

# The impact of socio-demographic characteristics on adolescents' prosocial behaviour

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## ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study were to increase understanding of association between adolescent's prosocial behaviour and socio-demographic characteristics. Results of this study indicate that among the age group 13-16 years, adolescents from the age group 13-14 years studying in grade seven show high prosocial behaviour than others. In overall scores, girls exhibited more prosocial behaviour than boys. Private school adolescents exhibited more prosocial behaviour than adolescents of government school. Results show that adolescents belonging to middle socio-economic status show high prosocial behaviour than low socio-economic status. Adolescents of educated parents show high prosocial behaviour than adolescents of illiterate parents. Adolescents belonging to joint family show higher level of prosocial behaviour than adolescents' from nuclear family. Adolescents having one or two sibling show high prosocial behaviour than adolescents having no siblings or three or more siblings. Chi-square value shows association between socio-demographic characteristics and prosocial behaviour. It shows that prosocial behaviour among adolescents is dependent on socio-demographic characteristics.

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most important aspects of human, distinguishing human from other species, is the degree of helping, co-operation, and altruism among people (Fehr and Fischbacher, 2003). Prosocial behaviour that is behaviour intended to benefit others (Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998) is often considered as the basis of human relationships (Staub, 1979). Possible environmental sources of individual differences in prosocial behaviour have often been considered (Staub, 1979). Most of the studies focused on parental influences on children's prosocial behaviour (Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998). However, there is also some evidence that, under certain conditions peers and schools also affect adolescent's degree of prosocial behaviour (Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998). Prosocial behaviour or voluntary behaviour intended to benefit another consists of actions which benefit other people or society as a whole such as helping, sharing, donating, co-operating and volunteering. Wispe (1972) defined prosocial behaviour as

behaviour that has positive social consequences and that contributes to the physical or psychological well being of another person. Bar-Tal (1976) stated that prosocial behaviour is a positive form of social behaviour that is carried out to benefit another without anticipation of external rewards and is performed when the behaviour is done for its own end. 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. Evidence suggests that prosociality is central to the well-being of social groups across a range of scales. Empathy is a strong motive in eliciting prosocial behaviour and has deep evolutionary roots. Prosocial behaviour fosters positive traits that are beneficial for children and society. It may be motivated both by altruism and by self-interest. Reviews of researches of past decade reveal little emphasis of normative patterns of development and socialization of prosocial behaviour. Very few Indian studies could be traced but the variables selected for the present study have not been touched. Prosocial behaviour seems to be one

dimension of social competence that plays a role in children's development of peer relations.

The adolescent years might be viewed as the period of the last open time window in shaping an individual's personality. Adolescence is a period of transition which provides many opportunities for establishing a positive developmental trajectory in adulthood. The adolescents' search for career, political, religious and sexual identities heavily on a system of social support provided by family, peers, schools, community organizations and cultural dynamics. The successful integration of these foundations of social support can lead to a positive social and emotional transition into adulthood. The social support processes across family and community system appear to be extremely important in the adolescents' positive prosocial development. The prosociality in an individual is very importance during the development stage. This is because prosocial behaviour is the foundation in social interaction with family, peers, and friends. It also encourages the helping behaviour to be nurtured in between human. Therefore, social behaviour of adolescence is so significant and should be discussed in the study and in future research.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

In present study participants were 500 adolescents (248 boys, 252 girls; age range 13-16 years) who were studying in class 7<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> in Garhwa. After collecting the list of schools and strength of adolescent's population in different schools of Garhwa, the total population was estimated and sample size was calculated. Total numbers of adolescents available in selected schools were 1369. Out of total strength of 1369, 500 adolescents were selected randomly for further study. Initially all these 500 samples were considered for data collection. The prosocial behaviour assessment scale was administered on those respondents. Based on the assessment of prosocial behaviour assessment scale categorization into high prosocial behaviour (n=99), moderate prosocial behaviour (n=287) and low prosocial behaviour (n=114) respondents were made. Hence, final sample size comprised of 213 adolescents (high prosocial behaviour 99 and low prosocial behaviour 114) and rest 287 adolescents who scored moderate prosocial behaviour were dropped from the study. Further socio - economic status scale was administered to those two groups (adolescents with high prosocial behaviour and adolescents with low prosocial

behaviour).

### Instruments :

#### *Prosocial behaviour assessment scale :*

Prosocial behaviour assessment scale was developed by the investigator on lines of prosocial tendencies measures by Carlo and Randall (2002) and also questionnaire prepared by Tremblay *et al.* (1992) and items of the scale were also collected from relevant literature and by discussing with experts, psychologists and personal experiences. The scale had 45 items in positive statements, categorized in three dimensions of prosocial behaviour (Social morale, Co-operation, Helpfulness) and six types of prosocial behaviour (Altruism, Compliant, Public, Emotional, Dire, Anonymous). Participants were asked to rate the extent to which statements described themselves on a 5-point scale ranging from 1(Never) to 5(Almost Always).

#### *Socio - economic status scale :*

The socio - economic status scale developed by Bharadwaj in 1971 was used to measures individuals socio-economic status and it includes items from different aspects of socio-economic status.

## OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

The results are presented and interpreted under the following heads:

- Prosocial behaviour among adolescents
- Association between prosocial behaviour and socio-demographic characteristics

### Prosocial behaviour among adolescents :

Prevalence of prosocial behaviour indicates normal prosocial behaviour pattern among adolescents. It indicates the prevalence of three dimensions (Social morale, Co-operation, Helpfulness) and six types (Altruism, Compliant, Public, Emotional, Dire, Anonymous) of prosocial behaviour. This assessment is a form of purposeful step in support to identify adolescents with high prosocial behaviour and adolescents with low prosocial behaviour, to know the prosocial need of adolescents and planning intervention for further prosocial development.

Table 1 depicts the overall prevalence of adolescents' prosocial behaviour. Majority of the respondents (57.4 %) show moderate prosocial behaviour followed by low prosocial

Range of scores	Prosocial behaviour category	Boys (n=248)	Girls (n=252)	Total (n=500)
		f (%)	f (%)	f (%)
Below 80.82	Low prosocial behaviour	72(29.04)	42(16.67)	114(22.8)
80.82-190.2	Moderate prosocial behaviour	141(56.85)	146(57.93)	287(57.4)
Above190.2	High prosocial behaviour	35(14.11)	64(25.40)	99(19.8)

\*Figures in parenthesis indicates percentages

behaviour (22.8 %) and high prosocial behaviour (19.8 %). Table also shows that as compared to boys, girl respondents has the tendency to exhibit higher prosocial behaviour.

Table 2 demonstrates mean scores and SD on three dimensions (behaviour of social morale, behaviour of helpfulness, behaviour of co-operation) of prosocial behaviour and also six types (altruism, compliant, public, emotional, dire, anonymous) of prosocial behaviour. It can be seen from the table that in the three dimensions of prosocial behaviour, the mean value of behaviour of social morale is highest and behaviour of helpfulness and behaviour of co-operation is low but both were almost equal. Similar findings were reported by study findings of Li xianghai (2011) which examined the basic condition of co-operation, helpfulness and the tendency of social morality and found the dimension of social morality is higher than the behaviour of helpfulness and co-operation. Adolescents scored low on behaviour of co-operation. In our real life, it sets much context of win-lose and in this context, people have two results: his own success or other's success. This win-lose context made people establish the concept of "rival" firmly; it directly stimulates people's competitive motive

and action, reduces people's co-operative behaviour. People develop a strong tendency of comparison in their social contact and expected the outcome of social comparison benefit the affirmation of one's self-worth; the desire of trying to affirm self-worth in social comparison made people tend to be above all others, they involved themselves with others by adopting a way of competition. This "advantage of psychological competition" is the social psychological reason why behaviours of co-operation are at a low level.

The mean scores on types of prosocial behaviour depicted that adolescents reported compliant prosocial behaviour the most, followed by altruism, emotional, public, anonymous and dire prosocial behaviour, respectively.

Table 3 indicates mean, SD scores and 't' value on dimensions and types of prosocial behaviour (in terms of p values) of adolescent boys and girls. The mean scores on dimensions of prosocial behaviour depicted that girls scored higher than boys on all three dimensions of prosocial behaviour *i.e.* behaviour of social morale (25.47±9.49>20.88±9.56), behaviour of helpfulness (23.65±10.10>19.37±10.49), behaviour of co-operation

**Table 2 : Mean and SD scores of prosocial behaviour among adolescents**

	N	Mean±SD
<b>Dimensions of prosocial behaviour</b>		
Behaviour of social morale	500	23.20±9.79
Behaviour of helpfulness	500	21.53±10.51
Behaviour of co-operation	500	21.39±10.43
<b>Types of prosocial behaviour</b>		
Altruism	500	12.15± 4.44
Compliant	500	12.45 ±5.33
Public	500	11.34± 4.91
Emotional	500	11.58 ±4.33
Dire	500	10.77 ±5.04
Anonymous	500	11.29± 5.39

**Table 3 : Gender wise mean, SD scores and 't' values of prosocial behaviour among adolescents**

	Adolescents		't' value	'p' value
	Boys (n=248) Mean±SD	Girls (n=252) Mean±SD		
<b>Dimensions of prosocial behaviour</b>				
Behaviour of social morale	20.88±9.56	25.47±9.49	-5.38	0.00**
Behaviour of helpfulness	19.37±10.49	23.65±10.10	-4.64	0.00**
Behaviour of co-operation	19.03±10.61	23.71±9.72	-5.14	0.00**
<b>Types of prosocial behaviour</b>				
Altruism	11.46±4.53	12.83±4.44	-3.47	0.00**
Compliant	11.47±5.23	13.40±5.16	-4.11	0.00**
Emotional	10.90±4.10	12.24±4.45	-5.49	0.00*
Public	10.15±4.62	12.5±4.92	-3.49	0.00**
Dire	9.92±4.77	11.60±5.15	-3.77	0.00**
Anonymous	10.19±5.15	12.36±5.42	-4.57	0.00**

\*\* indicate significance of value at P=0.01

(23.71±9.72 > 19.03±10.61). Both boys and girls scored higher on behaviour of social morale than other dimensions. Calculated 't' value shows significant differences in all three dimensions of prosocial behaviour among adolescent boys and girls ( $p < .01$ ).

Table 3 lucidly shows that there is a significant difference in the types of prosocial behaviour between adolescent boys and adolescent girls. The mean scores depicted that girls scored higher than boys on six types of prosocial behaviour. Adolescent girls scored higher than adolescent boys on altruism prosocial behaviour (12.83±4.44 > 11.46±4.53), compliant prosocial behaviour (13.40±5.16 > 11.47±5.23), emotional

prosocial behaviour (12.24±4.45 > 10.90±4.10), public prosocial behaviour (12.50±4.92 > 10.15±4.62), dire prosocial behaviour (11.60±5.15 > 9.92±4.77) and anonymous prosocial behaviour (12.36±5.42 > 10.19±5.15). There were gender differences in all type of prosocial behaviour.

Several interesting gender differences emerged from the table. Adolescent girls scores higher than adolescent boys on all the dimensions and types of prosocial behaviour. These results are similar to prior research on gender differences in prosocial behaviour in adolescents (Fabes *et al.*, 1999). The finding that adolescent girls reported more of these types of prosocial behaviour than adolescent boys was consistent with

**Table 4 : Mean and SD scores of prosocial behaviour among adolescents with high prosocial behaviour and adolescents with low prosocial behaviour**

Boys		Girls		Total	
Adolescents with high prosocial behaviour n=35 Mean±SD	Adolescents with low prosocial behaviour n=72 Mean±SD	Adolescents with high prosocial behaviour n=64 Mean±SD	Adolescents with low prosocial behaviour n=42 Mean±SD	Adolescents with high prosocial behaviour n=99 Mean±SD	Adolescents with low prosocial behaviour n=114 Mean±SD
206.23±8.64	55.71±13.94	208.82±9.01	58.90±12.19	207.15±8.81	57.72±12.89

**Table 5 : Socio-demographic characteristics wise frequency and percentage distribution of adolescents with high prosocial behaviour and adolescents with low prosocial behaviour**

Socio-demographic characteristics		High prosocial behaviour (n=99) f (%)	Low prosocial behaviour (n=114) f (%)
Age	13-14	57(57.58)	62(54.39)
	15-16	42(42.42)	52(45.61)
Sex	Boys	35(35.35)	72(63.16)
	Girls	64(64.65)	42(36.84)
Grade	7 <sup>th</sup>	43(43.43)	13(11.40)
	8 <sup>th</sup>	30(30.30)	19(16.67)
	9 <sup>th</sup>	15(15.15)	39(34.21)
	10 <sup>th</sup>	11(11.11)	43(37.72)
School	Government	48(48.48)	70(61.40)
	Private	51(51.52)	44(38.60)
Socio-economic status	Upper class	29(29.29)	45(39.47)
	Middle class	52(52.52)	30(26.32)
	Lower class	18(18.18)	39(34.21)
Fathers' education	Illiterate	8(8.08)	25(21.93)
	Upto high school	15(15.15)	29(25.43)
	Senior secondary	19(19.19)	27(23.69)
	Graduation and above	57(57.57)	33(28.94)
Mothers' education	Illiterate	5(5.05)	55(48.24)
	Upto high school	11(11.11)	32(28.07)
	Senior secondary	25(25.26)	18(15.79)
	Graduation and above	58(58.58)	9(7.89)
Type of family	Nuclear	40(40.40)	66(57.90)
	Joint	59(59.60)	48(42.10)
Number of siblings	No siblings	28(28.28)	47(41.23)
	One or two siblings	42(42.42)	29(25.44)
	Three or more siblings	29(29.30)	38(33.33)

\*Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages

prior findings (Eagly and Crowley, 1986). Furthermore, other researchers have shown that adolescent boys are more concerned with gaining others' approval than adolescent girls (Carlo *et al.*, 1999). Taken together, these findings suggest that adolescent girls might be most likely to engage in prosocial behaviour when internalized, empathetic motives are relevant and when there are fewer concerns with gaining others' approval such as altruistic, anonymous and emotional prosocial opportunities.

The fact that adolescent girls reported more compliant prosocial behaviours than adolescent boys is consistent with strong gender role stereo types about such behaviour and with existing social pressures for girls to comply with asked for assistance (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974). However, Eagly and Crowley (1986) have not found overall gender differences in compliant prosocial behaviour. Therefore, more research is needed to discern the apparent inconsistencies between the present and prior findings. In contrast to these gender differences, adolescent boys reported a greater tendency to engage in public forms of prosocial behaviour than did adolescent girls. This finding is inconsistent with results of prior studies examining actual performance of prosocial behaviour that shows a greater tendency for men to help others when an audience is present.

Interestingly, adolescent girls reported more emotional prosocial behaviour than adolescent boys, which might lead to more helping in dire circumstances because many of these circumstances would be emotionally evocative.

Table 4 contains mean scores and SD of prosocial behaviour among adolescent boys and girls with high and low prosocial behaviour. Comparison of high prosocial behaviour among adolescent boys and girls shows that girls exhibit higher level of prosocial behaviour. Comparison of low prosocial behaviour among adolescent boys and girls shows boys scored higher on low prosocial behaviour than girls.

#### Association between socio-demographic characteristics and prosocial behaviour :

Table 5 presents socio-demographic characteristics wise

frequency and percentage distribution of adolescents with high prosocial behaviour and adolescents with low prosocial behaviour.

Results of the study reveal that among the age group 13-16, adolescents from age group 13-14 studying in grade seven show high prosocial behaviour than others. In overall scores, girls exhibited more prosocial behaviour than boys. Private school adolescents have exhibited more prosocial behaviour than adolescents of government school.

Results show that adolescents belonging to middle socio-economic status show high prosocial behaviour than low socio-economic status. Adolescents of educated parents show high prosocial behaviour than adolescents of illiterate parents. Adolescents belonging to joint family show higher level of prosocial behaviour than adolescents from nuclear family. Adolescents having one or two siblings show high prosocial behaviour than adolescents having no siblings or three or more siblings.

Table 6 shows the association of prosocial behaviour with adolescents socio-demographic variables. The table shows that calculated value of Chi-square in socio-demographic variable as sex, grade, school, socio-economic status, parents' education, type of family and number of siblings are significantly associated ( $p < .01$ ,  $p < .05$ ) with prosocial behaviour.

Results of the study reveal gender differences in prosocial behaviour. In overall scores, girls exhibit more prosocial behaviour than boys. It has been found that adolescents who studied in grade seven shows more prosocial behaviour than others. Private school adolescents exhibit more prosocial behaviour than adolescents of government school.

Adolescents' socio-economic status also affects their prosocial behaviour. Adolescents belonging to low socio-economic status show low prosocial behaviour than middle and high socio-economic status. Parents' education is significantly associated with adolescents' prosocial behaviour. Adolescents of educated parents show high prosocial behaviour than adolescents of illiterate parents. Adolescents belonging to joint family show higher level of prosocial behaviour than adolescents from nuclear family and

Table 6 : Chi- square values exhibiting association between socio- demographic characteristics and prosocial behaviour			
Demographics characteristics	$\chi^2$ values	Degree of freedom	'P' value
Sex and prosocial behaviour	16.38	1	0.00**
Grade and prosocial behaviour	45.51	3	0.00**
School and prosocial behaviour	3.57	1	0.05*
Socio-economic status and prosocial behaviour	16.12	2	0.00**
Father's education and prosocial behaviour	20.04	3	0.00**
Mother's education and prosocial behaviour	88.27	3	0.00**
Type of family and prosocial behaviour	6.48	1	0.01**
Number of siblings and prosocial behaviour	7.38	2	0.02*

\* and \*\* indicate significance of values at  $P=0.05$  and  $0.01$ , respectively

Ho: Prosocial behaviour among adolescents is independent of socio-demographic characteristics

number of siblings also affects their level of prosocial behaviour. Adolescents having one or two sibling show high prosocial behaviour than adolescents having no siblings or three or more siblings. It could be concluded that prosocial behaviour is associated with socio-demographic variables. Hence, the Null hypothesis that prosocial behaviour among adolescents is independent of socio-demographic characteristics was rejected.

Results of the study found that among the age group 13-16 years adolescents from age group 13-14 years studying in grade seven showed high prosocial behaviour than others. According to study by Avgitidou (2001) young adolescents have more prosocial behaviour than older adolescents. Fabes and Eisenberg (1996) conducted a meta-analysis of age differences in prosocial behaviour. In this analysis, they examined age-related changes in prosocial behaviour by categorizing participants into particular age groups that included infants through adolescents. They found that prosocial behaviour generally increased with age, with greater increases as the age span between comparisons increased. Though age trends in prosocial behaviour remain unclear, several studies have demonstrated that young children show low levels of prosocial behaviour and these behaviour increase during the early and middle elementary school years (Eisenberg *et al.*, 2006).

Results of the study also indicate gender differences in prosocial behaviour. In overall girls exhibit more prosocial behaviour than boys. Girls are more helpful, generous and compassionate than boys. Adolescent girls often help, comfort, and share more than boys, although the magnitude of this sex difference is not large (Eisenberg *et al.*, 2006) and is not apparent in all situations (Grusec *et al.*, 1996). Males are more likely to help in circumstances and broader societal spheres and they are more likely to help women than men. Females are more likely to help in daily life in the local sphere and are more likely to receive help.

Private school adolescents exhibited more prosocial behaviour than adolescents of government school. Socio-economic status is also a remarkable determinant of prosocial behaviour among adolescents. Results showed that adolescents from middle socio-economic status showed high prosocial behaviour than adolescents from low socio-economic status. Parents from lower socio-economic groups are characterized as more strongly punitive and power assertive and less responsive than parents from higher socio-economic group (Burbach *et al.*, 2004).

Thus, the link between lower socio-economic status and lower prosocial development might be mediated by compromise and maladaptive parental socialization although this explanation has not been evaluated in longitudinal studies.

Parental education is other most important determinant of adolescents' prosocial behaviour. Adolescents of educated

parents show high prosocial behaviour than adolescents of illiterate parents. Family size and siblings is also an important determinant of prosocial behaviour. Adolescents belonging to joint family show higher level of prosocial behaviour than adolescents' from nuclear family. It is because in joint family members are more. They help each other, care for each other, manage the household which may serve as adolescents learning environment for prosocial development. Number of siblings also affects level of prosocial behaviour. Adolescents having one or two sibling show high prosocial behaviour than adolescents having no siblings or three or more siblings. Having siblings and especially being an older sibling may facilitate the development of prosocial behaviour. Dunn and Munn (1986) studied the conflict behaviour of children both with and without siblings. Here, sibling status correlated with higher rates of conciliation and references to social norms indicating a possibility for increased prosocial behaviour such as sharing when children have siblings.

The study of prosocial behaviour and socio demographic characteristics has begun to generate consist evidence of the impressive contributions made for parents. Prosocial behaviour is essential to the well being of adolescents. Adolescents must learn to act in an appropriate manner, that is both beneficial to them and to others. With so many adolescents participating in group settings positive interactions are a necessity. The development of these skills allows them to interact with others in a socially accepted manner. Parents and teachers of adolescents must all work together to provide appropriate environment and also use effective ways in which adolescents feel comfortable with themselves and their surroundings and develop their prosocial skills.

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