



## Blood donors and factors impacting the blood donation decision: Motives for donating blood in Turkish sample



Eda Karacan<sup>a</sup>, Guldane Cengiz Seval<sup>b,\*</sup>, Zeynep Aktan<sup>c</sup>, Meltem Ayli<sup>b</sup>, Refia Palabiyikoglu<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *Ufuk University Faculty of Art and Science and Literature, Department of Psychology, Turkey*

<sup>b</sup> *Ufuk University Faculty of Medicine, Department of Hematology, Turkey*

<sup>c</sup> *Ufuk University Faculty of Medicine, Department of Hematology, Blood and Transfusion Centre, Turkey*

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Donations in Turkey are insufficient to cover the high transfusion needs arising from large numbers of thalassemia and sickle cell anemia patients and increasing demands for blood due to advanced surgery and cancer treatment. The most acceptable means to get blood is voluntary blood donation and the blood donor system in Turkey mostly depends on a combination of voluntary and involuntary donors. The main aim of this study is to explore the motivations of Turkish voluntary blood donors toward blood donation and to determine predictors of blood donation motivation.

**Materials and methods:** A cross-sectional sample survey of active blood donors in Ankara, Turkey was conducted. The sample consisted of 189 male volunteer blood donor adults. Donors filled in a self-administered questionnaire including the measures of demographic information, empathetic concern, altruism, social responsibility and blood donation motivation questionnaire during donation.

**Results:** Factor analysis of Blood Donation Motivation Measure with varimax rotation revealed a three-factor solution named as “values and moral duty”, “positive feelings and esteem” and “self-benefit and external reasons”. The results with regression analyses showed that only social responsibility had a significant effect independent of age, income, and education on blood donation motivation.

**Conclusion:** These result reflects that blood donation motivation not only linked to a high degree of altruistic reasons, but also to a combination of some self-regarding motives. Additionally, feelings of empathy or altruism may be less strong at the time the decision to help, other factors may have a larger influence on helping decisions.

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### 1. Introduction

The requirement of blood and blood components is still high around the world at present. Although blood banks are charged with preparing adequate blood supplies, they have to contend with a permanent shortage of blood. The most acceptable means to get blood is voluntary blood

donation and donation in Turkiye (Turkey) are insufficient to cover the high transfusion needs arising from large numbers of thalassemia and sickle cell anemia patients and increasing demands for blood due to advanced surgery and cancer treatment.

Understanding the factors that motivate donors to donate will facilitate improvements in recruitment programmes. Blood donation decision making has been investigated worldwide for decades to understand the process better to increase donation efficiency, safety, retention and collection [12,14,15]. In their review article, Masser et al. [13] have identified a range of sociodemographic,

\* Corresponding author. Address: Ufuk University Faculty of Medicine, Department of Hematology, Dr. Ridvan Ege Hospital, 06520 Balgat, Ankara, Turkey. Tel.: +90 312 204 4336.

E-mail address: [guldanecengiz@gmail.com](mailto:guldanecengiz@gmail.com) (G. Cengiz Seval).

organizational, physiological, and psychological factors that influence people's willingness to donate blood. Mathew et al. [14] stated that encouraging previous donors to return was important for to increasing collections of donated blood. Therefore, a growing number of studies have also highlighted the role of psychological factors in explaining, predicting and promoting blood donation [13]. Although blood donation is widely portrayed as an altruistic behavior, previous research also found that family and social influences [11], religious activity and institutional settings [10] were also significant. Importantly, Healy [10] emphasized that not only the individual identity factors (e.g., "altruistic identity"), but also institutional features were also important determinants of donor behavior. Bednall and Bove [3] also reviewed blood donation motivators and they verified that the motives behind blood donation differed among first-time, repeat, lapsed, apheresis, and eligible nondonors. They concluded that, among first-time and repeat donors, the most common motivators were convenience (e.g., blood drive nearby), prosocial motivation (e.g., altruism), and personal values (e.g., moral norm). They also identified several deterrents among which the most frequently mentioned barrier was low self-efficacy to donate (e.g., ability to overcome barriers such as lack of time).

Although many studies have emphasized that empathy and altruism are an important component of motivation to perform prosocial or helping behaviors in particular, these studies have argued whether truly altruistic behavior or empathy can exist for helping behavior [1,6,7,8,17]. Some previous research in other areas has also firmly revealed that empathetic emotion is often closely linked to altruistic behavior [2,4], therefore, it would be possible that there is a link between empathy and blood donation. However, while empathic concern played an important role in volunteer choices in Davis' et al. [6] study in a student sample, another study by Davis et al. [7] found no correlation between empathic concern and volunteering. Similarly, Einolf [8] revealed that empathic concern may not be an important motivator for planned helping decisions to help others who are not immediately present, such as volunteering and blood donation.

As a result, different people may become volunteer for the blood donation for different reasons and the same individual may donate because of more than one motive. Moreover, only a small percentage of the eligible population actually chooses to donate blood on a regular basis. Therefore, the first aim of the present study was to identify the factors that would motivate donors to donate and develop new strategies to gain new donors and transforming first-time donors to repeaters. Despite the considerable research into empathy and altruism in these fields, there has been little research into whether and how empathic reactions and personal predispositions to empathy predict helping behaviors in a real life helping behaviors. Thus, the second focus of this study is to see whether high empathy or altruistic conditions are more likely to induce prosocial behaviors in a real life helping behaviors (i.e., blood donation condition). Therefore, the specific research questions are: what are the factors, directly and indirectly affect the blood donation, and what are the predictors of the

blood donation of Turkish people? In addition, this study reports a questionnaire-based study of motivational and demographical characteristics of volunteer blood donors in a non-experimental settings.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Participants

The subjects of the study sample were 189 male adults who were volunteer blood donors. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 60 years, with a mean age of 32.97 (SD = 8.61) and the majority of the participants were married (Table 1). 73% of the whole sample was current donors and 27% of the sample had volunteer in the past but not given blood in the present (i.e., lapsed).

### 2.2. Procedure

Data for the study were collected through self-report Questionnaires from volunteer blood donors at Ufuk University Faculty of Medicine Blood Transfusion Centre in Ankara. The participants who enrolled in this study between January 2011 and December 2011. This analysis was restricted to blood donors who responded to the questionnaire survey. Before the study, informed consent were given to all participants and only volunteer people were gi-

**Table 1**  
Descriptive of the study sample.

Blood donors (N = 189)	
Age	M = 32.97 (range:17–60)
25-years and younger	38/189 (20.1%)
26–35-years-old	83/189 (43.9%)
36–45-years-old	47/189 (24.9%)
46 years and older	21/189 (11.1%)
Education	M = 4.32 (range: 1–6)
Secondary (high school) or less	97/189 (51.3%)
University	79/189 (42.2%)
Master or doctoral degree	11/189 (5.8%)
Marital status	
Married	119/189 (63.0%)
Divorced or separated	6/189 (5.2%)
Single	60/189 (31.7%)
Perceived Ses	
Low	46/189 (26.0%)
Middle	95/189 (53.7%)
Middle-high	36/189 (20.3%)
Donor status	
Current donor	138 (73%)
Past donor	51 (27%)
Donation frequency	
Every 3 months	9/189 (4.8%)
Every 6–12 months	38/189 (20.1%)
Irregular	133/189 (70.4%)
Need for blood in the family	
Yes	96/189 (50.8%)
No	93/189 (49.2%)
Need for blood for himself in the past	
Yes	181/189 (95.8%)
No	8/189 (4.2%)

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