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Personality correlates of altruistic behaviour among secondary school students

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Abstract

The present study was planned to investigate the personality correlates of altruistic behaviour of secondary school students. To assess personality and altruism Neo Five Factor Inventory (Costa & McCrae: 1991) and Altruism Test (Jain: 1989) tests were used. The findings indicated that there is no significant gender difference in altruistic behaviour of secondary school students. On the other hand girls have scored higher on the two dimensions of personality i.e. Extraversion and Openness whereas boys scored higher than girls on Neuroticism. There exists no significant correlation between altruism and different dimensions of personality in secondary school boys and girls.

Keywords: altruism, personality, extraversion, openness, neuroticism, agreeableness and conscientiousness

Introduction

Education plays an important role in the life of every individual, which influences human behaviour and personality. Education helps the man to modify his behaviour by offering a wide variety of educational settings and opportunities, which can be created with a little careful planning. The modern educational practices aim at the development of whole personality of an individual. Teachers make significant sacrifices for the interest of their students. They usually pride themselves on being concerned with their students' interests, even to the harm of their own interests at times. They pay more attention on their students' well-being rather than their own well-being. Altruism is a way that includes benefiting another as a means to benefit one which could be an important trait to be taught in today's world of hatred and deceit.

Altruism

Altruism is generally defined as any form of voluntary act intended to favour another without expectations of rewards (Smith & Mackie, 2000) [10]. In other words altruism refers to a kind of selfless help which is based on pure desire to help others (Aranson, Wilson, Akert & Fehr, 2004) [11]. In democratic societal set up where cooperation is the key concept of social relationship, the term 'altruism' 'helping behavior' and 'prosocial behaviour' may be used as synonym (Ruston & Sorrentino, 1981). Altruism is generally understood to be behavior that benefits others at personal cost to the behaving individual. One of the central motives that potentially confounds altruism is the warm glow of giving, that is, the utility one get simply from the act of giving without any concerns for the interests of others (Andreoni 1989, 1990) [2, 3]. Social responsibility is an orientation which is presumably relevant in a large number of social situations. Those who follow the notion of social responsibility are likely to act more pro-socially than people who express less of such an orientation. Altruism is the principal or the practice of concern for the welfare of others. It is a traditional virtue in many cultures and a core aspect of various religious traditions and secular worldviews, though the concept of 'others' towards whom concerns should be directed can vary among cultures and religions.

Personality

The study of personality has a long story in psychology; our behaviour in any given situation is usually a complex function of both our personality (The stable internal factors that make us unique individuals) and situational factors in the world around us.

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Personality refers to the pattern of thoughts, feelings, social adjustments and behaviours consistently exhibited over time that strongly influences one's expectations, self perceptions, values, and attitudes. Personality is a dynamic organization within the individual of those psycho physical systems that determine his unique adjustment to his environment (Allport). The desire to do good deeds for other people is natural and deep rooted but often misunderstood. Helping other people and engage in altruistic behaviour has many advantages such as improvement in social relationships, gives our lives new purposes, shows us other perspectives on our own problems and makes us more attractive to the opposite sex. So these recommendations raise few questions. Should we be selfish or selfless? To what extent should we put the needs of others before our own? These questions show that over a time, cooperation is more advantageous than betraying. Betraying may have benefits in the short term but it is problematic in the long term because we remember how others treated us in the past. Rusthon, Fulker, Neale, Blizzard and Eysenck (1984)^[9] found age and gender differences in altruism and found that altruism increased over the age span and women had higher scores than men on altruism. Van der zee & Van Oudenhoven (2000)^[11] related cultural empathy to big five factor agreeableness. Krueger, Hicks and MacGue (2001)^[7] showed that altruistic and anti social behavior are uncorrelated tendencies stemming from different sources. Bierhoff and rohmann (2004)^[4] investigated the influence of the altruistic personality in general and social responsibility in particular pro social behaviour. Results show that specific profile of personality variables are associated with helpfulness in the easy escape and difficult escape conditions.

Objectives

- To compare the altruistic behavior of secondary school boys and girls.
- To compare the personality of secondary school boys and girls.
- To study the relationship between personality and altruistic behaviour among secondary boys and girls.

Hypotheses

- There exists no significant difference in the altruistic behaviour of secondary school boys and girls.
- There exists no significant difference in the personality of secondary school boys and girls.
- There exists no significant relationship between personality and altruistic behavior of secondary school boys and girls.

Method and Procedure

The selection of suitable method is very important in order to yield satisfactory results. The present study falls in the domain of descriptive research.

Sample

Random sampling technique was employed for the selection of the sample. On the basis of randomization few schools were selected. In the present study a sample of 200 students (Boys: N=100 and Girls: N=100) was taken from secondary schools affiliated with CBSE.

Research Tools

Selection of suitable tool is of great importance for any successful research. For the purpose of the present study following tools were used:

- 1. Neo Five Factor Personality Inventory (Costa & McCrae: 1991)^[5].
- 2. Altruism Test (Jain: 1981)^[6].

Results and Discussion

The important findings of the study are given below:

Gender Differences (Altruism)

In an attempt to examine the significant gender differences among secondary school students on the measure of altruism, the t- test was applied on the obtained data. The means and standard deviation along with their t- test ratio and level of significance are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Secondary School Students along with Statistical Significance on Altruism (N = 200)

Variables	Boys		Girls		t-ratio	Sig. Level
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Altruism	54.41	5.80	55.34	5.36	1.18	IS

Significance value at 0.01 level=2.97; Significance value at 0.05 level= 1.56

A glance at the Table 1 clearly indicates that there is no significant gender difference in altruistic behaviour of secondary school students. However the girls (M=55.34) have scored slightly higher than boys (M=54.41). It means girls have shown little more altruistic behaviour in comparison to boys. Thus, our hypothesis there exists no significant difference between altruistic behaviour of male and female secondary school students is accepted. The results of the present investigation are in contradiction with the studies done by Rusthon, Fulker, Neale, Blizzard, Eysenck (1984)^[9]. They found age and gender differences in altruism. Altruism increased over the age span and women had higher scores than men on altruism.

Gender Difference (Personality)

In an attempt to examine gender differences on the dimension of personality (Neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness) among boys and girls, t- test was applied on obtained data.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Secondary School Students along with Statistical Significance on Personality (N = 200)

Variables	Boys		Girls		t-ratio	Sig. Level
	M	S.D.	M	S.D.		
N	24.43	3.19	23.34	3.21	2.41	0.02
E	23.99	4.61	25.12	3.50	1.95	0.05
O	24.14	3.67	25.31	3.41	2.34	0.02
A	24.21	3.45	24.18	3.50	0.06	0.95
C	24.77	4.85	24.69	4.01	0.12	0.89

Significance value at 0.01 level= 2.9; Significance value at 0.05 level= 1.56

It is evident from the values presented in the Table 2 that Secondary school girls significantly differ from secondary school boys on the three dimensions i.e Neuroticism (N) [Girls: M = 23.34, Boys: M = 24.43], Extraversion (E) [Girls: M = 25.12, Boys: M =23.99] and Openness (O) [Girls: M = 25.31, Boys: M = 24.14]. Above Mentioned mean scores show that girls have scored more on two dimensions i.e. Extraversion and Openness whereas boys scored higher than girls on Neuroticism. High scores on Extraversion and Openness reflects that girls are more social, active, energetic, talkative, sensitive, curious to know new things and flexible

in their thinking. On the contrary boys, as compared to girls, have more irrational ideas, anxiety, less control on the impulses and cope poorly than others with stress. Thus our hypothesis that, there exist no significant differences between personality of boys and girls of secondary school students is partially accepted.

Corealtional Analysis

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Method was used to identify the relationship between altruism and different component of personality.

The inter correlation matrices are reported in Table 3 (Boys) and Table 4 (Girls). The notable findings from these tables are summarised as follows.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix Showing Correlations between Altruism and Personality of Secondary School Students (Boys: N=100)

Variables	Altruism	Neuroticism	Extraversion	Openness	Agreeableness	Contentiousness
Altruism						
Neuroticism	-0.13					
Extraversion	0.03	0.021				
Openness	0.06	-0.54	-0.18			
Agreeableness	0.01	0.02	-0.12	-0.26**		
Contentiousness	-0.03	-0.08	0.39**	0.049	-0.11	

**Correlation is significant at 0.01level = 0.283; *Correlation is significant at 0.05 level = 0.217

Table 4: Correlation Matrix Showing Correlation between Altruism and Personality of Secondary School Students (Girls: N=100)

Variables	Altruism	Neuroticism	Extraversion	Openness	Agreeableness	Contentiousness
Altruism						
Neuroticism	-0.14					
Extraversion	-0.10	-0.44**				
Openness	0.011	-0.30**	0.28**			
Agreeableness	-0.13	-0.46**	0.21*	0.17		
Contentiousness	0.038	-0.40**	0.57**	0.39**	.40**	

**Correlation is significant at the level = 0.283; *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level = 0.217

The values reported in the Table 3 and Table 4 show that there exists no significant correlation between altruism and different dimensions of personality in secondary school boys and girls.

Thus our hypothesis that, 'there exists no significant relationship between altruistic behaviour and personality of secondary school students' is accepted.

Educational Implications

- The school should aim at developing altruism among its students.
- Highly altruistic children have more friends and report a better quality of friendship relative to less altruistic children.
- Altruistic children have superior social skills which enable them to work better with peers and to get along better with teachers.
- The children may be given an opportunity to work collaboratively in small groups and participate in activities designed to promote social understanding.
- Parents be encouraged to participate in school activities to improve their skills.
- Pro-social behaviour in children can be encouraged by altering school climate by conducive teaching.
- Training of secondary school teachers to improve self regulations and their pro social behaviour to set an example in front of students.

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