

Altruism and Burnout among Working Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

Helping people, particularly those that are less privileged than oneself, enables one to view life from a more balanced viewpoint and be more optimistic in life. Work-related stress can often lead individuals to a state of physical or emotional exhaustion that creates a sense of lowered achievement and reduced sense of one's own identity. This can cause a severe impact on the intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships of individuals, which could potentially lead to a lack of prosocial or altruistic behavior in people. The study aims to throw light on the relationship between the altruistic nature and the level of burnout experienced by employees. The Self Report Altruism scale (SRA) and Burnout Questionnaire, Adapted by Michelle Post. were administered to assess altruism and burnout respectively, on 107 working young adults between the ages of 20-35. The results of the study show that altruism and burnout are significantly correlated.

Keywords: Altruism, Burnout, Employees, Prosocial Behaviour, Selflessness, Stress, Work, Young Adults

Altruism The concept of altruism is crucial for understanding how people relate to one another and how many interpersonal and financial choices are made. Altruism, or the motivation to help others without expectation of reward, has been linked to positive outcomes such as enhanced well-being, increased life satisfaction, and reduced stress. It is the selfless concern for others—acting out of a genuine wish to assist others rather than out of a sense of responsibility, loyalty, or religious obligation. According to Merriam Webster (n.d.), altruism is the ‘unselfish regard for or devotion to the welfare of others.’ Greater activity in the limbic areas of the brain is linked to the propensity to act altruistically.

Burnout

International Classification of Diseases (2019), has defined burnout as ‘a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed’. It is a psychological state characterized by exhaustion, cynicism, and decreased professional efficacy, which can occur in any domain of life, including work, relationships, and personal life. Burnout develops as a protracted reaction to ongoing interpersonal pressures at work. The overwhelming tiredness, the sensation of cynicism and alienation from the task, and the perception of inefficiency and lack of achievement are the three main

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Received: May 09, 2023; Revision Received: August 22, 2023; Accepted: August 24, 2023

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components of this reaction. Burnout is increasingly prevalent among working young adults, who face a range of pressures and demands related to employment, relationships, and personal development.

Working Young Adults

As per the American Psychological Association (n.d.) adulthood has been defined as the 'period of human development in which full physical growth and maturity have been achieved and certain biological, cognitive, social, personality, and other changes associated with the aging process occur'. It also classifies young adulthood as 'roughly 20 to 35 years of age'. This is a phase of life marked by the difficulties of independence, the satisfaction of success, and the perseverance of crises- especially those that occur in the occupational arena. Though there are studies that show the correlation between altruism and burnout in adolescents, there is still some extent of ambiguity regarding how altruism may relate to burnout among working young adults.

Need and Significance of Study

This study will contribute to the understanding of the relationship between altruism and burnout in working young adults. The findings of this research may aid further research in this field for others that could result in developing implications aimed at reducing burnout and promoting well-being in this population. If altruism is found to be protective against burnout, interventions that enhance altruistic behaviors and attitudes may be developed and implemented in educational, occupational, and community settings. Conversely, if altruism is found to be unrelated to burnout or to have a negative impact, alternative approaches to preventing and addressing burnout in working young adults may be needed.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The association between altruism, burnout, and helping behaviours was investigated in a study by Emmerik et al., (2003). Findings of 178 employees showed that while burnout was solely associated with OCB, volunteerism, and aiding relatives and neighbours, altruism was related to these behaviours. Burnout also acted as a moderator in the connection between assisting relatives and altruism versus volunteerism.

Xia Shi and Liang Zhang (2004) aimed to explore the effect of altruism on driving behavior among professional bus drivers. Furthermore, they looked into how burnout mediated the link between driving behaviours and altruism. The findings revealed that altruism inhibited reckless driving. They noticed that there was considerable burnout mediation in the connection between altruism and lapses. Additionally, the link between altruism and erratic driving behaviour was mediated by burnout.

The majority of burnout research, according to a study by T.H. Stone (2005), have concentrated on resource constraints, the prevalence of burnout, and unfavourable results. This study, on the other hand, looked at the connections between altruism, burnout, and a good result, namely the participation in organisational civic behaviour. Three professional organisations' employees each received a web survey. Altruism and organisational citizenship behaviour are associated, according to the findings from the 178 respondents. Only decreased personal accomplishment was negatively correlated with engagement in organisational citizenship behaviours among the three categories of burnout.

A study conducted by Erin Coquese from Vaughn Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College (2013), investigated the relationship between burnout, wellness, and altruistic motivation of entry level, live-in and live on residence life staff. The

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literature review consists of empirical research for each construct presented (burnout, wellness, and altruism). The study samples utilized were live-in and live on full-time, entry-level residence life personnel employed at predominately white public and private institutions in the southeastern part of the United States. Multiple regression analysis was used to answer specific research questions. Results confirmed that there was no relationship existed between constructs; however, findings do suggest burnout of residence life staff.

The findings of a study conducted by Kate L. Jansen, M.A. (2010) show that increasing use of negative coping mechanisms, higher levels of stress, lower levels of empathy, and worse general mental health were significant predictors of increased burnout at the end of the study. At the conclusion of the study, there was a substantial correlation between people' happiness with their volunteer program and lower symptoms of burnout, greater empathy, and identified passion for volunteering.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

In the research study convenient sampling method was used. Questionnaires on altruism and burnout were circulated online considering the inclusion and exclusion criteria and a total sample of 107 were collected.

Statistical Technique

The statistical techniques used for the study were inferential and descriptive statistics. Measures of descriptive statistics used are mean and standard deviation. Measures of inferential statistics used are correlation and linear regression using SPSS software.

Research objectives

- To study the levels of altruism and burnout in working young adults.
- To study the relationship between the levels of altruism and burnout among working young adults.
- To study the influence of burnout on altruism among working young adults.

Variables

The variables used for the study are altruism and burnout.

Hypotheses

Ho¹: There is no significant relationship between altruism and burnout among working young adults.

Ho²: There is no significant influence of burnout on altruism among working young adults.

Population Sample

The study was conducted on a population sample of 107 working young adults between 20-35 years of age, employed in the organized working sector.

Inclusion criteria

Adults of 20-35 years of age, employed in the organized sector and can be of any gender.

Exclusion criteria

Non-adults or adults above the age of 35, unemployed or employed in an unorganized sector.

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Sampling technique

Convenience sampling technique was chosen for this study considering the cost effectiveness and easy access to potential participants.

Tools used for study

Self-Report Altruism scale (SRA): It is a scale with 20 items that assesses how frequently a person does acts of kindness, particularly towards strangers, in order to gauge altruistic propensity. Answers are given on a 5-point scale, with 'Never' (0) being the lowest and 'Very Often' (4) being the highest. The validity of the SRA-scale was assessed by correlating it with the peer ratings (Rushton, 1981). High internal consistency scores ($\alpha = 0.89$) and positive correlations were obtained between this scale and social responsibility, empathy, organ donation, sensitive attitudes, and prosocial individual values, providing evidence for the reliability and validity of the SRA scale (Manzur, 2021)

Burnout Questionnaire, adapted by Michelle Post: It is a scale that is used to measure burnout. It has 28 response columns and questions, which are further separated into three subcategories. It is also graded on a 5-point scale, with 'Never/No change' (1) being the lowest and 'Always/Much change' (4) being the highest. A score of 28 is the lowest possible and a score of 140 is the most possible in the overall scoring (Michelle Post, 1981). The burnout questionnaire's reliability and validity were found satisfactory, ($\alpha = 0.82$ to 0.85) (Harshita, 2022).

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects, including informed consent, confidentiality, and data protection. Participants were informed of the study aims, procedures, and potential risks and benefits. They were provided with the option to withdraw from the study at any time, and the assurance that all data would be kept confidential and would only be accessible to the research team.

RESULTS

Ho¹: There is no significant relationship between altruism and burnout among working young adults.

Table 1: Pearson Correlation Table between Altruism and Burnout

S.I No.	Variables	N	M	SD	1	2
1	Altruism	107	37.03	12.443	--	
2	Burnout	107	73.18	18.749	0.98	--

Ho²: There is no significant influence of burnout on altruism among working young adults.

Table 2: Regression Table with R value, R square, Adjusted R vale, Beta value and B value

Variable	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Sig F change	B value	Beta value
Burnout	0.98	0.010	0.000	0.488-	0.65	0.314

DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to examine the correlation between altruism and burnout as well as to study the influence of burnout on altruism in working young adults.

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According to Table 1, the mean value and standard deviation for altruism were 37.03 and 12.443 respectively. Also, the mean value and standard deviation for burnout were found as 73.18 and 18.479 respectively.

Altruism did not show any significant correlation with burnout, as the Pearson correlation value (0.98) was >0.05 . Therefore, the null hypothesis that, "There is no significant relationship between altruism and burnout among working young adults.", can be accepted.

Although, there have not been many extensive studies done in this field, upon careful analysis it was understood that the findings of this study were observed to be consistent with those of certain others done based on the same variables (Emmerik et al., 2003), which all suggest that there is no positive correlation between levels of altruism and burnout (Vaughn, 2013). Majority of the findings of earlier studies pertaining to this field of research have tended to be proven otherwise, where significant correlation was found between levels of altruism and burnout amongst employees. However, there are also studies (Shi & Zhang, 2017) which established negative correlation between altruism and burnout, and have not aligned with the findings of this study.

According to Table 2, the R^2 value was 0.010, the Adjusted R^2 value was 0.000, the Sig F change value was found as 0.488, the B value was found as 0.65 and the Beta value was found as 0.314. Thus, it was observed that burnout did not show any significant influence on altruism, as the Sig F change value (0.488) was >0.05 . Therefore, the null hypothesis that, "There is no significant influence of burnout on altruism among working young adults.", can be accepted.

The probable reason for arriving at such findings could be the presence of any other unknown external mediating factor between altruism and burnout.

CONCLUSION

The study sought to identify the relationship and influence of burnout on altruism among working young adults. No significant relationship was observed between altruism and burnout among working young adults. No significant influence of burnout on altruism was observed among working young adults. This was a preliminary study with scope for improvement and further research.

Limitations of Study

- The sample size chosen for this study was relatively lesser than those of other studies done in this field.
- This study could not detect any other external mediating factor's impact on the correlation between altruism and burnout.

Suggestions for Further Research

Given the limitations highlighted above the researcher proposes recommendations for further studies in the future as follows:

- Further research can be done with a sample of other age groups.
- The study can be extended by doing comparisons on various socio-demographic details.
- The data can be collected from employees from unorganized sector as well
- The study can be conducted using other qualitative methods such as interviews and meta-analysis.

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- The study can also be conducted by measuring other psychological aspects among employees.

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Acknowledgement

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Zacharia, J. & Sinha, A. (2023). Altruism and Burnout among Working Young Adults. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(3), 2692-2697. DIP:18.01.255.20231103, DOI:10.25215/1103.255