

RELIGIOSITY AND PERSONALITY CORRELATES OF ALTRUISM

Dr. Arun Kumar, Asstt. Professor
Deptt of Psychology, P.U.P. College, Motihari, East Champaran

INTRODUCTION:

The term altruism is of recent origin. However, attempts to explain to which the term applies are ancient. August Comte, a French philosopher and sociologist, first introduced this term (Encyclopedia of Britannica, 1967; Vol. 8). Probably, he came to adapt the term from the Italian 'altrui'. For him, altruism was an unselfish regard for the welfare of others. The other conception in this regard is the term altruism comes from the word "alter", meaning "other" and generally connotes an orientation toward other rather than toward self. Altruism refers to acts that bring benefits to other people. These acts are aimed to producing, maintaining or improving the physical and psychological welfare and integrity of other (Staub & Wispe, 1978; wispe, 1978). It implies an unselfish concern, the interest, support above concern for oneself. Examples of altruistic behaviour cover a wide range, including expressions of interest, support and sympathy, doing special favours for other; acts of generosity, activities for the mentally or physically handicapped and martyrdom (Longman; Dictionary of Psychology and Psychiatry). According to Murphy, L.B. (1973), "It is desire to help others. It expresses itself in many ways through sympathy, philanthropy etc. The person with a strong altruism want has affection and concern for others and is usually contrasted with the selfish person".

Show and Constanzo (1970) have suggested that the least adequate definitions in social psychology are those "real" definitions, which state the essential nature or attributes of some entity or theoretical construct. Altruism is an unfortunate example of this deficiency. Karbe (1970) leaves this problem "to new research to supply a more meaningful and precise definitions of altruism". He argued in favour of operational definitions which, "are usually not coextensive with the conceptual definition of the term" (Shaw and Costanzo, 1970). The point is that until we understand what altruism means, it will be impossible to decide whether or not something is a good index of it. Brown (1975) defines altruism as the giving of aid in the form of arbitrarily defined good or services to the individuals of the same species, who are not off springs of direct decedents of the donor and without direct benefit to its donor or its mate. According to Hamilton's (1978) view, altruistic behaviour can be distinguished from other types of intra specific social interactions. The term and their definitions are :- Cooperative behaviour which helps both parties; selfish behaviour, which helps the donor only; and spiteful behaviour in which both parties lose. Hamilton further stated that these terms are used as heuristic devices only and do not only imply awareness on the part of the participants. It differs from helping behaviour where the potential cost may be low and the possibility of gaining rewards may be high. Altruistic behaviour involves helping sometimes even taking great risks-even through the act is not likely to be rewarded, recognized, or even appreciated. Thus, altruistic act is selfless.

The same has been stressed by walster and others (1972), "Altruism is very special form of helping behaviour that is; voluntary, costly to the altruism and motivated by something other than the expectation of material or social reward". altruism, then, is selfless rather than selfish. Yarrow, Scott and Waxler (1973) point out that altruism is not a specific form of behaviour, rather it includes a diversity of responses, helping, sharing, rescuing, sympathizing and undoubtedly more".

In this way differing view of human nature have led to three different conceptualization of altruism.

The first one emphasized the reward cost formulation of the meaning of altruism, i.e. altruism exists when-ever someone helps but gets far less in lieu of helping than the cost involved. If altruistic behaviour involves cost to the benefactor, the benefactor is hurting itself. It must have compensating benefits that render altruism ultimately advantageous to the performer or according to the natural selection, this altruistic behaviour will not sustain.

The second conceptualization was advocated by a group of philosophers who believed that it is our moral duty to help others, i.e. non is being altruistic if, even un willingly one jumps into a river to rescue a drawing child out of the sense of duty. This formulation implies that the rescuer acted both altruistically and morally. But the difficult is that this conceptualization does not make any sharp demarcation between altruistic behaviour and moral behaviour.

Specific Hypotheses:

The high altruist will score high on religiosity dimension in comparison to low altruist.

Sampling:

In order to get an appropriate sample; age, educational status and economic status were c controlled. There are various studies which show that these variables have direct baring on the personality characteristics and attitudes of the subject. According to Eysenck (1963), attitudes were determined by a person's objectives social status; by his education, which, of course, in turn is dependent on his status and class, by this religious affiliation, and by his age. Centres (1949) in his study and strongly advocated the effect of age, sex, education and socio-economic status on the attitude of an individual . Thus, in view of the research findings, following criterion were laid down for selecting the sample of the present study:-

1. Sex : Male & Female
2. Age : 16 to 19 Years
3. Education: Students of Degree Classes (+3)

4. Economic status Low middle classes, i.e., Students whose parent's monthly income ranged from Rs. 1500/- to Rs. 2500/-

Apart from the above criteria of sex one hundred female students of the same age education and socio-economic status were also selected to make a comparative study of altruism between male and female subjects.

On the basis of personal data sheet and also with the help of the college authorities; it was found that there were 1975 students to fulfill the criteria. The college wise details of the students population for the study are given in table No. 1

Table No. 1

Name of College	Total No. of Students fulfilling the criteria	No. of Students comprising the sample
Rajendra College Chapra	490	122(25%)
Jagdam College Chapra	437	109 (25%)
D.A.. College Siwan	443	111 (25%)
Gopalganj College Gopalganj	425	448

Due to the limitation of time and paucity of finance, the sample was 25% of the total population with proportional representation given to different colleges. Thus, 342 boys and 106 girls; i.e.; 448 taking together comprised the sample. The respondents were selected purely on random basis. The details of the sample selected from different colleges are given in table No.1

Tools used:

Altruism Scale (ALTS) in Hindi developed by Rai & Singh (1988) was used to measure the degree of altruism of the respondents.

Table displaying correlation between Altruism Scale scores on the one hand and religiosity (as measured by R-Scale), and personality characteristics (as measured by DPS)

Table No. 2

On the other hand (N=300)

Scale	Dimension	Altruism Scale	P
1	21	3	4
R-Scale	Religiosity	.292	< .01
DPS	Decisiveness	.184	< .01
DPS	Responsibility	.162	< .05
DPS	Emotional Stability	.296	< .01
DPS	Masculinity	.009	< .05
DPS	Firmedliness	.177	< .05
DPS	Heterosexuality	..005	> .05
DPS	Ego-strength	.273	< .01
DPS	Curiosity	.012	> .05
DPS	Dominance	154	< .05

The significance of the correlation were further tested by determining the mean scores of high and low altruist groups on Religiosity scale and Differential Personality Scale. The high groups were those who scored above Q_1 and low groups were those who scored lower than Q_1 . The significance of difference between the men religiosity scores and different personality scale scores of high on low altruist groups were determined by t-Test.

Altruism and Religiosity:

The co-efficient of correlation between altruism and religiosity given in Table No. 2 . The correlation between altruism and religiosity test scores is, 292 which is significant at 0.01 level of confidence. Further confirmation of relationship was established by determining the mean religiosity scores of high altruist group had significant higher scores ($M=25.22$) . The t-ratio obtained for the difference between two means was 2.262 which was significant at .01 level of confidence. Thus a positive and significant correlation between altruism and religiosity was observed. In this way, our hypothesis that altruism would be positively related to religiosity and high altruist would score high on altruist in comparison to low altruist subjects is verified and retained.

The obtained positive relationship between altruism and religiosity is quite in congruence with the conclusion that the religious commitment of people was significantly correlated with altruism (Batson & Gray, 1981; Benson et. al. , 1980).

On the other hand, this relationship was visualized in the light of the theoretical aspect of religiosity and altruism and in the light of composite Indian culture. The concept of altruism is concerned with humanism and righteousness and preach concern for others. And on the other hand, religiosity in the emotional aspect does reflect the feeling of devotion and dedication to God and experience of pleasures, delight and satisfaction in observance of religious practices which is ultimately, expressed in benevolence, charity, volunteering, sharing helping ect. In this way altruism and religiosity both emphasized the importance of humanism and human-well being and preach concern for others . It is also evident from the review of literature (Das, 1955; Galloway. 1956; James, 1963; Khan, 1962) relating religious practices indicates that the behavioural dimensions of religiosity preached almost commonly by different religions are:- Observing prayer or worship to God; performing certain specific behavioural from the consideration of ethical good and bad (Puny and Paas); observing rituals with faith that there is life beyond death of world beyond this reality; and observing sacrifice, tolerance, forgiveness etc. as religious values.

The obtained positive relationship between altruism and religiosity can very well as understood with reference to the composite Indian culture and common heritage as documented in Indian literature. The great Indian Saints and philanthropists and poets like kabir Das, Tulsi Das, Raheem, Maithili Sharan Gupta and many more others laid stress on orientation towards others, Self-service into humanity and good deeds. Pages of Indian history, literature and mythology are full of description of such saints, mystics, philanthropists and humanists who made highest sacrifice, exemplenary selfless service and high degree of benevolence Mahatma Buddha by the suffering and dedicated his rest of life for welfare. Countless names like Mahatma Dadheechi. Mahatma Gandhi, Acharya Binova Bhawe, Mother Teresa are there who dedicated their entire life to the service of others.

Thus on the basis three dimensions, i.e. theoretical, emotional and behavioural of religiosity and the basic theoretical rationale of altruism on the one hand and the long chain of cultural heritage of India on the other we may concluded that the close association of altruism with that of religiosity is genuine and reasonable.

References:

1. Agrawal, S. & Jain, Poonam (1993) : Modification of altruism among children and adolescents through modeling and cognitive restructuring, Journal of Community Guidance and Research, 10 (2), 127-135
2. Allport, G.W. (1961) : Pattern and growth of personality , New York Holt, Rinehart and Winstone.
3. Aronfreed, J & Paskal (1965) : Conduct and Consistence, New York, Academic Press.
4. Aribaffm J. & Willson, T.P. (1984); Personality in the social process, Hillsdale, Lowrence Erlbaum.
5. Armand, c. & Petitone, A. (1975) : Attraction and hostality , New York, Atherton.
6. Batson. C.D. & Ventis. W.L. (1982) : The religious experience: A Social psychological Perspective, New York, Oxford University Press.
7. Batson, C.D. et. al. (1986) : Where is the altruism in the altruistic Personality"? Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 50, 212-220.
8. Brown, R & Hamilton, D.L.; (1975) : Attitudinal and behavioral effects of initial integration of white Suburban neighborhoods, Journal of Social Issues, 32 92) , 47-67.
9. Bryan. J.H. & London, P. (1970) : Altruistic behaviour by children, psychological Bulletinj, 73, 200-211.

* * * * *