Influences on Generosity:
The Effects of Internal and External Influences on Generosity

Abbi Hawkins

Eastern Mennonite University

Overview

Generosity is the act of giving. Whether it be money or time, it is something that happens around us all the time, yet we don't always notice it. It was estimated that 53.1% of all Americans made a charitable gift in 2016 (Osili & Zarins, 2018). Beyond monetary gifts, many people also give time. Twenty-five percent of the American population volunteers, and the average American adult will spend 52 hours a year volunteering their time to many organizations ("the ultimate list of charitable giving," n.d.). Many previous studies have focused on either money donations or time donations but not both. The purpose of this study was to better understand the predictors of generosity and whether they differ between donations of money and donations of time. **The four influences included perceived peer influence, perceived church influence, perceived family influence, and perceived personal influence.** This study allows us to better understand how the two compare to each other regarding the chosen influencers.

Study Aims

- Better understand how the predictors of generosity differ in donation types.
- Examine the way four factors (peer, church, family, and personal) influence people to give.

Methods

- **50 participants** from Mennonite and non-denominational churchs.
- Participants were recruited via email and provided with a consent form that explained the nature of the task.
- The questionnaire was a **30-41 questions**. The number of questions depended on whether people said they donated time, money, or both.
- Every question was in Likert scale format and were scored accordingly on a scale of 1-5.

- Questions about demographics were collected to find age range and religious background.
- There were 4 sections (peer, church, family, and personal) that had 4 or 6 questions each. The questions paralleled each other which can be seen in figure 1 below.
- Questions within each section were then averaged and analyzed with the monetary or time donation variables.

Figure 1. Example questions from the survey. Each question mirrored another question and asked about both time donations and money donations.

Results

- Two linear regression analyses were conducted to reach these results.
- In each analysis, the formula used was:
- Time Donations = $\beta_1$perceived peer influence + $\beta_2$perceived church influence + $\beta_3$perceived family influence + $\beta_4$perceived personal influence + ε
- Money Donations = $\beta_1$perceived peer influence + $\beta_2$perceived church influence + $\beta_3$perceived family influence + $\beta_4$perceived personal influence + ε

Predictors of Time Donations

	Standardized (β)	*p*
Church Influence	0.209	0.307
Peer Influence	-0.126	0.500
Family Influence	-0.114	0.579
Personal Influence	-0.208	0.335

Figure 2a. Standardized coefficients and significance values for predictors of time.

Predictors of Money Donations

	Standardized (β)	*p*
Church Influence	-0.269	0.075
Peer Influence	0.433	0.007
Family Influence	-0.293	0.041
Personal Influence	-0.396	0.007

Figure 2b. Standardized coefficients and significance values for the predictors of money.

Predictors of Time Donations

- In the time condition, there were no statistically significant predictors, however the results trended in similar fashion as monetary donations as you can see in the two figures above.

Predictors of Money Donations

- **Monetary Donations (*p* = .007, Standardized = .443) had a strong and significant relationship with peer influence. People who gave felt their peers had more influence gave more monetarily.**
- **Family Influence (*p* = .041, Standardized = -.293) and Personal Influence (*p* = .007, Standardized = -.396) both had negative relationships with monetary donations and were significant. This means people who gave more felt they were not influenced by family or personal relationships or that it actually had an influence on them not wanting to not give.**
- **Church Influence (*p* = .075, Standardized = -.269) had a marginally significant relationship to monetary donations, however it was a negative relationship similar to family and personal influence.**

Discussion

- People who tend to donated more money feel they are influenced by peers. This could be related to the idea that these people will go to more charity dinners with their friends and then feel pressured to donate (for example).
- The negative correlations contradict previous research (Lee & Chang, 2007) and maybe should not be taken as significant results.

Limitations

- Further research should be done with more more participants to help balance outliers.
- Better defining of volunteering time and donating money may also help participants to see activities in their lives as more significant and may have helped change their answers.