



Level of altruism amongst school children of metropolitan and non-metropolitan cities in India.

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Abstract

Urban ethnotheories have expounded change in human behaviour due to their built environment and related culture but owing to their operant learning. Altruism is one such behaviours which is claimed to have changed. This research presents a pilot work of an experimental study exploring the level of altruism in school children of metropolitan and non-metropolitan cities. The current work primarily compares the level of altruism between the samples from two representative city types while considering other important variables such as age, sex and religion. The subjects were randomly chosen from different schools and were tested on the Altruism test.

The data revealed that city-status was a predictor of altruism in same gender group where non-metropolitan students showed altruism in much greater proportions than their metropolitan counterparts. In a mixed-gender analysis, sex appeared to be a more potent predictor with females showing higher altruism than males. The findings have been discussed in the light of psycho-social theories and a social policy projection has been presented.

Keywords: Positive psychology; Altruism; Pro-social Behaviour; Metropolitan; Gender; Developmental

The term *Altruism* comes from the Latin word *alter*, meaning "other", and generally connotes an orientation towards others than towards self. (Post, 2002) defines an altruist as "someone who does something for the other and for the other's sake, rather than as a means to self-promotion or internal well-being..." (p. 53). Social scientists assert that altruism has contextual, social-cognitive, affective, and relational roots (Becker, 1981; Post, Underwood, Schloss, & Hurlbut, 2002; Richman, DeWall, & Wolff, 2015; Smith, Mackie, & Claypool, 2014). More specifically, situational conditions (e.g., natural disasters) motivate individuals to care for others (Baron & Smolenska, 1992; Hovannisian, 1992; Lemieux, 2014; Li, Li, Decety, & Lee, 2013; Oliner, 1992).

A number of studies (Agnihotri, Krush, & Singh, 2012; Ahmed, 2009; Andreoni & Vesterlund, 2001; Bierhoff, 2002; Freund & Blanchard-Fields, 2014; Giridharadas, 2007; Hornstein, 1976; Saroglou, 2013; Sharma & Rosha, 1992; Sinha, 1998; Visser & Roelofs, 2011; Wilson, 2005) have assessed the nature, dynamics and levels of altruism across groups and

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populations such as city environments, age groups and gender. The main reason behind this enquiry is ever evolving human nature which is markedly influenced by the continuously changing culture and lifestyle (Bandura, 2006; Berkes & Folke, 1992; Brown, 1991; Fehr & Fischbacher, 2003; Warneken & Tomasello, 2009b). While behavioural theorists have expounded the construct and changing aspects of altruism with a predominantly intrinsic orientation (Bandura, 2006; Batson, 2014; Hung, Lai, & Chang, 2011; Rushton, 1976), anthropologists and ethnotheorists detailed the crescendos and diminuendos of altruism in a socio-cultural context with a predominantly extrinsic orientation (Boyd, 1988; Goody, 1991; Hinde & Groebel, 1991; Kurtz, 1999; Sussman & Cloninger, 2011; Warneken, Hare, Melis, Hanus, & Tomasello, 2007). Ideologically the later follows the prior one and in its effect altruism facilitates a strong social fabric for the humanity (Andreoni, 1990; Dixon, 2008; Monroe, 1998; Sussman & Cloninger, 2011; Weinstein, 2004).

Developmental psychologists have established a contextually influenced but positive association between altruism and age ((Fehr, Glätzle-Rützler, & Sutter, 2013; Thompson, Barresi, & Moore, 1997; Warneken & Tomasello, 2009a)) which paved way for further analysis and debate over the phenomenon (Goody, 1991; Kurtz, 1999; Rushton, 1976; Warneken et al., 2007; Warneken & Tomasello, 2009a, 2009b) .

Large-city dwellers, according to popular stereotype, are regarded as more socially aloof and less interpersonally responsive and helpful than residents of smaller community (Albanesi, Cicognani, & Zani, 2007; Clark & Word, 1972; Hart & Miethe, 2008; Latané & Darley, 1970; Milgram, 1970). (Milgram, 1970) contended that the urbanite, in adapting to stimulus overload caused by large numbers of people and high levels of heterogeneity and density, developed generalized social norms curtailing and minimizing both the breadth and intensity of social contacts. Later research, however, has indicated no effect in altruism due to community size (Korte & Kerr, 1975; Kwon & Wen, 2010; Lesk & Zippel, 1975; Vigdor, 2002) or even that urban dwellers are more helpful than their more rural counterparts (Ricketts, 2005; Schneider & Mockus, 1974; Weiner, 1976).

In a fast changing scenario of lifestyle in Indian cities where economic activities are inspiring not only the outer World but also the mode of living at micro levels, this theoretical objective requires an investigation of the factors explaining altruism. There is wide research evidence that gender differences, city environments and age differences influence the phenomenon of altruism (Agnihotri et al., 2012; Ahmed, 2009; Kwantes, 2003; Sharma & Roshia, 1992; Sinha, 1998). Researchers have also considered religion as an influencing factor (Habito & Inaba, 2006; Saroglou, 2013; Saroglou, Pichon, Trompette, Verschueren, & Dernelle, 2005).

Therefore, a comparative study of altruism for school children representing different sizes of cities has been put forward. Results of such a study may be useful not only to analyse various group differences but also for discriminating among the causes of variation in altruism.

Study objectives:

1. To study the level of altruism amongst the school children from representative cities of India.
2. To identify if these children differ on altruism in terms of age, gender, city size or religion.
3. To identify significant predictors of the level of altruism

METHODS

Sample and Setting

The data for this field study were collected with the help of personal contact to school administrations from two representative cities of India viz New Delhi being a Metropolitan city and Aligarh being a non-metropolitan city. Student lists from school offices were used to

randomly select the respondents. Besides testing them for their level of altruism, we asked the selected students to provide information about their age, gender and community. The schools from which the respondents were selected have well-established reputation, educational infrastructure and running curriculum on moral and value education. Through randomization of numbers at MS Excel, 400 students were selected. 242 students completed their forms out of which 102 were from schools of Aligarh and 140 were from schools of New Delhi. No effort was made to control the number of respondents from any groups e.g. age, gender or religion.

Breakup of the sample (N = 246)

City Status	Gender	Religion	N
Non-metropolitan = 102	Female = 49	Hindu	05
		Muslim	44
	Male = 53	Hindu	11
		Muslim	42
Metropolitan = 144	Female = 65	Hindu	52
		Muslim	9
		Christian	2
		Sikh	1
		Other	1
	Male = 79	Hindu	63
		Muslim	6
		Christian	5
		Sikh	3
		Jain	1
	Other	1	

Tool used:

A three point Altruism test developed by Penny Jain was used. The test consists of 25 items suitable to the socio-cultural settings of Indian society and follows Likert rating style. The split half reliability of the test is 0.91 whereas the questionnaire satisfies the content and face validity.

Analysis

Student's t-test was applied to compare means of various groups on the study variable. Relationships were studied using Carl Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. To identify significant predictors of altruism, Stepwise Multiple Regression analysis was conducted. Bootstrapping of confidence intervals (Haukoos & Lewis, 2005; Zhou & Dinh, 2005) for regression coefficients were calculated to extrapolate findings in the total population. Analyses were conducted using SPSS software.

RESULTS

Assumptions of normalcy for altruism data were just about met for both the groups of metropolitan [KS (144) = .073, $p = .06$] and non-metropolitan [KS (102) = .084, $p = .08$] groups. Both groups showed statistically significant difference indicating that non-metropolitan children were superior on the counts of altruism [$t(244) = 2.56$, $p = .011$]. Other group comparisons in overall sample such as gender [$t(244) = 0.57$, $p = .68$] and religion [$t(230) = 1.57$, $p = .126$] did not show any significant difference.

Gender and religion based groups were however compared within their respective city samples. Males and females did not show any difference on altruism within metropolitan sample [$t(142) = 1.07$, $p = .286$] as well as non-metropolitan sample [$t(100) = 0.26$, $p = .793$].

Likewise, Hindu and Muslim students were also similar on the counts of altruism within metropolitan sample [t (100) = 1.40, p = .162] as well as non-metropolitan sample [t (100) = 1.57, p = .11].

Analysis across the city status was also conducted. Comparisons of metropolitan and non-metropolitan males [t (100) = 1.22, p = .226] did not indicate any statistically significant difference whereas females [t (112) = 2.59 p = .012] showed statistically significant difference implying that metropolitan females were superior on the counts of altruism. While comparing similar religious groups across cities, difference was found within Hindu subjects [t (129) = 2.63, p = .01] implying that metropolitan Hindu subjects were superior on the counts of altruism as compared to their non-metropolitan counterparts. Muslim subjects, however, did not show any significant difference on altruism across the cities [t (99) = .408, p = .684].

Review of literature about altruism and pro-social behavior suggests an association of this dimension with age. Therefore, product moment correlation of age and altruism was also carried out. Age was not found associated neither in the total sample [r = -.05, p = .44] nor in non-metropolitan [r = -.06, p = .55] and metropolitan samples [r = -.03, p = .70]. Likewise, no other groups showed any association between age and level of altruism.

Having studied the difference between various groups and the pattern of relationship amongst variables, the data was further analysed and to extrapolate the findings within the population. In this regard, stepwise multiple regression analysis helped to identify the significant predictors of level of altruism. Independent variables in this analysis were age, gender, city type and religion. The level of altruism was taken as dependent variable. The findings have been reported in the following tables.

Model fit: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	191.141	1	191.141	6.333	.012
	Residual	7364.343	244	30.182		
	Total	7555.484	245			

The output indicates that only one variable i.e. status of city qualifies as a significant predictor of level of altruism. Therefore, the output tables show only one step. Table 4a shows the efficacy of the regression model to significantly predict our dependent variable. An observation of sum of squares shows that regression line fits to the data. F-ratio is significant enough, showing that our ability to predict the dependent variable has improved.

Having studied the goodness of fit of our regression model in table 4a we further study the model parameters and regression coefficient which have been reported in table 4b.

Model summary and Coefficients

Variables	R	R ²	β	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for β	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
City Status	.159	.025	1.789	2.517	.012	.389	3.190

Constant = 53.33

City Status in our model has entered at first and only step being single important and significant predictor of level of altruism. Regression value (.159) indicates considerable association between the dependent and the independent variables. R² value indicates the amount of variance accounted for by the Status of City in the level of altruism. In this model 2.5% of the total variance in altruism level is due to a subject's city. Regression coefficient value is 1.789 which coefficient indicates that each chance of a subject representing a

metropolitan city increases the value of moral judgement as high as 1.789 units provided that the effect of all other variables remains constant. *t*-value is highly significant which indicates that β -value is significantly different from zero. This signifies that the slope of the regression is steep enough. Confidence interval for β indicates the limits of coefficient value which can vary in the population of our study in future.

DISCUSSION

Contrary to the belief established by the social theorists (Milgram, 1970) and social experimenters (Merrens, 1973) that the incidence of altruism is greater among rural or small city dwellers than among urban dwellers, the present findings offer evidence that large city dwellers show comparatively higher altruism. This is however a matter of further enquiry that the reported lesser level of altruism of the non-metropolitan city children is more a function of situational factors and of the interaction between situational and subject variables than of subject characteristics alone. The current enquiry however provides that metropolitan altruism seems unaffected by the exposure to urban sprawl, overcrowding, economic and housing instability, failing social and cultural institutions, and crime is marked by a reduced likelihood of prosociality – as assumed previously.

Some previously research based beliefs about altruism or prosocial behaviour such as age being the strong correlate or gender being strong predictor have not met in the present research. Just like (Mortelmans, Damen, & Sinardet, 2008) we do not find a difference between boys and girls in altruistic behavior. This can be explained by referring to a psychological predictor as well used in this research. We had assumed this difference between boys and girls because of a difference in empathy showed by (Eisenberg, 2006) which has allocated as a predictor in this research. Unfortunately, the variance in altruism explained by gender is rather modest, so it does not have to be surprising that this assumed difference between boys and girls remains forthcoming. On the other hand, age is known to have a significant effect on altruism. It implies that the older people are, the more they tend to show altruistic behavior. This notion has also not been met in our study. This finding identifies with (Thompson et al., 1997) who find altruism and prosociality unrelated to age. They argue that children acquire the ability to deal with future-oriented situations through the development of some common mechanism which affects both future-oriented prudence and altruism. This is how children decide about helping others which is not dependent on age.

With regard to the selected predictors such as age, religion gender and city type, the only postulated research supported is about type of city and that is too in the opposite direction of what was hypothesized. With regard to the status of urbanity, we find a positive effect for altruism and for metropolitanism. The higher people score on altruism denotes they belong to a bigger city. The opposite results we found for the type of city is contrary to our expectations. The possible reason of this phenomenon has been elaborated by the researchers like (Holahan, 1977; Lähteenmaa, 1999; Schneider & Mockus, 1974). According to them, the relation of metropolitanism with altruism is not as unequivocal as its relation with empathic concern and that this relationship, because of its situational sensitivity, probably will be more easy to establish in an experimental setting, where someone is tested for altruism in a stressful situation for example, than in survey research.

POLICY PROJECTION

The current study provides a lead to several policy implications. Because of the finding that altruism is comparatively high in the metropolitan areas, intervention designers may find it particularly useful to focus a spotlight on metropolitan youths who could be engaged in altruistic activities. Their positive energies could be channelized under a well designed social policy program in order to help the needy sections of the society. Along with this, for reinforcement, the altruistic youth could be promoted as capable of goodness and causes of

positive change. Interventionists may also further promote altruism in non-metropolitan settings by priming certain motives among youths who do not have as high level of altruism. The metropolitan youth may come in contact with non-metropolitan youth under the guidance of government or non-government agencies; join hands together to do welfare for the needy, the environment and the governance. In this way, a transfusion of altruism from higher to lower side will also take place. The mechanism will involve priming these youths' awareness of the needs of others (allocentric motives), their religious/spiritual, and familial/relational values (normocentric motives), themes of justice and humanism (axiological motives), and or reflections on the role of social position, discrimination, and social power in determining who is cared for (socio-political motives).

This work could also inspire program about social organization or cohesion while taking wisdom from Social disorganization theories. The vision is that community-level problems such as poverty, crime and discord in neighborhood are reduced when social cohesion increases in the presence of altruism. The theoretical argument sounds effective because of the link between social ecology, social capital, and prosocial behavior.

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