

Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur

Science of Happiness and Well-being (RX60012)



Group 14

Abhishek Chakram	19AE10002
Lakavath Niharika	21MT10062
Prathvik	20PH20028
Kathula Greeshma	11HS20013

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Abstract

The study aims to go through the different matters of altruism and happiness, how they affect our lives and how to cope with unhappiness. There are various facets of altruism, and its scientific foundations are almost universal. However, in some fields, including the social sciences, its importance is highlighted. The goal of this study is to evaluate altruism's definition, dimensions, scales, measurement options, and historical context while highlighting the social and economic perspectives on it. It also seeks to draw attention to potential study hypotheses. The article gives a review of the literature and examines recent applied research on altruism within this paradigm. It comes to the conclusion that generosity is built on empathy. Positive and negative personality and identity qualities, personal engagement, and other internal and external motivators can all encourage altruistic behaviour. However, its long-term impacts, both good and bad, may influence how supportive people act. It also puts forward the concept of What to do if someone is unhappy and how to cope up with it.

Introduction

The general populace has the misconception that those who work in the helping industries are selfless. Do we understand what altruism actually means, though? Due to this, we would like to present the background, dimensions, scales, and measuring options of altruism. We are on Earth to help one another, according to Pressburger. What would happen to us if not?" He emphasised that helping others can be thought of as a way and a subset of altruism. Altruism's origins go all the way back to the beginning of time. One of its earliest recorded histories is found in the Torah and the Bible's explanations of generosity, selflessness, and alleviation. Altruism's scientific justifications date all the way back to the 19th century. Auguste Comte introduced the idea of altruism by drawing comparisons between it and two significant endpoints, selflessness and selfishness. More specifically, he believed that although altruism and selflessness are equivalent, the egoistic trait is the exact antithesis of altruism. Numerous disciplines still today deal with altruistic conception and behaviour, which appears as a selfless act of service. It is an interdisciplinary notion that can appear so frequently in the fields of political science and social psychology that we can read about it frequently in the literature's columns on economics, sociobiology, and genetics. In addition to human cultures, the animal realm also exhibits altruism. This study examines altruism's many manifestations while highlighting its social and economic significance. It evaluates the characteristics of altruistic behaviour as well as the moral and ethical dilemma of whether receiving pay may be considered altruism. Another intriguing topic is whether altruism can exist independently or if it should be viewed as a process in which each actor plays a part in both the process and the entity. According to study, 50% of behavioural traits are inherited due to genetic factors. These also apply to actions that display aggressive and altruistic tendencies. The parental-mediated socialisation features that are passed down and learned by children have a significant impact on the altruistic traits that are evident in people's daily behaviour.

Review of Literature

1. The Altruism Theoretical Approach

A basic guideline of altruism is supported by the literature: family members are more willing to lend a hand. Can remuneration be recognised as a component of an altruistic behaviour, though, is a more general question that needs to be answered. However, it appears that the process includes mental reinforcement. One can wonder if there is such a thing as completely unselfish behaviour. Since the 1800s, a lot of researchers have been working to uncover an explanation. We may be misled into thinking that altruistic behaviour is actually a result of self-interest if we focus on the phenomenon of altruism through the prism of economics, as Monroe (1994) did. This is because altruistic behaviour also has some sort of gain, no return — the person does not take selfless actions without anticipating reciprocity. Socio-biology describes altruistic behaviour as being advantageous to those who accept aid but detrimental to the giver. Altruism is said to be strongly tied to genetics from an evolutionary perspective because it increases the chances of another organism's survival when one exhibits altruistic behaviour. Social psychology claims that there are differences in the causes of altruism. This is due to the possibility of egoistic altruistic motivation existing alongside the particular altruistic motive. Similar to this, different types of altruism can be classified based on their intentionality as well as their motive. Similar to this, when altruism manifests, the emotions that motivate it may be significant and may take many different forms. Three types of altruism are distinguished in the literature: selfish, real, and so-called reciprocal altruism. As the name suggests, a selfish altruistic person genuinely works to improve his or her own appearance, therefore it is not a genuine act of selflessness. True altruism is helping others in a way that does not improve one's own circumstances. Reciprocal altruism refers to a situation in which both the caregiver and the beneficiary eventually benefit. Even more distinct categories of benevolence exist. The three classifications that form the basis above have already been described. The literature also distinguishes between different sorts of altruism: there is the so-called "hard-core" type, which includes altruistic suicide. The second form is evolutionary

altruism, which manifests as an impulsive reaction in the most hazardous circumstances. Complex altruism, which already comprises a longer-term and regular phenomenon, is the third type of altruism. Even the idea of so-called "effective altruism" is covered in the literature on altruism. According to Gabriel, the goal of the philosophical and social movement known as effective altruism is to transform philanthropy. The movement's primary driving force is to inspire people to carry out as much good as they can. Usually, this "good" is accomplished by making financial contributions to organisations that provide aid and development.

2. The Link Between Mental Health and Altruism

Altruism is regarded as a key idea in social psychology because of how crucial it is to the advancement of human civilization and human evolution. Comte's original definition of altruism as a selfless regard for the welfare of others encompasses two fundamental ideas: empathy (an altruistic attitude) and prosocial behaviour (altruistic behaviour). According to the mainstream viewpoint on explaining present altruism, engaging in altruistic behaviours can lead to immediate or long-term bodily and psychological rewards for the altruist. Less aggressive behaviour, improved physical and mental health, a longer life expectancy, and a higher level of well-being are all linked to altruistic behaviour. Similar to this, students' contentment, sense of duty, and social adaptation are all positively connected with altruistic behaviour. The association between altruism and health can be explained by three different hypotheses. According to the evolutionary biology paradigm, acts of altruism within groups provide them a competitive edge over rival groups. The physiological benefit model also contends that altruistic feelings triumph over fear and anxiety and lessen stress in response to perceived threats. The positive emotion paradigm holds that altruism-evoked pleasant emotions, such as kindness, compassion, and other feelings of altruistic love (passion for helping), improve health by displacing harmful ones.

3. The Reasons Behind Altruistic Behaviour

Altruism and the COVID-19 pandemic are linked in recent literature, and potential connections between the two phenomena have been suggested. As is well known, there is a persistent global emergency as a result of the high mortality rate and widespread infection of COVID-19. People displayed anticipated threat reactions in response to the COVID-19 health danger, including fear, anxiety, despair, panic shopping, and xenophobia. This may be brought on by the rise in conflict situations at work and in their daily lives. However, it is also true that not everyone reacts to dangerous circumstances in the same way. People's responses are influenced by a variety of psychological factors, including risk perception, personality attributes, and social support. According to Feng et al. (2020), those with high levels of altruistic willingness experienced greater detrimental consequences on their mental health than those with lower levels, which subtly worsened their symptoms of worry and depression. Low levels of altruistic behaviour in this context may relate to a person's lack of emotional attachment.

Objective and Methodology

The method used in this study is secondary research. With secondary research, we seek to investigate the main points of contention in the scientific community and to identify any remaining unanswered questions. We will be able to conduct new scientific studies in the field of altruism in this way. Numerous studies on altruism have used secondary research to understand its nature. We performed searches on the words "altruism," "altruism definition," "altruism theory," "categories of altruism," and their Hungarian equivalents using Google Scholar and Google. We used these findings to filter the papers based on how pertinent their abstracts were, and we ultimately settled on 29 secondary sources to illustrate altruism, including its varieties, dimensions, and some relevant domains. The literature review analyses them. We reviewed 18 of these studies, which emphasise certain altruism-related aspects in a way that can serve as the foundation for additional research. We then divided the collected variables into categories.

Findings and Result

The secondary analysis has allowed us to identify the primary altruism-influencing elements. We divided the key elements into two major groups: those that encourage altruism and those that characterise the effects of altruism. Empathy, selflessness, self-sacrifice, sense of responsibility, guilt, compassion, dependability, selfishness, moral aggression, faith in intuition, emotions, kindness, creativity, cross-cultural value transmission, risk-taking behaviour, and religion are the key factors that might cause altruism. The desire to help others, compassion, appreciation, volunteering, friendliness, avoiding perceived threats, alternative certainty, and the donor's potential reputation may all serve as additional motivators. Altruism's effects on people's longevity, happiness, and mental health can be either favourable or detrimental. We divided the causes and consequences into the following six broad categories: Personal engagement and other internal (personal) motivators, external (external) motivators, positive and negative effects of altruism, and both positive and negative effects of altruism are discussed.

**Positive Personality
and its traits**

**Negative Personality
and its traits**

**Personal Engagement
and Internal Motivator**



External Motivators

**Positive impact of
altruism**

**Negative impact of
altruism**

Coping up with unhappiness

Do you feel as though nothing can bring you joy anymore? You may no longer like the activities you used to, be unable to get out of bed in the morning, or feel lost or pessimistic about the future. It's crucial to avoid letting these emotions linger, regardless of whether they are momentary or a symptom of a more serious issue. Situational depression may start off as something brief, but it could develop into something more. Following are some suggestions to help you get yourself out of the state you are currently finding yourself in if you are finding that nothing makes you happy and wondering what to do about it.

1. Modify Your Mentality

Changing your thinking might be all that is necessary for some people who only experience brief emotions of boredom. This may sound overly simple. It's critical to quit using the belief that you are delaying happiness as an excuse for skipping out on embracing your life right now. Everyone has a narrative that affects them deeply, regardless of whether awful things have happened to them in the past or they currently don't have everything they want in life. What will make you unique is how you approach your story and how you go about living with it in the outside world.

2. Stop ruminating and start solving problems

What specific actions can you take to truly get there if you decide that you are ready to alter your perspective on how you are feeling? Ruminating on how they are feeling is one of the things that people who are depressed frequently do. Are you there? Do you frequently reflect on how little you like things now? Rumination is a behaviour that can make depression or a lack of enjoyment worse. Try to be conscious of your thoughts and keep an eye out for instances when you start to think negatively. Asking oneself "why" can help. What do I need to accept, consider, or modify?

While it may seem like you are accomplishing something when you ruminate or whine about your circumstances, in actuality you are only making yourself feel worse.

Decide the problems you can fix, then address them. You will begin to feel better as you take action.

3. Take Up Exercise

At least a couple times a week, try to work out, ideally for 30 minutes each time. Your brain releases endorphins after exercise, which will naturally increase your mood and happiness.

4. Create Healthful Habits

Be careful to practise other good behaviours in your life, similar example taking frequent exercise. Are you daily water consumption adequate? Do you frequently take vitamins and follow a healthy diet? Junk food, caffeine, alcohol, and other stimulants will only make you feel lethargic, exacerbate your mood, and prolong it. On the other side, establishing healthy habits will offer you a strong base on which to reestablish your sense of joy in life. Make sure you are performing fundamental actions to maintain your physical and mental health so you can give yourself a chance to feel better.

5. Practice yoga and meditation.

Try including a regular meditation and/or yoga practise along with breathing exercises if you still struggle to find joy in your life. Regular practise will assist you in letting go of unfavourable feelings and stress, making you feel more at peace, joyous, and prepared for clarity in your life.

6. Connect to Joy Again

You might be prepared to begin reintroducing enjoyable activities into your life at this stage. What used to you like doing? Make it a point to set aside some time each day or week for the activities that make you happy, whether they be reading, watching movies,

working in your yard, creating art, or engaging in other activities. Even though you might not feel like doing them right away, making an effort to include them back into your life will eventually help to improve your mood and restore the joy you once felt. At this point, you might be ready to start reinstating joyful activities into your life. What did you used to enjoy doing? Whether it's reading, watching movies, working in your yard, doing art, or doing other things that make you happy, make it a point to set aside some time each day or week for such pursuits. Making an effort to include them back into your life will eventually help to boost your mood and bring back the joy you once felt, even if you don't feel like doing them right away.

7. Think About Professional Aid

What should you do if you've tried everything mentioned above and still can't discover anything that makes you happy? Then, you might want to think about asking your doctor or a mental health expert for assistance. Clinical depression, which occasionally has a biological origin, can show symptoms such as loss of motivation and enjoyment. Therapy and/or medicine can be used to alleviate depression, giving your mind an opportunity to feel optimistic once more (through the release of positive chemicals in your brain).

8. Message From Verywell

If you discover that nothing makes you happy any more, work on your attitude, take care of your physical and mental health, pick up old hobbies again, and then assess your current circumstances. If you continue to lack drive or enjoyment, you may have clinical depression, which you cannot treat on your own. Keep in mind that asking for assistance when you need it is never a sign of weakness. It's crucial to seek out medical attention or mental health assistance, especially if you have tried all of the prior advice without success.

Discussion

In this study, we discovered evidence that, in addition to the most important motivators, personality and identity qualities, personal engagement, and other internal and external motivators are essential to altruism. However, it's probable that both good and negative effects contribute to supportive and helpful behaviour. These categories and the characteristics that underlie them (such as empathy, selflessness, trust, sentiments and emotions, and mental health) can be taken into consideration for further research, and hypotheses can be developed in light of the findings. We advise more study to delve deeper into the drivers and rewarding tools of altruistic behaviour among helpful, altruistic people.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine benevolence from many angles. We can look into definitional overlaps. We might draw the conclusion that caregivers' acts of generosity can manifest themselves in a variety of ways throughout daily life. It is clear from examining the many formulations and studies that none of the theories presuppose full selflessness; rather, they are all founded on the interaction between the person and the group. In the hopes of a successful long-term partnership, the caretaker's behaviour might be viewed as continual and taking the shape of gifts, reciprocity, and cooperation. The authors do think that selfless, unconditional altruistic behaviour does exist. Altruistic behaviour is built on empathy. Altruism can be sparked by both external and internal, as well as good and negative circumstances, such as difficulties or joy. In times of need, people may become aware that they need assistance. By fostering an environment that leads to happiness, we may help to inspire altruistic behaviour. Receiving encouraging verbal or nonverbal cues is the major way that rewarding happens following the altruistic procedure. Both direct and indirect input are possible in this. A "smile" or a "thank you" are examples of direct responses. Indirect comments may allude to the work's societal value and acknowledgment. Apart from this, the caregivers might simply be driven by personal growth. Only a few caregivers, mostly the beneficiary's relatives, support them without any self-improvement, reinforcement, or feedback. According to learning theories, activities cease to exist in the absence of validation.

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