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More People Less Help: How the Beneficiary Number Affects Volunteering Intention?

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Abstract:

The aim of this study is to examine the interacting role of the beneficiary number and type of donations in eliciting intention to volunteer. We propose that time donation intention is generated more when charities present a single beneficiary image compared with many beneficiaries. We test our prediction in an experimental study participated by undergraduate students. We randomly assigned study participants into a 2 (donation type: time vs. money) x 2 (beneficiary number: one vs. many) between participant experimental design. The dependent variable was an intention to make time donations. We found that when the participants were requested to volunteer, their willingness to donate was enhanced only when they saw a beneficiary in the charitable campaign. However, this effect disappeared when the participants were asked to donate their money. Charity managers may benefit from the findings of this study, in particular on how charities may use different donation types and graphical manifestations to induce more donations. The findings contribute to the prosocial behavior literature by confirming that beneficiary number interacts with different donation types in influencing donation intent.

Keywords: charity, volunteering, beneficiary number effect, perceived responsibility.

更多人少帮助：受益人数如何影响志愿服务意图？

摘要：

本研究的目的是研究受益人数量和捐赠类型在激发志愿者意愿方面的相互作用作用。我们建议，与许多受益者相比，当慈善机构呈现单一受益者形象时，更多地产生时间捐赠意图。我们在本科生参与的实验研究

中测试我们的预测。我们将研究参与者随机分配到参与者实验设计之间的 2（捐赠类型：时间与金钱） \times 2（受益人编号：一个与多个）。因变量是为了进行时间捐赠。我们发现，当参与者被要求做志愿者时，只有当他们在慈善活动中看到受益人时，他们的捐赠意愿才会增强。然而，当参与者被要求捐赠他们的钱时，这种效应消失了。慈善管理人员可能会从这项研究的结果中受益，特别是关于慈善机构如何使用不同的捐赠类型和图形表现来诱导更多的捐赠。研究结果通过确认受益人数量与不同捐赠类型的相互作用影响捐赠意图，为亲社会行为文献做出了贡献。

关键词：慈善事业, 志愿服务, 受益人数效应, 感知责任.

1. Introduction

Volunteering plays a crucial role in our society. For instance, volunteering is seen as a remedy for social issues such as loneliness and unproductivity in older adults (Onyx & Warburton, 2003) and education to be more responsible adults for the youth (Youniss et al., 1997). Indeed, volunteering contributes to countries' Gross Domestic Products (GDP) and provides social cohesion to communities (Ackermann, 2019). Although volunteering activities are primarily associated with creating benefits for others, prior findings discussed the benefits of the volunteering activities to the volunteers themselves (Detollenaere et al., 2017). Despite the importance of volunteering, recent studies show that there has been a consistent decline in the number of volunteers over the past few years (Same et al., 2020; Septianto et al., 2018), which promotes the need to discover new and effective ways to encourage volunteering.

Time and money are the most common resources requested by charities. However, previous studies found that different psychological effects may occur when one is asked by charities for either time or money (Liu & Aaker, 2008; Macdonnell & White, 2015). This indicates certain conditions when people prefer to donate time than money. For instance, people are more inclined to volunteer their time if they are highly religious (Diop et al., 2018) and when they activate an abstract mindset rather than a concrete mindset (Macdonnell & White, 2015). However, little is known regarding the effects of image presentation by charities on consumers' decisions on whether they would donate their time. This study fills this void.

We argue that consumers' preference for donating time is influenced by how charities present an image of the beneficiaries. Based on prior findings on beneficiary number effects (Butts et al., 2019; Kogut & Ritov, 2005; Sharma & Morwitz, 2016), we propose that a charity that presents one beneficiary (vs. many beneficiaries) will attract a higher time donation intention. In an experiment, we revealed that the beneficiary number affects how consumers donate time to a charity. Further, in this study, we explore the underlying mechanism of this effect by examining the mediating role of perceived responsibility. We drew on prior research regarding time donation and the number of beneficiary effects to develop our conceptual

framework.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Time vs. Money Donation

Time and money are the most common resources people spend on donations; yet, people strive to save them, pursue them, worry over them, and use them more efficiently (Macdonnell & White, 2015). They are multifaceted constructs that have received extensive attention from prosocial scholars (Mogilner & Aaker, 2009). Time and money have different psychological characteristics, which leads people to have different preferences in spending them. For instance, since time is less fungible than money, it is more perishable and cannot be stored physically (Mogilner & Aaker, 2009); consequently, people are more careful in spending time. People are also more selective in giving time to others relative to giving money, which makes assessing the qualities of the relationship between the time giver and the time recipient is crucial (Reed et al., 2016). This helps explain why, when people think about the concept of time, they prefer to spend time with close others, such as family and friends (Mogilner, 2010).

Thinking of money instead of time can make people less ethical, less active socially, and work harder (Mogilner, 2010). Activating the concept of money drives people to be more self-sufficient – a psychological state where people focus on achieving personal goals and tend to be detached from others (Vohs et al., 2008). This does not necessarily mean that spending money is self-centered and entirely against the interests of others. Dunn et al. (2014) argue that when people spend money on others' benefits, the donors may reap the feeling of happiness. In contrast, giving time to others increases an individual's connection with the beneficiary and consequently emphasizes one's focus on others rather than oneself (Mogilner & Aaker, 2009).

Individuals respond differently when they are asked for either time or monetary donation. When asked to make a time donation, people focus more on emotional meaning, such as happiness, which later drives them to involve in prosocial behavior (Liu & Aaker, 2008; Mogilner, 2010). Activating the concept of time rather than money also directs people to behave less immorally (Gino & Mogilner, 2014). Conversely, money tends to lead people to become self-serving by

maximizing their benefits because money provides means (Liu & Aaker, 2008) for individuals to achieve personal goals without the help of others (Vohs et al., 2006).

2.2. Helping One or Many? The Beneficiary Number Effects

Literature focusing on the effectiveness of presenting either a single identified beneficiary or multiple beneficiaries has been established. Scholars have elucidated how people are more generous toward single rather than multiple beneficiaries (Sharma & Morwitz, 2016). A single beneficiary induces higher emotional reactions than multiple ones (Kogut & Ritov, 2005) since the single beneficiary provides more detailed information that leads to more vivid imagery and evokes higher emotional reactions (Hamilton & Sherman, 1996; Slovic, 2010). In contrast, presenting many beneficiaries reduces compassion toward the beneficiaries and consequently reduces helping. Compassion fading occurs due to weakened affective responses when people are unable to pay full attention and depict the imagery of multiple beneficiaries compared with a single beneficiary (Butts et al., 2019).

Individual differences are also an essential factor that accounts for the variability of the relationship between the number of beneficiaries and people's intention to donate (Friedrich & McGuire, 2010; Kogut, 2011). For instance, people with lower-analytical thinking are more persuaded to donate when presented with a single identified victim. At the same time, many beneficiaries tend to be irrelevant predictors of donating behavior among those with higher-analytical thinking (Friedrich & McGuire, 2010). Individuals with lower-analytical thinking tend to make spontaneous decisions based on their emotions, such as sympathy and distress, which are more elicited by a single identified rather than multiple victims. While this suggests that presenting a single victim increases an individual's likelihood to help, individuals who hold a chronic belief in a just world may be less sympathetic when presented with a single beneficiary. Just world believers may blame the victim who is considered responsible for their own plight (Kogut, 2011).

2.3. Types of Donations and to Whom the Donation Goes

Donors respond differently when they encounter prosocial requests to help victims who are responsible or irresponsible for their plights (Kogut, 2011; Lee et al., 2014). When people are asked to make time donations, they would focus on the beneficiary's interests and feel compassion for the beneficiary (Mogilner & Aaker, 2009). Since compassion is easier to be experienced toward single beneficiaries than multiple beneficiaries, it is expected that a time donation charitable request would be more effective when the charity presents one rather than multiple

beneficiaries. In contrast, thinking about donating money increases the eagerness to fulfill personal interests (Liu & Aaker, 2008) and is socially separated from others (Vohs et al., 2008). This self-focus orientation in donating money, compared with volunteering, diverts one's focus from others' interests, making the number of beneficiaries irrelevant to the helping intention. We hypothesized:

H1: When individuals are asked for time donation, a charitable ad presenting one beneficiary will generate more donation intentions than many beneficiaries. This effect diminishes when the charity asks for a monetary donation.

People have some awareness that their potential behavior may impact the welfare of others in their social interactions (Schwartz, 1968). Thus, in prosocial contexts, people often feel responsible for helping others in need (Basil et al., 2006; Fanggidae et al., 2020). Perceived responsibility is more significant for people who have a more robust social connection with the potential helper (Levine & Crowther, 2008). For instance, significantly more people intend to donate bone marrow to a cousin rather than a stranger because they feel more responsible for helping their family or relatives (Baron & Miller, 2000). Making time (vs. money) donation evokes a personal connection with the beneficiaries, which is also the case when an individual is asked to help one (vs. many) beneficiaries. Thus, it is expected that donating time to one beneficiary leads to higher perceived responsibility, increasing one's donation intent.

H2: Perceived responsibility mediates the effect of donation type on donation intention, while this effect is moderated by the beneficiary number.

3. Methods

Based on the literature review, this study examines the willingness of the participants to donate time or money when they encounter one or many beneficiaries. This study tests whether beneficiary number (one vs. many) moderates the relationship between donation type (time vs. money) and intention to donate. This study predicts that the intention to donate to one beneficiary (vs. many beneficiaries) will be higher if the charity asks for a time (vs. money) donation.

Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (donation type: time vs. money) x 2 (beneficiary number: one vs. many) between participant experimental design. The dependent variable was an intention to make donations.

A total of 210 Indonesian undergraduate students aged between 17 and 24 responded to the online survey. After screening the responses to the study inclusion criteria, the final sample comprised 189 participants (58% were female). We decided to recruit students as the study participants since this demographic group provides heterogeneous characteristics necessary for psychology and social science (Hanel & Vione, 2016). Additionally, student volunteering is increasing as it

benefits the students, higher education institutions, and charity causes (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2020).

Undergraduate students in an Indonesian university were invited to participate in this study by completing an online survey. Participants were selected through convenient sampling by using an online study advertisement in various channels of massaging groups (including WhatsApp Group and Facebook Messenger). The first page of the survey contained information about the study description, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and benefits/risks. Potential participants would then be asked to click the “agree” button to indicate their agreement to the study participation. The ethical aspect of the study has been institutionally reviewed.

Participants were then randomly divided into two groups based on donation types, time (i.e., volunteering), and monetary donations. In the time donation (i.e., volunteering) condition, participants were informed that the charity needs more volunteers and asked them to volunteer their time to the charity during the blood drive day. The participants were assured that the blood drive would be held on the weekend and not interrupt their classes. They were informed that the charity needed more money to organize the blood drive in the money donation condition. They were then asked to donate money to the organization. The charity is the Indonesian Red Cross, a well-known not-for-profit organization whose primary goal is to ease the suffering of patients who need a blood transfusion. The purpose of featuring a credible charity is to increase the possibility that participants would be attentive to the message (Bendapudi et al., 1996).

Half of the participants in each group (i.e., time and money donations) see different charitable ads. The first group saw an image of a patient in a hospital who needed a blood transfusion, while the other group saw an image of seven patients. The text attached to the images is identical. The participants were asked to indicate their willingness to donate (i.e., time or money) which serves as the dependent variable in the study. After responding to the dependent variable, participants responded to questions regarding the mediation, manipulation checks, and demographic data. The participants were debriefed and thanked.

3.1. The Dependent Variable

This study adapted a scale that examines the intention to donate time or money to a charity from a prior study by White and Pelozo (2009). The scale comprises two items where participants responded on a seven-point scale (1 = very unlikely, and 7 = very likely). The questions are: (1) If our lives get back to normal, how likely would you be to make a (time or money) donation to the Indonesian Red Cross?; (2) If our lives get back to normal, how inclined are you to donate (time or money) to the Indonesian Red Cross?

3.2. Perceived Responsibility

The variable was measured through two items on a 7-point scale (1 = Very much, and 7 = Not at all) adapted from Erlandsson et al. (2015). The items are: (1) How much good do you think you can do by donating (time/money) to the Indonesian Red Cross? (2) How great a difference do you think you can make by donating (time/money) to the Indonesian Red Cross?

3.3. Manipulation Check

To confirm whether the manipulations were effective, we asked two binary questions: (1) I was asked to donate (time/money); (2) The image in the brochure showed (one/more than one) participant. The questions were self-developed.

4. Results

Descriptive analyses were conducted. Cronbach's alpha of donation intention ($\alpha = .92$) shows a reliable internal consistency within the scales (Hinton et al., 2014). Similar results were also observed for perceived responsibility ($\alpha = .89$). Means, standard deviations, and correlations between variables are presented in the following table.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, correlations, and Cronbach's alpha

Variable	α	M	SD	1
1. Donation intent	.92	4.91	2.23	
2. Perceived responsibility	.89	4.53	1.99	.32**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

We first employed age and gender as control variables since previous studies suggested that variations in age (Matsumoto et al., 2016) and gender (Espinosa & Kovářik, 2015) influence individuals' donating attitudes. However, the data did not find the main effects of age ($F(1, 198) = .76, p = .38$) and gender ($F(1, 198) = 1.21, p = .27$) on the donation intention. Thus, the potential control variables (i.e., age and gender) were excluded in the main analysis.

A two-way ANOVA was conducted to inspect the interaction between donation types (1 = time, 2 = money) and beneficiary number (1 = one, 2 = many) on the donation intention. Although the results demonstrated no main effects of beneficiary number ($F(1, 194) = 1.67, p = .19$), the main effect of donation types was statistically significant ($F(1, 194) = 26.07, p < .001$) on the donation intention. This indicates that people are more willing to give their money than time when they are asked by charities to donate. More importantly, the interaction effect of the two independent variables on donation intention was significant ($F(1, 194) = 4.89, p < .028$). The interaction is illustrated in Figure 1.

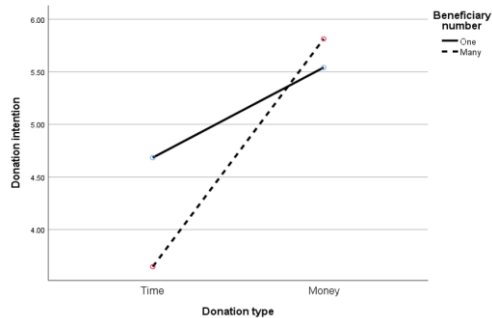


Figure 1. The interaction effect of donation type and beneficiary number on donation intention

The results of independent sample t-test analyses demonstrated that when the participants were asked for a time donation, their donation intention was higher when they saw an image of a patient ($M = 4.68$, $SD = 2.06$) than an image of many patients ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 2.47$, $F(1, 194) = 6.20$, $p = .01$). These results support our first hypothesis. In contrast, in the money donation condition, donation intention difference between the participants who saw an image of a patient ($M = 5.54$, $SD = 1.88$) and those who saw an image of many patients ($M = 5.81$, $SD = 1.83$, $F(1, 194) = .42$, $p = .52$) was not significant.

We examined whether perceived responsibility mediates the relationship between donation types and donation intention when the beneficiary number was assigned as a moderator. To test the second hypothesis, a bootstrap moderated mediation model (Process Model 7) (Hayes, 2013) was conducted. Donation types (1 = money, 2 = time; the independent variable) and beneficiary numbers (1 = one, 2 = many; the moderating variable) while donation intention was the dependent variable. The direct effect of donation types on donation intention ($b = 1.59$, $SE = .28$, $p < 0.01$) was significant. Indirectly, perceived responsibility mediated the link between donation types and donation intent as shown by the moderated mediation index ($b = .58$, $SE = .24$, $95\% \text{ CI} = [.14, 1.10]$). However, the indirect effect was conditional. It was only significant when the respondents saw one beneficiary in the charitable campaign ($b = -.36$, $SE = .16$, $95\% \text{ CI} = [-.70, -.06]$), while it was not significant when they saw many beneficiaries ($b = .21$, $SE = .16$, $95\% \text{ CI} = [-.08, .55]$). The significant indirect effect suggests that, when encountered with one beneficiary, the participants in the time (vs. money) donation condition felt more responsible for the beneficiary's welfare and consequently showed higher donation intentions. These findings support our second hypothesis.

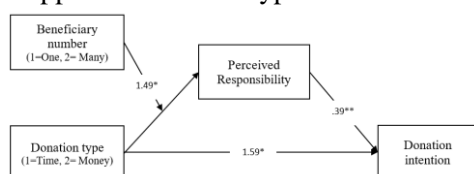


Figure 2. The moderated mediation model of perceived responsibility in the relationship between donation type and donation intention

5. Conclusion

Our findings contribute to the literature by demonstrating that donation of time depends on the number of beneficiaries (Kogut & Ritov, 2005) presented by charities. We included a monetary donation to examine whether the beneficiary effect influences the donation intention in different donation types. In our experiment, we manipulated donation types (time vs. money) and beneficiary numbers (one vs. many). We found that, when the participants were asked to donate time, their donation increased only when one beneficiary was shown in the charitable campaign. Nonetheless, the beneficiary number effect was diminished when the participants were requested to donate their money. We also investigated the underlying mechanism of the beneficiary number effect on different donation types by proposing the mediating role of perceived responsibility (Erlandsson et al., 2015). It is confirmed that people felt more responsible to one beneficiary if they were asked for time than money donation. However, when the charity presented an image of many beneficiaries, the level of perceived responsibilities between time and money donations were equal. The high perceived responsibility, in turn, increased the donation intent.

Our study presents a new understanding of people's inclination to donate either their time or money to charities. Prior studies have explicated individual preferences when asked to make donations. For instance, Chen et al. (2019) argued that people donate time over money because they experience social presence, trust toward the charity, and are inclined to control their behavior. However, subjective norm was included as the main reason for donating time. Our findings highlight a vivid yet understudied factor that is the graphical appearance of the prosocial campaign as a determining factor in donating either time or money.

Social marketers and non-profit institutions can benefit from this study's findings because it shows that donation types (time vs. money) and beneficiary numbers (one vs. many) can be used to increase consumers' intention to volunteer. Beneficiary image is commonly used in charitable campaigns (Choi et al., 2016; Small & Verrochi, 2009) by charities asking for a source of donations (i.e., time and money). Thus, this study provides the most appropriate combination of beneficiary numbers and different types of donations in generating time donation intent. Additionally, this study gives an essential insight into how images can evoke a specific emotional feeling (i.e., perceived responsibility) and, eventually, boost consumers' donation intention.

6. Limitations and Further Study

Our study offers an avenue for future research. First, since this study measures donation intention rather than

actual donations, future studies can extend the external validity of the current study's findings with a field experiment when possible. Second, although the student sample is considered appropriate for its heterogeneous characteristics (Hanel & Vione, 2016), it could be problematic since there are differences in prosocial behavior between students and the general population, as suggested by a previous study (Falk et al., 2013). To resolve this issue, future research should collect data from a more general population.

Third, while dual system thinking (i.e., deliberative vs. intuitive) can influence sympathy and helping behavior (Small et al., 2007; Small & Verrochi, 2009), this study excludes it as a determining factor. Prior research found that sad versus happy expressions have different impacts on how consumers feel sympathy toward the beneficiaries. However, this emotional contagion is diminished when consumers think deliberatively about the image (Small & Verrochi, 2009). Future research can include dual system thinking as an additional moderating factor besides beneficiary number (one vs. many) that can influence the link between donation types (time vs. money) and donation intention or behavior. It is possible that when people are in a deliberative thinking mode, perceived responsibility is weakened, even in a situation when the charity is presenting one beneficiary and is asking for time donations.

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Authors' Contributions

Nonce F. Tuati was the main author, generated the idea, and performed the data collection process. Jappy P. Fanggidae designed the analytical methods and analyzed the findings. Karel K. Himawan supervised the findings and writing the paper.

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