CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY

Daily reports of violence, wars and crimes have for many years led social scientists to focus their investigation on aggressive behaviour. However, in the last two decades, social scientists have become more interested in behaviour that might be considered the opposite of aggression. This behaviour is termed as prosocial behaviour in which a person benefits another person without anticipating any reward in return and his act can be seen as having positive consequences. Prosocial behaviour includes altruism and restitution.

Macaulay and Berkowitz (1970) define altruism as "behaviour carried out to benefit another without anticipation of rewards from external sources". The condition to be added required that the behaviour must be done voluntarily for its own end only. That is, altruistic act cannot be carried out as a result of obligation or expectations of quid pro quo. When a person who helps feels that he is expected to do so because of previously received help or because he did harm, he makes restitution but does not carry out an altruistic act. Theoretical bases to altruistic behaviour can be classified into four different approaches: the exchange approach, the normative approach, the developmental approach, and the cultural approach. Similarly, attempts have been made to explain reciprocity behaviour by proposing different theories: distributive justice theory, equity theory, reciprocity theory and indebtedness theory. Other theorists also tried to provide theoretical bases of reciprocity behaviour.

In contrast to the extensive research on the prosocial behaviour of adults, few studies have investigated the development of prosocial behaviour in children. One important finding confirmed by several experiments is that prosocial behaviour steadily increases with age during the first ten years of life. It is reasoned that maturing children realize that adults expect children to help when help is needed and feel responsible to help others in need. Capacity to empathise with others also increases with
age, which is considered a necessary precondition for altruistic behaviour (Aronfreed, 1970). Altruism also increases with age through observation of the behaviour of adults and other children through direct tuition, and through reinforcement.

There are various factors, which affect the development of prosocial behaviour. Family is in key position to affect prosocial behaviour development in children. A vital aspect in this respect is structure of the family i.e., nuclear and joint families. A nuclear family can be characterised by its limitedness, that is, it consists parents and their children only, while a joint family is characterised by its largeness i.e., it consists of grandparents, uncles, aunts and their children which provide differential environment to the children and affecting their development of personality, morality and specific values which prone them to behave differentially in social situations where they are expected to act prosocially. Cohen (1972) and Rehberg & Richman (1989) observed prevalence of high prosocial behaviour among children of nuclear family.

Another important factor is parental moral value. It is possible that older children are more altruistic than younger not only because of the greater opportunity to learn this culturally valued activity, but because they may be shifting the basis of moral judgement from a hedonistic position to one emphasising social approval. Theories of Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1969) suggest that the development of prosocial behaviour be related to the development of moral judgement. London (1970) and Hoffman (1975) showed that altruistic children have at least one parent (usually the same sex) who communicate altruistic values, thus, serving as model.

Parental value system too play its vital role in the development of prosocial behaviour in children. Allport (1961) described values as deep level traits and of six types i.e., theoretical, economic, aesthetic, social, political and religious. Mullis et al. (1983), Siegel (1990) and Eisenberg et al. (1992) observed that parental altruistic value could be a positive social influence in the children’s expression of prosocial behaviour.
A total of 240 students for Study I and 450 subjects for Study II were selected randomly as the final sample equally from three age-groups i.e., 4-5 years, 6-7 years, and 8-9 years. In Study I, half of the subjects in each age-group were from nuclear families and another half were from joint families and finally, one-fourth (N=10) of these subjects in each family structure were belonging to four parental moral value groups i.e., both parents high moral value, father high-mother low moral value, mother high-father low moral value, and both parents low moral value. In Study II, out of 150 subjects in each age-group, 25 subjects were selected of parents with high on one and low on other five of six values i.e., theoretical, economic, aesthetic, social, political and religious.

Ajawani Moral Value Test and Ojha Value Tests were administered on both the parents to measure their moral value level and dominance of a particular value, respectively. A family bio-data form was also given to the father of student to fill up to know about the structure of the family.

Prosocial behaviour of the subjects was studied in an experimental situation wherein the subjects had to perform a task of sorting out white pearls from the mixture of white and black pearls along with a co-participant of his age. After completion of the task the subject was given 3 chocolates to share with the co-participant. On the basis of the number of chocolates shared by the subject with the co-participant, his prosocial behaviour scores were obtained with the help of a prosocial behaviour checklist. Maximum score of 4 was assigned when the subject had given all the three chocolates to the co-participant, a score of 3 was assigned when he had given two chocolates to the co-participant keeping only one for herself, a score of 2 was given when he had given one chocolate to the co-participant and kept one for herself returning the third to the experimenter, a score of 1 was assigned when he had given only one chocolate to the co-participant and kept the two for herself and the minimum score of 0 was assigned to the subject when she had not shared the chocolates at all with the co-participant keeping all the three chocolates for herself only. In a 3 X 2 X 4 factorial design, effects of three independent factors i.e., age, family, structure, and parental moral value on prosocial behaviour of the children were studied (STUDY I), and in a 3 X 30 factorial design, effects of age and
parental value pattern were studied on prosocial behaviour of the children (STUDY II).

The obtained data were analysed with the help of appropriate parametric (ANOVA, t/CR) and non-parametric ($X^2$) statistics. The major findings of the present research are summarised below:

1. The first problem of the research is to study the development pattern of prosocial behaviour, that is, whether age brings any change in prosocial behaviour of children. It is found that as the child advances from age 4 to 9 years, his prosocial behaviour also increases.

2. The second problem of the investigation is whether family structure i.e., nuclear and joint, has any influence on the development of prosocial behaviour. Though children of nuclear families have excelled, those of joint families in respect of their prosocial behaviour, the difference does not stand genuine to empirical test.

3. The third problem of the research aims at determining whether moral value of the parents has any influence on the development of prosocial behaviour in their children. Considerable difference between children of mother high-father low moral value, and between children of parents of both with high moral value and father high-mother low moral value in regard to their prosocial behaviour provide a sound basis to conclude that mother's moral value plays more important role in the development of prosocial behaviour of her female children that the moral value of father. Children of father high-mother low moral value are certainly poorest among the four parental moral value groups, while those of mother high-father low moral value are the best as regards to their prosocial behaviour.

4. The fourth problem of the study is whether children of parents dominated by and low on either of six value i.e., theoretical, economic, aesthetic, social, political and religious value, show any difference in regard to their prosocial behaviour.
5. It is found that children of parents with low theoretical, low economic, high aesthetic, low social, high political, and high religious are more prosocial as compared to their counterparts. To make the interpretation more decentful, all the thirty parental value groups were merged into two broader prosocial value groups: high prosocial value group, and low prosocial value group. It is found that children of high prosocial parental value pattern have considerably excelled those of low prosocial value pattern in respect of their prosocial behaviour. High prosocial value group includes parents with high economic—low theoretical, high economic—low social, high aesthetic—low theoretical, high aesthetic—low religious, high social—low theoretical, high political—low theoretical, high political—low aesthetic, high political—low social, high religious—low theoretical, high religious—low economic, high religious—low social, and high religious—low political value groups. The counterparts of these parental value groups are included in low prosocial value groups. When the two parental value groups are compared at a time in reference to prosocial behaviour of the children, it has been found that the theoretical and social value of parents play more important role in the development of prosocial behaviour in the children than economic value. Similarly, aesthetic value of parents is more important than religious value, theoretical value is more important than social value, political value is more important that aesthetic value, and religious value is more important that political value and religious value is more important than political value as regards their children’s prosocial behaviour.

6. The last problem of the present research pertains to the interaction effect of independent variables i.e., age, family-structure and parental moral value (STUDY I), and age and parental value pattern (STUDY II) on prosocial behaviour of children. When interaction effect of any two factors is considered at a time in STUDY I, none of these interaction effects is found genuine, indicating thereby, independent roles of age, family-structure, and parental value in regard to prosocial behaviour of children, while the interaction effect considering all the three factors at a time is found genuine, indicating thereby, differential prosocial behaviour of sub-groups based on above three factors. However, the
interaction effect between age and parental value is found considerable suggesting that there is joint effect of the two variables on prosocial behaviour of the children.

Since the present research involves sample of female students of urban population only, it is suggested that more generalised results shall be obtained including male sample also, belonging to both urban and rural populations. Larger sample is required in future to conclude on the role of family-structure. Looking at the scope, the present research has not incorporated the effect of socio-economic status of the children. However, the same can be included in future along with some variables undertaken in the present study.