CHAPTER 6
Discussion:

The results of the present pilot study are discussed under the following headings:

1- Self-esteem and altruism.

2- Empathy and altruism.

3- Social – desirability and altruism.

4- Country and altruism.

5- Sex and altruism.

6- Limitations of the study.

7- Future research

1 – Hypothesis 1 stated that there is a positive relationship between self-esteem and altruism. The present study supported this hypothesis. Refer to Table 5.1 and Table 5.2. The results of the study show that the relationship between self-esteem and altruism is a highly significant one at .01 level. Therefore there exists a positive correlation between self – esteem and helping behaviour.
Those individuals high on self-esteem are more likely to be helpful than those low in self-esteem and vice-versa.

Past research on the relationship between self-esteem and altruism also support the results of the present research. For example, high self-esteem was found to be one of the personality variables reflective of an altruistic disposition. (Rushton, 1980; Bateson, 1986).

Subjects who were made to believe that they were competent (high self-esteem) were found to be more altruistic than others. (e.g. Midlarsky and Midlarsky, 1971; Kazdin and Bryan, 1971).

Individuals who perceived their career preparations at Western Michigan University to be above average (high self-esteem), were more altruistic than individuals who perceived their career preparations to be average (Andreas, 1981).

Indirect evidence of an association between high self-esteem and altruistic behaviour may be inferred from experiments demonstrating that children who are highly altruistic are more stable emotionally, are more self-confident, and are more satisfied with
their peer relationships (Mussen and Eisenberg, 1977; Rushton, 1980).

In conclusion it can be said that there is indeed a positive correlation between self-esteem and altruism. This holds true for all humans, regardless of creed, colour or race.

2- Hypothesis 2 states that there is a positive correlation between empathy and altruism. The result of the present study does not support this hypothesis. Refer to Table 5.1 and Table 5.2.

An argument for the above findings could be that when a person examines a situation where another person requires help, other factors also play a role in determining whether help will be offered or not. For example, newspaper accounts of emotional experiences, novels, or poetry, often, emotionally arouse people, although a part of the arousal may simply be the result of the excitement of the story that leads to altruistic behaviour.

Smith (1759) made an initial differentiation between empathy (sympathy) which he described as a quick, involuntary, seemingly
emotional reaction to the experience of others and intellectual empathy (or sympathy) or the ability to recognize the emotional experience of others without any vicarious experiencing of that state. Therefore it is possible that empathy is related positively to altruism when one type of empathy is aroused, rather than the other.

In conclusion, the present research shows that an empathetic person need not necessary be a helpful one and vice-versa.

3 – Hypothesis 3 states that there is a positive correlation between social-desirability and altruism. The results of the present study do not confirm this hypothesis. Refer to Table 5.1 and Table 5.2.

An explanation for the above finding may lay in the fact that people differ in their need to be thought of well by others. Those with a high need generally tend to hold the expectancy that approval is gained by engaging in behaviours that is culturally acceptable and by avoiding behaviours that others would not approve of (Crowne and Marlowe, 1960).
Nowadays, along with the changing times people's mentality about acceptance also is changing. In today's fast paced world, examples of altruism and altruistic behaviour are hardly found. Newspapers and television give more importance to sensational news rather than news related to good deeds or helping behaviour. One tends to read more and more about murder, rape, violence and terrorism and less sacrifice, charity, and benevolence. Whereas Indian History books have a number of altruistic heroes and heroines, today's India has very few examples to quote, pointing out the increasing infrequency of this highly valued behaviour.

People nowadays are more self-centered and they do not give more importance to what other people think about them. Therefore it is possible that social-desirability is no longer a factor necessary in encouraging helping behaviour. People exhibit helping behaviour if they want to by choice, rather than any other factors.

4 – Hypothesis 4 stated that altruism will be higher amongst Indian students as compared to Dubai based students. The present
research supports this hypothesis. Refer to Table 5.3. The correlation between helping behaviour and Indian students is highly significant.

Through this research it was found that Indian students were more helpful compared to Dubai based students. One reason for this outcome could be in the fact that Indian philosophy outlines a definite way of life. A code of ethics for obtaining ‘moksha’, a state of existence where there is perfect bliss and no taint or sorrow or any imperfection. Highly spiritual in outlook, it inspires the Indian to be morally elevated super-beings, to be enlightened world citizens, and exhorting them to be altruistic in outlook (Dasgupta, 1941).

Altruism or selfless action for the service of others is also central to the code of ethics of several religions. And because India is a multi-religious country, the influence of the old code of ethics is much more.

Dubai is a city which, to a large extent, influenced by the western culture. In the West, for the pre-Socratic philosophers, as for some ‘moderns’ like Hobbes, people are naturally oriented to
individual gains. For these thinkers, altruistic behaviour is merely a culturally acquired restraint on the desires of competitive individuals. Best known for the speeches of Thracymachus in Plato's Republic, this hedonistic view treats human laws or customs as 'restraints' on nature.

As Antiphon, the sophist, puts it in "On Truth", since humans naturally follow individual gain or pleasure, altruism can only be explained as the result of social customs or convention – and thus is essentially learned.

Thus it is not difficult to see why Indian students are more altruistic in behaviour as compared to Dubai students.

5 – The fifth hypothesis states that altruism will be higher among young females as compared to young males. The present research does not support this theory (refer Table 5.4).

Previous, similar studies agree with the outcome of the present research. One of the studies that provides evidence for sex differences asserting that males are more altruistic than females is
that of Wispe and Freshley (1971), who conducted a study on 176 black and white male and female 26-year-olds who found themselves in a position to help a young black or white female accomplice whose bag of groceries had just broken in front of a supermarket. Results showed that men were more helpful than women.

Dabbs and Latane (1971), in their study, again found that males were more helpful as compared to females. They also found that females receive more help than males. They observed that helping being motivated by a desire to adhere to norms, men are more helpful, specifically towards women as a constellation of norms suggest that people, specially men, are supposed to help other people, specially women.

Senneker and Hendrick (1981), using the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI, Bem, 1974), pre-selected sex typed and androgynous men and women. They found that more help was given by males than females, and that androgynous subjects were more helpful than sex-typed subjects during an emergency.
Thus, the present research supports the previous researches carried out on altruism station that men are more helpful compared to females.

6 – Limitations of the present study.

The following could be considered the limitations of the present study.

1. All measures used in the study are based on verbal self-reports. Such data generally show positive self-reporting.

2. The present study was a shortened form of the original Marlowe Crowne Social Desirability Scale, which may have affected the results. However, the original scale could not be used as some items were quite similar in content/meaning to the items on the altruism scale, and some items were considered inappropriate for the sample used in the study.

3. Since the study was a cross-cultural one, there was less control over the extraneous variables.
4. The split-half reliability and the alpha co-efficient of the altruism scale were not worked out. The altruism scale was also not validated against actual altruistic behaviours.

7 – Future research

The present researcher has tried to add knowledge about altruism and some of its psycho-social correlates in a cross-cultural setting. However, this is only the first block, marking the beginning of a tall tower of knowledge.

a. The sample of the cross-cultural research can be extended to include other cities in the same countries, namely, India and UAE.

b. The present researcher also suggests that more correlations of altruism can also be measured, thus giving us a broader viewpoint on what really influences helping behaviour.

c. Future researches can also include the method of case studies.

d. The influence of television and media on helping behaviour can also be studied.
e. Studies can also be conducted on the extent to which helping behaviour is influenced by peers (single culture in India as opposed to multi-cultural in UAE).

f. With regard to the natural calamities that are affecting the world, research can be done on the effect on the helping behaviour of people.