

PRO SOCIAL TENDENCY AMONG ADOLESCENTS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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Abstract: *Prior researches on pro social behaviour have usually tried to assess pro social behaviour on two major contexts viz. pro social behaviour shown globally and situation specific pro social behaviour. On the basis of literature review, it is also seen that researchers have identified four types of pro social behaviour: altruistic pro social behaviour, compliant pro social behaviour, emotional pro social behaviour and public pro social behaviour. Whether concerned with types or with pro sociality, studies have shown individual differences in the pro social behaviour of adolescents. This paper attempts to find out if gender, religion or locality has any influence on the pro social tendency among adolescent students. Results of the study reveal that gender and locality significantly influence the pro social behaviour of adolescents whereas religiosity has influence on their pro sociality. Adolescents irrespective of their religion show prosociality.*

Key words: *Pro social, Adolescents, Altruism, Empathy, Volunteering*

Introduction

Prosocial behavior is defined as actions that benefit other people or society as a whole (Twenge, Ciarocco, Baumeister, & Bartels, 2007, p. 895). It refers to "voluntary actions that are intended to help or benefits another individual or group of individuals" (Eisenberg and Mussen, 1989, p. 56). While the recipient is benefited by one's prosocial actions, these actions may also be costly to the doer (Benabou, 2005, p. 1). Intension to act prosocially may lead one to help others at the cost of his own self (Simpson, 2008, p. 37).

Prosociality or voluntary actions that help others are rooted in human behaviour. Examples of prosocial traditions were found in ancient Indian culture where life attitudes such as treating guests as God (*atithi devo bhava*), service to humanity, sympathy, empathy, giving donations (*dana*) to the needy, treating the whole world as one family (*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*) etc. had been valued with high esteem. Recorded history and prehistory of man also show the examples of humans engaging in prosocial behavior throughout the world. The native peoples of North America had a very strong communal culture associated with the practice of helping and giving others. In the Hopi culture, helpfulness and cooperation have been regarded as good practices for the

household and individual (Knickerbocker, 2003, p. 1). Prosocial behavior or prosociality is regarded as central to the well being of social groups across a range of scales (Helliwell and Putnam, 2004, p. 1435).

Though pro social behaviour and altruism are the terms which are used interchangeably, these are two different concepts. Prosocial behaviour is taken as a pattern of activity, whereas altruism is taken as the motivation to help others without thinking of one's own benefit ((Knickerbocker, 2003,p. 1). However, the description of the term altruism as an action driven by other-oriented actions are questioned by researchers like (Batson, Ahmad and Tsang, 2002, p. 429), who made a distinction between self-oriented and other-oriented motivations or by (Clary et al,1986,p. 283), who pointed out that people have both self-oriented and other-oriented motivations. Keeping these findings in mind, the researcher has preferred the term pro social behaviour instead of altruism to describe pro social actions like charity, volunteering, donating etc. Ethical approval for conducting this study was taken from the institution.

Significance of the study

Although the term "prosocial behavior" is often associated with developing desirable traits in children, the literature on the topic has grown since the late 1980s to include adult behaviors as well (Eisenberg and Mussen, 1989, p. 56). Prosocial behavior is crucial to the well being of adolescents. Acting in a prosocial manner not only help individuals to reinforce and maintain their positive self image or personal ideals, it also helps to fulfill their own personal needs (Omoto and Snyder, 1995, p. 471).

Prosocial behaviour helps in developing positive mood. The positive effects of volunteering and other prosocial behaviors on life satisfaction, self esteem and overall mental health have also been found out by several researchers (Schwartz, et al. 2003; p. 778, Rietschlin, 1998; p. 348, Wilson and Musick, 1999, p. 141). Individuals, who exhibit prosocial behavior, are conferred with advantages by the members within a society, and the benefactors are reciprocated indirectly (Simpson, 2008, p.37). Prosocial behavior as an important form of social capital for major national and international events, is also emphasized by Penner (2004, p. 645 and Lo and Jiang, 2009, p. 251).

However, there are evidences which show that there is a decline in the helping attitude during adolescent period (Lindeman, Harakka, & Keltikangas-Jarvinen, 1997, p. 339). Goeree et al (2010, p. 183, Hoffman, McCabe and Vernon, 1996, p. 653), found out that individuals are more likely to share their goods and resources with those whom they feel closer. Therefore, efforts should be made to develop programme which could develop these skills in adolescents so that children can be benefited from them. Explorations in this area can contribute to find out the possible physical and mental benefits of

prosocial actions and the ongoing contribution of prosocial behavior to interpersonal and intergroup relations (Penner, 2005, p. 645).

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study include the following:

1. To find out the pro social tendency of secondary school students.
2. To find out whether there exists any significant difference in the pro social tendency of secondary school students on the basis of their gender.
3. To find out whether there exists any significant difference in the pro social tendency of secondary school students on the basis of their locality.
4. To find out whether there exists any significant difference in the pro social tendency of secondary school students based on the basis of their religion.

Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses were framed to achieve the above objective:

5. There is no significant difference in the pro social tendency of students studying in secondary schools.
6. There is no significance difference in the pro social tendency of students with respect to gender.
7. There is no significance difference in the pro social tendency of students with respect to locality.
8. There is no significant difference in the pro social tendency of secondary school students based on their religion.

Research design

Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 200 students selected from six schools of Agra, Uttar Pradesh on the basis of simple random sampling. They were further categorized on the basis of their gender, locality and religion. The table 1 shown below represents the sample group along with their different characteristics:

Table 1: Socio demographic attributes of the sample

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
School type	Rural	100	50
	Urban	100	50
	Total	200	100
Gender	Male	103	51.5
	Female	97	49.5
	Total	200	100
Religion	Hinduism	136	68
	Christianity	64	32
	Total	200	100

Tools

The Revised Prosocial Tendencies Measure (PTM-R) developed by Carlo and Randall (2002, p. 107), was adopted in the Indian context to measure the existence of six different types of pro social tendencies among students. The types of pro sociality in the scale include public, anonymous, compliant, altruism, emotional and dire. The scale had 21 items and the participants were required to respond on a five point Likert scale starting from “doesn’t describe me at all” to “describe me greatly”.

Statistical Techniques

1. Basic statistical techniques such as mean, standard deviation and percentage were used to check the distribution of score.
2. χ^2 to find out the level of pro sociality among students.
3. t-value was calculated to find the significant difference between various groups.
4. One way ANOVA was employed to find the significant difference among various groups on the score of pro social behaviour.

Analysis and interpretation of data

The investigator categorized the whole sample into five groups consisting of very low pro social tendency, low pro social tendency, average pro social

tendency, high pro social and very high pro social tendency on the basis of the scores they obtained in pro social tendency. Percentile of P 20, P 40, P 60 and P 80 were calculated for such categorization. Students who scored less than P 20 were kept under very low group, students who score between P 20 and P 40 were categorized as low, between P 40 and P 60 as average, between P 60 and P 80 as high and greater than P80 were labeled as students with high pro social tendency. Tabular representation of the students' pro sociality is shown in table 2.

Table 2: Level of pro social tendency among adolescents

Group	Frequency	Percentage	χ^2
Very low	36	18	1.76
Low	40	20	
Average	54	27	
High	38	19	
Very high	32	16	

Form table 2 it is evident that the χ^2 is not significant at 0.05 level. This led to accept the hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in the pro social behaviour of adolescent students. in other words, it can be stated that pro sociality is identically distributed among adolescent students. However, the table also makes it clear that number of students in the average group is the highest.

Table 3: Pro social tendency of adolescent students on the basis of gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Boys	103	20.87	2.08	4.29*
Girls	97	24.2	2.87	

*significant at 0.05 level

Table e reveals that mean score of boys for pro social tendency is 20.87 and of girls is 24.2. the t value 4.29 for the difference between two means is significant at 0.05 level of significance. It indicates that both the mean values differ significantly from each other i.e. girls are more tend towards pro sociality than boys.

The result reinforce previous findings which suggested that female adolescents possess more pro social values and engage themselves in more pro social activities than male adolescents (Bartel and Barnett, 2009). Previous studies also reveal that peer influence on female adolescents strongly contribute

towards their pro social behaviour in comparison to their male counterparts (Aronson, Wilson and Akert, 2004). Studies have also shown that women are more towards giving charity than men (Jas, 1999, p. 349). A meta analytic review conducted by Eagly and Crowley, 1986, p. 283, also revealed a significant gender difference in their helping attitude. They stated that helping that was more heroic or more chivalrous was more often demonstrated by young men than young women whereas helping associated with relational context was more exhibited by young women.

Table 4: Pro social tendency of adolescent students on the basis of locale

Locale	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Rural	100	18.98	2.98	2.86*
Urban	100	17.25	1.12	

*significant at 0.05 level

The result obtained from table 4 shows that the rural and urban students' mean scores are 18.98 and 17.25 respectively. The t value of 2.86 reveals a significant difference in the pro social tendency of rural and urban students. Thus, the hypothesis stating that there is no significance difference in the pro social behaviour of students with respect to locality is summarily rejected. Rural students are more prone towards pro sociality than their urban counterparts.

This study is in line with that of Ma, Pei and Jin (2015), which also states that rural people display more sharing and generosity than urban people. Referring to China, the investigator also pointed out that the urban culture in China are more lean towards individualism in contrast to the rural culture which is more inclined towards collectivism. The individualistic characteristics of more economically developed regions i.e. urban ones in comparison to the collectivistic nature of rural regions are also demonstrated by Geert (1995, p. 130, Koch, 2009, p. 207). However, the result of the present study is in sharp contrast to that of Albert and Thilagavathy (2013, p. 261), which shows non-significant difference between in pro social behaviour on the basis of locality.

Table 5: Pro social tendency of adolescent students on the basis of religion

Religion	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Hinduism	136	23.56	0.25	0.93
Christianity	64	23.89	0.77	

The table shown above depicts a clear picture that the mean values for pro social tendency among Hindu and Christian students do not differ significantly. The non significance of t value at both the level of significance reveals that religion is not a significant factor in determining the pro social behavior of students. This led to the acceptance of the hypothesis stating that religion wise there is no significant difference in the pro social tendency of secondary students.

However, studies conducted earlier demonstrate a close correlation between religiosity and pro social behaviour. Wuthnow (1991), found that people who regularly attend church are influenced by the love of the divine and more inclined to exhibit volunteer work. Religion or spirituality as a reason for prosocial behaviour is also confirmed by Colby and Damon (1992, Perry et al, 2008, p. 445). The association of religiosity with pro social behaviour is again reported by Saroglo;(2013,p. 439, Park & Smith, 2000, p. 272, and Myers, 2012, p. 913).

Educational implications

Children also learn functional life skills through their observation of the adults. Therefore, adults must learn to behave in a socially accepted manner. However, they do not develop social values in a vacuum. In recent times, the development of prosocial skills in adolescents has been emphasized by educators, policymakers, and researchers. Researches on child development suggests that one of the most effective ways in which schools can encourage prosocial behavior is the development of school wide programs designed to teach and model social skills (Kidron and Fleischman, 2006, p. 90). Therefore, schools should come out with various training programme to inculcate pro sociality in their students.

Further, the importance of personal and group relationship in student's life suggests that educators can significantly influence student's social growth by creating a school wide culture in which each student will have the opportunity to observe the prosocial behavior modeled by other students and by adults as well (Lickona, 1997,p.63). *Again, prosocial behavior, along with altruism and empathy, are considered to play a central role in the good functioning of a society (Mi Jur and Rushton, 2007,p.664). Therefore, our education system should be oriented to inculcate these skills in children and adults.*

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), pointed out that human relationships are learnt in the classroom. Therefore, enough scope should be provided to children to play and work with others, negotiate social skills with language, develop other social skills that characterize socially competent human beings (cited in Bredekamp and Copple, 1997, p. 117). Studies conducted by Johnson and colleagues (1998, p. 309),

also indicated that volunteering increases the academic achievement of adolescents. Volunteering adolescents have high intrinsic motivation towards their school work and have higher grade point average.

Activities must be provided by the teacher to help children identify various social skills and to understand the need of those skills. He stated that it is the role of the teacher to facilitate and encourage prosocial behavior in children by rendering support and assistance to children to develop appropriate social skills.

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