

# PHILANTHROPY: EXPLORING THE ART OF GIVING

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Nidhi Chadha

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Goswami Ganesh Dutta Sanatan Dharma College, Sector -32, Chandigarh

## Abstract

The recent years specially in times of pandemic saw philanthropy in full swing and in a variety of shades, from thousands of crores being donated and meals being fed to something as simple as being there for the elderly during the lockdown. Philanthropy is the desire to promote the welfare of others by addressing social issues. Individuals can express their philanthropy with generous donations of money to fund causes. Philanthropy not only includes donations but also volunteer services and other acts of kindness. Someone who is well known for practicing philanthropy may sometimes be called a philanthropist. Although such individuals are often very wealthy, people may nevertheless perform philanthropic acts without possessing great wealth. Spending money on other people may have a more positive impact on happiness than spending money on oneself. In a more fundamental sense, this research paper will provide an insight in the concept of philanthropy which also encompasses any altruistic activity that is intended to promote good or improve human quality of life. Also, this research paper focuses on the benefits of giving; not just for the recipients but for the giver's health and happiness, and for the strength of entire communities. For the receiver, philanthropy helps in material and concrete terms, indirectly helping mental and psychological well-being. For the giver, it brings in social recognition and appreciation, which is also good for mental health. This research paper tries to explore the influence of personality traits on the philanthropic behaviour.

**Keywords:** Philanthropy, Personality traits, Altruism, Happiness.

## INTRODUCTION

Barman (2017) defines philanthropy as “private giving for public purposes”.

Philanthropy can be broadly defined as love for humankind. It is derived from the Greek words "philos," which means loving and "anthropos," which means humankind. The purpose of philanthropy is to improve the wellbeing of humankind by preventing and solving social problems. Philanthropy is a very important part of a democratic society. Philanthropists do not answer to the government or to the public, so are able to freely choose the people and projects to receive their support. Philanthropy has played a very important role in our society. We directly benefit from philanthropy by the use of libraries, schools, hospitals, performing

arts centre and museums supported by the generosity of philanthropists.

As researcher John Cacioppo writes in his book *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection*, “The more extensive the reciprocal altruism born of social connection . . . the greater the advance toward health, wealth, and happiness.”

“Being kind and generous leads you to perceive others more positively and more charitably,” writes Lyubomirsky in her book *The How of Happiness*, and this “fosters a heightened sense of interdependence and cooperation in your social community.”

## Historic Roots

Philanthropy is thousands of years old. Like modern philanthropists, ancient people practiced philanthropy for different reasons. Some reasons were kindness and concern for the common good. Some people used philanthropy as a way to gain recognition, prestige, and power and others saw philanthropy as a way to gain the favor of the gods.

References to philanthropy can be found in the Koran, Bible, Torah and in the teachings of many other religions and cultures, including Buddhism, Japanese and Native American cultures, and Hinduism. "Zakat," or giving, is one of the five pillars of Islam that help people become closer to God. According to the Bible, giving is a way to honor the sacredness of each individual, as in the book of Matthew, when God says, "...Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me". In the Jewish tradition, there are eight levels of charity. The highest level is helping someone to become self-sufficient, which is the definition of true philanthropy (Friedman).

## Objectives

The objectives of this study on Philanthropy are:

- To focus on research studies relating to philanthropic behaviours.
- To identify relationship between personality traits and philanthropy.
- To compare charity and philanthropy.
- To identify various factors or causes affecting philanthropy.

## Methodology

The methodology consists of a conceptual discussion on highlighting the framework of philanthropic behaviors. There are different types of qualitative research methods used in

this research such as focus groups analysis and case study researches.

## Research studies and theories demonstrating Philanthropic behaviors

Across cultures, people display a wide range of philanthropic behaviors, including cooperating in public good games (Henrich et al., 2004), benefitting others through volunteering (Ruiter and De Graaf, 2006), giving money (Borgonovi, 2008) and helping strangers (Bennett and Einolf, 2017). Research thus shows that philanthropic behavior is at least to some extent universal. Research across different disciplines also supports the idea that there is some universality in the individual motivations for this behavior.

Aknin et al. (2013) show that people across cultures experience a "warm glow" of giving. This is supported by the recent meta-analyses of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) studies on altruistic and strategic decisions to give by Cutler and Campbell-Meiklejohn (2019): When contributing to others, areas in the brain related to reward processing light up.

In another recent meta-analyses, Thielmann, Spadaro and Balliet (2020) show the influence of personality traits on prosocial behavior and conclude that traits related to the unconditional concern of others' welfare (such as social value orientation, altruism, concern for others and empathy) are more strongly correlated with prosocial behavior in economic games.

Although much research has examined the effect of income on happiness, we suggest that how people spend their money may be at least as important as how much money they earn. Specifically, we hypothesized that spending money on other people may have a more positive impact on happiness than spending money on oneself. Providing converging evidence for this hypothesis, we found that spending more of one's income on others predicted greater happiness both cross-sectionally (in a nationally representative survey study) and longitudinally (in a field

study of windfall spending). Finally, participants who were randomly assigned to spend money on others experienced greater happiness than those assigned to spend money on themselves (Dunn et al., 2008).

The principles of Self Determination Theory can be applied across philanthropic contexts. Self Determination Theory is a meta-theory on human motivation, which explains that humans have three core psychological needs central to their physical and psychological wellbeing (Howell, Chenot, Hill, & Howell, 2011). These core needs are:

Autonomy defined as the need to see one's actions as volitional or selfdetermined.

Competence defined as the need to see oneself as capable and effective individual

Relatedness defined as the need to feel close or connected to other human beings.

Relatedness implies that humans have a fundamental need to belong and feel connected to others. This reality shapes many decisions, such as how people spend their time as well as how they use and donate their money. Acts of generosity which allow people to create and strengthen social bonds are more likely to boost the individual's happiness than those that do not. By harnessing insights from social psychology, helping opportunities can be improved by understanding that people want to express personal choice, know the direct positive impact of their help, and connect meaningfully with other people

### **Big Five Personality traits and Philanthropy**

Personality traits are tied to the philanthropic sector in various studies. Researchers designed study questions to identify which personality traits and variables are associated with more giving behaviors. This relationship between personality traits and giving is important to the sustainability of the philanthropy sector because it may identify what type of person tends to be more giving and why they are generous. The information may help us

understand how to motivate and influence people to give in relation to the way their personality is constructed.

Among the Big Five personality traits, researchers identified the following trends.

□ Extraversion is associated with altruism toward family members, friends, and/or strangers (Science of generosity, 2018).

□ Openness is found to be associated with altruism toward strangers.

□ Agreeableness is associated with altruism toward acquaintances or friends.

A study explained that agreeableness and extraversion might be the main characteristics that contribute to engagement in various prosocial activities (Carlo et al. 2005). For example, there is evidence that agreeable people are highly altruistic, straightforward, trusting, soft-hearted, modest, and compliant. Similarly, extraversion is associated with sociability, assertiveness, positive emotions, warmth, and activity. Agreeable people are also involved in non-financial donations, such as giving blood (Bekkers, 2006). In studies, agreeableness and extraversion were more strongly related to volunteerism than the other personality traits in the Big Five personality dimensions (Carlo et al., 2005)

### **Charity vs Philanthropy**

While some use the words charity and philanthropy interchangeably, philanthropy often casts a broader net of giving. Its role is to help society or groups in the community flourish over a long-term period. Charity is usually based on individual giving and helping in a short-term way, like donating coats to the homeless in winter, helping out or contributing goods to a local food pantry, or sending money to a scholarship fund. These are all acts of charity but may not be considered philanthropic efforts like building a school or a library or donating millions to a scholarship fund.

## Causes of Philanthropy

First is awareness of need. That is, people are more likely to help when they realize that help is needed. However, it is important to note, that this mechanism is most effective when the person in need is also perceived as deserving (Miller 1977) and when potential givers feel that their help will make a difference (Warren and Walker 1991).

Related is a second motivator, solicitation. People seldom make unsolicited contributions. They must be approached and made aware of the opportunity to give (Bryant, Jeon-Slaughter, Kang, and Tax 2003). Third, individuals weigh the costs and benefits of helping. Charitable giving increases when donors feel that their costs are lessened somehow, or that either they, or a group that they belong to, are receiving a benefit – however small – from their giving (Miller 1999).

Individuals are also concerned about reputation – or one's social standing – and this affects charitable giving. There is a significant amount of research suggesting that social pressure not only affects what someone gives, but also who they give it to, and that publicly observable opportunities for donations are particularly effective (Bekkers and Wiepking, 2007). In addition to the social benefit of reputation, psychological benefits impact giving as well. Individuals also give to improve their self-image and mood.

Further, those with positive self-images and moods are more likely to give. People who help others through philanthropy and other helping behaviors are more likely to have altruistic, prosocial, post materialist, or caring values and those who feel personal and moral responsibility for the welfare of others (Bekkers and Wiepking 2007; Ray 1998). Further, people tend to give to charitable organizations that espouse values similar to their own (Bennett 2003).

With regard to efficacy, people are more likely to give if they feel that their input is important for the cause they are supporting – that they are making a difference. When individuals feel that their contributions are effective, they give more

and give more often (Jackson and Matthews 1995; Parsons 2003).

## Final Remarks

Happier people give more and giving makes people happier, such that happiness and giving may operate in a positive feedback loop (with happier people giving more, getting happier, and giving even more). Giving is good for you. If you can find a way to share some of what you have with others, both you and the recipient will reap the benefits. Philanthropy has also been linked to the release of oxytocin, a hormone that induces feelings of warmth, euphoria, and connection to others. Giving, within the traditional discipline of philanthropy and psychology, is a powerful behavior capable of fulfilling our fundamental human needs to connect with others and build confidence in our ability to make a difference in the world. The benefits of philanthropy are not limited to individuals. Corporations that support charitable giving receive a wealth of offerings from building a better public image, creating more vital brand awareness, and attracting new partners and talent who may be attracted to a company that contributes to charities.

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