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**MANAGING VOLUNTEERING BEHAVIOUR: THE DRIVERS OF DONATIONS  
PRACTICES IN RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR ORGANISATIONS**

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# **MANAGING VOLUNTEERING BEHAVIOUR: THE DRIVERS OF DONATIONS PRACTICES IN RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR ORGANISATIONS**

## **ABSTRACT**

The present research deals with donations practices and the extent to which drivers of donations practices contribute to volunteering behavior. The paper aims to deepen the understanding of the relationship between volunteerism and key drivers in donating behavior and donations practices, thus allowing charities to pursue more efficient ways in which to elicit volunteer work as well as better manage fundraising practices. It is argued that gender, age, religious affiliation, compassion, altruism, egoism, and religiosity impact on the level of volunteerism of the donor.

A sample of 612 Portuguese donors was selected from within a population of donors that donate regularly to charitable institutions. The key findings of the current study are grounded on the idea of interaction between the volunteering behavior of a donor and both his level of religiosity and his religious affiliation. With regard to other drivers of donations practices, it was found that both altruism and compassion are positively correlated with donor volunteerism.

## **KEYWORDS**

Volunteerism, pro-social behavior, religiosity, donations practices

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Much attention has been paid to questions addressing volunteering as a vital behavior in a society (Fisher and Ackerman 1998; Wilson 2000; Allison, Okun et al. 2002; Briggs, Peterson et al. 2009), as an honorable tradition of community service (Horn 2012; Cornelis, Van Hiel et al. 2013). Since early history, volunteering behavior has been a powerful driving force in the betterment of humanity, a key contributor to the solving of the problems of mankind.

Overall, different types of institutions and organizations have always depended on volunteering work as a vital resource for the accomplishment of their objectives. Moreover, amongst other issues that are of the utmost interest to charitable organizations, including how much people are willing to donate, what are the profiles of donors, and which charitable causes donors tend and want to support, charitable donations and donations behavior in general has been thoroughly researched (Webb, Green et al. 2000; Bennett and Sargeant 2003; Ranganathan and Henley 2008).

Charities rely heavily on donations as sources of income: volunteerism and donations, or time and money are highly appreciated. Conversely, recruiting volunteers and obtaining donations are seen nowadays as vital activities for every organization pursuing its mission in a responsible way. Current research claims that time and money go hand in hand (Clain and Zech 1999; Lee and Chang 2007; Bekkers and Theo 2008), and that they are complementary from the viewpoint of charities and their resource management strategies (Bekkers 2010). It is believed that time and money, are therefore required to be considered in tandem by charitable institutions.

This study has considered different aspects when researching two types of pro-social behavior: volunteerism and donations practices (Abreu 2012). Volunteerism and donations practices are behaviors that emanate from citizens in general and have been under deep scrutiny from the academic literature for some time, with a recurrent emphasis on the

origin and the exploration of different drivers that can work as explanatory schemata for the occurrence of these behaviors.

Nevertheless, and although there is ample literature on donations practices, studies centered on the impact of different drivers of pro-social behavior on volunteerism can be considered to be few and far between. Such key issues as the relationship between people's volunteerism and donations practices combined with their level of religiosity or altruism have received scarce academic treatment, which prompts much necessary responses in filling this gap in the literature. This paper aims to be just one such contribution.

A deeper understanding of volunteers' life choices, attitudes, interests, pro-social behaviors and motivations is indeed required in order to attain a better and more useful knowledge that better aids volunteering causes and contributes to the survival of charitable institutions. Better and more in-depth knowledge of donations practices and donor behavior can aid the charitable organization with obvious gains to society at large.

This paper looks into pro-social behavior and volunteering. An analysis of the impact of the donor's volunteerism into donations' practices is conducted, which aims to uncover the relationship between volunteerism in different donors and their donations practices. On this issue different studies have attempted to illustrate this relationship (Lee and Chang 2007; Pelozo, Hudson et al. 2009) and its usefulness for organizations (Abreu 2012). The key research question that is elicited here addresses the impact of different drivers of pro-social behavior on volunteerism. Other questions that are worthy of investigation are: Is it advisable to consider the joint impact of different aspects whilst observing the level of voluntarism? Can we use different characteristics of the donor as proxies for determining who is more likely to be a volunteer?

With all of this in mind, this paper aims to make salient these gaps in the literature, put together some relevant propositions and subsequently proceed to offer the results of a survey, its analyses and discussion as well as presenting some worthwhile conclusions derived from empirical scrutiny.

## **2. PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND VOLUNTEERISM**

Volunteering is considered a form of pro-social behavior (Wilson 2000), as well as a widely acclaimed key aspect within pro-social behavior, i.e., an intentional and voluntary behavior valued by society or a significant segment of it (Eisenberg 1982; Piliavin and Charng 1990; Penner, Dovidio et al. 2005). Pro-social behavior is also considered as a broad sort of activities that benefit other people such as helping, sharing, altruistic behavior and sympathy, cooperation, giving, donating, and being sensitive and responsive, regardless of personal motivation that would justify that behavior (Eisenberg 1982; De Concillis 1993; Penner, Dovidio et al. 2005).

Volunteering can be defined as a behavior involving a pro-social action in an organizational context, which is planned and that continues for an extended period (Penner, Dovidio et al. 2005). Volunteering, giving, philanthropy or humanitarianism, have been applied more or less interchangeably, all terms mirroring the progression of the noble human tradition of helping the less fortunate through the work of organizations.

In effect, the ones that are worried with social problems tend to be associated more with volunteering activities, and are the ones that engaged more regularly in civic compromise. All sorts of people (Plagnol and Huppert 2010) are contributing their time and energy in assisting others in a variety of ways. Not surprisingly, volunteering has also been recognized as a source of well being to the volunteer himself, and is believed to have a positive impact on the lowering of the incidence of serious human conditions including morbidity and mortality (Poulin 2013).

Different studies have attempted to explain the reasons why people engage in volunteering activities (Clary and Snyder 1995; Clary and Snyder 1999; Cornelis, Van Hiel et al. 2013), and the main motivations can be grouped into individual attributes, and on social

influences (Wilson 2000); moreover, demographic attributes, such as age and gender have been used as explanatory variables (Luoh and Herzog 2002; Plagnol and Huppert 2010).

Volunteering motivation is an important debate (Tienen et al., 2010), and some authors argue for a deeper analysis of the direct or indirect influence that religion has on people's volunteering behavior, especially in European countries that are characterised by a strong decline in religious participation (Bekkers and Theo 2008). As a matter of fact, the idea of people helping other people also as part of their religious duties and obligations has been historically acknowledged.

Nowadays, there has been an expansion in the number of people volunteering for services in different charities, and also volunteering in the so-called third world, especially young people (Cornelis, Van Hiel et al. 2013) and elderly retired people at a more local level. There is also a vivid discussion around whether an action can be considered volunteering, if and when it is remunerated in some form, and also if volunteering has a pre-determined intention, or even whether volunteering can be solely defined as an output (Wilson 2000).

### **3. DRIVERS OF VOLUNTEERING**

Various disciplines have been actively engaged with charities in their volunteering activities and an understanding of motivation of volunteering is extremely important (Bales 1996; Bekkers and Theo 2008; Withers, Browner et al. 2013). Within the volunteering and pro-social behavior literature, identifying and understanding the drivers behind these types of activities has been one of the most debated topics (Eisenberg 1982). One can say that the drivers of a specific behaviour are the set of processes and mechanisms that precede an action. Moreover, drivers for volunteering are extremely important in uncovering volunteering behavior and understanding volunteers.

The literature has been overwhelming in explaining and classifying the drivers for volunteerism. For instance, Allison et al.(2002) have identified such motives as career,

esteem, protection, social esteem or understanding as drivers of volunteerism. Religious topics have been identified as the most important drivers for volunteering (Cnaan and Boddie 2001; Saroglou, Pichon et al. 2005; Bekkers and Theo 2008; Tienen, Scheepers et al. 2010; Krause and Hayward 2012). Different constructs have been used with regards to this topic including religious affiliation, religiousness, or religiosity. On this, Tienen et al. (2010) concluded that volunteering can be enhanced via a so-called informal spirituality, whilst religious practice and church attendance are more related with formal volunteering. Einolf (2013) claims that spirituality is significant as a predictor of volunteerism, irrespective of attendance of a particular church. Bekkers and Schuyt (2008) have found that church attendance is a key indicator for volunteerism, especially for volunteerism inside the church.

Demographic variables have been highly debated in volunteering (Plagnol and Huppert 2010). Age (Krause and Hayward 2012; Principia, Chiattia et al. 2012; Knowles, Hyde et al. 2013), for instance, has been under inspection, as volunteerism is often associated with older people. Gender is another variable under scrutiny, but with various outcomes in relation to volunteerism (Wilson, 2000).

Within pro-social behavior at large, various terms have been debated, including compassion, implying feelings like caring and loving, resulting sometimes in actions like sharing, giving, serving, and supporting (Callahan 1992). Likewise, compassion has been related with benefiting others (Batson, Harris et al. 1979; Shariff and Norenzayan 2007), and so associated with volunteerism.

Altruism (Magat 1989; Andreoni 1990; Clary and Snyder 1995; Hibbert and Horne 1996; Smith 2003; Bruce 2005; Hur 2006), another so-called type of pro-social behavior, has been heavily debated and also correlated with volunteerism (Cooper, Cripps et al. 2013), and egoism and it can also be tested for explaining levels of volunteerism (Horn 2012).



#### **4. GAPS AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL**

Consistent with the literature, the gaps identified are: i) the pattern involving volunteerism and religion stays complex and controversial; ii) there is a need for a deeper understanding of altruism and egoism motives as predictors of donations practices and their relationship with volunteerism; and iii) little is known about how the three types of donors, religious, religious but non-church goer, and secular, are similar or different with respect to their donation practices, considering their level of volunteerism.

The gaps that have been identified lead to an inquiry about the influence and interaction of different drivers on volunteerism, including age and gender, religious affiliation, religiosity, compassion, egoism, and altruism.

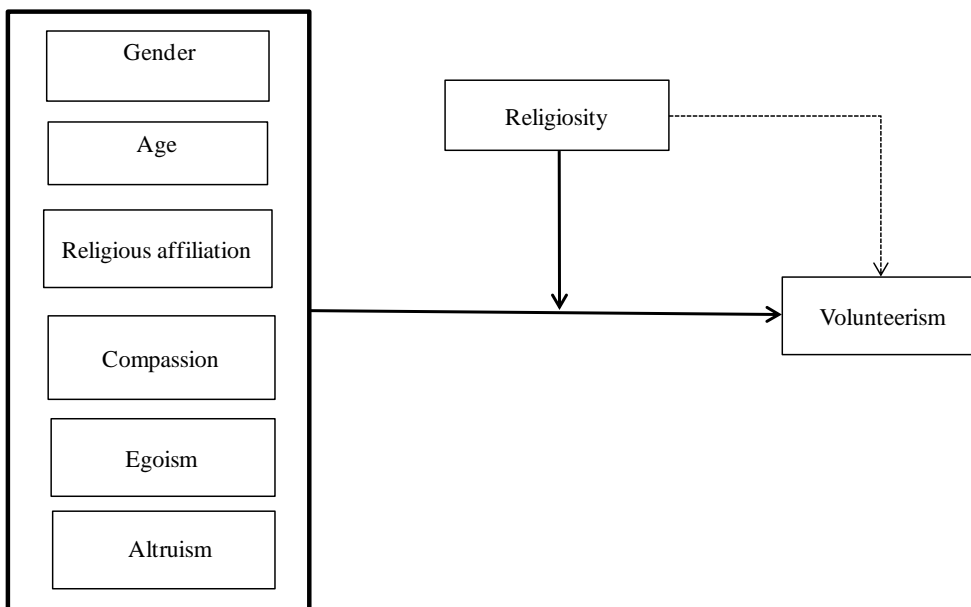
The scrutiny of the literature has revealed the importance of volunteerism for charities and the importance of identifying donations drivers that along with some of the characteristics of individuals tend to be related to volunteerism (Lee and Chang 2007; Bekkers 2010; Abreu 2012). Moreover, the literature is not unanimous about the role of religiosity regarding the explanation of volunteerism and, consequently, donations practices and behavior (Batson 1976; Ji, Pendergraft et al. 2006; Reistma, Scheepers et al. 2006).

In this context this study aims to explore and test the role of religiosity and the relationship between the characteristics of individuals and their volunteerism level, leading to the following conceptual model (Figure 1) and propositions:

- Proposition 1: There is a significant effect of religiosity on the level of volunteerism.
- Proposition 2: There is a significant effect of gender and religiosity on the level of volunteerism.
- Proposition 3: There is a significant effect of age and religiosity on the level of volunteerism.

- Proposition 4: There is a significant effect of religious affiliation and religiosity on the level of volunteerism.
- Proposition 5: There is a significant effect of compassion and religiosity on the level of volunteerism.
- Proposition 6: There is a significant effect of egoism and religiosity on the level of volunteerism.
- Proposition 7: There is a significant effect of altruism and religiosity on the level of volunteerism.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model



## 5. METHODOLOGY

Data was collected for the purposes of the current research by means of a survey type instrument conducted next to donors into Portuguese charities. A large scale questionnaire was delivered to the participating organizations on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February of 2010, and it stayed on-line until the 9<sup>th</sup> of April of the same year. This approach was taken with a view

to capturing a sample that would be representative of the average donor and also to avoid the possible biases that could possibly arise from directly surveying donors.

Six hundred and twelve donors to Portuguese charities participated in this study, 66.3% of them female and aged between 15 and 77 years old (mean 36.8 years old with a standard deviation of 11.2 years). Taking into consideration religious affiliation, the sample comprises 51.4% religious, 28.3% non-church goer and 20.3% secular donors. Thus, despite the sample selection not being random, it is possible to conclude that the diversity of the population's characteristics has been incorporated into the study sample.

To measure volunteerism De Concillis' (1993) framework of validated items. A 5-point Likert scale was used with extreme points ranging from "totally disagree" to "totally agree", the uni-dimensionality of the scale was tested with Principal Components Analyses (PCA) and a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.824 was obtained. The scale scores that were obtained were the item averages.

The same procedure was followed for religiosity (Reistma 2007), compassion (De Concillis 1993), altruism and egoism (Batson and Shaw 1991) scales. Table 1 presents all the scales Cronbach's Alpha, suggesting a good level of reliability. For a better interpretation of the results these scales were re-coded in two categories: low for a value equal or less than 3 (center point of the scale) and high for values above 3.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the scales used

Scale	Volunteerism	Religiosity	Compassion	Egoism	Altruism
<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	0.824	0.971	0.860	0.837	0.723

The seven propositions were analyzed with 2-way ANOVA, a statistical procedure to analyze the influence of two categorical independent variables (the drivers of

volunteerism) on one continuous level dependent variable (the volunteerism level). This statistical procedure has three assumptions (Laureano 2012): i) the samples must be independent; ii) the populations from which the samples were obtained must be normally or approximately normally distributed; and iii) the variances of the populations must be equal. All of them were verified, except for the analysis of the interaction between compassion and religiosity where the variances are significantly different ( $Levene_{(4,608)}=4.931;p=0.002$ ). Each proposition from 2 to 7 is corroborated if the differences in the mean level of volunteerism for two levels of one volunteerism driver are not the same across all levels of the second volunteerism driver. In this case, the interaction between the two drivers is significant.

## 6. RESULTS

Tables 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the scales used, namely, volunteerism (as dependent variable), religiosity as moderator factor, and compassion, egoism and altruism as independent variables. Volunteerism (mean 2.49) is lower as a type of pro-social behavior rather than compassion (mean 3.92). Religiosity displaces high values. The mean level of altruism (3.37) is much higher than for egoism (1.73) suggesting altruism as a much stronger driver for donation practices.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the scales used

Scale	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Median	Maximum
Volunteerism	612	2.49	0.81	1.00	2.40	5.00
Religiosity	612	3.50	1.28	1.00	3.90	5.00
Compassion	612	3.92	0.74	1.33	4.00	5.00
Egoism	612	1.73	0.51	1.00	1.67	3.89
Altruism	612	3.37	0.92	1.00	3.50	5.00

The perception of religiosity is related with the level of perceived volunteerism, with the mean level of volunteerism higher when the donor has higher religiosity (mean=2.60; standard deviation =0.82) than when he or she has low religiosity (mean=2.24; standard deviation=0.74), and this difference is significant for 0.05 level ( $t_{(610)}=5.052$ ;  $p<0.001$ ). This conclusion is also supported by all 2-way ANOVA tests where religiosity, as main effect, is found significant in all of them.

The results of the different 2-way ANOVA performed are presented in the six profile plot (interaction plot) where the points represent the volunteerism mean values for each combination of two levels of the two drivers plotted (see Figures 2 to 7).

The results allowed for the conclusion that the interaction between the drivers religious affiliation and religiosity is significant ( $F_{(2,606)}=2.726$ ;  $p=0.066$ ,  $\eta^2=0.009$ ). In fact, secular donors vary from low to moderate voluntarism level depending on which level of religiosity they have. Seculars with low level of religiosity have, on average, a volunteerism level of 2.23 (standard deviation=0.72) but if their religiosity is high than the mean level of volunteerism is higher (mean=3.02; standard deviation=0.96).

With previous results we can state that propositions 1 and 4 are corroborated and the remaining five are not. Although, despite just one interaction effect was found, three significant main effects were significant, not including the religiosity main effect as just analyzed:

a) the effect of religious affiliation ( $F_{(2,606)}=3.341$ ;  $p=0.036$ ,  $\eta^2=0.011$ ) as religious donors have higher perceived volunteerism level (mean=2.64; standard deviation=0.81) than those that are non church goer (mean=2.33; standard deviation=0.79) or secular (mean=2.30; standard deviation=0.78), being the differences between these two groups not significant as showed by the Scheffé post hoc test ( $p=0.946$ );

b) the effect of altruism ( $F_{(1;608)}=30.492$ ;  $p<0.001$ ,  $\eta^2=0.048$ ) as donors with high level of altruism have higher perceived volunteerism level (mean=2.63; standard deviation=0.81) than those that have low level of altruism (mean=2.33; standard deviation=0.75);

c) compassion effect (assumptions of the test are not verified) as donors with high level of compassion have higher perceived volunteerism level (mean=2.59; standard deviation=0.81) than those that have low level of compassion (mean=1.91; standard deviation=0.58).

Figure 2. Perceptions of volunteerism under two levels of religiosity and gender

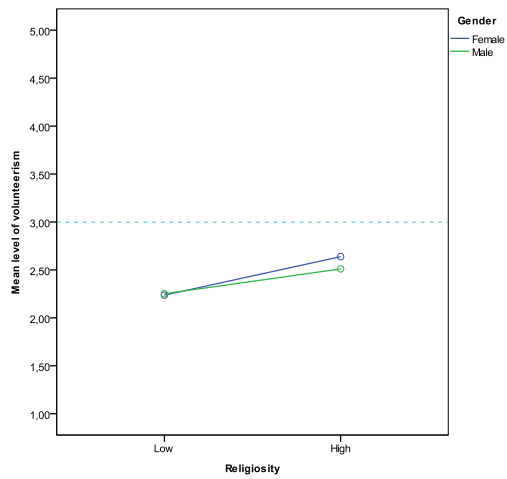


Figure 3. Perceptions of volunteerism under two levels of religiosity and age

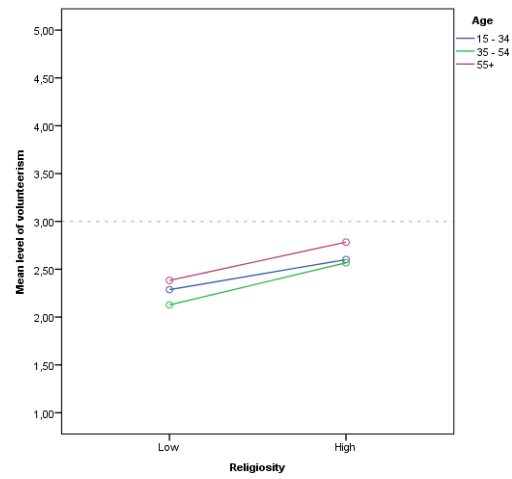


Figure 4. Perceptions of volunteerism under two levels of religiosity and three levels of religious affiliation

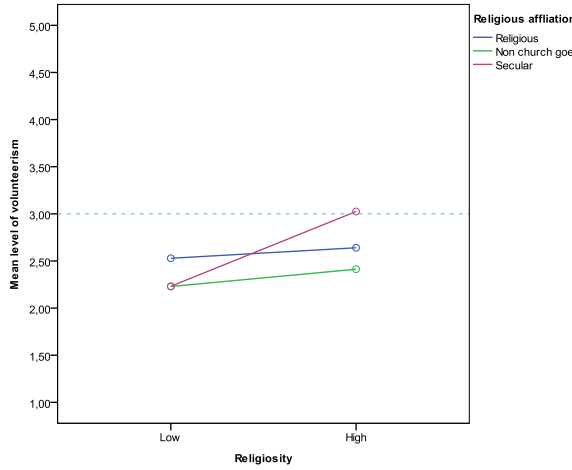


Figure 5. Perceptions of volunteerism under two levels of religiosity and two levels of perceived compassion

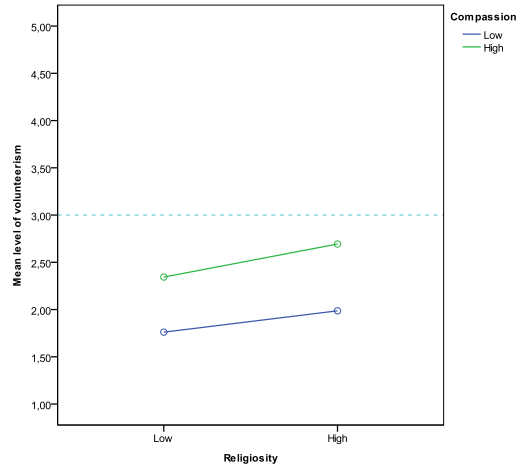


Figure 6. Perceptions of volunteerism under two levels of religiosity and two levels of perceived egoism

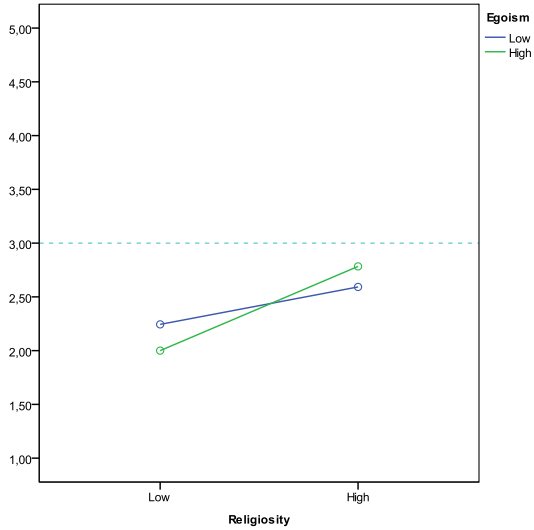
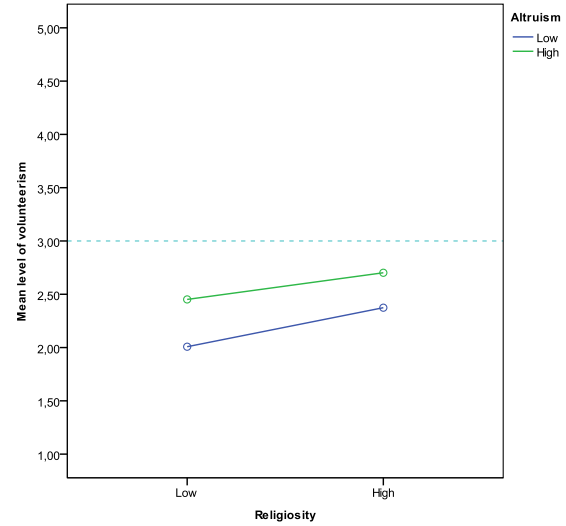


Figure 7. Perceptions of volunteerism under two levels of religiosity and two levels of perceived altruism



## 7. DISCUSSION

The values for volunteerism (see Table 2) are low, with the exception of the value for the secular donors, when their religiosity is also high. In contrast, the values for compassion, the other type of pro-social behavior, are much higher. This probably occurs because volunteering costs time for the donor, it is not a remunerated task (Wilson 2000), and is therefore a more difficult type of pro-social behavior to be administered by a charity.

Religiosity, both by its main effect, and while combined with religious affiliation (interaction effect), does have a positive relation with the level of volunteerism of the donors. This is also in line with other studies (Bekkers and Theo 2008) although for the purposes of this paper volunteering was only applied as a general construct: Tienen et al. (2010) found that spirituality positively impacts informal volunteering, and religious attendance impacts on related formal volunteering.

The demographic characteristics at stake, gender and age, are not associated with voluntarism, and the interaction effect of religiosity is not found, and thus propositions 2 and 3 are not corroborated. As a matter of fact, different outcomes have been found for the relationship between gender and voluntarism, or no relationship whatsoever (Winterich, Mittal et al. 2013) ; on the other hand, getting older has been highly appraised as a condition for volunteerism (Plagnol and Huppert 2010; Krause and Hayward 2012; Principia, Chiattia et al. 2012; Knowles, Hyde et al. 2013). This study showed that there is a slightly tendency for older people displacing higher values of volunteerism, but this difference is not significant.

Compassion displays a direct effect on volunteerism, a result also found in previous studies (e.g. Batson, Harris et al. 1979; Shariff and Norenzayan 2007). Egoism is not related with voluntarism, and, this relation has been discussed in other studies where egoistic values are shown as competing with pro-social values and behavior (Horn 2012). The literature suggests that altruism can indeed make a difference in volunteerism (Batson and Shaw



1991) and this study has also revealed that altruism does have a positive effect the other way around, that is the interaction effect of altruism and religiosity was not found.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

The aim of this study was to conduct an analysis and develop an understanding of the relationship between different drivers of volunteerism, in line with a perceived gap in the literature. There was also an added purpose of the current research in analyzing the influence of religiosity on volunteerism.

The present study s looks at seven different types of drivers of volunteerism: age, gender, altruism, egoism, compassion, religious affiliation, and religiosity. As far as one can tell, research papers applying these particular drivers and mixing demographic traits, attitudinal intentions, and religious variables, are few and far between and to be more rigorous none were identified.

Grounded on a large scale, this study indicates that religiosity, altruism, and compassion, can indeed enhance the volunteerism level of the donor. Besides, religiosity positively influences the volunteerism of a donor, in conjunction with the religious affiliation of the donor. In addition, charities can look at the joint impact of religious affiliation and religiosity: higher levels of religiosity for the ones who are not religious can increase their level of volunteerism.

Like most studies, the present study suffers from limitations. First of all, the sample was not random but rather purposive because of an absence of national databases of donors in Portugal. Also, the sample was one of Portuguese donors, and there could be different results in response to questions of religion or volunteering if the questionnaires were administered elsewhere in Europe; and moreover people that are volunteers and not donors

have been inquired. Besides, future research should take into consideration the use of other measurement scales.

In spite of the evidence found, the most striking contrast with the existing literature is that age as a demographic characteristic is no indicator of volunteerism. Perhaps this is due to cultural differences between Portugal and other European countries and the United States, where older people tend to be are the highest volunteering group, but this was not found to be the case in southern European countries (Plagnol and Huppert 2010). This is therefore an issue that can be the subject of further scrutiny in subsequent studies. Another opportunity for forthcoming research is to seek a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between different sorts of volunteering (formal and informal), religiosity and religious affiliation.

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