

Mindset, Virtue Signaling and Volunteering

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Background

Virtue signaling, or publicly showing off one's good character or actions to others, has been studied in many contexts. We are interested in investigating the impact of fixed vs. growth mindsets on virtue signaling in a volunteering context. Mindsets, in the context of this research, are the beliefs people hold about the consistency of human's personality as well as their moral characteristics.

Yang and Hsee (2022) examined the impact of obligatory or voluntary virtue signaling on charitable giving. They demonstrated that obligatory virtue signaling increased donation/volunteer behavior because it removed the concern of "showing off". Regarding motivations for behavior, research has shown that people with a growth mindset value learning/improvement goals while those with a fixed mindset value goals of proving themselves to others. Park and John (2012) found that those with a fixed mindset were more persuaded by signaling ad appeals while those with a growth mindset were more persuaded by self-improvement ad appeals.

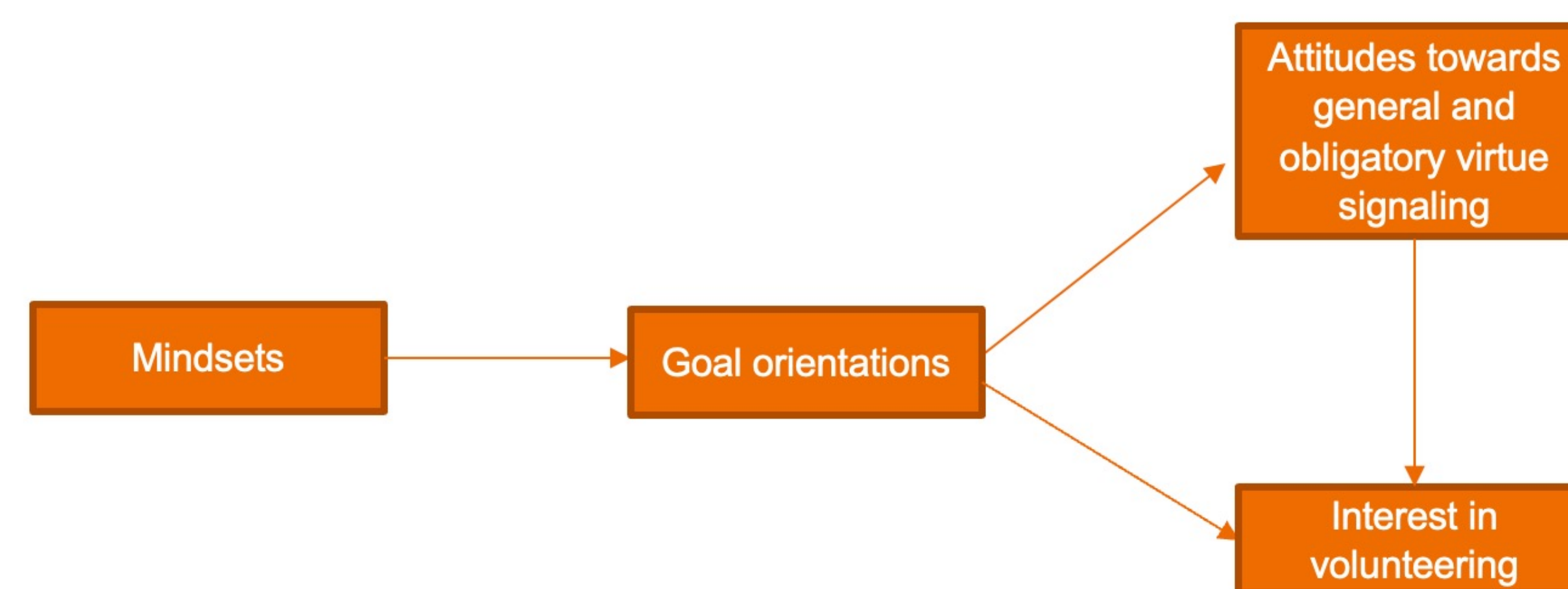
Objectives

Given the different goal orientations of people with a growth (vs. fixed) mindset, we believe the impact of obligatory virtue signaling on volunteer behavior will be stronger among people with a growth (vs. fixed) mindset since obligatory (vs. voluntary) signaling reduces the "showing off" concern.

Methodology

- Our first step was a pretest to investigate the validity of the hypothesized relationships
- We examined the following variables:
 - Interest in volunteering at a "local hospital" and Cedars-Sinai specifically
 - Interest in recognition opportunities for volunteering at a local hospital (voluntary virtue signaling)
 - Interest in obligatory recognition opportunities for volunteering at Cedars-Sinai (obligatory virtue signaling)
 - Personality (Levy, Stroessner, & Dweck, 1998) and Morality (Dweck 2000) Mindset.
 - Goal orientation (Elliot and Murayama, 2008)
 - Conspicuous donation behavior (another way of examining virtue signaling) from self and other perspectives (Wallace & Buil, 2021)
- 62 Pepperdine students participated in an online survey during the Fall 2023 semester for a chance to win one of several 10\$ Starbucks gift cards.

Pretest Model:



Pretest Results

- People with a growth mindset were more interested in volunteering ($r = .45, p < .001, n = 60$), were more OK with receiving recognition from volunteering ($r = .17, p = ns, n = 62$), and were more OK with receiving obligatory recognition from volunteering ($r = .34, p < .10, n = 57$) than were people with a fixed mindset
- Goal orientation showed no significant correlation with other variables. However, partial results shows that individuals with a Learning Goal marginally negatively correlated with a fixed mindset ($r = -.22, p < .10, n = 62$), and positively correlated with perceived desirability of receiving recognition for volunteering ($r = .31, p = .01, n = 62$), and interest in volunteering ($r = .37, p < .01, n = 60$).
- The conspicuous donation behavior variable did not yield significant results. However, directional results suggest promising venue for our first study. For example, our pretest shows that individuals with a fixed mindset would tend to post their volunteering affiliation on social media to manage others' impressions of them ($r = .25, p = .06, n = 62$).

Limitations and Next Steps

- Sample size was small to test for mediating relationships.
- Some of the scales used such as the one to measure goal orientation needs to be revisited.
- We are in the process of implementing an online survey at Cedars-Sinai with 100 current volunteers
- Variables to be tested:
 - Interest in continuing to volunteer at Cedars-Sinai
 - Interest in voluntary recognition opportunities for volunteering at Cedars-Sinai (voluntary virtue signaling)
 - Interest in obligatory recognition opportunities for volunteering at Cedars-Sinai (obligatory virtue signaling)
 - Mindset (personality oriented, since pretest showed personality oriented mindset results to be more significant than morality oriented mindset)
 - Goal orientation/motivation orientation
 - Conspicuous donation behavior from self and other perspectives
 - Perceived efficacy (variable found to be important in literature and in our previously published study)