

2020 SPI Conference Paper Submission

## **What Predicts Muslim Philanthropy During Ramadan?**

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### **Introduction**

The month of Ramadan is the most sacred time of the year for Muslims worldwide. It is considered a time of spirituality and generosity. It is a time when Muslim organizations and institutions intensively fundraise, capitalizing on the theological importance of this sacred month to prospective donors (ISPU, 2018). Muslims are likely to be motivated donate in Ramadan due their sense of religious duty and the feeling that those with more should help those with less (). However, the determinants of Muslim philanthropy in Ramadan are not well understood. As Ramadan in 2020, which took place in late April to late May, coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, the uncertainty in the air may have also contributed to donor beliefs and behaviors. This study uses a large sample of North American Muslims to investigate the demographic, religious, and psychological correlates of donor behavior.

### **Data Sources and Research Methods**

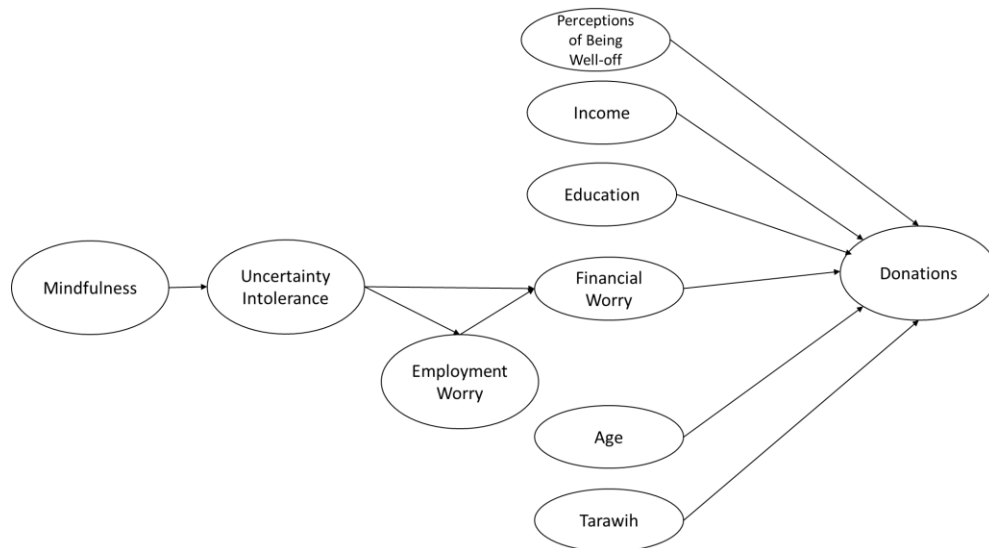
This study utilized a diverse sample of North American Muslims ( $n=1000$ ) who responded to a survey about Ramadan during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey gathered information on demographics, religious behaviors, and psychological constructs hypothesized to correlate with philanthropic behavior. This study considered age, education, and income as demographic variables of interest and religious behavior in Ramadan. Psychological constructs included mindfulness, uncertainty intolerance, perceptions of being well-off, and worries about

employment and finances. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to test our hypothesized model, which ultimately predicted actual donations.

## Results

The model fit the data well ( $\chi^2(48) = 422.37, p = .000$ ; RMSEA = .07; CFI = .29). Mindfulness predicted Uncertainty Intolerance ( $B = .48, p < .001$ ), which in turn predicted worrying about employment ( $B = .68, p < .001$ ) and finances ( $B = .07, p < .001$ ). Actual donations were predicted by perceptions of being well-off ( $B = .10, p < .001$ ), praying *tarawih* (optional night prayers) ( $B = .07, p = .001$ ), higher education ( $B = .31, p < .001$ ), age ( $B = .28, p < .001$ ), income ( $B = .23, p < .001$ ), and financial worry ( $B = -.08, p < .001$ ).

Figure 1. SEM Predicting Donations in Ramadan



## Implications and Scholarly Significance

This study was a novel investigation of Muslim philanthropy in the month of Ramadan during the COVID-19 pandemic. Uncertainty intolerance was the primary construct of interest, which we hypothesized as a core psychological aspect of philanthropy. We found that uncertainty

intolerance is correlated with increased worries about personal finances, which negatively impact donations. Additionally, we found that mindfulness was a predictor of uncertainty intolerance, which is in line with prior research (Kramer et al., 2016). Our findings have important implications for future research and experiments on philanthropic behavior. Future research should consider various aspects of religious behavior, extending beyond self-reported religiosity or service attendance. Additionally, understanding the context of the COVID-19 pandemic as it adds to our understanding about decision making under uncertainty in the domain of philanthropy. Future research may examine how worries about employment and money in other contexts relate to donor behavior. Future experimental work should consider the malleable psychological traits we have found to correlate with donations, especially mindfulness, uncertainty intolerance, and perceptions of being well-off. Interventions may target mindfulness to decrease uncertainty intolerance (Karelaia & Reb, 2015; Victorson et al., 2017) and possibly increase donations. Alternatively, interventions targeting perceptions of being well-off may utilize advantageous social comparisons to increase perceptions of being well-off and possibly increase donations.

## **References:**

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