

Original Article

The Impact of Social Framing in Digital Fundraising Campaigns on Donation Behaviour

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Abstract - Online crowdfunding has become an important tool to raise funds for various causes. The success of these campaigns, however, depends on how the campaigns for donations are framed and whether they can create a sense of trust and evoke emotions in potential donors. This study aims to look at the social framing of the online donation campaigns and how this framing affects the willingness of people to donate, and compare emotional and trust-based appeals, and also analyse the donation behaviour of donors. This paper used a quantitative analysis of the data collected by 36 respondents, and the participants were given two campaigns based in India and two in the U.K. They were analysed on a 5-point Likert scale, across three dimensions: trust, emotional impact, and persuasiveness. Along with this, the Helping Attitudes Scale (HAS) was used to measure prosocial orientation. There was more motivation towards donating to the campaign in the U.K., whereby credibility and transparency were the motivating factors, rather than emotional appeal. These results suggest that donations are driven by trust as well, not just empathy. Nonprofit organisations can benefit when they emphasise accountability and show tangible results to their potential donors to build trust.

Keywords - Social Framing, Digital Campaigns, Fundraising, Consumer Behaviour, Crowdfunding.

1. Introduction

Over the past few years, crowdfunding has become an extensively used method of fundraising for both personal and social causes. It brings together small contributions from several individuals through online platforms. The rate of success of the crowdfunding campaigns depends on how emotions are expressed. The tone, intensity, and emotional appeal can influence the involvement of the audience and campaign funding (Sitruk et al., 2024). Digital crowdfunding has rapidly appeared as a transformative model of fundraising, and is reshaping how individuals and organisations get financial support (Liu et al., 2025). Crowdfunding has created new opportunities by bringing together small contributions from numerous donors via online platforms, for causes that may otherwise struggle to collect donations (Hoque, 2024). In India, crowdfunding for causes related to medical has become noticeable, expanding at a rate of 25 per cent annually and generating nearly \$630 million in contributions (Sra, 2025). This activity occurs mainly on Ketto, a crowdfunding platform that hosts nearly 20 per cent of the campaigns nationwide and serves as an important middleman between patients and potential donors.

The emerging role of medical crowdfunding has reshaped the way people are seeking funding to support healthcare, but

it also casts important issues of equity, regulation, and the importance of more equitable regulation (Cai et al., 2025). The number of transactions they enable affects not only the healthcare financing but also the rights of patients, pointing to the urgent need for stronger legal frameworks (Bhat et al., 2024). The current guidelines from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) recognise donation-based and reward-based crowdfunding as legal; however, there is no independent legislation or regulator dedicated to overseeing medical crowdfunding.

Simultaneously, the inequities continue, and campaigns in rural or disadvantaged areas are inclined to have lower success rates. The factors such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and education determine the fundraising outcomes by influencing the access to networks and the effectiveness of persuasive storytelling. At an international level, similar trends can be seen. In the United Kingdom, the Big Give has become a leading model, raising £52.1 million in 2024 alone through its match-funded campaigns, which attracted more than 160,000 individual donations. Research across multiple platforms confirms that campaign success is frequently driven less by the project itself and more by the crowd dynamics, such as behavioural signals that help predict the collective donor action (Dambanemuya & Horvát, 2021).



In both instances, framing is the one factor that emerges as central. The deciding role can be played by the way in which donation campaigns are structured, whether through partitioned versus all-inclusive framing of amounts (Lee & Chu, 2023) or the use of strategic information cues (Keser et al., 2023), as studies have shown. Hence, how the campaigns tell their stories plays an important role in the success of digital fundraising, and this shows that it does not only depend on the urgency of need. Existing literature on crowdfunding highlights that people are not only influenced to donate because of a need, but a large part of it depends on how the request is presented, that is, how the campaign is framed.

According to Robert Entman (1993), framing refers to the selective presentation of certain facts in reality that should be more visible, allowing people to interpret them in a particular manner (Entman, 1993). A situation can be illustrated, and each situation can be described as a crisis or a challenge; both words can trigger different reactions (Palmieri et al., 2022). Likewise, Tversky and Kahneman (1986) claim that the way information is framed can influence the choices that individuals make, even if their fundamental facts remain unaltered. Their work focuses on the cognitive biases like the “loss versus gain” framing, and proves that minor differences in wording can lead to different decisions. This shows how framing is important for crowdfunding, where fundraisers must convince donors efficiently.

There are a few studies that test how framing works in the real world. Lee and Chu (2023) compared partitioned framing, where the amount of donation is broken down into smaller amounts, with all-inclusive framing, which shows the whole amount at once. They found that partitioned framing many times encouraged more philanthropic behaviour, mainly depending on the psychological traits of donors. Another study by Keser, Kliemt, and Späth (2023) showed that the way information is framed, such as by adding clarity or transparency, impacts the amount that people are willing to give. Both studies prove that framing is not neutral; it is a tool that can strongly influence the charitable outcomes.

It is also important to consider why people donate at all. Hladká and Hyánek (2015) found that the strongest motivation is altruism, feelings of moral duty, empathy, and compassion. But people also donate for personal reasons, such as the warm-glow effect, which is the good feeling they get after helping, or for recognition and reciprocity (Bischoff & Krauskopf, 2015). Just like crowdfunding backers, individuals who invest in community energy projects are motivated by both financial and social-normative factors, including personal values and community belonging (Dóci & Vasileiadou, 2015). The study showed that donors who made regular donations were guided by a sense of empathy and duty, whereas donations made in large amounts were linked to investment motives. The reason behind campaigns generally succeeding is when their framing connects with deeper motivation.

The way a donation campaign is framed can modify how people react. However, most research is conducted in experiments or focuses on a single type of platform. There are studies that focus on how these framing ideas work on different fundraising platforms, like Ketto in India, which uses personal and urgent stories, and The Big Give in the U.K., which focuses on match-funding and short deadlines. There is also less evidence on how these framing styles connect to the real reasons people donate. The present study aims to understand how framing campaigns influence people’s decisions to make donations.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design and Tools Used

The study aims to explore how social framing of online donation campaigns in India and the United Kingdom influences the decisions of individuals in India to donate. The focus is on what appeals to donors, whether it is the emotional appeal, urgency, or the tone of the campaign. The study follows a quantitative approach to collect data through a structured Google form that was shared with participants. A method of convenience sampling was used to collect data from family, friends, and teachers. The questions asked were filtered, and the respondents were asked if they had donated before. Those who had donated in the past 12 months proceeded to the main campaign evaluation section.

These respondents were then presented with four real-world education-focused online donation campaigns: two from India (Ketto) and two from the United Kingdom (The Big Give). For this research, Ketto was chosen as it is a prominent, leading crowdfunding platform in India, widely recognised for social and educational fundraising campaigns (Chandra et al., 2025). Similarly, The Big Give was selected from the U.K., as it is a well-established match-funding platform that specialises in amplifying donations and supporting education and educational causes (Focus on a Funder: The Big Give and Match Funding, 2024). From both the campaigns, education-focused campaigns were used to provide a common ground for comparison, ensuring that differences in responses could be attributed mainly to the framing and country of origin rather than to the cause itself.

In the campaign evaluation section, the respondents were asked to imagine that they were given ₹1,00,000 to donate. A brief background of each campaign was given, and respondents were asked whether they would donate (Yes/No/Maybe), how much they would donate, to rate emotional impact, persuasiveness, and trust on a 5-point Likert scale, and to explain in their own words what made them more or less inclined to donate.

The form had another section that analysed the Helping Attitude Scales (HAS) of people. The Helping Attitudes Scale was developed by Nickell (1998). It is a standardised tool used

to measure the beliefs, feelings, and behaviours that reflect the respondents' thought process towards helping others. The scale has 20 statements; the scores from each item were summed from 20 to 100. Respondents were asked to choose from a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), and a few items (1, 5, 8, 11, 18, 19) were reverse-scored, and a score of 60 was considered neutral. The dependent variable is the attitude regarding helping behaviour, like how positively or negatively people feel about helping others or donating. The scale was integrated into the survey, which included 7 sections. The survey began with questions that asked about the respondents' donation history, whether they had donated to any online campaign before. Based on their responses, they were asked to fill in the donation-behaviour-related questions or skipped to the helping attitudes scale section. The HAS was used in its original form to preserve its reliability and validity.

Overall, the research design ensured that responses reflected both campaign-specific behaviour and general prosocial attitudes. The following section outlines the demographic and background characteristics of the sample that formed the basis of this study.

2.2. Sample Characteristics

To understand the donor behaviour across different contexts, the study included participants from various demographics. This ensured a variety in data, ensuring perspectives beyond a single age or professional group. A total of 36 participants were a part of the survey; this data was collected through convenience sampling from family, friends, and teachers. Specific age groups were not tracked down formally, but it is clear that the sample was dominated by students and those who are still in the education system, indicating that there was a great number of younger respondents. This corresponds with a movement where young people are taking on an increasingly active role in areas such as facilitating financial decisions, including giving to charities and engaging in crowdfunding. Overall, the sample was gender-balanced, heterogeneous in education and background, and biased to students. This bias is a result of the convenience sampling method, but still, it gives some useful information about the approaches of the younger population and working adults to donation appeals. (Table 1) depicts the different variables that were considered and their frequency from the data, and their percentage.

Table 1. The variables for the participants of the survey, with their categories, frequency, and percentage, were considered

Variable	Category	n	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	19	51.4
	Male	17	45.9
Occupation	Student	24	64.9
	Working Professional (Private Sector)	6	16.2
	Academic/ Researcher/ Educator	1	2.7
	Entrepreneur / Self-employed	2	5.4
	Homemaker	3	8.1
	Daily wage or informal worker	1	2.7
Education	Higher Secondary education	9	24.3
	Diploma/Vocational training	4	10.8
	Bachelor's degree	6	16.2
	Master's degree	5	13.5
	Doctorate/PhD	2	5.4
	Currently studying	10	27.0
Donated in the past 12 months	Grade 9	1	2.7
	Yes	29	78.4
	No	8	21.6

2.3. Ethical Considerations

Before beginning the data collection, straightforward informed consent was obtained from all participants in the study. This was done by briefly explaining the purpose, expected time commitment, and nature of the survey at the start of the survey. Participants were informed that the study aimed to explore the donation behaviour and the factors that influenced the donor's decision to donate, and that their participation was completely optional. This was backed up through the conclusive statement: "By continuing with the survey, you are giving your consent to be part of the study."

For the demographic analysis, the respondents were also required to provide their email, gender, occupation, and education. The details gathered from the participants were kept strictly confidential and stored securely, along with their other responses. No identifying information was disclosed to any third party. Participants were informed that there were no known risks associated with taking part in the study. While there were no direct personal benefits, their responses would contribute to a better understanding of charitable giving behaviour. They were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time before submission of the survey, without any consequences.

2.4. Data Collection Procedure

The data for this study were collected through a self-administered survey created on Google Forms. This platform was chosen as it provided a convenient and accessible way for participants to complete this survey at their own pace. Through the use of online forms, participants could respond in a flexible setting without the limitations of location or time, which ensures the ease of participation. The survey was made in English and shared with individuals across different age groups. The distribution was carried out with the link circulated among family, friends, and teachers. This method lets the survey reach a diverse demographic while remaining effective in the collection of data.

2.5. Data Analysis Strategy

The data collected from this study were analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods to capture not only how respondents scored each campaign but also why they felt that way. For the quantitative analysis, data from the 5-point Likert scale were compiled for each of three times: the emotional impact, persuasiveness, and trust. Since each respondent answered three questions for each of the 2 campaigns, the lowest score was 3 and the highest was 15 for each person. This means that the total of a single campaign varied from 60, which suggested complete rejection, to 300, which suggested wholehearted support among the sample of 20 participants. The descriptive statistics, such as the mean, standard deviation, and frequency distributions, helped in identifying the response trends. Graphs and tables were created to show differences between the India and the U.K. campaigns.

A paired t-test was conducted to explore if there was a significant difference between how respondents rated the two campaigns. This test helped to determine if the difference observed between the India and the U.K. campaign averages statistically meant anything.

A correlation analysis was also carried out to check whether variables such as emotional impact, persuasion, and trust were positively related to overall willingness to donate. Where appropriate, a simple linear regression was used to see which of these variables best predicted willingness to donate. This gave an insight into whether emotional or trust-based framing had a stronger influence on donor behaviour.

The qualitative analysis involved open-ended questions, where the respondents elaborated on the reasons that inclined them more or less to donate, and the qualitative analysis was conducted thematically. The frequent themes and words were determined and summarised into general themes like emotional connection, trust in systems, perceived urgency, and transparency. The numerical data were then associated with these themes to comprehend the motivations of high or low scores.

Lastly, the findings of the Helping Attitude Scale (HAS) were combined to determine whether more prosocial individuals were also more willing to donate. The average and the standard deviation of the HAS scores were used to explain the overall tendency of helping among the sample, and the correlation among them was used to test the association between positive attitudes to helping and greater willingness to donate.

This analysis offered a balanced approach to understanding the quantifiable patterns and the rationale of these patterns by using the descriptive, inferential, and thematic approaches.

3. Results and Discussion

In the results and discussion section, the key findings of the research are presented and interpreted as they relate to the objectives of the research. Likert scale quantitative results are summarised initially to indicate general trends in the overall evaluation of the respondents of the two campaigns. There are qualitative insights of open-ended responses that give an answer to why the participants made those choices. The findings, along with their analysis, offer a more in-depth insight into the use of emotional appeal, trust, and persuasion in influencing donor behaviour in various circumstances of campaigning.

The highest score one could get on the Likert scale for a campaign would be anywhere between 3 and 15 points. When considering the data for 20 people, the possible lowest total was 60, and the highest possible total was 300. The way the results would be interpreted was set by a boundary.

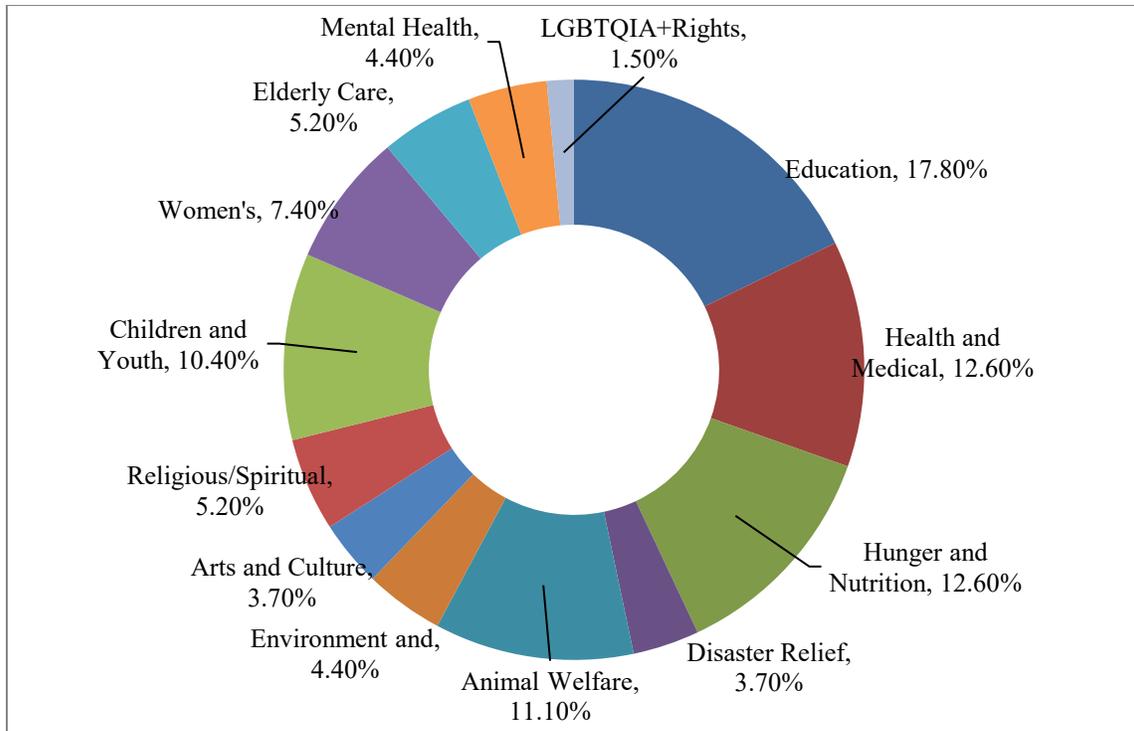


Fig. 1 Causes respondents typically support donating (n= 36)

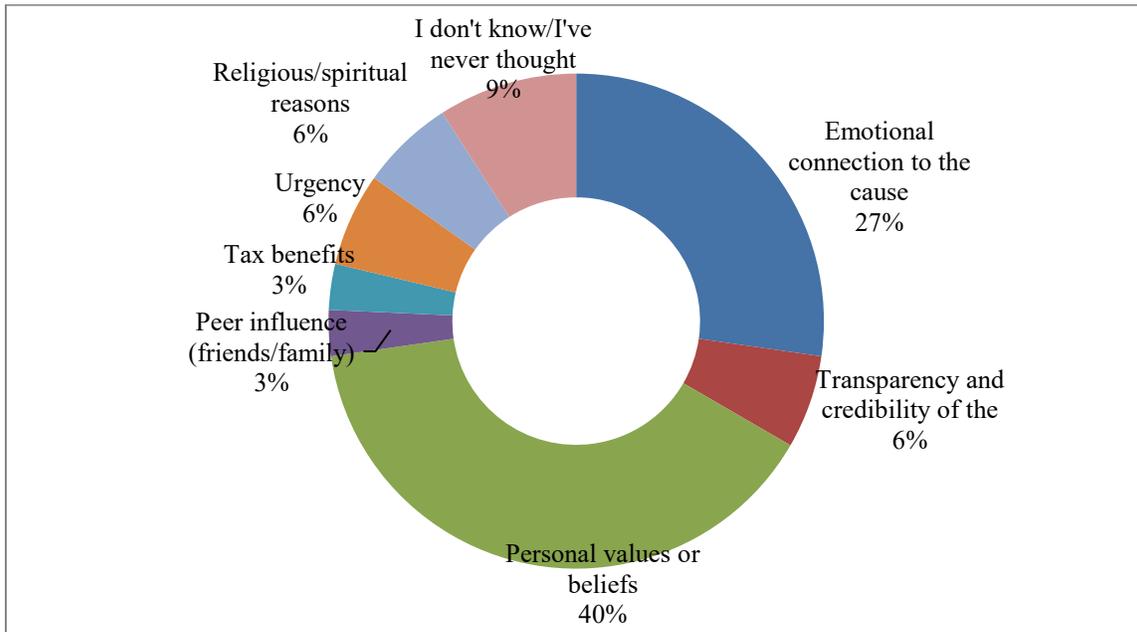


Fig. 2 Motivation of respondents to donate (n= 36)

The cause that has the highest number of respondents is education, as shown in Figure 1. This demonstrates that individuals feel that education can bring about change in the long run and enhance future generations. Close to them are health and medical aid (17 respondents) and hunger and nutrition (17 respondents), which indicates that many people also prioritise basic survival needs. Animal welfare (15

respondents) and children and youth development (14 respondents) were also highly supported as other causes. Although lower compared with these, women's empowerment (10 respondents) is still characterised by an evident interest in equality and social justice. The least supported were disaster relief (5 respondents), arts and culture (5 respondents), and LGBTQIA+ rights (2 respondents). Religious/spiritual causes

(7 respondents), elderly care (7 respondents), environment and climate (6 respondents), and mental health (6 respondents) were rated in the middle range. These figures suggest that individuals are aware of these causes, but they may not prioritise them as high as more pressing concerns, such as hunger or medical assistance.

The trends in the graph are clear: the causes that concern survival and long-term development are more supported than those issues associated with culture, identity, or a specific event. This points to the fact that the importance and attention to some spheres, including LGBTQIA+ rights and mental health, is yet to be given equal consideration.

The channels of donation that donors usually use for donations are crowdfunding platforms (such as Ketto, Milaap and GoFundMe), NGO websites, social media fundraisers (Instagram, Facebook, etc.), in-person or offline donation drives, and religious institutions (temples, mosques, churches, etc.), government-run platforms (e.g., PM CARES Fund), SMS or phone campaigns, contributions made through friends or family asking for a cause, participation in trusts and nonprofit organizations, school-led fundraising initiatives (such as annual charity events), and non-monetary forms of giving like volunteering or teaching support.

In Figure 2, the biggest reason why people donate is because of their personal values or beliefs, with 13 respondents choosing this option, denoting that people often give when they feel that the cause aligns with their own principles or what they believe is right. Another common reason was the emotional connection to the cause (9 respondents). This shows that when people personally relate to or feel moved by an issue, there is a high chance that they will donate. Both reasons point to how strongly donations are guided by personal feelings and beliefs rather than outside influences.

On the other hand, reasons like transparency of the organisation (2 respondents), urgency (2 respondents), and religious or spiritual reasons (2 respondents) were not chosen as much. This proposes that while these factors do matter to some people, they are not the main motivators. Even fewer people said that peer influence (1 respondent) or tax benefits (1 respondent) encouraged them to donate, and surprisingly, media coverage or influencer endorsement received no responses at all. This shows that publicity alone does not necessarily convince people to donate. Interestingly, 3 respondents said they do not really know what motivates them or that they have never thought about it. This suggests that for some individuals, donating may be an impulsive action, where they give without much planning or consideration. From this, one clear trend is evident: people are more motivated to donate because of their personal feelings or beliefs, rather than because of external rewards or pressure. For organisations, this means that making a strong emotional connection and

linking their cause to people’s values may be the best way to encourage more donations (Shang & Croson, 2009).

Table 2. Frequency distribution of: What made them feel more or less inclined to donate to this campaign?

Campaign	Category (Reason)	N	%
1	Emotional appeal/empathy for children	13	68.4%
	Helping society/fairness/equality	3	15.8%
	Familiarity/personal experience	1	5.26%
	Practical reasoning (education responsibility)	1	5.26%
	Lack of emotional connection	1	5.26%
2	Empathy/child welfare/care for orphans	10	52.6%
	Urgency and severity of issue (poverty, neglect)	4	21.1%
	Trust/familiarity with the platform (Ketto)	2	10.5%
	Awareness or experience	2	10.5%
	Personal beliefs/values (education & equality)	2	10.5%
	Preference for domestic giving	1	5.26%

Table 3. Regression Analysis of the relationship between Helping Attitudes and Willingness to donate (n=20)

Model	B	SE B	t	p
Constant	82.65	8.03	10.30	0.0001
Helping Attitude	0.23	0.41	0.57	0.57
R ²			0.018	
F			6.51	

*p<0.05
 B=Coefficients
 SE B = Standard Error

Table 3 shows a simple linear regression that predicts the willingness to donate (total score) using the Helping Attitude Scale (HAS). The model intercept was B = 82.65 (SE = 8.03, t = 10.30, p < .001). This shows that the expected willingness score is when HAS = 0 (however, this is an extrapolated value if HAS is not zero-based, thus it is impossible). The slope for helping attitude was B = 0.23 (SE = 0.41, t = 0.57, p = 0.574). This shows that for every point that increases on the Helping Attitudes Scale, willingness to donate goes up by a tiny amount (0.23). The most important thing here is that this effect was not statistically significant (p = 0.574). The value of R² is 0.018; this is extremely low, therefore, we can conclude that

the Helping Attitude Scale is a poor predictor of willingness to donate in this model.

The data from Table 2 show that, although the Helping Attitudes Scale was a poor predictor, the overall findings made it clear that people were more willing to donate to the U.K. campaign. Trust and credibility were two strong predictors of willingness compared to purely emotional campaign appeals. It turns out that people who already had a positive outlook towards donation (HAS = 84.92) were most likely to donate, but only when they were convinced that the campaign was genuine and effective. This backs up the research by Sargeant and Lee (2004), which states that if one trusts an organisation and thinks they know what they are doing, they will stick with them and are more likely to donate (Sargeant & Lee, 2004b). We can observe this as a vital message that they should cease depending on sad and emotive narratives. The focus of the campaigns should be on transparency, displaying the direction in which the funds are spent, and accountability, demonstrating the quantifiable results. By doing so, organisations can achieve trust and credibility, particularly with donors who are willing to assist.

These results are to be handled with caution, as the research is also limited in its way. Sampling was small and random; therefore, one cannot assume that the results are generalised to all people beyond the study group. Additionally, given that the data was self-reported, this can elevate the chances of bias in the responses as the respondents might have given answers that they believed were correct rather than.

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These findings emphasise the need to ensure that the campaigns can articulate their objectives and show accountability, as they are more likely to attract contributions, particularly those already predisposed to giving. These findings also have implications for nonprofit organisations, social campaigns, and education-oriented charities that can enhance the involvement of the donors by focusing on transparency and presenting the real results. This study, however, has limitations because it has a small and non-random sample, is based on self-reported information, and is cross-sectional in nature, which restricts the conclusion of causality. Further studies might involve bigger and more diversified samples and longitudinal designs in order to examine the effects of the trust-building strategies on the donation behaviour in the long term.

4. Conclusion

This study examined how the social framing of education-focused donation campaigns, based in India and the U.K., influences people’s willingness to donate. The focus was on emotional impact, persuasion, trust, and their general helping attitude. The results show that the campaign based in the U.K. scored higher on the HAS Scale, showing that trust and credibility were more closely linked to willingness rather than emotional appeal. Respondents also mentioned prosocial attitudes rather than only prediction. The open-ended responses from respondents included empathy for children, the importance of proper use of funds, and the reliability of the platform. The future studies should use larger, more diverse samples and use experiments to test specific factors that affect the trust cues, storytelling formats, and they may also track donors over a period of time to assess the sustained effects.

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