



What impact do personal values and political ideology have on one's willingness to become an organ donor?

Shannon Bossidy, Marcus DeKnatel, Anna Ferraro, and Wade Gregor

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

According to the Health Resources and Services Administration, there are currently over 106,000 people on the national transplant waiting list. This study aims to determine if there is a correlation between organ donor status and political beliefs and personal values, such as empathy and religious beliefs. Recent research regarding the influence of political ideology on organ donation intentions was completed by Eugene Y. Chan in 2019. The study recruited 228 Australian students not on Australia's Organ Donor Registry and who voted in the 2016 Australian federal election, thus creating a research gap as it does not apply to the political system of the United States. The results found the Liberal National Coalition supporting students were less willing to sign up for the organ donation registry compared to labor-supporting students. Additional research from a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services survey explored the relationship between demographic profiles and willingness to donate. From those results this study was able to control for given factors of age, race, and level of education to focus primarily on an American citizen's willingness to become an organ donor influenced by one's political ideology and personal values of empathy and religion.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research was conducted through the use of a Qualtrics survey which contained information from a validated questionnaire for measuring factors influencing organ donation and transplantation proposed by Alenka Slavec. Empathy was measured through the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire, and the participants' empathy results was used to assess personal values. Religion is also a substantial personal value taken into account by the participants' responses as to which religion they affiliated with the most. Political ideology was assessed by the 2018 Political Belief Scale through the APA and correlated with willingness to donate. Ideology was then compared to a set of fabricated quotes to assess whether a scientist, a conservative figure, or a liberal figure would have the greatest influence on becoming an organ donor. After the creation of the Qualtrics survey, it was released through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) yielding 198 participants.

HYPOTHESIS

People who consider themselves politically liberal will have a higher level of empathy and therefore be more likely to be registered as donors, whereas political conservatives will be less empathetic and less likely to be a donor.

RESULTS

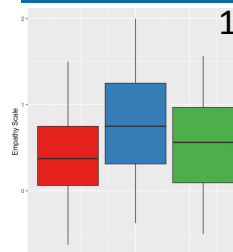
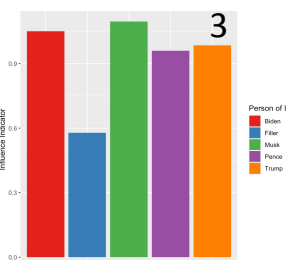
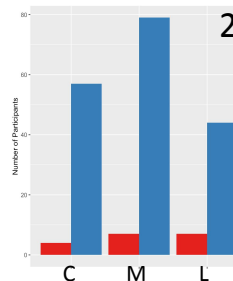


Figure 1: Empathy level amongst conservative, moderate, and liberal political groups.

Figure 2: Willingness to become an organ donor between self identified political groups. C= conservative, M= moderate, L= liberal.

Figure 3: Amount of influence between people of interest on willingness to become an organ donor. Higher scores indicate a higher positive influence on participants.



Analysis of the data showed significant differences between the willingness of the politically conservative, moderate and liberal groups. Measured empathy levels suggested that moderates were the most empathetic and conservatives least empathetic. However, when assessed political ideology was tested against willingness to donate, the liberal group was the least willing. The results of one's religion compared to the willingness to donate was overall inconclusive due to the smaller sample size of minority religious groups examined. Finally, analysis of public figure influence showed that Elon Musk was the most influential on a person's willingness to donate.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the data showed politically moderate groups were the most willing, and the most empathetic, suggesting ideology and empathy may not be as significant of an influence as originally hypothesized. Conservatives were shown to be the least empathetic, but were more likely and willing to donate than liberals who were least likely, suggesting a reevaluation of the main hypothesis. There were several response contradictions which could have resulted in incorrect affiliations, possibly misconstruing analysis between political ideologies and willingness to donate. In addition, when assessing willingness, there was a significantly low number of participants that were unwilling to become registered as a donor. Empathy and religion should both be further explored as the results were not conclusive for these reasons. Analysis of the fabricated quotes provided inconclusive information because Elon Musk was the most influential in regards to persuading the participants to become an organ donor, yet a fabricated scientist had the least influence, suggesting some correlation between name recognition and influence. Future research should further analyze the influence of well-known figures on willingness to become an organ donor.

FURTHER APPLICATIONS

This study aims to gain an understanding of why someone chooses to become a donor, so individuals with these traits can be targeted in order to increase the overall number of donors. This is vital issue as related to the field of health because a higher number of donors means there is increased potential to save millions of lives. Further studies should fully explore the effects of empathy and political ideology for an accurate representation. Further studies should also focus on people who are unwilling to become donors in order to understand which influences are the most significant.

REFERENCES

- Chan, Eugene Y. "The Politics of Intent: Political Ideology Influences Organ Donation Intentions." *Personality and Individual Differences*, Pergamon, 21 Dec. 2018.
- Singh, Rajvir et al. "Validation of a Survey Questionnaire on Organ Donation: An Arabic World Scenario." *Journal of transplantation*, 8 Feb. 2018.
- Spreng RN et al. "The Toronto Empathy Questionnaire: Scale development and initial validation of a factor-analytic solution to multiple empathy measures." *J. Pers. Asmt.* 2009;91(1):62-71.
- Webber, D., et al. 2018. Political Belief Scale [Database record].