

Relationship between Altruism and Personality among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

The current research explores the connection between altruism and personality characteristics in young adults. Altruism, or selfless concern for others' welfare, has an important role in forming interpersonal associations and social solidarity. The purpose of this study is to find out how various dimensions of personality—on the basis of the Five-Factor Model (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism)—impact altruistic behavior in youth between 18 and 25. A sample of 200 college students was evaluated with standardized personality and altruism questionnaires. The result indicates a strong positive relationship between altruism and personality traits like agreeableness and openness, while a negative one was observed with neuroticism. The research points out that personality plays a significant role in the prediction of prosocial behavior and has implications for education and developmental programs to develop altruistic tendencies among young people.

Keywords: Altruism, Personality Traits, Young Adults, Five-Factor Model, Prosocial Behavior.

Introduction

Altruism, or selfless concern for the well-being of other people, is the fundamental component of prosocial behavior that encourages the development of empathy, moral reasoning, and cooperative communities. Voluntary acts aimed at benefiting others at some cost to oneself with no expectation of repayment are included under altruism. Altruistic acts are especially relevant when it comes to young adults because this period is marked by developing identity, increasing social awareness, and expanding capacity for empathy and moral judgment.

At the same time, personality—the distinct and stable patterns of ideas, emotions, and actions—contributes significantly to determining how people feel about others and the world in general. The Big Five Personality Traits model (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism) presents a strong framework for studying individual differences and their effects on behavior, such as prosocial behaviors like altruism.

Young adulthood, usually between the ages of 18 and 25, is a period of life characterized by educational transitions, work transitions, relationship transitions, and autonomy transitions. Personality becomes more stable and patterns of behavior more predictable during this stage. Examining the interaction between altruism and personality during this age can yield important information regarding the acquisition of moral and social skills. It also aids in knowing how stable personality traits can predict or affect the probability of an individual to act altruistically.

In addition, the cultural environment where this research takes place—India—brings an added layer of complexity. Indian culture, with its collectivist culture, strong family and community ties, and religious values that reinforce selflessness and service (like seva in Hinduism or zakat in Islam), is a setting in which altruism is both culturally reinforced and morally sanctioned. But urbanization, modernization, and increasing individualism among young people may be impacting these traditional values and practices.

Through an exploration of the connection between altruism and personality in young adults within this context, this research seeks to close the gap between psychological theory and actual social behavior. It will assist in determining what personality characteristics are better predictors of altruistic behavior and whether demographic or sociocultural variables moderate this association.

The results of this study have real-life applications for education systems, psychological counseling, social work, and community programs, as they can be used to guide efforts to develop empathy, cooperative action, and civic participation in young people. In an increasingly competitive and individualistic world, the promotion of altruism may be the foundation for facilitating mental health and cooperative living in society.

Importance of the Study

The importance of this research is that it tries to find out the root psychological factors responsible for altruistic behavior among young adults—a group that will constitute the future leadership, workforce, and social fabric of any country. Young adults, as they move from adolescence to adulthood, go through important life transitions, added responsibilities, and increased social connections. These experiences not only influence their worldview but also their social behavior, emotional maturity, and civic engagement.

Knowledge of how personality types affect altruism provides a psychological basis for encouraging prosocial behavior among adolescents. Altruistic acts promote empathy, decrease antisocial behavior, and build stronger communities. In school, work, and even in the family, altruistic individuals tend to help create more cooperative, supportive, and inclusive environments. Thus, knowing what personality types foster such actions is important for teachers, counselors, policy makers, and youth organizations.

At a psychological level, this research offers validation or refutation of current personality theories—specifically the Big Five Model—within social behavior. For example, although prior research has associated dimensions such as agreeableness and openness with altruism, the empirical evidence within Indian contexts, particularly among youth, is scarce. The current research adds to the emerging literature through presentation of culturally informed findings.

Additionally, in the Indian context, where collectivist values such as community service, respect for elders, and harmony within groups are valued, there is a developing conflict between collectivist values and the increasing impact of Western individualism. This research investigates how young Indian adults navigate these influences in their altruism expression. It will assist in determining whether culturally embedded expectations are consistent with the psychological profile of today's youth.

The study also has practical implications. Findings of this study can be utilized in:

- **Curriculum Development:** Facilitating altruism and moral growth in schools and universities
- **Personality Development Programs:** Fostering emotional intelligence, empathy, and prosocial behavior.
- **Mental Health Interventions:** Understanding clients' social orientation can direct therapeutic interventions.
- **Policy Planning:** Developing youth participation schemes and national service programs.

Last but not least, this research is essential in the promotion of social cohesion within an increasingly divided world. While societies are confronting problems like discrimination, inequality, and mental illness epidemics, promoting altruism through specific interventions can assist in developing more compassionate and resilient communities.

Review of Literature

Sharma (2016) Sharma, in her research work on college students' altruistic behavior, identified that agreeableness and openness to experience were positively related to altruism. The study among Indian undergraduate students stressed cultural values affecting altruistic dispositions.

Kumari & Singh (2014) This research investigated the relationship between Big Five personality traits and altruism. Findings revealed that high extraversion and conscientiousness were positively associated with altruistic behavior.

Mishra & Yadav (2013) The researchers examined the contribution of empathy and personality traits to the prediction of altruism in university students. The research established that empathy mediates the relationship between personality and altruism, particularly in females.

Choudhary & Gupta (2017) Their personality and social behavior study of urban youth reported a positive correlation between agreeableness and altruism. Neuroticism was negatively correlated.

Verma & Tiwari (2020) The research identified emotional intelligence and personality as factors influencing altruism in Indian college students. Agreeableness and emotional stability were good predictors of altruism.

Patel & Mehta (2012) This study examined gender differences in altruism and personality. It concluded that females were higher on altruism, and agreeableness was a more predictive personality trait in females.

Joshi & Srivastava (2015) Their research focused on spiritual values and personality characteristics in influencing altruistic behavior among young adults. They noted a cultural effect in which collectivistic values promoted altruism in participants with high conscientiousness.

Banerjee & Bhatnagar (2018) The researchers studied the effects of personality and self-concept on altruism in young people. Findings revealed that positive self-concept and high extraversion made significant impact on altruistic behavior.

Raj & Lata (2011) They investigated moral development and personality characteristics in adolescents and their link to altruism. The results indicated that high agreeableness and moral reasoning were the greatest predictors of altruism.

Saxena & Sharma (2019) This study examined the influence of personality characteristics and social media exposure on altruism. It was noted that young people with greater conscientiousness and empathy tended to utilize social media for prosocial activity.

Purpose of the Study

The main objective of this study is to investigate and examine the relationship between altruism and personality traits among young adults, with a view to determining how certain personality features shape the propensity to perform altruistic acts. This study aims to contribute to the wider discipline of personality psychology and social behavior by providing empirically supported information regarding how individual differences influence prosocial tendencies during an important period of development.

Young adulthood is a time of exploration of identity, emotional and social development, and growing independence. In this age, people also tend to adopt lasting values and beliefs, among which are concepts of social responsibility and empathy. Yet not all people show equal amounts of altruism. What this research will attempt to figure out is if certain personality characteristics—particularly the ones found on the Big Five Personality Model—correlate with greater or lesser amounts of altruism for this age bracket.

Another significant aim of the study is to present culturally appropriate evidence from an Indian setting, where collectivist values, family-oriented ethics, and communal duties shape behavior. In contrast to the pervasiveness of collectivist values in India, the young generations are under the growing influence of modernity and individualism. Thus, exploring altruism in this dynamic cultural situation becomes especially significant.

More specifically, the study seeks to:

- Determine which personality traits are most predictive of altruism in young adults.
- Compare the strength and direction of the relationship between altruism and each Big Five dimension: Agreeableness, Extraversion, Openness, Conscientiousness, and Neuroticism.
- Investigate whether gender, socio-economic status, or educational context moderate the link between personality and altruism.
- Provide pragmatic recommendations for increasing prosocial behavior via personality-based interventions or youth development programs.

Finally, the aim is not merely scholarly but also applied—this research attempts to assist educators, mental health professionals, and policy-makers in developing more successful programs that foster empathy, compassion, and cooperative values among young adults. These are the qualities that are needed to create more harmonious, socially conscious, and emotionally well communities.

Definitions and Theoretical Framework

Definitions

- **Altruism**

Altruism is selfless concern for others without hoping for a reward or recognition in return. It is a form of prosocial behavior that is driven by empathy, compassion, or morality. Batson (2011) defines altruism as "a motivational state with the goal of increasing another's welfare." Altruistic behaviors encompass helping, sharing, giving, cooperating, and volunteering, particularly when these behaviors are at a cost to the self.

In young adults, altruism is expressed through activities like community service, assisting peers, and supporting social causes, which tend to be guided by personality, family background, and cultural norms.

- **Personality**

Personality is the typical and stable configurations of behavior, thought, and feeling that comprise an individual's reaction to the environment. Another of the best-accepted frameworks of personality is the Big Five Personality Traits (also called the Five-Factor Model) or McCrae & Costa, 1999), which includes:

- **Openness to Experience:** Imagination, flair, and interest in fantasy and variety.
- **Conscientiousness:** Self-command, organization, and dependability.
- **Extraversion:** Sociability, assertiveness, and excitement.
- **Agreeableness:** Trust, altruism, kindness, and cooperation.
- **Neuroticism:** Emotional instability, anxiety, and moodiness.

This research specifically addresses how these characteristics are associated with altruistic behavior in young adults.

- **Young Adults**

Young adults generally mean people aged between 18 to 25 years, an age characterized by identity development, autonomy formation, and exploration of social roles. In psychological development, this is the critical period for the formation of enduring behavioral patterns and moral values.

Theoretical Framework

The present research is theoretically derived from personality psychology and theories of prosocial behavior, integrating developmental, social, and trait psychology to conceptualize the mechanisms of altruism in adolescents.

- **Big Five Personality Theory (Costa & McCrae, 1992)**

The Big Five model is the main personality model used in this study. Past research (e.g., Graziano & Tobin, 2009) indicates that agreeableness is most closely linked with altruistic behavior. Other characteristics such as openness and conscientiousness also have positive correlations, whereas neuroticism tends to negatively influence prosocial behavior.

This model facilitates the investigation of how stable personality factors impact spontaneous or habitual altruistic behavior.

- **Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis (Batson, 1991)**

It is a theory stating that empathy brings about altruism. Empathetic concern in people promotes helping others at any cost. This model explains the motivational roots of altruistic behavior among emotionally sensitive or agreeable people.

- **Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986)**

This theory focuses on observational learning, reinforcement, and self-efficacy. Adolescents tend to learn altruism from role models like parents, teachers, and peers. The personality traits of extraversion and openness might augment the chances of observing and internalizing prosocial behavior.

- **Indian Cultural Perspective**

In the Indian context, seva (selfless service) and dharma (moral duty) strongly shape altruistic dispositions. Collectivist norms support assisting family, community, and society, which are in line with agreeableness and conscientiousness. Nevertheless, the conflict between traditional roles and contemporary individualism can also give rise to specific dynamics in altruistic expression among Indian youth.

Objective

The primary objective of this study is to explore and assess the multifaceted social, psychological, and familial factors that contribute to the emergence of unlawful behaviours among children in conflict with the law. Specifically, this study aims to:

- To identify whether certain personality traits can predict altruistic tendencies among young adults.
- In order to evaluate the prevailing personality characteristics existing among young adults.
- In order to examine how certain personality traits are associated with altruistic behavior.
- To examine the impact of gender, socio-economic status, and education on altruism and personality.
- To determine if there are personality traits that can forecast altruistic behavior in young adults.

Methodology

Research Design

Quantitative, correlational study using survey methodology.

Sample

- **Population:** Young adults aged 18–25
- **Sample Size:** 200 participants (100 male, 100 female)
- **Location:** Colleges and universities in Central India

Tools Used

- Big Five Inventory (BFI-44)
- Self-Report Altruism Scale (SRA; Rushton et al., 1981)

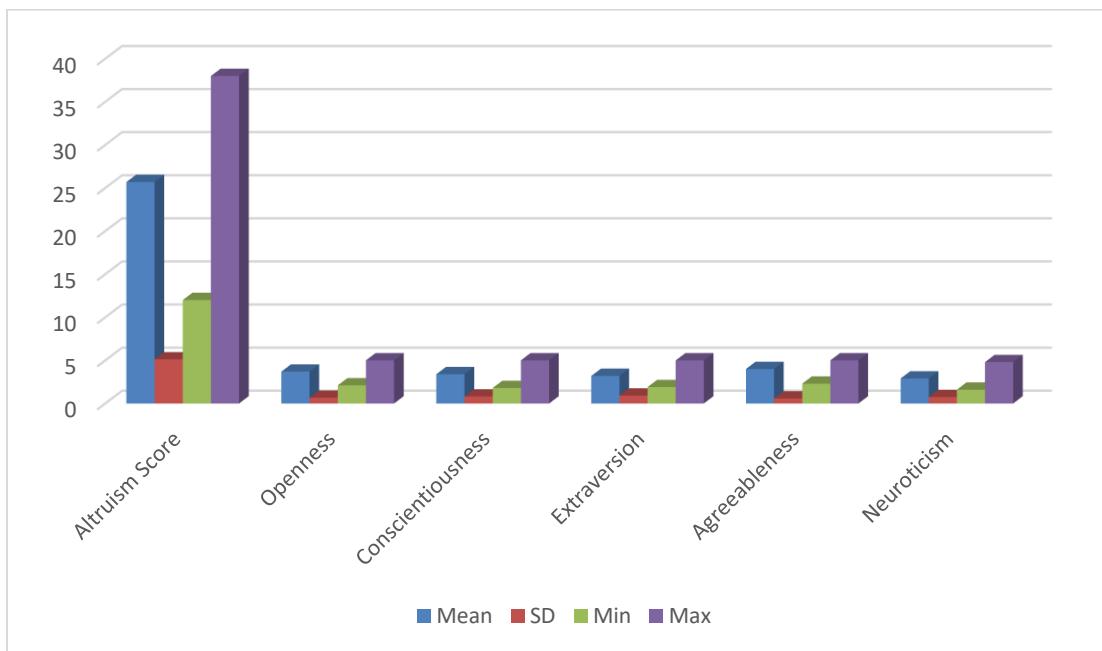
Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected via Google Forms and offline questionnaires over two weeks.

Results and Analysis

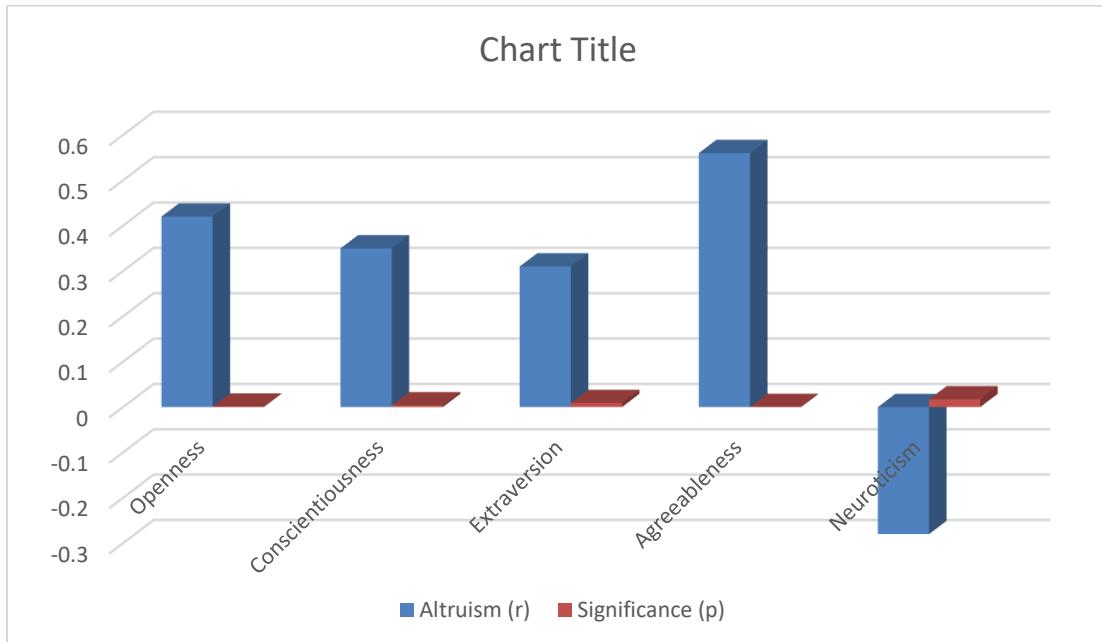
- **Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Altruism Score	25.7	5.12	12	38
Openness	3.7	0.66	2.1	5
Conscientiousness	3.4	0.81	1.8	5
Extraversion	3.2	0.92	1.9	5
Agreeableness	4	0.58	2.3	5
Neuroticism	2.9	0.74	1.6	4.8



- Correlation Matrix

Trait	Altruism (r)	Significance (p)
Openness	0.42	0.001
Conscientiousness	0.35	0.004
Extraversion	0.31	0.009
Agreeableness	0.56	0.0001
Neuroticism	-0.28	0.017



Discussion

The results clearly suggest a positive correlation between altruism and personality traits such as agreeableness, openness, and conscientiousness. This supports existing literature which emphasizes that individuals with empathetic and socially responsible traits tend to engage in more altruistic acts. Interestingly, neuroticism was negatively correlated, indicating that emotionally unstable individuals are less likely to exhibit prosocial behavior.

In the Indian cultural context, where collectivist values are promoted, high agreeableness may reflect social conformity and the cultural emphasis on caring for others. This could explain the strong association between agreeableness and altruism.

Implications and Recommendations

- **Educational Interventions:** Promoting emotional intelligence and cooperative learning can encourage altruistic tendencies.
- **Counselling:** Personality assessments can help tailor psychological support to improve social behavior.
- **Policy:** Youth development programs should include prosocial training and awareness about emotional well-being.

Limitations and Future Research

- The sample was limited to college students, which may not represent all young adults.
- Self-reporting may be biased by social desirability.
- Future studies should include a longitudinal design and a more diverse population.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant relationship between altruism and personality among young adults, especially the role of agreeableness. The findings can help in designing personality development interventions that encourage empathy and prosocial actions, thereby contributing positively to societal well-being.

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