

## Altruism in Pakistan

Review of Article by Farha Iqbal *Department of Psychology, University of Karachi, Pakistan* Prosocial Behavior in Different Situations among Men and Women

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Altruism is a selfless gentle act admired by all social groups. History has extraordinary legendary examples of brave soldiers, great rulers, noble men and women who made selfless sacrifices of material possessions, status and even ones selves for common good of others (Sally, 2000). August Comte, (1875) French founder of sociology, coined the term Altruism. It's worth mentioning that years before August Comte's the phenomenon of altruism was explained in Islam with several practical examples in the form of "Eethar" (Mehdi, 2006).

Literature review suggests a very inadequate research is been done on altruism in Pakistan. So the purpose of the current article review is to highlight the work done in Pakistan on exploring existence of altruistic behavior and nature of its practice in the region. As yet the altruistic behavior its predictors and its manifestation are still veiled among the social psychologists, sociologists and social workers of the region.

Pakistani culture is a replication of collectivism, here people experience a family system with deep cultural and religious values, every family member is closely-knit with each other and supports the family in every thick and thin. Being Islamic state Pakistani culture moral and religious values emphasize on merits of restraint behavior, self-control of strong emotions, and avoidance of interpersonal conflict. Pakistani people are brought up with a strong sense of responsibility and obligation towards the family and humanity. Due to the emphasis on Islamic moral principles, increase in helping behavior and empathy Pakistani people feel uncomfortable generally by leaving relatives and even "stranger" unattended. Along with it inspite of religious social and moral demands some occasions led to conclude that people of our region, are snowed with 'apathy'. It's factual that our country is in a state of emergency and majority of us are acting similar to a 'bystanders'. Our moral values as a nation are questioned on different occasions where instead of condemning the brutality of the people the culprits are supported by the authorities and are saved from the warning in the reward of bad deeds. There is no scientific information regarding the avoidance behaviors of people and diffusion of responsibilities in the region. Even after witnessing such deteriorating conditions of the society, very few of us are initiating to examine altruism empirically.

Iqbal. F (2013) conducted a study titled "Prosocial behavior in different situations among men and women" the study intended to explore the prompting circumstances for altruistic behavior leading to direct and indirect help among married and unmarried male's and female's of Pakistan. Although for the purpose of gaining information a sample of N=240 participants with age range 20-40 years n=120 males (n= 60 married & n=60 un married) & n=120 females, (n= 60 married & n=60 un married) was approached. But the study could be appreciated as it initiated the investigation related to altruistic behavior in Pakistan. The participants were supposed to decide as to how they would intervene with four different situations portraying a victim of accident, domestic violence, shoplifting and molestation. The findings of the study highlighted that nature of helping behavior vary with varying circumstances but there is no gender difference in helping behavior and with respect to marital status and in nature of help provided in the four situations exposed to the participants. Thus through the results it was observed that helping behavior differs among all the four situations.

Iqbal. F (2013) assumed that people will intend to provide indirect as compared to providing direct help and few people will help in all of the four situations. On its intensity helping behavior would differ in all the four situations, it was also assumed that males participants would provide direct help as compared to females participants. Similarly it was also explored that whether married participants would provide direct help or indirect help as compared to unmarried participants.

Accidents are considered to be of same severity in nature therefore it is expected that considering it serious issue a larger number of people will intervene in the situation. But the results unrevealed that a larger group of participants n=55 opted that they would not help in the accident situation. An equal number of participants reported that they would prefer helping the accident victim by asking someone else to help the accident victim because they intended to provide help in the serious situation but just to avoid the unwanted consequences created by Pakistani police they would prefer indirect help so that they could overcome the guilt

of not helping at all. A small fraction of the sample  $n=22$  participants reported that they would not provide any type of help at all neither direct nor indirect. The participant gave the reason that in Pakistan, people who help an accident victim were often taken as an accused by the police. Moreover the helper was supposed first to lodge a first investigative report (FIR), and then only the hospital use to provide emergency help. But now Supreme court of Pakistan has notified in 2015 that in any case of emergency the injured person will first be provided first aid and then the process of FIR will be followed. Yet even after supreme court orders insecurities and ambiguities are part of everyone in Pakistan which is leading to stress, and decline in the personal, social life and socio-cultural development. Such deterioration is effecting an individual responsibilities towards society. The panic of being involved in unavoidable situations due to poor state of law order leads to extreme sense of insecurity and uncertainty turn people to be more vulnerable to social isolation consequently, people at large feel comfortable by staying away in an accident situation and not involving themselves into the helping behaviors. So many accidents pass by unattended for hours. The examples of Sialkot incidence where no one stepped to help the brothers who were killed by a mob similarly Raymond Davis case where no body intervened to save the victims just to avoid the consequences.

In the situation related to domestic violence participants reported that they do not intend to provide help for the situation related to domestic violence as it is a personal issue and interfere in some one's personal concern is morally and ethically is not appreciated in a society following principles of freedom and liberalism. Even female participants did not show any motivation to provide help to another women facing domestic violence as our social structure do not accepted such bold female acts specially when helper female is a house wife and not in a position of authority her act of raising voice against domestic violence is not appreciated. Female intention to help other female suffering usually cause problems for the women who intends to help mainly because women are weaker part of our male dominating society and lack the strength to stand up and fight for the rights of another women, and usually in result face issues in form of their own domestic unrest.

In the situation in which the female has been portrayed to be stealing from a shop,  $n=92$  people responded that they would help directly,  $n=98$  responded that they would help indirectly where as  $n=50$  responded that they would not help at all. The results are really interesting as although the amount of threat involved is very low, yet people opted that they would help indirectly. It is a tendency that opposite attracts so male helpers opted for indirect help in which they intended to interact with the female shoplifter instead of reporting the shop keeper about the stolen good they prefer trying to change the mind of the shoplifter to return the stolen goods instead of disrespecting the shoplifter by informing shop keeper about the act. On the other hand most of the females participants described that they would help directly rather than interacting with the woman they will directly inform the shop keeper about the items being stolen so that he can catch the woman red handed before the woman would get away with the stolen items. Most males reported that they would approach the lady who shoplifted not just because of the factors of physical attractiveness, but they also felt they would be successful enough in helping the shoplifter lady in changing her decision of stealing, and this would help in protecting integrity of shoplifter lady.

A larger number of male participants  $n=76$  stated that they would provide direct help, in the situation of harassment. The root cause of providing direct help could be that the integrity of the girl is at stake, morally strong individual cannot stand an act of immorality, so most of the participants stated that they would directly approach and help the victim of harassment, and instead of wasting valuable time in trying to seek help from some other source they would prefer direct help it was not a matter of showing masculine strength but a question of male ego too for providing help to a weaker gender specially at the time when a female is facing severe helplessness. Considering the severity of the situation even females opted for helping in this situation indirectly if not direct  $n=136$  participants opted for direct help,  $n=85$  opted for indirect help & only  $n=19$  responded that they would not help at all out of these majority were females i.e.  $n=12$ , which means that only  $n=7$  were males  $n=57$  females reported that they would not let it go but would ask someone else or call the police to provide help to the victim keeping in view they were not competent enough to face the situation and the risk that the molester could attack them was also there.

One of the assumptions of the study was based on finding out the difference between direct help or indirect help among two groups. The supposition was that married people would be more likely to provide indirect help while unmarried people would provide direct help. Both groups married and unmarried exhibited almost the same levels of helping behavior, whether direct or indirect. The core motive behind the response recorded could be speculated in the light of resilient traditional customs related with moral and social obligation. In our culture since most of the people live in a closely-knit family system with deep cultural and religious values that are transferred from generation to generation, helping others in times of need is a core value, which is a reflection of a collectivist society. There could be different motives among married and un married behind providing help the level of sense of empathy, understanding and responsibility, vary among both groups it is usually assumed that marriage increases an individual's sense of responsibility, leading to provide help either direct or indirect. Similarly when we come across equal level of help among unmarried people, along with

empathy we could label on a stronger parental, familial, social, religious and moral up bringing of the individual. In our society children from a very young age are told to respect and love others and to treat them in the same manner they would treat one of their own. These values are based on religious teaching that if anyone is in need of help it is the duty of every person to help him or her. This is backed by a strong belief that they will be rewarded for their actions.

In the study there was a pretty good number of participants who reported that they will not provide any kind of help at all in any situation. The participants provided a variety of explanations of not intending to help in any situation most of the participants reported that they have faced unpleasant experience, which lead them to decide that even if they wished to help they would not take risk of landing themselves in trouble as for example it is observed in our every day experiences that those who help an accident victim by taking him to the hospital is latterly a part of an investigation and face numeral complications.

The article is to be considered as an important milestone in the field of awareness related to altruism in Pakistan. There are few constraints which if in future be removed can make a more authentic study firstly Pakistan is a multicultural region the sample was too small to generalize the social issue even the sample could be generated from different cities of the country to get a clear picture of altruism in the different representative cultures of the country. Secondly the researcher used interview method to gather the information that is researcher read out the situations to the participants, although researcher claimed that the tone the voice body language was monitored so that researcher's preferences could not influence the participant response but it is not a feasible method. It could be more beneficial and accurate if the situations were presented in form of the video clips the constancy of the expressions would have been same in all circumstances and would be free of biases and response set.

Thus it can be concluded that Pakistan and its people are still holding altruistic values in them. The unrest in social and political setup due to which a helper faces negative consequences of help instead of being positively rewarded restrains the Altruistic acts in public Government and law in forcing agencies are not keenly handling the issues of backwardness, unemployment and economic deprivation in the country there is no judicious distribution of resources in the country. People do not help not because of being apathetic but because they avoid the hassle they would face after helping any one in need. It is not humanly possible to have total justice and peace in society but the extreme lawless ness in the country is creating fear in those who want to initiate for helping the victims in need .The thana culture of our society where the corrupt are enjoying facilities and poor and helpless are getting physical and emotional torture this is demotivating the helping hands. The male dominating society is ruining the female rights if some one raise voice against the unjust attitudes of the society towards female crises the voice is being snubbed even the victim also step back due to the pressure on the victim from family and society and leave the helper to fight alone.

Hence the article is a source to realize that society should not forget its moral duty and should not give weightage to the negativism and look at the government, and leaders instead we should consider our duty as human beings to act kindly and generously to others. Our generous act will lead satisfaction to our soul by even trying to help an old man crossing the road or by just listening an emotionally disturbed one not only we will feel good but our act of kindness can make a chain of kind people around.

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