



# Smile! The role of facial expressions and evaluation mode on charitable donations

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## Introduction

In the context of charitable giving, it is still unclear how the use of **emotional faces** in donation ads impact the decision to donate.

Do we favor **happy** or **sad faces** when deciding whether - and how much - to donate?

To try disambiguate the unclear findings of the literature<sup>1,2</sup>, we explored how different factors might moderate or mediate the effect of emotional expressions.

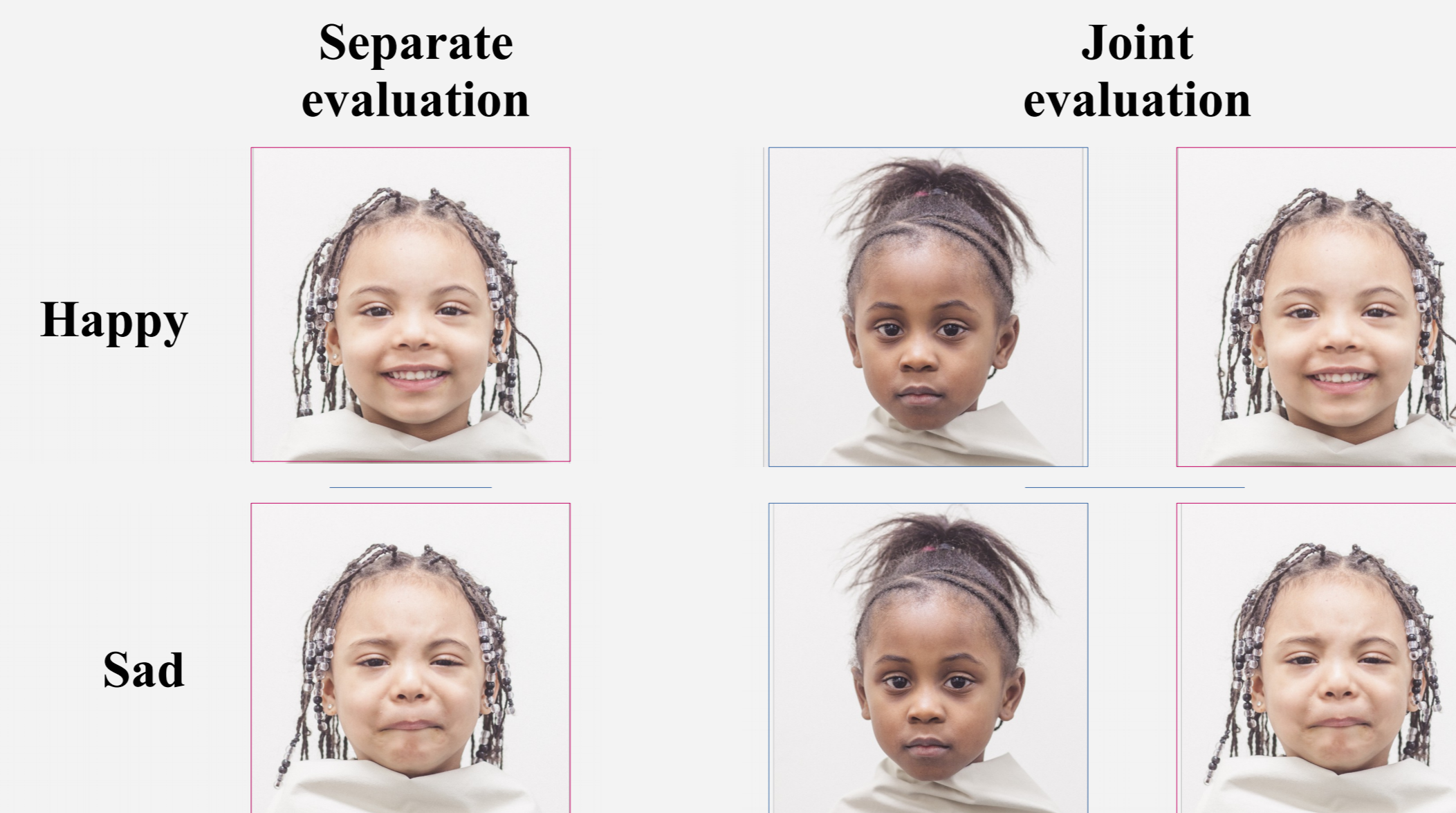
In particular, we investigated:

- How a **comparative context** can modify donors' response<sup>(\*)</sup>;
- The mediating role of **perceived effectiveness**<sup>3</sup> of the donation<sup>(\*)</sup>;
- How **attention allocation** can help predict donation behavior and understand the underlying cognitive processes<sup>(\*\*)</sup>;
- The role of **individual traits** (here **emotional avoidance**<sup>4</sup>), in donation decisions<sup>(\*\*)</sup>

## Studies overview

Study	Sample size	Sample pool	Design	Research questions
1 <sup>(*)</sup>	267 <sup>§</sup>	Mturk (US)	Between subjects	- interactive effect of <b>emotional expression</b> and <b>evaluation mode</b> on donations - mediation role of <b>perceived effectiveness</b>
2 <sup>(**)</sup>	264 <sup>§</sup>	Prolific (UK)	Mixed design	- predictive value of <b>attention</b> on donations - effect of <b>emotional expressions</b> on fixation time - effect of <b>emotional avoidance</b> on fixation time

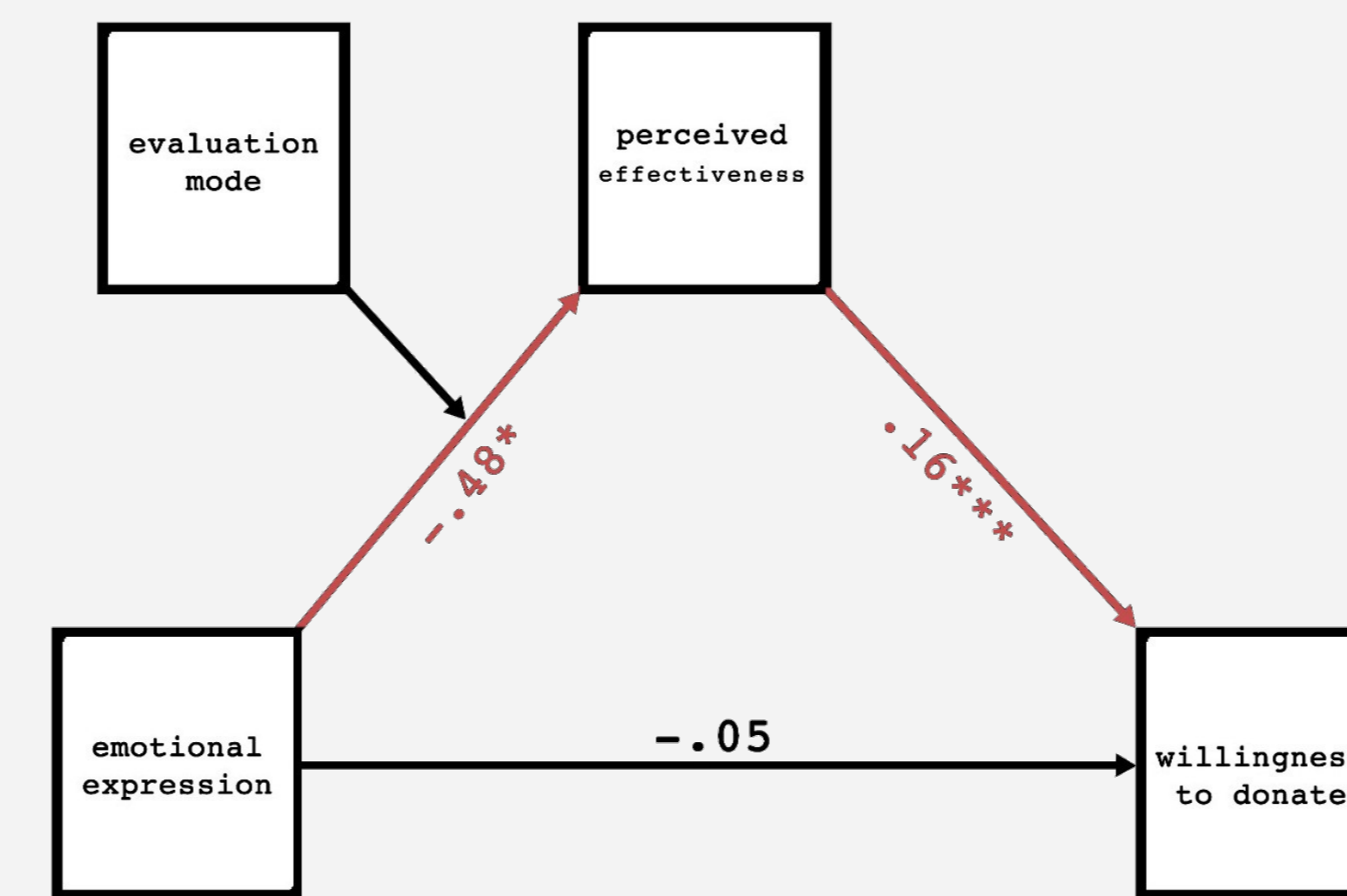
## Study 1



Measured variables:

- willingness to donate (y/n) (donation target framed in red)
- amount donated (\$0-\$100) (if donation: yes)
- perceived effectiveness of donation (0-5) (always)

## Results



	JE		SE	
	happy (N=88)	sad (N=93)	happy (N=44)	sad (N=41)
Efficacy				
Mean (SD)	3.20 (1.22)	3.39 (1.18)	3.48 (1.30)	2.85 (1.33)
Median [Min, Max]	3.00 [1.00, 5.00]	3.00 [1.00, 5.00]	4.00 [1.00, 5.00]	3.00 [1.00, 5.00]

## Conclusions

- Both in SE and JE, donating to **happy children** is perceived as **equally effective**, but
- The perceived effectiveness (and consequently donations) for **sad children** can be **improved with a comparative setting**.

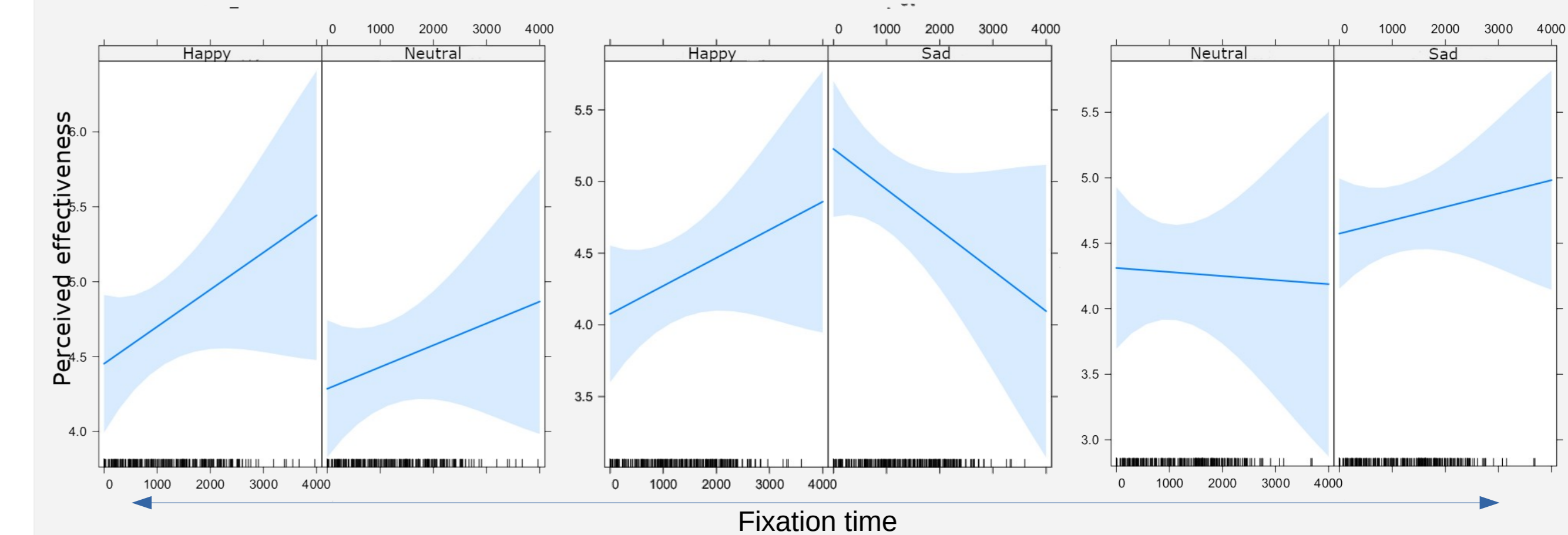
## Study 2



Measured variables:  
 target of donation (A/B)  
 amount donated (£0-£25)  
 perceived effectiveness  
 fixation time per face  
 emotional avoidance (BEAQ<sup>4</sup>)

## Results

	Donation decision			Donated amount		
	Estimate	SE	p-value	Estimate	SE	p-value
Fixation (t)	0.25	0.06	<0.001***	0.09	0.11	0.38
BEAQ	-0.01	0.01	0.16	-0.04	0.04	0.29
Effectiveness	1.95	0.16	<0.001***			



## Conclusions

- Fixation time predicts donations, emotional avoidance does not;
- Interaction between fixation time and emotional expression on the perceived effectiveness is still open to discussion

## References

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