

# **An Assessment of the Giving Behaviours of University Students**

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## **Abstract**

This paper presents the results of a survey data examining the giving behaviours of university students. A convenience sample of 329 students in Australia voluntarily participated in a two-part survey to determine the level of university students' involvement in donating to non-profit charity organisations. Fifty-six per cent of respondents donated to not for profit organisations in the last two years and the overwhelming majority (90%) made a one-off donation. Statistically significant difference was noted between the two groups (those persons who were born in Australia and those persons who were born overseas) with regard to the emotional utility, performance, trust, and commitment constructs. Respondents who were either Australian born or who made Australia their usual country of residence were more likely to have donated to not for profit organisations than would students from other countries.

## **Introduction**

This paper attempts to assess the giving behaviours of university students with particular emphasis on monetary donations, although giving can also be in form of body parts and blood (Burnet 1981; Pressemier, Beamon and Hanssen, 1977) or time as a volunteer (e.g., Dolnicar and Randle 2004, Bussell and Forbes, 2002). Different authors to illustrate the motivating factors of helping behaviour (Batson, 1987; Krebs and Miller 1985; Mathur 1996; Radley and Kennedy 1995) put various models forward, however, these models fail to explain and explore the factors that drive the value of gifts (Schelegelmilch, Diamantopoulos and Love, 1992). Sargeant, Ford and West (2006) address these issues by summarising those important factors that determine individual giving and exploring relationships between trust and commitment and giving behaviour. Trust refers to the extent of donor belief that a charity will behave as expected and fulfil its obligation (Sargeant, West and Ford, 2004). It always involves some degree of self-sacrifice and is unlikely to occur in circumstances where trust does not exist. Sargeant, Ford and West (2006, p.163) suggest that trust appears unrelated to the direct benefits that accrue to donors as a consequence of their gift, however, "trust and commitment are predicated on the perceived benefits supplied to beneficiaries and the manner in which the impact of these benefits is communicated back to the donors". However, these authors reiterate that perceptual determinants or the role of particular determinants as well as the relationship between trust and commitment and giving behaviour might vary by context (i.e. geographical contexts) (2006,p.163). Giving behaviour to charities has been widely discussed in the non-profits in the US and the UK. In 1996, £3.6 billion worth of donations was given to charitable organisations in the UK (Pharoah, 2000). These figures represented 80% of the UK's population had given either time or monetary donations to the non-profits (Sargeant, West and Ford, 2004). In Australia, a total of \$7.2 billion was donated to non-profit organisation in 2002, a contributed by 66% of the Australian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2002). Studies in Australia (Polonsky, Shelley and Voola, 2002; Shelley and Polonsky, 2002) show that whilst altruistic reasons (familial utility) play an important role in giving, a stronger emphasis was also placed on egoistic reasons

(demonstrable/emotional utility). However, Sargeant, Ford and West (2006) conclude that a significant positive link exists between emotional/familial utility and commitment, and that emotional utility and familial utility are of similar importance to trust in driving commitment, and consequently leading to giving behaviour. This study applied Sargeant, Ford and West's giving behaviour scale items to assess university students' giving behaviours to nonprofit organisations.

## Methods

The objective of this research was to assess the giving behaviour of university students. A two-part questionnaire using the giving behaviour scale items was administered in classrooms with a convenience sample of 329 students. Part 1 sought students' feelings about charitable giving to non-profitable organisation and measured on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). Sargeant, Ford and West (2006,163-4) grouped the scale items into six constructs namely *emotional utility* (two items), *familial utility* (three items), *performance of the organisation* (two items), *communication quality* (six items), *commitment* (four items), and *trust* (five items). Part 2 canvassed general socio-demographic questions and included age, gender, country of birth and country of residence, level of study and whether they gave donated to non-profit organisation in the last two years, and if so to which organisation and how often. Data from 329 completed questionnaires were analysed using SPSS v.13.

## Data Analysis and Discussions

About the same per cent of males and females (50.5% vs. 49.5%) participated in the survey. Students' mean age was 24.4 years, with 56% being 22 years or older; 55% were born in Asian countries, and 55% mentioned Australia as their usual residence. Eighty-three per cent of respondents were undergraduate students. Fifty-six per cent of participants indicated that they had donated to non-profit organisations in the last two years, with overwhelming majority (90%) mentioning a one-off donation. This current study used Sargeant, Ford and West (2006) instrument that consisted of 22 scale items within six constructs. Presented in Table 1 are the mean scores of each scale item together with reliability coefficients alpha ( ) values for the six constructs based on the current study of university students. It should be noted that the values of this study are slightly different than the values reported by Sargeant, Ford and West, which were 0.684, 0.729, 0.831, 0.844, 0.761, and 0.942 for EU, FU, PO, CQ, C, and T respectively (Sargeant, Ford and West, 2006, p.163-4) . The slight differences perhaps associate with the large sample size of 1,000 participants compared with 329 for this study. It should also be noted that one of the constructs in Table 1 namely "familial utility" (FU) had a low reliability with a Cronbach alpha of 0.597.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Scale Items**

Construct/Scale items <sup>a</sup>	Mean <sup>b</sup>
<u>Emotional Utility (EU) ( <math>\alpha = 0.756</math> )</u>	
I often give to this non-profit because I would feel guilty	3.80
If I never gave to this non-profit I would feel bad about myself	3.79
<u>Familial Utility (FU) ( <math>\alpha = 0.597</math> )</u>	
I give money to this non-profit in memory of loved one	3.78
I felt that someone I know might benefit from my support	4.55
My family had a strong link to this non-profit	3.28
<u>Performance of the Organisation (PO) ( <math>\alpha = 0.762</math> )</u>	
This non-profit is the non-profit most likely to have an impact on this issue	4.12
This non-profit spends a high proportion of its income on this cause	4.28
<u>Communication Quality (CQ) ( <math>\alpha = 0.850</math> )</u>	
This nonprofits' communications make me confident it is using my monies...	4.63
This non-profit keeps me informed about how my monies are being used	4.37
I look forward to receiving communications from this organisation	4.17
I feel safe in my transactions with this non-profit	4.66
This non-profit's communications are always courteous	4.73
This non-profit's communications are always timely	4.46
<u>Commitment (C) ( <math>\alpha = 0.821</math> )</u>	
I feel a sense of belonging to this organisation	3.98
I care about the long term success of this organisation	4.66
I would describe myself as a loyal supporter of this organisation	4.11
I will be giving to this non-profit next year	4.27
<u>Trust (T) ( <math>\alpha = 0.916</math> )</u>	
I would trust this non-profit to always act in the best interest of the cause	4.88
I would trust this non-profit to conduct their operations ethically	5.08
I would trust this non-profit to use donated funds appropriately	5.10
I would trust this non-profit not to exploit their donors	4.98
I would trust this non-profit to use fundraising techniques that are appropriate	5.14

<sup>a</sup> Source: Sargeant, Ford and West (2006, p.163-4). <sup>b</sup> 1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree

### Group Means Compared

Independent samples t-test scores were used to compare group means on the six constructs. Gender, age, country of birth, country of usual residence, level of study, and donation history showed statistically different mean scores on at least one of the six constructs. For example, female students had a higher mean (4.37) on the PO construct than their male counterparts (4.04). 22 years old students scored significantly higher mean (4.65) on the CQ construct compared with 21 years old students (4.32). Students born outside Australia tended to score higher mean (4.00) on the FU construct compared with Australian-born students (3.55). Usual place of residence showed statistically significant differences on four of the six constructs as follows: Australian residents' mean score (3.95) on the EU construct was significantly higher (3.58) than those residing elsewhere. The former group also scored higher on the PO and T constructs (4.32, 5.15) compared with the latter group (4.03, 4.88). On the other hand, the latter group scored significantly higher (4.09) on the FU construct compared with former group (3.68). Postgraduate students had higher mean scores (4.64, 4.75) on the PO and CQ constructs compared with undergraduate students' mean scores (4.11, 4.45). Statistically significant mean scores were also reported for giving behaviour on four of the six constructs. Those who donated over the last two years scored significantly higher means (3.96, 4.37,

4.46, 5.27) on the EU, PO, C, and T constructs compared with scores for the non-givers (3.58, 3.99, 3.99, 4.74). Detailed statistics was presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Mean Differences on the Six Constructs (*t-values* are shown)**

Constructs	Gender	Age	Birth place	Residence	Study	Donation
Emotional				2.16*		2.24*
Familial			-2.98**	-2.91**		
Performance	-2.38*			2.09*	-2.94*	2.83**
Communication		-2.84*			-1.99*	
Commitment						3.83***
Trust				2.14*		4.21***

Significance at: \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

### Predicting Giving Behaviour

Logistic regression allows one to predict how well a set of predictor variables explains categorical dependent variable such as group membership from a set of continuous, discrete, dichotomous or a mix of variables (Pallant, 2006; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001). In this case, the predictor variables were the six constructs discussed above. Categorical predictor variables included gender, age, birth place, usual residence, and level of study. The dependent variable was whether the students donated to nonprofit organization in the last two years (with either a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer). Table 3 shows regression coefficients, Wald statistics, and statistical significance. Commitment (C), familial utility (FU), trust (T) and residence were significant predictors (multiple  $R = .31$ ) of giving (yes or no). Among constructs commitment was the most significant predictor of giving ( $\beta = .46$ ), followed by trust ( $\beta = .31$ ), and familial utility ( $\beta = .28$ ). Among demographic characteristics, only residence was a significant predictor with  $\beta = .89$ .

**Table 3: Logistics Regression Analysis of Giving Behaviour**

Predictors	Beta ( $\beta$ )	S.E.	Wald	Sig.
Familial (FU)	0.275	0.119	5.345	0.021
Commitment (C)	0.457	0.155	8.700	0.003
Trust (T)	0.306	0.147	4.312	0.038
Residence	0.887	0.301	8.660	0.003

Variable(s) entered: Emotional(EU), Familial(FU), Performance(PO), Communication (CQ), Commitment (C), Trust (T), COB, COR, Age, Gender, Level of Study.

### Implications and Conclusion

Today, competition in the fundraising industry is getting more intense than ever. Hence, every penny from the fundraising budget counts, and fundraisers are always in search of greater efficiency. Trust as being the integrity of the charity, was expressed as an important factor towards donor’s commitment to a charity. However, for charities, “trust is difficult to

establish, easy to block and constantly under threat” (Fenton, Passey and Hems, 1999, p.39). To gain and maintain “trust” in the donor-charity relationship is meeting the expectations of donors on the organisation’s effectiveness and its level of courtesy. A number of limitations ought to be mentioned. The conclusions for this study were drawn from 329 respondents. Due to this small sample size the results from the research has limited generalisation. Future research will need to collect data from a larger student population from different geographical settings in order to increase reliability of the results. Secondly, this study did not focus on specific giving behaviour towards the charity’s nature, for instance, humanitarian, environmental, disease foundation, animals, etc. hence it does not represent the precise giving behaviour of a particular type of charities. Therefore, future studies may focus on the specific type of charity (i.e. humanitarian).

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