

Description for the general public

The objective of the proposed research is to analyse similarities and relationships between self-control (preference for a larger reward that is available later to a smaller reward available sooner) and altruism (abandonment of the benefit for the self to the benefit for the other person). According to some researchers people may not see the relationship between their present selves and their future selves (time dimension) as well as people may not see the relationships between their own interests and the interests of others (social distance dimension). The research shows that the probability of self-control decreases when the waiting time for a smaller reward becomes shorter (e.g. small children prefer to receive three chocolate bars in a week to one chocolate bar in six days, but at the same time they prefer to receive one chocolate bar immediately to three chocolate bars next day). The outlined effect is called preference reversal. We plan to investigate whether the analogous effect occurs in the case of altruism, i.e. in choices between larger amount of money for a very socially distant person (to the subject) and a socially distant person the former should be preferred and, at the same time, choice of a smaller amount of money for a very close person should be preferred to the choice of a slightly larger amount for a close person. All planned studies are to be executed by the use of computer application, in which the subjects will make choices between hypothetical monetary rewards. The research on self-control and altruism shows that people who treat better their future self (exhibit higher degree of self-control) tend to treat better other people as well. In our view such direction of the relationship between self-control and altruism characterises situations in which altruism demands an immediate abandonment of one's own benefit. We further predict that when the abandonment of one's own benefit is demanded in the future, the direction of the relationship will turn, i.e. higher level of altruism will go with lower degree of self-control. The latter prediction is to be tested by the use of computer application simulating situations of choice (1) between the reward for the self and for the other person as well as (2) in economic games – dictator game (the subject receives the amount of money and is asked to split the amount between the self and the other person) and ultimatum game (the other person must now accept the proposed split and so enforce it). Both hypothetical and real money rewards will be here used.