

Some Psychosocial Predictors of Prosocial Behavior Among a Sample of Myanmar Undergraduates

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Abstract

The present study is concerned with an attempt to explore prosocial behavior among youth in Myanmar. Specifically, the focus of present study is on the roles of psychosocial factors and demographic variables on prosocial behavior among Myanmar undergraduates. A questionnaire study was carried out by using 600 (300 males and 300 females) students studying at Taunggyi, Kalay, Myitkyina and Kyaukse Universities in Myanmar. Four hypotheses were tested. As a result in Pearson product moment correlation (Pearson r), religiosity, perceived social exclusion, perceived parent type and prosocial attitude are significantly related to students' prosocial behavior (except life satisfaction). In t-test analysis, the results showed that there was no a significant influence of place of residence (urban / rural) and gender differences on prosocial behavior. An ANOVA analysis suggested that the ethnic differences have partially influence on prosocial behavior. The results indicated that there was a difference among the four ethnic groups (Bamar, Chin, Kachin and Shan) in prosocial behaviour. In regression analysis, the mediating role of religiosity and three regression equations are estimated. Among them, religiosity was regressed on the exogenous variables (life satisfaction, perceived social exclusion, perceived parent type and pro-social attitude). The exogenous variables (except perceived social exclusion) have a significant causal influence on the mediator variable (religiosity)

Keywords: pro-social behavior, religiosity, life satisfaction, perceived social exclusion, perceived parent type and pro-social attitude

Introduction

Many scholars on the topic of prosocial behavior have put a lot of times and great effort into understanding psychosocial predictors of pro-social behavior because they realized that prosocial behavior is desirable in determining the health and progress of a group, an organization, a society or even a nation. Nowadays, there are numerous negative behaviors that can be easily seen from daily media over the world. A lot of problems related to youth's behavior have been increasing such health risk behaviors as fighting, smoking, drinking, drug addition, gambling, game addition, internet addition and luxurious lifestyle in Myanmar and neighbouring country (Kittisuksathit, Mahaarcha, Gray, & Rakumnuay kit, 2006).

In other words, only few researches from a social psychology perspective have actually investigated prosocial behavior among University students in Myanmar. For this

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reason, the essence of this study is to investigate the effect of psychosocial factors on prosocial behavior of undergraduate students in some Myanmar Universities. Before describing how to conduct this study, we need to explain what prosocial behavior or voluntary behavior is.

Prosocial Behavior

Prosocial behavior, or voluntary behavior intended to benefit another (Eisenberg, Fabes and Spinrad, 2006), consists of actions which benefit other people or society as a whole, such as helping, sharing, donating, co-operating, and volunteering (Arthur P. Brief & Stephan J. Motowidlo, 1986). It can also be referred to as a broad category of behaviors that includes any action that provides benefit to others like following rules in a game, being honest and cooperating with others in social situations. These actions may be motivated by empathy and by concern about the welfare and rights of others, as well as for egoistic or practical concerns (Eisenberg, Fabes and Spinrad, 2006). The term "prosocial" contrasts with the term "anti-social", which applies to the aggressive, violent behaviors. A host of specific behavior can be viewed as prosocial – bystander intervention in emergencies, charity, cooperation, donation, helping, sacrifice, and sharing. (Krebs & Miller; 1985).

Religiosity and Prosocial Behavior

The definition of religiosity can refer to various factors, including religious beliefs and religious practices. Miller and Thoresen (2003) have identified the operationalized religiosity by using religious beliefs and practices terms. Many researchers have identified religiosity in terms of different aspects of religious commitment or religious identity. The component of religious commitment mainly comprises with personal faith, participation in organized religious activities, and identification with a particular religious denomination. Correspondingly, dimension of religious identity refers to the subjective assessment of spirituality in one's life, religious practice, and communal affiliation.

Bonner, Koven, and Patrick (2003) also found that both religiosity and general spirituality are positively correlated with prosocial behavior. They suggested that this was because people's spiritual or religious beliefs help them feel more personally fulfilled and worthy, leading them to participate in activities that heighten their levels of self-actualization, including prosocial behavior. For this reason, this research is to measure the religiosity of university students in Myanmar and to examine the relationship between their religiosity and prosocial behaviors.

Rural/Urban differences and Prosocial Behavior

Many scholars assume that people in rural areas are more helpful. This effect holds over a wide variety of ways of helping in many countries. One explanation is that people from rural settings are brought up to be more neighbourly and more likely to trust strangers. People living in cities are likely to keep to themselves in order to avoid being

overloaded by all the stimulation they receive. This is because where an accident occurs, it can influence helping more than where potential helpers were born, and that population density is a more potent determinant of helping than is population size (Aronson, Wilson and Akert, 2010). Cultural differences, in relation to prosocial behavior, are expressed differently between individualistic and collectivistic societies. For instance, someone living in the U.S. is least likely to help someone in need than someone living in Australia, India or Kenya. (Miller, Bersoff and Harwood (1990).

Cultural/Ethnic differences and Prosocial behavior

Cultural differences, in relation to prosocial behavior, are expressed differently between individualistic and collectivistic societies. For instance, someone living in the U.S. is least likely to help someone in need than someone living in Australia, India or Kenya. (Miller, Bersoff and Harwood (1990). In Myanmar, there are many different ethnic groups and sub cultures. That is why, the current study intends to examine the relationship between cultural / ethnic differences and prosocial behavior of University students because some University students belong to some ethnic groups like Shan, Danu, Kachin, Chin, Pa-O, and others students belong to majority groups like Bamar.

Life Satisfaction and Prosocial Behavior

Research has shown that prosocial behavior is positively correlated with satisfaction with life. Hunter and Lin (1981) found that retirees over the age of 65 who are pro-social were more satisfied with life, and were less depressed and had low anxiety. The same way Martin and Huebner (2007) found that a higher rate of pro-social interactions was linked to greater life satisfaction and pro-social acts for middle school students.

Anderson (2009) in his study concluded that satisfaction with life did not account for any variance of prosocial behavior. This suggests that those who demonstrate prosocial behavior are not significantly motivated to do so because of life satisfaction, but as a result of other factors. Perhaps prosocial behavior is too complex and too broad to be significantly accounted for by satisfaction with life.

Perceived Social Exclusion and Prosocial Behavior

Correlational research has linked social rejection with decreased prosocial behavior, although it is unclear which one is the cause of the other. Numerous correlational studies have found that children who are rejected by their peers act less pro-socially than do others (e.g., Gest, Graham-Bermann, & Hartup, 2001; Wentzel & McNamara, 1999). Thus, prosocial actions are expected to correlate with social acceptance, so also, close relationships and prosocial behavior goes together (Twenge, et. al, 2007). Other studies have also found that children who are rejected by their peers act less pro-socially than do other (e.g., Gest, Graham-Bermann, & Hartup, 2001; Wentzel & McNamara, 1999).

Perceived Parent Type and Prosocial behavior

The current research also aims at to investigate the relationship between perceived parent type and prosocial behavior of University students in Myanmar. Jeffries (1987, 1990, 1993) had also pursued the question of the love adolescents feel for their parents. Based on the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas Jeffries's model suggests that love for one's parents consists of two basic components: attraction and virtue. Each component in turn consists of five factors. To the extent that feelings of attraction and virtuous behaviors occur, adolescents also feel loved by their parents, experience happiness and satisfaction with this relationship, indicate high self-esteem, trust other people, and behave in an altruistic way. This and other studies provide evidence that positive parent-child relationships are of vital importance to the success of subsequent interpersonal relationship.

Prosocial Attitude and Prosocial Behavior

An attitude can be defined as a positive or negative evaluation of people, objects, event, activities, ideas, or just about anything in your environment (Zimbardo et al., 1999). All attitudes take a stance, positive or negative, but they can vary in intensity. Attitudes form our experiences (or observing experiences) and serve to guide our future behavior. Social psychologists examine attitudes in terms of three components: Cognitive, (This is the mental component, consisting of beliefs and perceptions.) Affective – (This is the emotional component.) Behavioral (This is the action component; more specifically, it consists of the predisposition to act a certain way toward the attitude object).

Therefore, the following hypothesis was also examined:

Hypothesis1: There would be significant correlation between the exogenous (religiosity, life satisfaction, perceived social exclusion, perceived parent type, prosocial attitude) and endogenous variables (pro-social behavior) of study.

Hypothesis2: Place of residence would have a significant influence on prosocial behavior.

Hypothesis3: Cultural/ethnic differences would have a significant influence on prosocial behavior.

Hypothesis4: Religiosity would mediate relationship between the psychological variables of life satisfaction, perceived social exclusion, perceived parent type, prosocial attitude and prosocial behavior.

Method

Participants

The sample group of the study consisted of 300 male and 300 female students or 600 students in total, studying at Taunggyi, Kalay, Myitkyina and Kyaukse Universities in Myanmar. Their age ranges from 16 to 23 years. Each University sample consists of 150 students. Besides, these students are from different academic years (from 1st year to 4th year).

Procedures

The researcher visited, Taunggyi, Kalay, Myitkyina and Kyaukse Universities, Myanmar for the data collection. Firstly, the researcher asked for the permission of the Rectors from each university, and then the researcher approached and requested the undergraduate students to cooperate in this study. Next, the researcher explained the purpose of the study, assuring confidentiality of them. After that, the researcher administrated a package of questionnaire to the undergraduate students.

Measures

The Prosocial Behavior Scale: The original prosocial behaviors scale was developed by Afolabi (2013). The current prosocial behavior scale was constructed by adapting to Myanmar version based on the Afolabi's scale items to assess the Myanmar University students' prosocial behavior. The current scale consisted of 12 items. Each statement is evaluated on a Likert 5-point scale ranging from very often 5 to never 1. The scale had coefficient alpha of .78, test re-test reliability estimates over two weeks (n = 275) was .66 among Myanmar undergraduates.

The Religiosity Scale: This scale was also constructed to be applicable to Myanmar socio cultural, milieu as described. It has three factors/ composites which include religious salience or commitment. Each statement is evaluated on a Likert 5-point scale. The scale was found to have a Cronbach alpha reliability of .70. For the present study, test re-tests reliability estimates over two weeks was .63.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale: The original satisfaction with life scale (SWLS) was developed by Diener, Emmons, Larson and Griffin (1985). Based on the original scale items, a new scale was constructed to be applicable to Myanmar socio cultural, milieu. The new scale is also a 5-item measure that was used to evaluate each participant's cognitive judgments of satisfaction with his or her life. Participants responded to each question of the SWLS a 7-point Likert scale. The alpha (internal consistency reliability) was found to be .69 and test re-tests reliability of .62.

The Perceived Social Exclusion Scale: The original perceived social exclusion scale is a 4-item scale developed and used by Layte, Maitre and Whelan (2010). A new scale applicable to Myanmar's socio cultural conduct was constructed by adapting the original scale items

to Myanmar version. Each item was responded to on a 5-point scale. The scale was found to have alpha reliability of .62 and test re-tests reliability of .60.

The Perceived Parent Type: Perceived parent type scale was developed by the researcher based on Thomas Aquinas Jeffries's model which suggested that love for one's parents consists of two basic components: attraction and virtue. Each component in turn consists of five factors. This scale is made-up of 10-items and each item is evaluated on 5-point scale. For the present study, an alpha reliability of .87 was found with a test retest reliability of .53.

The Prosocial Attitude Scale: The items for Attitude towards prosocial behavior were developed by the researcher. This scale has 12 statements and each statement is evaluated on a Likert-7 point scale. Item numbers (1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 11) are reverse items. The scale has coefficient alpha of .65 and test re-test reliability of .52.

Results and Discussion

Correlations between exogenous variables (Religiosity, Life satisfaction, Perceived Social Exclusion, Perceived Parents Type, Prosocial Attitude, Ethnic Groups, and Residence Type) and Prosocial Behaviors (endogenous variable) are shown in Table 1. In order to carry out the correlation analysis, a Pearson Product Moment method was used to test the first hypothesis in this study.

Table 1 Descriptive and Correlations among Variables of the Study (N = 600)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	M	SD
1. PSB	-								32.80	7.57
2. Religio	.27**	-							28.15	3.35
3. LS	.06	.18**	-						21.16	5.68
4. PSE	-.09*	-.05	-.13**	-					9.97	2.67
5. PPT	.17**	-.27**	.25**	-.22**	-				41.60	5.71
6. PSA	.15**	.15**	.89*	-.17*	.10*	-			59.76	8.58
7. Ethnic	-.24**	-.06	.08*	.09*	.09*	.05	-		2.50	1.12
8. Residence	-.03	.07	.03	.01	.00	-.25	-.00	-	1.55	.49

PSB = Pro-social behaviour, Religio = Religiosity, LS = Life Satisfaction, PSE = Perceived Social Exclusion, PPT = Perceived Parent Type, PSA = Pro-social Attitude **p< .01 *p<.05

Correlation between Religiosity and Prosocial Behavior

According to the results (shown in Table 1), there was a significant relationship between religiosity and prosocial behavior ($r = .27$; $p < .01$). In other words, this study found that the higher scores the participant get in religiosity scale, the more they positively responded in the prosocial behavior scales. This finding supports the assumption of almost all social-psychological theories that religion positively impacts prosocial behavior (Baston et al., 1993).

Correlation between Life Satisfaction and Prosocial Behavior

Although we expected that there is a correlation between life satisfaction and prosocial behavior, the present study did not find a significant correlation between these variables. The studies by Hunter and Lin (1981) studies showed that prosocial behavior is positively correlated with satisfaction with life. Similarly in the studies by Martin and Huebner (2007), it is found that a higher rate of prosocial interactions was linked to greater life satisfaction and prosocial acts for middle school students. The finding of this study did not support the above studies. Generally, we can conclude that perhaps prosocial behavior is too complex and too broad to be significantly accounted for by satisfaction with life.

Correlation between Perceived Social Exclusion and Prosocial Behavior

As shown in Table 1, there is a negative relationship between perceived social exclusion and prosocial behavior ($r = -.09$; $p > .05$). The result indicated that individuals with high social exclusion perception will not be willing to render help. It can be said that the higher the social exclusion perception, the lower the prosocial tendency. The finding of this study is consistent with those of other studies. Gest et al., 2001; Wentzel & McNamara, 1999 also found that children who are rejected by their peers act less prosocially than others. Therefore, social exclusion may impair some inner responses that are needed for prosocial behavior. Thus, it can be concluded that the present study suggests that socially excluded individual was less willing to perform prosocial acts.

Correlation between Perceived Parent Type and Prosocial Behavior

As predicted in hypothesis one, this study showed that, perceived parent type and prosocial behavior are positively correlated ($r = .17$; $p > .01$). In this study, it is found that parents are ideal person for their children, parent's personality and behavior are very important. Children imitate their parent's personality, morality and behavior. So, it can be said that the relationship between parents and their children is important to have prosocial behavior.

Correlation between Prosocial Attitude and Prosocial Behavior

As shown in Table 1, there was a significant relationship between prosocial attitude and prosocial behavior ($r = .15$; $p > .01$). In this study, it is found that everyone who has prosocial attitude has prosocial behavior. To have prosocial behavior, one needs to have prosocial attitude.

The first hypothesis stated that each of the five psychological variables is significantly related to students' prosocial behavior. In the present study reveals a significant relationship between exogenous variables and endogenous variable (except satisfaction with life).

Table 2 The results of t-test showing the influence of place of residence on prosocial behavior

Place of Residence	N	Mean	SD	df	t	P
Urban	271	33.03	7.57	598	.68	ns
Rural	329	32.61	7.58			

According to Table 2, the results stated that place of residence was not a significant influence on prosocial behavior of undergraduate students. The result shows that there was not a significant influence of place of residence on prosocial behaviour.

The second hypothesis can be predicted that place of residence would have a significant influence on prosocial behavior. The results of previous research finding concerning rural and urban on prosocial behavior may be different. According to this study, there is no difference in rural and urban on prosocial behavior. It implied that both of the undergraduate students living in the urban environment and living in the rural environment were high in prosocial behavior. In this modern era, people become more intellectual and people living in rural and urban environment are not different concerning prosocial behavior. In this study, university students were studied as samples. The results may be different if the study focuses on people from different social strata.

Table 3 Showing the means and standard deviation of scores in prosocial behavior

Variables	Mean	SD	N
Place of residence			
Urban	33.03	7.57	271
Rural	32.61	7.58	329
Cultural/ethnic differences			
Bamar	35.10	7.38	150
Kachin	34.18	7.49	150
Chin	31.21	7.42	150
Shan	30.72	7.11	150

Table 3 showed that the mean scores of respondents on prosocial behavior based on their groups. Here it can be seen that respondents residing in the urban have a higher mean score (33.03) than those residing in the rural with a mean score of (32.61). Among the ethnic groups who took part in the study, the Bamar have the highest mean score (35.10) on prosocial behavior and Kachin M = (34.18), Chin M = (31.21), and Shan M = (30.72) scored respectively in prosocial behavior.

Table 4 Showing the effect of ethnic differences on prosocial behavior

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	P
Total	49337.39	599		13.00	<.001
Between	2108.93	3	702.96		
Within	32228.47	596	54.08		

In Table 4, the result showed that cultural/ethnic differences have a significant influence on prosocial behavior [F (600) = 13.00; p < .001]. Further analysis showed the study of the four ethnic groups' cultural/ethnic differences on prosocial behavior. Bamar scored highest on prosocial behavior with mean score of (35.10). This is followed by Kachin with a mean score of (34.18), Chin with a mean score of (31.21), and lastly Shan with a mean score of (30.72).

Table 5 Showing the effect of ethnic differences on prosocial attitude

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	P
Total	44071.96	599		7.66	<.001
Between	1637.05	3	545.68		
Within	42434.91	596	71.20		

According to the table 5 ethnic differences have a significant influence on pro-social attitude [F (600) = 7.66; p < .001]. Kachin scored highest on pro-social attitude with a mean score of (61.73). This is followed by Chin with a mean score of (60.80), Shan with a mean score of (59.08), and lastly Bamar with a mean score of (57.42).

The third hypothesis can be stated that cultural/ethnic differences would have a significant influence on prosocial behavior. The results showed that there are differences in the prosocial behavior of undergraduates based on their cultural/ethnic differences. Thus, cultural differences actually influence on prosocial behavior in that a person is likely to help, donate or extend positive gesture to a person based on cultural affiliation.

Table 6 Summary of t-test showing the influence of gender differences on prosocial behavior

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	P
Male	300	33.24	7.21	598	1.4	ns
Female	300	32.37	7.9			

According to the Table 6, the result shows that there was not a significant influence of gender on prosocial behavior.

Figure 1

Hypothesis four states that religiosity will mediate relationships between life satisfaction, perceived social exclusion, perceived parent type and prosocial attitude and prosocial behavior.

Religiosity

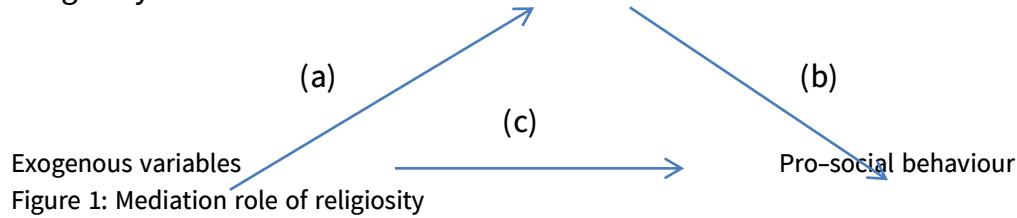


Figure 1 indicates a four-variable system such that there is a direct path of the exogenous variables of (life satisfaction, perceived social exclusion, perceived parent type and prosocial attitude) on religiosity (path a), a direct path of the exogenous variables to prosocial behavior (path c) and an indirect path of the exogenous variables to prosocial behavior through the impact of the mediator variable religiosity (path b)

First, religiosity was regressed on the exogenous variables (presented in Table 7. Second, the endogenous variable was regressed on the exogenous variables (presented in Table 8). Third, the endogenous variable was regressed on both exogenous variables and religiosity (presented in Table 9). These three regression equations provide the test of the linkage of the mediation model.

Table 7 Equation 1: Regressing religiosity (mediator variable) on the exogenous variables

Exogenous	Religiosity			
	B	R ²	F	Sig. level
Life satisfaction	.07**	.10	16.98	.001
Perceived social exclusion	.04			
Perceived parent type	.14***			
Prosocial attitude	.05**			

a for the variable within the regression model ***p<.001 **p<.01 *p,.05

According to equation 1 in Table 7, the exogenous variables (except perceived social exclusion) have a significant causal influence on the mediator variable (religiosity) (R² = .10; F (4, 595) = 16.98, P < .001. Afolabi (2013) study found that exogenous variables (life satisfaction and perceived social exclusion) have a significant causal influence on the mediator variable (religiosity) (R² = .43: F (2, 438) = 5.09, P< .01.

Table 8 Equation 2: Regressing the endogenous variable on the exogenous variables

Exogenous	Pro-social Behavior			
	B	R ²	F	Sig. level
Life satisfaction	.00	ns	7.46	.001
Perceived social exclusion	-.10	ns		
Perceived parent type	.20***	.05		
Pro-social attitude	.11**			

a for the variable within the regression model ***p<.001 **p<.01 *p,.05

The results of equation 2 presented in Table 8, also show that exogenous variables (except life satisfaction and perceived social exclusion) have a significant causal influence on the endogenous variable (prosocial behavior), with $R^2 = .05$; $F(4, 595) = 7.46$ $P < .001$. Afolabi (2013) found that exogenous variables (life satisfaction and perceived social exclusion) have a significant causal influence on the endogenous variable (prosocial behavior), with ($R^2 = .39$: $F(2, 438) = 4.98$, $P < .01$).

Table 9 Equation:2 Regressing the endogenous variable on both the mediator and exogenous variables

Exogenous Variables and the Mediator	Prosocial Behavior			
	β	R ²	F	Sig. level
Religiosity	.24***	ns	12.82	.001
Life satisfaction	-.03			
Perceived social exclusion	-.04			
Perceived Parent Type	.09*			
Prosocial Attitude	.09*			

a for the variable within the regression model ***p<.001 **p<.01 *p,.05

Besides, results of equation 3 presented in Table 9, revealed that both the exogenous and mediator variables (except life satisfaction and perceived social exclusion) have a significant causal influence on the endogenous variable (prosocial behavior) with $R^2 = .09$; $F(5, 594) = 12.82$ $P < .001$. Afolabi (2013) study found that exogenous variables (life satisfaction, perceived social exclusion and religiosity) have significant causal influence on the endogenous variable (prosocial behavior), with ($R^2 = .45$: $F(2, 438) = 10.7$, $P < .01$).

These three regression equations provide the test of the linkage of the mediation model. To establish mediation, two major conditions were satisfied. First, the independent variables affect both the mediator in the first equation and the dependent variable in the

second equation. Secondly, the mediator affects the dependent variable in the third equation. These conditions were established and confirmed by Afolabi (2004), Okurame (2002) and Baron & Kenny (1986) and all hold in the predicted direction. Results of equations 1, 2 and 3 presented in Tables 7, 8 and 9 respectively satisfy the three conditions required for a mediation role to be established for religiosity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study implicate prosocial behavior as beneficial in many ways. First prosocial behavior impacts various social behaviors, promotes well-being, and allows people to express themselves through helping others. Besides, it shows that religious undergraduates are more prosocial than the less religious students.

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