

Empathy-altruism

Authored by
mohammad looti

November 19, 2022

RECOMMENDED CITATION

mohammad looti (2022). *Empathy-altruism*. PSYCHOLOGICAL SCALES. Retrieved from <https://scales.arabpsychology.com/?p=39351>

Empathy-altruism is a form of altruism based on feelings for others. The social exchange theory basically states that altruism does not exist unless benefits outweigh the costs. C. Daniel Batson disagrees. He feels that people help out of genuine concern for the well-being of the other person. The key ingredient to helping is empathy. According to his 'empathy-altruism hypothesis', if you feel empathy towards another person you will help them, regardless of what you can gain from it (1991). Relieving their suffering becomes the most important thing. When you do not feel empathy, the social exchange theory takes control.

Batson recognized that people sometimes helped out of selfish reasons. He and his team were interested in finding ways to distinguish between the motives. Students were asked to listen to tapes from a radio program. One of the interviews was with Carol. She talked about her bad car accident in which both of her legs were broken. She talked about her struggles and how behind she was becoming in class. Students who were listening to this particular interview were given a letter asking the student to share lecture notes and meet with her. The experimenters changed the level of empathy by telling one group to try to focus on how she was feeling (high empathy level). The other group did not need to be concerned with that (low empathy level). The experimenters also varied the cost of not helping. The high cost group was told that Carol would be in their same psychology class after returning to school. The low cost group believed she would finish the class at home. The results confirmed the empathy-altruism hypothesis. Those in the high empathy group were almost equally as likely to help her in either circumstance, while the low empathy group helped out of self-interest. Seeing her in class everyday made them feel guilty if they did not help (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2005).