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Altruism and Social Desirability in Young Adults: Exploring Gender Differences and Relationships

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ABSTRACT

Altruism and social desirability are two fundamental psychosocial constructs that shape interpersonal behavior and self-presentation in young adults. While altruism reflects the intrinsic motivation to help others without expecting personal gain, social desirability captures the tendency to present oneself favourably in social contexts. Studying these constructs in young adults is crucial, as it allows us to examine whether altruistic behavior arises from genuine concern for others or is influenced by social approval. To address this, the present study examined whether a relationship exists between altruism and social desirability, while also assessing overall altruism levels and gender differences in both constructs. A total of 373 participants aged 18–25 years (267 males, 105 females, 1 other) completed standardized self-report measures. Descriptive analysis revealed moderate to low overall altruism (Mean = 31.02, SD = 13.086), indicating substantial individual variability. Gender differences were observed in altruism, with males scoring significantly higher (Mean Rank = 193.86) than females (Mean Rank = 167.78), whereas social desirability showed no significant gender difference (Females Mean Rank = 202.40, Males Mean Rank = 180.25). Correlation analysis indicated no significant association between altruism and social desirability ($\rho = .036$, $p = .494$), suggesting that prosocial motivation operates independently of social impression management. These findings underscore the variability of altruistic tendencies in young adults and indicate that altruistic behavior cannot be explained solely by social conformity. Understanding these distinctions can inform interventions aimed at promoting genuine prosocial engagement and contribute to theoretical models differentiating intrinsic altruistic motivation from socially influenced behavior in emerging adults.

Keywords: emerging adults; prosocial behavior; psychosocial constructs; self-presentation; social impression management