

Exploring the antecedents of financial contribution to the NHS: the case of Italy during COVID-19 emergency

Sesini, G., Castiglioni, C., & Lozza, E.

Department of Psychology, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has quickly become an unprecedented challenge for many countries at a global level. To respond efficiently to such an emergency, most countries had to allocate a significant amount of financial resources to support the National Healthcare System (NHS). Historically, most of these resources came from the general public through tax payments and monetary donations. The present work aims to investigate the antecedents of citizens' willingness to financially support the National Healthcare System in a situation of public emergency such as the one related to the COVID-19 outbreak. It also aims to distinguish between the willingness to support the system through two different forms of financial contribution, tax payment and charitable giving.

We examined the information collected at two distinct times in the midst of the Italian public health emergency, corresponding to the first (March/April) and the second (November/December) COVID-19 wave, while the country was reaching its contagion peak. Results show that, during the first wave, participants were more willing to give a financial contribution to the NHS when it was framed as a donation rather than as a one-off tax payment. Such difference, however, was non-significant during the second wave. A possible explanation is that during the first wave monetary donations were perceived as a way to address a temporary and extra-ordinary emergency (i.e. disaster relief donation), while during the second wave the situation appeared to be more structural and 'ordinary'. Moreover, it was found that trust in money management was one of the most important factor in predicting the intention to make a financial contribution to the NHS, either through a tax payment or through charitable giving, as well as perceived social norms. The perceived risks with regard to the pandemic, in contrast, had no impact. The study shows how reactions to the coronavirus

pandemics can be explained by economic psychology. Both theoretical and pragmatic implications for policymakers are discussed.