

**BELIEF IN JUST WORLD AS MEDIATOR IN RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ALTRUISTIC BEHAVIOR AND PERCEIVED SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AMONG ADULTS**Aasma Yaseen<sup>1</sup>, Mohsin Atta (PhD)<sup>2</sup>, Najma Iqbal Malik (PhD)<sup>\*3</sup>, Ayesha Fayyaz<sup>4</sup>**Original Article**

1. M.Phil Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Pakistan  
Email: asimayaseen30@gmail.com
2. Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Pakistan. Email: gotamabbasi@gmail.com
3. Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Pakistan  
Corresponding author Email: najmamalik@gmail.com  
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3521-1014>
4. M.Phil Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Pakistan  
Email: aishafayaz96@gmail.com

**Abstract**

*This study established whether belief in a just world is a mediator in relationship between altruistic behavior and perceived social responsibility among adults. A convenient sampling technique was used to collect data from 310 adults. Perceived Social Responsibility (PSRS), A Simplified 9-Items Version of the SRA Scale to Assess Altruism (9-SRA), and The Global Belief in a Just World Scale (BJW) were used to collect the data. Pearson correlation was used to find the relationship pattern in study variables. According to multiple regression analysis, believing in a just world and altruistic behavior are both good predictors of perceived social responsibility. Using hierarchical regression, a belief in a just world was discovered as a strong mediator in the relationship between altruistic behavior and perceived social responsibility.*

**Keywords:** Belief in just world, altruistic behavior, and perceived social responsibility.

**Introduction**

The belief that the world (BJW) is just, and that good behavior is rewarded is widespread among those who regard themselves as good people. Those who embrace such a viewpoint are likely to have selfless attitudes and activities. The association between these three variables does not appear to be evident in the research. To have a just world, people must be driven to behave in a certain way, which is primarily being accountable for their own lives and contributing to the lives of others. However, the impact of free will on responsibility perceptions and altruistic behavior has received less attention. This study recommends that this connection be further explored by focusing on the belief of a just world as a mediator of the relationship between individuals' perceptions of social responsibility and their propensity for altruism.

BJW is an all-around flexible position with a variety of traits. Lerner (1980) asserted that to deal with unfairness, incompetence, and uncertainty that they have witnessed or experienced, individuals must consider that the world is just a place. In general, BJW is a versatile profession with a broad variety of skills. The most individuals consider being a BJW to be a personality trait with dispositional differences (Dalbert, 2009). Generally speaking, trust in the future, ultimate justice, and BJW is connected (Hafer & Sutton, 2016). BJW is strongly correlated with extreme

social beliefs, antisocial dispositions, and less social activism both in general and for others (Sutton & Winnard, 2007). It has been linked to a rise in norm breaches, and one study found that (Bègue & Muller, 2006), even a positive correlation with self-reported intentions to steal.

On the other side, altruistic behavior (AB) is an activity that is done for the betterment of others. Selfless action can manifest itself in a variety of ways, including gestures of gratitude, assistance, and empathy-specific favours performed for others - active protection of the rights of oppressed or disadvantaged persons (Elfers, Hlava, Elfers, & Hlava, 2016). What is desired and helpful to others is referred to as positive behavior. Recent years have seen an increase in the popularity of good psychology, and academics' interest in fully understanding positive behavior is growing. There has been a focus on personality qualities like helpfulness and other behaviors, such as altruism and empathy that facilitate peaceful coexistence and promote positive interpersonal connections (Zheng et al., 2016). Altruistic behavior is among the most essential components of good personality development. Altruism and social responsibility have been linked in studies (Pavenkova, Pavenkov, & Rubtcova, 2015; Kim & Han, 2018). It comprises showing empathy for and aiding others without anticipating a reward out of a sense of obligation to them. People who prioritize social responsibility act morally, according to Wary-Lake and Syvertsen (2011), they also develop connections with others, and uphold the ideals of fairness and care, which helps them to find a balance between concern for the rights of others and compassion for themselves.

### **Perceived Social Responsibility**

Broadly stated, social responsibility is the observance of social standards and expectations while caring about larger ethical concerns and the common good (Armstrong, 2011). Social responsibility more specifically refers to behaviors and attitudes that respect others' rights and feelings, act responsibly as a citizen, and refrain from damaging and violent behavior in the context of positive youth development (McDonough et al., 2013). Perceived social responsiveness refers to how people view friends, family members, and other social actors as deserving of care or protection in any situation that follows the ethic. Perceived social responsibility has repeatedly been linked to society's benefit, the prosperity of ethics, and a practice that can bring good experiences. There is a close, if not unbreakable, relationship between ethics and social responsibility, which will strike most social actors (and managers in business settings) as a debatable and quixotic idea at best, and potentially deceptive at worst. Many social advocates feel that a social group should not simply take advantage of a situation/norm but also examine their actions' societal ramifications (Krohn, 2018).

### **Rationale of the Study**

A deep belief in the notion that the world is just, and that people are rewarded for their good behavior is critical for overall psychological well-being. People who embrace such a viewpoint tend to have selfless attitudes and activities. Belief in a just world and selfless behaviour both predict perceived social obligation. Researcher were able to establish a link between these three factors in pairs, but there is a clear vacuum in the literature when it comes to a comprehensive picture of these three variables (Zhang, Chen & Xia, 2021; Mei et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2020).

Moving forward, to construct a just world, people must be encouraged to behave in a certain way, which primarily entails being accountable for their own lives and contributing to the

never been thoroughly examined in the social sciences (Caspar, 2017). That is why researching how BJW fits with both AB and PSR is critical because both of the latter variables are dependent on an individual's choice/freedom (as no one can impose social responsibilities on people; it is always their choice). By exploring or expanding on this link, one can explain the psychological characteristics of a socially responsible or charitable individual.

The current study attempts to increase its practical applicability by focusing on the academic characteristics of an adult, or, in other words, how an adult's education level (intermediate, bachelor, and postgraduate) influences the dynamics between all three variables.

Moreover, the literature accessible on all three variables and the questionnaire planned to be used in this research have been validated in the Western population, which cannot be applied to the Eastern areas for obvious reasons (especially the Pakistani population). As a result, studying the connections between study variables for the Pakistani population would significantly advance the body of knowledge on the subject. Furthermore, the researcher is aware of no study that simultaneously examined these study characteristics in Western and Pakistani cultures. In order to gain a local perspective, the primary goal of the current study is to examine the link between altruistic behavior and perceived social responsibility among Pakistani adults. This goal is based on the preceding argumentation. A mediating factor in this relationship is the conviction that justice will prevail.

## Method

### Research Design

A cross-sectional survey research approach was used to carry out the current investigation. The correlations between the variables of interest are investigated in this study using a single subject group. The study was conducted in Sargodha from January 2022 to August 2022.

### Sample

The sample of adults was selected through a convenient sampling technique from adults. Data was collected by approaching the participant directly from the University of Sargodha and the University of Faisalabad with a hard copy of questioner through random sampling techniques. The sample was adults ( $N = 310$ ) including men ( $n = 142$ ) and women ( $n = 168$ ) with the age above 18 years. Adults between the ages of 18 and 60 who had at least an intermediate degree with English as their primary language of instruction qualified as participants in this study. Data was collected from participants through convenient sampling technique.

The participants were chosen from a pool of candidates that met these criteria, and they were required to be able to read and write without any difficulties. People with psychological disorders were excluded from the study.

### Instruments

The factors of relevance in this study were evaluated using the following tools.

#### ***The Global Belief in a Just World Scale (BJW)***

Self-report on seven items BJW was assessed using the Belief in a just World (BJW) scale, which uses a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Neutral, 5 = Slightly Agree, 6 = Agree, and 7 = Strongly Agree) to evaluate belief in a fair world ( $\alpha=.90$ ; Reich & Wang, 2015). strong scores indicate a strong level of belief in a just world. Low scores on this measure imply a lessening of a BJW.

***A Simplified 9-Items Version of the SRA Scale to Assess Altruism (9-SRA).***

Nine item self-report SRA scale to measure altruism questionnaire ( $\alpha = .78$ ; Manzur & Olavarrieta, 2021) was used to measure altruistic behavior on a 5-point Likert scale: (1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Frequently, 5 = Always). High scores on this scale suggest high altruistic behavior and low scores on this scale suggest less altruistic behavior.

***Perceived Social Responsibility (PSRS)***

To measure perceived social responsibility on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all true, 2 = A little true, 3 = Somewhat true, 4 = Pretty true, 5 = Really true), a seven-item self-report perceived social responsibility scale ( $\alpha = .87$ ; Anderson-Butcher et al., 2016) was used. An elevated degree of PSR is indicated by a high score on this scale, whilst a low level of perceived social responsibility is indicated by a low rating.

**Procedure**

The departmental ethical committee approved the study after receiving formal permission from the author. A dossier of questionnaires was given to each participant in a one-on-one setting after formal consent was obtained. Each item on the scale was supposed to be answered honestly by the participants. As well as being assured of the confidentiality of the information provided, they were also told that this would be used only for research purposes. Data was collected using 360 forms, of which 330 returned and 20 eliminated for incomplete or random responses.

**Statistical Analysis**

The data in the present study was analyzed through descriptive statistics, person correlation and multiple regression analysis using SPSS.

**Results**

The percentage of females ( $n = 162, 52.3\%$ ) was higher than the proportion of men ( $n = 148, 47.7\%$ ) among the 310 participants. Mediation was confirmed by assessing the direct and indirect effect of belief in just world on study variables. As per the findings of the study altruistic behavior (independent variable) had a direct effect on perceived social responsibility ( $\beta = .37, t = 7.02, p < .001$ ). Results also demonstrated a direct effect of belief in a just world (mediating variable) on perceived social responsibility ( $\beta = .11, t = 2.06, p < .05$ ) and the model overall explained 14% variance in perceived social responsibility which was statistically significant ( $R^2 = .14, F(2, 307) = 49.24, p < .001$ ). The indirect effect of altruistic behaviour and perceived social responsibility indicates the mediating role of belief in a just world ( $\beta = .35, t = 6.57, p < .001$ ) and both explained 1% in perceived social responsibility ( $R^2 = .01, F(2, 307) = 21.01, p < .001$ ) (see figure 1).

**Table 1**  
*Psychometric Properties and Descriptive Statistics of the Scale*

Variables	1	2	3	M	SD	Range		Cronbach's $\alpha$
						Potential	Actual	
1. Altruistic behavior	-			26.16	6.54	5-45	12-45	.80
2. Perceived-social responsibility	.37***	-		24.25	5.50	5-35	7-35	.80
3. Belief in just world	.18**	.17**	-	30.52	7.74	7-49	7-49	.77

\*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Table 1 reveals that altruistic behavior has significant positive correlation with perceived social responsibility and belief in just world. Perceived social responsibility has significant positive correlation with belief in just world.

**Table 2**  
*Standardized Path Coefficients for Direct and Indirect Effects of Altruistic Behavior (N = 310)*

Paths	Outcome Variable	Predictor Variable	B	95% CI	
				LL	UL
A	PSR	Altruistic behavior	.37***	.22	.40
B	BJW	Altruistic behavior	.31***	.06	.20
C	PSR	BJW	.11*	.01	.15
D	PSR	Altruistic behavior through B JW	.08*	.21	.38

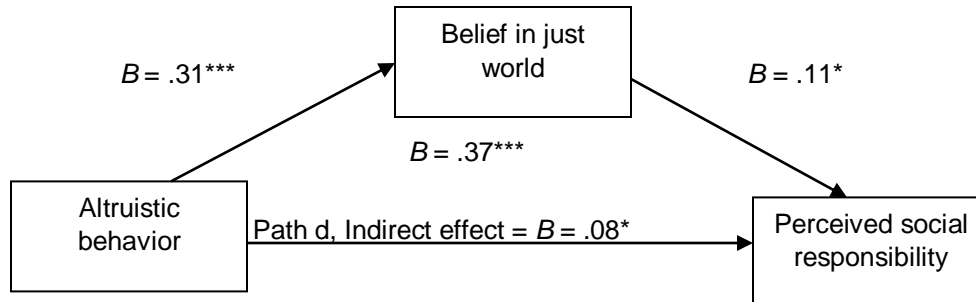
Note: CI = confidence interval; PSR = perceived social responsibility; B JW = belief in just world.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Table 2 shows the direct and indirect effect of altruistic behavior through belief in a just world on perceived social responsibility. Altruistic behavior (independent variable) has a direct effect on perceived social responsibility. Results also demonstrate that direct effect of belief in a just world (mediating variable) on perceived social responsibility and indirect effects were significant illustrating full mediation.

**Figure 1**

*Schematic Presentation of mediating role of Belief in Just World between Altruistic Behavior and Perceived Social Responsibility*



### Discussion

The outcomes of the current investigation show that PSR and BJW have a strong positive correlation with AB. PSR on the other hand also has significant positive correlation with belief in just world. These results fall in line with pre-existing literature which also confirms there is a positive relationship between BJW and AB (Shah & Ali, 2012). It has also been claimed that social responsibility and prosocial behavior are favorably associated with and predicted by the belief in a just society (Bierhoff, 2002). Furthermore, AB motivates people to do good for others even when there is no expectation of recompense. By assisting others, especially those who are less fortunate than you, one might gain perspective and feel more optimistic. There is some evidence to support the idea that practicing kindness and appreciation consciously may increase feelings of joy, optimism, and fulfillment. As a result, social responsibility requires a person to fulfill the norms and duties for the good of society. Previous research found that AB and social responsibility are related (Meyzari & Dasht, 2016).

The BJW's mediation role in the link between AB and PSR was validated by this research. However, no research has been conducted to determine how this relationship is mediated by one's BJW. This study sought to determine the link between altruistic behavior and perceived social responsibility as well as the role of belief in a just world as a mediator. A previous study did not specifically identify this mediation, but BJW mediates the association between altruistic behavior and emotional warmth (Zhang et al., 2021). And literature has also established that emotional warmth has been linked with prosocial behavior (social responsibility is a type of prosocial behavior) (Luo et al., 2021). The fact that people are supposed to have an inherent sense of compassion towards all forms of life – (and non-living things that have the potential to impact living beings) to assume a sense of responsibility towards various social factors (activities). The connection between emotional warmth and compassion has been established in the psychological literature time and again (Silva & Aragón, 2021). The same is true for compassion and conscience (since one ought to possess a strong conscience to have an inherent sense of social responsibility) (Scherschilgt, 2020). So emotional warmth and compassion do predict social responsibility and the earlier set of variables are directly linked with altruistic behavior. This line of interaction is further boosted by having a strong conscience which is directly related to a BJW. So, with this indirect relation and support from this research, it can be established that BJW mediates the link between AB and PSR.

### Conclusions

The findings of the current study and prior research show a link between the studied variables. A positive correlation indicates that as one variable increases, so does another. In this instance, both belief in a just world and selfless action rise. This could be because people are more willing to act altruistically when they believe in a just world. It's also plausible that those who act kindly are more inclined to think the world is fair. When someone believes that positive events happen to helpful individuals while wicked things befall wicked people, they are more likely to provide a helping hand to those who have been hurt or mistreated by others because they believe that the victim deserves it. They may also be less likely to assist someone who has been harmed or traumatized in an accident if they consider that person did not deserve it. The findings demonstrate that some altruistic actions and beliefs in a just society predict how people perceive social responsibility. The study also examines the role of BJW in mediating altruistic behavior and perceived social responsibility. The findings point to mediation between research variables. All other hypotheses were either entirely or partially accepted. The present investigation also examined how various demographic variables affected the study. Except for confidence in a just world on age, the results demonstrate no significant mean difference.

### Limitations of the Study and Prospect Suggestions

1. The study's key weakness is that it was done in a narrow geographical area. Future studies should consider collecting data from multiple areas of the city to ensure that their results are more representative of the population.
2. Second, all data were self-reported by participants. Self-reported measurements can be prone to personal biases, which can affect the validity of research results. Future studies should utilize both self-reported and observer-reported measures of personality to mitigate this limitation.
3. Only one form of data collecting was employed in this study: surveys. Future research should try employing a variety of approaches to collect data on altruistic behavior and perceived social responsibility traits to better understand how these traits develop over time and how they interact with each other within individuals' lives.
4. In future studies mediating variables in terms of personal and environmental contexts must be considered to build a better picture of the mediating effect of the variable.

### REFERENCES

- Anderson-Butcher, D., Amorose, A., Lower, L., & Newman, T. (2016). *Perceived social responsibility scale*. LiFEsports Initiative, Community and Youth Collaborative Institute, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.
- Armstrong, M. (2011). Modeling the relationship between a social responsibility attitude and youth activism (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Scholar Works at Georgia State University.
- Bègue, L., & Muller, D. (2006). Belief in a just world as moderator of hostile attributional bias. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 45(1), 117–126. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466605x37314>
- Bierhoff, H. (2002). Just World, Social Responsibility, and Helping Behavior. *The Justice Motive in Everyday Life*, 189–203. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511499975.011>

- Caspar, E. A. (2017). *The Influence of (Dis)belief in Free Will on Immoral Behavior*. *Frontiers*. Retrieved September 22, 2022, from <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00020/full>
- Dalbert, C. (2009). Belief in a just world. In M. R. Leary & R. H. Hoyle (Eds.), *Handbook of individual differences in social behavior* (pp. 288–297). The Guilford Press.
- Elfers, J., Hlava, P., Elfers, J., & Hlava, P. (2016). The gratitude of caring: Altruism and empathy. *The spectrum of gratitude experience*, 49-72.
- Hafer, C. L., & Sutton, R. (2016). Belief in a Just World. *Handbook of Social Justice Theory and Research*, 145–160. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4939-3216-0\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4939-3216-0_8)
- Kim, H., & Han, S. (2018). Does personal distress enhance empathic interaction or block it? *Personality and Individual Differences*, 124, 77–83. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2017.12.005>
- Krohn, S. (2018). *Four Types of Corporate Social Responsibility*. Bizfluent. <https://bizfluent.com/info-8117691-four-types-corporate-social-responsibility.html>
- Lerner, M. J. (1980). The Belief in a Just World. *The Belief in a Just World*, 9–30. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-0448-5\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-0448-5_2)
- Luo, H., Liu, Q., Yu, C., & Nie, Y. (2021). Parental Warmth, Gratitude, and Prosocial Behavior among Chinese Adolescents: The Moderating Effect of School Climate. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(13), 7033. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18137033>
- Manzur, E., & Olavarrieta, S. (2021). The 9-SRA Scale: A Simplified 9-Items Version of the SRA Scale to Assess Altruism. *Sustainability*, 13(13), 6999. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13136999>
- McDonough, M., Ullrich-French, S., Anderson-Butcher, D., Amorose, A.J., & Riley, A. (2013). Social relationships predict social responsibility among low-income youth in sport-based positive youth development programs. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 25, 431-447.
- Mei, Y., Yuan, T., Hua, M., Silin, H., & Ziqiang, X. (2019). Relationship between Belief in a Just World and Social Responsibility among Undergraduate Students: The Mediating Role of Interpersonal Trust and the Gender Difference. *Psychological Development and Education*, 35(3): 282-287. <https://doi.org/10.16187/j.cnki.issn1001-4918.2019.03.04>
- Meyzari Ali, R., & DashtBozorgi, Z. (2016). The relationship of altruistic behavior, empathetic sense, and social responsibility with happiness among university students. *Practice in Clinical Psychology*, 4(1), 51-56.
- N., S. M. S. (2015, July 8). *What is ALTRUISTIC BEHAVIOR? definition of ALTRUISTIC BEHAVIOR* (*Psychology Dictionary*). Psychology Dictionary. Retrieved August 31, 2022, from <https://psychologydictionary.org/altruistic-behavior/>
- Pavenkova, O., Pavenkov, V., & Rubtcova, M. (2015, May). The Altruistic Behavior: Characteristic of Future Teachers of Inclusive Education in Russia. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 187, 10–15. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.03.003>

- Reich, B., & Wang, X. (2015). And justice for all: Revisiting the Global Belief in a Just World Scale. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 78, 68–76. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2015.01.031>
- Santiago-Silva, D. Z., & Sánchez-Aragón, R. (2021). Emotional Warmth and Empathy in Relationship Satisfaction of Couples with Diabetes. *Diabetes and Couples*, 185–206. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-68498-3\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-68498-3_9)
- Scherschilgt, M. (2020). *Conscience and Compassion*. Holy Family School of Faith. <https://www.schooloffaith.com/rosary-archive/conscience-and-compassion-1>
- Shah, S. S., & Ali, A. Z. (2012). Altruism and belief in just world in young adults: relationship with religiosity. *Pakistan Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 11(2). [https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A311675503/AONE?u=edgewood\\_oscar&sid=googleScholar&xid=25e1b850](https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A311675503/AONE?u=edgewood_oscar&sid=googleScholar&xid=25e1b850)
- Sutton, R. M., & Winnard, E. J. (2007). Looking ahead through lenses of justice: The relevance of just-world beliefs to intentions and confidence in the future. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 46(3), 649–666. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466606x166220>
- Wray-Lake, L., & Syvertsen, A. K. (2011). The developmental roots of social responsibility in childhood and adolescence. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 2011(134), 11–25. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cd.308>
- Yang, C., Wang, Y., Wang, Y., Zhang, X., Liu, Y., & Chen, H. (2020, January 10). The Effect of Sense of Community Responsibility on Residents' Altruistic Behavior: Evidence from the Dictator Game. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(2), 460. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17020460>
- Zhang, Y., Chen, L., & Xia, Y. (2021). Belief in a Just World and Moral Personality as Mediating Roles Between Parenting Emotional Warmth and Internet Altruistic Behavior. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.670373>
- Zheng, X., Wang, Y., & Xu, L. (2016). Internet Altruistic Behavior and Subjective Well-Being: Self-Efficacy as a Mediator. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal*, 44(9), 1575–1583. <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.2016.44.9.1575>