



MOTIVES FOR AND AGAINST ENGAGEMENT IN CHARITY BY OLDER ADULTS. EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM POLAND

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Abstract

Research background: Engagement in charity by society appears to be a vital issue. It is crucial due to the limited resources available for non-profit organizations. Older adults seem to be one of the groups that can support the non-governmental sector and may be involved in charity. The number of older people is dramatically growing worldwide, however, in comparison to the previous generation, the latest older generation is much healthier, better educated, and expressing their readiness to sacrifice for others.

Purpose: The aim of the research is to determine the motives for and against charity engagement of older adults in Poland by identifying the psychological, socio-cultural, and economic motives, and defining the demographic, social, and economic factors differentiating the charity behavior of older Polish people.

Research methodology: A consumer survey using the CAWI technique among 320 older adults enrolled at third-age universities across Poland was implemented. The Mann-Whitney U test was performed.

Results: The psychological motive for and against providing charity concerns sensitivity to the harm of others, the economic motive refers to sharing with others and the socio-cultural one is the hope to receive support in the future. Older adults with higher education and living in large towns are more prone to engage in charity in Poland.

Novelty: The research sheds new light on the latest generation of older adults and their motives for and against charity engagement. It reveals the sorts of factors that differentiate the motives for and against the charitable activities of older adults in Poland. The research outcomes support NGOs in encouraging older generations to contribute to those in need on a larger scale and shift older adults from beneficiaries to active donors.

Keywords: charity, older adults, motives, psychological, socio-cultural, economic factors

JEL classification: A13, D10, D91, M31, O33

Introduction

The contemporary economy is highly related to civic engagement in social activities. It also concerns the generation of older adults defined as people at the age of 60 years and over. The gradually increasing interest of older people in participating in various types of activities for society, either in charity or volunteering in non-governmental organizations has been reported lately in Poland. Non-profit organizations (NGOs) face challenges due to a lack of human and financial resources (Charycka et al., 2022). For solving the non-governmental sector problems, the involvement of older generations can be a future solution, since older adults are the only demographic groups that are quantitatively growing. The aging of societies has become a permanent and universal trend in the world, but in the short- and long-term Poland will suffer the challenge the most. The population of citizens at the age of 60 and over was 23% in 2022. In 2024, the median age of the Polish population was 41.8, but it is expected to rise to 51.8 in 2050 and to 55.3 in 2100 and it is believed that Poland in 2100 will be one of the twenty oldest nations worldwide (United Nations, 2024). What is more, for the first time in modern human history, we are obliged to deal with as many as two generations of older people, i.e., people 60 years and over and in many cases who still have their living parents at the age of 80 and over (Migdał-Najman et al., 2020). Due to a decrease in the number of childbirths and an increase in the life expectancy of Polish citizens, by 2060 the number of people aged 65 and over will amount to 10.7 million out of 30.93 million (Statistics Poland, 2023). A strong stereotype of older people as poorly adjusted to social change, lonely, and poor still exists in the media (Olejniczak, 2021), however, compared to previous generations, older adults act in different ways. They are much healthier, better educated, and have opportunities to live actively, they increasingly volunteer, expressing their readiness to

sacrifice their own time, skills, or goodwill, after performing various jobs (Barwińska, 2008). The different fulfillment of needs characterizes the households of older adults compared to others (Olejniczak, Olejniczak, 2020). Due to the better conditions in which they live, older people also have wider opportunities to participate in society, taking an active role as agents of social change (Almeida, 2016). The differences in the motivation and needs of older people depend on biological, psychological, and social factors affecting aging (Moschis, 2012), but understanding older adults' motives for engagement in social activities is still quite limited. This is evident in Central and Eastern Europe. There is still a lack of empirical research on older people in this region, and by now this group has been mostly treated as beneficiaries and a subject of support, not as donors. Thus, some questions arise: What are the types of motives for engagement in charity among older adults? Is older adults' charity behavior homogenous or do any factors differentiate their behavior? What are the factors that differentiate the behavior of older adults in the wake of charity engagement?

Based on such knowledge, some directions for public policies and the marketing communication of nonprofit organizations can be developed to encourage older generations to contribute to those in need on a larger scale. It will also support changing the position of older adults from beneficiaries to donors.

1. Literature review

Charity stems from man's tendency to do good and help out of free will. It is selfless, noble, and necessary. Helping is determined by the need to share with others and results from the need to feel needed. Charity is related to the Christian idea of love for one's neighbor, which obliges one to take care of the weakest member of the community (Górecki, 2013). Feeling helpful through actions meant to alleviate the suffering of distant others is a recently marketable commodity with a considerable history (Richey et al., 2021). The authors of this study define charity as "selfless help to entities in need (persons, animals, institutions, nature) independent of the donor, which does not result from obligations imposed by law and is associated with respect and willingness to support the prevention of suffering, deprivation, and limitations of others".

Volunteering is defined as permanent involvement in pro-social activities (Górecki, 2013; Bussell, Forbes, 2002) and is often carried out within an organization (Snyder, Omoto, 2008; Nowakowska, 2022). It is rarely a one-time act of helping (Wilson, 2000). Volunteering is undertaken out of free will, and it is based on personal motives, and covers personal needs

or values, although it may also often be rewarded with a small fee (Omoto, Packard, 2016). Volunteering may concern different areas of social life (Górecki, 2013). According to the Council of the European Union (2012), volunteering refers to all sorts of voluntary activities undertaken of one's own will and without payment. Volunteering aims to help people, social groups, or institutions in need. According to Górecki (2013), volunteering is a broader concept than charity, which is *ad hoc* and directed directly at people, so it is a form of social assistance. Distinguishing charity from volunteering is difficult, therefore understanding both ideas is not obvious, and their research is quite difficult (Pettigrew et. al., 2019).

Volunteering is promoted to improve the well-being of older people and provide needed community services (Breheny et al., 2020). Both charity and volunteering are associated with helping weaker, needy, and lonely people. Special attention is paid to help addressed to older people or provided by them. As Barwińska (2008) emphasizes, older people in the 21st century differ significantly from previous generations. They are healthier, better educated, and have opportunities to live actively, they increasingly volunteer, expressing their readiness to sacrifice their own time, skills, or goodwill, to perform various jobs. Furthermore, the World Health Organization (2015) report emphasized the positive effects of volunteering on physical and mental health. Webster et al. (2021) noted that moderate levels of volunteering are associated with better mental health, but the link to physical health is only present in decreasing network bridging. Furthermore, they pointed out that identifying specific circumstances under which volunteering is beneficial is critical for developing interventions to promote health for all, including those in mid and later life. Aging policy and research on older adults' behaviors therefore has become particularly important, being part of the challenges that aging the silver economy (Barković Bojanić, Erceg, 2017; Frąckiewicz, 2018, 2021; Iwański, 2019, 2021; Zalega, 2019, 2020, 2021).

While the literature on the subject contains many studies on charitable activities, including the motives of volunteers, a group of older people has rarely been studied. Dury et al. (2015) highlighted that altruistic and religious values, physical health, frequent contact with friends, and providing help to others are important predictors for potential and actual volunteers. The researchers noted that the results indicate important insights into recruitment and the retention of older volunteers. Tang (2008) suggested that more highly educated, older adults are more likely than their less-educated counterparts to volunteer in different types of organizations (i.e., religious, educational, political, senior citizen, and others), volunteer in a wider range of organizations, and devote more hours. However, income makes little significant difference in organizational volunteering.

The research conducted by Fabiś and Kędziora (2008) concerned the motives for older Polish adults' engagement in volunteering, especially in hospice activities. In most studies, volunteering is treated, without distinguishing types of volunteer activities (Burr et al., 2005; Sauer et al., 2001, 2002; Silberman et al., 2004; Narushima, 2005; McDonald & Warburton, 2001). There are notable differences between the motivations for involvement in cultural and recreational organizations, neighborhood organizations, and volunteer programs, and an emphasis is on fostering interpersonal relationships, and the more ideological/political motivations that appear as determinants within political and activist organizations (Martins et al., 2021).

Barwińska (2008) compared the motives for older people's charity engagement in Germany and Poland and referred to 4 groups of motives: altruistic motives (sense of solidarity with the poor and suffering, compassion, identification with people in need, sharing hope with disadvantaged people), instrumental motives (acquiring new experiences and skills, useful use of free time, maintaining contact with other people, finding personal satisfaction), moral and obligatory (moral and religious beliefs, humanitarian contribution to social life, performing penance, political obligations, concepts of values), motives related to self-development (active participation and co-decision, communication and social integration, change in the field of equalizing social inequalities). In Poland, engagement in volunteering is determined primarily by altruistic and moral-obligation motives (beliefs), while in Germany the activity is oriented towards active participation, social integration, and communication.

In turn, the study conducted by Gong, Zhang and Fung (2019) underscored the importance of contextual factors in understanding age differences in prosocial behaviors such as donation. The researchers were looking for an answer to the question, whether older adults are more prosocial than younger adults? For this purpose, they investigated how age differences in prosocial behaviors varied across different contextual factors, that is, donation form, kinship, and social distance. The results showed that, compared to younger adults, older adults donated less to nonrelatives, but donated a similar amount or even donated more to relatives. Older adults displayed higher levels of kin selection in both monetary and time donations and showed higher levels of social discounting in monetary but not time donation.

The research results presented by Gong, Zhang and Fung are confirmed by Badowska and Delińska (2025), who conducted a study among Generation Z donors. The study concludes that young people seem to be one-off donors with no regular habits of providing financial aid to needy people. This study also provides important guidance on the need to develop incentives for seniors to activate them to provide charity.

The impact of age on prosociality was also examined by Cutler, Nitschke, Lamm et al. (2021) who conducted a global study on a group of 46,576 people aged 18–99 across 67 countries using two measures: distancing during COVID-19 and willingness to donate to hypothetical charities. Age positively predicted prosociality on both measures, with increased distancing and donations among older adults. Older adults make larger donations to national over international charities and reporting increased in-group preferences.

Factors influencing decisions regarding charity in the United States were studied by Midlarsky and Hannah (1989), proving that altruism is important for older people. Nowakowska (2022) paid particular attention to the altruistic motives of volunteering in recent years. The research results among the Polish volunteers show that empathy and altruism appear important in this area. Moreover, Michałek-Kwiecień (2020) argues that grandparents may play an important social role as mentors and authority. Due to their involvement in building relationships with grandchildren and empathy, older adults can play an important role in shaping the attitudes of younger generations. It may also be important for developing aging policy, non-profit organization actions, and charity communication.

The critical literature review on motivations and barriers to volunteering by older adults leads to the view that older people are most often motivated to volunteer by some complex factors (Petriwskyj, Warburton, 2007). Values, social aspects of volunteering, and an opportunity to contribute to social circles or society are among them. The usage of older adult's skills, and some opportunities such as sharing knowledge, continuing learning, developing new skills, and being intellectually stimulated, as well as feeling good or needed can be noted (McDonald, Warburton, 2001). Motivation may vary depending on the activities involved in volunteering (Clary et al., 1996). The few studies which focused on comparing age groups clearly show significant and strong differences between older and younger volunteers in terms of reported motivations, expectations, and barriers to volunteering (Clary et al., 1998; Omoto et al., 2000; Okun, Schultz, 2003; Hendricks, Cutler, 2004). For example, Omoto et al. (2000) found that while older volunteers were more likely to be motivated by concerns about service or social responsibilities, younger volunteers were probably more motivated by concerns about interpersonal relationships. Limitations and barriers to volunteering are rarely explored in the literature. The research concerning older people in Australia (Pettigrew et al., 2019) indicated that the main reason for the decline in engagement in volunteering concerns other obligations, e.g., to dear ones. Komp et al. (2012) recommend that voluntary organizations and policymakers use personal characteristics, such as health status when defining their target

groups for programs that encourage volunteering. In addition, researchers should not use an age group when referring to the third age, meaning the active and productive part of old age.

Understanding the motivations and preferences of senior donors is crucial for organizations looking to enhance their fundraising efforts. Research and observations conducted by the Open Grants (2025) prove that older adults stand out for unique motivations for their philanthropic efforts, such as the desire to effect change in their communities, support cherished causes, and very often leave a meaningful legacy for future generations. Key factors such as legacy giving, personal relationships, community engagement, and recognition play significant roles in influencing their philanthropic decisions. By recognizing the motivations of senior donors, non-profit organizations can tailor their strategies to foster deeper connections in the greater involvement of seniors.

A review of studies from Web of Science (WOS) and Scopus databases by Hu, Abd Rahman, Hanafi (2025) delves into the multifaceted roles of NGOs in promoting active aging and uncovers three primary contributions: care services, lifelong learning, and particularly distinguishes volunteer engagement.

Numerous studies on donor motives indicate that most of them prefer a single and identifiable beneficiary over multiple and unidentifiable beneficiaries.

In this context, interesting results are provided by research conducted by Gong, Yu, Zheng et al. (2025), who proves that high-power donors donate more when they view the pictures of multiple beneficiaries, whereas low-power donors donate more when they view the pictures of a single beneficiary. Assuming that seniors can be classified as donors with low power, the results of this study provide interesting conclusions for organizations and strategies working to activate seniors in the charity area.

Important conclusions on the motives of the charity of seniors in the context of the development of digital ITC technologies are provided by a study conducted by Badowska, Pangsy-Kania, Grottel (2024). The study, which covered 512 seniors, who were listeners of the Universities of the Third Age, identified the phenomenon of e-charity and were allowed to recognize the behavior of older adults in this area in the context of technological changes.

Due to the changes and challenges society faces, older adults in Poland seem to constitute a crucial research group. Parallely, engagement in charity by an aging Polish society appears to be a vital issue.

2. Research methods

The research aim is to determine the motives for and against the charity engagement of older adults in Poland. The study purpose was defined twofold. Firstly, there is a need to identify the sorts of motives for and against engaging in charity among people at the age of 60 and over. Secondly, it is crucial to define the demographic, social, and economic factors differentiating the charity behavior of older Polish people. The study subjects were psychological motives, socio-cultural, and economic motives. For this study, the concepts of definitions were adopted and are presented below in Table 1. To achieve the research goal, the following research questions were proposed:

1. What are the types of motives for and against engagement in charity among older adults?
2. Is older adults' charity behavior homogenous or do any factors differentiate their behavior?
3. What are the factors that differentiate the behavior of older adults in the wake of charity engagement?

Table 1. Basic definitions and variables used in the study

Charity	Providing charity Y(1) Not providing charity Y(2) Lack of knowledge about providing charity Y(3)
Psychological motives	Helping is a pleasure P(1)
	Helping others brings me joy P(2)
	I help because it concerns those I care about P(3)
	I help because it is my duty P(4)
	Helping others is the meaning of my life P(5)
	I feel relieved by helping P(6)
	I help because I am sensitive to the harm of others P(7)
	I don't help because it's not important to me P(8)
	I don't help because I don't want to P(9)
	I don't help because I don't feel the need P(10)
Socio-cultural motives	I help because I feel pressure from others S(1)
	I help because it is my religion S(2)
	I help because I hope that when I am in need, someone will also help me S(3)
	I don't see the point in helping others, everyone should be able to cope on their own S(4)
	I don't help because no one has helped me so far S(5)
	I don't help because people are ungrateful, even when you help them S(6)

Continuation of table 1

	I don't help because when I needed help, no one helped me S(7)
	I don't help because there are appropriate institutions to help S(8)
	I don't help because the state should help S(9)
	I don't help because others should help S(10)
	I don't help because I don't see people who can be helped S(11)
	I don't help because I don't have time S(12)
	I don't help because I don't know how to do it S(13)
	I don't help because I have so many problems of my own that I don't have time to deal with others S(14)
Economic motives	I help because of the benefits I receive in return E(1)
	I help others because I have a lot and I want to share E(2)
	I don't help because I can't afford it E(3)
	I don't help, because what they have should be enough for them E(4)
Demographic factors	Gender (CD1) – respondents: Female / Male
	Age group (CD2) – respondents in the age groups 60-69/70 and more (70+)
	Educational level group (CD3) – respondents in groups with primary-secondary/higher education level
	Size of the place of residence (CD4) – respondents in groups with the size of the place of residence: up to 99,999 inhabitants/from 100,000 inhabitants
Social factors	Cohabitation (CS1) – respondents living alone/cohabiting with others
Economic factors	Income level (CE1) – respondents in groups with income level in PLN: up to 3,999.99/ from 4,000.00

Source: own elaboration.

The main hypothesis followed directly from the study aim and it was formulated as the following: *Demographic (gender, age group, education group, size of the place of residence), social (cohabitation) and economic (income level) factors differentiate the motives for and against engagement in charity by older adults.* The specific hypotheses are included in Table 2 and, for example:

H0: The demographic factor – gender (CD1) does not differentiate the providing charity (Y1) among older adults.

H1: The demographic factor – gender (CD1) differentiates the providing charity (Y1) among older adults.

A study of statistically significant differences was carried out to identify the occurrence of differences in the respondents' behavior. Due to the lack of normal distribution, the Mann-Whitney U test was performed for variables (expressed on an ordinal scale) with the number of results/responses being at least 5. Two statistical hypotheses were determined 13 times, each

time assuming the occurrence of differences in behavior. If the result of the test probability p was below 0.05, H_1 should have been accepted. Otherwise, there were no grounds to reject H_0 .

Table 2. Research hypotheses

Independent variable	Dependent variable
Demographic factors: 1. Gender (CD1) 2. Age group (CD2) 3. Educational level group (CD3) 4. Size of the place of residence (CD4) Social factors: 5. Cohabitation (CS1) Economic factors: 6. Income level (CE1)	Charity: Providing charity Y(1) Not providing charity Y(2) Lack of knowledge about providing charity (Y3)
	Psychological motives: helping is a pleasure P(1) helping others brings me joy P(2) I help because it concerns those I care about P(3) I help because it is my duty P(4) helping others is the meaning of my life P(5) I feel relieved by helping P(6) I help because I am sensitive to the harm of others P(7) I don't help because it's not important to me P(8) I don't help because I don't want to P(9) I don't help because I don't feel the need P(10)
	Socio-cultural motives: I help because I feel pressure from others S(1) I help because it is my religion S(2) I help because I hope that when I am in need, someone will also help me S(3) I don't see the point in helping others, everyone should be able to cope on their own S(4) I don't help because no one has helped me so far S(5) I don't help because people are ungrateful, even when you help them S(6) I don't help because when I needed help, no one helped me S(7) I don't help because there are appropriate institutions to help S(8) I don't help because the state should help S(9) I don't help because others should help S(10) I don't help because I don't see people who can be helped S(11) I don't help because I don't have time S(12) I don't help because I don't know how to do it S(13) I don't help because I have so many problems of my own that I don't have time to deal with others S(14)
	Economic motives: I help because of the benefits I receive in return E(1) I help others because I have a lot and I want to share E(2) I don't help because I can't afford it E(3) I don't help, because what they have should be enough for them E(4)

Source: own elaboration.

A quantitative method was used to achieve the study objectives, using a consumer survey the CAWI technique (online survey questionnaire) due to the COVID-19 pandemic occurring at that time. Participants were recruited among Third Age Universities (TAU) across all voivodeships in Poland. The research group seems to be accurate to study new products and technologies (Migdał-Najman, Najman, Badowska, 2020). The online link with the survey

access was distributed among the TAU coordinators to invite their students to take part in this research. The purpose and scope of the study was described participants, and their participation was anonymous and voluntary with the possibility of resigning at any time during the survey. Primary data was collected using the Lime Survey platform between January and April 2023.

The sample selection in the study was purposeful and based on quota (age). Due to purposive sampling, older adults at the age of 60 years old were targeted. There were 512 such respondents, of whom 320 completed the survey in full and these respondents' answers were included for further analysis. The average profile of the respondents indicated that it was a woman, aged between 70 and 79, living in a town with over 100,000 inhabitants and declaring higher education. The specific characteristics of the population studied are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Characteristics of the population studied

Items			Percent respondents
Gender	female		84.37
	male		15.63
Age	60–69		41.25
	70–79		51.88
	80+		6.87
Education	primary		0.62
	vocational		1.88
	secondary		27.19
	higher		70.31
Place of residence	village		7.81
	town	to 19,999 inhabitants	5.00
		from 20,000 to 49,999 inhabitants	11.88
		from 50,000 to 99,999 inhabitants	12.50
		from 100,000 to 499,999 inhabitants	41.56
		from 500,000 inhabitants	21.25

Source: own elaboration based on empirical research.

The survey questionnaire consisted of two parts: 23 substantive questions and a data sheet containing 8 questions. The questionnaire was constructed conditionally, i.e., the number and scope of questions asked to the respondent depended on the answers the respondent provided at earlier stages. For this analysis, 3 substantive questions and 7 metric ones were selected.

3. Results¹

Among the 320 respondents, 89.69% (287 people) declared that they provided charity according to the authors' definition suggested in the questionnaire. Next, 4.69% of the respondents (15 people) indicated that they did not provide charity, and the final 5.62% of the respondents (18 people) responded that they don't know whether they are doing charity according to the definition proposed (Table 4).

Referring to the types of motives studied, 10 psychological motives (7 for providing and 3 for not providing the charity), 11 socio-cultural ones (3 for providing and 7 for not providing the charity), and 2 economic ones (1 for providing and 1 for not providing charity) were identified among the older people.

The most often chosen psychological motive for providing charity by older people is related to older adults' sensitivity to the harm of others (185 indications, i.e., 27.00% of the responses). The next one was feeling the joy of providing charity (139 indications, 20.30% of the responses), and the sequential motive was feeling pleasure derived from the fact of doing charity (93 indications, 13.06% of responses).

The most frequent socio-cultural motives indicated by the older people were firstly the hope that when respondents were in need, they would also receive the expected help (63 indications, 9.20% of the responses), and secondly, older adults' attitude derived from the principles of their religious beliefs and convictions (29 indications, 4.20% of the responses). Regarding the economic motives, respondents referred to the opinion that they help due to having a lot and needing to share with others (51 indications, 7.40% of the responses).

Discussing the psychological reasons against providing charity, the most frequent motive declared by the older adults referred to the lack of feeling of such a need (3 indications, 10.30% of the responses), followed by the lack of personal feeling of the importance of such activities for the respondents (2 indications, 6.90% of the responses).

Subsequently, five of the most frequent socio-cultural reasons declared by older adults against providing charity were identified. They were as follows: seeing no point in helping others because everyone should be able to cope on their own, a conviction of the existence of appropriate institutions for helping, the lack of noticing any people in need, and the lack of knowledge to help and finally conviction of having by older people too many own problems to help others (per 3 indications, 10.30% of the responses).

¹ The results of the empirical study were presented at the 4th National Interdisciplinary Scientific Conference *Silver Economy. Intergenerational Relations*, March 20–21, 2024, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Szczecin. Title of the presentation: *Motives for the involvement of older people in e-charity – results of empirical research*.

Referring to the economic perspective, one reason against engaging in charity was important for the Polish responders and concerned the impossibility of affording charity (I do not help because I cannot afford it – 5 indications, 17.20% of the responses).

Table 4. Responses of motives for and against providing charity

Group of motives	Motives	No. of responses	Percent of responses
1	2	3	4
Psychological motives	<i>Providing charity</i>		
	Helping is a pleasure P(1)	93	13.06
	Helping others brings me joy P(2)	139	20.30
	I help because it concerns those I care about P(3)	48	7.00
	I help because it is my duty P(4)	31	4.50
	Helping others is the meaning of my life P(5)	23	3.40
	I feel relieved by helping P(6)	22	3.20
	I help because I am sensitive to the harm of others P(7)	185	27.00
	<i>Non-providing charity</i>		
	I don't help because it's not important to me P(8)	2	2.00
	I don't help because I don't want to P(9)	0	0.00
	I don't help because I don't feel the need P(10)	3	10.30
Socio-cultural motives	<i>Providing charity</i>		
	I help because I feel pressure from others S(1)	1	0.10
	I help because it is my religion S(2)	29	4.20
	I help because I hope that when I am in need, someone will also help me S(3)	63	9.20
	<i>Non-providing charity</i>		
	I don't see the point in helping others, everyone should be able to cope on their own S(4)	3	10.30
	I don't help because no one has helped me so far S(5)	1	3.40
	I don't help because people are ungrateful, even when you help them S(6)	0	0.00
	I don't help because when I needed help, no one helped me S(7)	0	0.00
	I don't help because there are appropriate institutions to help S(8)	3	10.30
	I don't help because the state should help S(9)	2	6.90
	I don't help because others should help S(10)	0	0.00
	I don't help because I don't see people who can be helped S(11)	3	10.30
	I don't help because I don't have time S(12)	1	3.40
	I don't help because I don't know how to do it S(13)	3	10.30
	I don't help because I have so many problems of my own that I don't have time to deal with others S(14)	3	10.30

1	2	3	4
Economic motives	<i>Providing charity</i>		
	I help because of the benefits I receive in return E(1)	0	0.00
	I help others because I have a lot and I want to share E(2)	51	7.40
	<i>Non-providing charity</i>		
	I don't help because I can't afford it E(3)	5	17.20
	I don't help, because what they have should be enough for them E(4)	0	0.00

Source: own elaboration based on empirical research.

Next, the test of the significance of differences was provided. The results of providing charity by older adults indicated that for the variables: education level group (CD3) and size of place of residence group, p was below 0.05, therefore in both cases, the H1 hypothesis should be accepted. Therefore, the education level of the respondents differentiates by providing charity. The people who declared higher education in comparison with those without were almost four times more likely to start carrying out charitable activities. Moreover, the size of the place of residence also differentiates older people's behavior in providing charity. People from larger towns were over two times more likely to provide charity work than people living in smaller towns.

Table 5. Results of significance tests for differences in motives for and against engagement in charity

Variables	p*					
	Gender (CD1)	Age group (CD2)	Educational level group (CD3)	Size of the place of residence (CD4)	Cohabitation (CS1)	Income level (CE1)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Providing charity Y(1)	0.352191 (+)	0.330660 (+)	0.000219* (+)	0.042460* (+)	0.110869 (+)	0.297379 (+)
Helping is a pleasure P(1)	0.995254	0.996933	0.996497	0.996323	0.996817	0.994841
Helping others brings me joy P(2)	0.996887	0.998314	0.998144	0.997974	0.998249	0.997279
I help because it concerns those I care about P(3)	0.986536	0.991400	0.990745	0.990757	0.991657	0.985878
I help because it is my duty P(4)	0.982640	0.981991	0.981991	0.983305	0.983530	0.977666
Helping others is the meaning of my life P(5)	0.956493	0.972074	0.972074	0.973364	0.974873	0.962649
I feel relieved by helping P(6)	0.966050	0.973808	0.970596	0.971913	0.971884	0.965022

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I help because I am sensitive to the harm of others P(7)	0.998424	0.998901	0.998759	0.998648	0.998882	0.998304
I help because it is my religion S(2)	0.971437	0.976970	0.976970	0.977930	0.982336	0.952232
I help because I hope that when I am in need, someone will also help me S(3)	0.993017	0.994459	0.993823	0.993146	0.994459	0.991378
I help others because I have a lot and I want to share E(2)	0.990143	0.992483	0.988337	0.989667	0.991141	0.989520
Not providing charity Y(2)	1.000000	1.000000	1.000000	1.000000	1.000000	1.000000
I don't help because I can't afford it E(3)	0.772830	1.000000	0.772830	0.772830	0.772830	1.000000

* Statistically significant differences.

(+) p-score with continuity correction.

Source: own elaboration based on empirical research.

Referring to the remaining motives differentiating providing charity, in all of the examined cases p was above 0.05, and the hypothesis that H0 should be successively accepted. Therefore, the demographic (gender, age group), social (cohabitation) and economic (income level) factors do not differentiate older adults' behavior in providing charity.

Similarly, referring to actions concerned with not providing charity by older people, in all examined cases p was above 0.05, and the hypothesis that H0 should be successively accepted. Therefore, the demographic (gender, age group, education level group, size of the place of residence), social (cohabitation) and economic (income level) factors do not differentiate the behavior of older adults in not providing charity.

Table 6. Providing the charity in terms of the education level group and the size of the place of residence

Variables	Items	n	Percent of respondents
Educational level group (CD3)	primary-secondary	76	26.48
	higher	211	73.52
	total	287	100.00
Size of the place of residence (CD4)	to 99, 999 inhabitants	100	34.84
	from 100,000 inhabitants	187	65.16
	total	287	100.00

Source: own elaboration based on empirical research.

The results of significant tests for differences in motives for and against engagement in charity are presented in Table 5. The structure of responses for and against engagement by the education level group and the size of the place of residence was presented in Table 6. Dependent variables concerning providing and not providing charity and independent variables relating to demographic, social, and economic factors were presented in Appendix.

4. Discussion

The aging of society is a worldwide trend. This process will intensify in the coming years, and in 2030 it will reach its climax in many developed countries where the percentage of people older than 60 years will exceed 30% (Barwińska, 2008). In 2060, older adults will constitute more than 30% of the Polish population. As a result of this process, Poland is reported to become one of the twenty oldest societies in the world (United Nations, 2024). Thus, older people are an increasingly numerous and important social group now and in the future.

Nowadays, in comparison to previous generations, older adults are healthier, better educated, knowing foreign languages, better off financially, and having more opportunities to live actively (Barwińska, 2008). What is more, for the first time in modern human history there are two generations of older people at the same time, i.e., people at the age of 60 and over and in many cases those who still have their living parents at the age of 80 and over (Migdał-Najman et al., 2020). One of the social activities that older people are increasingly undertaking is volunteering (Fabiś, Kędziora, 2008).

This study sheds light on motives for and against engagement in charity by older adults in Poland. Three groups of motives for providing and against providing charity including psychological, socio-cultural, and economic ones were identified and analyzed.

The psychological motives for providing charity are related to the fact that helping is a pleasure for the helper and brings them satisfaction and joy because it concerns those the helpers care about. It may also result from duty or sensitivity to the harm of others, and it often constitutes the meaning of life for the helper. The outcomes of the study show that the most important psychological motives for providing charity among older people in Poland are the following: the sensitivity to the harm of others, the feeling of joy in providing charity, and the feeling of pleasure from the fact of doing charity. On the other hand, the psychological motives for not providing charity were the lack of feeling of such a need, followed by the lack of importance of such activities for the respondents.

The socio-cultural motives may include religious values, social pressure, and the expectation of support in the future in exchange for the help provided now. The most frequently socio-cultural motives indicated by the responders were the hope that when they were in need, they would also receive support in the future, and the attitude derived from the principles of religion or beliefs. On the other hand, the most frequently declared socio-cultural reasons for not providing charity were the following: seeing no point in helping others because everyone should be able to cope on their own, the existence of appropriate institutions for these types of activities, the lack of noticing people in need and the lack of knowledge to help and conviction of having by older adults too many own problems to help others.

From an economic point of view, the only motive for helping was distinguished: sharing with others determined by the donors' positive financial standing and willingness to share with others. Parallely one reason against engaging in charity was significant for the Polish respondents – the impossibility of affording charity.

The study results show that the respondents' level of education and the size of their place of residence differentiate between charity activities among older people. Older people with higher education and living in large towns more often declared engagement in charity. On the other hand, the demographic (gender, age group, education level group, size of place of residence), social (cohabitation) and economic (income level) factors do not differentiate the behavior of older adults in not providing charity. The above suggests that older adults as a target should not be treated as a homogeneous group. In many countries where the motives for older adults' engagement in volunteering were studied, age was the differentiating factor (Clary et al., 1998; Omoto et al., 2000; Okun, Schultz, 2003; Hendricks, Cutler, 2004). However, in Poland, the main differentiating factors are the education level and the size of the place of residence. This shows that older adults' country of origin is also a significant factor in differentiating the motives for and against engagement in volunteering. This may indicate that culture and religion are much more important here. It seems that in Poland, engagement in volunteering is determined primarily by altruistic and moral-obligation motives (beliefs), but at the same time in Germany the activity is oriented towards active participation, social integration, and communication (Barwińska, 2008). The above suggests that the motives for and against charitable activities also depend on the cultural environment. Thus, it would be reasonable to conduct research covering groups of countries with a homogeneous culture to point out certain general supranational principles.

Referring to the conclusions, two practical implications emerge. Firstly, people with higher education are more willing to participate in charity. Secondly, charity is more often

provided by people from larger towns than from smaller ones. Such premises create a certain social profile of older people charity providers, who may be a potential target group for the non-governmental organization sector. Characteristic common features of these people include living in larger agglomerations and declaring to have higher education. Knowledge about such a profile of people active in charity creates a specific audience of older people to whom non-governmental organizations should direct their messages. Older adults are prone to be activated to helping others in need. There seems to be an appropriate response expected from these older donors. In targeted messages, it is worth referring to all the examined motives: psychological, socio-cultural, and economic. However, using psychological motives a message should refer to the harm that other people suffered and the difficulties the people face in need. Such a message tone may activate older adults and engage them in helping others more strongly than other arguments. Importantly, NGO messages should emphasize that older adults take pleasure and joy in helping others. The image of older people who help is better recognized by older adults and goes well with the feelings of older generation representatives. Based on socio-cultural motives, it is worth emphasizing that an older person who helps others can count on help when they require help and support. The communication message should emphasize the idea of mutual solidarity and support circles, highlighting that no one should be left alone with their problem. Such a message is crucial for older adults and may successfully motivate them to get involved in social support circles.

The last economic motive is related to sharing a broadly understood surplus. Non-governmental organizations dedicating their activities to increasing older adults' participation in charity should build communication messages based on the will to share with others because fate has generously gifted the helper. Such message content may influence older adults to increase their engagement in charity.

Conclusions

The study aimed to determine the motives for and against engagement in charity by older adults in Poland. Outcomes suggest that older people are engaged in charitable activities and their motives belong to psychological, socio-cultural, and economic reasons. Today's older adults are not a homogeneous group in terms of age, health condition, education, size of place of residence, and daily activities. Therefore, motives for and against engaging in charity by older adults are differentiated by some specific factors such as education level and place of living.

The outcomes may provide some recommendations for non-profit organizations and national aging policy. The results can suggest some solutions for shaping older people's attitudes towards charity involvement and these activities should refer to the motives that received the most responses in the study. For example, when building a marketing campaign for engaging older adults in charity, it should be based on psychological motives resulting from older people's sensitivity to the harm of others and the fact that helping brings them joy. The national aging policy should promote older adults' attitudes towards charity primarily dedicating the message to large towns inhabited by people with higher education. These demographic factors mostly differentiate the fact of providing charity among older Polish people.

As in most studies of this kind, the paper has some limitations. The research sample was purposeful, the study was conducted on a group of older adults who were the students of third-age universities, which means that its results are not representative of the entire group of older people in Poland. Another limitation derived from the fact that the study was conducted only in one country, so the research conclusions apply only to Poland. The research method used, which was an online survey, does not allow to effectively reach all older people living in Poland. One of the limitations derived also from the analysis methods and tools exists. The U Mann-Whitney test used for these analyses does not consider the variance of results in the tested groups. This means that groups may have different variances in scores, which may not be "detected" by the test. These several limitations should be addressed in further research. The study is also a starting point for further considerations and research in an age-friendly world.

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Appendix

Variables for engagement in charity related to demographic, social, and economic factors

Items	Dependent variables (n – no. of responses; % – percent of responses)		Independent Variable												
			factors												
			demographic								social		economic		
			gender (CD1)		age group (CD2)		educational level group (CD3)		size of the place of residence (CD4)		cohabitation (CD5)		income level (CE1)		
			female	male	60–69	70 and more (70+)	primary-secondary	higher	to 99,999 inhabitants	from 100,000 inhabitants	alone	cohabiting	to 3,999.99	to 4,000.00	lack of responses
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
Providing charity	providing charity Y(1)	n	244	43	121	166	76	211	100	187	115	172	170	63	54
		%	85.02	14.98	42.16	57.84	26.48	73.52	34.84	65.16	40.07	59.93	59.23	21.95	18.82
	not providing charity Y(2)	n	12	3	2	13	10	5	11	4	8	7	10	2	3
		%	80.00	20.00	13.33	86.67	66.67	33.33	73.33	26.67	53.33	46.67	66.67	13.33	20.00
	lack of knowledge about providing charity Y(3)	n	14	4	9	9	9	9	8	10	10	8	13	3	2
		%	77.78	22.22	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00	44.44	55.56	55.56	44.44	72.22	16.67	11.11
Psychological motives	helping is a pleasure P(1)	n	82	11	45	48	24	69	28	65	34	59	59	16	18
		%	88.17	11.83	48.39	51.61	25.81	74.19	30.11	69.89	36.56	63.44	63.44	17.20	19.35
	helping others brings me joy P(2)	n	128	11	64	75	40	99	51	88	50	59	87	26	26
		%	92.09	7.91	46.04	53.96	28.78	71.22	36.69	63.31	45.87	54.13	62.59	18.71	18.71
	I help because it concerns those I care about P(3)	n	43	5	17	31	13	35	18	30	20	28	9	28	11
		%	89.58	10.42	35.42	64.58	27.08	72.92	37.50	62.50	41.67	58.33	18.75	58.33	22.92
	I help because it is my duty P(4)	n	22	9	8	23	8	23	17	14	11	20	22	6	3
		%	70.97	29.03	25.81	74.19	25.81	74.19	54.84	45.16	35.48	64.52	70.97	19.35	9.68
	Helping others is the meaning of my life P(5)	n	21	2	6	17	6	17	7	14	9	14	12	6	5
		%	91.30	8.70	26.09	73.91	26.09	73.91	33.33	66.67	39.13	60.87	52.17	26.09	21.74
	I feel relieved by helping P(6)	n	18	4	11	11	6	16	11	11	7	15	13	6	3
		%	81.82	18.18	50.00	50.00	27.27	72.73	50.00	50.00	31.82	68.18	59.09	27.27	13.64
	I help because I am sensitive to the harm of others P(7)	n	159	26	85	100	49	136	65	120	74	111	39	112	34
		%	85.95	14.05	45.95	54.05	26.49	73.51	35.14	64.86	40.00	60.00	21.08	60.54	18.38
	I don't help because it's not important to me P(8)	n	2	0	0	2	2	0	2	0	0	1	1	0	1
		%	100.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	50.00	0.00	50.00
I don't help because I don't want to P(9)	n	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
I don't help because I don't feel the need P(10)	n	3	0	0	3	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	0	1	
	%	100.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	33.33	66.67	33.33	66.67	66.67	33.33	66.67	0.00	33.33	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Socio-cultural motives	I help because I feel pressure from others S(1)	n	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
		%	100.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	100.00	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00
	I help because it is my religion S(2)	n	26	3	5	24	5	24	7	22	12	17	19	2
		%	89.66	10.34	17.24	82.76	17.24	82.76	24.14	75.86	41.38	58.62	65.52	6.90
	I help because I hope that when I am in need, someone will also help me S(3)	n	51	12	27	36	17	46	22	41	27	36	38	13
		%	80.95	19.05	42.86	57.14	26.98	73.02	34.92	65.08	42.86	57.14	60.32	20.63
	I don't see the point in helping others, everyone should be able to cope on their own S(4)	n	3	0	0	3	3	0	3	0	1	2	1	0
		%	100.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	33.33	66.67	33.33	0.00
	I don't help because no one has helped me so far S(5)	n	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
		%	100.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00
	I don't help because people are ungrateful, even when you help them S(6)	n	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	I don't help because when I needed help, no one helped me S(7)	n	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	I don't help because there are appropriate institutions to help S(8)	n	1	2	0	3	2	1	3	0	1	2	2	1
		%	33.33	66.67	0.00	100.00	66.67	33.33	100.00	0.00	33.33	66.67	66.67	33.33
	I don't help because the state should help S(9)	n	1	1	0	2	1	1	2	0	1	1	1	0
		%	50.00	50.00	0.00	100.00	50.00	50.00	100.00	0.00	50.00	50.00	50.00	0.00
	I don't help because others should help S(10)	n	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	I don't help because I don't see people who can be helped S(11)	n	3	0	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	1
		%	100.00	0.00	33.33	66.67	33.33	66.67	66.67	33.33	66.67	33.33	66.67	33.33
	I don't help because I don't have time S(12)	n	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1
		%	100.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	100.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
	I don't help because I don't know how to do it S(13)	n	2	1	2	1	2	1	3	0	1	2	3	0
		%	66.67	33.33	66.67	33.33	66.67	33.33	100.00	0.00	33.33	66.67	100.00	0.00
	I don't help because I have so many problems of my own that I don't have time to deal with others S(14)	n	3	0	2	1	2	1	3	0	2	1	3	0
		%	100.00	0.00	66.67	33.33	66.67	33.33	100.00	0.00	66.67	33.33	100.00	0.00
Economic motives	I help because of the benefits I receive in return E(1)	n	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	I help others because I have a lot and I want to share E(2)	n	42	9	25	26	6	45	16	35	12	39	23	18
		%	82.35	17.65	49.02	50.98	11.76	88.24	31.37	68.63	23.53	76.47	45.10	35.29
	I don't help because I can't afford it E(3)	n	3	2	0	5	3	2	2	3	3	2	3	1
		%	60.00	40.00	0.00	100.00	60.00	40.00	40.00	60.00	60.00	40.00	60.00	20.00
	I don't help, because what they have should be enough for them E(4)	n	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: own elaboration based on empirical research.

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