

Reciprocity and Empathy in Motivating Altruism among Sixth Grade Students

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Abstract : The primary motivators of altruism are usually viewed as mutually exclusive. In this study, we wanted to know if the two primary motivators, reciprocity and empathy, can work together in motivating altruism. Therefore, we wanted to find out if there is a significant interaction of effects between reciprocity and empathy. To show how this may occur, we devised the combined altruism model, which is based on Batson's empathy altruism hypothesis. A sample of 120, 6th-grade students were randomly selected and then randomly assigned to four treatment groups. A 2x2 between subjects' design was used, which had empathy and reciprocity as independent variables, and altruism as the dependent variable. The study made use of materials that were effort based, where subjects were required to complete a task or a puzzle to help a person in a given scenario, two videos, one to prime empathy were also used. This along with Witt & Boleman's adapted Self-Reported Altruism Scale was used to determine an individual's altruism. It was found that both variables were significant in motivating altruism, with empathy being the greater of the two. However, there was no significant interaction of effects between the two variables. To explain why this occurred, we turned to the combined altruism model, where it was found that when empathically primed, we tend to not think of ourselves when helping others. Future studies could focus on other variables, especially age which is said to be one of the greatest factors that influenced the results of the experiment.

Keywords : reciprocity, empathy, altruism, experimental psychology, social psychology

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