

## A comparative study of altruism among the boys and girls of joint and nuclear families

Rashmi Sanadhya, DK Sharma, CS Sushil

**Abstract :** Family plays an important role in the altruistic behavior of a person because the children first learn the norms of society from the family. The aim of the current study is to find the altruism among the children of joint and nuclear families. The study was conducted in school going children of grade 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> from various schools of Kota city. For this purpose 65 children (30 boys and 35 girls) from joint family and 68 children (33 boys and 35 girls) from nuclear family were randomly selected. These children were evaluated on specially designed Performa including various scales ALTS- Altruism scale and behavior checklist. Children from nuclear family showed significantly more altruistic behavior than the children from joint family. Girls had significantly more altruistic traits than boys.

**Keywords:** Altruistic behavior, students

JMHBB 2010; 15 (2) : 88-90

### INTRODUCTION

Prosocial behavior is an important aspect of normal social and psychological development.<sup>1</sup> Altruism in children has been studied and has been found that family system influences the personality development of the child and this in turn influence the altruistic behavior as studied earlier.<sup>2,3</sup> Researchers have also found out that gender also influences altruistic behavior in children.<sup>4</sup> Cialdini et al<sup>5</sup> found that altruistic behavior appeared in girls, persisted for longer time.

Literature review showed scarcity of research in this area in India. Hence, the present study was undertaken to examine differences in terms of family structure and gender on altruistic behavior.

### MATERIAL AND METHODS

A sample of 65 children from joint families (35 girls and 30 boys) and 68 children from nuclear families (35 girls and 33boys) studying in Government school, comprised the sample. First

the consent was taken from Principal/Headmaster of the school then informed consent was taken from all the students about the study and they were assured about the confidentiality.

Altruism scale<sup>6</sup> :This test consists of 30 items in Hindi language. Each items of the scale has 3 alternate responses i.e. altruistic, neutral or egoistic. A score of 2 for altruistic, 1 for neutral and 0 for egoistic was awarded to each item on the scale. Scores so obtained were summed up to get the total score. Thus, the maximum possible score is 60 and the minimum score is 0. The test retest reliability of the instrument was 0.92 and the validity was found to be 0.63 including content validity and intrinsic & extrinsic validity.

T-test was employed in order to find out the differences in the score of joint and nuclear families& boys and girls.

### RESULTS

There were 65 adolescents from joint family and 68 from nuclear family. Their mean ALTS scores

were  $50.02 \pm 8.27$  and  $45.57 \pm 8.91$  ( $t=2.982$ ,  $p,0.01$ ). ALTS scores of girls ( $n=70$ ) were  $49.91 \pm 5.50$  and boys ( $n=63$ ) were  $45.33 \pm 11.15$  ( $t=2.96$ ,  $p,0.01$ ).

## DISCUSSION

Prosocial behaviors refer to voluntary actions undertaken to benefit others. Various prosocial behaviors such as sharing, donating, caring, comforting, and helping are believed to contribute to social relationships and personal mental health in most cultures.<sup>7,8</sup> Generous and compassionate behavior also may serve a myriad of individual needs, such as restoring one's self-esteem, enhancing regulation of negative affect, or preserving one's self-image from the injuries of personal failures.<sup>9,10</sup>

Result of the study shows that the scores of adolescents on ALTS from nuclear family are significantly higher than adolescents coming from joint families showing that adolescents from nuclear families are more altruistic. This is a surprise finding which is against the popular belief that adolescents from joint families are more altruistic. In this regard our findings are in line with the earlier findings.<sup>11</sup> They found that altruistic behavior is a learnt behavior rather than an innate one. Numerous researchers assign a major role to individual differences in personality or individual self-regulative processes. Indeed, certain people are more inclined than others to enact behaviors that benefit others and do not hesitate to make the sacrifices that these behaviors may carry. In this regard, developmental psychologists have argued that individual differences in prosocial tendencies reflect maturation and socialization processes as well as cognitive, emotional, and moral development.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, family system influences the altruistic behavior among the children. Robert<sup>12</sup> in his study revealed that children who behaved altruistically tend to have had a more close relationship with the parents who modeled

prosocial concern and behavior. However, the significant difference in altruistic behavior in children between two types of families reveals that family system definitely plays a role in the altruistic behavior among children. In addition, altruism depends upon parent's behavior whether they are altruistic or not.<sup>13</sup> Other studies have found that children, whose parents modeled altruism, were more altruistic as compared to those children whose parents modeled altruism to the lesser degree.<sup>2,3,14</sup>

The second important finding of the study was that the girls scored significantly higher on ALTS as compared to boys signifying that girls are more altruistic than boys. Thus, our findings match with the earlier findings.<sup>15</sup>

The difference in the altruistic behavior of boys and girls may be accounted for different attitude of parents towards boys and girls. India's social norms are more restrictive for girls. They are taught to have patience, forbearance, kindness, helpfulness and the like characteristics. Thus, their rearing is different from boys, which may be an important cause of higher level of altruism among girls than among boys. Another reason may be that girls mostly identify with mother who are the most sacrificing and altruistic member of most of the families. The study can not be generalized due to small sample size.

## REFERENCES

1. Gregory AM, Light-Häusermann JH, Rijdsdijk F, Eley TC. Behavioral genetic analyses of prosocial behavior in adolescents. *Dev Sci.* 2009; 12:165-74.
2. Mohan D, Sheoram RS. Altruistic behavior of adolescents in relation to their personality and values. *Perspectives in Psychological researchers* 1986; 9: 31-35.
3. Smith JD, Shaffer DR. Self consciousness, self reported altruism and helping behavior. *Social Behavior and Personality* 1986; 14: 215-220.
4. Byrne N. Differences in types and levels of altruism based on gender and program. *Journal of Allied Health* 2008; 37: 22-29.

5. Cialdini RB, Eisenberg N, Shell R, et al. Commitments to help by children: effect on subsequent prosocial self attributions. *Br J Social Psychol* 1987; 26: 237-245.
  6. Rai SN, Singh S. Altruism scale (ALTS). Agra: National Psychological Corporation. (1988).
  7. Eisenberg N, Fabes RA, Spinrad TL. Prosocial behavior. In: Eisenberg N, Damon W, Lerner RM, editors. *Handbook of child psychology: Volume 3 Social, emotional, and personality development*. 6. New York: Wiley; 2006. pp. 646–718.
  8. Penner IA, Dovidio JE, Piliavin JA, et al. Prosocial behavior: Multilevel perspectives. *Ann Rev Psychol* 2005;56:365–392.
  9. Hirschberger G, Ein-Dor T, Almakias S. The self-protective altruism: Terror management and the ambivalent nature of prosocial behavior. *Pers Soc Psychol Bull* 2008;34:666–678.
  10. Nadler A, Halabi S. Intergroup helping as status relations: Effects of status stability, identification, and type of help on receptivity to high-status group's help. *J Pers Soc Psychol* 2006;91:97–110.
  11. Robert R. The origin of altruistic behavior in children: educational aspects & television in family. *Child dev* 1982; 19-20: 101-114.
  12. Robert L. Development of conceptions of prosocial behavior. Information affecting rewards given for altruism & kindness. *Developmental Psychology* 1979; 15: 34-37.
  13. Clary EG, Miller J. Socialization & Situational influences on sustained altruism. *Child Development* 1986; 57:1358 – 1369.
  14. Mohan J, Bhatia S. Altruistic behavior of engineers and teachers in relation to their personality. *Indian Journal of Applied Psychology* 1987; 24: 87-90.
  15. Gentile M, Noughton AM, Kayson WA. Factors affecting altruism; sex, urgency and time of day. *Psychological Reports* 1986; 59: 79-82.
- 

Rashmi Sanadhya, Clinical psychologist,  
 DK Sharma, Professor & Head,  
 CS Sushil, Associate Professor  
 Department of Psychiatry,  
 Govt. Medical College & Associated Group of Hospitals,  
 Kota (Rajasthan).

**Corresponding Author:**

Rashmi Sanadhya, Clinical Psychologist,  
 C-141, Thermal Colony, Kota (Rajasthan)