



Altruism in relation to Life Satisfaction among NGO Volunteers

¹Vaishnavi Arora

Department of Psychology, School of Social Sciences, CHRIST (Deemed to be University)

Delhi-NCR Campus, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, India

vani1.arora@gmail.com

²Dr. Harleen Kaur, Assistant Professor

Department of Psychology, School of Social Sciences, CHRIST (Deemed to be University)

Delhi-NCR Campus, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, India

rj.harleen11@gmail.com

Abstract

The current research explores the intricate relationship between altruism and life satisfaction among NGO Volunteers. Employing a comprehensive dataset, descriptive statistics and correlation analysis illuminate the relationship among key variables. Rooted in the altruistic attitudes prevalent in collectivist cultures, particularly among Indian NGO volunteers, the study

investigates the impact of altruistic behaviours on positive affective states and overall life satisfaction moreover, understanding the gender difference. Incorporating evolutionary perspectives, the research aims to contribute to the understanding of how altruism fosters life satisfaction, providing a nuanced conceptual framework for further exploration and practical applications.

Keywords : *Altruism, Life Satisfaction, NGO Volunteers*

Introduction

Altruism, originating from the Latin word "ALTER," meaning "OTHER," embodies a selfless concern for the well-being of others. Post (2002) defines altruism as “socially proactive individuals who are empathetic and inherently inclined to help without condition or purpose.” Auguste Comte, in the 19th century, initially formulated the idea, marking the beginning of altruism studies. Since 1990s, enthusiasm from behavioural and sociological disciplines has significantly expanded awareness of altruism. Batson (1991) contributed to the understanding of altruism, conceptualizing it as an inspiring state that contributes to the wealth and well-being of others through compassion and empathy. The Italian origin of the word underscores the selflessness of altruistic acts, denoting help without expecting rewards (Batson & Powell, 2003).

Life satisfaction (LS) and happiness stand as fundamental human goals. Pavot and Diener (2009) defined life satisfaction as “an evaluative summary of one's quality of life, encompassing the balance of emotions, feelings, and behaviours. This positive state reflects the elegance of a good philosophy of life” (Dhiman, 2020). Life satisfaction is influenced by factors such as individual meaning attached to life, personality, relationships, and expectations (Recepoğlu, 2013).

In the context of NGO volunteers, the cultural norms of Indian volunteers differ from Western countries due to their participation in a collectivist culture. Collectivist cultures, such as India's, prioritize aspects like altruism, self-actualization, helping behaviour, and life satisfaction. Understanding these cultural nuances is essential for interpreting the dynamics of altruistic behaviour and its impact on life satisfaction. Altruism's motivating factors are highlighted in studies from 1977 to 2020, suggesting associations with enhanced life adjustment. Scholars in both West and East agree that altruism includes core ideas such as increasing the well-being of others, not expecting any return, and being entirely voluntary (Lu et al., 2019b). Numerous studies on LS from 1984 to 2019 indicated that it is an overall cognitive assessment of one's life conditions based on personal criteria (Diener, 1984). Maintaining altruistic attitudes and engaging in prosocial behaviours are considered protective resources beneficial for older adults in stressful situations (Kahana et al., 2014). LS is also seen as an intriguing component of social worker duties (Kubiszewski et al., 2018).

Empirical evidence supports the positive relationship between altruism and life satisfaction. Longitudinal studies demonstrate that altruistic attitudes and prosocial behaviours promote positive affective states and life satisfaction, especially in late life (Kahana et al., 2013). Altruistic behaviours, such as volunteering, positively impact mental wellbeing and health (Inagaki & Eisenberger, 2016).

Few studies have been done considering altruism as a mediating variable for life satisfaction or both the variables influencing each other or one influencing the other. The studies being done in different area of occupation and countries. Previous studies do not provide a complete picture of the relationship between study variables (altruism and life satisfaction), particularly in the context of volunteers at NGO. Additionally, these findings underscore the need for further research and exploring potential directions to develop policies, workshops, and therapies to enhance altruism and satisfaction in the lives of NGO Volunteers.

Methodology

Research Objectives

The objectives of the current study on the relationship between altruism and life satisfaction among the NGO Volunteers include (a) understand the relationship between altruism and life satisfaction among NGO Volunteers (b) explore gender difference in altruism and life satisfaction among NGO Volunteers.

Hypotheses

- **H1:** There will be a significant relation between altruism and life satisfaction among NGO Volunteers.
- **H2-:** There will be gender difference in the aspect of altruism and life satisfaction among NGO Volunteers.

Method

Research Design

A correlational research design was employed to study the research objectives. This research study adopted a quantitative research paradigm, utilizing two scales to assess Altruism and LS among the NGO Volunteers and understanding the variables within the contexts of both

genders. The scales were administered to participants through a questionnaire hosted on Google Forms. The selection of participants was conducted using a purposive sampling method.

Participants

Data from 200 adults (20–30 years) of all education level and class was collected. Inclusion criteria required participants to have at least a month experience at NGO, possess basic English skills, and be of Indian nationality. Exclusion criteria applied to those outside the age range, with no experience at NGO, and those diagnosed with mental disorders.

Measures

The following scales were used to collect data from participants:

- ***Socio-demographic and Personal data sheet:*** A semi-structured Performa was drafted for the study, containing information about the sociodemographic variables like age, sex, education, marital status, religion, socioeconomic status, and domicile of the subjects.
- ***Scale of Altruism (Rushton et al., 1981):*** The scale measures the altruistic behaviour in an individual. It consists of 20 items with 5 response options i.e. *Never, once, more than once, often, and very often*. Each item was scored from 0 to 4. Possible scores ranged from 20 to 100. The scale establishes high internal consistency and correlates with peer ratings, situational tests, and other questionnaire measures of altruistic tendency.

- ***Satisfaction with Life scale (Pavot & Diener, 1993):*** SWLS is a 5-item scale which measures global cognitive judgments of one's life satisfaction. Participants indicate how much they agree or disagree with each of the 5 items using a 7- point scale that ranges *from 7 strongly agree to 1 strongly disagree*. The SWLS is revealed to be a valid and reliable measure of life satisfaction, suited for use with a wide range of age groups and uses.

Procedure

Following approval from Institutional Review Board, individuals meeting the study's inclusion criteria were enlisted. An informed consent form was used and data was collected from 200 adults through purposive sampling. An online questionnaire incorporating the two scales served as the means of data collection while keeping ethical considerations in mind.

Statistical Analysis

The acquired data underwent analysis employing descriptive statistics followed by inferential statistics through use of Jamovi software.

Result

For the present research has been undertaken to assess gender difference and to establish correlation among the variables under the study within each gender group. For the purpose, descriptive statistics were computed along with t-test for independent sample. For the same statistical outcomes have been presented in the table below.

Table 1

Summary of descriptive statistics and t-test for independent sample on altruism and Life satisfaction between male and female participants (n = 100 each)

	Group	N	Mean	SD	Mean difference	SE difference	Statistic	df	p	Effect Size
altruism	Female	100	62.30	13.85	-2.47	2.08	-1.19	198	0.24	-0.17
	Male	100	64.80	15.51						
LS	Female	100	22.10	6.45	0.39	1.01	0.39	198	0.70	0.05
	Male	100	21.70	7.77						

Descriptive from the above table indicates that male participants ($M = 64.80$; S.D. 15.51) has score slightly higher mean score on altruism than their female counterparts ($M = 62.30$; S.D. = 13.85), but this is not a statistically significant difference ($t = 1.19$; NS). On the second variable under the study, i.e., life satisfaction, male and female participants have scores almost similar mean values, 22.10 and 21.70, respectively. Hence, on life-satisfaction no statistically significant difference has been obtained ($t = 0.39$; NS). Furthermore, the effect size also indicating that apart from statistical difference, there is no practical effect which for either variable.

Table 2

Summary of coefficient of correlation between al and LS for male and female participants

	Altruism	Life Satisfaction
Altruism	-	0.39***
Life Satisfaction	0.38***	-

The correlation matrix provided demonstrates the relationships between the variable's "altruism" and "LS" for two distinct groups: males and females. The correlation coefficient of 0.39*** for males and 0.38*** for females indicates a strong positive linear relationship between "altruism" and "LS" within each group, with the three asterisks highlighting the high statistical significance of these correlations. This implies that as the measure of altruism tends to increase, the measure of LS also tends to increase, and vice versa, within both male and female groups. The robust statistical significance underscores the reliability of these observed correlations, suggesting that changes in one variable are closely associated with proportional changes in the other, emphasizing the meaningful connection between altruistic tendencies and life satisfaction within the contexts of both genders.

Discussion

This study endeavoured to assess and comprehend correlation between Altruism and Life Satisfaction in NGO Volunteers. The study also tried to understand and explore if there was any gender difference between Altruism and Life Satisfaction within the volunteer context. The study's findings exhibited that there is a slightly higher significant positive association between the two variables in the male NGO Volunteers as compared to the female NGO

Volunteers. However, the difference between the scores of two gender's was not as significant to be qualified for a statistical significance. The effect sizes further indicated that, despite few statistical discrepancies, there were no practical effects on either variable. Contrary to initial expectations outlined in Hypothesis, gender differences in altruism and life satisfaction were not prominent among NGO volunteers. While males displayed a slightly higher mean score in altruism, this did not translate into a significant difference. Moreover, both male and female participants exhibited similar levels of life satisfaction, contradicting gender stereotypes related to well-being and altruistic behaviours. Study by Eagly and Crowley (1986) delved into gender differences in helping behaviour, aligning with the idea that gender does not significantly influence altruistic tendencies. Their research suggested that, in contexts such as volunteer work, gender disparities may diminish, emphasizing the shared commitment to altruistic actions among both men and women. Bekkers and Wiepking (2011) conducted a cross-national study examining gender differences in charitable giving, a form of altruistic behaviour. Their findings indicated that gender differences in charitable giving were minimal when controlling for income and other socio-economic factors. This aligns with the idea that in certain contexts, economic and situational factors may outweigh gender distinctions in altruistic tendencies. Vanwey (2004) concluded that altruism level is high in men and migrants from richer households behave more contractually. Heilman and Chen (2005) also discovered in their investigation that altruistic citizenship activity in the workplace would boost men's favourability. Conversely, a study by Davis and Murrell (1993) proposed that gender roles and societal expectations could influence the manifestation of altruistic behaviours. Their findings indicated that, in certain situations, traditional gender norms might lead to variations in the expression of altruism, challenging the assumption of uniformity suggested by our research. Whereas, Brañas-Garza et al. (2018) have observed that women are significantly more altruistic than men.

Consistent with the hypothesis, statistical analysis revealed that there is a significant positive association between Altruism and Life Satisfaction. The findings suggest a nuanced connection between altruism and life satisfaction among NGO volunteers. The hypothesis posited a significant relationship, which was supported by the observed correlation coefficients. The strong positive correlation (0.39) underscores that as altruistic tendencies increase, life satisfaction tends to follow along. This aligns with theoretical perspectives emphasizing the positive impact of altruistic behaviours on well-being. The study's outcomes highlight that altruism plays a crucial role in shaping life satisfaction among NGO volunteers. The positive correlation implies that volunteers with higher altruistic tendencies experience greater life satisfaction. This aligns with prior research emphasizing the emotional rewards associated with helping others, contributing to an enriched sense of well-being. A study by Dulin et.al. (2001) showed that altruism is predictor of life satisfaction that goes consistent with our study. According to their study, altruistic involvement had influence on life satisfaction for low-income, older adult community service providers. They found that people who were involved in community services for altruistic reasons instead of monetary or other material benefits had higher life satisfaction than others. Capara and Steca (2005) also found that prosocial behaviour directly influenced life satisfaction. The study's outcomes highlight that altruism plays a crucial role in shaping life satisfaction among NGO volunteers. The positive correlation implies that volunteers with higher altruistic tendencies experience greater life satisfaction. Clary and Snyder (1999) explored the relationship between altruistic behaviours and life satisfaction among volunteers, their findings reinforced the positive correlation observed in our research, emphasizing that individuals engaged in altruistic activities tend to report higher levels of life satisfaction. Batson et al. (2007) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis affirming the emotional rewards associated with altruistic acts. Their study emphasized that individuals who engage in selfless behaviours not only experience positive emotions but also report higher life

satisfaction signifying the role of altruism in shaping well-being further giving a path to life satisfaction. Harbaugh, Mayr and Burghart (2007) conducted an experimental study exploring the neurobiological basis of altruistic behaviour where the findings (based on brain imaging) revealed that engaging in altruistic acts triggered reward centres associated with positive emotions. This neurological evidence strengthens the argument that altruism contributes significantly to an individual's overall sense of well-being.

In contrast, few studies presented a different perspective. A study by Oliner and Oliner (1988) acknowledged the positive impact of altruistic behaviours on personal fulfilment, they argued that the nature of the altruistic act and the motivation behind it could influence the relationship and in cases where altruism is driven by external pressures rather than genuine empathy, the correlation with life satisfaction may be less straightforward. Piliavin and Charng (1990) presented that the impact of altruistic behaviors on life satisfaction may vary across cultural contexts where the research highlighted that the social and cultural norms surrounding altruism can influence its perceived value, challenging the universality of the positive correlation. Cialdini et al. (1987) suggested that while altruistic behaviors may lead to short-term boosts in mood, the long-term impact on life satisfaction could be influenced by various factors such as the perceived cost of the altruistic act and individual differences in coping mechanisms. Rushton and Chrisjohn (1981) proposed that the relationship between altruism and life satisfaction may be more complex. Their research suggested that personality traits, such as empathy and self-esteem, could mediate the link between altruistic actions and subjective well-being. This challenges a straightforward causal relationship between altruism and life satisfaction.

Several previous studies are divergent with the current findings since the previous research has focussed on physicians, religious leaders, students, adolescents, LGBT older

adults and even the illiterate, but the current study focuses on particularly NGO Volunteers who have been volunteering or volunteered for at least one month. By examining altruism and life satisfaction within this context, the research acknowledges the unique dynamics of individuals engaged in pro-social activities, contributing to the external validity and applicability of the findings. The research contributes to the literature by explicitly addressing gender differences in altruism and life satisfaction. This gender-focused approach recognizes the importance of understanding how societal norms and expectations may influence these variables, enriching the study's overall contribution.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research illuminates the intricate relationship between altruism and life satisfaction among NGO volunteers. Findings underscore the positive impact of altruistic behaviours on overall well-being, transcending gender differences within this pro-social context. The study's implications extend to tailored volunteer training, gender-inclusive initiatives, and long-term engagement strategies, emphasising emotional rewards while offering practical insights for organizations fostering altruism. Ultimately, understanding the dynamics of altruism among volunteers contributes to the broader discourse on well-being, emphasizing the significance of purposeful engagement in shaping a satisfying and fulfilling life. On the other hand, the study's limitations, including a sample limited to adult NGO. By focusing solely on Altruism and Life Satisfaction, other key mediating and other influencers are likely to have been overlooked. These considerations underscore the necessity for further research, employing longitudinal studies and diverse samples, to deepen our understanding of the multifaceted nature of these relationships and their implications for mental health in evolving digital landscapes.

References

- Batson, C. D. (2010). *Altruism in humans*. Oxford University Press.
- Bergner, R. M., & Ramon, A. (2013). Some implications of beliefs in altruism, free will, and nonreductionism. *The Journal of social psychology, 153*(5), 598-618.
- Dulin, P., Hill, R. D., Anderson, J., & Rasmussen, D. (2001). Altruism as a predictor of life satisfaction in a sample of low-income older adult service providers. *Journal of Mental Health and Aging*.
- Dovidio, J. F., & Penner, L. A. (2001). Helping and altruism. *Blackwell handbook of social psychology: Interpersonal processes, 2*, 351-373.
- Hassan, S., Habib, S., & Zaidi, S. M. I. H. (2022). Role of Altruism and Spirituality in Life Satisfaction among Welfare Workers. *Advances in Business and Commerce (ABC), 1*(1), 29-40.
- Jhangiani, R., & Tarry, H. (2022). 8.1 Understanding Altruism: Self and Other Concerns. *Principles of Social Psychology-1st International H5P Edition*.
- Kahana, B., Kahana, E., Bhatta, T., Ye, M., & Yu, J. (2017). Altruism and life satisfaction among LGBT older adults. *Advances in Psychology Research, 120*(45), 1-13.
- Kahana, E., Bhatta, T., Lovegreen, L. D., Kahana, B., & Midlarsky, E. (2013). Altruism, helping, and volunteering: Pathways to well-being in late life. *Journal of aging and health, 25*(1), 159-187.

- Lu, C., Liang, L., Chen, W., & Bian, Y. (2021). A way to improve adolescents' life satisfaction: School Altruistic Group Games. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*, 533603.
- Pavot, W., & Diener, E. (1993). Review of the satisfaction with life scale. *Psychological assessment, 5*(2), 164.
- Ricard, M. (2017). Altruism and happiness. *Happiness, 156*.
- Rushton, J. P., Chrisjohn, R. D., & Fekken, G. C. (1981). The altruistic personality and the self-report altruism scale. *Personality and individual differences, 2*(4), 293-302.
- Samuel, P., & Pandey, S. (2018). Life satisfaction and altruism among religious leaders. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology, 6*(1), 89-95.
- Sharma, V., & Rosha, J. (1992). Altruism as a function of self-actualization and locus of control of benefactor. *Psychological Studies*.
- Tusche, A., & Bas, L. M. (2021). Neurocomputational models of altruistic decision-making and social motives: Advances, pitfalls, and future directions. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science, 12*(6), e1571.
- Yelpaze, İ., & Yakar, L. (2020). The relationship between altruism and life satisfaction: Mediator role of cognitive flexibility. *Cukurova University Faculty of Education Journal, 49*(1), 142-162.