

## Maximizing the Potential Relationship between Media and Religious Beliefs in Inspiring Positive Intentions to Register as Organ Donors

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### Abstract

When discussing about organ donation, various contexts come to mind for individuals. Most often, what typically comes to mind is the relatively low number of individuals registered as organ donors. The issue of the declining number of organ donors is a topic that has been widely discussed among society. Therefore, based on this ongoing issue, this study focuses on how to address it by maximizing the potential of media and religious beliefs in influencing individuals to develop a positive intention to register as organ donors. This study thoroughly examines both factors and their interrelation in the context of organ donation. The study concludes that these two factors are crucial in influencing individuals to develop a positive intention to register as organ donors. Additionally, the study also emphasizes how these factors dynamically influence the process of forming a positive intention to register as organ donors. The findings of this study have the potential to be leveraged in the future for both social marketing purposes and academic research.

**Keywords:** Organ Donation, Media, Religious Belief, Intention To Register As Organ Donors, Pledge As Organ Donors.

### Introduction

Human organs are the most precious gift one can receive in their lifetime (Ab Latiff, 2020). To this day, organ transplantation has saved thousands of lives and provided those individuals with a higher quality of life, hope, and happiness. Other than that, organ donation tremendously helped individuals in need by giving them psychological motivation to recover from their illnesses.

In many countries, organ transplantation depends on human organ availability. According to a recent survey, there is a waiting list of nearly 41,000 transplant candidates in

the European Union, while there are around 100,000 patients in the United States (Health Resources & Services Administration, 2023; Council of Europe, 2023). In this regard, obtaining organs for donation and transplantation solely depends on health resource services and health professionals' performance in identifying potential donors and management tasks (DeFilippis et al., 2019). In this sense, this process is primarily subject to personal decisions that are heavily mediated by psychosocial processes (Harel et al., 2022). This psychological aspect is related to an individual's exposure to the importance of organ donation (Harel et al., 2022). There are several ways to expose the importance of organ donation, and the main way is to use media to disseminate relevant related information (Madli et al., 2023). However, the process of effective information dissemination is challenging, and there are still many issues that must be resolved. In addition, organ donation is an individual action that a person needs to register as an organ donor must be related to how to answer their questions regarding organ donation. Therefore, this study focuses on how media influences or relates to organ donation. Additionally, this study also examines another aspect, which is how religious beliefs affect organ donation. These two aspects are chosen due to their importance in impacting organ donation. However, this study brings forth a relatively new argument: how these two factors intersect in the process of an individual developing the desire to register as an organ donor.

### **Media and Public Health**

The relationship between media and public health has a long and complex history. The media has played a significant role in shaping public health policies and practices, as well as influencing public attitudes and behaviors towards health issues. One of the earliest media's impacts on public health can be seen in the coverage of the 1918 to 1920 influenza pandemic, also known as the Spanish flu (Johnson & Mueller, 2002). The media played a significant role in disseminating information about the outbreak, raising public awareness about the disease, and encouraging people to take preventative measures to avoid infection.

Over the years, the media has continued to shape public health discourse, both positively and negatively. On the positive side, media campaigns have been instrumental in promoting healthy behaviors and lifestyles, such as exercise, healthy eating, and smoking cessation. For example, the anti-smoking campaigns of the 1990s and early 2000s helped to reduce smoking rates in many countries (Dredze, 2012). However, the media has also been criticized for spreading misinformation and stigmatizing certain health conditions. Misinformation is the spread of false or misleading information about health issues, often amplified by social media and other online platforms. For example, in the early days of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, media coverage often sensationalized the disease and fueled fear and discrimination against those affected (Giustini et al., 2018). This can undermine public trust in health authorities and lead to harmful behaviors or attitudes.

Despite these challenges, the media remains an important tool for public health communication and education. In recent years, social media platforms have emerged as powerful tools for disseminating health information and engaging with the public. Public health officials and organizations now use social media to reach wider audiences and promote health messages in a more personalized and interactive way. According to (Moorhead et al., 2013), public health is linked with the health communication, which refers to the public, patients, and health professionals communicating about health issues using social media

platforms. It has been recognised as a major disseminators of health misinformation. According to (Basch et al., 2022), for public health officials to combat potential misinformation, they must understand the type of information accessed and explore the potential platforms for disseminating information with widespread reach for the intended audience.

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed the relationship between media and public health. Before the pandemic, the media had a significant impact on public health discourse, but the pandemic has brought this relationship into even sharper focus (Allington et al., 2021). Before the pandemic, the media often covered health issues in a piecemeal fashion, focusing on individual health topics or events. However, with the emergence of COVID-19, the media has had to cover a public health crisis on an unprecedented scale, with far-reaching implications for public health policy, economics, and social life. The responsibility of media as a role in disseminating information about the pandemic, providing updates on case numbers, deaths, and vaccines, and helping to shape public perceptions and behaviors around the virus (Tang et al., 2021). Social media platforms have been instrumental in allowing public health officials and organizations to reach wider audiences and combat misinformation about the virus.

At the same time, the pandemic has highlighted some of the challenges and limitations of media coverage of public health issues. The rapid pace of scientific research and the evolving nature of the pandemic has meant that information has sometimes been contradictory or incomplete, leading to confusion and distrust among the public. The pandemic has also brought to light the impact of media on public health policy and practice. Schillinger et al. (2020) indicating that the governments and public health officials have had to navigate the delicate balance between protecting public health and maintaining economic and social stability, while also managing public perceptions and expectations in an environment of rapidly changing information and shifting public sentiment.

Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of media in shaping public health discourse and policy, highlighting both its potential benefits and challenges. As the pandemic continues to evolve, the media will likely continue to play a critical role in shaping public perceptions and behaviors around the virus and in supporting public health efforts more broadly (Henderson et al., 2018). The audience consume in terms of health advertising and how they access the health-related messages have changed immeasurably through.

The above discussion and arguments clearly demonstrate the importance and impact of media in the public health sector. Indirectly, the positive relationship between media and public health is closely related to organ donation. This also directly shows that media plays an important role in the context of organ donation as well. In the context of organ donation, a positive impact is undoubtedly related to the increase in the number of individuals willing to pledge as organ donors. This can be proven by several studies from previous researchers who emphasized the importance and direct positive effects on organ donation, such as the studies by (Naghavi et al 2020; and Islahudin et al., 2022).

**Religious or Social Support for Improving Organ Donation Rate Registration**

Demand for organ donors worldwide has created a crisis due to the significant disparity between increasing demand and shortage in the availability of donors. For example, the demand for organ transplants in Asia has increased 12% each year (Morgan et al., 2013), suggesting the critical need for organ donation. The previous discussion highlighted 2 proposed solutions of traditional and modern media to disseminate information on organ donation. In this light, other factors need to be evaluated in-depth; hence, this study suggests including religious and social support groups in the organ donation campaign to encourage more individuals to register as organ donors. This factor was chosen after the researchers of this study examined and studied depth into previous literature in the context of organ donation and public health. Many researchers abroad have highlighted matters related to religious influence, but the role of religious and social support groups is still considered small in organ donation.

A religious support group is a group of individuals who share the same religious understanding and practice the same belief (Sadic et al., 2016). In the context of this study, a religious support group entails a group of individuals who share the same understanding of organ donation. Religion is an important factor in organ donation as it relates to the reality and meaning of life and death (Sadic et al., 2016; Luo et al., 2021). In this regard, religious belief becomes the guideline for making any decision and actions that are permitted or prohibited (Randhawa et al., 2012). In this regard, this study suggests religious support groups as an important influencing factor for a person's intention to register as an organ donor. Religious groups will normally have leaders who will lead discussions on different topics, including those related to organ donation (Sadic et al., 2016). Such discussion often ends with a unanimous decision on the issue raised (Oliver et al., 2012). Hyde and White (2010) stated that almost all religions encourage organ donation. This statement will be a powerful mechanism to support individuals in deciding to pledge as an organ donor because it validates their decision (Doerry et al., 2022). In other words, the approval and validation of religious and social support groups will drive individuals to decide about organ donation.

In addition, religious support groups can be a motivating mechanism for the community to register as organ donors. This impetus to the community can be achieved by conducting local engagement-related activities with the community to discuss and explain organ donation from a religious perspective (Hyde & White, 2010; Madli et al., 2022). Similarly, Monday (2020), stated that local activities conducted by religious and social groups positively affect the local population's awareness of organ donation. Such proactive local engagement activity will address the different views regarding organ donation, such as having an intact body for the funeral or any religious rule against or for organ donation (Albright et al., 2005; Sadic et al., 2016). Local engagement activities can be implemented through several channels, such as the community centres, halls, schools or a specific event (Doerry et al., 2022). Such activities can help spread altruism in the context of organ donation to the community (Hyde & White, 2010). Altruism is an important factor in organ donation because it can be a powerful driver of specific behaviours. In this regard, altruism will cause one to think about the well-being of society and the survival of individuals needing the organs (Akbulut et al., 2020). Therefore, local engagement activities conducted by religious groups can positively influence individuals to register as organ donors. Religious group leaders can

also use community events to directly explain the importance of organ donation and how it is perceived as a noble act (Akbulut et al., 2020).

In addition, as expert resources, religious support groups have a unique capability to influence individuals to register as organ donors (Hyde & White, 2010; Madli et al., 2019). This means that individuals will see religious support groups as individuals with extensive knowledge of the legislation related to organ donation (Luo et al., 2021). In this regard, these groups act as a community of expert resources who can positively influence individuals' decisions to register as organ donors. Another factor that adds to the strength of the religious group as an expert resource is a transparency and honesty (Akbulut et al., 2020). Combining these elements further strengthens religious support groups' influence on people's will to register as organ donors. Subsequently, the morals and values brought by this religious group will be easily accepted by the community to further strengthen the approval or impetus for them to register as organ donors (Akbulut et al., 2020). This moral value or value is very important when talking about donating or giving to a person in the financial and organ donation contexts.

### **The Intersection of Media and Religious Public Health in Context of Organ Donations**

The above discussion relates to organ donation in two different contexts: media and religious beliefs. Fundamentally, both elements show a significant direct impact on organ donation. This importance lies in how these elements can positively influence an individual's willingness to register as an organ donor.

However, this study argues that both elements should ideally coexist in a given situation or occur at different times but remain interconnected. In the first scenario, an individual is exposed to information from the media while also being influenced by religious beliefs. In other words, the individual finds the information about organ donation interesting, and simultaneously, their religious beliefs further influence their decision to register as an organ donor. In the second scenario, these elements do not occur simultaneously but sequentially. Initially, the person receives information about organ donation, and after some period, religious beliefs play a role in influencing their decision. In other words, the individual has received information about organ donation but has not made a final decision; then, religious beliefs emerge and ultimately influence them to register as an organ donor. This second scenario is not limited to a single sequence as discussed above but is suggested to be dynamic. This means there is no fixed order, and it depends on the unique situation of each individual.

Therefore, this study recommends that social marketers or those involved in planning marketing strategies related to organ donation should consider these two elements in their strategic planning. Moreover, the application of this study's findings is not limited to the context of organ donation but can also be used in different contexts within the health scope, such as blood donation.

### **Conclusion**

The media plays a significant role in the success of public health campaigns, including organ donation. The lack of organ donors has become a critical crisis in all corners of the world. This problem is exacerbated by the small number of individuals registering as organ

donors while the demand for organ transplants is increasing daily. Government and non-governmental organisations have made various efforts to solve this issue. However, the proportion of individuals registering as organ donors is still small year after year. Hence, this study critically reviewed the relevant literature and suggested three main solutions to increase the number of organ donors.

In addition, this study contributes not only to managerial perspective, as discussed above, but also in terms of theoretical contributions. In details, this research expands the discussion on how media relates to organ donation. The focus is on the importance of media usage and its role in increasing organ donation registration. The theoretical contribution does not stop here, but this study also broadens the discussion to include religious beliefs. As overall, this study contributes to the intersection of three key main elements which is media, religious belief, and organ donation, thereby strengthening the relevance of its contribution in context of theoretical contribution.

This study, strongly supported by the previous literature, proposes optimising the use of media and religious support groups. Media use is important as they can effectively disseminate and communicate information related to organ donation to all parts of society, regardless of age, socio-economic background and location. In addition, this study argued that to emphasise the function of religious support groups to further enhance the effectiveness of donation campaigns among the community. However, these proposed strategies require further research as empirical testing to validate based on specific areas or locations. Future researchers will be able to implement empirically based on such recommendations. The findings of this study have significant implications for the parties directly involved in executing organ donation marketing strategies. Besides that, the findings of this study will also extend the body of knowledge in the context of public health, specifically on organ donation.

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