

# ALTRUISM AND PERSONAL WELL – BEING AMONG ADULTS

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**ABSTRACT:** *Today good actions are related to a more prolonged well-being than private conquests that have a momentary effect. It is believed that this discovery may have a very great application in terms of quality of life and altruism. Wellbeing is an important aspect of one's psychological disposition and a mental state that helps a person to maintain balance, anchored in hope and optimism, even during the adversities of life. Altruism is referred to as acting out of concern for the wellbeing of others, without any regard to one's own self. The current study follows the exploratory research design to explore the association between altruism and wellbeing among adults. It is hypothesised that there will be a significant association between the variables. The study includes 202 adults consisting of both men and women. The sample is collected using simple random sampling technique. The tools used are Personal Wellbeing Index –Adult by Cummins et al (2013) and Adapted Self-Report Altruism Scale by Peter Witt and Chris Boelman (adapted version 2009, original version by Rushton, 1981). The results indicated a relationship between altruism and personal well - being. It also pointed out that personal well-being differed among gender.*

**Keywords:** Altruism, Personal Well – Being

## INTRODUCTION

To be empathetic and have a positive regard for all irrespective of their relationship creates positivism around us. In this competent world, people are very busy and running behind the goals that they want to achieve. All are more focused on their personal life and their family. There are some who are busy with their own self where they do not have time for others. But there are some people who dislike helping others and intentionally avoid doing good deed for others. On the other hand, there are also individuals and groups who work and devote their time for the needy. They involve in social services helping people. Many conceptual frameworks and empirical studies postulate that individual with high prosocial behaviour tends to live happier than others. The art of giving and the satisfaction that an individual gets is soothing. People who are unconditionally helpful and concerned for the welfare of others tend to have a better subjective and mental well-being. A prosocial behaviour tends to energise within oneself and creates positivity, a sense of happiness.

## Altruism

Altruism is said to be a motive for helping that is primarily intended to relieve a person who is under stress, regardless the helper's self-interest. Altruistic help is deliberate, voluntary, and motivated by a concern for the welfare of another person. When help is done for reasons of altruism, the helper does not expect gratitude, repayment, reciprocity, recognition, or any other benefits. Having a unselfish regard for others does not come naturally for everyone. After all, cooperative behavior allowed our ancestors to survive even under harsh and critical conditions. But many people realize that making the effort to give without expectations of reciprocity, gives a feel of fulfilment and energy.

The difference between egoistic and altruistic motive to help has been controversial sometimes. One reason is that altruistic descriptions do not lend to the kind of reward-cost theories that dominate the psychological analysis of motivation during the 20th century. These theories argued that behavior occurred only when it maximizes the actor's rewards while minimizing their costs, a framework which does not facilitate altruistic interpretations of helping. Nevertheless, it is very clear that helping others involve great personal cost with less or no reward; one need to only consider the individual's behavior.

Altruism is usually understood as the behavior that is the benefit for others at a personal level. However, in evolutionary biology, various authors have interpreted the idea of altruism differently, which leads to dissimilar reasons about the evolution of altruistic behavior. Generally, several interpretations diverge on which the party receives the benefit out of altruism and upon how the cost of altruism is estimated. By using a simple trait-group underlying structure, the assumptions underlying different interpretations can be delineated and can show how they relate to each other. People feel that a thorough inspection of the link between interpretations not only exposes why different authors arrived at disparate conclusions about altruism but even illuminates the conditions that are likely to be in favour of the evolution of altruism.

## Personal well - being

Well-being is a wide and dynamic concept that covers all subjective, social, and psychological dimensions and also health-related behaviours.

Subjective well-being is also known as personal well-being. The term Subjective Well-Being (SWB) is said as an experience by an individual's reaction to affect and cognitive judgments. Happiness is sometimes interchanged and used with Subjective Well-Being, but it has even more of a wide-ranging explanation to psychologists; although happiness is related with a sense of SWB. It usually looks at satisfaction generally, as well as a sense of satisfaction to the standard of a particular person. Measuring life satisfaction involves experiences of past and expectations of future.

Diener and Suh (1997) believed that: subjective well-being consists of three interrelated components: life satisfaction, pleasant affect, and unpleasant affect. Affect refers to pleasant and unpleasant moods and emotions, whereas life satisfaction refers to a cognitive

sense of satisfaction with life. In well-being theory: well-being is said to be a construct, and well-being is the concept in positive psychology. It has five measurable elements that is counted towards it:

- ✓ Positive emotion
- ✓ Engagement
- ✓ Relationships
- ✓ Meaning and purpose
- ✓ Accomplishment

Not a single element gives the definition of well-being, but each one contributes. By self - report, some aspects of the five elements are measured subjectively. But other aspects are measured by objective means. In theory of authentic happiness, the center piece of positive psychology is happiness. It is a real factor that is defined by the life satisfaction measure. Happiness talks about three aspects namely, positive emotion, engagement, and meaning. Each of which feeds to life satisfaction and is measured by subjective report. There are twenty-four concepts in the theory of authentic happiness, like kindness, the strengths, and virtues, social intelligence, courage, integrity, humour which are the supportive factors for engagement. In well-being theory, engagement alone is not underpinned but all the five elements by the twenty-four strengths. Deploying highest strengths leads to more positive emotions, more to meaning, more accomplishment and to better relationships.

### Adulthood

An adult biologically is a human that has attained sexual maturity. In the context of human beings, the term adult has various meanings which are associated with the legal and social concepts. A legal adult is a person attained the age of majority and thus is regarded as self-sufficient, independent and responsible. In developmental psychology, early adulthood is said to be between the ranges of 19 to 40 years.

Psychological adult development is encompassed in Human adulthood. The definitions of adulthood are frequently contradictory and inconsistent. An individual person may be biologically an adult, and have adult behavior but can be still treated as a child if they fall under the legal age of majority. Likewise, an individual can legally be an adult but possess none of the responsibility and maturity which define an adult.

Although Erikson (1950) accepted Freud's basic psychosexual framework, he expanded the frame of development at each stage. In his psychosocial theory, Erikson emphasized that the ego does not just act on the impulses of id and demands of the superego. At each stage, ego acquires certain skills and attitudes that make an individual active and as a contributing member of the society. A basic psychological conflict, resolved along a continuum from positive to negative, determines either a healthy or maladaptive outcome at every stage.

### Stages:

- Infancy – Birth-1 year – Trust vs. Mistrust
- Early childhood – 1-3 years –Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt
- Pre – School – 3-6 years – Initiative vs. Guilt
- School ages – 6- 11 are years – Industry vs. Inferiority
- Adolescence – Identity vs. Identity Confusion
- Young Adulthood – Intimacy vs. Isolation
- Middle adulthood – Generativity vs. Stagnation
- Old age – Ego Integrity vs. Despair

### Need for the Study

Altruism or selflessness is said to be the principle of concern for the welfare of others. In many cultures, it is a traditional virtue and a core aspect of several religious traditions and secular worldviews. According to a few psychologists, there is nothing as 'pure' altruism. When people help strangers or animals, there is always some benefit for us, sometimes we are not aware of it. Altruistic behaviour makes a person feel good about oneself, it also gains the respect of other people. It is also said by saints that altruism may increase the chances of entering into heaven. Otherwise, altruism can be an investment strategy - the good deeds are done to others in the hope that they will return some other day when we are in need of it, this is noted as reciprocal altruism.

According to evolutionary psychologists, it can also be a way of exhibiting one's resources, showing how wealthy one is. Thus they become more appealing to the opposite sex and may have an enhancement in reproductive possibilities. The need for altruism comes from the concept that a person has energy more than it is needed to care for one's personal needs.

Actually, the act of altruism is not an option. It is just that we can choose to be altruistic or egoistic. But examining Nature illustrates that altruism is the fundamental law. For example, each cell in the body is inherently egoistic. But to exist, it must relinquish its egoistic tendencies for the sake of the body's well-being. The reward for that cell is that it experiences not only its own existence but the life of the whole body.

The act of doing good will and helping others without any intentional expectation creates a sense of internal happiness and satisfaction. It also creates positivity and when people who benefitted bless or appreciate, it increases the motive to work for the welfare of others. The happiness felt within an individual, in turn, add on to the well - being. The urge to be happy and cherish the good in oneself is something which every person would wish for. Thus altruistic helps a person to have a better well - being, it is not the subjective/personal well - being but also the social and emotional well - being also increases.

Altruistic behaviour also creates more social connections and network among people. The social relationship brings a sense of security and connectedness. As studies indicate well - being is a very important concept in the life of an individual. All the dimensions of well - being namely: personal, social, physical, mental and spiritual are interdependent on each other and are interconnected. A well-functioning person has life satisfaction and better well - being in all the five dimensions. Therefore the need for altruism in every person is an essential trait that would contribute to their well - being in all ways.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study focused on underlying similarities between the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire (PAFS; Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984a) and the Differentiation of Self Inventory (DSI; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998). Generalized least-squares

factor analysis produced two related factors, Self-Regulation and Interdependent Relating, accounting for 60% of the variance in the solution. Higher Self-Regulation—comprised of DSI scales characterized by less emotional reactivity and the ability to take an I position in relationships—and Interdependent Relating—marked by greater personal authority, intergenerational intimacy and less intergenerational fusion on the PAFS and less emotional cut off on the DSI—predicted well-being among both women and men (Skowron, Holmes and Sabatelli 2003)

Altruistic (different-regarding) feelings and behaviours were related to well-being, health, and longevity. The study presented a summary and evaluation of existing research information on altruism and its relation to psychological and physical health. It suggested numerous complimentary interpretive frameworks, along with evolutionary biology, physiological models, and positive psychology. Potential public health implications of the study were discussed, in addition to guidelines for future studies. The article concluded, with a few caveats that a sturdy correlation exists between the well-being, happiness, health, and longevity of those who were emotionally and behaviourally compassionate, so long as they're not overwhelmed by using helping tasks. (Post 2005).

The research measured resident well-being and explored its relationship with empathy. Well-being was measured using Medical Outcomes Study 8-item Short Form (SF-8). Eighty-three (50%) residents replied to the survey. Mean ratings for well-being as measured by way of the SF-8 were corresponding to the overall population, and empathy rankings on the IRI had been similar to resident samples. Resident empathy on both the cognitive (PT) and emotive (EC) sub-scales of the IRI become higher for residents with higher intellectual well-being on the SF-8; however, this difference was statistically significant only for the cognitive sub-scale. The importance of a number of personal wellness promoting strategies differed for residents with higher intellectual properly-being on the SF-8. (Shanafelt, West, Zhao, Novotny, Kolars, Haberman and Sloan 2005).

The study on Altruism, Helping, and Volunteering: Pathways to Well-Being in Late Life examined the influence of prosocially orientations including altruism, volunteering, and informal helping on positive and negative well-being outcomes among retirement community dwelling elders. Result indicated, Ordinal logistic regression outcomes indicated that altruistic attitudes, volunteering, and informal helping behaviours make precise contributions to the maintenance of life satisfaction, positive affect and different wellbeing consequences considered on this research. Predictors gave an explanation for variance commonly in the positive indicators of psychological well-being, however were not significantly associated with the negative effects. Female gender and functional limitations were also related to diminish psychological well-being. (Kahana, Bhatta, Lovegreen, Kahana, and Midlarsky 2014).

## METHODOLOGY

### Objectives

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

### Hypotheses

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

### Research Design and Sample

Exploratory research design was used. The sample constituted the adult population in the age range of 23 - 30 years and was collected using simple random sampling method. The sample includes youth both male and female. There were totally 202 samples who participated in the study.

### Tools

- ✓ **Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI)** was developed by the **International Well Being Group (IWbG 2006)**. The PWI scale contains seven items of satisfaction, each one corresponding to a quality of life domain as: standard of living, health, achieving in life, relationships, safety, community-connectedness, and future security. These seven domains are theoretically embedded. It is a 10 point rating scale from "No Satisfaction at all" to "Completely Satisfied". Cronbach alpha lies between .70 and .85 in Australia and overseas. Inter-domain correlations are often moderate at round .30 to .55 and item-total correlations are at least .50. The index has also demonstrated good test-retest reliability across 1-2 week interval with an intra-class correlation coefficient of 0.84 (Lau and Cummins, 2005). Strong Construct Validity and Convergent Validity were found.
- ✓ **Adapted Self-Report Altruism Scale** was 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 Personal Well-being.
- ✓ Independent Sample t test - males and females on Altruism and Personal Well-being.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1**  
**Correlation between Altruism and Personal Wellbeing**

Variables	r
Altruism	0.177*
Personal Well-Being	

\*Significant at 0.05 level

Product moment correlation was computed to study the relationship between Altruism and Personal Wellbeing. Results indicate that there exists a significant positive correlation between Altruism and Personal Well – being. The study conducted by Schwartz and colleagues



(2008) states that engaging in altruistic acts indeed produces beneficial results ranging from improved mental health, increased well-being, increased positive affect, decreased negative affect, and increased life satisfaction. There have also been many studies done on altruism for those on the receiving such as the effects of volunteering on the community.

A study by **Kahana, Bhatta and Lovegreen (2013)**, indicated that altruistic attitudes, volunteering, and informal helping behaviours made unique contributions to the maintenance of life satisfaction, positive affect and other wellbeing Predictors explain variance primarily in the positive indicators of psychological well-being.

**Haurwitz and Marsh (2014)** hypothesized about the relationship between objective and subjective well-being, results showed that subjective well-being mediated the relationship between increases in objective well-being metrics, such as income, and altruism. These results suggest that extraordinary altruism may be promoted by societal factors that increase subjective well-being. Findings imply that people who are altruistic, experience better mental health. People who are already functioning well psychologically may also be better able to help others.

Thus the hypothesis stating that "There will be a significant relationship between Altruism and Personal well – being" is accepted.

**Table – I**  
**Mean scores and the level of significance of the variables**

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t value
Altruism	Female	97	37.12	8.598	0.200 <sup>NS</sup>
	Male	105	36.13	8.751	
Personal Well-Being	Female	97	62.58	15.731	0.023*
	Male	105	57.30	16.876	

\*Significant at 0.05 level

<sup>NS</sup> Not Significant

The results indicated that there exist no gender significant differences in altruism among the sample. But there is a significant gender difference in personal well - being. The difference is at 0.05 level.

In contrast, an experiment by **Innocenti and Paziienza (2006)** implemented the triadic design proposed by Cox (2004) which discriminated between transfers resulting from trust or trustworthiness and transfers resulting from altruistic preferences. Results show that women exhibit a higher degree of altruism than men for both trust and trustworthiness but relatively more for trustworthiness. This result provides an explanation to the experimental finding that women reciprocate more than men. But the current study portrays that there is no gender difference in altruism.

The reason for this contradiction may be, now a day everybody are helpful to each other. In seeking help or helping others there is no much difference. The way boys help may differ from girls but the tendency to be altruistic exists. Females are more nurturing and caring whereas males are heroic and chivalrous.

**Graham and Chattopadhyay (2012)** found that women have higher average levels of reported well-being than men world-wide. The standard deviation of well-being levels across women is also smaller than that of men. The current study also portrays that there is gender difference and thus supports the previous studies.

Thus the hypothesis stating "There will be no significant gender differences in Altruism" is accepted. "There will be no significant gender differences in Altruism" is not accepted.

### Significance of the study

The current study reveals that altruism positively influences personal well-being. This may be attributed to the positive affect an individual has towards the life. The positive affect influences the individual's attitude towards the life events and the coping mechanisms adopted in the event of unexpected catastrophic events. The sense of satisfaction the individual has towards life events makes him/ her feel positive in various aspects of life that has an impact on the overall psychological well-being of an individual. The findings of pessimism not relating positively to gratitude and psychological well-being can also be attributing to the same cause. The negativity associated to the life cannot make an individual grateful towards life which in turn affects the psychological well-being.

### Limitations and Recommendations

- A larger sample size can be used for better results that can be generalized.
- A comparative study between working adults and studying adults can be done.
- Representation from different districts and also states can be collected.

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