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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Firm-Created and User-Generated Content as Drivers of Donation Intention: The Mediating Role of Empathy

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ABSTRACT

An increased use of social media by non-profit organizations (NPOs) has changed the way people learn about and support charitable causes. Little empirical research has been done to comprehend how various social media content types affect donation intention through psychological pathways in NPO context. Drawing on Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), this study sought to test a model which explains whether and how FCC & UGC through empathy affect donation intention. An online self-reported questionnaire was distributed to the followers of chosen NPOs' social media pages as part of a quantitative research design. Results of a sample of 307 analysed through structural equation modelling (SEM) revealed nonsignificant effect of FCC and UGC on donation intention. Furthermore, results showed empathy to be a significant psychological pathway explaining the effect of both FCC and UGC on donation intention. The study contributes to the body of knowledge and practices in relation to social media driven donation intention and empathy's important explanatory role. The results provide useful insights to NPO managers and social media strategists in understanding how specific social media contents are capable to influence internal psychological and behavioral states of potential donors.

1. Introduction

Social media as a marketing communication strategy is progressively adopted by Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) to reach prospective volunteers and donors (Thomas & Duffet, 2025). Data have reported that approximately 78% charities within Pakistan have positioned their online presence together with social media activities (Charity Digital, 2023). This signifies a wider acknowledgement of social media's power. Research has highlighted a need to investigate the effect of social media communication in context of NPOs (Schivinski et al., 2022). This is arguably because majority of the

existing research paid attention to the impact of social media communication in commercial settings and failed to empirically examine its influence in NPO context.

Social media communication within literature has been described in two forms. The messages disseminated by brands on their official social media pages, that are designed, created, and originated by brands themselves are categorized as firm-created content (FCC herein after) (Colicev et al., 2019; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). In contrast, content created by users about brands on social media that is independent of ownership by any firm/brand and is extensively available to public is classified as user-generated content (UGC herein after) (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016; Wunsch-Vincent & Vickery, 2007). Schivinski et al. (2022) further limited it to the content that users post about brands on their personal social media accounts in their research. For better strategic use in marketing, the quantitative influence of social media content must be considered and assessed (Al-Abdallah & Wright, 2025). So, numerous studies have examined and confirmed the significant influence of FCC and UGC on behavioral outcomes (Poulis et al., 2019), including intentions in commercial settings (e.g., Antony et al., 2026; Sandunima & Jayasuriya, 2024; Sang et al., 2024; Wijaya et al., 2025). However, a gap still exists in literature regarding exploring the effect of both FCC and UGC specifically in the NPO context (Schivinski et al., 2022). According to Gugenishvili (2023), researchers mainly focus on intentions, rather than behaviors in NPO context (p.308). Donation intention is the desire and persistence of giving to the charity by the potential donors (Bilgin & Kethuda, 2022). Therefore, donation intention is the behavioral outcome that is the focus of this study which has previously been studied as an outcome within digital media context (e.g., Kamarudin et al., 2025; Millan et al., 2024; Wu & Peng, 2025; Zheng et al., 2024). Schivinski et al. (2022) and Fazio et al., (2023) further highlighted investigating the underlying psychological processes connecting social media content to behavioral outcomes.

Among such psychological processes, empathy is reflected as a fundamental stimulus evoking moral deeds and pro-social behaviors of people (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). It is the capacity to comprehend and share the views, experiences and feelings of others (Le et al., 2023; Gutentag et al., 2024). Recent research has increasingly shifted attention to examining the effects of empathy within digital settings (Lee et al., 2014) towards donation intention (Li et al., 2023). Also, limited attention has been devoted to understanding what evokes empathy on social media (Li et al., 2023). These gaps are chiefly relevant to developing countries including Pakistan where online charity increased from PKR 44 million to PKR 148 million between 2023-2024, stressing the importance of social media communication strategies in producing donations (Chaudhary, 2025). Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the mediating role of empathy in the effects of FCC and UGC on donation intentions.

From theoretical perspective, an extended TPB version is used in current study. Previous research approves the use of this theory in donation intention and philanthropic context (Saputra, 2024), providing an understanding of the psychological factors of charitable giving (Balaskas et al., 2024; White et al., 2023; Vijaya et al., 2023). Therefore, empathy being an affective state (Li et al., 2023) is investigated as a psychological factor in explaining the effect of FCC and UGC on donation intention.

This research makes various contributions. First, the study enhances our knowledge regarding the effects of FCC and UGC on donation intention. Second, the study provides insight into FCC and UGC as determinants of empathy. Third, the study extends TPB by

exploring empathy as a determinant of donation intention. Fourth, the study examines the mediating role of empathy as a psychological mechanism explaining the effect of FCC and UGC on donation intention. Fifth, the study scrutinizes the relationships in charity NPO context in Pakistan as an attempt to discover the overlooked charity context of evolving economy (Aziz et al., 2024).

2. Review Of Literature

2.1. Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

TPB originally advocated that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are the determinants of intention (Ajzen, 1991). However, over the years, an extended TPB demonstrated that intention is also shaped by psychological and moral concepts (Chen, 2020). Also, more factors could be added following the researcher's topic in question (Razali et al., 2020; Aziz et al., 2024). Therefore, in this research empathy is proposed as a psychological construct mediating the effect of both FCC and UGC on donation intention. This proposition draws support from prior studies on digital charity campaigns generating donation intention through empathy (Phan et al., 2026).

2.2. Hypothesis Development

2.2.1. FCC, UGC and Donation intention

FCC and UGC serve as persuasive sources of information that shape awareness, evaluation, and intentions of individuals (Colicev et al., 2019). Research has proved intention related outcomes to be significantly influenced by FCC and UGC. Previous studies have demonstrated the significant impact of both on behavioral intention (Choi et al., 2026), purchase intention (Ballester et al., 2021; Sandunima & Jayasuriya, 2024; Mulcahy et al., 2024), travel intention (Wijaya et al., 2024), consumer consumption intention (Yi et al., 2019), blood donation intention (Balaskas et al., 2024) etc. However, the influence of both in NPO context where donation intention is the main focus of researchers (Gugenishvili, 2023), is yet to be explored (Schivinski et al., 2022). In NPO context, the growing use of social media has enabled organizations to build larger, more engaged online audiences, which in turn relates to charitable giving (Shin, 2024). Hence, it is expected to positively influence donation intention in charity NPOs operating in Pakistan. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1a: FCC has a significant positive effect on donation intention.

H1b: UGC has a significant positive effect on donation intention.

2.2.2. FCC, UGC and Empathy

Social media communication not only influences intentions of individuals but also shapes their psychological responses (Sang et al., 2024; Wijaya et al., 2025) like empathy. In digital philanthropy, Phan et al. (2025) exhibited that emotionally engaging, visually compelling, and contextually appropriate narratives have tendency to induce powerful empathic responses. It is because social media communication is capable to turn non-identifiable statistical victims into real people that people can empathize with and perform charitable actions (Moorlock & Draper, 2018). Previously, Kim and Kim (2023) empirically confirmed that when viewers are exposed to FCC in form of advertisements on social media depicting people in distress, they are more likely to

develop empathic responses and mentally visualize the challenges faced by the victims portrayed. Similarly, when viewers view UGC, they perceive it as less biased, more credible and authentic (Hochstein et al., 2023; Qin et al., 2024), and perception of authenticity increases individual's empathy (Phan & Bui, 2025). So, based on above discussion, it is proposed that in realm of charitable NPOs, FCC and UGC may serve as important antecedents of empathy.

Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2a: FCC has a significant positive effect on empathy.

H2b: UGC has a significant positive effect on empathy.

2.2.3. Empathy and Donation Intention

Empathy in the context of charitable giving refers to the feelings of compassion that individuals develop towards other people (Lee et al., 2014). It helps individuals to experience both emotional concern for others and comprehend their situations and perspectives (Decety & Jackson, 2004; Shepherd et al., 2023). Accordingly, empathy has been recognized as an important psychological factor that encourages pro-social behavior and moral conduct (Duong et al., 2025; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; Ukil et al., 2024). Researchers have paid increased attention to exploring the effects of empathy in online donation contexts (Lee et al., 2014). Studies have proved the positive association of empathy with donation intention in charitable crowdfunding project on social media (Li et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2018). Beyond charitable crowdfunding campaigns, empathy has also been found to encourage donation intention in broader online charitable contexts (Bae, 2023). Therefore, upon the suggestions from the literature, it is assumed that empathy will have a significant positive effect on donation intention for charitable NPOs in Pakistan.

H3: Empathy has a significant positive effect on donation intention.

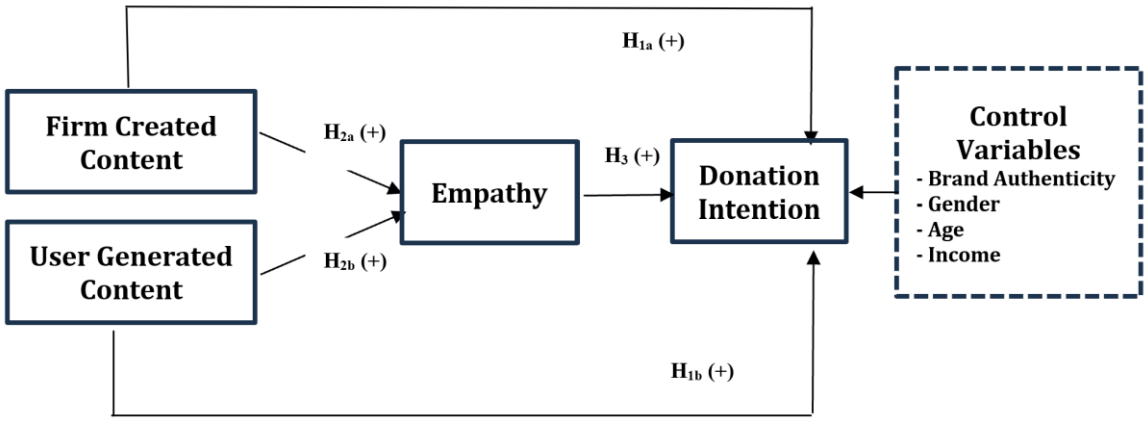
2.2.4. Mediating Role of Empathy

Empathy has been established as a significant psychological driver of donation related outcomes across multiple digital giving realms. It includes charitable crowdfunding (Liu et al., 2018) and online charity participation, where empathic concern, being motivated by emotional appeal, has proved to significantly predict donation intention (Chen et al., 2021). Similarly, charity advertisements have been shown to evoke emotional responses that influence helping intention through empathy (Bae, 2023). However, this evidence is drawn from content types of crowdfunding appeals and advertisements. These types are conceptually narrower than FCC and UGC, which together capture a broader range of organizational and user-driven social media communication. No study to date has investigated whether empathy similarly mediates the relationship of these two forms of social media communication with donation intention. Consistent with TPB's recognition that intention formation is shaped by underlying psychological processes, empathy represents a theoretically consistent mechanism through which such contents may shape donation intention. Accordingly, the study proposes the following hypotheses.

H4a: FCC exerts a significant indirect effect on donation intention through empathy.

H4b: UGC exerts a significant indirect effect on donation intention through empathy.

Figure 1. Research Framework



3. Methodology

3.1. Sample and data collection

The population of the study were followers of selected charity NPOs working in Pakistan that had social media presence. The sample was chosen through following steps. First, due to the absence of any database containing structured record of charitable NPOs working in Pakistan (Melis & Nawaz, 2024), 50 social media users were informally consulted with consultation continuing until no new organization names emerged (Guest et al., 2006). They were asked to identify well known charity organizations. Second, to confirm the chosen NPOs social media presence during the financial year of 2025, their official websites and social media pages were visited (Suh, 2022). Third, partially like the approach of Bilgin and Kethuda (2022), invitations were sent directly to the social media messengers of those followers, who had recently liked, shared, or commented on charity posts of NPOs. The specific type of interaction used to identify participants, depended on the features and privacy policies of each social media platform and privacy settings of social media users. Moreover, the unavailability of complete follower lists restricted by social media policies made probability-based sampling impractical and convenience sampling appropriate.

3.2. Measures

All constructs were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) through well-established instruments. Both FCC (4 items) and UGC (4 items) were measured with scale developed by Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016). In addition, PMO (3 items), Donation intention (3 items) and Brand authenticity (a control variable, 3 items) were operationalized through scales developed by Wang et al. (2019), Bilgin and Kethuda (2022) and Moulard et al. (2015), respectively. Lastly, the demographic variables of gender, age, and income were controlled to avoid their influence on the existence of the main effects in this study consistent with past research on donation intention (Wang et al., 2025; Robson & Hart, 2020).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Preliminary analysis

4.1.1. Data Screening

In total 330 responses collected via google survey forms were obtained. After excluding invalid ones i.e., straight lined responses (Dunn et al., 2018) and multivariate outliers (Hair et al., 2019), 307 responses were retained for final data analysis.

4.1.2. Respondent Profile

Among the 307 respondents, the sample was predominantly females (53.70%), while males accounted for 46.30% of the respondents. In terms of the age, the largest proportion of respondents belonged to the 18-27 years group (77.52%), followed by those aged 28-37 (14.98%). Respondents aged 38-47 years represented 4.56%, whereas the remaining participants were distributed across the other age categories. With regards to monthly income, the highest proportion of respondents reported earning PKR 71,000 and above (26.06%). This was followed by respondents with an income of PKR 31000-50,000 (23.78%), while 22.80% earned between 11,000 to 30,000. A comparatively smaller proportion fell in range of 51,000 to 70,000 (14.01%), and less than or equal to 10,000 (13.36%).

4.1.3. Assessment of Common Method Variance

Due to self-reported responses gathered from a single source, statistical remedy was undertaken to address potential common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Specifically, Harman's (1976) single-factor test was employed. The results demonstrated that a single factor accounted for less than 50% of the variance indicating that CMV was not a concern in our data (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

4.1.4. Multicollinearity Assessment

To assess multicollinearity among the predictor variables, Variance inflation factor (VIF) was used. Neither of the value exceeded the threshold of 5 indicating the absence of problematic multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2019) (see Table 1).

4.2. Assessment of measurement model

Table 1 presents the assessment of measurement model in terms of reliability, convergent and discriminant validity. The Cronbach's alphas (α) and the composite reliability (CR) of all constructs were above 0.70 showing good reliability (Hair et al., 2019). For convergent validity, standardized factor loadings of indicators and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of constructs were calculated which were greater than the cut-off of 0.70 and 0.50, respectively (Hair et al., 2019). This demonstrated adequate convergent validity. Also, discriminant validity was supported by meeting the Fornell-Larcker's criterion (1981) which states that square roots of AVEs of all constructs should be greater than their correlations with other constructs as presented in Table 2)

Table 1: Reliability, Convergent Validity, and Multicollinearity Diagnostics

Constructs	Items	Factor loadings	α	CR	AVE	VIF
FCC	FCC1	0.831	0.9	0.902	0.697	2.037
	FCC2	0.856				
	FCC3	0.852				
	FCC4	0.799				
UGC	UGC1	0.833	0.91	0.906	0.708	1.584
	UGC2	0.820				
	UGC3	0.863				
	UGC4	0.850				
Emp	Emp1	0.715	0.86	0.856	0.599	2.085
	Emp2	0.752				
	Emp3	0.773				
	Emp4	0.849				
BA	BA1	0.890	0.92	0.915	0.782	1.642
	BA2	0.891				
	BA3	0.871				
DI	DI1	0.740	0.82	0.822	0.606	N/A
	DI2	0.791				
	DI3	0.804				

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation, and Bivariate Correlations

	Mean	SD	FCC	UGC	Emp	DI	BA	Gender	Age	Income
FCC	3.746	0.783	**0.834**							
UGC	3.663	0.804	0.455**	**0.842**						
Emp	3.660	0.647	0.641**	0.579**	**0.774**					
DI	3.831	0.578	0.576**	0.505**	0.628**	**0.778**				
BA	3.739	0.879	0.588**	0.442**	0.497**	0.562**	**0.884**			
Gender	1.54	0.499	-0.001	-0.036	0.021	0.071	-0.022	1		
Age	1.34	0.743	-0.059	-0.031	-0.064	-0.023	-0.080	-.263**	1	
Income	3.17	1.387	0.139*	0.161**	0.121*	0.213**	0.174**	-0.021	0.056	1

*Note. n = 307, *p < .05, **p < .01, Diagonal represent square root of AVEs*

4.3. Descriptive statistics

All bivariate correlations, means and standard deviations of the study constructs are presented in Table 2. Significant and positive correlations among key variables provided initial evidence of the proposed effects.

4.4. Assessment of structural model

After establishing the adequacy of the measurement model, the structural model was assessed using bootstrapping with 5000 resamples at confidence interval of 95%. Results presented in Table 3 showed no significant effect of FCC on donation intention (β = .098, SE = .096, p > .05), and same was the case with UGC (β = .089, SE = .084, p > .05). Thus, H1a and H1b were not supported. In contrast, both FCC and UGC positively and significantly influenced empathy (β = .530, SE = .050, p < .001; β = .397, SE = .055, p < .001), supporting H2a and H2b, respectively. Likewise, empathy had a significant positive effect on donation intention (β = .459, SE = .117, p < .001) supporting H3. The

control variables were included to account for potential contextual and demographic influences. Their inclusion did not affect the estimated path coefficients of the key constructs. Overall, the model explained 65% variance in empathy (R^2 = 0.652) and 66% variance in donation intention (R^2 = 0.663). Next, to examine the mediating role of empathy, a bootstrapping procedure with 5000 subsamples at 95% confidence interval was conducted. The results confirmed that the indirect effect of FCC on donation intention and UGC on donation intention were positive and significant (effect = .243, SE = .068, 95% CI [.118, .389]; effect = .182, SE = .054, 95% CI [.086; .299]), supporting H4a and H4b. As the direct effects were non-significant and indirect effects were significant, these findings indicated full mediation i.e., empathy fully accounts for the effect of FCC and UGC on donation intention.

Figure 2: Structural Model Results

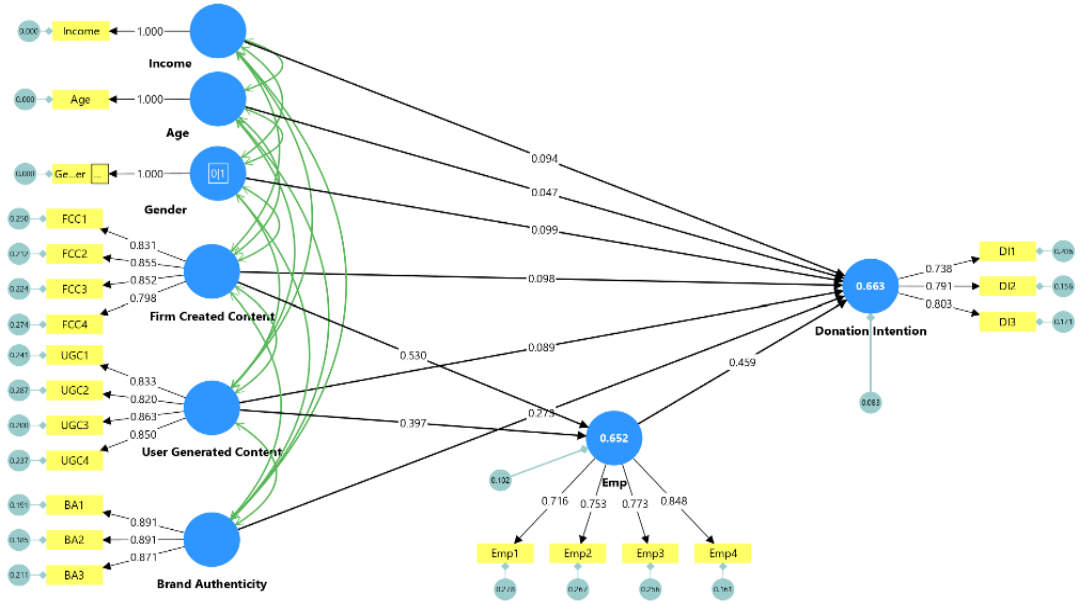


Table 3: Hypotheses Testing Results

Paths/ Effects	β	S.E.	p-value	95% Bootstrapped C.I.	Hypotheses Decision
Direct Effects					
Firm Created Content -> Donation Intention	0.098	0.096	0.307	[-.092; .279]	H1a Unsupported
User Generated Content -> Donation Intention	0.089	0.084	0.291	[-.079; .255]	H1b Unsupported
Firm Created Content -> Empathy	0.530	0.050	0.000	[.432; .626]	H2a Supported
User Generated Content -> Empathy	0.397	0.055	0.000	[.284; .502]	H2b Supported
Empathy -> Donation Intention	0.459	0.117	0.000	[.235; .693]	H3 Supported
Additional Direct Effects of Control Variables					
Brand Authenticity -> Donation Intention	0.273	0.074	0.000	[.136; .425]	
Gender -> Donation Intention	0.099	0.046	0.031	[.007; .186]	
Age -> Donation Intention	0.047	0.045	0.291	[-.037; .137]	
Income -> Donation Intention	0.094	0.047	0.048	[-.002; .184]	
Total Indirect Effects					
Firm Created Content -> Empathy -> Donation Intention	0.243	0.068	0.000	[.118; .389]	H4a Supported
User Generated Content -> Empathy -> Donation Intention	0.182	0.054	0.001	[.086; .299]	H4b Supported
Total Effects					
Firm Created Content -> Donation Intention	0.341	0.074	0.000	[.193; .481]	
User Generated Content -> Donation Intention	0.271	0.070	0.000	[.132; .408]	
Coefficient of Determination (R^2)					
Empathy	0.652				
Donation Intention	0.663				

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5. Discussion

Drawing from extended TPB, this study sought to answer the research question of whether and how FCC & UGC through empathy affect donation intention. The empirical results reveal some interesting findings.

First, it is found that both FCC and UGC did not significantly influence donation intention. Rather, both constructs influenced donation intention indirectly through a psychological process of empathy. To the best of our knowledge, this is amongst the first studies to empirically test FCC and UGC constructs in predicting donation intention directly and indirectly through empathy. This finding is somewhat consistent with previous research. For example, Bilgin and Kethuda (2022), examining dimensions of charity social media marketing including advertisement (a form of FCC) did not find it significantly predicting donation intention. Likewise, Ahn (2024) reported a comparable pattern concluding that message content (rational and emotional) showed no direct significant effect on donation intention. Both studies showed that external stimuli translate into donation intention through some intervening variables. While neither of these studies tested FCC and UGC specifically, this convergence across related constructs provides some support to the pattern observed in present study.

This finding, however, contrasts with research conducted in commercial contexts, where FCC and UGC have been found to directly influence behavioral intention (purchase intention, visit intentions etc). For instance, studies by Sandunima and Jayasuria (2024) and Winarta and Martini (2026). This divergence may reflect a fundamental difference between transactional and pro-social decision-making. Purchase decisions are often driven by a relatively direct, self-relevant evaluation of product-related content. On the other hand, donation decisions, being other-oriented and altruistically motivated, may require content to first evoke an emotional, empathic response before translating into behavioral intention. Qualitative evidence from Pakistan has also demonstrated that vicarious emotional responses through witnessing other's hardship are a key driver of prosocial behaviors (Ahmed et al., 2022). In the context of social media, FCC and UGC expose individuals to the hardship of others through posts, images, videos etc. Such exposure is likely to evoke vicarious emotional response like empathy, which in turn influence donation intention. Thus, the present findings suggest that it is not exposure to social media content itself that drives donation intention, but whether that content succeeds in evoking empathetic responses is of primary importance.

Second, the findings that FCC and UGC positively affect empathy suggest that regardless of content source, exposure to charity-related social media content can evoke an emotional, other-oriented response among users. It is in accordance with previous similar research. A study by Phan et al. (2025) exhibited that emotionally evocative, visually convincing, and contextually relevant narratives are capable to generate powerful empathic reactions. Accordingly, Kim and Kim (2023) established that exposure to social media advertisements (a form of FCC) portraying distressed victims evokes empathic reactions and enables individuals to envision the victims' challenges.

Finally, empathy was found to positively affect donation intention. This finding supports the theoretical assumption that empathy serves as a proximal, affective driver of prosocial intention. It is consistent with the broader empathy-altruism literature. The findings are consistent with Li et al.'s (2023) study which proved that empathy significantly enhances individual's intention to donate.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

This research makes several theoretical contributions. First, by studying source-based social media communication in NPO context, this study filled a research gap highlighted by Schivinski et al. (2022). Second, this study is amongst the first to empirically test FCC and UGC as theoretically distinct, source-based determinants directly predicting empathy. While empathy is recognized as key driver of prosocial behavior, limited attention has been paid to what evokes empathy on social media (Li et al., 2023). This study addressed that gap. Third, as suggested by Razali et al. (2020) to broaden the use of TPB by incorporating additional variables as per researcher's need, this research extended TPB by incorporating a new construct of empathy as a mediating mechanism in NPO charitable context. By doing so, it has strengthened the model's explanatory power in social media charitable contexts. Fourth, this study extended TPB's applicability into a source-based perspective of social media communication. Finally, finding that FCC and UGC affect donation intention only through empathy shows that content on its own isn't enough. It must stir some emotional response.

5.2. Practical Implications

This study offers several practical implications for NPO leadership and social media communication teams who seek to leverage social media for fundraising. Leadership should learn that posting content alone and by organization only is not sufficient to drive donation intentions. UGC is equally important in influencing donation intention through empathy. So, leadership should invest in providing training to social media teams. The training should help teams in developing a well-rounded strategy ensuring what to post (empathy stimulating content), when to post (identifying peak engagement hours), and how much to post (balancing frequency to avoid over or under posting). These steps may ensure content reaches and resonates with followers effectively. Also, leadership should encourage donors and beneficiaries to share their own stories through their personal social media platforms and by allowing posting of those links on organizational social media pages to increase reach of those posts. It is because a post coming from fellow users is often perceived to be more legitimate (obada et al., 2024). Next, social media teams, responsible for managing NPO social media accounts, should be trained in empathy-driven storytelling and community engagement techniques instead of treating content creation as a purely informational task. Lastly, brand authenticity's importance in influencing donation intention has proved in this study. Thus, brand authenticity should be preserved by social media teams. It is possible through honest and accurate campaign messaging ensuring credibility of both FCC and UGC.

5.3. Limitations and Future Suggestions

This study is not without limitations, which offers avenues for future research. First, the data were collected using a cross-sectional design capturing all variables at a single point in time. This approach does not permit causal inferences. Future studies employing longitudinal, time lagged designs would help establish stronger causal claims. Specifically, time lagged design would allow for a more rigorous test of the proposed sequence of effects. It may clarify whether the effects of social media content on donation intention via empathy strengthen, weaken, or remain stable over repeated exposure.

Second, the study relied on convenience sampling. Though it was practical for reaching social media users through this, it still limits the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of potential donors. As complete sampling frame was not available, probability sampling was not feasible. However, future research could instead consider alternative non-probability techniques like snowball sampling. It has shown to be effective for surveying hard-to-reach populations lacking an accessible framework (Dusek et al., 2015). In this context, an initial group of NPO followers could be identified through platform-based indicators of genuine engagement, such as Facebook's "Top fan badge". They can then be asked to refer to other engaged users within their networks who are followers to NPOs allowing recruitment through verifiable engagement and real social ties.

Third, this study examined empathy as the sole psychological mechanism through which FCC and UGC affect donation intention. While empathy was found to fully mediate this relationship, other psychological mechanisms may also play a role. For instance, a related study by same authors (Mehmood et al., 2026) examined perceived moral obligation as an alternative mediator within same framework. It suggested that donation intention in collectivist contexts may be shaped by multiple, potentially co-occurring psychological pathways. Future research could examine empathy and perceived moral obligation as parallel mediators within a single integrated model to clarify whether these mechanisms operate independently or complementarily.

Fourth, the non-significant direct effects of FCC and UGC on donation intention contrast with commercial-context literature. In commercial context, these constructs have been found to directly influence behavioral intentions. Since this study was limited to charitable giving in a collectivist context (Pakistan), it remains unclear whether this pattern hold in individualistic cultures or other prosocial domains such as blood donation, food donation etc. Future research should test this across different cultures and prosocial behaviors, specifically through studies comparing individualist and collectivist samples directly.

Fifth, CMV and SDB remain potential concerns given the self-reported, single-wave data collection, despite the procedural and statistical remedies adopted. A time-lagged design would further help mitigate common method bias in future replications. Future studies could also incorporate multi-source data. Such data, including actual donation records, could strengthen the robustness of self-reported donation intention findings.

Finally, an extended TPB is used in present study to understand prosocial behavior. Future researchers may extend this model by incorporating some other mediating or moderating variables (Razali et al., 2020) according to their area of interest.

By overcoming these limitations and further incorporating the suggestions will enrich our understanding of consumer behavior in social media context and NPO sector.

6. Conclusion

This study examined whether and how FCC and UGC affect donation intention directly and through empathy in the realm of NPOs in Pakistan. The findings demonstrated that neither FCC nor UGC affected donation intention directly. Instead, both exerted their influence through empathy, indicating full mediation. This pattern contrasts with commercial settings where FCC and UGC often directly shape behavioral intentions,

advocating that transactional and prosocial decision making may operate through different mechanisms. In a collectivist context such as Pakistan, mere exposure to social media content seems insufficient to encourage giving. The content must first evoke empathy to meaningfully influence donation intention. By testing FCC and UGC as distinct determinants within a single model, this study contributes new evidence to social media communication research. It suggests that NPOs may benefit more from designing emotionally resonant content than from focusing on content volume or source alone.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The researchers used the research ethics guided by PUTRA Business School, UPM, Malaysia. Participation was voluntary. All responses were collected anonymously and treated confidentially for research purposes only.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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