

## ERD 2019 Education, Reflection, Development, Seventh Edition

### ALTRUISM – A PREMISE IN PROVING PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIORS

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#### *Abstract*

Altruism is the moral to be cultivated, inculcated in the students personality, thus helping to prevent irresponsible behavior, the identification of positive, genuine, pro-social skills and social-emotional development. This is a goal that can be achieved by approaching effective teaching strategies based on active-participative methods and developed in a educational environment friendly, relaxing and nurturing. Altruism involves empathy, emotional need that students feel safe, feel that they are listened to, understood by the teacher and in turn, they show respect for others, active listening, understanding. The teacher's role is important to be an example for his pupils to be truly a "person" to be truly "human" and with respect, compassion, wisdom shown to his pupils. In our study we have dedicated this issue of major importance and we researched this phenomenon through the application of specific research methods sciences education, observation, survey-based questionnaire-based research thoroughly curriculum documents and school in force. In this respect, I supported lessons on internalization of moral value of altruism using the basic teaching game teaching method with its different variants because of its dynamism and generating good mood, emotional comfort and freedom of expression.

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**Keywords:** Altruism, empathy, pro-social behaviour, personality.



## 1. Introduction

Altruism is the moral value to be cultivated, inoculated into the pupils' personality, thus contributing to preventing irresponsible behavior, to highlighting positive, authentic, pro-social matters, as well as to developing socio-emotional skills. This is a goal to be achieved by approaching effective teaching strategies based on active-participative methods and developed in a friendly educational, relaxing and nurturing environment.

Altruism involves empathy, emotional need whereby pupils feel safe, they feel that they are listened to, understood by the teacher and in their turn, they show respect, active listening, understanding towards others. The teacher has got the important role to be an example for his pupils to be a real "person", to be truly "human" and through the respect, compassion, wisdom shown towards his pupils.

Practicing pro-social behaviors is a goal to be achieved by studying school subjects from the curricular area related to "Man and society", especially those of Civic education, a subject studied at the primary level, in the 3rd and 4th grades. Altruism represents such moral value manifested by generosity and by a benevolent and selfless behavior, to promote the welfare of another person, even if it means taking a risk (Barbu, Boca, & Călineci, 2016). In this context "the root of altruism lies in empathy, in the ability to read the emotions of others: do not feel the need or despair of others means a lack of affection (...) and if there are two moral attitudes our times would need, they are certainly self-abstinence and compassion" (Goleman, 2008, pp. 59-60).

## 2. Problem Statement

Altruism, among other "personal virtues" (sincerity, honesty, nobility, love, charity, responsibility etc.) and social virtues lie on the development of humanistic education expressed by values of a "pluralistic, participatory, collaborative and persuasive, consensus and diversity civic culture, enabling change, shaping it" (Chicu, 2002, p.33). It is therefore requested, as a contemporary and indispensable requirement, the formation of a humanistic personality, characterized through features and meanings such as: honesty, sincerity, kindness, humanness, generosity, faithfulness, nobility, modesty, respect, love, kindness and concern for people, gratitude and vigilance towards the family, parents; confidence in human values and capabilities of, civilized behavior, attentive and gracious in interhuman relationships, avoiding all forms of physical or moral insult, sympathy, care and help to the suffering people, deprived by calamities, disabled, elderly or having other needs, dignified and civilized coexistence between individuals of all ages and nationalities, understanding and cooperation between generations, the ability to offer joy to parents, elderly, etc., dignity, personal and national pride, loyalty towards the country and people, honoring the memory of all those fallen in battle, aversion to evil and to inhuman acts such as greed, adultery, murder, destruction, drug trafficking, etc., fight for ensuring peace, for preventing and eliminating conflicts on our planet etc. (Bontaș, 2007).

Formation and development of the specific skill related to the demonstration of pro-social behaviors as a socio-emotional competence is an ongoing and impact process on the design and finalization of the student character, of the personality relational-value side. Classroom is a psychosocial climate where can form interpersonal and intrapersonal relationship skills that will influence the moral

conduct. The student builds its personal identity, forms its own personality, self-confidence, empathy, assertiveness and other personality traits desirable for a genuine and harmonious social life. Within the group-class along with the teacher, pupils internalize social and moral behavior rules and norms, initially imposed from the outside and subsequently transferred to the moral conduct, imposed from the inside.

### **3. Research Questions**

The research questions are the following:

- 3.1. How important is the application of teaching strategies with playful character within Civic education classes in the 4th grade?
- 3.2. How altruistic are the pupils subject to questioning?
- 3.3. How do pupils in the fourth grade perceive the moral value of altruism at the level of inter-human relations?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

To support this idea, we developed an intervention program to develop this skill at the fourth grade, on a population of 185 pupils, over a school semester, distributed at the level of two samples, a control sample and an experimental sample. Therefore, in the context of Civic education classes, we approached a playful teaching and learning strategy, because it promotes learning in a relaxed and stimulating environment, based on interaction, on cooperation, but also on competition between groups of pupils who have a common goal and a common desire. We chose the role play as a basic teaching method, because, through games and activities based on cooperation, the student gains feelings of confidence and self-esteem, communication and empathy skills with others, develop relational and aptitude skills. Insertion of game within teaching strategies determines the cultivation of ability of mastering primary emotional and social acts of pupils, as long as it is strictly supervised and directed by the school teacher. It helps, through its rules and content, to the achievement of tasks of moral education in the psychosocial interactions between partners "which interaction will inevitably have a moral coloring, the pupils being put in a position to behave according to what others do, either as partners, or as opponents. The game is therefore an organized form of practice and training of moral conduct" (Nicola, 2003, p. 287).

So, at the level of the lesson in which the value of altruism has undergone the process of comprehension by the pupils and turned into a socio-emotional competence of empathy and internalizing of pro-social behavior, the role play "Little judges" has been used, because this game actively involves the pupil in its own training and forms its open attitude and behavior in the social and moral relationships towards its colleagues. The role play stimulates the empathic and altruistic behavior of the pupil, which defines its personality in an authentic way. Also, by role, the pupil can explore emotional problems, inter-individual relationships and may mediate inter- and intrapersonal conflicts. The play consists in telling a moral story (or a case) following which the pupils will have to analyze and propose the appropriate measures of some inappropriate behavior of some pupils. Classroom management will be made by

groups, each group receiving a different case. The pupils will judge the moral behavior and communicate the "judgment" in front of the whole class.

## 5. Research Methods

In our study, we have dedicated to this topic of major importance and we researched this phenomenon by means of application of some research methods specific to education sciences, such as observation, questionnaire-based survey, based on a thoroughly research of curriculum and school documents in force. In this respect, I supported lessons on introspection of moral value of altruism, using the basic teaching game as a teaching method in its various variants, because of its stimulating potential, as well as generating good mood, emotional comfort and freedom of expression.

The observation consisted in the careful monitoring of pupils' behavior before and after doing lessons of civic education on introspection of the moral value of altruism and transferring it to the level of pro-social behavior.

Questionnaire-based survey consisted of a questionnaire addressed to all pupils involved in research in order to highlight the existence of some significant differences regarding the pro-social behavior between the two groups of subjects under investigation, i.e. the experimental sample and control sample.

## 6. Findings

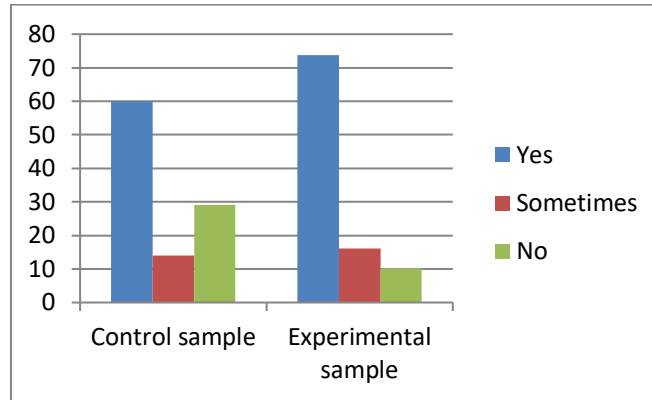
After doing lessons with a moral content and ludic support, a questionnaire was applied to determine the degree of internalization and understanding of the content of the lesson. The questionnaire consisted of formulating answers to those 9 subjective and objective test items, namely:

*Item No. 1* consists of a closed question, but with an argument in case of an affirmative answer, "Do you think you are an altruistic child? If so, why?" The values obtained after processing the answers given by subjects are shown in Table 01.

**Table 01.** Comparative table for item No. 1

Sample	a (Yes)		b (Sometimes)		c (No)		Total subjects
	Figures	%	Figures	%	Figures	%	
E.C.	49	59,97	12	13,95	25	29,06	86
E.E.	73	73,73	16	16,16	10	10,10	99

Graphical representation of answers of the two categories of samples is depicted in Figure 01.



**Figure 01.** Comparison chart of the two samples for item No. 1

The answers given by the subjects of the two categories of samples are different. In the case of control sample, it was found that, in case of positive answers, they are not motivated, they are confusing and some of them are general, unspecific, vague, undefined. In case of experimental sample, the answers were more nuanced and deeper. Options of answers for the two categories of samples are given in Table 02.

**Table 02.** Comparative table according to categories of samples, item no. 1

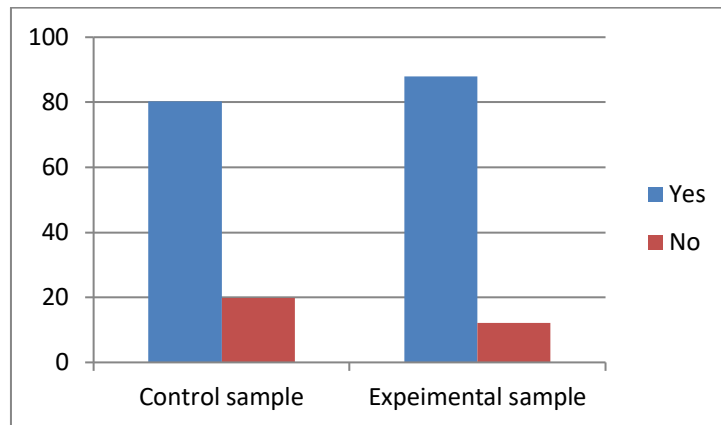
Options of answers	
Control sample	Experimental sample
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- because I am good</li> <li>- it's good to help</li> <li>- I've always been generous</li> <li>- I comply with rules</li> <li>- I hate to be selfish</li> <li>- I comply with rules</li> <li>- it's good to be kind with friends</li> <li>- it's good to help</li> <li>- I help my family</li> <li>- I am not the kind of bad child</li> <li>- I try and give and share</li> <li>- because I feel like that</li> <li>- the good is enjoying</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I give even if I will be deprived of such thing</li> <li>- I like to help my colleagues</li> <li>- I help people</li> <li>- I offer presents</li> <li>- I help my friends without asking for anything in return</li> <li>- I help colleagues in need</li> <li>- I know how to share with anyone</li> <li>- I am generous with the others</li> <li>- I donate clothes and toys to poor children</li> <li>- I offered help to poor people</li> <li>- I like to offer without expecting our reward</li> <li>- I offer from my little assets</li> <li>- I help as much as I can</li> <li>- I help people without financial means</li> <li>- I like to help people and make their life happier</li> <li>- I share almost everything with my colleagues and friends</li> <li>- I help, listen, respect</li> <li>- I am good-hearted and generous</li> </ul>

Item No. 2 consists of a closed question, but based on an argument in case of a positive answer: "Do you think that being altruistic is a quality that helps you in life? If so, why?" The values obtained after processing the answers of the subjects are shown in Table 03.

**Table 03.** Comparative table for item No. 2

Sample	a (Yes)		b (No)		Total subjects
	Figures	%	Figures	%	
Control sample	69	80,23	17	19,76	86
E.E.	87	87,87	12	12,12	99

The graphical representation of the answers of the two categories of samples is depicted in Figure 02 which highlights the percentages for affirmative and negative answers.



**Figure 02.** Comparison chart of the two samples for item No. 2

The answers given by the subjects of the two categories of samples are different. In the case of control sample, it was found that arguments are more general and they are sometimes even missing and in case of experimental sample, the answers are much more nuanced and profound. These types of answers are shown in Table 04.

**Table 04.** Comparative table according to categories of samples, item no. 2

Options of answers	
Control sample	Experimental sample
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- you can have many friends</li> <li>- you do well to people</li> <li>- people respect you</li> <li>- you can also help someone else</li> <li>- we should be generous</li> <li>- it's good to be kind</li> <li>- the others will notice this capacity</li> <li>- you'll become a respected person</li> <li>- it's good to help your friends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the others will feel better next to you</li> <li>- if you are altruistic, the others will be the same</li> <li>- people consider you a quality person</li> <li>- people will consider you a good person and will help you, in their turn</li> <li>- the good enjoys you</li> <li>- if you are kind to others, they will be kind to you as well</li> <li>- you'll become agreeable and loved</li> <li>- you'll have many friends</li> <li>- everyone likes you</li> <li>- if you are altruistic, you'll have much to gain</li> <li>- altruistic people are respected and have many friends</li> <li>- favour will return to you</li> <li>- you feel good if you make people happy</li> <li>- you can be integrated more easily into the classroom</li> <li>- you are much more appreciated</li> <li>- If you do well, you'll find better.</li> </ul>

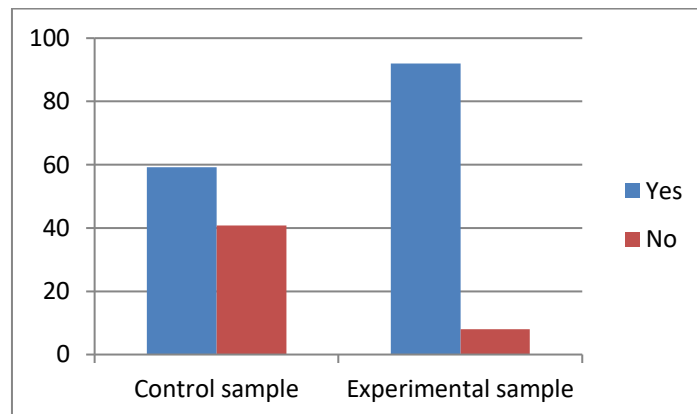
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- if you are generous, life will be generous to you</li> <li>- if you offer, you'll feel very well.</li> <li>- you'll feel very good after any good act you've done.</li> <li>- If you do well, you'll find better.</li> <li>- doing good deeds, God sees and helps.</li> </ul>
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Item No. 3 consists of an open subjective question: "Have you ever shown an altruistic behavior? Towards whom and in what circumstance?" The values obtained after processing the answers of the subjects are shown in Table 05.

**Table 05.** Comparative table for item No.3

Sample	a (Yes)		b (No)		Total subjects
	Figures	%	Figures	%	
Control sample	51	59,30	35	40,69	86
Experimental sample	91	91,91	8	8,08	99

The graphical representation of answers of the two categories of samples is depicted in Figure 03, which highlights the affirmative and negative answers in case of showing altruistic behaviors.



**Figure 03.** Comparison chart for the two samples concerning item No. 3

The answers given by the subjects of the two categories of samples are different. In case of the control sample, it was found that the answers are more general, unspecific, vague or they are even missing. In case of experimental sample, the answers were much more relevant and various. These answers are summarized in Table 06.

**Table 06.** Comparative table according to categories of samples, item no. 3

Options of answers	
Control sample	Experimental sample
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I lent various objects to my colleagues</li> <li>- I gave candies to my colleagues, on my birthday</li> <li>- when children beat, I separated them</li> <li>- towards guests, on my brother's anniversary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I offered clothes to a poor child</li> <li>- I donate clothes and toys to poor children</li> <li>- I fed a poor child, a beggar</li> <li>- I lent a sum of money to a colleague, because he</li> </ul>

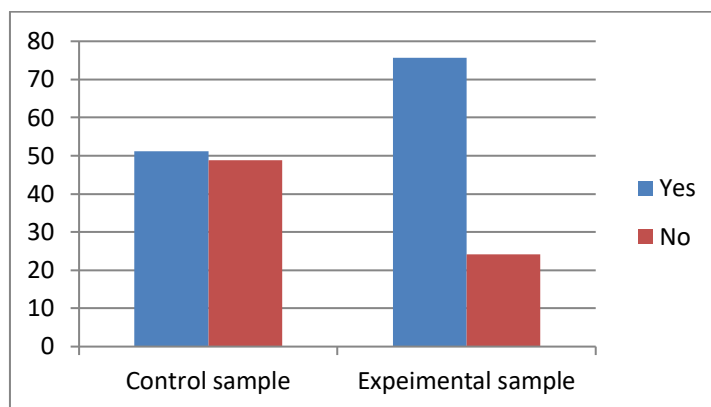
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- towards a friend, when the others bullied him</li> <li>- when a colleague does not know something</li> <li>- when my colleagues needed me</li> <li>- when two colleagues fought</li> <li>- when I played with a ball together with a colleague</li> <li>- towards my colleagues</li> <li>- towards a friend</li> <li>- I cannot remember</li> <li>-I helped my parents cooking and house working</li> <li>- I borrowed a colleague with money</li> </ul>	needed it <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I donate things to children from orphanage</li> <li>- I donate useless toys to the needy children</li> <li>- I donated money to the poor people</li> <li>- I helped an old woman to cross the street</li> <li>- I shared my little belongings to a friend</li> <li>- I celebrated one of my friends's birthday with other colleagues, because she has never celebrated it</li> <li>- I offered my seat to an old man in the bus</li> <li>- I share things with my friends</li> <li>- I share my sandwich with my female friend when she hasn't got any.</li> <li>- I helped a colleague to learn walking on rollers</li> <li>- I donated the money left from shopping to a homeless man</li> <li>- I bandaged a colleague who has cut his hand</li> </ul>
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Item No. 4 consists of a closed question, but based on an argument in case of an affirmative answer: "Do you think you learn something new in the lesson of today (about altruism)? If so, what?" The values obtained after processing the answers of the subjects are shown in Table 07.

**Table 07.** Comparative table for item No. 4

Sample	a (Yes)		b (No)		Total subjects
	Figures	%	Figures	%	
Control sample	44	51,16	42	48,83	86
Experimental sample	75	75,75	24	24,24	99

The graphical representation of the answers of the two groups of samples depicted in Figure 04 which highlights the percentages obtained in the case of affirmative and negative answers.



**Figure 04.** Comparative chart for the two samples concerning Item No. 4

The answers given by the subjects of the two categories of samples are different. In the case of control sample, it was found that the answers are more general, unspecific, vague, undefined. In the case



of experimental sample, the answers were more nuanced, various and deep. These answers are given in Table 08.

**Table 08.** Comparative table according to categories of samples, Item No. 4

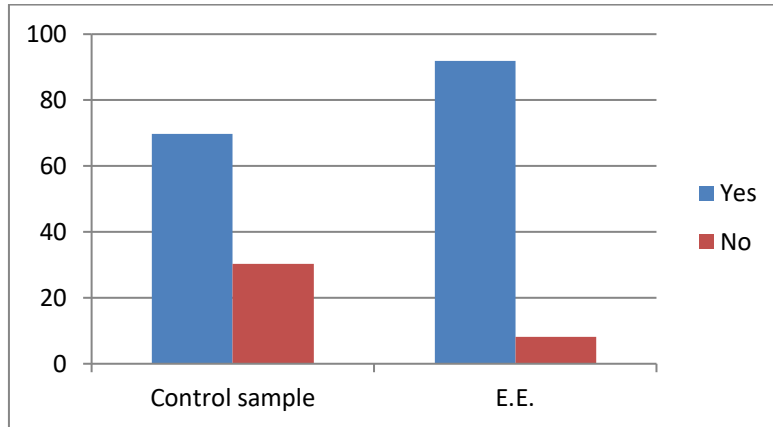
Options of answers	
Control sample	Experimental sample
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- other kind of people is surrounding me</li> <li>- let us be generous</li> <li>- information on altruism</li> <li>- what is the meaning of the word „altruism”?</li> <li>- if you are altruistic, you are a respected person</li> <li>- altruism means generosity</li> <li>- how to help</li> <li>- nice behaviour day by day</li> <li>- let us be generous with people and our family</li> <li>- if you are altruistic, you have got more friends</li> <li>- you should not be selfish</li> <li>- altruism helps us in life</li> <li>- do not deceive friendship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to help, to respect and never ignore cries for helps</li> <li>- altruism reconciles with kindness, generosity and love</li> <li>- if you are altruistic, you'll also be rewarded</li> <li>- let us be always good</li> <li>- I have learnt a new conduct</li> <li>- do not be greedy</li> <li>- to be even better than I really am</li> <li>- it's good to help people</li> <li>- give without expecting something in return</li> <li>- by altruism, people can change their behavior</li> <li>- many interesting and useful things</li> <li>- if you are altruistic, you get ten times more, but do not expect something in return</li> <li>- let us be more kind and generous</li> <li>- if you are altruistic, you may become an honest person</li> <li>- if you are altruistic, people can trust you</li> <li>- let us be generous, regardless of the situation</li> <li>- altruism is a proof that you respect yourself</li> <li>- I must give more and do more good deeds</li> </ul>

Item no. 5 consists of a closed question, but accompanied with an argument: " Would you like the Civics lessons take place in the form of a game? If so, why?" The values obtained after processing the answers of the subjects are shown in Table 09.

**Table 09.** Comparative table for Item No. 5

Sample	a (Yes)		b (No)		Total subjects
	Figures	%	Figures	%	
Control sample	60	69,76	26	30,23	86
Experimental sample	91	91,91	8	8,08	99

Graphical representation of answers of the two categories of samples is depicted in Figure 05 which highlights the percentages of the two categories of answers.



**Figure 05.** Comparison chart for the two samples concerning item No. 5

Arguments brought in favor of applying the teaching game in civics lessons were, in case of the control sample, regarded as a potentiality level and they are presented alongside with the arguments of the experimental sample, marking with certainty valences of the teaching game within the civic education classes. Versions of answers according to the two types of samples are shown in Table 10.

**Table 10.** Comparative table according to categories of samples, Item no. 5

Options of answers	
Control sample	Experimental sample
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- it would be more entertaining</li> <li>- it would be more relaxing and we would study better</li> <li>- it would not be necessary to write so much</li> <li>- it would be more interesting</li> <li>- it would be more funny</li> <li>- we would have some fun and it would be to our liking</li> <li>- I don't like to write</li> <li>- we would learn much easier</li> <li>- it would be funnier to also entertain at school</li> <li>- we would learn things faster</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- it would be much more educational and we would acquire knowledge much faster</li> <li>- we would understand better the school matter</li> <li>- we develop ourselves better</li> <li>- we can learn easier</li> <li>- we play and study at the same time</li> <li>- we would be eager to learn and it would be funnier</li> <li>- it's easier to learn through play</li> <li>- I like better to play and to learn at the same time</li> <li>- they would be more attractive and funny</li> <li>- we learn how to behave, much better</li> <li>- we would learn with pleasure</li> <li>- our lessons are boring; learning through play would be otherwise</li> <li>- we would not write so much</li> <li>- learning through play would be more educational</li> <li>- it is more understandable to us</li> <li>- we are children and we can learn a lot through play</li> <li>- it is much more exciting, especially with our teacher.</li> </ul>

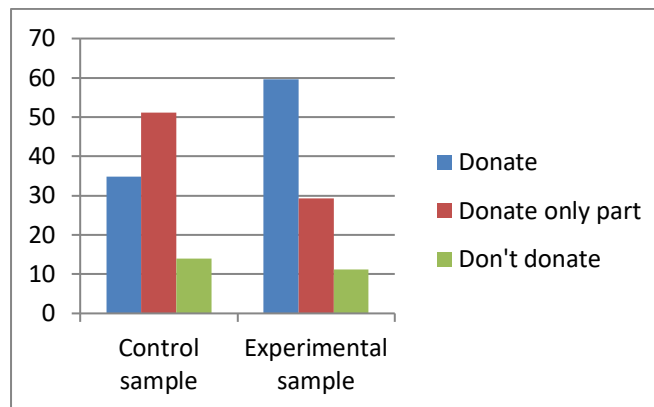
Item 6 consists of a closed-ended request, Let's suppose that one of your mates is seriously ill and needs a large amount of money to be surgically operated in a foreign country and you have money

gathered in a money box to buy a toy. What would you do in such a case? The values obtained after processing the answers of the subjects are shown in Table 11.

**Table 11.** Comparative table for Item No. 6

Sample	a (You donate all your amount)		b (You donate only part of the amount)		c (You do not give anything)		Total subjects
	Figures	%	Figures	%	Figures	%	
Control sample	30	34,88	44	51,16	12	13,93	86
Experimental sample	59	59,59	29	29,29	11	11,11	99

The graphical representation of the answers of the two groups of samples is depicted in Figure 06 which highlights the degree of altruism of the investigated pupils, the students forming part of the experimental sample proving a higher degree of altruism (59.99%) as compared to the components of the control sample (34.88%).



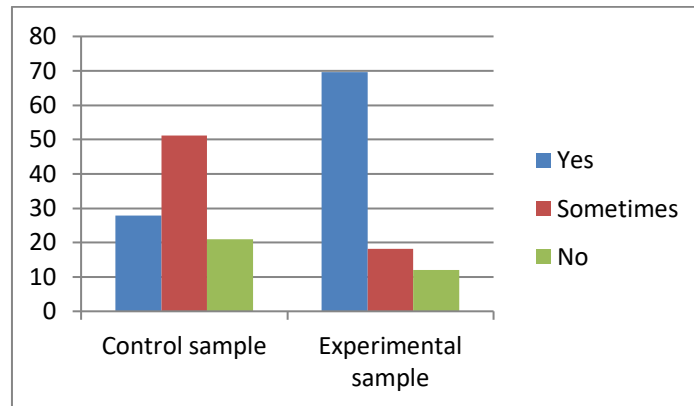
**Figure 06.** Comparison chart for the two samples concerning item No. 6

Items 7, 8 and 9 are closed-ended requirements which are behavioral indicators of socio-emotional competence of *demonstration of prosocial behaviors* corresponding to the dependent variable No.2, represented in Table 12. At the progress test on internalizing the moral value of *altruism* attended 86 students at the control sample and 99 students at the experimental sample.

**Table 12.** Comparative table for behavioral indicators specific to socio-emotional competence to demonstrate prosocial behaviors

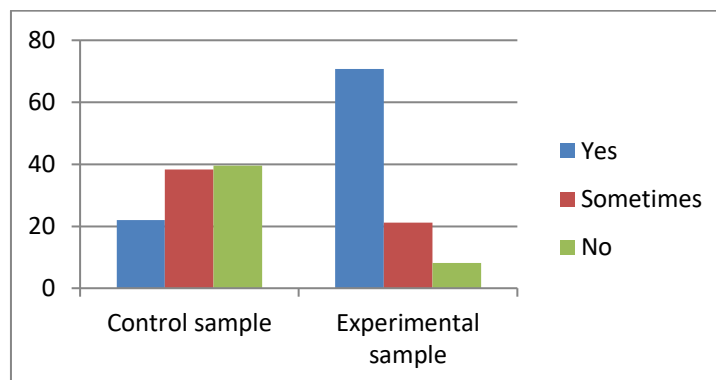
Sample	Variable	Yes (a)		Sometimes (b)		No (c)	
		Figures	%	Figures	%	Figures	%
Control sample	V2.1. (I6)	24	27,90	44	51,16	18	20,93
	V2.2. (I7)	19	22,03	33	38,37	34	39,53
	V2.3. (I8)	22	25,58	40	46,51	24	27,90
Experimental sample	V2.1. (I6)	69	69,69	19	18,18	12	12,12
	V2.2. (I7)	70	70,70	21	21,21	8	8,08
	V2.3. (I8)	65	65,65	25	25,25	9	9,09

Item No. 7 corresponding to the behavioral indicator V.2.1. *Those mates who do not work enough to reach their goal do not deserve help when in trouble*, shows comparative values between the two samples shown in Figure 07.



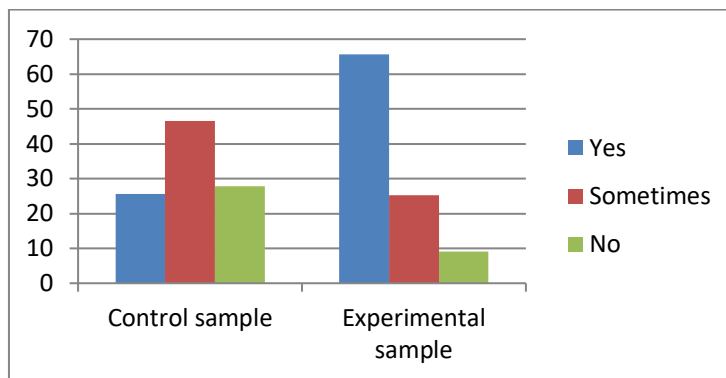
**Figure 07.** Comparison chart for the two samples on the behavioral indicator V.2.1

Item No. 8, corresponding to the behavioral indicator V2.2., *Within a project you are working on along with other mates of yours, you offer to help if someone needs*, shows comparative values between two samples shown in Figure 08.



**Figure 08.** Comparison chart for the two samples on the behavioral indicator V.2.2

Item no. 9, corresponding to the behavioral indicator V2.3., *Within a project you are working on along with some of your mates, you offer to help if someone needs*, shows comparative values between two samples shown in Figure 09.



**Figure 09.** Comparison chart for the two samples on the behavioral indicator V.2.3

## 7. Conclusion

Following the research undertaken by us, we have found as follows:

- By applying teaching strategies with a playful nature within civic education classes, students became more motivated, more receptive to new knowledge also due to the stimulating potential of the educational games

- There has been an increase in the degree of internalization of the moral value of altruism, but also as regards the application of the prosocial behavior in the school context, through mutual assistance, increased attention given to colleagues in difficult situations, elimination of conflicts and reduction of tense states at the level of group of students.

- It turned out that the subjects undergoing the experiment whereby moral lessons were conducted, having playful activities as a teaching strategy, present an increased altruistic and empathetic potential, compared to subjects who have not performed these lessons.

As Kohn (2014) stated in his book entitled *Punished by rewards*, the real lessons that learn from us (teachers / schoolmasters) are those related to love, justice, respect and compassion only when practiced authentically and positively.

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