

Effects of Prosocial Behavior on Happiness and Well-Being

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ABSTRACT

Growth in the field of subjective well-being reflects larger societal trends concerning the value of the individual, the importance of subjective views in evaluating life and the recognition that well-being necessarily includes positive elements. Researchers suggest that well-being and happiness are interrelated and factors like prosocial behavior, hope, optimism and altruism are also related to well-being. Gaining knowledge about these intricate phenomena is a goal pursued by several social psychologists. Considering the growth rate of prosocial behavior, this study aims to explore the effect of prosocial behavior on well-being and happiness. To fulfill this purpose data was collected from the undergraduate students (N=250) of Delhi University with the help of simple random sampling technique. The prosocial behavior, happiness and well-being were measured. The findings suggested that prosocial behavior is directly related to well-being and happiness. An association between socio economic status, well-being and happiness was also found.

Keywords: *Prosocial Behavior, Happiness, Well-being*

Chayamanyasyakurmantitishthantiswaymatpe

Falanayapiprarthayavrikshahsatpurushah

Trees stand in sun and give shade to others. Their fruits are also for others.

Similarly good people go through all hardships for welfare of others.

A common event or episode recorded in civilization across geographies and cultures is people engaging in behaviors benefiting others, even at the costs of their comforts and losses, such socially desirable behaviors are referred to in the discourse of psychology as prosocial behaviors. The notion of prosocial behavior is not new in India. India, the land of cultural diversity has

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spirit of such behavior at the heart of cultural and religious practices in India. India is a collectivistic culture in nature and hence focuses on the importance of the need to work for the welfare of the society as a whole. Indian societal values, religious scriptures teach people to donate and daan is considered as a punya in diverse land of India. In everyday life we often listen from our elders, teachers and parents that there is unity in diversity where each culture is based on same moral values that are to help others. From every religion prosocial behavior can be extracted through sayings, quotes or incidents happened.

According to Quran, “It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the east or the west, but truly righteous is he who believes in God and the Last day and the angels and the Book and the Prophets, and spend his money for love of Him, on the relatives and the orphans and the needy and the traveler and those who ask for charity, and for ransoming the captives.” Bhagwad Gita quotes that “gift which is given out of duty, at the proper time and place, to a worthy person, and without expectation of return, is considered to be charity in the mode of goodness.” In Sikhism. AdiGranth, it is quoted that “without selfless service are no objectives fulfilled; in service lies the purest action.” According to Judaism and Christianity, “blessed is he who considers the poor; the Lord delivers him in the day of trouble.” Rig Ved states that “he who, possessed of food, hardens his heart against the weak man, hungry and suffering ,who comes to him for help, though of old he helped him-surely he finds none to console him.”

Some donated a major part of them which one cannot even think of. It can be seen by examples with in holy text such as Karna, who handed over his armor and earrings by cutting them off from his body on demand of Indra as he was bounded by his oath that he will never send anyone from his door empty- handed. This act was considered as the greatest charity one had ever made. Dadhichi is an important character in Hindu mythology. He sacrificed his life and weapons made from his bones were used to defeat Demons in order to save the world. He is revered amongst the greatest of sages and is portrayed as an example that no sacrifice is too great when the result is the good of the world. In the same line of reference, Eklavya gave away his right hand thumb in the name of guru dakshina on the demand of his guru Drona, even if he was aware of the fact that he won't be able to practice his art of archery without his thumb..

Remember when you do well, you feel good.”Same way, Mother Teresa stated that “At the end of life we will not be judged by how many diplomas we have received how much money we have made, how many great things we have done. We will be judged by “I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was naked and you clothed me. I was homeless, and you took me in”.

The aroma of helping others is still alive in the air of India; many wise and noble people were influenced by such holy write ups and did great work for welfare of society such as Anil Agarwal founder and chairman of Vedanta Resources, are ranked second in Harun India

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Philanthropy list 2014 for his personal donation of Rs 1,796 crore. He has pledged to donate 75% of his family wealth to charity, saying he was inspired by Bill Gates and Dalai Lama. Another person in same line of reference is Delhi's plastic king, Bhanwarlal Raghunath Doshi, who gave up his Rs 600 crore business empires to embrace Jain monastic life at ceremony on 2nd June, 2015.

The discourse of prosocial behavior in psychology is considered to have originated with McDougall's (1908) conceptualization of prosocial behavior as the effect of "tender emotions" based on parental instinct. Penner et al., (2005) defined prosocial behavior as an act performed to benefit another person. According to S. H. Schwartz and Bilsky (1990), *prosocial behavior* is an umbrella term used to describe acts undertaken to protect or enhance the welfare of others and includes helpful interventions, volunteer work, and the donating of money or blood, among other examples. Each of these behaviors has unique characteristics, but the common denominator they share is actions intended to help or benefit others. The prevalence of such helping behaviors have been reported by Thoits and Hewitt (2001). Often, prosocial behavior is interchangeably used and understood with altruism. But these two are distinct concepts, semantically and functionally. The former refers to a pattern of activity while the latter is the motivation to help others out of absolute regard for the others' needs instead of one's own benefits. For example, if a person donates blood the action of giving is prosocial behavior. The person motivation to give would be altruism.

Prosocial behavior can be exhibited in different forms. Most of which are exemplified in volunteering, donating money, charity or donations and the likes. Defining prosocial and determining if it truly exists, has long been a topic of debate. Prosocial behavior has been an integral part of Indian society. Many acts of prosocial behaviors are reasoned to incur direct or indirect benefits. These can be a rise in the social standing, self enhancement, and insurance of helps reciprocated, and buffering personal stress. Nevertheless, psychological studies have sought to explore the dynamics of prosocial behavior. They have shown the relationship between act of kindness with emotional and mental well-being. Committing acts of kindness boosts both temporary mood and long-lasting well-being (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005; Kurtz, Lyubomirsky, 2008; McGowen, 2006). Moreover, giving in interpersonal relationships has been linked to positive health behaviors, relational outcomes (Helgeson, 1994) and reduced mortality (Brown, 2003). Giving is also known to reduce the negative effects of stress. Recent research revealed that helping others even predicted reduced mortality due to stress.

Well-being

In the similar line of reasoning, the relationship between prosocial behavior and subjective well-being has been purported as described by Andreoni, 1989, 1990; Krebs, 1987. Helping other people and engaging in different types of prosocial behavior has many advantages. But the main

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advantages of prosocial behavior are that it significantly affects our well-being and our happiness in many dimensions.

Well-being can be defined as a suitable state of existence which can be characterized by good health, happiness and prosperity. Verma & Verma (1989) have defined general well-being as the subjective feeling of contentment, happiness, satisfaction with encounters of life and of one's role in the field of work. Well-being can be considered as a condition of one's perception of life or meaning of life. According to Diener, Richard E Lucas and Oishi, subjective wellbeing is defined as person's cognitive and affective evaluation of his life. These evaluations include emotional reactions to events as well as cognitive judgments of satisfaction and fulfillment. Thus subjective wellbeing is a broad concept. It includes experiencing pleasant emotions, negative moods and life satisfaction; according to Stones and Kozma (1985), the former includes peoples' emotional responses, domain satisfaction and global judgments of life satisfaction. Each dimension is independent and unique but are still interdependent and correlates substantially, suggesting the need for the higher order factor. Thus, SWB is considered as a general area of scientific interest rather than a single specific construct. Table 1 presents the major divisions and sub divisions of the field.

Table 1:- showing subfields of subjective well-being

Pleasant affect	Unpleasant affect	Life satisfaction	Domain satisfaction
Joy	Guilt and shame	Desire to change life	Work
Elation	Sadness	Satisfaction with current life	Family
Contentment	Anxiety and Worry		Leisure
Pride	Anger	Satisfaction with past	Health
Affection	Stress	Satisfaction with future	Finances
Happiness	Depression	Significant others view of one's life	Self
Ecstasy	Envy		Ones group

Relation between well-being and pro social behavior was not only purported by various scientists. It was also seen that socioeconomic status affects an individual in various aspects (Jing et al, 2014). Various researches explored the relationship between well-being and socio economic status by mainly focus on income and well-being. Various researches purported different relationship between them; some found that income do not effect well-being to great extent (Heady & Wearing, 1992; King and Napa, 1998). Some studies found that there is a strong association between wealth and well-being (Diener et al.1995; Diener & Fujita, 1995; Cummins, 1998; Schyns, 1998; Hayo,2003).According to Diener, Suh, Lucas & Smith (1999), there is weak relation between socio economic status and different dimensions of subjective well-being such as life satisfaction and positive and negative emotions experienced by an

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individual. Whereas other researchers found that individuals with higher income relative to others in their own county reported higher life satisfaction (Boyce, Brown, & Moore, 2010). Certain arguments show that local status matters more to subjective well-being than global status does. Hence well-being and socio economic status are related but in various degrees. Positive and negative affect are distinct dimensions of well-being and balance between them helps in achieving happiness. Past researches have also shown that prosocial and well-being has a great connection between them.

Happiness

Many researches try to find out the relation between well-being, happiness and prosocial from very long time. It is beautifully stated by Mother Teresa that “Nothing makes you happier than when you reach out in mercy to someone who is badly hurt”. . Happiness can be understood in various aspects. According to positive psychology happiness is a type of feeling which is marked by joy, satisfaction, delight, pleasure. The concept of true happiness is not a novel topic in this world, from ancient times human beings are desperately in search of true meaning of happiness and how one can attain it as primary goal of each human is to attain happiness.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle defines “happiness as a sort of living and faring well”. He considered happiness as spiritual life. According to him, achieving Eudemonia, a state in which an individual experiences happiness by performing his moral duties well. Ancient people have had a common belief that direct achievement of happiness is not possible to get happiness, if you want to achieve it forget about it. From an ethical perspective, the root of happiness involves two pathways consisting of the pursuit of pleasure and meaning in one’s life. The pursuit of pleasure may include short-term or immediate fulfillment of one’s desires, known as hedonism (Kahnemen, Diener, & Schwartz, 1999), whereas eudaimonism is the pursuit of potential (Aristotle, trans. 2009; Waterman, 1993). Happiness itself is an ambiguous term, in that it conveys multiple meanings: it can be understood as an emotional experience of fulfillment and accomplishment, as a long-term process of meaning making and identity development through exploring ones potentials and following ones relevant goals. It can also be defined as positive emotional state. Happiness usually arises when individual perform activities which he consider important and satisfactory. Haybron defined happiness as a long term psychological condition- “not the acute emotion of feeling happy, but rather whatever it is that concerns us when we talk of someone’s being happy these days”.

It was found that children as young as two exhibit increased happiness when giving a valued resource away (Aknin, Hamlin, & Dunn, 2012) At the most basic level, functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) evidence shows that using money for charity purpose leads to similar brain activity in regions implicated in the experience of pleasure and reward hence increasing happiness.

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Not only well-being is related to socio economic status but a positive relation was also found between happiness and socio economic status by various researchers. Various researchers found that happiness increases with increase in income and decreases with urbanization. Study conducted by Montazeri (2012) found that individual with low economic status experience less happiness. In similar line of reasoning Easterlin et al (2010) found the relationship between the social economic status and happiness. Cooper argued that if less income inequalities exist then an individual experience more happiness. Hence more income brings more happiness.

The main aim of this study is to examine the effect of prosocial behavior on happiness and wellbeing.

METHOD

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between prosocial behavior, well-being and happiness. Past researches show that prosocial behavior in any form increases happiness and wellbeing. This present study tries to find out whether prosocial behavior leads to happiness and wellbeing.

Sample:

Quantitative research was done, where data was collected from college students selected by simple random sampling to assess the relationship. Participants were under-graduate and the mean age of the sample participant's was 19 years. With the help of survey, questionnaires were made to fill on prosocial behavior, happiness and well-being scale. Participants completed the questionnaires; an introductory paragraph explained that the purpose of the study was to learn the type of relationship of prosocial behavior and our well-being and happiness. They were also assured that there were no right or wrong responses to the given questions and the information filled by them would be kept confidential.

Tools:

1. **Prosocial Personality Questionnaire** developed by Schwartz and Howard (1982) was used to measure Prosocial Behaviour. It a 5 point Likert scale. Response possibilities ranges from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).
2. **The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire** was incorporated in the tool list to measure happiness. Developed by Michael Argyle and Peter Hills of Oxford Brookes University, It's a 6 point Likert scale. Response possibilities ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).
3. **Subjective Well-being Scale** developed by Diener, Emmons and Griffin (1985) was used to measure Well-being. It's a 7 point Likert scale. Response possibilities ranges from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree).

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RESULT

Pearson product moment was calculated among variables in order to examine contribution of prosocial behavior (PST) on happiness and well-being. Univariate analysis of variance was done.

Table 2:- Descriptive Statistics

VARIABLES	N	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION
Prosocial Behavior	250	18.00	70.00	49.05	12.08
Well-Being	250	5.00	35.00	20.03	9.27
Happiness	250	54.00	138.00	104.14	13.82

A scrutiny of table 2 shows that mean of participants on prosocial behavior variable is high (49.05) and has standard deviation of 12.08. Mean of participants on well-being variable is 20.03 which is greater than average mean and has standard deviation of 9.27. Similarly mean of participants on happiness variable is 104.14 which is more than average mean and has standard deviation of 13.82

Table 3:- Inter-relationship between happiness, wellbeing and prosocial.

VARIABLES	WELLBEING	HAPPINESS	PST
Wellbeing	1	.66	.294**
Happiness		1	.000
Prosocial Behavior			1

** $p < 0.01$ (2 Tailed)

A scrutiny of table 3 shows that there is a significant positive correlation ($r = .294$, $p < 0.01$) between

Prosocial behavior and well-being. There is also a positive relation ($r = .000$, $p < 0.01$) between happiness and prosocial behavior but not significant at 0.01 level. All the above correlations are significant at 0.01 level (2 tail test).

Table 4: Analysis of variance for Well-being and Happiness on the basis Socio economic status.

VARIABLES	F value	Sig.
Wellbeing	24.412	.000
Happiness	.295	.745

Table 4 shows that F value of well-being is highly significant for 24.412 value at 0.000 level. Similarly F value of Happiness is significant for value .295 at .745 level. This shows that socio economic status has effect on happiness and well-being.

DISCUSSION

The current research aims to understand the question what will be the impact of prosocial behavior on happiness and well-being. In the above study the results are clearly showing that participants on average have high prosocial behavior, wellbeing and happiness. The results of the

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study clearly shows that there is a positive correlation between happiness, well-being and prosocial behavior.

The first objective of the research is to examine the effect of prosocial behavior on happiness and well-being and the results are clearly showing that person who is involved in more prosocial activities tend to have high happiness and well-being.

There have been studies which support the notion of the positive outcome of being selfless and exhibiting prosocial behavior for individual as well as for the society. Various studies found that adult volunteers were healthier and lived longer than non-volunteer groups (Moen et al., 1992 and Oman et al, 1999). Midlarsky (1991) articulated that by helping others person can distract from his own problems, can increase his life satisfaction, can improve his self-evaluations, boosting moods. Oman et al. (1999) suggested that helping others could influence the body through psycho-neuro-immunologic pathways, thus it helps in reducing mortality rate. Various researches have also linked prosocial behavior with great emotional and mental and physical health benefit hence boosting temporary mood, long-lasting well-being and happiness. Giving also reduces negative effects of stress.

The second objective of the research is to examine whether socio economic status has some effect on happiness or wellbeing or not and results are guiding us that socio economic status has an effect on wellbeing and happiness of an individual. The result of the study has shown that socio economic status marked an impact on individual's well-being as we can see that F value is positive and is high and significant at 0.01 level. Similarly socio economic status has an effect on happiness of a person but it is not as high as seen in case of well-being as results clearly show that F value is low and not significant.

Various studies investigate the relationship between happiness and socio economic status. Researchers found that happiness increases with income, health and education and decreases with unemployment. Researchers such as Easterlin & et al, 2010 stated that happiness and socio economic status are related to each other. Montazeri et al (2012) indicated that Individuals with lower economic status felt less happiness. This result was in line with the research results carried out by Easterlin et al (2010) found the relationship between the social economic status and happiness. Previous researches also throw light on relationship between socio-economic status. Cooper argued that if less income inequalities exist then an individual experience more happiness. Similarly well-being is associated with ones socio economic status. Diener et al. (1995); Diener & Fujita, (1995); Cummins, (1998); Schyns, (1998); Hayo, (2003) found that wealth, component of socio economic status and wellbeing are strongly correlated. Certain arguments show that local status matters more to subjective well-being than global status does. Studies also showed that individuals with higher income relative to others in their own county

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reported higher life satisfaction (Boyce, Brown, & Moore, 2010). Hence happiness and well-being are affected by social economic status.

CONCLUSION

Examined that prosocial behavior is positively correlated with well-being and happiness. If prosocial behavior is increased with a significant amount then there is a significant amount of increment in our well-being and happiness. It also shows that socio economic status effects individual's happiness and well-being.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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