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# How Charity Involvement Influences the Effects of Beneficiary's Facial Images in Charitable Advertising

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**Abstract:** This study examines how beneficiaries' facial expressions and gaze direction in charitable advertising interact with individuals' levels of charity involvement to influence emotional and behavioral responses among potential donors. Using a 2 (facial expression: positive vs. negative) × 2 (gaze direction: direct vs. averted) × 2 (charity involvement: high vs. low) between-subjects experimental design, the research tests both main and interaction effects on empathy, emotional arousal, and helping intentions. The findings show that facial expressions and gaze direction do not significantly affect donor responses unless charity involvement is considered as a moderator. For individuals with low charity involvement, advertisements depicting beneficiaries with negative facial expressions elicit stronger empathy and greater helping intentions than those with positive expressions. Similarly, direct eye contact more effectively induces emotional arousal and motivates helping behavior among these individuals, suggesting that vivid and confronting visual cues are particularly influential for less engaged audiences. In contrast, facial expressions and gaze direction have no significant effect on individuals with high charity involvement, who may rely more on stable values or prior commitments than on specific visual cues. These results emphasize the moderating role of charity involvement in determining the impact of visual elements in charitable advertising. The study advances research on charitable communication by highlighting the need to align visual strategies with donor characteristics and offers practical guidance for nonprofit organizations seeking to design more effective, segment-specific campaigns.

**Keywords:** facial expression; gaze direction; involvement; prosocial behavior; charitable advertising

## 1. Introduction

Personal donations constitute a vital funding source that enables charitable organizations to fulfill their social missions. Among various fundraising approaches, charity advertisements, particularly those featuring images of beneficiaries, play a crucial role in shaping individuals' willingness to donate [1]. Two essential visual elements in these advertisements are facial expressions and gaze direction, which act as potent nonverbal cues influencing viewers' emotional and cognitive responses.

In charity advertising, facial expressions (positive vs [1, 2]. negative) and gaze direction (direct vs. averted) strongly influence viewers' emotional responses and donation intentions. Facial expressions communicate the beneficiary's emotional state, while gaze direction indicates whether the beneficiary is making eye contact with the viewer or looking away. These visual cues shape viewers' perceptions of the advertisement and their emotional engagement, thereby influencing prosocial behavior.

However, the effectiveness of gaze direction varies across individual characteristics such as cultural background, persuasion context, and gender [3, 4]. This study examines an important yet underexplored moderator, individual charity involvement, defined as the perceived personal relevance and significance of supporting charitable causes. Psychological involvement shapes how individuals process and respond to advertisements, including moderating the effects of emotional appeals. Although the moderating role of charity involvement has been explored regarding facial expressions, its interaction with gaze direction remains unclear.

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Beneficiary images in charity advertisements play a key role in eliciting empathy, reflecting concern and emotional resonance with those in need [5]. However, few studies have directly examined the broader emotional arousal evoked by such images. Emotional arousal, regardless of its positive or negative valence, enhances engagement with advertisements and strengthens prosocial intentions. While empathy is primarily elicited by facial expressions, emotional arousal appears to be more strongly influenced by gaze direction.

To address these gaps, this study conducted a laboratory experiment to examine how individual charity involvement moderates the effects of beneficiaries' facial expressions and gaze direction on emotional arousal, empathy, and helping intention. This research contributes to the literature on charity advertising in several ways [6]. First, it introduces charity involvement as a novel moderator in the relationship between gaze direction and key outcome variables, namely emotional arousal and helping intention. Second, by incorporating emotional arousal as an outcome variable and examining it alongside empathy and helping intention, the study provides deeper insight into how gaze cues influence individual responses to charity advertisements and identifies important boundary conditions for the gaze effect.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The next section outlines the theoretical framework and research hypotheses, followed by a description of the research methods and experimental results [3, 7]. The final section discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the findings and proposes directions for future research.

## 2. Literature review

### *2.1. The role of facial expressions in charity advertising*

Facial expressions in charity advertising represent the emotions displayed by beneficiaries, typically categorized as positive or negative. Positive expressions include emotions such as happiness, pride, and excitement, whereas negative expressions encompass sadness, anger, and fear. In this study, positive facial expressions mainly refer to smiling or joyful faces, while negative expressions indicate sadness, often reflected through downcast or distressed appearances [6, 8]. These visual cues function as important emotional signals in donation appeals.

The beneficiary's facial expression in charity advertisements plays a crucial role in emotional contagion, an automatic process through which viewers unconsciously mimic and internalize observed emotions. Positive expressions elicit uplifting emotions, whereas negative expressions evoke concern or sadness [6, 9]. These emotional responses are essential for understanding how viewers establish emotional connections with beneficiaries.

Although the emotional impact of facial expressions is widely acknowledged, debate persists over whether positive or negative expressions are more effective in promoting donations. Some perspectives suggest that negative expressions evoke stronger empathetic responses through emotional contagion. Furthermore, negatively expressed emotions may convey greater need, increasing perceived urgency and motivating helping behavior. This perspective regards sad expressions as powerful cues for eliciting support [10, 11].

Conversely, an increasing number of studies suggest that positive expressions can also be persuasive in donation contexts. Smiling beneficiaries convey hope and resilience, which may inspire donors and enhance their sense of efficacy or optimism regarding the impact of their contributions. This perspective highlights the need for further research on how facial expressions in charity advertisements operate across different contexts.

### *2.2. The role of gaze direction in charity advertising*

Gaze direction refers to where an individual looks, particularly in relation to another person's eyes, and is generally categorized as direct or averted [12]. In print advertising, direct gaze, or eye contact, occurs when the character looks directly at the viewer, whereas averted gaze involves the character looking away to avoid eye contact.

Humans are inherently responsive to direct gaze. Eye contact activates the brain's reward system, enhances engagement with visual stimuli, and promotes deeper cognitive processing. The "eye contact effect" indicates that direct gaze triggers emotional arousal and attention-related neural mechanisms. Faces displaying direct gaze are processed more intensively and evoke greater interest and a stronger sense of personal connection than those with averted gaze or closed eyes [13, 14].

In advertising, however, the effects of gaze direction are complex. Direct gaze has been shown to attract greater attention to the character's face and enhance emotional engagement. From a cognitive processing perspective, averted gaze can also offer advantages [15, 16]. When the character in an advertisement looks away, viewers tend to focus more on other ad elements such as product or message details. This shift in attention enhances narrative immersion and improves brand recall and message retention.

The impact of gaze direction also varies with contextual factors. Research indicates that when combined with a smiling expression, direct eye contact increases consumer arousal, an effect particularly evident among certain audiences. Direct gaze is more effective when accompanied by a first-person narrative rather than a third-person one. Its persuasive power further increases when direct gaze aligns with positive emotions or averted gaze with negative emotions. These findings indicate that the effectiveness of gaze direction is context-dependent. However, limited research has explored how individual-level factors, such as personal traits or viewer motivations, may moderate these effects [17].

### *2.3. The relationship between charity involvement and facial expression*

Psychological involvement refers to the degree to which an individual feels mentally connected to a particular object, decision, or behavior, influenced by intrinsic values, goals, and self-concept. In charitable contexts, charity involvement reflects the extent to which individuals perceive philanthropic engagement as meaningful, self-relevant, and consistent with their beliefs. This study defines charity involvement as the perceived importance, relevance, and personal interest an individual assigns to supporting charitable causes [18].

Charity involvement can be classified into enduring and situational forms. Enduring involvement reflects a long-term orientation shaped by accumulated experiences, personal values, and sustained concern for an issue, whereas situational involvement is temporary and triggered by specific contexts or immediate circumstances [19, 20]. This study focuses on enduring charity involvement as a trait-like characteristic that influences individuals' responses across different charitable contexts.

According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model, individuals with high charity involvement are more likely to engage in central processing of charitable messages, engaging in deeper cognitive elaboration. In contrast, those with low involvement tend to rely on peripheral cues such as emotional appeals or visual features. This distinction helps explain why facial expressions, particularly negative ones, have varying effects on viewers depending on their level of involvement [6, 21].

Negative facial expressions, such as sadness, function as strong peripheral cues for low-involvement individuals by visually signaling need and urgency. These expressions effectively convey the severity of a beneficiary's condition and evoke empathy through emotional contagion. For low-involvement viewers lacking a prior connection to the cause, such clear visual indicators of distress provide accessible emotional information that aids situational understanding and encourages prosocial behavior.

Conversely, positive facial expressions may induce cognitive dissonance in charitable settings [22]. The Emotions as Social Information model suggests that negative emotions are regarded as more contextually appropriate in help-seeking situations, thereby strengthening persuasive effectiveness. Smiling beneficiaries may unintentionally imply that aid is less urgent or warranted, particularly for low-involvement individuals who depend on emotional cues to evaluate the legitimacy of need.

Highly involved individuals exhibit more consistent responses across emotional conditions [4]. Their established commitment and deeper cognitive engagement make them less influenced by emotional cues, as their reactions stem primarily from internalized values and sustained concern for the cause. Therefore, charity involvement is proposed to moderate the relationship between facial expressions and both empathy and willingness to help. Specifically:

2.3.1. Hypothesis 1: Charity involvement moderates the effects of beneficiaries' facial expressions on empathy.

Hypothesis 1-1: Individuals with low charity involvement experience stronger empathy when beneficiaries display negative facial expressions [2, 23].

Hypothesis 1-2: Among individuals with high charity involvement, empathy remains consistent regardless of the facial expressions displayed by beneficiaries.

2.3.2. Hypothesis 2: Charity involvement moderates beneficiaries' facial expressions on the willingness to help.

Hypothesis 2-1: Individuals with low charity involvement exhibit a stronger willingness to help when beneficiaries display negative facial expressions [20, 24].

Hypothesis 2-2: Among individuals with high charity involvement, the willingness to help remains consistent regardless of the facial expressions shown [25].

*2.4. The relationship between charity involvement and gaze direction*

Extensive research demonstrates that gaze direction strongly influences emotional perception and response [26]. Direct eye contact amplifies emotional intensity and promotes deeper affective engagement than an averted gaze, producing stronger physiological reactions such as heart rate deceleration and heightened subjective emotional experience. These effects, however, vary across individuals and are likely moderated by charity involvement.

According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model, individuals with high charity involvement engage in deeper cognitive processing and are more influenced by central cues such as argument strength and cause relevance. In contrast, low-involvement individuals rely primarily on peripheral cues, including visual features like gaze behavior, when forming judgments. The Limited Capacity Model of Attention further supports this view, suggesting that low-involvement viewers, due to shallower processing, are more easily influenced by salient visual stimuli such as direct gaze.

For low-involvement individuals, direct gaze serves as an attention-capturing cue that increases arousal and fosters message engagement [27, 28]. In contrast, highly involved individuals, already cognitively and emotionally invested in the cause, rely less on visual stimuli for emotional activation. Their responses are shaped primarily by established attitudes and schema-based processing, leaving minimal room for gaze direction to influence emotional or behavioral outcomes.

In charitable contexts, direct gaze may function as a nonverbal request for assistance, particularly for individuals with low personal involvement. This perceived social appeal can evoke emotional responses and strengthen helping intentions, whereas highly involved individuals are less affected due to their established commitment. Accordingly, charity involvement is proposed to moderate the relationship between gaze direction, emotional arousal, and willingness to help, as follows:

2.4.1. Hypothesis 3: Charity involvement moderates the effect of beneficiaries' gaze direction on emotional arousal.

Hypothesis 3-1: For individuals with low charity involvement, a direct gaze from beneficiaries, as opposed to an averted gaze, enhances emotional arousal [29, 30].

Hypothesis 3-2: For individuals with high charity involvement, emotional arousal remains consistent regardless of the beneficiaries' gaze direction.

2.4.2. Hypothesis 4: Charity involvement moderates the effect of beneficiaries' gaze direction on the willingness to help.

Hypothesis 4-1: For individuals with low charity involvement, direct gaze from beneficiaries enhances the willingness to help compared to averted gaze.

Hypothesis 4-2: For individuals with high charity involvement, the willingness to help remains consistent regardless of beneficiaries' gaze direction [31].

## 3. Method

### *3.1. Purpose*

This study examines how charity involvement influences the impact of beneficiaries' facial expressions and gaze direction on empathy, emotional arousal, and the willingness to assist within charitable advertising contexts [11, 32].

### *3.2. Design*

A 2 (facial expression: positive vs [33]. negative) × 2 (gaze direction: direct vs. averted) × 2 (charity involvement: high vs. low) between-subjects laboratory experiment was conducted, resulting in eight experimental conditions. Three primary dependent variables were assessed: empathy, emotional arousal, and willingness to help.

### *3.3. Participants*

A total of 154 university students participated in the experiment (50.33% male, 49.67% female; M~age~ = 22.71, SD = 3.57). Participants were randomly assigned to the experimental conditions. Based on pre-test charity involvement scores, 78 were categorized as having high involvement and 76 as having low involvement.

### *3.4. Stimulus Materials*

The experimental stimulus was a charity fundraising poster depicting a rural Chinese girl. Children from developing regions, particularly girls, are often portrayed in charitable advertising [34]. Beneficiary images were sourced from public welfare campaigns and online news reports. Following visual and textual analysis, one representative image was selected and edited with Adobe Photoshop to create a standardized version in four conditions, varying by facial expression (positive or negative) and gaze direction (direct or averted). The naturalness of the stimuli was evaluated in a pilot test, and participants provided qualitative feedback on their perceptions. The manipulations adhered to established procedures in prior studies.

In addition to the girl's image, each poster contained three types of textual information consistent across all conditions: a slogan, the charity organization's name, and a donation prompt [11, 35]. These textual elements were identical in all versions. The complete stimulus materials are provided in Appendix A.

### *3.5. Procedure*

Charity involvement was measured using a pre-experimental questionnaire. Participants scoring above the mean (M = 3.61) were classified as high involvement, while those scoring below were categorized as low involvement. They were then randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions, as detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Experimental conditions.

| **positive expression** | | **negative expression** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| direct gaze | averted gaze | direct gaze | averted gaze |
| condition 1 | condition 2 | condition 3 | condition 4 |

Each participant completed the experiment individually in a controlled laboratory environment to reduce external interference. Prior to viewing the stimulus, participants were provided with a brief introduction to the charity organization and its fundraising project. They then viewed the poster for 16 seconds, after which the screen automatically advanced to a questionnaire.

Upon completing the questionnaire, participants were asked whether they had previously encountered the image, and all confirmed they had not. The experiment

concluded with a brief debriefing session, and the entire procedure lasted approximately 15 minutes.

*3.6. Measures*

The main variables measured included willingness to help, empathy, emotional arousal, and charity involvement. Willingness to help was assessed using a seven-point Likert scale (e.g., 1 = "strongly disagree" to 7 = "strongly agree"), measuring willingness to assist the beneficiary group (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.91$). Empathy was measured with a seven-point Likert scale, evaluating empathy, compassion, resonance, and protective motivation toward the target group (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$). Emotional arousal was assessed using the Self-Assessment Manikin (SAM) scale to determine the intensity of emotional responses [36]. Charity involvement was measured with a five-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree," 5 = "strongly agree"), assessing how personally important, relevant, interesting, and necessary individuals perceived charitable giving to be (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.72$).

The manipulation check for facial expression was conducted using a seven-point semantic scale, with 1 indicating negative emotions and 7 indicating positive emotions [37]. Gaze direction was assessed through a forced-choice item asking, "The child in the poster is looking:" with response options "at you" or "away from you." Manipulation check items were placed at the end of the questionnaire, and participants responded based on recall.

## 4. Result

*4.1. Manipulation check*

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effectiveness of the facial expression manipulation by assessing perceived emotional valence. The results revealed a significant main effect of facial expression, with images displaying positive expressions rated significantly more positive than those with negative expressions [M~positive~ = 6.09, SD = 0.88; M~negative~ = 2.26, SD = 0.74; $F(1, 149) = 849.50$, $p < 0.001$]. Neither the main effect of gaze direction nor its interaction with facial expression was significant. A chi-square test confirmed the effectiveness of the gaze direction manipulation, as participants correctly identified the portrayed gaze direction ($\chi^2 = 43.05$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.001$). These findings validate the success of the experimental manipulations.

*4.2. Hypothesis testing*

Hypothesis 1 predicted that individuals with low charity involvement would experience greater empathy when viewing beneficiaries with negative rather than positive facial expressions, whereas this effect would not occur among highly involved individuals. A three-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with facial expression, gaze direction, and charity involvement as independent variables and empathy as the dependent variable. The results showed a significant interaction between facial expression and charity involvement ($F(1, 145) = 6.40$, $p < 0.05$) and a main effect of charity involvement ($F(1, 145) = 9.96$, $p < 0.01$), with no other significant effects. Participants with low charity involvement reported higher empathy toward beneficiaries with negative expressions than those with positive expressions (M~positive~ = 3.23, SD = 1.15; M~negative~ = 4.06, SD = 1.11; $F(1, 149) = 9.10$, $p < 0.01$). For highly involved participants, empathy did not differ significantly across facial expression conditions (M~positive~ = 4.37, SD = 1.17; M~negative~ = 4.18, SD = 1.54; $F(1, 149) = 0.39$, $p > 0.05$, Figure 1). These findings support Hypothesis 1.

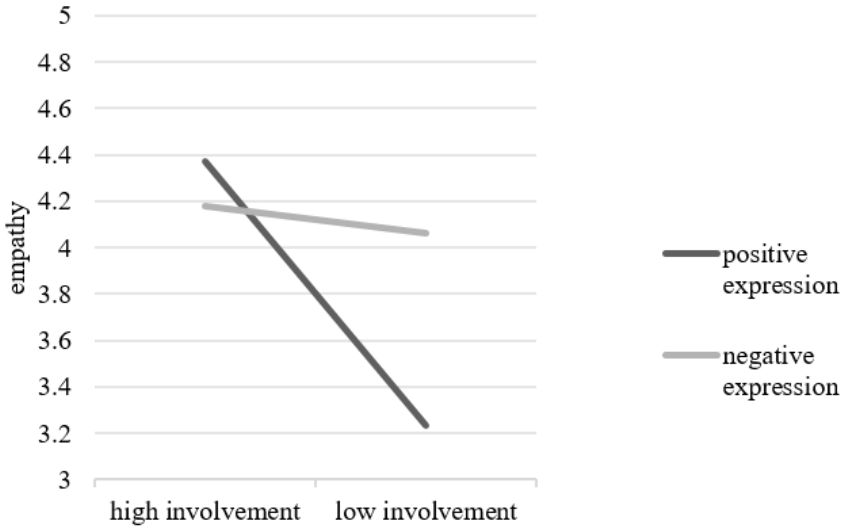


**Figure 1.** The moderating role of charity involvement on the effect of facial expressions (DV: empathy).

Hypothesis 2 predicted that individuals with low charity involvement would exhibit a stronger willingness to help when viewing beneficiaries with negative rather than positive facial expressions, whereas this effect would not occur among highly involved individuals. Hypothesis 4 proposed that individuals with low involvement would show a stronger willingness to help when exposed to direct rather than averted gaze, with no significant difference among highly involved individuals [38]. A three-way ANCOVA was conducted with facial expression, gaze direction, and charity involvement as independent variables and willingness to help as the dependent variable. The results revealed significant interactions between facial expression and charity involvement ($F(1, 145) = 4.71$, $p < 0.05$) and between gaze direction and charity involvement ($F(1, 145) = 6.27$, $p < 0.05$), along with a main effect of charity involvement ($F(1, 145) = 15.52$, $p < 0.001$). No other effects were significant.

For participants with low charity involvement, the willingness to help was stronger when viewing negative rather than positive facial expressions (M~positive~ = 4.19, SD = 1.30; M~negative~ = 4.81, SD = 0.88; $F(1, 149) = 5.87$, $p < 0.05$). Among highly involved participants, this difference was not significant (M~positive~ = 5.28, SD = 0.91; M~negative~ = 5.14, SD = 1.56; $F(1, 149) = 0.23$, $p > 0.05$, Figure 2). Similarly, participants with low charity involvement showed a stronger willingness to help when exposed to direct rather than averted gaze (M~direct~ = 4.86, SD = 0.82; M~averted~ = 4.24, SD = 1.29; $F(1, 149) = 6.03$, $p < 0.05$). This effect was not significant among highly involved participants (M~direct~ = 5.14, SD = 1.26; M~averted~ = 5.31, SD = 1.16; $F(1, 149) = 0.40$, $p > 0.05$, Figure 3). These findings support both Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 4.

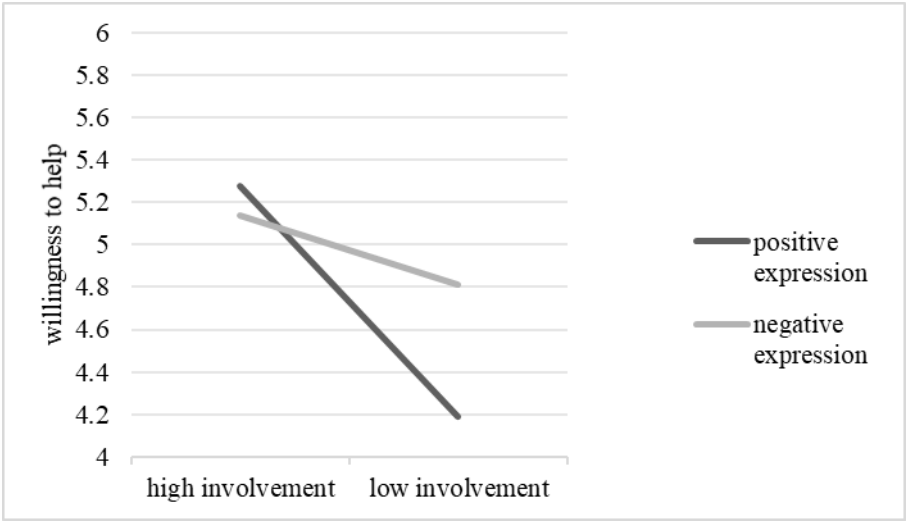


**Figure 2.** The moderating role of charity involvement on the effect of facial expressions (DV: willingness to help).

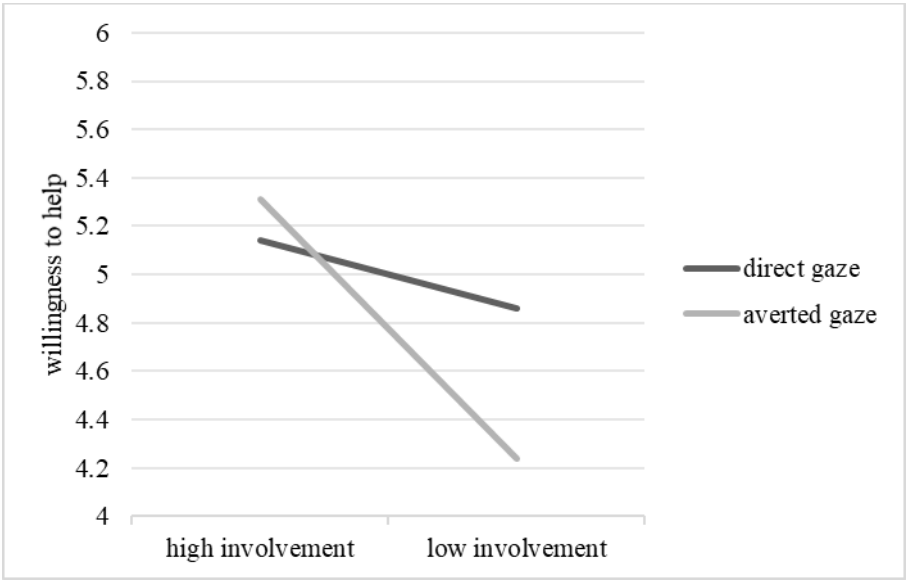


**Figure 3.** The moderating role of charity involvement on the effect of gaze direction (DV: willingness to help).

Hypothesis 3 proposed that individuals with low charity involvement would exhibit higher emotional arousal in response to direct rather than averted gaze, whereas no significant difference would occur among those with high involvement. A three-way ANCOVA with gaze direction, facial expression, and charity involvement as independent variables and emotional arousal as the dependent variable revealed a significant interaction between gaze direction and charity involvement ($F(1, 145) = 4.74$, $p < 0.05$). No other effects were significant. Among participants with low charity involvement, emotional arousal was significantly higher under direct gaze than averted gaze conditions ($M_{direct} = 4.90$, $SD = 1.42$; $M_{averted} = 4.00$, $SD = 1.53$; $F(1, 149) = 6.68$, $p < 0.05$). In contrast, no significant difference was observed among highly involved participants ($M_{direct} = 4.73$, $SD = 1.79$; $M_{averted} = 4.88$, $SD = 1.57$; $F(1, 149) = 0.17$, $p > 0.05$, Figure 4). These findings support Hypothesis 3.

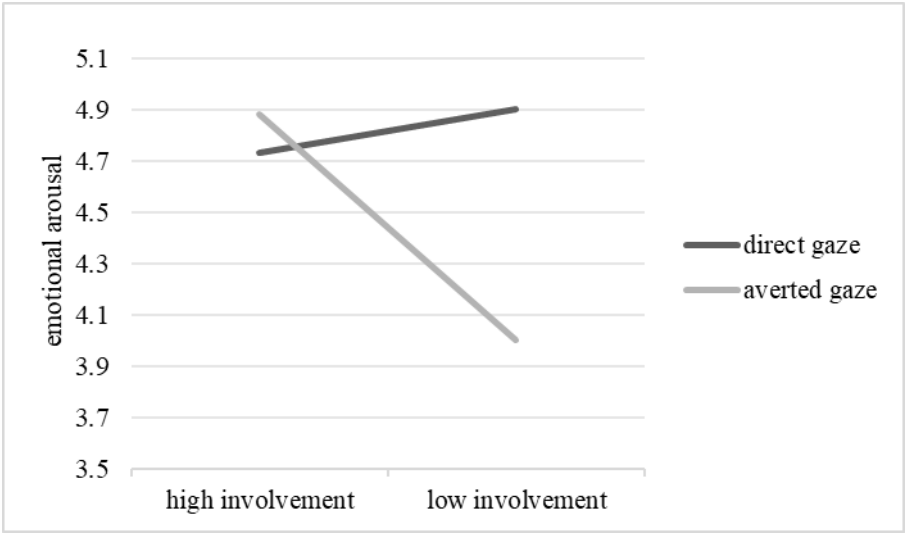


**Figure 4.** The moderating role of charity involvement on the effect of gaze direction (DV: emotional arousal).

## 5. Discussion

The use of beneficiary images in charity advertising has become a common strategy to promote donations [6, 39]. However, the most effective way to present these images, particularly regarding facial expressions and gaze direction, remains uncertain, especially when accounting for individual differences in charity involvement. This study employed a laboratory experiment to examine how facial expressions and gaze direction influence responses to charity advertisements and how these effects are moderated by viewers' levels of charity involvement.

Regarding facial expressions, the results indicate that charity involvement moderates the effect of beneficiaries' facial expressions on helping intentions. Negative facial expressions elicited greater empathy and stronger helping intentions among low-involvement individuals. However, a distinct pattern emerged among highly involved participants [40]. Unlike findings from Western contexts, where positive expressions were more effective for highly involved individuals, Chinese participants showed no significant difference between positive and negative expressions. This cultural variation may stem from differences in emotional display norms and interpretation patterns between Western and East Asian societies. While Western cultures tend to view positive emotions as genuine and motivating, East Asian contexts often regard negative emotions as more appropriate and sincere in help-seeking situations, diminishing the advantage of positive expressions even among highly involved individuals. This cultural perspective clarifies the observed differences and highlights the need to consider cultural context in designing emotional appeal strategies.

Regarding gaze direction, the findings help clarify inconsistencies in previous research [41, 42]. While averted gaze has been reported to elicit stronger sympathy than direct gaze, this study focused on emotional arousal and revealed a different pattern. The divergence likely arises from the distinct nature of these dependent variables: sympathy involves a complex cognitive-affective evaluation, whereas emotional arousal reflects an immediate physiological response. Notably, direct gaze significantly increased emotional arousal among low-involvement individuals, indicating that involvement level serves as a critical boundary condition for gaze effects. The attention-capturing function of direct gaze is particularly effective for individuals who rely on peripheral cues, helping reconcile conflicting findings by identifying viewer involvement as a key moderating factor.

The theoretical implications of these findings are as follows. First, they identify charity involvement as a key individual difference factor influencing visual information processing in charitable contexts, addressing a gap in prior research that has focused primarily on message content rather than viewer characteristics [17]. Furthermore, by

integrating the Elaboration Likelihood Model with visual communication theory, this study offers a more refined framework for understanding how central and peripheral processing pathways interact with specific visual cues.

From a practical standpoint, these findings provide actionable insights for charitable organizations. When addressing low-involvement individuals, who are generally less inclined to donate, featuring beneficiaries with negative facial expressions or direct gaze can effectively enhance emotional engagement and willingness to help. For highly involved audiences, however, efforts may be more productively directed toward conveying substantive information about organizational impact and transparency, as visual cues yield diminishing effects for this group. This differentiated strategy allows for more efficient allocation of creative resources and more precise audience targeting in charitable campaigns [43, 44].

Despite the valuable insights, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the use of a student sample, although suitable for preliminary theory testing, may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should replicate the study with more diverse demographic groups [45]. Second, although the sample size was sufficient to detect medium effects, it remains a constraint given the number of experimental conditions. A larger-scale replication would strengthen the robustness of the findings. Third, the use of images derived from a single original photograph may have limited ecological validity. Future studies could employ multiple original photographs to enhance stimulus realism. Fourth, dichotomizing charity involvement, while facilitating clearer group comparisons, may have reduced statistical power and masked subtler associations that could emerge through continuous variable analysis. Future research should adopt continuous involvement measures to improve analytical precision. Finally, the reliance on self-reported measures of emotional arousal introduces potential bias. Incorporating physiological indicators such as EEG or facial EMG in future studies could provide more objective assessments of emotional responses.

## 6. Conclusion

This study explored the influence of facial expressions, gaze direction, and individual charity involvement on responses to charity advertisements within the context of charitable fundraising. The findings offer valuable insights into how these elements interact to shape emotional and behavioral reactions to donation appeals.

The results highlight the moderating role of charity involvement in shaping the effects of facial expressions and gaze direction in charitable advertising. These visual cues function interactively, with their impact depending on the viewer's level of involvement. For individuals with low charity involvement, advertisements featuring beneficiaries with negative facial expressions elicited stronger empathy and a greater willingness to help compared to those with positive expressions. Similarly, beneficiaries making direct eye contact were more effective in evoking emotional arousal and motivating helping intentions among low-involvement individuals. Conversely, facial expressions and gaze direction had no significant influence on individuals with high charity involvement.

These findings contribute to the understanding of charitable advertising by identifying the conditions under which visual cues have the greatest impact. They enhance knowledge of how character imagery interacts with psychological traits such as involvement and offer practical guidance for designing targeted donation appeals. Charitable organizations can improve campaign effectiveness by aligning visual imagery with the engagement levels of their target audiences. Future research should build on these findings by investigating a wider range of individual characteristics and exploring additional visual or contextual factors that influence donor behavior in charity advertising.

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