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Social Predictors of Prosocial Behavior Among Filipino Adolescent College Students

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Abstract. Prosocial behavior is an important developmental outcome in adolescence, yet studies in the Filipino context are limited, particularly in understanding the role of social factors. This study aimed to examine how empathy, moral reasoning, and social influences from parents, peers, and school predict prosocial behavior among Filipino adolescent college students. Using a descriptive-correlational design, data were collected from 100 participants aged 18–21 years through standardized online questionnaires: Prosocialness Scale for Adults, Toronto Empathy Questionnaire, Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (moral reasoning), Parent–Adult Child Relationship Questionnaire, Peer Relationships Scale, and Positive Youth Development Scale. Results indicated high levels of moral reasoning (M=125.0, SD=13.5) and empathy (M=47.7, SD=8.2), while scores for parental influence (M=53.3, SD=11.3), peer relationships (M=15.6, SD=2.5), school environment (M=83.5, SD=14.8), and prosocial behavior (M=65.3, SD=9.7) were moderate. Correlation analysis revealed significant positive associations between prosocial behavior and moral reasoning ($r=0.49$, $p<0.01$), empathy ($r=0.29$, $p<0.01$), parental influence ($r=0.32$, $p<0.01$), and school environment ($r=0.43$, $p<0.01$), with no significant correlation for peer influence. Multiple regression analysis indicated moral reasoning ($\beta=0.33$, $p<0.05$) as the strongest predictor, accounting for 23.9% of variance in prosocial behavior ($F[5,74]=5.96$, $p<0.001$). This suggests that, within this Filipino adolescent group, internalized moral values are more pivotal in shaping prosocial behavior compared to empathy or external social influences. These findings underline the importance of designing culturally responsive programs that specifically enhance moral reasoning to foster prosocial behaviors among Filipino adolescents effectively.

Keywords: Filipino; Individual factors; Late adolescent; Prosocial; Social factors

1.0 Introduction

Prosocial behaviors, such as sharing resources, comforting others, volunteering, and assisting those in need, significantly contribute to positive adolescent development by promoting academic success, personal achievement, social competence, and emotional well-being (Klein, 2016; Hastings & Miller, 2022). Such behaviors are inherently voluntary and intrinsically motivated, strengthening social connections and fostering empathy, gratitude, and emotional resilience (Eisenberg et al., 2023). Despite extensive global research, current literature predominantly focuses on Western contexts, overlooking the cultural nuances that shape prosocial behavior in non-Western settings, particularly among Filipino adolescents. Filipino youth are culturally expected to embody kindness, helpfulness, and respectfulness, especially towards elders (Datu & Bernardo, 2020; David, Sharma, & Petalio, 2017). However, recent trends highlight growing challenges among Filipino adolescents in consistently

exhibiting these culturally valued behaviors, emphasizing a critical research gap in understanding the unique cultural and contextual influences on prosocial behaviors in this population (Guerrero et al., 2019).

Research on predictors of prosocial behavior often emphasizes individual competencies. Empathy—the capacity to perceive and resonate with others' emotions—has been linked to prosociality in various cultural settings (Mestre et al., 2019; Siu, Shek, & Lai, 2012). Moral reasoning—guided by internal ethical principles—tends to become more influential in late adolescence, as self-concept and identity solidify (Ellemers et al., 2019; Morales & Domingo, 2023). However, findings differ across contexts. Studies in the West (Carlo et al., 2012) highlight moral reasoning as a consistent predictor, while research in collectivist societies often finds that social expectations and empathy exert more substantial influence (Lai et al., 2015).

Social influences—parental interactions, peer relationships, and school environments—also shape prosociality. Parental warmth and support have been associated with greater prosocial behavior (Malonda et al., 2019; Spinrad & Gal, 2018), while peer relationships provide social modeling that can either encourage or discourage helping behaviors (Busching & Krahé, 2020). Schools, as structured social environments, can cultivate prosociality through positive climates, opportunities for collaboration, and value-based programs (Luengo Kanacri et al., 2017; Kosse et al., 2019). Despite these established connections, there is limited empirical evidence on how individual and social factors mutually predict prosocial behavior among Filipino late-adolescent college students. Most Philippine-based studies focus on younger adolescents or examine predictors in isolation. This leaves a gap in understanding whether internalized moral values or external social influences are more prominent during late adolescence. To address this gap, the present study examines how empathy, moral reasoning, and social influences from parents, peers, and school environments predict prosocial behavior among Filipino adolescent college students. The findings aim to clarify the relative relevance of individual and social determinants, guiding culturally relevant programs and interventions that promote prosocial development in this population.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design to describe the variables involved and explore the relationships between individual and social factors and prosocial behavior among Filipino college students. According to the American Psychological Association, a descriptive research design involves systematically observing and measuring variables without manipulating them, aiming primarily to depict characteristics or phenomena. Additionally, a correlational research design examines how variables relate to each other in natural settings without intervention or manipulation by the researcher.

2.2 Participants and Sampling Technique

The researchers recruited 100 participants for the study, using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling where the selection of the participants will be based on the researchers' judgment. The qualifications were college students, who must be in the late adolescent stage, aged 18-21 years old.

2.3 Research Instrument

The research questionnaires comprised a total of 135 items, adopted from a series of standardized instruments developed by Caprara et al. (2005), Spreng et al. (2009), Schutte et al. (1998), Peisah et al. (1999), Anderson-Butcher et al. (2013), and Lopez et al. (2014), to measure the key variables of the study.

Prosocial Behavior

Developed by Caprara et al. (2005), the PSA is a 16-item measure assessing prosocial tendencies, including sharing, helping, caregiving, and empathetic behaviors toward others. Items are rated using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Never* to 5 = *Always*). The original validation study indicated excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$). The scale demonstrates robust construct validity through significant correlations with empathy and inverse correlations with aggressive behaviors (Caprara et al., 2005). Though widely used internationally, additional validation in Filipino adolescent populations is recommended.

Empathy

The Toronto Empathy Questionnaire, created by Spreng et al. (2009), consists of 16 items designed to measure empathy through emotional comprehension and empathetic responsiveness. Items utilize a 5-point Likert scale (0

= *Never*, 4 = *Always*). The TEQ shows strong reliability (Cronbach's α = .85 in the original validation). Construct validity is confirmed via strong positive correlations with related empathy measures and inverse correlations with measures of aggression and social insensitivity (Spreng et al., 2009). The TEQ is internationally recognized, yet validation specifically with Filipino samples remains limited.

Moral Reasoning

The Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test, developed by Schutte et al. (1998), is a 33-item self-report instrument assessing emotional intelligence, specifically measuring emotional perception, utilization of emotions, managing self-related emotions, and managing others' emotions. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*). The scale exhibits high internal consistency (Cronbach's α = .90). Validity has been confirmed through its associations with measures of psychological well-being, empathy, and interpersonal competence (Schutte et al., 1998). While broadly validated, cross-cultural application within Filipino contexts requires further exploration.

Parent

The Parent Adult-Child Relationship Questionnaire (PACRQ), developed by Peisah et al. (1999), is a 26-item measure assessing perceptions of relationships between adult children and their parents. Two separate subscales measure maternal (PACQM) and paternal (PACQF) relationships. Items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *Rarely or Never*, 4 = *Almost Always*). High internal consistency is reported (Cronbach's α = .87 for mothers and .86 for fathers). The scale demonstrates strong validity through correlations with family cohesion, communication quality, and psychological adjustment (Peisah et al., 1999). Cross-cultural adaptation for Filipino samples is advisable due to cultural variations in familial relationships.

Peer

The Peer Relationships scale (PRS), developed by Anderson-Butcher et al. (2013), measures students' perceptions of peer support and quality of relationships within educational contexts. This concise scale contains four items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 5 = *Strongly Agree*). The PRS has shown excellent internal reliability (Cronbach's α = .90). Validity is supported through correlations with academic engagement, social competence, and lower reported bullying and victimization (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2013). Additional Filipino cultural validation is recommended.

School

The Positive Youth Development Scale (PYDS), developed by Lopez et al. (2014), assesses positive youth development in school environments. This comprehensive 40-item measure employs a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 5 = *Strongly Agree*). The PYDS demonstrates high reliability (Cronbach's α = .92). Construct validity has been established through correlations with academic success, psychosocial adjustment, and reduced risk behaviors among adolescents (Lopez et al., 2014). Cultural adaptations for use among Filipino youth would further enhance the scale's relevance and accuracy.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data collection, formal permission was sought from the authors of the adopted questionnaires. Ethical approval for the study was obtained through the college's standard research approval process, which involved review and endorsement by the program coordinator, dean, and relevant faculty advisers. The validated instruments were compiled into a Google Form, which began with an informed consent section outlining the study's purpose, voluntary participation, and confidentiality measures. Participants who met the inclusion criteria completed the demographic section and then answered the six questionnaires online (total of 135 items). The gathered data helped the researchers examine the factors significantly associated with and predicting prosocial behavior among Filipino college students.

2.5 Data Analysis Procedure

Statistical treatments were encoded and run using Microsoft Office Excel 2017 and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The researchers utilized univariate analysis to describe each variable. The researchers used Pearson correlation and multiple regressions to generally 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 a lack of available data interpretation that professionals validated.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Participants of the study were recruited voluntarily with the right to withdraw at any time. The researchers acquired informed consent from the participants by agreeing to the survey's terms and conditions in Google Forms before participating in the study. The safety of both participants and researchers is the top priority. Therefore, possible harm was addressed before the data gathering to avoid unfortunate incidents. The information gathered after the process of data collection was treated with confidentiality and anonymity. Lastly, the participants will have the right to know the results.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The mean scores of respondents were obtained to determine their level of empathy, moral reasoning, and the influence of peers, school, parents, and their level of prosocial behavior. Table 1 presents the mean, standard deviation, and the corresponding interpretation of the respondents' scores from the six variables. Results indicated that college students scored high on individual factor moral reasoning (x=125, SD=13.5) and empathy (x=47.7, SD=8.2) while respondents got an average score on social factors, peer (x=15.6, SD=2.5), school (x=83.5 , SD=14), and parents (x=53.3, SD=11.3). Overall, the score on prosocial behavior can be interpreted as average (x=65.3, SD=9.7) for Filipino adolescent college students.

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	SD	Level	Sample Statements
Moral Reasoning	124.99	13.51	High	*"I try to act in ways that are fair to everyone. "I believe it is important to help others even if it means sacrificing my benefit."*
Empathy	47.66	8.18	High	*"I often feel compassion for people who are in need. "I can imagine how other people feel in difficult situations."*
Peer	15.60	2.53	Average	*"My friends listen to me when I need to talk. "I feel accepted by my peers."*
School	83.54	14.77	Average	*"Teachers in my school care about me as a person. "My school provides opportunities for me to develop my skills."*
Parents	53.29	11.30	Average	*"My parents support me when I have problems. "I can talk to my parents about things that are important to me."*
Prosocial Behavior	65.34	9.67	Average	*"I help people who are in need. "I share my belongings with others when they need them."*

The results, as shown in Table 2, indicate that prosocial behavior has a low and significant positive correlation with moral reasoning (r=0.49, p<0.01), influence of school (r =0.43, p<0.01), and parents (r=0.32, p<0.01). On the other hand, empathy (r =0.29, p<0.01) has a negligible or very low significant association, and prosocial behavior has no relationship with the influence of peers.

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

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Moral Reasoning	1					
Empathy	.335**	1				
Peer	.210	.417**	1			
School	.697**	.295**	.226*	1		
Parent	.358**	.320**	.044	.451**	1	
Prosocial	.491**	.288**	.216	.431**	.318**	1

Multiple linear regression was carried out to determine the influence of moral reasoning, empathy, peers, school, and parents on prosocial behavior. This was a statistically significant model F(5,74) = 5.96, p<.001. The adjusted R2 value showed that 23.9% of the variance in prosocial behavior can be explained by the variances in the five predictors (see Table 3). The analysis suggested that moral reasoning (β ¬= .33) was the most influential predictor, and empathy (β = .07) was the least influential predictor. In terms of individual factors, moral reasoning (t = 2.39,

p <.02) was shown to be a statistically significant predictor of prosocial behavior. Empathy (t = .59, p = .56), peer (t = .81, p = .42), school (t = .69, p = .49), and parents (t = 1.12, p = .27) were not (see table 3.1 and 3.2).

Table 3. *Model Summary of Moral Reasoning, Empathy, Parents, Peers, and School as Predictors of Prosocial Behavior*

Mode	R	R- Square	Adjusted R-Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	.536[a]	.287	.239	8.43847

Predictors: (Constant), Parents, Peer, Moral Reasoning, Empathy, School

Table 3.1. *ANOVA Table of the Regression Model*

Model		Sum of Squares	Difference	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2120.514	5	424.103	5.956	.000[b]
	Residual	5269.374	74	71.208		
	Total	**7389.887**	**79**			

Dependent Variable: Prosocial
Predictors: (Constant), Parents, Peer, Moral Reasoning, Empathy, School

Table 3.2. *Variances of Moral Reasoning, Empathy, Peer, School, and Parents to Prosocial Behavior*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standard Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Standard Error	Beta		
(Constant)	14.982	10.121		1.480	.143
Moral Reasoning	.239	.100	.334	2.392	.019
Emphaty	.081	.138	.069	.588	.558
1	.340	.421	.089	.809	.421
Peer					
School	.066	.095	.100	.694	.490
Parents	.109	.098	.128	1.117	.268

Dependent Variable: Prosocial

This study aimed to identify the level of moral reasoning, empathy, parental, peer, and school influences, and their predictive relationship with prosocial behavior among Filipino college students. Grounded in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, the study hypothesized that both individual factors (moral reasoning and empathy) and social influences (parents, peers, school) significantly predict prosocial behavior. Results partially supported this hypothesis, demonstrating a nuanced relationship among these predictors.

Findings indicated that moral reasoning was the strongest significant predictor of prosocial behavior among participants, aligning with recent studies suggesting that moral reasoning becomes particularly prominent during late adolescence due to increased self-reflection and identity formation (Wang, Wu, & Wei, 2021; Scott & Yu, 2022; Ding et al., 2018). This result reinforces the notion that internal cognitive processes, such as moral reasoning, can significantly guide prosocial choices independently from immediate social influences. Additionally, research on moral identity theory supports the notion that adolescents with stronger moral identities tend to exhibit more consistent prosocial behavior, aligning well with the results obtained (Ellemers et al., 2019).

Contrary to initial expectations and ecological systems theory, empathy and peer influence were not significant predictors in the regression model. These findings diverge from recent literature, which typically emphasizes empathy and peer relationships as important components of adolescent prosociality (Busching & Krahé, 2020; Mestre et al., 2019; Silke et al., 2018). One potential explanation for the reduced role of empathy is offered by recent findings highlighting the weakening of empathy in adolescence due to increased digital interactions, potentially reducing direct emotional engagement (Groep et al., 2020; Simon-Thomas, 2020; Yeo & Kim, 2021). Similarly, peer influence might have been diminished due to prolonged isolation during the recent global health crisis, which limited adolescents' social interactions and possibly reshaped their social dynamics, reducing peers' impact (Jin et al., 2021; Van de Groep et al., 2020).

On the other hand, parental and school influences remained significantly correlated with prosocial behavior,

although these did not emerge as strong independent predictors in the regression analysis. This partial alignment with ecological theory underscores the continuing importance of stable relational and institutional influences in adolescents' lives, even in late adolescence, consistent with recent studies highlighting parental warmth and positive school climates as crucial support systems for prosocial development (Malonda et al., 2019; Luengo Kanacri et al., 2017; Syahril et al., 2020).

These mixed findings suggest possible refinements to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, particularly emphasizing developmental and contextual variations. Specifically, the shift toward internal moral processes in late adolescence, coupled with unique contextual factors (e.g., digital interactions), might mediate the expected impact of social influences. Future research should examine these developmental transitions and contextual nuances more explicitly, perhaps through longitudinal designs or qualitative methods, to deepen the understanding of how individual and social factors interact differently across various adolescent stages and environments (Bowen et al., 2019; Jin et al., 2021). Overall, this study contributes meaningful insights into adolescent prosocial behavior within a Filipino context, highlighting moral reasoning as a critical internal factor during late adolescence. Educational programs and interventions aiming to promote prosocial behavior could benefit from emphasizing moral reasoning development, given its identified central role in influencing adolescents' willingness to engage in helping behaviors (Wang, Wu, & Wei, 2021; Scott & Yu, 2022).

4.0 Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight that among Filipino late adolescents, moral reasoning emerged as the strongest predictor of prosocial behavior, emphasizing the critical role of internal cognitive factors during this developmental stage (Wang, Wu, & Wei, 2021; Scott & Yu, 2022; Ding et al., 2018). Contrary to initial hypotheses based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, empathy and peer influence did not significantly predict prosocial behaviors (Busching & Krahé, 2020; Mestre et al., 2019; Silke et al., 2018). However, parental and school influences maintained significant correlations with prosocial outcomes, supporting the theory's assertion of ongoing environmental impacts, even if they did not appear as strong independent predictors in this study (Malonda et al., 2019; Luengo Kanacri et al., 2017; Syahril et al., 2020).

These outcomes suggest that developmental and contextual factors, such as the transition to late adolescence and the effects of digital interactions and social isolation during the pandemic, might modulate the expected influence of social factors (Groep et al., 2020; Simon-Thomas, 2020; Jin et al., 2021; Van de Groep et al., 2020). The study thus underscores the need for future research to consider these variables explicitly and calls for refining theoretical models better to capture the complexity and specificity of adolescent prosocial development (Bowen et al., 2019; Jin et al., 2021). From an applied perspective, this research provides valuable insights for educational institutions, policymakers, and practitioners. Programs designed to enhance prosocial behaviors in adolescents should prioritize fostering moral reasoning capacities, given their demonstrated centrality in predicting prosocial behavior (Wang, Wu, & Wei, 2021; Scott & Yu, 2022). Ultimately, understanding these dynamics is crucial for effectively promoting prosocial behavior and positive youth development in Filipino adolescent populations.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

All authors contributed to the study's conceptualization, data collection, analysis, and manuscript preparation. Specific roles included developing the research framework, reviewing literature, administering instruments, analyzing data, and revising the manuscript for submission.

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This research received no external funding. The authors personally funded all expenses related to the study.

7.0 Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest, financial or non-financial, related to this study. This research was conducted solely for academic and professional growth.

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