

Investigation into Chinese Adolescents' Prosocial Behavior Tendencies

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Abstract. This investigation focuses on Chinese adolescents' prosocial behavior tendencies current days. In order to fulfill the mission, the Prosocial Tendencies Measure (PTM) is adopted to investigate 206 adolescents from different regions and fields in China. With the assistance of SPSS 17.0, the data revealed that there were higher prosocial tendencies among Chinese adolescents in the case of different genders, family types, and with/without siblings.

Keywords: Prosocial Behaviors; Chinese Adolescents; Investigation.

1. Introduction

Prosocial behavior mainly refers to the friendly and positive behavior shown by people in social communication, which is characterized by benefiting others and even the whole group and can promote the harmonious relationship between the two sides (Wispé, 1972). In essence, this behavior reflects the relationship between the self and others and between the individual and the society, having a positive effect on human survival adaptation and social development. During the past three decade, western scholars have been making efforts to detections of prosocial behavior development and its related research (Carlo & Randall, 2002; Erreygers et al., 2018). However, with different educational or parental backgrounds or social development, adolescents may tend to show various prosocial behaviors in front of the public. Previous studies show that individuals who were excluded from a group are more niggardly in knowledge-sharing (Takhsha, Barahimi, Adelpnah & Salehzadeh, 2020); experimental studies have also found that excluded individuals are less willing to donate (Lee & Park, 2019) and to help others in some trivial things (Kothgassner et al., 2017). But participants in these studies were not specified in China. Therefore, the current study will take an investigation into prosocial behaviors of Chinese adolescents and find the similarities and differences between the current study and previous studies.

2. Prosocial Behavior in Adolescence

As a kind of voluntary behavior, prosocial behavior is carried out with the intent to benefit others or promote harmonious relationships with others (van Rijsewijk et al., 2016), such as compassion, self-sacrifice, sharing, assistance, donation, etc. (Wispé, 1972). Researchers admit that prosocial behavior always interpersonally occurs; people conduct such behaviors in order to be friendly and harmoniously maintain specific social relations (van Rijsewijk et al., 2016). Thus, prosocial behavior is accepted and encouraged by society or groups; if there is no interpersonal interaction, prosocial behavior cannot happen. Adolescence is an important phase for the development of social behaviors since adolescents would spend time with parents, peers, and teachers. van Rijsewijk et al. (2016) finds out that prosocial exchanges between peers become more important. Similarly, in early adolescence, family relationships exert an increasing influence on adolescents' behavior (Memmott-Elison et al., 2020).

Researchers believe that individuals always live in a specific group, and the members from different societies tend to have different communication purposes, so the understanding of prosocial behavior will be of variance (Bergin, Talley & Hamer, 2003). Consequently, prosocial behavior is a complex process with multiple components and different mechanisms associated with externalizing and internalizing problems (Carlo & Randall, 2002; Paulus, 2018). Many important regulatory factors may exist when conducting prosocial behavior. Moreover, Cicchetti and Toth (1998) point out that prosocial behaviors also can be a predictor of some mental illness among adolescents. Still, previous

studies also demonstrate that individuals are inclined to decrease their precocial behaviors after experiencing social exclusion (Cuadrado, Taberner & Steine, 2016; Ren, Wesselmann & Williams, 2018).

During the past few decades, scholars have been making efforts on constructing validated scales to test prosocial behaviors (Caprara & Pastorelli, 1993; Caprara et al., 2005; Carlo & Randall, 2002). Based on American college students, Carlo and Randall's (2002) study modified a scale, namely, Prosocial Tendency Measures (PTM), finding that PTM is a much better scale to test prosocial behavior than a self-reported questionnaire. Carlo and Randall also confirmed that PTM works for middle and high school students as well. The six factors of PTM are conducive to studying the differences and connections between the different types of prosocial behaviors, which is better adapted to the new type theory of prosocial behaviors. Research has found that prosocial behavior increases during adolescence (Brittian & Humphries, 2015) and shifts from the family to the peer context (van Rijsewijk et al., 2016).

Based on the aforementioned discussion, scholars have spared no efforts to carry out studies on prosocial behaviors and their measurements. However, prosocial behavior is not a constant; it changes with the development of society and/or with various educational and family backgrounds. Additionally, participants from previous studies did not limit in China. This study, therefore, aims at probing into the current situation of Chinese adolescents' prosocial behaviors in terms of finding similarities and differences with preceding studies.

3. Methodology

The current empirical study adopted a quantitative research method to investigate the current situation of prosocial behaviors among Chinese adolescents.

3.1 Research Questions

1. What is the status quo of prosocial behaviors among Chinese adolescents?
2. Is there any significant difference between males and females, between adolescents from single-parent family and those from two-parent family, and between adolescents with siblings and those without siblings?

3.2 Participants

Participants were 206 adolescents who were enrolled in several universities in different regions in China (including South, North, and West China). Aging from 18 to 25, all the participants including 115 females and 91 males were in their undergraduate programs.

3.3 Sampling

This study implemented a convenience sample (Kelly, Lesh, & Baek, 2008), which meant that 206 participants were selected due to the fact that it was convenient for the author of this study to ask help from the universities where he had enrolled before. Although 209 individuals handed in their responses in the first place, it was found that two of them had not finished the questionnaire, and another one intended to select only one option in her response through data checking. Hence, these three participants were excluded from the current study. As a result, there were total 206 subjects valid in the present study in the end.

3.4 Instruments

The current study employed a quantitative method to examine the status quo of Chinese students' prosocial behaviors. Specifically, the Prosocial Tendencies Measure (PTM) Chinese version was adopted to test the variable. The PTM is a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Does not describe me at all) to 5 (Describes me greatly). Each of the 26 items is separated into one of six different subscales, namely, emotional (5 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .73$), compliant (5 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .74$), altruism

(4 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .76$), anonymous (5 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$), public (4 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .71$), and dire (3 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .56$). An overall score is collected through summing all of the six subscales with a minimum score of 26 points and a maximum score of 130 points. The higher the score is, the more prosocial behavior the participants show.

3.5 Procedures

PTM was edited as an online scale to hand it out among adolescents from different regions in China. Several university lecturers were invited to help hand out and collect the PTM. To ensure the participants honestly finish the scale, they were told that their information would be secretly kept and their results of PTM were only for academic purposes. A total of 209 scales were collected, and it spent almost three days to double check these responses in case of exposing some invalid ones. Accordingly, three questionnaires were in exclusion from the current study.

4. Research Findings

To investigate the current situation of Chinese adolescents' prosocial behavior tendencies, descriptive statistics are run to find the answers to the research questions of the present study with the assistance of SPSS 17.0.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
prosocial tendencies	206	31	130	96.52	14.657
emotional	206	6	25	19.29	4.156
compliant	206	5	25	17.92	3.984
altruism	206	4	20	16.17	2.784
anonymous	206	5	25	18.49	4.087
public	206	4	20	12.64	3.719
dire	206	6	15	12.02	2.141

Table 1 exhibits that the mean of prosocial tendencies is 96.52 (max=130, min=31) and the standard deviation is 14.657. The mean of emotional prosocial behaviors is 19.29 (max=25, min=6) and the standard deviation is 4.156. The mean of compliant prosocial behaviors is 17.92 (max=25, min=5) and the standard deviation is 3.984. The mean of altruism prosocial behaviors is 16.17 (max=20, min=4) and the standard deviation is 2.784. The mean of anonymous prosocial behaviors is 18.49 (max=25, min=5) and the standard deviation is 4.087. The mean of public prosocial behaviors is 12.64 (max=20, min=4) and the standard deviation is 3.719. The mean of dire prosocial behaviors is 12.02 (max=15, min=6) and the standard deviation is 2.141.

Based on the results, it can be concluded that participants show a higher prosocial tendency. It, therefore, can be interpreted that Chinese adolescents are likely to conduct prosocial behaviors. These results are in accordance with previous research results (Kou & Zhang, 2006; Kou, Hong, Tan & Li, 2007). Carlo and Randall (2002) hold an attitude that due to the different social and economic status, different norms and principles of individuals, and different perceptions of situations, so they tend to make different types of prosocial behaviors.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Prosocial Tendencies Sorted by Demographic Variables

	<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gender	91 (M)	31	130	98.10	16.512
	115 (F)	53	125	95.27	12.941
Family type	192 (T)	31	130	96.91	14.428
	14 (S)	53	116	91.14	17.195
Sibling	67 (N)	70	129	96.90	13.059
	139 (WS)	31	130	96.33	15.409

Note: M= males; F= females; T= Two-parent family; S= Single-parent family; N= No sibling; WS= With sibling

Table 3. Differences of Prosocial Tendencies Sorting by Demographic Variables

	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Total (M & F)	1.379	204	.169	2.829	2.052
Total (T & S)	1.425	204	.156	5.769	4.047
Total (N & WS)	.265	204	.791	.580	2.185

It is revealed in Table 2 that the mean score of male adolescents is higher than that of female adolescents ($M_M = 98.10$; $M_F = 95.27$), yet Table 3 demonstrates that no significant difference was located between male adolescents and female adolescents ($t = 1.379$, $p = .169 > .05$). Similarly, Table 2 shows that the mean score of two-parent-family adolescents is higher than that of single-parent-family adolescents ($M_T = 96.91$; $M_S = 91.14$); however, there is no significant difference was found between two-parent-family adolescents and single-parent-family adolescents ($t = 1.425$, $p = .156 > .05$). Table 2 also displays that the mean score of no-sibling adolescents is higher than that of with-sibling adolescents ($M_N = 96.90$; $M_{WS} = 96.33$); however, there is no significant difference was found between no-sibling adolescents and with-sibling adolescents ($t = .265$, $p = .791 > .05$).

Accordingly, no significant differences were found between different groups sorted by demographic information, namely, genders, family types, and with/without siblings. These findings show opposite results to several previous studies which claimed that there are significant differences between different genders (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2005; Leadbeater et al., 1999) and between different family types (Memmott-Elison et al., 2020), but the present results is in accordance with Kou, Ma, and Tan's (2004) discovery that no significant differences were located between adolescents with different genders and majors. One possible reason behind this result is that the current study adopted sample of convenience, so the sample size and gender ratios may be an influential factor to the research results. It can be interpreted that Chinese adolescents are greatly influenced by a unique Chinese thinking pattern: Chinese people believe that nothing exists in isolation; things are interconnected with each other directly or indirectly when facing the entire field and accepting contradictions and non-linear change in response to daily demands (Ji, Lee & Guo, 2010). This unique thinking pattern would guide adolescents in conducting prosocial behaviors under most circumstances. To be specific, Chinese students conduct prosocial behavior because they seek praise from others rather than the others' needs, while American college students do prosocial behavior for their own happiness.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of the present study is to take an investigation into Chinese adolescents' prosocial behaviors current days. Through analyses of descriptive analysis and Independent samples t-test with the SPSS 17.0, the results manifest that Chinese adolescents showed great prosocial tendencies. One possible factor is that Chinese adolescents are influenced by Chinese thinking patterns. As a result, this study suggests that parents, peers, and any other social group members are expected to pay more attention to adolescents' prosocial behaviors.

Although the current study was carefully defined, it is subjected to limitations: (a) the sample size was not large enough, which limits the generalizability of the results; (b) the current study adopted the sample of convenience, meaning the variety of subjects was a shortage of this study; (c) this study only adopts PTM to test participants' prosocial behaviors, and did not adopt regression to test whether there are any other mediate variables affecting the results of this study. Consequently, it is recommended that future researchers consider enlarging the sample size and testing prosocial behaviors with more validated tools.

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