



# ALTRUISM AND HAPPINESS; A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN YOUNG ADULTS AND MIDDLE AGED ADULTS

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## ABSTARCT

It is put forward that altruistic behaviors evoke higher level of happiness in individuals. This study aims to examine the relationship between altruism and happiness in young adults and middle aged adults. For this purpose data was collected from a sample of 80 adults (40 young adults and 40 middle aged adults). Oxford happiness scale, Self-report altruism scale were administered on the sample size. Statistical analysis was done using Pearson's correlation and independent t- test. The major findings were that altruism and happiness had a positive correlation in middle aged adults, whereas a negative correlation in young adults. There was a difference found in the scores of altruism and happiness of young adults and middle aged adults. However difference between means cores of happiness were found to be significant in the two groups, while mean scores of altruism were found to be non-significant. It was found that altruism and happiness increases with age.

KEYWORDS- Altruism, Happiness, Middle aged adults, Young adults.

## INTRODUCTION

Lishner and Stocks (2016) suggest that altruism can be termed as a motive to increase others wellbeing. Klein and Dollenmayer (2014) defined altruism as helping others at a cost or risk to yourself. Bryan and Test (1967) defined altruism as acts wherein people share or sacrifice a presumed positive reinforce for no significant social or material gain. Altruism involves helping others out of concern for their well-being. There is an unselfish motive behind helping out others despite personals costs and risks. It is a voluntary action carried out of one's own desire to help, without any expectation of reward in any form. Acts which do not involve self-sacrifice are also considered as altruistic, altruistic acts may occur due to a mixture of motives some of which can be out of self-interest.

Miller et al., (1991) suggested that altruistic behaviour is a subordinate type of prosocial behaviour. Altruism and prosocial behaviour are very closely related. Altruism is a term which comes under prosocial behaviour whereas prosocial behaviour is broader concept which refers to the act of helping others. The major difference between prosocial behaviour and altruism is that prosocial behaviour is any behaviour carried out in order to help the other person, with or without an expectation of a reward whether internal or external. On the other hand altruism does not involve any sort of reward in return and the act is performed solely for the betterment of the other person. Prosocial behaviour becomes altruistic when the motivation behind helping the other is without in thoughts of what you might get in return. While all altruistic acts are prosocial, not all prosocial acts are altruistic. There can be mixed motives behind helping others, such as guilt, responsibility, obligation, duty or even rewards.

Argyle, Martin and Crossland (1989) suggest that happiness is comprised of three components which are related to each other, the components are- satisfaction with life, positive effects and absence of negative effects. Diener (2000) believes that happiness is the basic human emotion, for most of people being happy is of great importance and in most societies happiness is a highly valued goal. Happiness is an experience which brings “joy, contentment, and or positive well-being to one’s life” (Lyubomirsky, 2008). Seyed Joodat & Zarbakhsh (2015) Believe that happiness is having positive attitude in life and being happy, it is one of the most important psychological needs and has a major influence on the quality of life of a person.

According to Seligman, we can experience three kinds of happiness: a) pleasure and gratification, b) embodiment of strengths and virtues and c) meaning and purpose.

Happiness is not a constant state of euphoria. The overall concept of happiness is to experience positive emotions more than negative emotions. People who are happy experience the whole range of emotions be it positive or negative, from joy, contentment, pride, satisfaction to anger, loneliness, boredom and frustration. Happiness involves balancing these emotions, even at the times of discomfort one should have a sense of optimism that it will get better and they can deal with it.

Studies show that there is a very strong link between happiness and helping others. Altruistic behaviour does not only has effects on the one receiving help, but it also makes the one performing altruistic acts feel happy, calm, satisfied and pleased. Various studies show that helping others boosts the level of happiness of an individual. Midlarsky (1991) stated that indulging in helping behaviour increases one’s life satisfaction, improves their mood, reduces stress and provides a sense of meaning and purpose to their life. People who are happy tend to be more indulged in helping others. Luks(1988) in his study found that 95% of people felt good after helping others, 53% of people experienced a feeling of happiness and optimism, and these feelings lasted for hours and even days for 81% of the people.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To study the relationship between altruism and happiness in young adults.
2. To study the relationship between altruism and happiness in middle aged adults.
3. To compare mean scores of altruism of young adults and middle aged adults.
4. To compare mean scores of happiness of young adults and middle aged adults.

## VARIABLES

- **Dependent variables-** Altruism and Happiness
- **Independent variables-** Age

## SAMPLE

The data for this study was collected from a sample size of 80 subjects comprising 40 subjects belonging to age group 18 to 35 years (young adults) and 40 subjects belonging to age group 36 to 55 years (middle aged adults). The sample was collected through random sampling technique. All participants voluntarily participated in the study by giving their consent. The sample belonged to Delhi NCR region.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- **STATISTICAL TOOLS AND INSTRUMENTS**
- 1. **Oxford happiness scale-**

The oxford happiness questionnaire was developed in 2002 by Michael Argyle and Peter Hills at Oxford University. It measures the level of general happiness of an individual. The OHQ consists of a total of 29 items, taken from the original oxford happiness inventory (OHI). All items can be answered on a six-point likert scale: strongly disagree, moderately disagree, slightly disagree, slightly agree, moderately agree, and strongly agree. Asking the subjects to choose what point on the scale best describes them on the basis of given statements. The oxford happiness questionnaire was found as a reliable ( $\alpha = .91$ ) measure in a sample size of 172 college students. Construct validity was calculated by investigating relationships between scores on OHI and related constructs comparing with relationship with the OHO and the same related constructs. There are 12 negative items in the OHQ. Scoring for positive items is done by denoting 1 as strongly disagree and 6 as strongly agree, for negative items reverse scoring is done by giving 6 as a score to strongly

disagree and 1 as a score to strongly agree. The total raw scores are used to interpret the level of happiness in an individual. Higher score indicates higher level of happiness.

## 2. Self-report altruism scale-

The Self-report altruism scale was developed by Rushton in 1981. It measures the level of altruism of an individual. It consists of 20 items, each item is a situation related to acts of altruism. The subject is asked to evaluate the situations by the frequency of them performing the given altruistic acts. The subject is asked to rate the situations/ items on a five point continuum scale: never, once, more than once, often and very often. The self report altruism scale is a standardized scale, observed of reliability (0.86) and validity (0.83). For scoring a score of 1 is given to never, 2 to once, 3 to more than once, 4 to often and 5 to more than once. The total score indicates the level of altruism in an individual. Higher score indicates higher level of altruism.

## RESULT

The data was collected and was analysed using Pearson's correlation and Independent t-test, the following results were obtained.

**TABLE: 1**

*Correlation between Altruism and Happiness in young adults*

|           |                     | Altruism | Happiness |
|-----------|---------------------|----------|-----------|
| Altruism  | Pearson correlation | 1        | -.136     |
|           | Sig. (2 tailed)     |          | .402      |
|           | N                   | 40       | 40        |
| Happiness | Pearson correlation | -.136    | 1         |
|           | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .402     |           |
|           | N                   | 40       | 40        |

**TABLE: 2**

*Correlation between Altruism and Happiness in middle aged adults*

|           |                     | Altruism | Happiness |
|-----------|---------------------|----------|-----------|
| Altruism  | Pearson correlation | 1        | .054      |
|           | Sig. (2-tailed)     |          | .739      |
|           | N                   | 40       | 40        |
| Happiness | Pearson correlation | .054     | 1         |
|           | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .739     |           |
|           | N                   | 40       | 40        |

**TABLE: 3**

*Mean comparison of young adults and middle aged adults on Altruism and Happiness*

| Variables | Young adults |                    | Middle aged adults |                    | t(78) | p    | Remark     |
|-----------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------|------|------------|
|           | Mean         | Standard deviation | Mean               | Standard deviation |       |      |            |
| Altruism  | 2.55         | .46                | 2.74               | .47                | 1.77  | .081 | $p > 0.05$ |
| Happiness | 4.13         | .73                | 4.56               | .49                | 3.055 | .003 | $P < 0.05$ |

## DISCUSSION

This study has focused on studying the relationship between altruism and happiness, while comparing the scores of altruism and happiness in young adults and middle aged adults.

**From Table 1** it is evident that correlation coefficient is  $-.136$ . This shows that there is a negative relationship between altruism and happiness in the group of young adults. A negative correlation indicates that when one variable increases the other variable decreases and vice versa. However the correlation is not statistically significant at 0.05 level of significance.

**From Table 2** it is evident that correlation coefficient is  $.054$ . This shows that there is a Positive relationship between altruism and happiness in the group of middle aged adults. A positive correlation indicates that when one variable increases the other variable also increases and vice versa. However the correlation is not statistically significant at 0.05 level of significance ( $P > 0.05$ ).

**From table 3** it can be seen that the mean scores of altruism of middle aged adults ( $M=2.74$ ,  $SD=.47$ ) is higher than young adults ( $M=2.55$ ,  $SD=.46$ ). However from the above table it is evident that the t value is 1.77, which is not significant at 0.05 level of significance ( $p > 0.05$ ). It reflects that there is no significant mean difference in the mean scores of altruism of young adults and middle aged adults.

**From table 3** it can be seen that the mean scores of happiness of middle aged adults ( $M=4.56$ ,  $SD=.49$ ) is higher than young adults ( $M=4.13$ ,  $SD=.73$ ). From the above table it is evident that the t value is 3.055, which is significant at 0.05 level of significance ( $p < 0.05$ ). It reflects that there is a significant mean difference in the mean scores of happiness of young adults and middle aged adults.

The major findings were that happiness and altruism were found to be positively related in middle aged adults, which is the age group 36-55 years. On similar lines Midlarsky (1991) stated that indulging in helping behaviour increases one's life satisfaction, improves their mood, reduces stress and provides a sense of meaning and purpose to their life. Altruistic behaviour does not only has effects on the one receiving help, but it also makes the one performing altruistic acts feel happy, calm, satisfied and pleased.

It was found that happiness and altruism were higher in middle aged adults, which might be a sign that altruism and happiness increase with age. In support of these findings, Freund et.al (2014) suggested that altruism is found higher in older adults, they tend to behave in more altruistic ways than younger adults. Reasons for which could be generativity, a facet of altruism. Generativity is caring for the well being of future generations by helping them in having better living conditions. Generativity is found to be higher in older adults than young adults. Another reason why younger adults are less altruistic in nature is that they prefer spending resources such as money on themselves because they need those resources to achieve their goals and ambitions. Devi M.S. (2019) suggested that happiness and age also had a linear relationship which is that happiness increases with age; it was found that elderly reported higher happiness score than young adults.

## CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this research was to study the relationship between the variables altruism and happiness, and to study the differences across the same in young adults and middle aged adults. The major findings were that altruism and happiness had a positive correlation in middle aged adults, whereas a negative correlation in young adults. There was a difference found in the scores of altruism and happiness of young adults and middle aged adults. Difference between means scores of happiness were found to be significant in the two groups, while mean scores of altruism were found to be non-significant. It was found that altruism and happiness increases with age.

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