

Impacts of Selfishness: A Primer

Matthew N. O. Sadiku¹, Uwakwe C. Chukwu², Janet O. Sadiku³

¹Department of Electrical & Computer Engineering, Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, TX USA

²Department of Engineering Technology, South Carolina State University, Orangeburg, SC, USA

³Juliana King University, Houston, TX, USA

ABSTRACT: Selfishness refers to the act of being self-centered, prioritizing one's own interests and desires above those of others. The concept of selfishness has captured the attention of philosophers, theologians, and social scientists. All humans are selfish. We naturally act in ways that benefit us. Selfishness has negative impacts on the society, home/family, workplace, and relationship. In this paper, we will examine the impacts of selfishness in diverse areas of our life.

KEYWORD: selfishness, impacts of selfishness, relationships.

INTRODUCTION

Just about everything we do or say either directly or indirectly affects others. Therefore, when we consider selfishness, we are really thinking about antisocial behaviors. Common wisdom holds that people are selfish and self-interested. But selfishness brings very little in the way of health, psychological benefits, and spiritual benefits.

By nature, humans are selfish creatures. Selfishness is bad for relationships. It is difficult to sustain a relationship with someone with that kind of mindset.

Selfish behaviors affect romantic relationships, friends, and family ties. In fact, selfishness runs everything. Here are some of the ways selfishness ruins everything [1]:

- Selfishness tends to push people away – it is one of the least appealing character traits.
- We can start to think of people in terms of what they can do for us rather than enjoying unconditional friendships.
- Self-obsession means we are more prone to worry and mental health problems.
- Selfishness may make it easier for us to fall into traps like addiction.
- Our selfishness can mean that we hurt others as we ruthlessly strive to satisfy our own needs.
- Self-centeredness can damage our reputation and lead to loneliness.
- It destroys families and relationships.

WHAT IS SELFISHNESS?

Human beings are predisposed to be self-centered, egocentric, and egoistic. Research shows evolution involves the process of natural selection by individuals who prioritized self-interest over others. Psychologists often draw on classical conceptions of selfishness from evolutionary biology (i.e., selfishness can be hereditary), economics (i.e., scale of preference in self-interest), and philosophy (i.e., psychological egoism). Selfishness is perceived in ourselves and others when we detect a situation-specific desire to benefit the self that disregards others’ desires. Detecting and deterring selfishness in both oneself and others is crucial in social and marital life. Understanding selfish actions and deterring them facilitates the maintenance of social cohesion and marital relationships.

Selfishness is the trait that leads people to frequently act in their own interests without any regard for how their actions could affect others. It is being overly concerned for oneself or one's own advantage, pleasure, or welfare, regardless of others. It is the opposite of altruism or selflessness. Selfish or self-centered people are overly focused on themselves. They lack empathy for others. The selfish person is interested only in himself, wants everything for himself, feels no pleasure in giving, but only in taking.

Selfish people only care about themselves and their own needs, and they are not interested in the needs of others. They are self-centered, controlling, and manipulative. Selfishness is living by the flesh; living by sight, not by faith. For a selfish person, it is “Me, myself & I.” Selfishness places you above God, spouse, and children. It is a sin against God and your spouse. God judges selfish people [2]. A typical demonstration of selfishness is shown in Figure 1 [3].

Selfishness is one type of human behavior. It is any behavior that brings any pleasure or benefit to the individual. It is often regarded as an undesirable trait, whereas altruism is typically considered universally desirable and virtuous. Many people believe that humans are hardwired to be selfish, but there’s scientific evidence to back that up. They believe that we are apparently ruthless, with strong impulses to compete against each other for resources and to accumulate power and possessions. Because people’s survival depended on access to resources, there was bound to be competition and conflict between rival groups, which led to the development of traits like racism, warfare, and male domination. Man in the state of nature seeks nothing but his own selfish pleasure, but such individualism naturally leads to a war in which every man's hand is against his neighbor.

IMPACTS OF SELFLESSNESS

It is first important to note that selfishness is not always inherently bad. Healthy selfishness affects own health, growth, happiness, joy, and freedom. It can have a positive impact both on the self and on others. The relationship between healthy selfishness and pathological altruism/selflessness is shown in Figure 2 [4]. Selfishness can be a bad mark in your personal life; it can cause a huge negative impact on your relationships and your career success. The impacts of selfishness include the following [1,5].

- *God:* We already discussed in the preceding chapter that selfishness breaks the Ten Commandment God gave us to observe. When we are selfish, we also send the Lord a message about our immaturity. Selfishness ruins everything including spiritual relationship with our Maker.
- *Home:* When we continue to act only in our own interests, refusing to propose win-win solutions that satisfy both of our interests, we will hurt, frustrate, and anger our spouse. The selfish spouse would be wise to tread carefully. Although the selfish spouse may be getting their way all the time, their own long-term interests are not served.
- *Workplace:* As an organization, employers and employees have a moral obligation to revive empathy in a society moving rapidly toward selfishness. Few are the people who would not be bothered by a selfish

business owner who was not wanting to share any of the company’s abundant profits with the hardworking employees who made it all possible. Generally selfish managers believe that their approach is perfect, so they are unlikely to change it. Selfishness in a leader impacts the team’s morale, engagement, retention, and productivity. A selfish employer may order their subordinates to engage in various tasks and refuse to take feedback from those who work for them. A selfish employee may use his office time doing personal business. Selfishness is contagious. It can spread quickly within organizations, become ingrained in the culture, and devastate relationships. It can also make the organization to be exclusive rather than inclusive. Here are some selfish traits in a workplace [6]:

- Watch the team struggle to look like "hero" in the end.
 - No awareness of the things that others need to get done.
 - They take all the credit.
 - They are thinking of their needs at the expense of others.
 - Make others feel less confident in themselves to create their sense of false confidence.
 - Dividing people to gain control (Divide and conquer).
 - Creating mistrust to earn trust by solving them.
 - Blocking uniform and fair passage of information through all levels.
 - Looking to get others in trouble to gain the confidence of their superiors.
- *Unrealistic Expectations:* Selfishness makes us expect too much from others, expecting more than we ourselves can deliver. A person with too high expectations for themselves never accepts a compliment, and expects nothing but perfection of themselves. They might seem humble because they are hard on themselves, but inside they hold themselves to an insane standard for human achievement.
 - *Joy Killer:* Selfishness is a killer of joy. It often squelches the ability to simply enjoy things because it finds something wrong with everything. Figure 3 shows a typical example of unhappy person [7]. We experience a profound joy and peace when we focus our attention on someone else’s needs instead of our own. Selfishness can be a source of growth and joy if we balance it with altruism.
 - *Destruction:* We tend to think of selflessness as desirable and selfishness as generally bad and glutinous, negatively impacting on others. Selfishness tends to push people away in various ways by hurting, mocking, or even embarrassing them constantly. It is one of the least appealing character traits. It is often regarded as an undesirable or even immoral characteristic, whereas selflessness is regarded universally desirable and virtuous. Selfishness can damage our reputation and lead to loneliness. It can hurt our loved ones. It destroys families. Selfish people are so blinded by their greed they cannot see that they are hurting themselves.
 - *Rejects Criticism:* Selfishness rejects any sort of criticism. Most of us have a hard time with criticism, but we know deep down that some criticism is warranted for improvement. People who are very sensitive to criticism are quick to defend themselves and rationalize their issues.
 - *Global Economy:* We are capable of caring about people all over the world. Generous and compassionate individuals give billions of dollars away to people they have never met, who live around the world, and who will never know how they have affected them. Selfish behavior can also have a significant impact on the global economy. For example, in 2008 the greed and selfishness of a few individuals in the financial

sector led to widespread harm to the global economy. This crisis serves as a reminder of the destructive power of selfish behavior.

- *Stress*: Stress affects us all on multiple levels. It affects our body, mind, and behaviors. Stress can make people selfish and it does not happen to everyone to the same degree. Not everyone shows the same response under stress. Money is often the leading cause of stress in relationships.
- *Uncertainty*: This is the ally of selfishness. For instance, people donate less to charity when they are not sure their donation will reach its target. Studies show that people tend to act with more generosity when they are uncertain about the impact of their actions on others.

CONCLUSION

In order to promote a more cooperative and altruistic society, it is imperative that we encourage and promote values that prioritize the well-being of others over the needs and interests of the individual. We can achieve this through education, community building, and the promotion of cooperative values in all aspects of society.

By nature, we are selfish to some degree. Selfishness is a natural human desire to protect the individual and act in his own interests. The altruistic/selfless individuals give of their time, talents, and material goods without looking for a reward. The major challenge is maintaining a balance between self-care or healthy selfishness and selfishness. As shown in Figure 4. We must choose to continue in selfishness or selflessness [8]. We need to consider the impact of our actions on others and respect their rights and feelings. Selfless relationships are one of the strongest predictors of happiness and they lower anxiety and depression. The absence of high-quality relationships in your life has the same effect on mortality as smoking a pack of cigarettes daily.

REFERENCES

1. P. Garrigan, “How selfishness ruins everything but kindness heals,” <https://www.hope-rehab-center-thailand.com/blog/personal-development/how-selfishness-ruins-everything-but-kindness-heals/>
2. J. O. Sadiku, M. N. O. Sadiku, U. C. Chukwu, and J. King, “Selfishness breaks all the ten commandments,” *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development*, vol. 7, no. 1, January-February 2023, pp. 139-145.
3. <https://pixabay.com/illustrations/selfishness-egotistical-self-love-7488645/>
4. S. B. Kaufman and E. Jank, “Healthy selfishness and pathological altruism: measuring two paradoxical forms of selfishness,” *Frontier of Psychology*, vol. 11, May 2020.
5. J. Lafitte, “4 Ways selfishness ruins your life,” June 2014, <https://relevantmagazine.com/life5/4-ways-selfishness-ruins-your-life/>
6. S. Padala, “Selfishness - common plague in today's workplace,” March 2023, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/selfishness-common-plaque-todays-workplace-soumya-padala#:~:text=According%20to%20Jayne%20Kinsman%2C%20%22If,of%20stress%20and%20competition%20versus>
7. “Four reasons why being selfish won't make you happy,” August 2023, <https://www.regain.us/advice/general/four-reasons-why-being-selfish-wont-make-you-happy/>
8. D. Anderson, “Choosing selflessness in a tragedy,” October 2017, <https://www.andersonleadershipsolutions.com/choosing-selflessness-tragedy/>



Figure 1 A typical demonstration of selfishness [3].

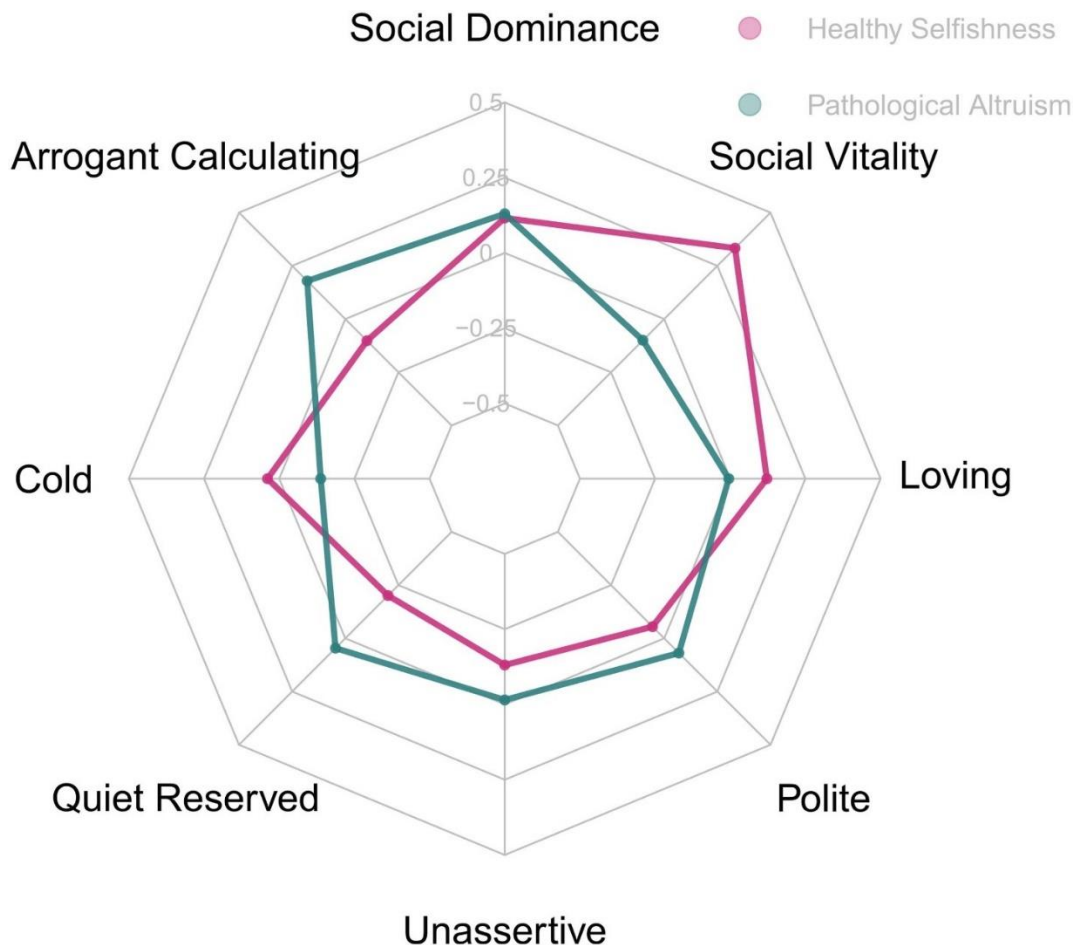


Figure 2 The relationship between healthy selfishness and pathological altruism [4].



Figure 3 A typical example of asad person [7].

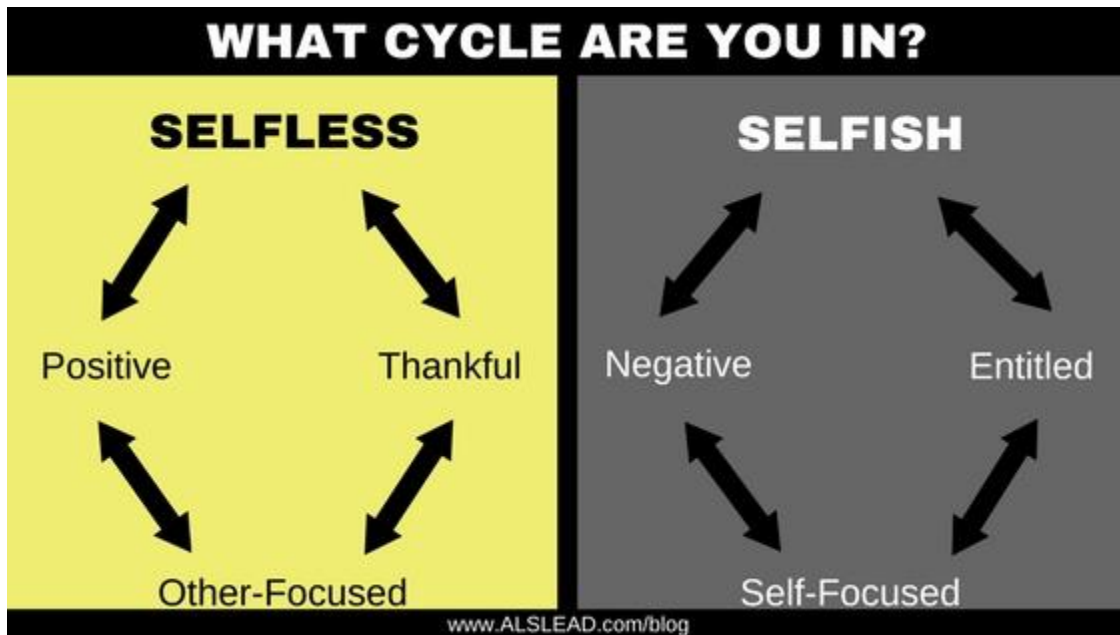


Figure 4. Choosing between selfishness or selflessness [8].