

PROSOCIAL DECISION-MAKING

RESEARCH QUESTION: Does the knowledge that one's choice is going to be known or observed have a strong effect on prosocial decision-making and to what extent does the nature of observation and type of trade off being made, matter?

INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on how nudge theory may minimize resistance and maximize positive change using social normative influences. I am curious about if the desire to "fit in" depends on the type of scrutiny that one receives. Specifically, this study tests the impact of (1) adding observation and (2) removing anonymity.

Implications: Testing these may clarify:

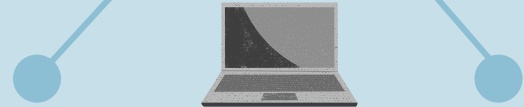
1. If the imminency of observation is influential
2. The influence of observation as used by the government, during proctored exams, in online school, and several other contexts

METHODOLOGY

Subjects complete economic activities under different types of observation.

Sessions are conducted at the **TEEL**.

The affect on prosocial decisions in the activities is analysed across treatments.



RESULTS

It is found that the removal of anonymity, that is, the addition of individuation, has a significant impact on (increases) prosocial behaviour. This confirms previous findings in the field of the influence of anonymity.

The data also show that the offer value in the dictator game (i.e., %prosociality) under all treatments with observation was consistently higher than the baseline.



The data also suggest:

1. A lack of observation and the maintenance of anonymity is correlated with **stronger attitudes towards inequity aversion**, although not significantly.
2. The highest and lowest offers (%prosociality) made across all treatments were under both **webcam-based observation** groups.



DISCUSSION

This experiment was designed to determine the impact of specific dimensions of observation on prosocial behaviour and to test three hypotheses:

1. It is found that as the prosocial choice in a game becomes more unambiguous it is not necessary that the observer effect increases.
2. Changes in imminency of observation (i.e., whether it was in-person, live-streamed, in real-time or delayed via recording) did impact prosocial decision-making (i.e., observation treatments had higher measures of prosociality than the control).
3. Finally, the third hypothesis is proven as we see very clearly significant differences in the data between baseline and the treatment condition where anonymity is removed (i.e., removing anonymity increases prosociality).

Exploring how observation impacts other measures of prosociality would be a fantastic next step to validate these findings and to continue unearthing what influences human decision-making.

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