

Individual And Social Factors as Predictors of Prosocial Behavior Among Filipino Adolescent College Students

Adrian S. Giron¹, Melvin C. Pamintuan¹, Danica G. Baluyut¹,
Cherique Ann G. Granada¹ and Crizza Ann C. Nonato¹

Abstract

Filipino adolescent college students (n=100) were recruited to accomplish online questionnaires that measure the individual and social determinants of prosocial behavior. From the descriptive-correlational approach, the respondents scored high for individual factors, moral reasoning, and empathy while scoring average for social factors. Furthermore, the respondents' level of prosocial acts falls on average. Results also indicate that empathy, moral reasoning, and influence from parents and school are significantly correlated. Lastly, results from multiple regression reveal that moral reasoning is a stronger significant predictor of prosocial behavior. The findings suggest that individual factors and moral reasoning alone strongly predict prosocial acts among the samples. More so, age range and the effect of the pandemic have also played a major factor in this study. Therefore, researchers recommend replicating the study after the pandemic with the use of qualitative methods.

Keywords: Filipino, Prosocial, Late Adolescent, Social Factors, Individual Factors

Introduction

A voluntary act meant to help another person is known as prosocial behavior; this includes sharing and donating resources, comforting others, volunteering for charitable activities, and assisting the needy (Klein, 2016). Prosocial behavior is not motivated by obligation and is done voluntarily rather than under pressure (Lam, 2012). Numerous research studies also link it to several facets of positive youth development (Lam, 2012; Eisenberg et al., 2015; White et al., 2017). This includes academic success, satisfaction with personal achievement, social competence, and subjective well-being, Lam (2012). Researchers have also claimed that youth with prosocial behaviors often exhibit better academic outcomes (Bergin, 2014; Carlo, 2014).

Prosocial behavior promotes positive growth by facilitating social relationships and reducing undesired behavior. It also promotes well-being and social adaptability (Caprara et al., 2012). Individuals' ability to identify and respond to requests for assistance and support protects them throughout their lives and inspires sympathy, gratitude, and appreciation (Caprara et al., 2012). In other words, prosocial tendencies help people trust their strengths and positive emotions (Caprara et al., 2015). In addition, studies show that adolescent involvement in prosocial activities increases their awareness and ability to accept social norms and moral standards. This would bring them a great experience and eventually benefit society, Lam (2012).

By mid-to-late adolescence, prosocial development is likely to have taken shape (Padilla-Walker & Fraser, 2014). Young people

will likely acquire a set of values that will shape their behavior by then (Siu et al., 2012). However, various research on the development of prosocial conduct has revealed conflicting results (Carlo et al., 2012; Luengo et al., 2013). According to Carlo, prosocial moral reasoning capacities with a strong socio-cognitive basis increased with age, whereas simple prosocial behavior like helping and empathy did not (Carlo and others, 2012). In contrast with Luengo's study, prosocial behavior among adolescents showed a decline in prosociality during the adolescent stage (Luengo and others, 2013). Unfortunately, research has been scarce on the Filipino population for prosocial behavior (Gülseven et al., 2020).

Filipino adolescents are expected to be kind, helpful, and respectful, especially with elders (Datu & Bernardo, 2020), as these values were built on Filipino culture (David et al., 2017). However, there is an increasing report of youth being disrespectful, especially to the elderly (Guerrero et al., 2019).

In relation to this, there are two individual skills that young people may have that are thought to be linked to prosocial conduct: empathy and moral reasoning (Mestre et al., 2019). *Empathy* is defined as the ability to study another person's perception, feelings, and experience without passing judgment and to transmit one understanding to that person clearly and concisely. (Riess, 2017). Empathy can be dispositional or learned (Ter et al. 2018), and it also entails combining emotional and cognitive processes to comprehend people's feelings, thoughts, and experiences. (Riess, 2017). Young individuals with a higher level of empathy are expected to be more prosocial (Siu et al., 2012).

Furthermore, moral reasoning varies from other types of reasoning that it is driven by morally relevant rules, knowledge, and understanding, which are stored as moral schemas in the memory (Chiasson et al., 2017).

It is also a factor that can lead to moral decisions (Walker et al., 2017). Moral reasoning is a task that involves judging the actions of others rather than making own responsible decisions about how to act (Garrigan et al., 2018). Moral reasoning should be a fundamental component of socialization processes to create a better, fairer, and safer society (Férriz et al., 2018).

Moreover, research revealed that moral reasoning evolves from childhood to adolescence, culminating in an empathic orientation stage in which people frequently display compassionate care for others (Chiasson and others, 2017; Ellemers et al., 2019). That research confirmed that in the late adolescence stage, a better level of moral reasoning is linked to more prosocial conduct (Ellemers and others, 2019).

In relation to prosociality, social factors which can contribute to the level of prosocial acts include parents (Spinrad, 2018; Malonda et al., 2019) peer, (Busching & Krahé, 2020; Park & Shin, 2017) and schools (Luengo et al., 2017; Kosse et al., 2019) as recent studies suggest that those three factors have the most impact when it comes to the social influence in adolescence for prosociality (Kosse, and others, 2017; Spinrad, 2018; Malonda and others 2019).

According to Flynn, Felmlee, Shu, & Conger (2018), parents are their children's first teachers. Mothers have been identified as substantially impacting adolescents' socialization of prosocial behavior (Malonda and others, 2019). This statement, supported by the social learning theory, suggests that adolescents would model their behavior after watching their parents interact with family members and others (Spinrad, 2018), which is a crucial idea regarding the intensity of parental impact on child behavior (Bandura, 1977). Close relationships have been connected to

warm parenting (Carlo, 2014; Spinrad, 2018), and warm parenting promotes prosociality as it practices cooperation, interaction, and nurturing (Spinrad, 2018). In addition, the study of Malonda and others (2019) showed that warmth from mothers was linked to prosocial behavior toward family and mothers in adolescents, while warmth from fathers was linked to prosocial behavior toward friends and fathers. (Malonda and others, 2019).

In contrast, parental hostility, which includes parental displays of anger, frustration, and disappointment in adolescents as well as overt hostility such as fighting, sarcasm, and emotional abuse, has been linked to lower levels of prosocial behavior (Flynn et al., 2018). Furthermore, mother hostility did not affect prosocial conduct, whereas father hostility negatively impacted prosocial behavior toward family, friends, strangers, mothers, and fathers. (Flynn and others, 2018).

Another social factor that can influence prosocial acts is peers. These groups are critical in developing adolescent social behavior (Busching & Krahe, 2020). During the adolescence stage, there is a decline in parental interactions, and peers gain more and more influence at a social level (Lam et al., 2014). Previous studies on adolescents have found that peers are the most influential factor in students' social adjustment and functioning (Park & Shin, 2017). According to Farrell, Thompson, & Mehari (2017), adolescents' prosocial behavior is significantly associated with how they interact with their friends (Farrell and others, 2017).

Another study suggests that the level of prosocial behavior of an adolescent depends on the level of prosocial behavior that their friends have (Busching & Krahe, 2020), which means that the more their friends engage in projecting helping behavior, the more likely they show prosocial act (Busching, & Krahe, 2020).

According to research, prosocial behavior in friendships is predicted by the quality of their relationships (Padilla-Walker et al., 2015). In contrast, if they are with a group that displays problems behavior like smoking and drinking (Ragan, 2020; Vitória et al., de, & Lima, 2020), social media abuse (Marino et al., 2020), aggressive and other anti-social behavior, there is a greater chance that they might project it so (Jung et al., 2019).

Concerning social factors, school, on the other hand, is represented in the idea that it should be a growing-up community where students feel accomplished and contented (Buljubai-Kuzmanovi, 2012). According to studies, the school should be a place where they can demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities, resolve conflicts in a nonviolent manner, and learn engagingly and creatively (Luengo and others, 2017). Also, they can develop cooperation and more successful relationships with others, be more tolerant, and apply what they have learned and experienced daily (Buljubai-Kuzmanovi, 2012). Positive social skills, habits, and beliefs that allow adolescents to fit into society should be promoted and strengthened in schools, such as prosocial behavior (Blažević, 2016). Prosocial adolescents are more likely to create a supportive social and academic environment where they feel appreciated and supported by their peers and teachers. There is much evidence that encouraging prosocial behavior at school can help students learn and adjust over time while also preventing them from negative developmental consequences like peer rejection, violence, and anti-social behaviors (Caprara et al., 2012; Caprara and others, 2015).

Conceptual Framework

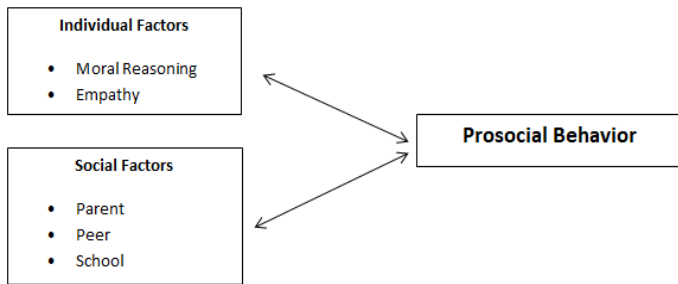


Figure 1. Influence of Individual and Social Factors of Prosocial Behavior

Human ecological model developed by Bronfenbrenner (1974) acknowledged that several components of a developing kid's life interact with and impact the youngster. His research extended beyond individual development to consider broader influencing variables and the environment (or ecology) of development. A child's development, according to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, is a complex system of relationships influenced by several layers of the surrounding environment, ranging from intimate family and school settings to broad societal values, laws, and practices. In ecological systems theory, the microsystem is the most influential level, which is the most immediate environmental setting containing the developing child, such as family and school. According to Lai, Siu & Shek (2015), Individual competencies in empathy, moral reasoning, and social influences from parents, friends, and school were expected to be the significant drivers of prosocial behavior in this study.

Based on the human ecological model, this study hypothesized that individual competencies in empathy, prosocial moral reasoning, and social influences from parents, peers, and school are the key determinants of prosocial behavior.

Method

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design that aims to describe the variables separately and examine the relationship between the individual and social factors towards the prosocial behavior of Filipino college students. The researchers recruited 100 participants with qualifications of college students, late adolescence stage ages 18-21 years old, which was determined using purposive sampling. The participants answered seven different standardized tests to measure the needed variables. Those instruments are the Prosocialness Scale for Adults (Cronbach's α of .91.), Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (Cronbach's α of .85), The Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (Cronbach's α of .90), The Parent Adult Child Relationship Questionnaire (Cronbach's α of .87 for the mother and .86 for the father), The Peer Relationships scale (Cronbach's α of .90) and Positive Youth Development Scale (Cronbach's α of .92).

Statistical treatments were encoded and run using Microsoft Office Excel 2017 and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The researchers utilized univariate analysis in describing each variable. The researchers used Pearson correlation and multiple regressions; to explain the relationship between multiple independent or predictor variables and one dependent or criterion variable and if the relationship is significant (Petchko, 2018) and examine the effect of individuals' competency or societal influence on prosocial development. In addition, the researchers used norming with the help of three statisticians to interpret descriptive results for the Prosocialness Scale for Adults (PSA), Parent Adult Child Relationship Questionnaire (PACRQ), The Peer Relationships scale (PRS), and Positive Youth Development Scale (PYDS) due to lack of available data interpretation which professionals validated.

Results

Table 1. Summary of the Mean, Standard Deviation and level of Moral Reasoning, Empathy and Influence of Peer, School, Parents and Level of Prosocial Behavior of Filipino Adolescent College Students

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Moral Reasoning	124.99	13.51	High
Empathy	47.66	8.18	High
Peer	15.60	2.53	Average
School	83.54	14.77	Average
Parents	53.29	11.30	Average
Prosocial Behavior	65.34	9.67	Average

Table 1 indicates that participants scored high for individual factors which includes moral reasoning and empathy while they scored average for prosocial behavior and social factors which is the influence of peer, parent, and school

Table 2. Correlation Between Prosocial Behavior and Moral Reasoning, Empathy, Influence from Peer, School and Parents

	Moral Reasoning	Empathy	Peer	School	Parent
Prosocial	.491**	.288**	.216	.431**	.318**

Table 2 shows that moral reasoning, empathy and the influence of parent and school are significantly correlated with prosocial behavior while peer influence is not.

Table 3. Variances of Moral Reasoning, Empathy, Peer, School, and Parents to Prosocial Behavior

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	14.982	10.121		1.480	.143
Moral Reasoning	.239	.100	.334	2.392	.019
Empathy	.081	.138	.069	.588	.558
Peer	.340	.421	.089	.809	.421

School	.066	.095	.100	.694	.490
Parents	.109	.098	.128	1.117	.268

Table 3 shows that moral reasoning is the strongest predictor of prosocial behavior with the beta score of $\beta = .33$.

Discussion

The study sought to determine the level of moral reasoning, empathy, and the influence of parents, peers, school, and prosocial behavior among Filipino college students. Also, to examine the relationship between the individual and social factors in correlation with prosocial behavior and assess which among the factors can be a strong predictor of prosocial acts.

The result of this study indicates that participants scored high for individual factors, which include moral reasoning and empathy. In contrast, they scored average for prosocial behavior and social factors, which is the influence of peers, parents, and school. This is contrary to the researcher's hypothesis that the level of influence of social factors and prosocial behavior is high. The high level of moral reasoning and empathy is supported by the study of Samuel Volkin in 2020 for John Hopkins University that in the late adolescent stage, people are more likely to develop their sense of identity, including moral reasoning and empathy. Meanwhile, the level of social factors and prosocial behavior are high in the studies of Siu, Shek, and Lai, 2012; Caprara, Luengo Kanacri, Zuffianò, Gerbino, and Pastorelli, 2015 and Mestre, Carlo, Samper, Malonda, and Llorca Mestre, 2019 in opposing result with the average level of social factors and prosocial behavior that the researchers found out on this study, which tend to show that this pandemic has a huge impact on how adolescents develop their social skills. The greatest effects felt by adolescents start from school closures, being in the house with family members, and not getting to see peers. Adolescents have different developmental needs than adults. Teenagers are at a stage in life when they are very invested in

social connections. So, COVID-19 social distancing requirements have a different emotional impact on them than on adults. Depending on their age and developmental stage, some adolescents may have difficulty understanding what the pandemic means and how it impacts their world. (Volkin, 2020).

The result indicates that Filipino college students' level of prosocial behavior is more likely to be high when they have a high level of moral reasoning and empathy, as well as a good relationship with their peer, parents, and in school. In agreement with the study of Batara (2015), Filipinos are collectivist in general which they tend to think of others rather than themselves is a positive indication of having a high level of prosocial act, just like what the study's participants manifested in their score.

Furthermore, correlation shows that moral reasoning, empathy, and the influence of parents and school are significantly correlated with prosocial behavior. (Carlo, Crockett, Wolff, and Beal, 2012; Luengo Kanacri, Pastorelli, Eisenberg, Zuffianò, and Caprara, 2013; Siu, Shek, and Lai 2012). Peer, on the other hand, indicates that it has no significant relationship. The factor the researchers are considering in this result was the isolation that participants had experienced during this pandemic (Van de Groep, Zanolie, Green, Sweijen, & Crone, 2020). Students experience school closure and less interaction with their peers, which has a huge impact on developing their social skills (Volkin, 2020), which is why peer influence shows no significant correlation. On the other hand, moral reasoning and empathy show a significantly correlated between parent and school, this suggests that participants of the study are developing their self-identity, which is very significant in the late adolescent stage (Carlo and others, 2012 and Volkin, 2020).

Lastly, multiple regression shows that moral reasoning is the strongest predictor of prosocial

behavior, followed by the influence of parents, school, peers, and empathy. This means that the higher an individual's moral reasoning level, the higher the level that they can exhibit helping behaviors. According to the study by Ochoa in 2013, Filipinos have a high level of moral reasoning because they respect authority, maintaining a positive image of their family and their interest. In addition, recent studies show that moral reasoning promotes individuals' socialization. Thus, individuals with a high level of moral reasoning can better identify others' needs so they can show more prosocial behavior (Wang et al., 2021).

Moreover, other factors, such as the influence of peers, parents, school, and empathy, show non-significant predictors of prosocial behavior. This implies that participants of the study are focused on building their identity rather than on social influence. Moral reasoning is proven to be high during the late adolescent stage and is considered a strong factor in building individuality (Carlo and others, 2012 Volkin, 2020). Another factor the researchers are looking into is the isolation effect caused by this pandemic. A recent study shows that school closure, online learning, and isolation have a huge impact on building social relationships among adolescents (De Groupe and others, 2020). This is the reason why social factors are non-significant predictors of prosocial behavior. Meanwhile, empathy also shows a non-significant predictor of prosocial behavior due to limited personal interaction. In support of the study of Simon–Thomas at the University of California in 2020, too much screen time and not sufficient face-to-face communication give us fewer chances to practice empathy. As a result, individuals get worse at "reading" each other's emotional expressions.

Alternatively, the results of the study of Siu, Shek, and Lai (2012) show that moral reasoning is not a strong predictor of prosocial behavior as it is more of social factors, which are peers, parents and the influence of school. Aside from

the effect of the pandemic, age also plays a significant role in the results. This indicates that as people age, individual factors such as moral reasoning are likely to be more influential rather than social factors (Bowen et al., 2019).

Conclusion

This is a new study explaining the influence of individual and social factors in relation to prosocial behavior in the Filipino adolescent population. Participants have described results as having a high level of moral reasoning and empathy while scoring an average for the influence of peers, parents, and school. Both predictors are significantly correlated with prosocial behavior except for peer influence which shows no significant correlation. Meanwhile, moral reasoning has been noted to be a significant predictor of prosocial behavior and empathy, at the least.

These findings differ from the previous study conducted in Hong Kong, which identified that social influence tends to be the significant predictor of prosocial behavior; these include peer, parent, and influence of school factors, contrary to the result. The researchers looked at the possible factor of age difference as it may be the reason why the result of the first study displays that the significant predictor is the social factor since young adolescents might be more attached to their parents, peer, and the need to be recognized in school. It reduces as they transition to late adolescent stage. In addition, the pandemic greatly affects the participants' experience in answering the survey questions. The result of this study provides an important reference for parents and educational/social services who intend to promote prosocial behavior among young people.

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