Incidental emotions have an important influence on consumption behavior. This study examined the influence of anxiety, sadness, hope, pride, and a control neutral condition on altruistic decisions via the Dictator Game (DG).

The DG is a task first set up in 1986 by Kahneman, Knetsch & Thaler (1986). The task is essentially a one-person decision task where individuals decide to split a windfall endowment ($10, in this study) between themselves and another anonymous, unidentified individual. Since the recipient is anonymous, any amount that is passed on is attributed to altruistic intentions.

Further, in this study, a mediator, other/situational responsibility initiated by the emotion was also investigated for the first time in predicting decisions. The other/situational responsibility essentially refers to the perceived responsibility of the cause of an event & can be a significant predictor of behaviors by affecting motivations.

Results

Reliability of Scales:
- Self affirmation - α = .76; M = 45.56 (range- 7-56), SD = 5.74
- Risk Propensity - α = .77; M = 37.74 (range- 7-63), SD = 9.29
- Compassion - α = .88, M = 26.18 (range- 5-35), SD = 6.09
- Responsibility - α = .63 (for 3-item scale)

Emotion Manipulation Check
Each of the emotion conditions were verified for their induction of the pertinent emotions. One-way between subjects ANOVA - to explore the effect of emotion on altruism
- No significant differences among the emotion conditions on altruistic giving, F(4, 145) = 0.841, p = .50.
- Overall average donation to (fictitious) counterparts across emotion conditions was $4.97 (SE = .13).
- On average, anxious individuals gave $5.27 (SE = 0.21) followed by those in the neutral condition (M = $5.10; SE = 0.30), hopeful individuals (M = $5.03, SE = 0.41), sad individuals (M = $4.90, SE = 0.23) while proud individuals passed on $4.57 (SE = 0.25).

An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted for the effect of emotion condition on donation amounts, with self-affirmation and baseline measures of positive and negative as covariates.
- No significant main effect of self-affirmation, F(1, 142) = .52, p = .47, no main effect of baseline positive affect, F(1, 142) = .39, p = .53 and no main effect of baseline negative affect, F(1, 142) = .04, p = .85.
- No main effect of emotion on the donated amounts in the DG task, F(4, 142) = .76, p = .55.
- Same trend

A second ANCOVA was conducted with emotion condition on DG decisions. The covariates – risk propensity, compassion, PA score and NA score.
- Controlling for baseline measures, risk propensity and compassion was not significant, F(1, 142) = .52, p = .47, no main effect of baseline positive affect, F(1, 142) = .39, p = .53 and no main effect of baseline negative affect, F(1, 142) = .04, p = .85.
- No main effect of emotion on the donated amounts in the DG task, F(4, 142) = .76, p = .55.
- Same trend

Conclusions

- First study to compare the effect of different specific emotions (i.e., anxiety, sadness, hope & pride) on altruistic giving using the DG
- Specific emotions did not significantly differ in predicting prosocial behavior
- A trend was observed – Anxiety > Neutral > Hope > Sad > Pride – Demands future investigation

Reference