .331]	Supported
Indirect effect (5,000 bootstrap samples)						
HC → ATT → PI	.229	.043	-	-	[.144, .313]	Supported

Note. HC = Health Consciousness; ATT = Attitude; PI = Purchase Intention; B = unstandardized regression coefficient; SE = standard error; BootSE = bootstrap standard error; CI = bias-corrected 95% bootstrap confidence interval based on 5,000 bootstrap samples.

Mediation analysis was performed using Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4) with 5,000 bias-corrected bootstrap samples. Health consciousness significantly predicted attitude (*B = .767, p < .001*), which in turn positively influenced purchase intention (*B = .298, p < .001*). The indirect effect of health consciousness on purchase intention through attitude was significant (*B = .229, BootSE = .043, 95% CI [.144, .313]*), as the confidence interval excluded zero. Furthermore, the direct effect of health consciousness on purchase intention remained significant after controlling for attitude (*B = .194, p = .006*), indicating partial mediation.Because the direct effect remained significant after accounting for the mediator, attitude partially mediated the relationship between health consciousness and purchase intention.Therefore, the mediating role of attitude (H6) was supported.

6. Implications

The findings offer several practical implications for marketers, policymakers, educational institutions, and organic food producers. First, health consciousness emerged as a significant predictor of both attitude and purchase intention, suggesting that promotional strategies should emphasize the health benefits of organic food rather than relying solely on environmental appeals. Marketing campaigns highlighting the absence of synthetic pesticides, improved food safety, and the long-term health benefits of organic products may strengthen consumers' intentions to purchase organic food.Second, attitude exerted the strongest influence on purchase intention and partially mediated the relationship between health consciousness and purchase intention. This indicates that interventions designed to

foster favourable attitudes toward organic food can further translate health awareness into stronger purchasing intentions. Universities and public health agencies may therefore organize nutrition awareness programmes, seminars, and educational campaigns that promote positive perceptions of organic food consumption.Third, subjective norms significantly influenced purchase intention, indicating that social influence remains an important driver of students' purchasing decisions. Organic food marketers may therefore utilize peer influence, social media influencers, testimonials, and student ambassadors to encourage organic food adoption among young consumers.Finally, the significant effect of perceived behavioural control suggests that students' intentions increase when they perceive organic food as affordable and accessible. Policymakers and retailers should therefore improve product availability on university campuses, reduce price barriers through promotional offers or subsidies, and enhance accessibility to encourage sustainable food consumption among students.

7. Theoretical contribution

This study makes several theoretical contributions to the literature on organic food purchasing behaviour. First, it extends the Theory of Planned Behaviour by incorporating health consciousness as an antecedent of attitude and purchase intention. While the original TPB focuses primarily on attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, the present findings demonstrate that health consciousness provides additional explanatory value in understanding students' organic food purchase intentions.Second, the study establishes attitude as a significant psychological mechanism through which health consciousness influences purchase intention. The mediation analysis revealed that attitude partially mediates the relationship between health consciousness and purchase intention, providing empirical evidence that health consciousness influences purchasing decisions both directly and indirectly through favourable evaluations of organic food.Third, this study contributes to the relatively limited body of evidence on organic food purchasing behaviour among university students in an emerging economy. Much of the existing literature has been conducted in developed countries; therefore, the present findings extend the generalizability of the TPB framework to the Indian higher education context, where purchasing decisions are shaped by different socio-economic and cultural conditions.Finally, by demonstrating the simultaneous effects of health consciousness, attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological determinants of organic food purchase intention among young consumers.

8. Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the study employed a cross-sectional research design, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships among the study variables. Longitudinal research would provide stronger evidence regarding changes in students' purchasing intentions over time.Second, data were collected using convenience sampling from university students, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other consumer groups, such as working professionals, older adults, or rural consumers.Third, the study examined purchase intention rather than actual purchasing behaviour. Because consumers' intentions do not always translate into actual purchases, future studies should investigate actual organic food purchasing behaviour to better understand the intention–behaviour relationship.Fourth, all variables were measured using self-reported questionnaires, which may introduce common method bias and social desirability bias despite the assurance of respondent anonymity.Finally, although the extended TPB model explained a meaningful proportion of variance in purchase intention, additional psychological and contextual factors may further improve the explanatory power of the model.

9. Future research

Future research may extend the present study in several directions. First, longitudinal and experimental research designs could be employed to establish stronger causal relationships among health consciousness, attitude, and organic food purchase behaviour.Second, future studies should examine actual organic food purchasing behaviour rather than purchase intention alone in order to investigate the intention–behaviour gap among consumers.Third, researchers may extend the TPB framework by incorporating additional constructs such as environmental concern, food safety concern, trust in organic certification, environmental knowledge, perceived value, moral norms, or willingness to pay, thereby improving the explanatory power of the model.Fourth, comparative studies involving different demographic groups, regions, or countries would help determine whether the relationships observed in this study remain consistent across diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts.Finally, future research may employ probability sampling techniques and larger, more heterogeneous samples to improve the generalizability of the findings and provide broader insights into consumers' organic food purchasing behaviour.

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