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THE ROLE OF ALTRUISM IN CREATING A POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH AMONGST ADOLESCENTS



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ABSTRACT

Altruism, concern for the welfare of others is considered a bedrock virtue by nearly all religions and cultures. From an evolutionary perspective, we're wired for helping others. Altruism promotes deeper positive social integration, distraction from self-preoccupation, enhanced meaning and purpose, a more active lifestyle, and the presence of positive emotions such as kindness that displace harmful negative emotional states. Thus, it is entirely possible to assert that altruism enhances mental health. This study offers a significant contribution to the research literature on the

relationship between altruism and mental health. People who help others may be rewarded with better health. The study shows that students who offer love, caring, and support to others have better mental health than those who only receive help from others. The findings suggest that altruism offers mental-health benefits that can help counter the negative effects of stressful life events.

KEYWORDS :Altruism and Mental health.

INTRODUCTION:

Aristotle said:

"What is the essence of life? To serve others and do good."

The 21st century is replete with wars and genocides. Rape, domestic abuse, school violence and elder abuse captured our attention. In the face of all this terror, how has our species been able to survive?

Philosophers, ethologists and evolutionary biologists argue for an "altruistic gene" and speculate that a species marked more by altruism than by aggression has a better chance to survive because altruism is an important part of what Darwin meant by "fitness." From a psychological perspective, in addition to any genetic predisposition that may be present, phenomena such as nurturance and courageous compassion are prosocial (altruistic) behaviors that can be taught and

developed in the home and in the school. Education in school and at home must transcend the acquisition solely of facts, skills and “proper” behavior. Students must be taught in an environment filled with encouragement and justice, in which each student is seen as a lovable human being, not only as a vessel to be filled. When each student feels that he or she is important and worthwhile, while being helped to learn, then our world will be a better place. Altruism generally means selflessness, and gain for oneself is not uppermost in the mind of a true altruist, of course. And yet most of us believe that “give and you shall receive.” The idea that altruism benefits the giver as well as the receiver usually derives from the fact (or hope) that if you provide help to others, one day when you need it there’ll be someone to help you. Social scientists, psychologists and medical researchers are finding other ways altruism rewards the giver. Notably, giving to others can be seen in the larger context of social support, which research has consistently linked to mental health and longevity.

The future of India lies in the hands of present day children and the youth. Adolescent stage is a crucial period in the life of everyone. It is the age of a second great spurt in the growth of physical, intellectual and emotional aspects of children. Personality development of adolescent is important for their career achievement in future. This personality may be altered by many values. One of the important values is altruism which is defined as one who helps others without reward. Nowadays, students concentrate only about the studies and not the values such as altruism, empathy, sympathy, sacrifice, etc. In future, altruistic behaviour among students is one of the considerable values for getting good personality and it will help them become better citizens. Altruism is the quality of unselfish concern for the welfare of others. It can act as a catalyst for ethical change in society. There is an inspirational quality in altruism-to act for seemingly higher purposes has the effect of giving hope and purpose to life in a world that is not always kind and giving. Altruists are often motivated to sacrifice their income and worldly pleasures in the hope that someday the world will be a much better place. The altruistic act fulfills the altruist’s life and inspires others in the process. In a sense, the altruist may be fully paid for the acts of selflessness and giving, on terms they understand, appreciate, and find acceptable. An outside observer may not believe that a sacrificing mother has been compensated for the care and attention she has given her children, but that observer is not privy to all of the intimate details of the her life that might show that some rewards have been received for all her seemingly selfless effort. Altruism is the result of natural process and it does not take place suddenly. School and teachers can play an important role in the promotion of altruistic behaviour. The role of these socializing agents becomes even more important if we keep in mind that for many children whose home atmosphere is not much conducive to this type of conduct the school can provide an excellent, if not unique, opportunity for learning this type of behaviour. This fact should not be overlooked in the planning of the school curriculum.

It is well known that personality plays an important role in determining not only the behavior of an individual but also his overall success and prosperity in life. In other words, personality of the individual determines the nature of the society and the society in turn influences and nurtures the personality of an individual; thus, mutually reinforcing each other. Altruism is an expression of concern for the welfare of others without any obvious benefit or motivation on the part of the individual expressing the concern. In humans, helping others generally results in a feeling of pleasure or satisfaction, suggesting that human beings have actually developed a biological imperative which pushes them to behave in an altruistic manner by providing an emotional reward.

OBJECTIVES

To study the mental health of adolescents in relation to Altruism.

HYPOTHESES:

There is no significance difference in mental health of adolescents in relation to Altruism.

VARIABLE:

Independent Variable: Altruism

Dependent Variable: Mental Health.

SAMPLE

The sample for the present study is 1000 students of higher secondary classes of Co-Ed and Single sex schools. The sample design has been presented in the following table –

| Group | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| Co-Ed | 125 | 125 | 250 |
| Single Sex | 125 | 125 | 250 |
| Total | 250 | 250 | 50 |

TOOLS

Some important tools which have been used in the present research work are:

- Altruism Scale –Dr. Penny Jain
- Mental Health Scale - Dr. (Smt.) Kamlesh Sharma

DELIMITATIONS

The present research has been conducted only on the students of higher secondary classes of Co-Ed and Single sex schools affiliated to either M.P. Board of Secondary Education or Central Board of Secondary Education located under the jurisdiction of Jabalpur city.

Comparative results of mental health of boys/ girls /students together in relation to altruism

| Gender | Spiritual Intelligence | N | Mean | S.D. | C.R. | ‘P’ Value |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| Boys | High | 284 | 59.98 | 6.51 | 45.43 | < 0.01 |
| | Low | 121 | 38.24 | 3.11 | | |
| Girls | High | 278 | 62.15 | 7.55 | 47.68 | < 0.01 |
| | Low | 151 | 35.95 | 3.83 | | |
| Students (Boys & Girls) | High | 562 | 61.05 | 7.12 | 64.25 | < 0.01 |
| | Low | 272 | 36.97 | 3.70 | | |

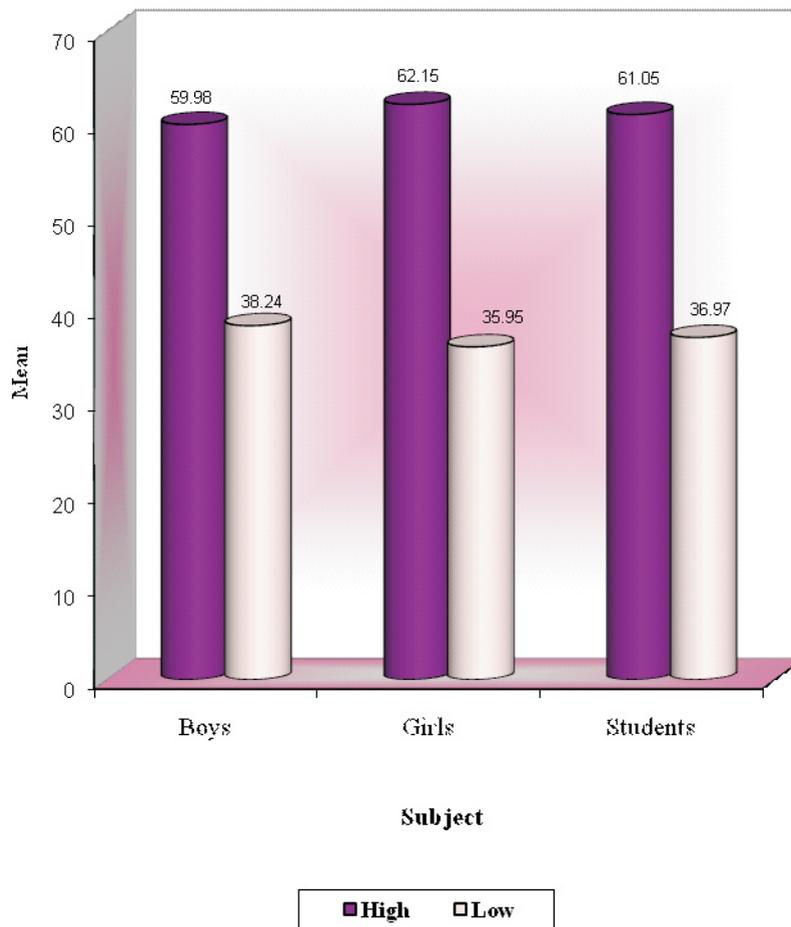
Degree of freedom – 403 Minimum Value at 0.05 Level – 1.97
 Minimum Value at 0.01 Level – 2.59
 Degree of freedom – 427 Minimum Value at 0.05 Level – 1.97

Degree of freedom- 832
Minimum Value at 0.01 Level – 2.59
Minimum Value at 0.05 Level – 1.96
Minimum Value at 0.01 Level – 2.58

There is impact of altruism on mental health of boys, girls and students. The values of CR's are 45.43,47.68 and 64.25 respectively, which are statistically significant at 0.01 level of confidence. The results show that there is a positive impact of altruism on mental health. Those groups of high altruism have better mental health in comparison to those with low altruism. Thus from the above table it can be inferred that altruism has a role in determining mental health of students.

Graph

Graphical presentation of results of mental health of boys/ girls /students together in relation to altruism



CONCLUSIONS

From the analysis and discussion of the results the following conclusions have been drawn:-

There is impact of altruism on mental health of boys, girls and students. The values of CR's are 45.43, 47.68 and 64.25 respectively, which are statistically significant at 0.01 level of confidence. The results show that there is a positive impact of altruism on mental health. Those groups of high altruism have better mental health in comparison to those with low altruism. Help given to others is a better predictor of mental health and well-being than are indicators of social engagement or received social support. In fact, "social connections may be beneficial to the extent that they provide individuals with the opportunity to benefit others." Helping others can also give us meaningful roles that boost self-esteem, mood and purpose of life, which in turn can enhance mental and physical health.

Thus the researcher feel that Altruism, as predictor of Mental Health of Adolescents and is a viable tool that can contribute to students' overall academic performance by increasing problem solving capabilities, enhancing critical thinking skills, and providing coping mechanisms gained through their abilities to transcend conflicts and difficulties.

SUGGESTIONS-

Adolescence mental health play a vital role in every place and without adolescent's mental strength cannot do any performance in his/her life. Therefore, Every adolescence should need for social and emotional learning skill such as awareness of self and others, positive attitude and value, responsible decision making and social interaction skill this kind of things may improve their mental health status also prevention programming requires further development of research based, comprehensive school reform models that improve social, health, and academic outcomes; educational policies that demand accountability for fostering children's and adolescence full development when adolescence academic performance increase, their mental health also increases. As such based on the conclusions of the present research work the following suggestions may be given

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- + It is imperative that school administrators and school based mental health professional's work collaboratively to support students. When community-based professionals provide services in schools, they should coordinate closely with their school counterparts.
- + Mental health education promotes the school adolescence mental health. So government can conduct micro level research in each school regarding mental health and mental ability among adolescence that will show current status of mental health and ability based on that the government can frame the training.
- + The non-government organization should initiate specific project on enhancement of mental health of adolescence in community level
- + School psychologists, counselors, and social workers should routinely support students with severe needs and identified mental health conditions.
- + The teacher's should build capacity for mental health promotion. All staff in schools and early childhood settings has a role in promoting mental health in children and young people.

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