

## ALTRUISM AND GENERAL WELL-BEING AMONG ADULTS

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### ABSTRACT

In today's world there are a lot of human beings but very little humanity. The current investigation follows the descriptive research designed to explore the people's mind set and the actions that lead them to what are who they are now. A person is said to be altruistic when he or she is selflessly concern for the well-being of others. General well-being playing an important role in today's world, a good or satisfactory condition of existence; a state characterized by health, happiness, and prosperity; welfare: to influence the well-being of the nation and its people is said to be the perfect concoction. The present study explores how far an individual is altruistic and how it reflects on their general well-being. It is hypothesised that there will be a significant relationship between the variables. The study includes 135 adults consisting of both men and women. The sample is collected using simple random sampling technique. The tools that are used are Adapted Self-Report Altruism Scale by Peter Witt and Chris Boleman (2009) and P.G.I General Well- Being Measure by Verma and Verma (1989). The statistical analysis is done using SPSS, Pearson Product moment correlation and Independent Sample t test will be used for analysis. From the analyses it was found that Altruism and Well-being had a significant positive correlation and there were no significant gender differences in Altruism and General Well-being among adults.

**Keywords: Altruism, General Well-Being, Adults**

## INTRODUCTION

*“If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.”*

- *Mother Teresa*

As an adult we have many responsibilities and one among them is the well-being of ourselves and others. One of the main reasons for general wellbeing is directly proportional to the altruistic nature of a person. Altruism is said to be a mind-set achieved when a person is selfless when it comes to general well-being of others. The word altruism is derived from an Italian word, which is "altri" meaning "other people" or "somebody else". Psychologically it is proven that in today's world a lot many people lack the altruistic nature. Because of which general well-being is affected. We, as a person with respect to the growth of a community or even a whole nation depends on our mentality towards an issue in hand or the people involved in an issue. General wellbeing is a state achieved when you are in a good or a satisfactory condition of existence. A personal or a general well-being of an individual will in turn reflect in the well-being of the nation. A general sense of well-being is said to be achieved if the individuals or the group's condition is positive. The sad state of so many humans around with so little humanity has already started taking a toll in our world, which would one day or the other bite us back.

### **Altruism**

The International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences defines psychological altruism as "a motivational state with the goal of increasing another's welfare." Altruism is an act or a principle of concern of the welfare of others. Actions by individuals that help others with no immediate benefit to the helper – are a common part of social life. Individuals rush for assistance of others who have fallen, give rides to their friends whose car aren't working or maybe even loan them a car, help graduate students with their dissertations by participating in psychological research, offer directions to lost strangers, and help in countless other ways. From the point of view of personal gains, such behaviour might seem strange; after all, the people who engage in such actions often don't receive anything back, and in fact, often don't expect any compensation for their assistance.

One explanation of altruism behaviour involves empathy – the capacity to be able to experience others' emotional states, feeling sympathetic towards others, and taking their perspective. This

perspective suggests that individuals help others because if they experience empathy towards them, they want their plight to end and also because it feels good to do good deeds. This is unselfish because it leads us to offer help no extrinsic reason, but it is also selfish, in one sense, because the behaviour of assisting others is rewarding to the helper. It makes this person feels good. Empathy - altruism hypothesis, they suggest that at least some altruistic acts are motivated solely by the desire to help someone in need. Such motivation can be sufficiently strong that the helper is willing to engage to unpleasant, dangerous and even life- threatening activity. Compassion for other people outweighs all other considerations.

Another possible motive for helping others, in the sense, the mirror image of empathy: instead of helping because we genuinely care about the welfare of another person, we help because such actions allow us to reduce our own negative, unpleasant emotion. In other words, individuals do good thing to stop feeling bad. The knowledge that others are suffering or more generally, witnessed those in need can be distressing. To decrease this distress in ourselves, we might help others.

It is generally true that it feels good to have a positive effect on the lives of other people. In this way, at least, it can indeed be better to give help than to receive it. This idea is that a helper responds to the needs of victim because they want to accomplish something and doing so is rewarding in and of itself. An important implication of this proposal is that it is crucial to know that his or her actions have a positive impact on the victim. Another important reason why people help others is that doing so boosts their own status and reputation and, in this way, ultimately brings them large benefits, ones that more than offset the costs of engaging in pro social actions.

Though many factors have been identified as affecting altruistic behaviour, people facing the same situation do not respond in an identical way. Some are more helpful than others and these individual differences are visible in a wide range of contexts. One that appears to be more important is the tendency to experience empathy; emotional reactions that are focused on or oriented toward to other people and include feelings of compassion, sympathy and concern towards others. Empathy consists of affective and cognitive responses to another person's

emotional state and also includes sympathy, a desire to solve the problem, and taking the perspective of the other person (Batson et al., 2003). An empathetic person feels what another person is feeling and understands why that person feels as he or she does. Individual differences in this respect tend to be relatively consistent over time.

The cognitive component of empathy appears to be uniquely human quality that develops only after we progress beyond infancy. Such cognition includes the ability to consider the view point of another person, the ability to put themselves in someone else's shoes. The potential reason for helping behaviour is the role of genetic factors, researchers have found that heredity

Several aspects of personality are involved in pro social acts has led some investigators to propose that a combination of relevant factors constitutes what has been designed as the altruistic personality. An altruistic personality is high on high dimensions that are characteristic of people who engage in prosocially behaviour in an emergency situation.

1. Empathy, people who help are found to be higher in empathy than those who are not. The most altruistic people describe themselves as responsible, socialized, confirming, tolerant, self-controlled, and motivated to make a good impression.
2. Belief In a just world. Helpful individuals perceive the world as a fair and predictable place on which good behaviour is rewarded and bad behaviour is punished. This belief leads to the conclusions that helping those in need is the right thing to do and the expectation that the person who helps will actually benefit from doing a good deed.
3. Social responsibility. The most helpful individuals also express the belief that each person is responsible for doing his or her best to assist anyone who need help
4. Internal locus of control. This is the belief that a person can choose to behave in ways that maximize good outcomes and minimize had once. People who fail to help, in contrast, tend to have an external locus of control and believe that their behaviour is irrelevant because outcomes are controlled by luck, fate, people with power, and other uncontrollable factors.
5. Low egocentrism. Altruistic people tend to self- absorbed and competitive.

## General Well- Being

Preoccupation with psychological ill health seems to have given way to that about psychological well-being, towards the end of the 20th century. A greater attention was gained in 21<sup>st</sup> century, accepting the two factor theory of mental healthviz, absence of psychological ill-being/ ill health does not necessarily mean presence of psychological well- being. A person can have both conditions poor, either conditions good or, any one of them good, with all its accompanying results.

General well-being may be defined as the subjective feeling of contentment, happiness, satisfaction with life's experiences and one's role in the world of work, sense of achievement, utility, belongingness, and no distress, dissatisfaction or worry, etc. these things are difficult to evaluate objectively, hence the emphasis on the term “ subjective” well-being. It may well be maintained in advance circumstances and conversely, may be lost in favourable situation. It is related to but not dependent upon the physical/ physiological conditions. Thus defined and conceptualized the general well-being may show some degree of positive correlation with quality of life, job satisfaction level, sense of achievement etc. and negatively related with neuroticism, psychotics and other such variables.

Well-being or welfare is a general term for the condition of an individual or a group, for example their social, economic, psychological, spiritual or medical state is high in well- being means that, the individual or group's experience is positive. If low in well-being is associated with negative. In psychology well-being often refers to the sense of satisfaction and happiness a person feels towards their life.

Well-being is not just the absence of disease or illness. It is complex combination of a person's physical, mental, emotional, and social health factors. Well- being is strongly linked to happiness and life satisfaction. In short, well-being could be described as how you feel about yourself and your life(**Partha 1993**).

Well-being has been defined from two perspectives. The clinical perspective defines well-being as the absence of negative conditions and the psychological perspective defines well-being as the

prevalence of positive attributes. Positive psychology definitions include six general characteristics; they are the active pursuit of well-being, a balance of attributes, positive effect or life satisfaction, pro social behaviour, multiple dimensions and personal optimisation. Factors that might influence general well-being are physical wellness and good health, sleep, job or career, personal success, hobbies and relationships.

Simple ways to develop well-being are to develop and maintain strong relationships with family and friends, make regular time available for social contact, eat wholesome and nutritious food, regular physical activity, being involved in activities of one's interest, join local organisations or clubs that appeal oneself, set achievable goals and work towards them, and try to be optimistic and enjoy each day.

### **Need for Study**

The study gives us a detail and a definitive report on where we stand with regards to the general well-being and the selfless nature of ours which is going to play a major role in our lives tomorrow. Each and every step of this journey is going to take us one step closer to finding ourselves and the long lost humanity on which these great nations were built and on which all of us led a proper and mentally stable lives. The study also gives us a brief report on what could be potentially used on further complications in the above topic. It would also help us achieve greater understanding of how to mould an individual to make their living better.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The article by **Post (2005)** presented a summary and assessment of the existing research on altruism and its association to mental and physical health. It suggested several frameworks, including evolutionary biology, physiological models, and positive psychology. Potential public health implications of this research were discussed. The article concluded, with some limits, that a strong association exists between the happiness, health, longevity of people and well - being, who are emotionally kind and compassionate in their activities of charitable helping —as long as they are not overwhelmed.

The chapter hypothesized that social-interest altruistic behaviours enhanced subjective well-being for both chronically ill adults and healthy. The first study focused on chronically ill multiple sclerosis patients. They examined the health implications of receiving training in coping strategies accompanied by monthly telephone support versus simply receiving fifteen-minute phone calls from trained peer supporters (who also had MS) once a month for a year. Data was collected from the five peer supporters revealed that they (the givers) reported improvements on more outcomes than the receivers and that the effect from the size of these changes was larger for the givers than for the supported patients. The second study used previously collected data on a large stratified sample of Presbyterians in order to examine the hypothesis within a healthy and much larger cohort. Data showed that giving help was a more important indicator of better mental health than receiving it. (**Schwartz 2007**).

**Pareek and Jain (2012)** studied subjective well-being in relation to altruism and forgiveness among 100 school going adolescents. The tools used to assess the variables were, Subjective Well-Being Inventory by Nagpal and Sell (1985), The Helping Attitude Scale by Nickell (1998) and The Heartland Forgiveness Scale by Thompson et. al. (2005). Based on multiple regression it was known that the predictive value of Forgiveness (Self, Others, Situation) does not enhance the prediction of subjective well-being whereas, Altruism enhanced the prediction of subjective well-being. A positive result was found between subjective well-being and predictor altruism which implies that if it is present in an individual, they would surely have higher subjective well-being.

**Kahana, Bhatta, Lovegreen, Kahana and Midlarsky (2013)**, observed the influence of prosocial orientations including altruism, volunteering, and informal helping on positive and negative well-being outcomes among retirement community dwelling elders. They utilized data from 2 waves, 3 years apart, of a panel study of successful aging (N = 585). The scales used for the study were, Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, & Griffin, 1985), PANAS scale (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Symptoms of Depression were measured using the 10-item short version of the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (Andresen, Malmgren, Carter, & Patrick, 1994). The results of Ordinal logistic regression pointed out that attitudes of altruism, informal helping behaviours and volunteering made distinct contributions to

maintenance of positive affect, life satisfaction and other well-being outcomes. The predictors also described the variance primarily in the positive indicators of psychological well-being. But they are not significantly related with the negative outcomes. Female gender and functional limitations were also related with psychological well-being and life satisfaction.

**Becchetti, Corrado, Conzo and Pierluigi (2013)** provided a non-experimental evidence of the relevance of sociability on subjective wellbeing. They investigated the determinants of life satisfaction on a greater number of Europeans aged above 50. They documented that religious attendance, helping friends/neighbours, voluntary work and participation to community-related organizations affect significantly and positively life satisfaction. It also illustrated the different impact that a few sociability variables have on cognitive measures of subjective wellbeing versus eudemonic. Their empirical findings discriminated among preferences regarding others and self as rationales describing such behaviour. It was documented that different combinations between motivations and actions have an impact on life satisfaction thereby providing support for the relevance of these specific “contingent goods” and to the literature of procedural utility.

The research by **Nathan (2015)** explored the power of altruism in enhancing a crucial dimension of psychological well-being: meaning in life. The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) was used along with the Altruism Questionnaire. The data was collected from 432 participants from India and Italy; two different countries. The samples were aged between 30 and 60 (Indian Mage = 44.48; Italian Mage = 44.24). The sample was balanced for profession and education. Findings indicated that across cultures a higher level of perceived altruism leads to higher level of presence of meaning. Meanwhile there was no evident negative correlation to search for meaning. Findings pointed that altruism is a promising pathway towards psychological well-being.

The current study focussed in establishing a relationship between altruism and well-being in Chinese college students at the undergraduate level. Two groups were selected, one group used self-reporting and another related to perception of peers. Self-reported altruism and self-reported decisions to help in real-life situations were measured in the first sample ( $N_1 = 525$ ); peer-rated altruism was measured in the second sample ( $N_2 = 189$ ). The results indicated self-reported



altruism and self-reported decisions to help exerted significantly direct effects on well-being, whereas peer-rated altruism did not indicate. And also self-esteem mediated the effects of self-reported altruism, self-reported decisions to help, and peer-rated altruism on well-being. These findings confirmed the emotion-elevating effects of altruism in collectivistic societies like China, which may encourage more people to engage in voluntary social service (**Feng and Guo 2016**).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Objectives**

- To measure Altruism and General Well-being.
- To find the association between Altruism and General Well-being.
- To identify the gender differences among Altruism and General Well-being.

### **Hypotheses**

- There will be a significant association between Altruism and General Well-being.
- There will be no significant gender differences in General Well-being.
- There will be no significant gender differences in Altruism.

### **Research Design**

Descriptive research design was used to gain insight about the association between the variables.

### **Sample**

The sample constituted the adult population in the age range of 23 - 30 years and was collected using simple random sampling method. The 135 samples include both male and female.

### **Tools**

✓ **PGI General Wellbeing** was constructed by Verma and Verma (1989). The tool consists of 20 items. Scoring is done by counting the number of ticks and those constitute the well-being score of that particular individual at that time. Higher total and domain-specific scores indicate higher levels of well-being. The split-half coefficient of reliability corrected by Kuder Richardson correlation (20) was found to be .98 (Verma, Dubey and Gupta, 1983). It is found to have satisfactory validity and highly significant reliability i.e. K. R. 98 and discriminative value.

✓ **Adapted Self-Report Altruism Scale** was adapted by Adapted from the Self-Report Altruism Scale (Rushton, 1981) and developed by P. C. Rushton (original), Peter Witt and Chris Boleman (adapted version, 2009). The scale consist of 14 items which consist of pointing scale from “never to very often” A correlation of at least .80 is suggested for at least one type of reliability as evidence; however, standards range from .5 to .9 depending on the intended use and context for the instrument.

### Statistical Analysis

The data was analysed using SPSS 22.

- ✓ Coefficient of correlation - Pearson product Moment Correlation between Altruism and General Well-being.
- ✓ Independent Sample t test - males and females on Altruism and General Well-being.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1**

### Correlation between Altruism and General Well-Being

Variables	Altruism	General Well-Being
Altruism	1	0.359**
General Well-Being		1

**\*\*Significant at 0.01 level**

Product moment correlation was computed to study the relationship between altruism and General Well- Being. Results indicate that there exists a positive correlation between altruism and General Well- Being. The coefficient of correlation is significant at the level of 0.01.

Hence the above result also proves that being altruistic is going to improve an individual’s well-being. To break the myth of today’s world, lacks well-being has been broken. Taking into consideration to prove the point that ample NGO’s have a great number of youngsters who do their part to the society, they in turn gain a sense of self-satisfaction which helps in their well-being. The altruistic nature has been a great personality trait in our current generation of youngsters. They have come to terms with the fact that in helping each other there can be a great increase of satisfaction in their day to day life. This in turn reflects in the general

well-being of an individual. We have learnt to thrive not only for ourselves but also for our companions for a better life.

**Pareek and Jain (2012)** studied subjective well-being in relation to altruism and forgiveness among 100 school going adolescents.

A positive result was found between subjective well-being and predictor altruism which implies that if it is present in an individual, they would surely have higher subjective well-being. Also a research by **Nathan (2015)** explored the power of altruism in enhancing a crucial dimension of psychological well-being: meaning in life. Findings indicated that across cultures a higher level of perceived altruism leads to higher level of presence of meaning and that altruism is a promising pathway towards psychological well-being. These studies strongly supported the results of the present finding.

Therefore hypothesis stating that "There will be a significant relationship between Altruism and General Well-Being" is accepted.

**Table – 2**

**Mean scores and the level of significance of the variables**

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t value
Altruism	Female	75	36.03	8.371	0.051 <sup>NS</sup>
	Male	60	35.95	9.227	
General Well-Being	Female	75	9.37	5.975	0.450 <sup>NS</sup>
	Male	60	8.90	6.183	

<sup>NS</sup> Not Significant

Independent sample 't' test was used to compare the differences between females and males in all the variables. There is no significant gender difference among adults in Altruism and General Well - Being.

On that note there has been a clear and a definitive answer that, being altruistic solely depends on an individual with no regards to gender. Given the situation and the surroundings of a person, the

level of being altruistic can vary, but has nothing to do with being a particular gender. It is a unique trait that will definitely differ from every individual.

Thus the hypothesis stating "There will be no significant gender differences in Altruism" is accepted. "There will be no significant gender differences in General well - Being" is accepted.

### **Significance of the study**

From the present study it is evident that altruism contributes to a well-being. Therefore being altruistic will improve the general well-being of an individual. When there is a great increase in the well-being of a community on the whole, it naturally helps each one for a better and a prosperous life. And on a personal level, altruism will increase the credibility of a person and give them a better perspective for any situation they are in.

### **Limitations and Suggestions**

- A larger sample size can be used for a better replicability and generalization.
- The sample is limited only to Chennai. Better representation from various districts and states can be done.
- A comparative study between social science, health science and arts, engineering students can be done, to know if the subject or study area makes a difference in altruistic behaviour.

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