Why Do Good Deeds Want to Be Anonymous? The Impact of Donor Information Concealment on Charitable Participation Behavior in Fundraising Platforms

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Abstract

Chinese culture has long advocated the principle of "doing good without seeking recognition," and fundraising platforms increasingly offer rich information concealment features for donors. This study investigates the impact of donor information concealment on philanthropic participation behavior in fundraising platforms. Through one secondary dataset (N = 442,536, Study 1) and three scenario experiments (N = 780, Studies 2/3/4), the results reveal that donor information concealment significantly enhances philanthropic participation behavior, with privacy risk and social image loss serving as dual mediators in this process. Specifically, compared to conditions without donor information concealment, the presence of donor information concealment reduces donors' perceived privacy risk and perceived social image loss, thereby increasing philanthropic participation behavior (donation behavior, sharing behavior). Furthermore, self-construal (independent vs. interdependent) moderates this effect. For individuals with interdependent self-construal, the positive impact of donor information concealment on philanthropic participation behavior is strengthened.

Full Text

Preamble

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1. Does this paper represent scientifically excellent research of broad interest and significance?
Acta Psychologica Sinica aims to publish cutting-edge psychological research that is "both scientifically excellent and of particularly broad interest and significance." Studies with only minor incremental contributions, those that do

not open new areas of inquiry or propose unique and innovative perspectives, or work that focuses purely on algorithms or techniques without addressing clear psychological questions, have low acceptance probability and should be submitted elsewhere.

Response: This study makes two key contributions. First, it identifies donor information hiding as a novel factor influencing charitable participation behavior, integrating both donation and sharing behaviors to comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of donor information hiding in fundraising platforms. Second, based on the "Loss–Reward Incentive Model," it reveals the multiple mediating mechanisms (privacy risk, social image loss) and boundary conditions (self-construal) through which donor information hiding influences charitable participation. This research not only confirms the universal applicability of the traditional Chinese philanthropic principle "doing good without letting others know" in modern fundraising platforms, but also provides a new theoretical perspective for promoting donors' charitable participation.

2. Have you used the same data in previously submitted or published articles? (We discourage authors from publishing multiple articles with the same variables from the same dataset, or splitting a series of related studies into multiple separate publications.)

Response: No. The data used in this study have not been used in any previously submitted or published articles.

3. For non-experimental, non-intervention studies in management, clinical, personality, and social psychology that rely solely on self-report (questionnaire) methods, have you checked for common method bias? What methods did you use to control for or demonstrate that such bias does not affect the validity of your conclusions? (For relevant literature on common method bias, see: http://journal.psych.ac.cn/xlkxjz/CN/abstract/abstract894.shtml) Studies based on cross-sectional data with only self-reports and convenient samples are easy to conduct but typically have limited innovative value and low acceptance probability.

Response: To enhance robustness and applicability, this study employs both secondary data and scenario experiments. In the scenario experiments, since all items were completed by the same participants at the same time, common method bias may exist. Following established practices, we used Harman's single-factor test to assess this bias. Specifically, we conducted an exploratory factor analysis on all items without rotation, using principal component analysis and extracting factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. Results showed that the first principal component explained 42.40% of variance in Experiment 1, 42.27% in Experiment 2, and 18.54% in Experiment 3, all below the 50% threshold. This indicates that common method bias does not seriously affect our main conclusions.

4. Did you report and analyze effect sizes? (e.g., Cohen's d for t-tests; [2]

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Response: Yes. In the empirical sections, we systematically report and analyze various effect sizes. Specifically, for one-way ANOVA, ANCOVA, and two-way ANOVA results, we report ^{2}_p; for t-test results, we report Cohen's d; and for mediation effects in Bootstrap analysis, we report confidence intervals. This approach ensures comprehensive and accurate assessment of our effects.

5. Please report planned vs. actual sample sizes. If they differ, explain why. Inadequate sample sizes leading to low statistical power have been a widespread problem in psychological research. We recommend explaining in the Methods section how and why you determined your sample size, based on justified effect sizes and desired power, and reporting the software or program used. See https://osf.io/5awp4/ for guidance.

Response: Study 1 (N = 442,536) used web scraping to collect fundraising data from the Weibo Gongyi platform on April 10 and 16, 2024. The original sample contained 443,124 cases; after removing 588 outliers in donation amounts using the 3σ method, we obtained a final valid sample of 442,536 donors. Studies 2 (N = 294) and 3 (N = 314) recruited participants through the Credamo platform's data marketplace, using attention checks to automatically screen valid samples, ensuring consistency between original and valid sample sizes. Study 4 (N = 172) recruited participants from a university in Tianjin, with an original sample of 197. After removing 25 invalid cases who failed attention checks or provided incomplete responses, we obtained a final valid sample of 172. Additionally, we used G*Power 3.1 to analyze statistical power for Studies 2–4, which all exceeded 0.99, well above the conventional threshold of 0.80, indicating adequate statistical power. The empirical sections detail our sample size calculations and justifications.

6. Do you report exact p-values? (Report $p < .001$ only when $p < .001$; otherwise report exact p-values) Does your paper meet this requirement? If using Bayes factors, have you reported their sensitivity to prior distribution assumptions?

Response: Yes. All results report exact p-values.

7. If you excluded data in your statistical analysis, did you report this in the paper? Why? How would results change if these data were included? How did you handle missing data? Did you delete individual items from scales? Why? How would results change if these items were included? Are there any

measured items or variables not reported? Why? Please indicate where in the paper this is addressed.

Response: To improve data quality, we strictly screened and excluded some data during statistical analysis, reporting both the number of excluded cases and reasons for exclusion. Importantly, our analyses show that these exclusions did not substantially affect the results. Furthermore, we retained all scale items and did not delete any individual items, ensuring comprehensive and accurate statistical analysis.

8. Are unpublished experimental materials, scales, or questionnaires attached for review? If not, explain why. If this article is published, are you willing to share these materials with other researchers?

Response: All experimental materials, scales, and questionnaires used in this study are reported truthfully in the paper and presented in detail in the appendices for review.

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11. If your study used human or animal subjects, was it approved by your institution's ethics committee? If yes, please send a scanned copy to the editorial office. If no, explain why.
Response: No. This study used human subjects but did not seek ethics committee approval because it did not involve any ethical issues.

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Response: Yes. The English abstract was carefully written following the editorial office guidelines, with word count controlled between 400–500 words. As the authors have strong English proficiency and invited English professionals to review the abstract, its quality is doubly ensured.

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Why Don't Donors Want Their Virtue to Be Known? The Impact of Donor Information Hiding on Charitable Participation Behavior in Online Fundraising Platforms

Abstract

Chinese culture has long advocated the principle of "doing good without letting others know." In line with this tradition, online fundraising platforms now offer donors increasingly sophisticated information hiding functions. This study investigates how donor information hiding on fundraising platforms influences charitable participation behavior. Through one secondary data analysis (N = 442,536, Study 1) and three scenario experiments (N = 780, Studies 2–4), we find that donor information hiding significantly enhances charitable participation behavior, with privacy risk and social image loss serving as dual mediators in this relationship. Specifically, when donor information hiding is available (vs. unavailable), donors' perceived privacy risk and social image loss decrease, thereby increasing charitable participation behaviors (both donation and sharing). Furthermore, self-construal (independent vs. interdependent) moderates this effect: the positive impact of donor information hiding on charitable participation behavior is strengthened for interdependent self-construal individuals.

Keywords: information hiding; privacy risk; social image loss; self-construal; charitable participation behavior
Classification Code: B849:F713.55

1. Introduction

According to the latest data from the Ministry of Civil Affairs, from 2016 to September 2022, 30 internet-based public fundraising information platforms (hereafter "fundraising platforms") have attracted over 51 billion instances of user participation, raising a total of 35 billion RMB. The rise of these platforms has dramatically expanded public access to charitable causes. However, as the "donor funnel theory" suggests, despite large numbers of participants, only a small minority actually donate, with most people unwilling to give (China Charity Alliance, 2023). This is corroborated by the reality that charitable giving in China relies primarily on corporate donations, with individual donations accounting for only about one-quarter of total charitable contributions, revealing substantial untapped potential for individual giving (Fan et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2023). To stimulate public enthusiasm for charity, fundraising platforms encourage users to share charitable information through social media to attract more potential donors (Li et al., 2021). Yet research shows that willingness to share charitable project information is far lower than willingness to donate (Li et al., 2018). Therefore, investigating the factors influencing charitable participation behavior (both donation and sharing) on fundraising platforms is crucial for optimizing platform mechanisms, promoting deeper public engagement in charity, and advancing the high-quality development of philanthropy.

The *Zhuzi Family Instructions* states: "Goodness that wishes to be seen by others is not true goodness," meaning that those who do good deeds merely to be observed by others are not truly virtuous. Throughout Chinese history, numerous thinkers and philosophers have championed the ideal of "doing good without letting others know." The Ming dynasty philosopher Hong Yingming wrote in *Cai Gen Tan*: "Doing good to elevate oneself above others, or bestowing kindness to gain reputation and connections—these are thorns in the path of virtue and reason, most easily attached and most difficult to remove." The late Qing statesman Zeng Guofan remarked: "The greatest joy in doing good is not seeking to be known by others." In recent years, with the rapid development of digital technology, fundraising platforms have offered donors more options for anonymous giving. On platforms like Alipay Charity and Tencent Charity, donors can choose whether to donate anonymously and can hide their names, donation amounts, and other information on electronic donation certificates. Although this function is widely available, theoretical research on donor information hiding in internet-based charitable decision-making remains limited. Understanding and effectively constructing the internet charity context to stimulate more extensive and deeper charitable participation is essential for fundraising platforms, donors, recipients, non-profit organizations, and government agencies alike. Therefore, it is necessary to examine how donor information hiding on fundraising platforms influences charitable participation behavior.

This study proposes that donor information hiding on fundraising platforms

has a significant positive effect on charitable participation behavior. In contemporary society, heightened privacy protection awareness makes donors more cautious when handling personal information to avoid potential privacy leakage risks (Zhou et al., 2020; Acquisti et al., 2013). Additionally, when donors share charitable information through social media, they may worry about the information being untrue or inaccurate, or about creating pressure on friends and family to donate, thereby triggering negative evaluations and damaging their social image. These concerns can limit donors' willingness or behavior to participate in charity (Li & Yang, 2018; Li et al., 2021). According to the Loss–Reward Incentive Model, individuals comprehensively evaluate potential benefits and costs when deciding whether to participate in charitable activities (Dovidio et al., 2006). Privacy risk and social image loss are two cost factors affecting charitable participation behavior, and donor information hiding provides protection in both areas, reducing the psychological costs of participation and thereby promoting charitable participation. Furthermore, this study examines self-construal as a boundary condition for this effect. Compared to independent self-construal individuals, interdependent self-construal individuals are more risk-averse (Duan et al., 2018; Peng & Cheng, 2024) and more concerned about others' feelings and evaluations in social interactions (Zheng & Liu, 2018; Kim et al., 2003). Therefore, for interdependent self-construal individuals, the positive effect of donor information hiding on charitable participation behavior will be more pronounced.

Using secondary data and scenario experiments, this study validates the positive effect of donor information hiding on charitable participation behavior, the dual mediating effects of privacy risk and social image loss, and the moderating effect of self-construal. By uncovering the psychological mechanisms behind the widespread phenomenon of "doing good without letting others know" on fundraising platforms, this research enriches and expands theoretical work on information hiding in internet-based charitable decision-making. Our findings also provide valuable decision-making guidance for the construction and optimization of fundraising platforms to more effectively promote public charitable participation and advance the high-quality development of social philanthropy.

1.1 Donor Information Hiding

On fundraising platforms, donor information hiding manifests in two ways. First, before donating, donors can choose whether to give anonymously. On Tencent Charity, for example, donors who do not select anonymous donation have their profile picture, nickname, and donation amount displayed in the project's donation record; those who select anonymous donation do not. This type of information hiding function is widely available across many fundraising platforms. Second, after donating, donors receive an electronic donation certificate on which they can choose whether to hide their name, donation amount, and other information. Currently, only a few platforms (e.g., Alipay Charity, Tencent Charity) offer this post-donation information hiding function (see Fig-

ure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper]).

A thorough review of literature on internet-based charitable decision-making reveals that the relationship between donor information hiding and charitable participation behavior remains a black box. Previous research has extensively examined factors influencing charitable participation on fundraising platforms, including platform characteristics (Fan et al., 2019; Ran et al., 2021; Defazio et al., 2021; Moriuchi & Murdy, 2022), recipient characteristics (Liu et al., 2023; Zheng et al., 2024; Ba et al., 2020), and donor characteristics (Li et al., 2021), all of which significantly affect individual donation or sharing behavior. However, despite the rapid development of digital technology offering donors increasingly rich information hiding functions, few studies have examined how donor information hiding on fundraising platforms influences charitable participation behavior.

In the internet crowdfunding domain, scholars have preliminarily explored funders' information hiding behavior, analyzing its motivations and consequences. For example, Burtch et al. (2016) found that social norms, particularly peer pressure, are important factors prompting funders to hide information (e.g., name, contribution amount). Research on the effects of this behavior has yielded inconsistent conclusions. Burtch et al. (2015) suggested that funders' information hiding may have both positive and negative psychological effects on potential funders, creating comfort on one hand but privacy concerns on the other. Subsequent research (Burtch et al., 2016) indicated that information hiding behavior may reduce crowdfunding project funding. Zhou et al. (2020) further supported this, noting that funders' information hiding may cause potential funders to question project quality and choose not to contribute. However, existing research is largely based on foreign crowdfunding platforms, fails to adequately consider cultural differences between China and other countries, and does not sufficiently explore how funders' information hiding behavior affects their own attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, research on funders' information hiding behavior in internet crowdfunding cannot be directly applied to the context of donor information hiding in Chinese fundraising platforms.

1.2 Donor Information Hiding and Charitable Participation: Dual Mediation by Privacy Risk and Social Image Loss

Social Exchange Theory posits that humans are rational actors who comprehensively evaluate potential benefits and costs before making behavioral decisions and choose actions that maximize benefits (Li & Yang, 2018; Emerson, 1981). Building on this theory, Dovidio et al. (2006) proposed the Loss–Reward Incentive Model, which reveals that when deciding whether to help others, people consider the losses and rewards of helping, as well as the consequences of not helping (Li et al., 2015). Integrating Social Exchange Theory and the Loss–Reward Incentive Model, existing research has examined factors that promote or inhibit prosocial behavior (Li & Yang, 2018; Hao et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2024). For instance, Li et al. (2021) found that when individuals perceive bene-

fits such as self-satisfaction and social recognition, they are more likely to share charitable information; when facing costs such as time and effort or social image loss, their willingness to share is inhibited.

In the "Internet + Charity" era, privacy risk has become a crucial cost factor affecting donors' charitable participation behavior. Compared to traditional fundraising methods, internet-based fundraising is widely praised for its high transparency (China Charity Alliance, 2023). In recent years, to enhance transparency and credibility, fundraising platforms have introduced blockchain technology to publicly disclose information about all stakeholders, including platforms, non-profit organizations, donors, and recipients. However, data transmission may raise potential information security and privacy leakage issues (Wang, 2020). Additionally, the emotional, sensational, and disorderly nature of new media supervision further exacerbates donors' privacy risks. Against the backdrop of growing public concern about privacy security, the negative impact of privacy risk on donors' charitable participation behavior will become increasingly significant (Zhou et al., 2020; Acquisti et al., 2013). Therefore, information hiding functions on fundraising platforms not only provide donors with more autonomy during charitable participation but also enhance their information control rights, effectively meeting their privacy protection needs.

Research also indicates that when transforming charitable participation intention into actual behavior, donors often face two major obstacles: image risk and social pressure (Zhang et al., 2021). Specifically, when donors participate in charitable activities, especially when publicly sharing related information, they may suffer negative social evaluations if the information proves untrue or inaccurate. They may also worry that their good deeds will be misinterpreted—for example, that frequently forwarding charitable information will be seen as "charity showboating" (Li & Yang, 2018). Additionally, sharing charitable information often implies an intention to mobilize and solicit donations, which may create psychological pressure and trigger competitive comparisons, particularly when donation amounts are high, forcing others to donate out of social obligation (Li et al., 2021). Therefore, when fundraising platforms provide information hiding functions for donors' names, donation amounts, and other details, they can help donors avoid potential image risks and social pressure, promoting more active participation in philanthropy.

In summary, donor information hiding functions provided by fundraising platforms can effectively reduce donors' perceived costs of helping—specifically privacy risk and social image loss—thereby promoting charitable participation behavior. Based on this analysis, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: Compared to when donor information hiding is unavailable, when it is available, donors exhibit greater charitable participation behavior.

H2: Privacy risk mediates the effect of donor information hiding on charitable participation behavior. Specifically, compared to when donor information hiding is unavailable, when it is available, donors' perceived privacy risk decreases,

thereby increasing charitable participation behavior.

H3: Social image loss mediates the effect of donor information hiding on charitable participation behavior. Specifically, compared to when donor information hiding is unavailable, when it is available, donors' perceived social image loss decreases, thereby increasing charitable participation behavior.

1.3 The Moderating Effect of Self-Construal

Self-construal refers to individuals' cognitive definition of the relationship between self and others, reflecting the extent to which individuals believe they are connected to or independent from others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). According to self-construal theory, individuals can be categorized as independent or interdependent (Duan et al., 2018; Xiao et al., 2022). Independent self-construal individuals value personal independence and uniqueness, emphasize personal feelings and interests, pursue autonomy and personal achievement, and place their own rights and preferences at the center. Interdependent self-construal individuals, in contrast, focus more on belongingness, value human social nature, expect to build harmonious interpersonal relationships, and are willing to assume responsibilities and obligations for the group (Li et al., 2016).

Research shows that individuals from different cultural backgrounds exhibit different self-construal types. In countries dominated by individualistic cultures (e.g., United States, Canada), people tend toward independent self-construal; in countries dominated by collectivistic cultures (e.g., Korea, Japan, China), people are more likely to exhibit interdependent self-construal (Kim & Johnson, 2013). However, independent and interdependent self-construals are not mutually exclusive; they can coexist within the same individual, with external environmental influences making one type dominant (Liu et al., 2017). Therefore, existing research often examines both chronic trait self-construal and temporary situational self-construal, with the former representing stable individual traits and the latter reflecting flexible changes across different contexts (Peng & Cheng, 2024; Zhu et al., 2020).

Research reveals unique tendencies among interdependent self-construal individuals in prosocial behavior, as they are more likely to be "those who do good without letting others know." First, self-construal is an important individual trait affecting prosocial behavior. Because interdependent self-construal individuals emphasize positive interactions with others, this trait strengthens their altruistic motivation and promotes prosocial behavior (Tian et al., 2023; Seo & Scammon, 2014). For example, in promotional activities, independent self-construal consumers prefer discount promotions, whereas interdependent self-construal consumers prefer donation promotions (Winterich et al., 2015). Second, when facing risks, independent self-construal individuals are more inclined to take risks for potential benefits, while interdependent self-construal individuals prefer to avoid risks (Lee et al., 2000). Additionally, in self-presentation, interdependent self-construal individuals are more considerate of others' feelings and

tend toward low-key or even negative self-presentation to avoid causing discomfort, whereas independent self-construal individuals are more willing to directly showcase their strengths and hide weaknesses (Zheng & Liu, 2018). Therefore, interdependent self-construal individuals are more sensitive to privacy risk and social image loss, which may lead them to show lower willingness to disclose private information (Peng & Cheng, 2024).

In summary, self-construal may serve as a boundary condition moderating the relationship between donor information hiding and charitable participation behavior on fundraising platforms. For interdependent self-construal individuals, who are more inclined to avoid privacy risk and social image loss, donor information hiding can enhance their charitable participation behavior. For independent self-construal individuals, who focus more on personal benefits and needs, donor information hiding has less impact on their charitable participation behavior. Based on this analysis, we propose:

H4: Self-construal significantly moderates the effect of donor information hiding on charitable participation behavior. Specifically, for interdependent self-construal individuals, donor information hiding has a significant positive effect on charitable participation behavior; for independent self-construal individuals, donor information hiding has no significant effect on charitable participation behavior.

1.4 The Current Research

This paper systematically tests our hypotheses through a comprehensive study combining one large-scale secondary data analysis (N = 442,536, Study 1) and three scenario experiments (N = 780, Studies 2–4). Study 1 uses real fundraising data from the Weibo Gongyi platform to validate the positive effect of donor information hiding on donation behavior. To ensure robustness and applicability, Study 2 replicates this main effect on sharing behavior through an online experiment. Study 3 uses an online experiment to verify the dual mediating effects of privacy risk and social image loss, revealing the psychological mechanisms underlying this relationship. Finally, Study 4 uses a laboratory experiment to examine how self-construal moderates the relationship between donor information hiding and charitable participation behavior.

Notably, charitable participation behavior on fundraising platforms extends beyond donating to include sharing and forwarding charitable project information (Zhu et al., 2020). Therefore, this study measures both donation behavior (Study 1) and sharing behavior (Studies 2–4). Additionally, to more closely approximate real fundraising environments, we selected diverse charitable projects and donation amounts as experimental materials, such as donating 10 RMB to "One School, One Dream for Rural Schools" (Experiment 1), 20 RMB to "Care for Children in Distress" (Experiment 2), and 10 RMB to "Spring Buds Program: They Want to Go to School" (Experiment 3). This design aims to simulate the diverse scenarios of real fundraising contexts, ensuring that our con-

clusions have greater practical significance and broad applicability. The design and logical relationships of Studies 1–4 are detailed in Table 1 .

Table 1 Design and Logical Relationships of Studies 1–4

Study	Donor Information Hiding Manipulation	Charitable Participation Behavior Measurement	Purpose
Study 1 (Secondary Data)	Hiding donor name	Donation behavior	Main effect test
Study 2 (Online Experiment)	Hiding donation amount	Sharing behavior	Main effect test
Study 3 (Online Experiment)	Hiding donor name and donation amount	Sharing behavior	Mediating effect test
Study 4 (Laboratory Experiment)	Hiding donor name and donation amount	Sharing behavior	Moderating effect test

2. Study 1: Main Effect of Donor Information Hiding (Secondary Data)

Study 1 analyzes real secondary fundraising data from a fundraising platform to verify whether donor information hiding (vs. no hiding) increases donation behavior, testing H1.

2.1 Data Source

Using web scraping technology, we collected large-scale fundraising data from Weibo Gongyi platform (https://gongyi.weibo.com/), the most representative fundraising platform in China, on April 10 and 16, 2024. The data covered detailed information for all charitable projects (both short-term and long-term), including project descriptions, categories, amount raised, number of donors, donor names, and donation amounts. After removing 588 outliers in donation amounts using the 3σ method, we obtained a valid sample of 442,536 donors.

2.2 Data Analysis and Results

Coding of Donor Information Hiding. On the Weibo Gongyi platform, donors who choose anonymous donation have their names automatically displayed as "Loving Netizen," effectively hiding their name information. Based on this, we classified all donors into two categories: non-hiding donors (coded as 0) and hiding donors (coded as 1). Among the 442,536 valid cases, 309,264 were non-hiding donors and 133,272 were hiding donors.

Effect of Donor Information Hiding on Donation Behavior. A one-way ANOVA with donor information hiding as the independent variable and donation amount as the dependent variable revealed that the non-hiding group donated significantly less than the hiding group (M_{non}-hiding = 10.88 ± 28.68, M_{hiding} = 11.08 ± 32.77; F(1, 442,535) = 4.27, p = .04, ^{2}_p < .001). Four control variables (project category, amount raised, number of donors, project duration) all significantly affected donation amount (all ps ≤ .01). After including these controls, the positive effect of donor information hiding on donation amount remained significant (F(1, 442,535) = 2.93, p = .09, ^{2}_p < .001). These results support H1, though the effect size of donor information hiding on donation behavior is relatively small.

Moderating Effect of Project Duration. A two-way ANOVA revealed that project duration significantly moderated the effect of donor information hiding on donation behavior (F(1, 442,535) = 17.26, p < .001, ^2p < *.001). For long-term projects, donor information hiding had a significant positive effect on donation amount (M*{non}-hiding = 10.58 ± 28.94, M_{hiding} = 11.67 ± 36.42; F(1, 90,458) = 23.33, p < .001, ^2p < *.001). For short-term projects, the effect was non-significant (M*{non}-hiding = 10.96 ± 28.60, M_{hiding} = 10.95 ± 31.94; F(1, 352,076) = 1.22, p = .27, ^{2}_p < .001). Mean donation amounts across the four groups are shown in Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]. These results indicate that the positive effect of donor information hiding on donation behavior exists only for long-term charitable projects.

3. Study 2: Main Effect of Donor Information Hiding (Online Experiment)

Study 1 demonstrated the positive effect of donor information hiding (i.e., hiding donor names) on donation behavior using real platform data. To enhance robustness and applicability, Study 2 uses an online experiment to manipulate donor information hiding (specifically, the presence or absence of donation amount information) and test its effect on sharing behavior.

3.1 Experimental Design and Participants

We recruited 294 participants (76 males, 25.90%) through Credamo platform's data marketplace and compensated them with cash payments after the experiment. Participants were randomly assigned to a one-factor (donor information hiding: absent vs. present) between-subjects design, with 155 in the non-hiding group and 139 in the hiding group.

3.2 Experimental Procedure

First, participants completed demographic information (gender, age, education, etc.). Next, they read the following scenario:

Imagine you are on an internet fundraising platform and donate 10 RMB to a charitable project you support (e.g., "One School, One Dream for Rural Schools"). After donating, you receive an electronic donation certificate. On this certificate, your donation amount is displayed (can be hidden). (See Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper] for the certificate.)

Finally, participants completed a three-item sharing behavior scale adapted from established measures (Huang et al., 2016; Xu et al., 2022): "You would share the electronic donation certificate on WeChat Moments," "You are willing to share the electronic donation certificate on WeChat Moments," and "You think sharing the electronic donation certificate on WeChat Moments is meaningful" (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree; Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$).

3.3 Data Analysis and Results

Effect of Donor Information Hiding on Sharing Behavior. A one-way ANOVA revealed that sharing intention was significantly lower in the non-hiding group than in the hiding group (M_{non}-hiding = 3.64 ± 1.09, M_{hiding} = 3.86 ± 1.12; F(1, 293) = 2.79, p = .096, ^{2}_p = .01). These results support H1, showing that donor information hiding—whether hiding donor names or donation amounts—effectively promotes charitable participation. In terms of effect size, donor information hiding has a larger effect on sharing behavior than on donation behavior, suggesting it is more important for promoting sharing.

Additionally, we conducted one-sample t-tests against the scale midpoint (3) for both groups (Wang & Dong, 2022). Both the non-hiding group (t(155) = 7.35, p

$< .001$, $d = 1.09$) and hiding group ($t(139) = 8.99$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.12$) showed sharing intentions significantly above the midpoint, indicating that electronic donation certificates generally promote sharing behavior regardless of whether donation amount is hidden.

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4. Study 3: Dual Mediation by Privacy Risk and Social Image Loss (Online Experiment)

Building on the main effects from Studies 1 and 2, Study 3 uses an online experiment to test whether donor information hiding reduces perceived privacy risk and social image loss, thereby increasing charitable participation behavior—validating the dual mediation hypotheses (H2 and H3). In Study 3, donor information hiding was manipulated by the presence or absence of both donor name and donation amount information.

4.1 Experimental Design and Participants

We recruited 314 participants (108 males, 34.40%) through Credamo's data marketplace and compensated them with cash payments. As in Study 2, participants were randomly assigned to a one-factor (donor information hiding: absent vs. present) between-subjects design, with 151 in the non-hiding group and 163 in the hiding group.

4.2 Experimental Procedure

First, participants completed demographic information. Next, they read the following scenario:

Imagine you are on an internet fundraising platform and donate 20 RMB to a charitable project you support (e.g., "Care for Children in Distress"). After donating, you receive an electronic donation certificate. On this certificate, your real name and donation amount are displayed (can be hidden). (See Figure 4 [Figure 4: see original paper] for the certificate.)

Participants then completed the same three-item sharing behavior scale as in Study 2 (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$). Next, they completed a three-item social image loss scale: "When sharing the electronic donation certificate on WeChat Moments, you would worry about others forming a bad impression of you," "you would worry about negative evaluations from others," and "you would be afraid of creating pressure for your WeChat friends" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$) (Li & Yang, 2018; Li et al., 2021). Finally, they completed a three-item privacy risk scale: "When sharing the electronic donation certificate on WeChat Moments, you would have privacy concerns," "you would feel that personal privacy information has been leaked," and "you would worry about illegal use of your personal privacy information" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$) (Li et al., 2023; Niu & Meng, 2019).

4.3 Data Analysis and Results

Effect of Donor Information Hiding on Sharing Behavior. A one-way ANOVA revealed that sharing intention was significantly lower in the non-hiding group than in the hiding group (M_{non}-hiding = 3.36 ± 1.24, M_{hiding} = 3.59 ± 1.20; F(1, 313) = 3.11, p = .08, ^{2}_p = .01), again supporting H1.

Dual Mediation by Privacy Risk and Social Image Loss. We used Bootstrap analysis (Model 4, 5,000 samples) to test the dual mediation (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Results showed significant positive indirect effects for both privacy risk (indirect effect = 0.12, SE = 0.05, 90% CI = [0.0422, 0.2054]) and social image loss (indirect effect = 0.10, SE = 0.06, 90% CI = [0.0071, 0.1968]). After including the two mediators, the direct effect of donor information hiding on sharing intention became non-significant ($\beta = 0.03$, SE = 0.12, p = .80, ^{2}_p $< .001$) from initially significant ($\beta = 0.24$, SE = 0.14, p = .08, ^{2}_p = .01). Path coefficients are shown in Figure 5 [Figure 5: see original paper]. These results support H2 and H3, indicating that donor information hiding increases charitable participation behavior by reducing perceived privacy risk and social image loss.

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5. Study 4: Moderating Effect of Self-Construal (Laboratory Experiment)

Study 4 uses a laboratory experiment to test whether the positive effect of donor information hiding on charitable participation behavior is strengthened for interdependent self-construal individuals, validating the moderating effect hypothesis (H4).

5.1 Experimental Design and Participants

We recruited 197 participants (105 males, 53.30%) from a university in Tianjin and compensated them with gifts. After removing 25 invalid cases who failed attention checks or provided incomplete responses, we obtained a valid sample of 172 participants. Participants were randomly assigned to a one-factor (donor information hiding: absent vs. present) between-subjects design, with 98 in the non-hiding group and 74 in the hiding group.

5.2 Experimental Procedure

First, participants completed demographic information including gender, age, and monthly expenses. Next, they completed 12-item scales measuring interdependent self-construal (Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$) and independent self-construal (Cronbach's $\alpha = .76$), adapted from established measures (Wang et al., 2008; Singelis, 1994). Participants then read the following scenario:

Imagine you are on an internet fundraising platform and donate 10 RMB to

a charitable project you support (e.g., "Spring Buds Program: They Want to Go to School"). After donating, you receive an electronic donation certificate. On this certificate, your real name and donation amount are displayed (can be hidden). (See Figure 6 [Figure 6: see original paper] for the certificate.)

Finally, participants completed the same three-item sharing behavior scale as in Studies 2 and 3 (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$).

5.3 Data Analysis and Results

Classification of Self-Construal. Following established methods (Li et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2017), we subtracted independent self-construal scores from interdependent self-construal scores. Participants with difference scores below the median (0.08) were classified as independent (M = 0.28, SD = 0.31, n = 77); those at or above the median were classified as interdependent (M = 0.56, SD = 0.44, n = 95). A t-test confirmed significant differences between groups (t = 14.53, p < .001).

Moderating Effect of Self-Construal. A two-way ANOVA with donor information hiding as the independent variable, self-construal as the moderator, and sharing intention as the dependent variable revealed a significant moderating effect (F(1, 171) = 4.12, p = .04, $^2p = .02$). *Specifically, for independent self-construal individuals, donor information hiding had no significant effect on sharing intention (M*{non}-hiding = 3.06 ± 0.93, M_{hiding} = 2.84 ± 1.14; F(1, 76) = 0.91, p = .34, $^2p = .01$). *For interdependent self-construal individuals, donor information hiding had a significant positive effect (M*{non}-hiding = 2.62 ± 0.88, M_{hiding} = 3.02 ± 0.87; F(1, 94) = 4.34, p = .04, ^{2}_p = .05). These results support H4. Mean sharing intentions across the four groups are shown in Figure 7 [Figure 7: see original paper].

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6. General Discussion

6.1 Research Conclusions

Based on the traditional Chinese philanthropic principle of "doing good without letting others know" and the increasingly popular practice of hiding donor information on fundraising platforms, this study examines the effect of donor information hiding on charitable participation behavior and its underlying mechanisms and boundary conditions. First, analyzing real secondary data from Weibo Gongyi platform (Study 1), we preliminarily validated the positive effect of donor information hiding on donation behavior. Next, an online experiment (Study 2) replicated this effect on sharing behavior, enhancing the robustness and applicability of the main effect. To explore the underlying mechanisms, another online experiment (Study 3) confirmed that privacy risk and social image loss significantly mediate the relationship between donor information hiding and sharing behavior. Finally, a laboratory experiment (Study 4) investigated

the moderating effect of self-construal (independent vs. interdependent), establishing a clear boundary condition for this relationship. Additionally, we found that the positive effect of donor information hiding on charitable participation behavior exists primarily for long-term charitable projects and has a stronger effect on sharing behavior than on donation behavior.

These findings deepen our understanding of the relationship between donor information hiding and charitable participation behavior, while providing theoretical guidance for how fundraising platforms can design contexts to effectively stimulate and strengthen donors' charitable participation.

6.2 Theoretical Implications

First, although existing research has preliminarily explored how funders' information hiding behavior on internet crowdfunding platforms affects potential funders' attitudes and behaviors (Zhou et al., 2020; Burtch et al., 2015, 2016), research on how this behavior affects funders' own attitudes and behaviors remains scarce. Moreover, previous studies have often limited charitable participation behavior to the single dimension of donation (Liu et al., 2023; Ran et al., 2021; Song et al., 2023; Zheng et al., 2024). In reality, charitable participation also includes sharing and forwarding charitable information (Zhu et al., 2020). This study identifies information hiding as a novel factor influencing charitable participation behavior, integrating both donation and sharing behaviors to comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of donor information hiding on fundraising platforms. Our findings that donor information hiding positively affects both donation and sharing behaviors not only confirm the widespread existence of the traditional principle "doing good without letting others know" in modern fundraising platforms but also provide a new perspective for promoting donors' charitable participation, enriching the literature on information hiding effects and refining the theoretical framework of factors influencing internet-based charitable decision-making.

Second, based on the Loss–Reward Incentive Model, this study explores the mechanisms and boundary conditions through which donor information hiding influences charitable participation behavior. Proposed by Dovidio et al. (2006), the Loss–Reward Incentive Model reveals that individuals comprehensively weigh various costs and benefits when making helping decisions, providing strong theoretical support for internet charity research (Li & Yang, 2018; Li et al., 2021; Hao et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2024). Using this framework, our study adopts a "helping cost" perspective, finding that donor information hiding can promote charitable participation by reducing the two potential costs of privacy risk and social image loss. Building on this, we further analyze differences between independent and interdependent self-construal donors in perceiving privacy risk and social image loss, validating the moderating role of self-construal. Our theoretical model of "the effect, mechanisms, and boundary conditions of donor information hiding on charitable participation behavior" not only enriches applications of the Loss–Reward Incentive Model in

internet charity research but also provides valuable theoretical insights into the effectiveness and evolution of donor information hiding behavior on fundraising platforms.

6.3 Practical Implications

This study offers management insights for fundraising platforms. First, platforms should provide efficient and convenient information hiding functions throughout the donation process, both before and after donating. Our results show that information hiding functions can significantly increase donation amounts before donating and effectively enhance sharing intention after donating. The reason is that when platforms offer options to hide donor names, donation amounts, and other information, donors' perceived privacy risk and social image loss decrease, thereby promoting their donation and sharing behavior.

Second, the positive effect of donor information hiding on charitable participation behavior is mainly observed among interdependent self-construal individuals. This group is more sensitive to privacy risk and social image loss, and given that China is a collectivistic culture where people generally tend toward interdependent self-construal, providing information hiding functions is particularly appropriate in the Chinese cultural context. Furthermore, fundraising platforms can leverage the situational nature of self-construal by temporarily activating donors' interdependent self-construal through contextual priming or guided instructions, thereby further promoting their charitable participation. In summary, this study reveals the positive effects of donor information hiding and provides practical recommendations for fundraising platforms. By scientifically designing information hiding functions, platforms can more effectively stimulate donors' charitable enthusiasm, promote autonomous participation in charitable activities, and ultimately achieve win-win outcomes for platforms, non-profit organizations, donors, and recipients.

6.4 Limitations and Future Directions

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that warrant future research.

First, although our scenario experiments adjusted charitable projects and donation amounts to enhance robustness, the selected donation amounts were primarily small (10 RMB, 20 RMB), reflecting common donation patterns on current platforms. However, large donors' roles in real donation environments should not be ignored. Future research should explore whether the positive effect of donor information hiding on charitable participation behavior remains significant in large-donation contexts to improve generalizability.

Second, based on the Loss–Reward Incentive Model, we examined the positive effects of donor information hiding from the perspective of privacy risk and social image loss. However, publicizing donor names and donation amounts may

also serve as a social reinforcement strategy that enhances donors' perceived social prestige and strengthens their charitable participation intention (Fan et al., 2019). Future research could adopt a "helping benefit" perspective to examine whether donor information hiding might reduce potential benefits such as self-satisfaction and social recognition, thereby negatively affecting charitable participation behavior.

Finally, this study used self-construal as a moderator and measured it using established scales. However, within the same cultural context, individuals may exhibit both independent and interdependent self-construal traits, differing only in degree. Future research could use temporary priming techniques to activate specific self-construal types and combine measurement and manipulation methods for more comprehensive empirical investigation, providing more specific guidance for business and social welfare practices.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Experimental Materials (Study 2)

Non-hiding Group

Imagine you are on an internet fundraising platform and donate 10 RMB to a charitable project you support (e.g., "One School, One Dream for Rural

Schools"). After donating, you receive an electronic donation certificate. On this certificate, your donation amount is displayed. (See certificate below.)

Hiding Group
Imagine you are on an internet fundraising platform and donate 10 RMB to a charitable project you support (e.g., "One School, One Dream for Rural Schools"). After donating, you receive an electronic donation certificate. On this certificate, your donation amount can be hidden. (See certificate below.)

Appendix 2: Experimental Materials (Study 3)

Non-hiding Group
Imagine you are on an internet fundraising platform and donate 20 RMB to a charitable project you support (e.g., "Care for Children in Distress"). After donating, you receive an electronic donation certificate. On this certificate, your real name and donation amount are displayed. (See certificate below.)

Hiding Group
Imagine you are on an internet fundraising platform and donate 20 RMB to a charitable project you support (e.g., "Care for Children in Distress"). After donating, you receive an electronic donation certificate. On this certificate, your real name and donation amount can be hidden. (See certificate below.)

Appendix 3: Experimental Materials (Study 4)

Non-hiding Group
Imagine you are on an internet fundraising platform and donate 10 RMB to a charitable project you support (e.g., "Spring Buds Program: They Want to Go to School"). After donating, you receive an electronic donation certificate. On this certificate, your real name and donation amount are displayed. (See certificate below.)

Hiding Group
Imagine you are on an internet fundraising platform and donate 10 RMB to a charitable project you support (e.g., "Spring Buds Program: They Want to Go to School"). After donating, you receive an electronic donation certificate. On this certificate, your real name and donation amount can be hidden. (See certificate below.)

Appendix 4: Measurement Scales (Studies 2–4)

Table 2 Measurement Scales for Main Variables in Studies 2–4

Construct	Items
Sharing Behavior	1. You would share the electronic donation certificate on WeChat Moments. 2. You are willing to share the electronic donation certificate on WeChat Moments. 3. You think sharing the electronic donation certificate on WeChat Moments is meaningful.
Privacy Risk	1. When sharing the electronic donation certificate on WeChat Moments, you would have privacy concerns. 2. When sharing, you would feel that personal privacy information has been leaked. 3. When sharing, you would worry about illegal use of your personal privacy information.
Social Image Loss	1. When sharing the electronic donation certificate on WeChat Moments, you would worry about others forming a bad impression of you. 2. When sharing, you would worry about negative evaluations from others. 3. When sharing, you would be afraid of creating pressure for your WeChat friends.
Interdependent Self-Construal	1. It is important for me to respect the group's decisions. … 12. Even if my views differ from group members, I avoid arguments.
Independent Self-Construal	1. I like being unique in many ways. … 12. I enjoy standing out from the crowd.