

Compassion Fade: Effects of Mass Perception and Intertemporal Choice on Non-Volunteering Behavior

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Abstract : Compassion fade proposes an inverse relationship between the magnitude of stimuli to elicited compassion. This phenomenon is viewed within a framework that integrates a 3-Act Compassion structure with Latané and Darley's Unresponsive Bystander Model and Prospect Theory of Decision-making under risk. Students (N=211) from Ateneo de Davao were sampled to examine the effects of mass perception (increasing number of needy persons) and intertemporal choice (soon versus later) on volunteering behavior. Collegiate classes in their natural setting were randomly assigned to five different treatment groups and were presented with audiovisual presentations featuring an increasing number of needy persons. The students were deceived to believe that two hypothetical feeding programs for Marawi refugees, taking place in 1 month and 6 months, were in need of volunteers for its preparatory phase. Results show a statistically significant ($p=0.000$; $p=0.013$) non-linear trend consistently for both feeding programs. There was a decrease in volunteered time means as identifiable victims increased from 0-47 and an increase as it progressed towards 267 non-identifiable victims. Highest interest was expressed for the 0 needy people shown and least for 47. The 0 hours volunteered was consistently the mode and median in all treatments. There was no statistically significant temporal discounting effect.

Keywords : compassion, group perception, identifiable victim, intertemporal choice, prosocial behavior, unresponsive bystander

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