



Who gives to food banks?

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This study helps us understand why some people donate to food banks and why others do not. It is valuable for food bank managers who want to create effective promotional campaigns.

The authors suggested that people's own beliefs and their perception of food bank users are the key factors in deciding whether to donate.

The study is important because it shows that those who have positive beliefs and perceptions are indeed more likely to donate. On the flip side, many people who do not donate seem quite unfamiliar with the life situation of food bank users. This indicates a need to enhance the public image of food bank users to encourage more support and understanding.

[#FoodBank](#) [#FoodDonations](#) [#DonationBehavior](#) [#UK](#) [#Fundraising](#)

Background

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Context



- Despite the increasing need for food, and consequently a growing number of food banks, **academic research on this topic has been scarce**. Before this study, scholars investigated the socio-political factors of giving and the characteristics of food bank users. Only one study conducted in the US explored food bank donors. Therefore, this is the second study about food bank donors overall, and the first in the UK.
- To explain donor behavior, authors employed the **Norm Activation Model (NAM)**. According to NAM, an individual donates once his/her personal norms toward giving are activated. These norms are more likely to be activated when the individual has 1) an awareness of the consequences of not giving, 2) a sense of responsibility to give, and 3) a social circle that supports giving.
- The authors hypothesized that the link between personal norms and the choice to donate is moderated by **how (non-)donors perceive food bank users**. Recognizing that attitudes toward food bank users may be shaped by broader attitudes toward poverty and personal experiences with poverty, the authors tested the impact of these variables as well.
- The data was collected in 2019/20 from shoppers in four supermarkets in South-West London. **Each supermarket featured a donation box at the checkout area, where interviewers engaged with respondents**. In total, 319 donors and 371 non-donors participated in the interviews.

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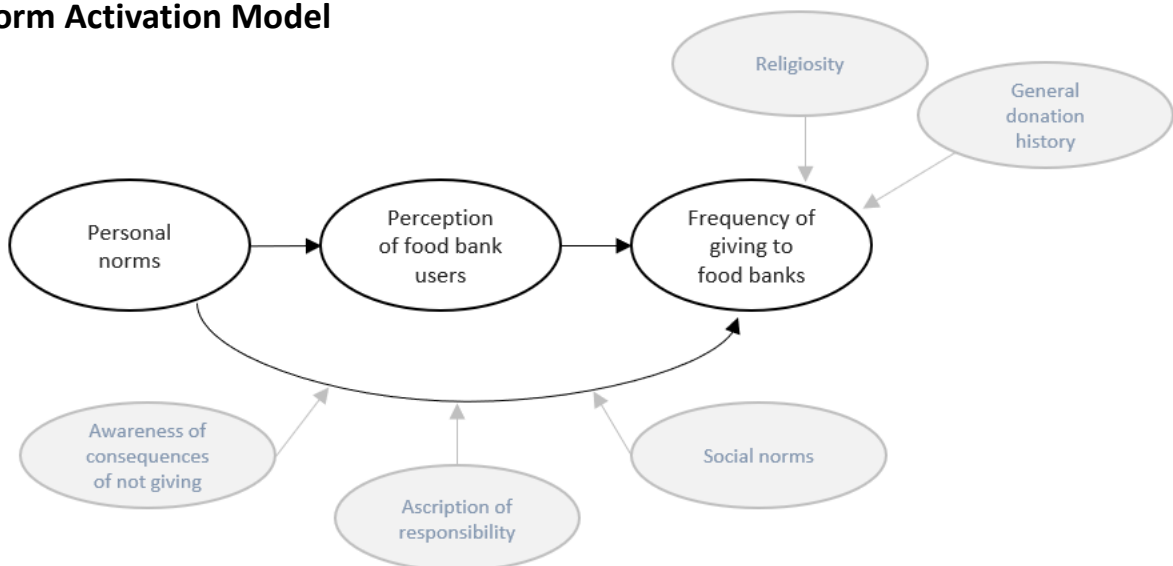
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Take aways & Learnings



- **Perception of food bank users** – At the beginning of the interview, shoppers were asked an open-ended question: “*What comes into your mind when you think about the sorts of people who go to and receive food from a food bank?*”. The results suggest that donors tend to blame the government’s policies and injustice in society for the condition of the poor, while non-donors more commonly believe food bank users are themselves responsible for their situation. Noteworthy, 40% of non-donors have never thought about this issue before.
- **Results** – The proposed NAM model seems to be plausible, as all direct correlations were found to be as predicted. **Individuals with positive personal norms towards giving and positive perceptions of food bank users are more likely to donate food.** This effect especially holds when donors are **aware of the consequences, have a sense of responsibility, and are surrounded by people who support giving.** On the other hand, attitudes towards poverty, personal experience of poverty, and estimation of personal influence over poverty showed no correlation with the frequency of giving.
- **Recommendations** – The authors advise **food bank managers** to 1) focus on **improving public perceptions** of food bank users, 2) **communicate that anyone can become** a food bank user, 3) **show how donors experience** satisfaction when giving, and 4) **recruit volunteers who could physically pick up food from donors’ residences.**

Norm Activation Model



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