

Not only a number: an experimental study exploring relations between guilt, perceived self-efficacy, perceived responsibility, and moral identity on donating behavior within statistical victim campaigns

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ABSTRACT

- **Objective**

Targeting donating behavior in Statistical Victim (SV) campaigns can support NGO efforts in funding important humanitarian activities. Such campaigns can considerably reduce the suffering of larger population groups that rely heavily on such funds, highlighting the importance of effective campaign designs. The present study aimed to identify the factors that enhance donating behavior in a Statistical Victim (SV) charity campaign and compared it to a fictional Identifiable Victim (IV) charity campaign.

- **Method**

A 2x2x2 between-subjects design ($N = 261$, $M_{\text{age}} = 25.6$ $SD = 8.72$, 36.4% male; 63.6% female) was conducted by carrying out a MANOVA, mediation analyses, and a moderated mediation. Self-report measures were implemented for guilt and Perceived Self-Efficacy (PSE); closed single item questions were used for assessing donating behavior and Perceived Responsibility (PR), and Moral Identity Questionnaire was used to measure Moral Identity (MI).

- **Results**

Results indicate that the type of victim used in a campaign does not influence donating behavior via either of the studied factors (Guilt, PR, PSE, MI). Findings suggest direct effects of PR and guilt on donating behavior. Additional effects of the investigated factors are presented.

- **Discussion**

Altogether, the present study suggests that the type of victim used in a charity campaign does not seem to have an influence on donating behavior. Rather, a direct influence of guilt and PR on donating behavior is suggested, though further research is needed. The measure of Self-Efficacy (SE) designed to fit the purpose of this study showed good reliability and might be used in the future to fit similar purposes in the context of charity campaigns.

Keywords

statistical victim, identifiable victim, guilt, perceived responsibility, moral identity, perceived self-efficacy, donating behavior

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1. INTRODUCTION

Wars, catastrophes, health crises, and other humanitarian crises are often happening around the globe. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2019), 70.8 million people are coercively dislodged worldwide due to these events and crises. Consequently, increasing economic resources are needed by a large number of populations in the world, such as refugees, war victims, or those threatened by hunger. Thus, as members of society, it is a moral duty to give an empathic response to these issues. In our society, governmental bodies act in order to convey social welfare, which is often not enough aid to develop a benevolent society that also works in the interest of disadvantaged people (Chang & Lee, 2009). As such, NGO efforts aim to increase donations in charity campaigns. However, the income of these organizations has decreased in the last years, which has led them to rely on donations in order to sustain the humanitarian activities they accomplish around the world (Nelson, Brunel, Supphellen, & Manchanda, 2006). Hence, it is highly relevant to understand how to possibly increase society's willingness to donate so that organizations can create better-tailored charity campaigns, which in turn will help more deprived people.

When it comes to charity campaigns and donating behaviors, people react in several different ways. First, it is essential to define what a charity campaign is; in order to do this, the literature may give aid. According to Albouy (2017), a charity campaign is a type of social-marketing campaign which encourages behaviors towards others, such as a financial donation, with the peculiarity of benefitting only the beneficiary and not the donator. As it can be noticed, a charity campaign pursues a behavior that aims to benefit only others, not the self, which is defined as a charitable offering. Indeed, according to Bekkers and Wiepking (2011), a charitable offering consists of a monetary donation to an organization that will aid only third parties involved. Hence, neither the donator nor the organization will benefit from this offer. This behavior, which NGOs seek in their campaigns, is called "prosocial behaviors"; it aims to "improve the well-being of others or society without offering any direct benefits to the

benefactor" (Albouy, 2017, p. 4). Therefore, it is possible to identify the donating behavior as prosocial behavior, since the donation would only affect the recipient and not the benefactor.

As the literature explains, charity campaigns are characterized by two types of victims: The Identifiable Victim (IV) and the Statistical Victim (SV), which will be further explained in detail in the following section of this paper. Their relevance lies in the effect they have on donating behavior. To be more specific, it has been demonstrated that the IV receives more donations than the SV since the IV includes only a single identifiable person in need. At the same time, the SV relates to a larger group of people in need (Kogut, 2011). The problem in this claim lies in the fact that only the IV will benefit from the donation, which tends to be a good outcome, but at the same time leaves a larger group of people in need without aid. Therefore, it is logical to think that enhancing the donations in SV campaigns will reach a more significant number of people seeking for help, thus making the effort of the campaign more effective (Loewenstein, Small, & Strnad, 2005; Small, D. A., Loewenstein, G., & Slovic, 2005).

Hence, this study aims to investigate which factors may enhance donating behavior in charity campaigns regarding the SV in order to achieve useful and practical findings that can lead to increase our knowledge in the field of charity campaigns and in enhancing donating behavior in people. Moreover, as mentioned before, these findings may help the NGOs to better tailor charity campaigns, which, in turn, could augment the willingness to donate. Therefore, the following research question is investigated:

To what extent do type of victim, message framing, and Moral Identity (MI) contribute to donating behavior in the context of a Statistical Victim (SV) campaign compared to an Identifiable Victim (IV) campaign?

Precisely, to better explain the research question, a set of sub-questions with further clarifying factors are proposed: *What is the difference in the effectiveness of the type of victim? To what extent does Perceived Responsibility (PR) play a role? To what extent does guilt play a*

role? To what extent does Perceived Self-Efficacy (PSE) play a role? And lastly, what is the role of Moral Identity (MI)? These factors and their relevance will be explained in detail in the following sections.

In order to answer this research question, a 2 (type of victim: Identifiable Victim (IV) versus Statistical Victim (SV)) x2 (message framing: Non Self-Efficacious frame (NSE) versus Self-Efficacious frame (SE)) x2 (Moral Identity (MI): high versus low) between subjects design was employed to research the effects on guilt, Perceived Responsibility (PR), Perceived Self-Efficacy (PSE), Moral Identity (MI), and donating behavior in SV campaigns.

1.1 Identifiable Victim (IV) and Statistical Victim (SV)

"The Identifiable Victim Effect (IVE) refers to the individuals' tendency to offer greater aid to identifiable victims than to statistical victims" (Lee & Feeley, 2018, p. 875). To better understand this theory, it is fundamental to understand what an identifiable victim (IV) and a statistical victim (SV) are. The difference between the two lies in the number and the level of information or details provided. The IV refers to an individual that requires help. So, it involves only a single individual that needs help and assistance in facing a difficult situation. They are usually presented with an accurate amount of information such as names, ages, faces, and the difficult situation they are facing. Regarding the SV, the characteristics are similar, but the difference lies in the number of individuals. The SV relates to a group of people that are asking for help (Lee & Feeley, 2018). So, it includes all the groups, populations, nations, or communities that need support and aid because they are facing a problematic situation. SVs are often characterized by general information about the population or group, such as statistics of deaths or country of origin. The people perceive these differences in different ways, so these disparities create a distinction between these two types of victims. (Lee & Feeley, 2018). It has been argued

a lot in the literature why this phenomenon exists and affects people's way of processing these issues.

On the one hand, according to Slovic (2010), individuals have difficulties in cognitively processing information about a group of victims, and this often results in the absence of emotions or a drastic reduction of them. On the other hand, a single individual in need, as the IV, is recognized as a concrete and consistent psychological unit arousing several emotions in comparison to a group of victims, which elicit fewer emotions (Lee & Feeley, 2018). Therefore, this theory explains how an IV communicates a more robust emotional reaction than SV. Indeed, according to Slovic (2010), the emotional reactions resulting from the exposition of respondents to an image that evokes sympathy, compassion, and distress start to reduce as the number of individuals involved rise up, even when the victims are only two individuals. Therefore, the number of victims is an essential indicator of the effectiveness of evoking emotions. Hence, large amounts of victims are likely to turn into a common statistic and fail in the mission of arousing the emotions of people and thereby lose the chance in persuading them to offer their help (Lee & Feeley, 2018).

1.1.1 Perceived Responsibility (PR)

Although the IV has shown to have the power to increase the willingness to donate not always this turns to be true. According to Kogut (2011), it has been found that an IV might decrease the donating behavior since the respondent may perceive the single, specific victim responsible for their plight. For example, a campaign asking to help a person with AIDS could result in a blaming behavior from the respondent as a result of thinking that the victim could have been avoided to get AIDS since he could have had sex without using the condom or because he could have gotten by using heavy drugs.

Conversely, the use of statistical victim decreases the possibility of incurring in this problem, since the blaming response decrease if the victim is not identifiable (Kogut, 2011). To be more specific, if a statistical campaign on AIDS is carried out, it will be more difficult to blame or give the responsibility of their action to someone in particular, when a group or number representative for a group is presented, thereby decreasing the tendency of a blaming response. So, it is very relevant to know how this factor may influence the willingness to donate. However, the existing literature has not reached a satisfactory level of saturation to be able to draw conclusive statements concerning its role. Nonetheless, it can be argued that using SV's in a campaign might surpass the possibility of the PR to have a negative influence or resistance on donating behavior. Because literature is rather scarce in this area, this research addresses this aspect with the following hypotheses:

***H1a:** Presenting a Statistical Victim (SV) negatively influences Perceived Responsibility (PR) compared to presenting an Identifiable Victim (IV).*

***H1b:** Presenting an Identifiable Victim (IV) positively influences Perceived Responsibility (PR) compared to presenting a Statistical Victim (SV).*

***H1c:** The effect of type of victim on donating behavior is mediated by Perceived Responsibility (PR).*

1.1.2 Guilt

Regarding the emotions provoked by social campaigns, it has been primarily argued about the use of negative emotions. Indeed, emotions such as fear, guilt, and shame are often mentioned in the literature regarding charity campaigns (Albouy, 2017; Basil, Ridgway, & Basil, 2008; Hibbert, Smith, Davies, & Ireland, 2007). Since it is known that negative emotions evoke psychological annoyance, they are widely used to create uncomfortable situations to achieve a motivated action by the individual in order to decrease the discomfort (Brennan & Binney, 2010).

Indeed, according to Albouy (2017), it has been demonstrated that negative emotions increase the possibility of a positive outcome concerning prosocial behavior, especially in the field of charity campaigns.

A common negative emotion that is often aroused in charity campaigns is guilt, which has been often associated with the generation of prosocial behavior (Hibbert et al., 2007). Moreover, the literature showed that guilt may have several typologies. The most relevant in this context is the existential guilt, consisting in the consciousness of the gap between the well-being of the individual and the victim (e.g., donator and IV or SV victim) (Basil et al., 2008). These findings are subsequent to previous works on guilt, which were focusing on action-reaction. To better understand this concept, when an individual performs an action for which he feels guilty, he tends to commit a consequent prosocial behavior in order to remedy his action (Carlsmith & Gross, 1969).

As it has been demonstrated by the studies mentioned above, the role of guilt may affect donating behavior. In addition to what has been stated about the action motivating the role of emotions on donation behavior, especially in identifiable victims (see section 1.1), there might be some exceptions to this. Statistical victims might also have the capacity to cause at least equal emotional reactions and call on people's actions as for identifiable victims. Motivation to help victims in immediate, as well as whether the nature of the cause of needing help appears to play a considerable role (Daniels, 2012). The author suggests that the motivation to help identifiable victims naturally produces the commitment to extend this to statistical victims, as a matter of social commitment. The stimulation of reasons by the victim presented can differ based on the individual's argumentation and preference. This study investigates this possibility; that statistical victim might evoke a comparable amount of guilt in people. Due to the strong support of literature, the superiority of the identifiable victim in initiating guilt was investigated similarly.

The following hypotheses were explored:

***H2a:** Presenting an Identifiable Victim (IV) positively influences guilt compared to presenting a Statistical Victim (SV).*

***H2b:** Presenting a Statistical Victim (SV) positively influences guilt compared to presenting an Identifiable Victim (IV).*

***H2c:** The effect of type of victim on donating behavior is mediated by guilt.*

1.2 Message Framing and Perceived Self-Efficacy (PSE)

In the field of charity campaigns, several advertising practices and methods are carried out to make the campaign able to reach the public and, of course, incrementing the donating behavior. One of the most important types of practice is the message framing. Framing consists of shaping the information in a way that the recipients of the message are significantly influenced by it. Framing it is a strategy widely used in communication and in advertising campaign given the powerful properties that it has (Chang & Lee, 2009).

Prosocial behavior as a product of arousing negative emotions in individuals is often related to the element of Perceived Self-Efficacy (PSE), which is widely implemented in social campaigns. To contextualize the PSE, it comes from the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) which believes that human behavior is led by three factors, such as behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and perceived behavioral control (control beliefs); this research will focus on the perceived behavioral control, which is related to the PSE. Indeed, the control beliefs consist in the "perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior" (Ajzen, 2002, p. 665), which ascribe to the PSE since it consists in the individual's perception of having the ability and the possibility to perform a prosocial behavior before pursuing an attempt (Basil et al., 2008).

According to Basil et al. (2008), PSE has been found to have the power to decrease the possibility of receiving maladaptive responses regarding the message that the campaign wants to communicate. In order to better understand how a self-efficacious framed message works, an

example is provided:

"With only 10€, you can support rescue ships to save migrants in the Mediterranean Sea."

As it is possible to notice in the example, the perception of PSE lies in the fact that a small amount of money as 10 Euros, for instance, it is an affordable item for most of the people that live in developed countries; therefore it makes the respondents understand that they have the ability to pursue the giving behavior, which, in turn, will increase the willingness to donate.

Thus, this study is aiming to test the extent to which a framed self-efficacious message influences donating behavior. The relevance of this investigation comes from the fact that most of the literature does not analyze the effect of PSE message framing within charity campaigns. Rather, respondents are guided to understand their ability to pursue their intended behaviors through other means, such as interactive computer games (Thomas, Cahill, & Santilli, 1997). Therefore, this study will implement PSE in the message framing of the campaign in order to test the effect that this might have on donating behavior, mainly focusing on SVs. So, the researcher defined the following hypotheses:

H3a: *A self-efficacious frame (SE) has a positive effect on donating behavior compared to a non-self-efficacious frame (NSE).*

H3b: *A self-efficacious frame (SE) has a more positive effect on donating behavior in a Statistical Victim (SV) campaign compared to an Identifiable Victim (IV) campaign.*

1.3 Moral identity (MI)

Concerning charity campaigns, another essential factor is Moral Identity (MI). To comprehend how MI works is necessary to understand what moral traits are. They consist of behaviors and feelings that relate to morality, such as being kind or manifest prosocial behavior

spontaneously. So, MI represents how much importance an individual gives to these traits (e.g., how much the individual cares to have these traits) (Lee, Winterich, & Ross, 2014). Therefore, individuals that identify themselves with these traits are more likely to have reflections and behaviors that relate to prosocial behavior. At the same time, this does not exclude individuals with low MI in either manifesting moral traits mentioned before or engage in prosocial behavior (Lee et al., 2014). It is just not as strong as someone with a high MI. Considering what has been mentioned above, it has been demonstrated that individuals with high moral identity usually tend to donate more than people with a lower MI; this is also the case when the donation addresses people from an outgroup, which happens less frequently for individuals with a level of MI lower (Reed II & Aquino, 2003).

Arguably, as it has been discussed in the previous paragraph (See Section 1.1.1.), people perceived a group of victims less responsible for the plight when they are compared to a single victim. Therefore, the literature suggests that SVs are less likely to be considered responsible for their plight (Kogut, 2011). About this, in the study conducted by Lee et al. (2014), it has been demonstrated that the impact of MI on donating behavior strongly depended on whether the respondent perceived the victim to be responsible (PR). This study demonstrated that an individual with high MI might not perform a donating behavior if he or she perceives the victim responsible for his or her plight.

Hence, by relating these two findings, it is interesting to investigate whether the type of victim may influence the Perceived Responsibility (PR) of the victim, and thereby influence donating behavior in respondents high in MI. Specifically, this paper will investigate whether the SV, as it is suggested to be held less responsible, will have a positive influence on donating behavior for the respondents scoring high on MI. When SVs are generally considered less responsible and donating behavior of highly moral individuals is decreased when victims are considered responsible, employing SV in campaigns might be more beneficial to enhance donations. Therefore, the following hypothesis may be formulated:

H4: high Moral Identity (MI) strengthens the effect of Statistical Victim (SV) on Perceived Responsibility (PR), and in turn, on donating behavior.

1.4 Conceptual model

To give a better understanding of this study, a conceptual model (See Figure 1.) and an overview of the hypotheses tested (See Table 1) are proposed:

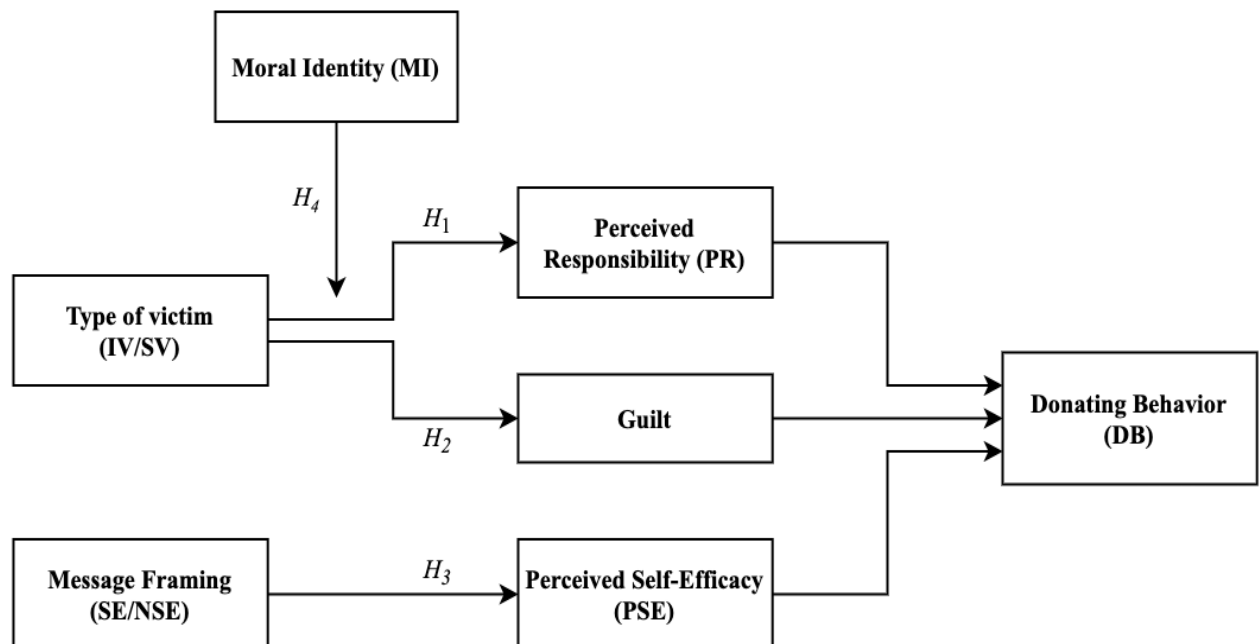


Figure 1. Conceptual model

Table 1*Overview of the tested hypotheses*

No	Hypothesis
<i>H1a</i>	<i>Presenting a Statistical Victim (SV) negatively influences Perceived Responsibility (PR) compared to presenting an Identifiable Victim (IV).</i>
<i>H1b</i>	<i>Presenting an Identifiable Victim (IV) positively influences Perceived Responsibility (PR) compared to presenting a Statistical Victim (SV).</i>
<i>H1c</i>	<i>The effect of type of victim on donating behavior is mediated by Perceived Responsibility (PR)</i>
<i>H2a</i>	<i>Presenting an Identifiable Victim (IV) positively influences guilt compared to presenting a Statistical Victim (SV).</i>
<i>H2b</i>	<i>Presenting a Statistical Victim (SV) positively influences guilt compared to presenting an Identifiable Victim (IV).</i>
<i>H2c</i>	<i>The effect of type of victim on donating behavior is mediated by guilt.</i>
<i>H3a</i>	<i>A self-efficacious frame (SE) has a positive effect on donating behavior compared to a non-self-efficacious frame (N).</i>
<i>H3b</i>	<i>A self-efficacious frame (SE) has a more positive effect on donating behavior in a Statistical Victim (SV) campaign compared to an Identifiable Victim (IV) campaign.</i>
<i>H4</i>	<i>High Moral Identity (MI) strengthens the effect of Statistical Victim (SV) on Perceived Responsibility (PR), and in turn, on donating behavior.</i>

2. METHODOLOGY

A 2 (type of victim: Identifiable Victim (IV) versus Statistical Victim (SV)) x 2 (message framing: Non Self-Efficacious frame (NSE) versus Self-Efficacious frame (SE)) x 2 (Moral Identity (MI): high versus low) between-subject design experiment with Moral Identity (MI) as a moderating variable was conducted to investigate the effect on guilt, Perceived Responsibility (PR), Perceived Self-Efficacy (PSE), and donating behavior in SVs campaigns. Moreover, a

pretest carried out employing qualitative interviews was designed to test the efficacy of the stimulus material. The experimental conditions of the study are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Experimental conditions

Experimental condition	Name	Type of victim	Self-Efficacy (SE)
1	IV(NSE)	Identifiable Victim	No
2	IV(SE)	Identifiable Victim	Yes
3	SV (NSE)	Statistical Victim	No
4	SV (SE)	Statistical Victim	Yes

2.1 Participants and procedure

2.1.1 Participants

Convenience and snowball sampling have been adopted to carry out this study. Respondents have been randomly chosen through social media. The exclusion criterion for this study was age below 18 years due to confidentiality and the ability to perform a donating behavior. The total sample consisted of 261 participants (36.4% males, 63.6% female, with a mean age of 25.6 (8.72)) who took part in the questionnaire. Participants were randomly selected to one of the four conditions (see Table 3). An overview of gender and age distribution between groups can be found in Table 4. The mean age of the IV(NSE) condition was 24.59 (7.96), with 40.54 % males, and 59.45% females, and consisted of 74 participants. The IV(SE) condition consisted of 65 participants, with a mean age of 27.48 (9.65), and 36.66 % male and 63.33 % female participants. In the SV (NSE) condition, 60 participants were included, with a mean age of 26.35 (10.0), 36.66% male, and 63.33 % female. Finally, the SV (SE) condition consisted of 62 participants, with a mean age of 24.56 (6.89), and 35.48% male, and 64.51% female. Additional tables showing more detailed characteristics of the participants can be found in Appendix A.

Table 3*Distribution across conditions*

Condition	Name of condition	N	Percentage (%)
1	IV(NSE)	74	28.4
2	IV(SE)	65	24.9
3	SV (NSE)	60	23.0
4	SV (SE)	62	23.8
Total		261	100.0

Table 4*Descriptive statistics per group and total study sample of gender and age distribution (N =261)*

	Gender, n (%)		Age, M (SD)
	Male	Female	
NSE			
IV (n = 74)	30 (40.54)	44 (59.45)	24.59 (7.96)
SV (n = 60)	22 (36.66)	38 (63.33)	26.35 (10.0)
SE			
IV (n = 65)	21 (32.30)	44 (67.69)	27.48 (9.65)
SV (n = 62)	22 (35.48)	40 (64.51)	24.56 (6.89)
Total (n = 261)	95 (36.4)	166 (63.6)	25.71 (8.72)
p*	.271		.019

*Differences between groups were tested with Levene's test ($p < .05$).

2.1.2 Procedure

Each participant was asked to fill in a questionnaire (See Appendix B) online on the system Qualtrics™, a survey system offered by the University of Twente. The system randomly allocated participants to one of the four experimental conditions. The study started with an informed consent form, assessed participant's demographics.

Subsequently, the survey shown the respondents the stimulus material, and next, it asked to answer questions regarding their state of guilt. Afterward, respondents were invited to answer questions regarding the responsibility (PR) they perceived the victim to have, previously shown

in the stimulus material. Next, they were invited to answer questions regarding Perceived Self-Efficacy (PSE), and then they were invited to donate (the donation was not involving real money). Eventually, a set of questions regarding the Moral Identity (MI) was proposed, marking the end of the survey.

2.2 Stimulus material

2.2.1 Pretest

A pretest was conducted through the mean of qualitative interviews (See Appendix C) in order to assure the effectiveness of the manipulation added to the picture. In order to test the perceived type of victim, due to practical and time constraints, only eleven participants (9 males, 2 females) were recruited and interviewed via Skype. They assessed eight formulations, of which four of them were framed as IV and the remaining four as SV; all of them were randomly presented to avoid response bias. The participants had to tell the researcher to what extent they were considering the messages representing either an IV or an SV, after being shown a short definition of both. The results showed that almost all the participants identified the correct type of victim; only the formulations *"Donate 20€ to buy medical kits for 17 war-wounded people"*, *"20€ can give a kitchen to Fatima's family to prepare food"*, and *"Donate 20€ to provide health checks for 8 children"* shown some misunderstandings in a few participants. Thus, these formulations have not been considered as potential framing for the stimulus material.

To assess self-efficacy (SE), eight formulations were presented as well. Four of these were formulated as a non-self-efficacious message (NSE), so without SE. While the other four were framed as self-efficacious (SE), all of them were also randomly presented to avoid response bias. The participants had to tell the researcher to what extent they were considering the message as self-efficaciously framed (SE) or as not self-efficaciously framed (NSE), after being shown a short and general definition of SE. Subsequently, they were asked to indicate which of the

messages represented the highest SE and the highest NSE. The results demonstrated that the most SE message was saying, *"With only 10€, you can contribute to rescue migrants in the Mediterranean Sea."*, while for the NSE one was *"Migrants in the Mediterranean Sea, need help. Donate now!"*. Moreover, some of the participants added comments for the SE message like *"It is clearly self-efficacious, but the amount is too high, I would rather use something smaller."* This gave the researcher insights for improving the stimulus material.

Based on the results of this pretest, the researcher chose, among the correctly perceived formulations, the ones that were best fitting the purposes of the research. Additionally, changes have been added, based on the comments from the participants, in order to enhance the effectiveness of the messages. The messages chosen for the four conditions are; *"Migrants in the Mediterranean Sea, like Farid, need help. Donate now!"* for the IV(NSE), *"With only 5€, you can contribute to rescue migrants, like Farid, in the Mediterranean Sea. Donate now!"* for the IV(SE). Finally, for the SV ones, *"Migrants in the Mediterranean Sea need help. Donate now!"* has been chosen for the SV (NSE), while *"With only 5€, you can contribute to rescue migrants in the Mediterranean Sea. Donate now!"* has been decided for the SV (SE).

2.2.2 Visual and textual manipulations on the stimulus material

In order to carry out the surveys and test the hypotheses, stimulus material was prepared. It has been chosen the plight of the Mediterranean refugees, which is largely adopted by NGOs for their charity campaigns. For the posters, an image of a boat shipwrecking with people in distress swimming and in need of help has been chosen (See Figure 2.). The questionnaire's stimulus material always presented the same picture but proposing differences in the message framing in order to test the four conditions.



Figure 2. Migrants in the Mediterranean Sea. Utilized as stimulus material for the present study (Dearden, 2012).

2.2.3 Manipulation for type of victim

In order to make the participants understand the intended victim, manipulation was added to the picture chosen for the stimulus material. To enhance the identifiability of the victim, an orange line in the background, going from left to right and stopping when encountering the face of the victim, was added. Moreover, the words "*like Farid*" were added to the text in the picture with the same purpose of increasing the identifiability of the victim. Additionally, the image presented the text in black, except for the word "*Farid*", which was colored in yellow to augment the identifiability of the victim.

In order to increase the unidentifiability of the victim, thus to make the participants perceive the victim as statistical and not as identifiable, an orange line was added starting from left and ending at the end of the text, in order to decrease the identifiability of the victim and creating the focus, with the aid of the text as well, on the overall picture. Lastly, the manipulated picture proposed the text in black except for the word "*Migrants*" in order to decrease the identifiability of the victim.

2.2.4 Message framing

Based on the pretest of this study, formulations of the message framing were chosen in order to make the participants perceive the SE by looking at the poster. Therefore, manipulation was added to the poster by changing how the messages were formulated. Regarding the non-self-efficacious posters (NSE), this message has been chosen "*Migrants in the Mediterranean Sea need help. Donate now!*". While this other message has been decided for the self-efficacious posters (SE), "*With only 5€, you can contribute to rescue migrants in the Mediterranean Sea. Donate now!*". SE lies in the wording "*With only 5€*" and "*you can*", as it has been suggested in the theoretical framework (See section 1.2) of this paper and from the results of the pretest.





Moreover, the posters presented the text in black except for the words, "*Need help*", and "*Donate*" for the NSE conditions; and the word "*only 5€*", "*you can*", "*rescue*", and "*Donate*" for the SE conditions. These words just mentioned were colored in yellow to augment the NSE and the SE that was meant to be communicated in the message.

2.2.5 Final stimulus material

The final stimulus material resulted in the four conditions that had these characteristics: In the first condition, a picture of an IV with an NSE framed message (IV-NSE) was shown. The text in the picture was saying, "*Migrants in the Mediterranean Sea, like Farid, need help. Donate now!*" (See Table 4). While, in the second condition, the same IV picture but with a SE message (IV-SE), was presented. The picture was stating, "*With only 5€, you can contribute to rescue migrants, like Farid, in the Mediterranean Sea. Donate now!*" (See Table 4). In the third and fourth conditions, a picture of an SV was displayed. Respectively, in the third condition, an NSE frame (SV-NSE) was proposed, saying, "*Migrants in the Mediterranean Sea need help. Donate now!*" (See Table 4). While, in the fourth condition, a SE one (SV-SE) was displayed, stating, "*With only 5€, you can contribute to rescue migrants in the Mediterranean Sea. Donate now!*" (See Table 4).

Table 5

Stimulus material

Type of victim	Self-Efficacy (SE)	Poster
Identifiable Victim (IV)	No	
	Yes	
Statistical Victim (SV)	No	
	Yes	

2.3 Measures

2.3.1 Guilt

A four-item scale from Bozinoff and Ghingold (1983) was used to assess the guilt arousal. The items were measured on a Likert-scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The items consisted of four adjectives related to guilt, namely "*ashamed*", "*guilty*", "*repentant*", and "*remorseful*". These four items formed a reliable scale ($\alpha = .73$), which is moderately comparable to the study of Cotte, Coulter, & Moore (2005), which has been shown that the scale has excellent reliability ($\alpha = .80$).

Finally, to avoid social desirability bias, three single items related to positive emotions were included in the question set, namely "*optimistic*", "*interested*", and "*hopeful*" (Bohlmeijer & Hulsbergen, 2018).

2.3.2 Perceived Responsibility (PR)

The perceived responsibility has been measured with a closed question, saying, "*How much do you think the victim is responsible for his/her plight?*". The question has been measured with a Likert-scale ranging from 1 (Not at all responsible) to 7 (Extremely responsible). Given that it is a single item, and a straightforward formulated question, the reliability of the question has not been assessed.

2.3.3 Perceived self-efficacy

In order to measure the PSE, a four items scale measured by a 7 points Likert-scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) has been carried out (Armitage & Conner, 1999). Examples of the items are "*I believe I have the ability to make a change by*

donating to this charity campaign" or "To what extent do you see yourself as capable of making a change by donating to this charity campaign?".

These four items formed a reliable scale ($\alpha = .93$), which is highly comparable to the study of Armitage and Conner (1999), where the scale showed high validity and reliability ($\alpha = .87$).

2.3.4 Donations

Donations were measure with a closed question asking, *"Given this would be a real-life charity campaign, how much would you be willing to donate?"* The answers were categorical. The participants could choose one of the given possibilities of choice consisting of a hypothetical amount of money they were willing to donate to the campaign (e.g., 5€, 10€, 25€).

This method has been chosen based on the way of asking donations used by the most famous and common charity organizations and NGOs, such as Save The Children, Open Arms, and Amnesty International. Therefore, a comparison of the possibilities of the amount they ask has been carried out and used in order to assess the donations.

2.3.5 Moral Identity

Trait moral identity has been measured with the self-report 20-items Moral Identity Questionnaire (Black & Reynolds, 2016). Both sub-scales of moral self and moral integrity were used as a combined score. Items were rated on a 7 points Likert-scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Participants' scores were classified in terms of high and low moral identity; the cut-off score was fixed at one standard deviation above and below the mean ($M = 40.66$, $SD = 4.30$). Participants considered to have high MI had a cut-off score at least one standard deviation above the mean, while participants considered to have low MI had a cut-off

score at least one standard deviation below the mean. Participants lying in between this interval were considered to have an average MI (Black & Reynolds, 2016).

Of the 20-item total scale, the sub-scale "moral self" is used to fit the purpose of this study. The sub-scale is comprised of 8 items and assesses how far participants identify with moral values. When people perceive themselves as highly moral, they are more likely to act in line with their beliefs and, therefore, act more morally (Narvaez, Lapsley, Hagele, & Lasky, 2006). A sample item of a sub-scale is *"one of the most important things in life is to do what you know is right."*

The reliability of the 8 items was assessed and demonstrated to be good ($\alpha = .75$). Psychometrics properties of the Moral Identity Questionnaire demonstrate satisfactory results as indicated by Black and Reynolds (2016), demonstrating right internal consistency, test/re-test reliability, and as well as validity.

2.4 Manipulation checks

2.4.1 Type of victim

In order to test the manipulation added to the stimulus material, two independent t-tests were conducted. The dependent variables were the manipulation check questions ("the campaign used an individual as a representative of a greater public", for the IV, and "the campaign aimed to help a larger population/group", for the SV). Both IV-conditions (IV-NSE, IV-SE) were merged to represent all IV participants, and both SV-conditions (SV-NSE, SV-SE) were merged respectively to represent all SV participants. Hence, the independent variable was the type of victim presented in the experiment.

The first independent t-test, with as dependent variable the manipulation check question for the IV, indicated that the scores were significantly higher for the IV ($M = 5.49$, $SD = 1.26$)

than for SV ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 1.59$), $t(229) = 7.15$, $p < .001$. Levene's test indicated unequal variances ($F = 10.28$, $p < .005$), so degrees of freedom were adjusted from 259 to 229.

While, the second independent t-test, with as dependent variable the manipulation check question for the SV, showed that there is no significant difference in the IV ($M = 5.76$, $SD = 1.33$) than for SV ($M = 5.61$, $SD = 1.17$), $t(259) = .90$, $p = .370$.

Therefore, as the results showed, the manipulation was effective in the IV conditions, so the posters have been perceived as identifiable victims. However, the SV conditions have not been perceived as SVs, indicating a lack of effectiveness in the manipulation.

2.4.2 *Message framing*

In order to test the manipulation added to the stimulus material, an independent t-test was conducted. The dependent variable was the total score of the PSE (i.e., the set of questions asked in the questionnaire). Both NSE conditions (IV-NSE, SV-NSE) were merged to represent all participants that received the NSE stimulus material. While, both SE conditions (IV-SE, SV-SE) were merged to represent all participants that received the SE stimulus material. Hence, the independent variable was the message framing, SE or NSE, presented in the experiment.

The independent t-test showed that there is no significant difference between the not self-efficacious (NSE) frame ($M = 15.27$, $SD = 5.75$) and the self-efficacious (SE) frame ($M = 15.39$, $SD = 5.45$), $t(259) = .18$, $p = .857$.

Therefore, as the results have shown, the manipulation of the message framing was not effective. So, the message framing has not been perceived as self-efficacious.

3. RESULTS

A 2x2x2 MANOVA analysis was conducted with guilt, Perceived Responsibility (PR), Perceived Self-Efficacy (PSE), Moral Identity (MI), and donating behavior as the dependent variables. Type of victim, message framing, and Moral Identity (MI) as the independent variables (See Table 6). Before testing the dependent variables, they were checked for normality. A Kolmogorov-Smirnov has been carried out, showing significant results, thereby indicating non-normality distribution. However, skewness and kurtosis values were between -2 and +2, which are considered acceptable (Field, 2013; George, 2011).

Table 6

Wilks' Lambda of type of victim, message framing (MF) and Moral Identity (MI)

Source	Wilks' Lambda					
	Value	F	Hypothesis (df)	Error (df)	p	η^2
Type of victim	.974	1.33	5	249	.251	.026
MF	.950	2.61	5	249	.025	.050
MI	.393	76.93	5	249	.000	.607
Type of victim * MF	.982	.915	5	249	.472	.018
Type of victim * MI	.973	1.39	5	249	.227	.027
MF * MI	.983	.868	5	249	.503	.017
Type of victim * MF * MI	.968	1.63	5	249	.150	.032

3.1.1 Type of victim on the dependent variables

For type of victim, the MANOVA was not significant (Wilks's $\Lambda = .974$, $F(5,249) = 1.33$, $p = .251$, partial $\eta^2 = .026$). However, a follow-up univariate ANOVA's showed that the effect of type of victim on Perceived Self-Efficacy (PSE) was significant ($F(1,253) = 5.21$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .020$), with IV scoring higher ($M_{IV} = 16.09$, $SD = 5.59$, versus $M_{SV} = 14.47$, $SD = 5.54$) than SV, indicating that respondents were feeling more able to perform a donation in a IV campaign rather than in a SV campaign.

There were no other significant effects regarding the type of victim on guilt, PR, MI, and donating behavior. Hence, there is no negative influence of SV on PR compared to an IV, so the H_{1a} has not been confirmed. Consequently, the H_{1b} is not confirmed as well, indicating that there is no positive influence of an IV on PR compared to an SV. Finally, an IV does not positively influence guilt as compared to an SV (H_{2a}), and presenting an SV does not positively influence guilt compared to presenting an IV (H_{2b}). Hence, both hypotheses are also not confirmed.

3.1.2 *Message framing on the dependent variables*

Regarding the message framing, the MANOVA was significant (Wilks's $\Lambda = .950$, $F(5,249) = 2.61$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .050$) indicating a main effect of message framing on the dependent variables; guilt, PR, PSE, MI, and donating behavior. Specifically, the univariate ANOVA showed that the effect of message framing on guilt was significant ($F(1,253) = 5.10$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .020$), with an NSE frame scoring higher ($M_{NSE} = 16.64$, $SD = 4.56$, versus $M_{SE} = 15.19$, $SD = 5.22$) than a SE frame, indicating that an NSE frame induced more guilt in the participants rather than a SE frame.

There were no other significant effects regarding the message framing on PR, PSE, MI, and donating behavior, proving that a self-efficacious (SE) frame does not have a positive effect on donating behavior compared to a non-self-efficacious frame (NSE) (H_{3a}). Therefore, against what was expected, the hypothesis is not confirmed. Lastly, a SE frame does not have a positive effect on donating behavior in an SV campaign compared to an IV campaign (H_{3b}), thereby rejecting the hypothesis. So, whether or not a message is framed in a self-efficacious or non-self-efficacious way, within an SV campaign, does not appear to affect donating behavior.

3.1.3 Moral Identity (MI) on the dependent variables

For Moral Identity (MI) the MANOVA was significant (Wilks's $\Lambda = .393$, $F(5,249) = 76.93$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .607$) indicating a main effect of MI on the dependent variables; guilt, PR, PSE, MI, and donating behavior. The follow up univariate ANOVAs showed that the effect of MI on guilt was significant ($F(1,253) = 14.95$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .056$), with high MI (HMI) scoring higher ($M_{HMI} = 17.01$, $SD = 4.80$, versus $M_{LMI} = 14.79$, $SD = 4.84$) than low MI (LMI), demonstrating that respondents high in MI were feeling more guilty rather than respondents low in MI.

Moreover, ANOVA detected a significant effect of MI on PSE ($F(1,253) = 6.77$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .026$), with high MI scoring higher ($M_{HMI} = 16.27$, $SD = 5.62$, versus $M_{LMI} = 14.33$, $SD = 5.42$) than low MI, implying that participants scoring high in MI were feeling more able to perform a donating behavior compared to participants that were scoring lower in MI. Finally, an effect of MI on donating behavior was also found ($F(1,253) = 7.52$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .029$), with high MI scoring higher ($M_{HMI} = 3.13$, $SD = 1.29$, versus $M_{LMI} = 2.67$, $SD = 1.31$) than low MI, showing that respondents scoring high in MI donated more compared to respondents scoring low in MI.

3.1.4 Interaction effects on the dependent variables

A three-way between subjects MANOVA analysis was conducted with guilt, PR, PSE, MI, and donating behavior as dependent variables. The results showed no significant interactions between the type of victim, message framing, and MI on the combined dependent variables (See Table 6).

3.1.5 Mediation of Perceived Responsibility (PR)

Next, it has been tested whether PR mediated the effects of type of victim on donating behavior (H_{1c}). A mediation analysis using SPSS PROCESS (Hayes, 2017) was carried out in order to test the mediating role of PR in the effect. The outcome variable for analysis was donating behavior. The predictor variable for the analysis was type of victim, so SV and IV. The mediator variable for the analysis was PR.

Results suggest that there is no direct effect of type of victim on donating behavior found ($b = -.09$, $SE = .2260$, $p = .6735$, 95% $CI = -.5426, .3517$; See Figure 3.), with 95% confidence intervals, including 0. In line with this, the relationship of type of victim on the donating behavior was not mediated by the PR, no indirect effect was found ($b = .04$, $SE = .0611$, $CI = -.0680, .1812$; See Figure 3.), with 95% confidence intervals, including 0. As there is no association suggested between type of victim and donating behavior, PR does not seem to play a mediating role. These findings suggest that the hypothesis is rejected, contrary to what was expected. No relationship was found between the type of victim presented and donating behavior. Whether the victim presented was perceived as responsible or not, does not underly the relationship between the type of victim and donating behavior.

Analysis also showed a statistically significant effect of PR on the dependent variable donation behavior ($b = -.22$, $SE = .0755$, $p < .005$, $CI = -.3699, -.0713$; See Figure 3.), with 95% confidence intervals, excluding 0. Whether a person donates therefore appears to be related to the perceived responsibility of the victim.

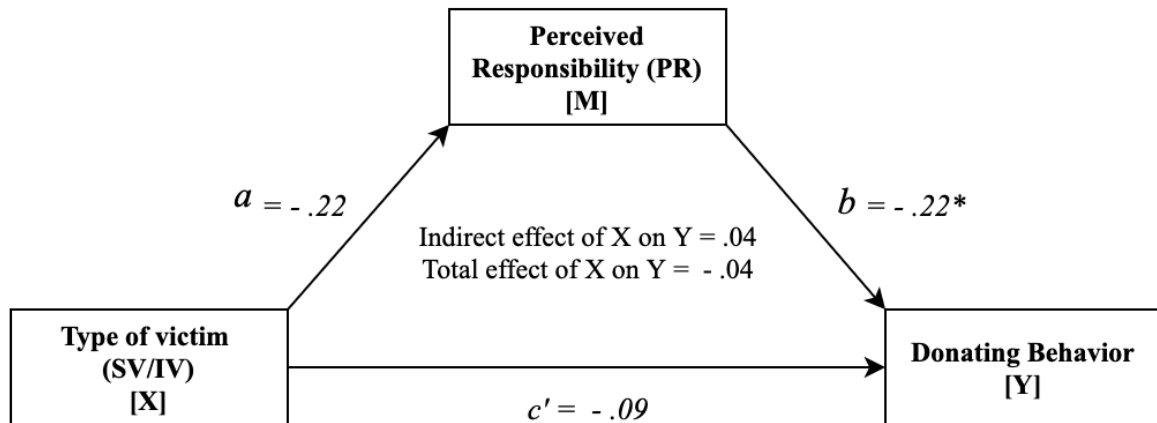


Figure 3. Mediation analyses in the effects of type of victim on donating behavior with PR as mediator.

Note: unstandardized coefficients and significance values are reported (* $p < .05$).

3.1.6 Mediation of Guilt

To investigate if the effect of type of victim on donating behavior is mediated by guilt (H_{2c}). A mediation analysis using SPSS PROCESS (Hayes, 2017) was performed in order to test the mediating role of guilt in the effect. The outcome variable for analysis was donating behavior. The predictor variable for the analysis was type of victim, so SV and IV. The mediator variable for the analysis was guilt.

From the results it can be inferred that there is no direct effect of type of victim on donating behavior ($b = .01$, $SE = .2250$, $p = .9527$, $CI = -.4317, .4584$; See Figure 4.), with 95% confidence intervals, including 0. The type of victim presented seems not to be associated with the donations provided. The assessment of an independent effect of type of victim on donation behavior through guilt as a mediator was not significant, accordingly ($b = -.06$, $SE = .0757$, $CI = -.2504, .0486$; See Figure 4.), with 95% confidence intervals, including 0. Guilt does not alter or introduce the relationship between the type of victim presented within a campaign and the

donations given and, therefore, does not hold as a mediator. As opposed to the expectations, there was no support for the hypothesis.

A statistically significant relationship was demonstrated to exist between guilt and donation behavior. More specifically, guilt was found to have a direct effect on donating behavior ($b = .07$, $SE = .0246$, $p < .005$, $CI = .0295, .1270$; See Figure 4.), with 95% confidence intervals, excluding 0. Whether someone experiences feelings of guilt or not seems to affect their donating behavior.

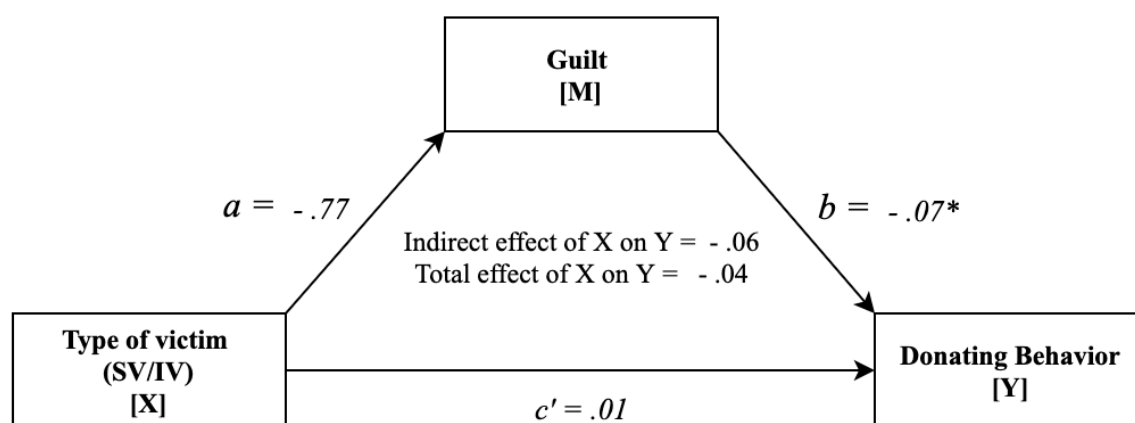


Figure 4. Mediation analyses in the effects of type of victim on donating behavior with guilt as mediator.

Note: unstandardized coefficients and significance values are reported (* $p < .05$).

3.1.7 Moderated mediation of Moral Identity (MI)

To investigate if high Moral Identity (MI) moderates the effect of SV on Perceived Responsibility (PR), and in turn, on donating behavior; a moderated mediation using SPSS PROCESS (Hayes, 2017) has been carried out. The outcome variable (Y) for analysis was donating behavior, while the predictor variable (X) for the analysis was SV. The mediator (M) for the analysis was PR, while the moderator (W) for the analysis was High MI.

High MI was hypothesized to strengthen the perception of responsibility (PR) of Statistical Victims (SV) (H_4) (See Figure 5.). Findings suggest that PR of SV was neither stronger nor weaker when MI was high, hence no interaction effect was found ($b = -.30$, $SE = .3537$, $p = .389$, $CI = -1.0012, .3917$; See Figure 5.), with 95% confidence intervals, including 0. Moreover, SV did not significantly predict the outcome of PR ($b = .07$, $SE = .1735$, $p = .686$, $CI = -.2715, .4117$), with 95% confidence intervals, including 0. Analysis showed that there was no significant direct effect found of SV on donating behavior ($b = -.06$, $SE = .1596$, $p = .671$, $CI = -.3819, .2465$), with 95% confidence intervals, including 0. These findings do not support the hypothesis. There is no moderation effect of high MI on PR via SV, and PR does not mediate the relation between SV and donating behavior.

In addition, there was a direct effect found of PR on donation behavior ($b = -.23$, $SE = .0566$, $p < .001$, $CI = -.3441, -.1214$; See Figure 5.), with 95% confidence intervals, excluding 0. Donating appears to be related to whether a victim is found to be responsible for their plight or not.

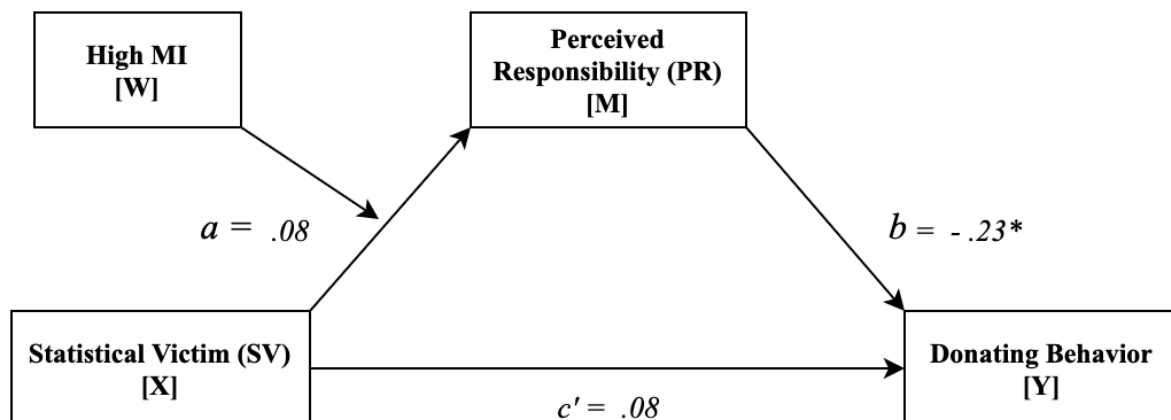


Figure 5. Moderated mediation analyses (model 7 by Hayes, 2017) in the effects of type of victim on donating behavior with guilt as mediator.

Note: unstandardized coefficients and significance values are reported (* $p < .05$).

3.2 Overview of the results of the tested hypotheses and the adjusted conceptual model

Following the previous results, an overview of the tested hypotheses and their results based on the statistical analysis performed is provided (See Table 5). Additionally, the adjusted research model is proposed (See Figure 6.).

Table 7*Overview of the results of the tested hypotheses*

No	Hypothesis	Result	Notes
H1a	<i>Presenting a Statistical Victim (SV) negatively influences Perceived Responsibility (PR) compared to presenting an Identifiable Victim (IV).</i>	Not supported	
H1b	<i>Presenting an Identifiable Victim (IV) positively influences Perceived Responsibility (PR) compared to presenting a Statistical Victim (SV).</i>	Not supported	
H1c	<i>The effect of type of victim on donating behavior is mediated by Perceived Responsibility (PR)</i>	Not supported*	It has been found a direct effect of PR on donating behavior ($p < .005$).
H2a	<i>Presenting an Identifiable Victim (IV) positively influences guilt compared to presenting a Statistical Victim (SV).</i>	Not supported	
H2b	<i>Presenting a Statistical Victim (SV) positively influences guilt compared to presenting an Identifiable Victim (IV).</i>	Not supported	
H2c	<i>The effect of type of victim on donating behavior is mediated by guilt.</i>	Not supported*	It has been found a direct effect of guilt on donating behavior ($p < .005$).
H3a	<i>A self-efficacious frame (SE) has a positive effect on donating behavior compared to a non-self-efficacious frame (N).</i>	Not supported	
H3b	<i>A self-efficacious frame (SE) has a more positive effect on donating behavior in a Statistical Victim (SV) campaign compared to an Identifiable Victim (IV) campaign.</i>	Not supported	
H4	<i>High Moral Identity (MI) strengthens the effect of Statistical Victim (SV) on Perceived Responsibility (PR), and in turn, on donating behavior.</i>	Not supported*	It has been found a direct effect of PR on donating behavior ($p < .001$).

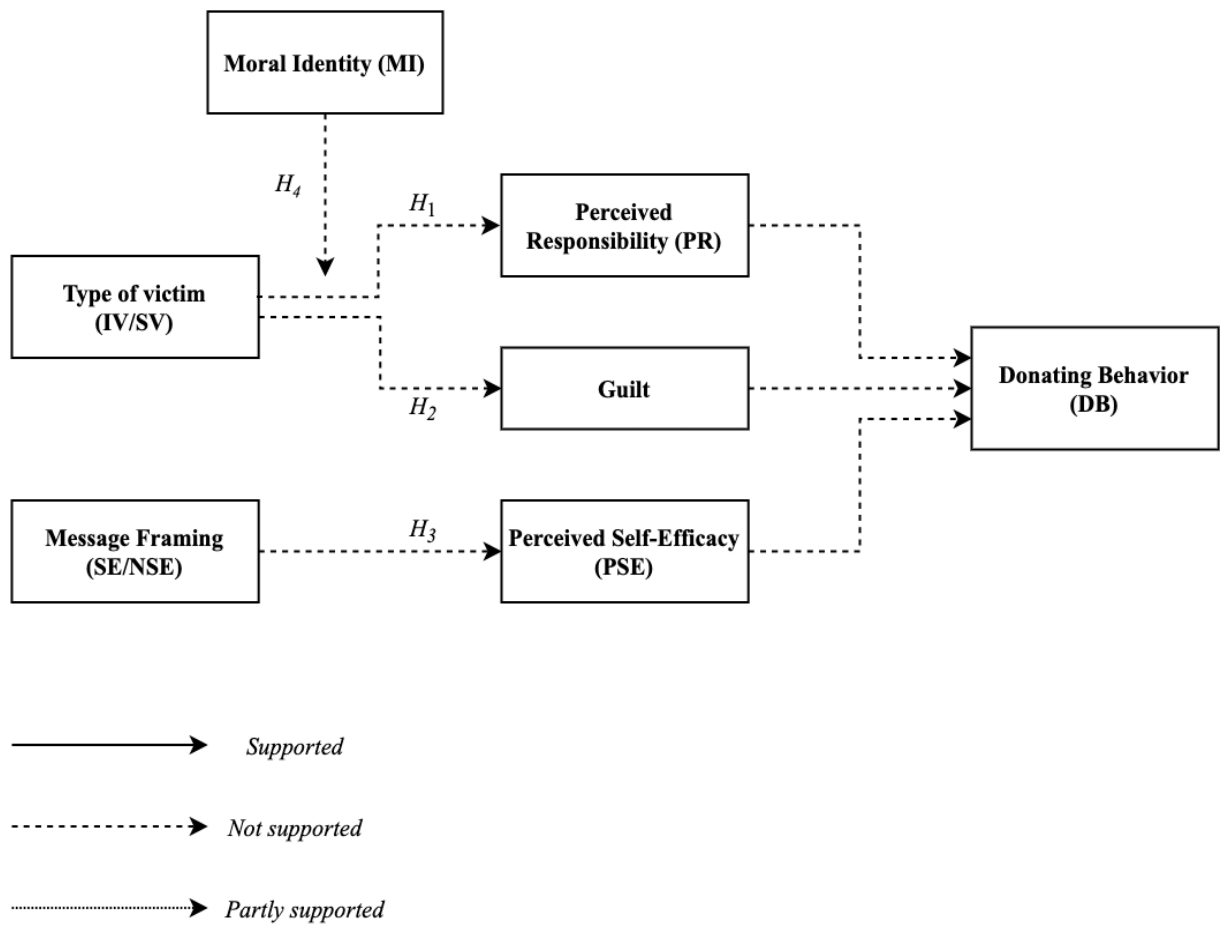


Figure 6. Adjusted conceptual model.

4. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to identify possible factors that might contribute to the effectiveness of Statistical Victim (SV) campaigns. The factors Perceived Responsibility (PR), guilt, Perceived Self-Efficacy (PSE), and Moral Identity (MI) were investigated. SV campaigns are currently suggested to have less persuasive power than Identifiable Victim (IV) campaigns; this is because IV campaigns are thought to evoke more emotions, such as sympathy, through making it possible to identify with a single victim (Lee & Feeley, 2018). An increase in people's donation behavior for charity campaigns targeting a greater public (SV campaigns) can assist in enhancing humanitarian actions and social welfare for those in need (Nelson et al., 2006). Filling this knowledge gap is of particular importance to complement NGO efforts, as they rely strongly on social funds.

Findings suggest that whether the victim displayed was statistical or identifiable, overall did not have a direct effect on donating behavior. Neither PR nor guilt did mediate the relationship between the type of victim displayed and donation behavior, as there was no direct observable relationship. The type of victim did also not determine whether a victim was perceived to be more or less responsible, nor did it have an effect on the degree of guilt evoked.

These findings oppose previous research findings. It has been indicated that perceiving a victim as responsible for their plight decreases people's willingness to donate, as blaming of the victim increases. SVs were argued to be less identifiable, and therefore less likely to be blamed than IVs (Kogut, 2011). This study used a campaign about victims in the Mediterranean Sea, where it might be difficult in general to place blame on a single victim or group since, for example, political tensions, cultural factors, or international conflicts can be involved (UNHCR, 2019). This aspect might have caused participants to rather perceive the displayed victims as not responsible themselves.

Nevertheless, the present study rejects the idea that SVs are less responsible, and IVs are more likely to be held responsible in charity campaigns.

Previous research findings on guilt highlight especially the role of guilt in evoking prosocial action as a response to relieve the negative feelings evoked by it (Albouy, 2017). Results indicated a direct effect of guilt on donation behavior, supporting these findings. Furthermore, Daniels (2012) suggested the like possibility of SVs inducing guilt by stimulating social commitment. A great opposing body of research has argued, however, that strong negative emotions like guilt are rather evoked when being presented with a single victim. People experience more considerable sympathy and can relate more easily to a single individual as opposed to a group or population (Lee & Feeley, 2018). This study is not in line with either line of findings, supposing that neither, the statistical victim campaign, nor the identifiable victim campaign distinctively generates greater feelings of guilt. This might be related to the ineffective manipulation check on the type of victim displayed.

However, it has been found that IV campaigns were scoring higher in Perceived Self-Efficacy (PSE) than SV campaigns. One might argue that the perception of personal confidence in prosocial actions, and the heightened, likely to be negative, emotions induced by IV campaigns might account for this finding. The emotional relation drawn to one single identifiable individual presented in a campaign could enhance the perception of the capability to help this individual because internal motivation is higher to reduce negative emotions (Carlsmith & Gross, 1969). However, more research is needed to make clear statements about this finding.

Moreover, further findings of this study suggest that both guilt and PR were found to have a direct effect on donating behavior. This can also be related to the research presented above. It seems then that although the type of victim might not have had an evident influence on either of the two factors, both factors appear to influence donating behavior independent of the type of victim presented. The ineffectiveness of the experimental manipulation might influence these findings. There was no

clear distinction of the statistical victim conditions, which could have influenced the strength of the relationship of the type of victim, and guilt and PR, respectively.

Further findings of this study imply that a self-efficacious (SE) message framing did not determine donation behavior. Also, the type of victim utilized within the SE message framing did not influence the effectiveness of the SE framed message either. When relating these findings to existing literature, again, a discrepancy is found. Literature has identified that perceiving oneself as capable of engaging in the action response, aimed to relieve negative feelings evoked through a campaign, benefits the action to donate (Basil et al., 2008). These findings do not align with this. However, the ineffectiveness of the experimental manipulation of the message framing could explain the absence of support of existing literature.

Nevertheless, this study found an effect of message framing on guilt. Participants were found to feel more guilty towards an NSE campaign rather than to a SE one. It could be argued here that charity campaigns are aimed to induce guilt in recipients (Lee & Feeley, 2018). Moreover, a self-efficacious message frame intends to make a recipient feel able to perform a certain behavior (Basil et al., 2008). For example, *“With only 5€, you can contribute to rescue migrants in the Mediterranean Sea. Donate now!”*. Hereby, some kind of solution or a first possible step towards the resolution of guilt is provided. In the example, this would be *“With only 5 euros...”*. If no self-efficacious message is presented, the perceived discrepancy between own behavior and the donation behavior asked from the campaign is greater because no apparent step is suggested. However, further investigation and exploration are necessary to make definite statements.

Additionally, it has been demonstrated that high Moral Identity (MI) does not alter the perception of responsibility in statistical victim campaigns and does thereby not have an effect on donating behavior. An existing body of research identified that individuals with high MI tend to donate more, primarily when the victim was not held responsible for their situation (Lee et al., 2014). Also, statistical victims were considered to be held less responsible as they are part of a greater group,

making it more difficult to ascribe a person as responsible (Lee & Feeley, 2018). However, only the IV manipulation was effective, questioning whether conclusive statements can be drawn. An effective manipulation can indicate more clear results.

Although the results did not fulfill the expectations of the research, findings regarding MI have been discovered. Results showed that people high in MI felt more guilty towards the campaigns compared to people low in MI. The same group of people scoring high in MI also has been found more able to perceive to have the ability to perform a donating behavior (PSE). It could be argued that people with high MI have an inner drive to act in line with these personal values of being moral through their behavior, as well as reflect upon them (Lee et al., 2014). Hence, when perceiving a victim in need, a feeling of discrepancy between the intended moral act and the current state of inaction could account for the heightened guilt. Also, since MI entails actual moral behaviors by the individual, the perceived self-efficacy, or confidence to engage in prosocial action, could be present already in these individuals. Again, further research is needed to draw clear conclusions. Lastly, people scoring high in MI also showed to have donated more than people scoring low in MI, which is in line with previous literature (Reed II & Aquino, 2003).

The study aimed to complement existing research to enhance donations in SV-campaigns by identifying factors that increase donating behavior. If the findings of the present study are considered, it is not important to focus specifically on conveying that the victim is either statistical or identifiable when the aim is to raise guilt or PR. Neither does the framing of the message in a self-efficacious way contribute to increased donations. Rather, it appears sensible to directly focus attention on guilt and PR through other means than the type of victim displayed. Guilt and PR affected donation behavior directly, making them the apparent focus of attention in the design of campaigns. Future research might then direct efforts towards finding how these factors can be integrated effectively, as well as investigating the nature with which they affect donation behavior. The ineffectiveness of the manipulation should be kept in mind when making inferences about the findings.

Moreover, the practical implication of this study is related to the measures utilized for perceived self-efficacy (PSE). Primarily self-report measures should provide good reliability, as it is a subjective means to obtain information. Especially concerning charity campaigns specifically, a measure for PSE could not be found prior to this study. The reliability of the implemented scale was ($\alpha = .93$), making it an excellent tool for future research with a similar purpose.

4.1 Strengths, Limitations and Future Research

This study found its ground on a good sample size ($n = 261$), which allowed to have a good representation of the population for the statistical analyses carried out. The size of the sample also allowed to have greater power on detecting the differences between the conditions through the statistical tests that have been performed, and thus, it gave fewer uncertainties on our results.

Arguably, the measures used in the method of this study were high in reliability, which made the measurement of the variables accurate. Notably, the measurement of PSE reported very high reliability.

However, this paper encountered some limitations that must be considered when interpreting the results. First, almost all the manipulation added to the stimulus material was found to be not effective. The insignificance of results can be a result of this, mainly because the participants did not perceive the stimulus material as it should have been intended. Unfortunately, this created a considerable barrier to this study since the research question was basing its ground, especially on the SV which its manipulation was found to be not effective. Here, the same victim was presented in all conditions; however, with different manipulations such as text and visual aspects accounting for better individualization. This can be less subtle within future campaigns.

Second, the carried-out pretest on which the stimulus material was based provides a considerable limitation to the study. Due to practical time constraints and the pandemic COVID-19

that broke out during the course of the study created several limitations that could have affected the overall study. For instance, the qualitative interviews carried out for the pretest were performed through video-calls on Skype, which can have affected the process of pretesting the stimulus material. Time constraints and limited available resources as a factor of the pandemic did not allow the researcher to test and re-test the stimulus material until a clear and overall unambiguous result had been obtained. This could have a misunderstanding of the stimulus material as a consequence.

Third, the questionnaire carried out online could have affected the results of the study since the aspect of a fictional donation could have enhanced social desirability in the donating behavior, thus altering the final results. Within a lab study in which the fictional nature of donation is not explicit until the study is over, a better representation of the actual behavior concerning donations could have been obtained. Also, the answers given to the MI, which were pretty straightforward, could have aroused the same possibility of social desirability as well, which in turn could have affected the overall results. The study is advised to be repeated under non-restricted circumstances in which all resources available can be utilized, and a real-life experiment can be implemented. Especially the pretest should be enhanced through a pilot study in which interaction between participants is allowed, in order to obtain clear and evaluated results. The study was intended to be carried out with virtual reality gadgets that made use of eye-tracking options; this can serve an additional tool to collect more objective data in addition to more subjective self-report measures.

Fourth, the use of a picture showing Mediterranean refugees could have affected the PR and the guilt aroused from the picture. The very nature of the victim's plight can have an influence on the perception and interpretation of a victim's situation and responsibility. So, future research is advised to select either different or multiple dimensions of their stimulus material, in which there is a higher possibility to perceive the victim as responsible if that variable is to be tested. Future research is advised to select the chosen campaign background based more firmly on the variables researched.

Lastly, direct effects were found from guilt and the PR on donating behavior, but no further explanation of these effects was found through the model. Future research should take into consideration this effect to possible subject of future study on why and how these effects exist.

5. CONCLUSION

To conclude, this paper aimed to complement existing research to enhance donations in SV campaigns by identifying factors that increase donating behavior. Considering the findings of this study, it has been found that the type of victim is not highly relevant when conveying a message with the intent of arousing guilt or perceived responsibility (PR), the same has been found for the message framing, where a self-efficacious (SE) or a non-self-efficacious (NSE) frame do not contribute to augment the willingness to donate. The study was influenced by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as non-effective experimental manipulation, which should be considered when interpreting the findings. Future research should, therefore, be carried out under non-restricted conditions. Future research should focus on finding how and why PR and guilt affect donating behavior as they have been found to have a direct effect. The development of a measurement scale for perceived self-efficacy (PSE) specifically for charity campaigns exceeded pre-existing measurements and might, therefore, be implemented for similar purposes in the context of charity campaigns. Upon taking into consideration the mentioned recommendations, this study can have the potential to shine a light on current research gaps within statistical victim campaigns.

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5. APPENDIX

Appendix A: participants characteristics tables

Table 1.
Distribution of respondents' characteristics

		n	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	95	36.4
	Female	166	63.6
	Other	0	0.00
Age	18-22	126	48.3
	23-27	85	32.6
	28-32	17	6.5
	33-37	10	3.8
	38-42	4	1.5
	43-47	2	0.8
	48-52	8	3.1
	53 and above	9	3.4
Nationality	Dutch	24	9.2
	German	49	18.8
	Italian	114	43.7
	Russian	6	2.3
	Other	68	26.1
Occupation	Student	179	68.6
	Employed	58	22.2
	Currently unemployed	15	5.7
	Other	9	3.4
Total		261	100.0

Table 2.
Distribution of characteristics across conditions

		Conditions			
		IV(NSE)	IV(SE)	SV(NSE)	SV(SE)
Gender	Male	30	21	22	22
	Female	44	44	38	40
Age	18-22	43	22	31	30
	23-27	21	26	14	24
	28-32	3	4	7	3
	33-37	3	4	2	1
	38-42	0	2	1	1
	43-47	0	2	0	0
	48-52	2	3	1	2
	53 and above	2	2	4	1

Appendix B: Questionnaire



Hi!

Thank you for participating in this study, I inform you that the questionnaire **will take** you **only 5 minutes** of your time. The aim of this research is to evaluate donating behavior in charity campaigns in the context of the refugee crisis which is occurring in the Mediterranean Sea.

- 1) This study has been approved by the BMS Ethics Committee.
- 2) This is a fictional study; no real money is involved in this study.
- 3) You can withdraw yourself from this study at any time.
- 4) No personal data or information about the participants will be collected, the questionnaire is totally **anonymous**.

If you would like to have more information about this research, you can contact the researcher at the e-mail address below.

Researcher:

Marco Aurelio Benincasa
m.a.benincasa@student.utwente.nl

Thank you for participating in this study!

Do you agree in participating in this study?

Yes

☐

No

☐

Please indicate your gender.

Male

☐

Female

☐

Other

☐

Please indicate your age.

Please indicate your nationality.

Dutch

☐

German

☐

Italian

☐

Russian

☐

Other

☐

Please indicate your primary occupation.

Student

☐

Employed

☐

Currently unemployed

☐

Other

☐

NOT ONLY A NUMBER

Please indicate below to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:

While looking at the campaign I felt...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Interested	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ashamed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Optimistic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Remorseful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Guilty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hopeful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Repentant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please answer the following question:

	Not at all responsible	Slightly responsible	Somewhat responsible	Neutral	Responsible	Moderately responsible	Extremely responsible
How much do you think the victim is responsible for his/her plight?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

NOT ONLY A NUMBER

Please indicate below to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe I have the ability to make a change by donating to this charity campaign.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please answer the following question:

	Very incapable	Incapable	Slightly incapable	Neither capable nor incapable	Slightly capable	Capable	Very capable
To what extent do you see yourself as capable of making a change by donating to this charity campaign?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please answer the following question:

	Very unsure	Unsure	Slightly unsure	Neither unsure nor sure	Slightly sure	Sure	Very sure
How confident are you that you will be able to make a change by donating to this charity campaign?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate below to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I am confident that I would be able to make a change by donating to this charity campaign.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Given this would be a real-life charity campaign, how much would you be willing to donate?

0€	5€	10€	25€	50€	100€
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

NOT ONLY A NUMBER

Please indicate below to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I always act in ways that do the most good and least harm to other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not hurting other people is one of the rules I live by.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important for me to treat other people fairly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try hard to act honestly in most things I do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If doing something will hurt another person, I try to avoid it even if no one would know.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want other people to know they can rely on me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Once I've made up my mind about what is the right thing to do, I make sure I do it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
One of the most important things in life is to do what you know is right.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate below to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
The campaign used an individual as a representative of a greater public.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The campaign aimed to help a larger population/group.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix C: pretest

STUDY PRE-TEST

Identifiable Victim (IV)

The Identifiable Victim (IV) refers to individuals that require help. So, they involve individuals that need help and assistance because they are facing a difficult situation. They are usually presented with an accurate amount of information such as names, ages, faces, and the difficult situation they are facing (Lee & Feeley, 2018).

Statistical Victim (SV)

The Statistical Victim (SV) has similar characteristics to the Identifiable Victim but the difference lays in the number of individuals. The SV relates to a group of people that is asking for help. So, it includes all the groups, populations, nations, or communities that need support and aid because they are facing a problematic situation. SVs are often characterized by general information about the population or group, such as common difficulty or country of origin (Lee & Feeley, 2018).

- 1) To what extent do you consider this message to be a statistical or identifiable victim?

“5 million children in Syria are in need of humanitarian assistance, help them with 20€”

- 2) To what extent do you consider this message to be a statistical or identifiable victim?

“Fatima’s family is in need of a kitchen to prepare food, donate 20€”

- 3) To what extent do you consider this message to be a statistical or identifiable victim?

“If not helped, Fatima won’t have food and clothes”

- 4) To what extent do you consider this message to be a statistical or identifiable victim?

“In the last 5 years more than 15.000 people died in the Mediterrean sea, if you do not donate, this situation will persist”

- 5) To what extent do you consider this message to be a statistical or identifiable victim?

“Donate 20€ to buy medical kits for 17 war-wounded people”

- 6) To what extent do you consider this message to be a statistical or identifiable victim?

“20€ can give a kitchen to Fatima’s family to prepare food”

STUDY PRE-TEST

- 7) To what extent do you consider this message to be a statistical or identifiable victim?

“Donate 20€ to provide health checks for 8 children”

- 8) To what extent do you consider this message to be a statistical or identifiable victim?

“With 20€ you can provide clothing and food for Fatima”

Self-Efficacy (SE)

Self-Efficacy (SE) is the individual's perception of having the ability and the possibility to perform a pro-social behavior before pursuing an attempt (Basil et al., 2008). To be more clear, the individual perceives that he or she is in power or has the ability to perform a behavior, as for example in this case, a charitable donation. Usually, self-efficacy is explicitly declared in the message so that the individual can better perceive that he or she has the ability to perform that behaviour. It is not therefore, generally stated.

- 1) To what extent do you consider this message to be self-efficacious or neutral (not self-efficacious)?

“Donate now to save lives of people like Fatima”

- 2) To what extent do you consider this message to be self-efficacious or neutral (not self-efficacious)?

“With the price of a coffee, you can contribute to rescue migrants in the Mediterranean sea”

- 3) To what extent do you consider this message to be self-efficacious or neutral (not self-efficacious)?

“By donating, you can support rescue ships to save people like Fatima”

- 4) To what extent do you consider this message to be self-efficacious or neutral (not self-efficacious)?

STUDY PRE-TEST

“Migrants in the Mediterrean sea need help, donate now”

- 5) To what extent do you consider this message to be self-efficacious or neutral (not self-efficacious)?

“With only 10€, you can contribute to save the life of people like Fatima”

- 6) To what extent do you consider this message to be self-efficacious or neutral (not self-efficacious)?

“With the price of a coffee, you can contribute to save the life of people like Fatima”

- 7) To what extent do you consider this message to be self-efficacious or neutral (not self-efficacious)?

“With only 10€, you can contribute to rescue migrants in the Mediterrenean sea”

- 8) To what extent do you consider this message to be self-efficacious or neutral (not self-efficacious)?

“By donating, you can support rescue ships in the Mediterrenean sea”

- 9) Which message did you find more self-efficacious?

- 10) Which message did you find less self-efficacious?

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY PRE-TEST!

For further information, contact
[**m.a.benincasa@student.utwente.nl**](mailto:m.a.benincasa@student.utwente.nl)

Appendix D: Literature Logbook

Literature Logbook

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed for the literature study:

- Which factors motivate donating behavior?
- To what extent type of victim influence donating behavior?
- To what extent can message framing influence donation behavior?
- To what extent self-efficacy plays a role in charity campaigns?
- To what extent perceived responsibility is associated with charity campaigns and moral identity?
- To what extent moral identity is related to donating behavior?
- To what extent type of victim and guilt affect donating behavior?
- To what extent are statistical victims worse than the identifiable victim?
- To what extent are statistical victims associated with charity campaigns?
- To what extent is donating behavior affected by emotions?
- To what extent can the use of self-efficacy in message framing influence donation behavior?

Criteria for choosing the materials

Most of the sources used for the literature study were scientific articles written in the English language. The researcher was striving to use the most recent articles on the topic investigated. However, old articles and theories were used too in order to complement the more recent literature, for example, the Theory of Planned Behavior or the measures of guilt. Valid and reliable (peer-reviewed and often cited) articles were preferred. Lastly, also, books were used (mainly academic textbooks).

Databases

The main databases used were Google Scholar and Scopus. The most used was Google Scholar since he searches mainly for relevant articles. However, Google Scholar often shows non-peer-reviewed articles while Scopus not. Arguably, Scopus was useful for searching for peer-reviewed articles but mainly to get articles through their title (See Table 1, Appendix C). Most of the time, however, articles were not found, or the search was not successful.

NOT ONLY A NUMBER

Table 1.
Logbook

Date	Source	Search Terms and strategies	How many hits (how many relevant)	Related terms/authors	Notes
24/03	Google Scholar	"statistical victim" AND "identifiable victim" AND ("donating behavior" OR "willingness to donate"	34 (1)	TH Feeley	
6/04/20	Google Scholar	"statistical victim" AND "identifiable victim" AND "donating behavior"	2 (0)	Influence of emotions	Not relevant
6/04/20	Google Scholar	"donating behavior" AND "perceived self-efficacy"	30 (2)	Emotional arousal Theory of Planned Behavior	
7/04/20	Google Scholar	"charity campaigns" AND "guilt" AND "perceived responsibility"	6(1)	Guilt arousal A. Wonneberger	Very insightful
7/04/20	Google Scholar	"moral identity" AND "perceived responsibility" AND "donating behavior"	1(1)	S. Nguyen	Very relevant Article
7/04/20	Google Scholar	"perceived self-efficacy" AND "donating behavior" AND "message framing"	3(1)	J. Lindenmeier	
8/04/20	Google Scholar	"donating behavior" AND "emotions" AND "identifiable victim"	12(0)	Empathy	Not so useful
08/04/20	Google Scholar	"guilt" AND "donating behavior"	249 (2)	S. Hibbert L. Bozinoff, M. Ghingold	Very relevant
22/05/20	Google Scholar	"mediation analysis" AND "process" AND "hayes"	36.900(3)	A.F. Hayes	Relevant
22/05/20	Google Scholar	"moderated mediation analysis" AND "process" AND "hayes"	4.450(2)	A.F. Hayes	
22/05/20	Google Scholar	"normal distribution" AND "shapiro-wilk"	77.600(1)	NM. Razali	Relevant
4/06/20	Scopus	Reasonable Disagreement about Identified vs. Statistical Victims	1 (Article title)		

