

Az MTA Társadalomtudományi Kutatóközpont Szociológiai Intézete
tisztelttel meghívja negyvenhatodik *Jour fixe* rendezvényére:

Hajdu Gábor – Koltai Júlia – Kristóf Luca – Simonovits Bori:

Determinants of Willingness to Help

Evidence from a Factorial Survey

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Abstract

Helping behaviour as a specific form of social cooperation is clearly an important aspect of social integration. Presumably, individuals' willingness to help others differs both by the potential helper's and by the target person's (the one in need of help) socio-demographic characteristics. According to a broad range of empiric work in the field, situational characteristics (such as the perceived risk, the level of emergency related to the situation, etc.) also seriously affect levels of willingness to help.

The aim of our research – implemented in Hungary in 2015 as a first attempt to measure willingness to help by applying a survey experimental design – was to examine the determinants of individuals' willingness to help others. As part of a survey questionnaire, each of the respondents (n=479) were made to evaluate 15 hypothetical situations (known as "vignettes") where a stranger asks for help ranging from small favours (i.e. a short phone call) to bigger requests (e.g. giving juridical testimony), and were asked about their willingness to help in these situations. Exploiting the intra-respondent variation of situations (gender, age, occupation, ethnicity and the residence of the stranger asking for help, as well as the hypothetical situation itself), our experimental research design allowed us to run multilevel regression models to examine causality between these characteristics and the respondent's willingness to help.

Our results show that situational characteristics are stronger predictors of willingness to help as compared to the socio-demographic characteristics of the target person. A generally high willingness to help has been found to be altered by certain socio-demographic characteristics of the potential helper: level of education, place of residence, and the person's level of trust (both personal and institutionalised trust). As far as the target person's socio-demographic characteristics are concerned, only ethnicity plays an important role in the decision of the potential helper: Roma targets are less likely to be helped in certain situations. We might conclude that a strong prejudice against the Roma minority in Hungary overrides strong social norms of helping others.

Keywords: social cooperation, willingness to help, factorial survey, Roma discrimination

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