

Prosociality in Relation to Perspective Taking, Moral Identity and Social Courage: A Study on Emerging Adults

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Abstract

Prior research has shown that Moral Identity, Social Courage, and Perspective taking and empathic concern contribute to Prosocial Behaviour or prosociality. However, how these three factors interact in predicting prosocial behaviours is not yet clear. The current study proposes to illustrate and explore the specific processes of how prosocial behaviour is motivated by these factors. Findings indicated that Social courage, perspective taking and moral identity emerged as significant predictors of prosocial behavior and moral identity completely mediated the relationship between social courage and prosocial behavior.

Keywords: *prosocial behavior, morality, perspective taking, empathy, courage*

Introduction

'Prosociality' is one of the most absorbing and necessary behavioural personality traits related with psychological well-being and the development of a healthier social interaction. But this stage of transition is challenging since it's possible to behave inappropriately for one's age and circumstances, which could lead to social and emotional immaturity later on. The virtue of courage is the willingness to take personal risks in order to pursue noble ideals. It is highly lauded but poorly studied. For more than two thousand years, philosophers and scientists have debated what courage is and how to define it. Although they never agree on a definition of courage, the characters hazard a guess that it must involve goodness/morality and absolutely no folly (Cooper & Hutcheson, 1997). Social courage has been found to be positively related to prosocial voice and silence in studies that have examined the role of social courage in organisational settings in terms of employee voice and silence, while it has been found

to be negatively related to defensive voice and silence as well as acquiescent voice and silence. To put it another way, social courage has a good relationship with constructive speech and silence as well as a negative relationship with destructive voice and silence. (Howard & Cogswell, 2019).

Typically, ideas of moral identity are based on Erikson's (1964) description of identity as one's firmly held self-concept. Individuals can have different moral identities with some emphasising justice (or other qualities), while others may prioritize care (Blasi 1984). According to identity theory, people evaluate their moral obligation to behave in specific circumstances based on how important their moral identity is to their overall self-concept (Aquino and Reed 2002; Blasi 1984). Similar ideas within the field of care ethics have been identified. Key issues in particular include neglecting to accept responsibility when one might, as well as the significance of preserving authenticity with oneself and others (Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988). Research on moral courage supports these ideas as well. For instance, Worline (2010) emphasized the significance of individual accountability through individuated v/s de-individuated action, as well as the significance of moral courage and ethical integrity. Similar to this, Putnam (2010) and Woodard (2010) both highlighted the need of personal accountability and authenticity in courage while making the case that personal courage is essential to any genuine decision.

Therefore, the behavioural manifestation of morally courageous action is positively correlated with the centrality of caring moral identity. For instance, Glazer and Glazer (1989, 1999) identified several participants in their seminal study of whistleblowers in industry and government who were expressly aware of the criticism they would probably face as a result of speaking up on matters of client or public safety. But, despite the high likelihood of severe, unfavorable consequences, they felt forced to proceed with whistleblowing because their moral identity was sufficiently fundamental and vital to both their professional identity and core notion of self. Also, their feeling of personal accountability and compassion were regarded as being more significant in these decisions than bureaucratic conformity.

The act of putting yourself in another person's shoes to perceive a situation or comprehend a subject is known as perspective-taking. The field of organisational behaviour is undergoing an Affective Revolution right now (Barsade, Brief, and Spataro, 2003). In the past, workplace emotions were investigated as a phenomenon of job satisfaction, but they are now understood to have important effects on an individual's performance, the

performance of others in the group, and organisational outcomes. Curiosity about the emotional subconscious processes people go through when processing information in their daily lives has driven a more recent interest in the function of emotions in the workplace (Kihlstrom, 1999). The role of affect on an individual's judgment has been found to have an impact on performance relevant outcomes (Brief & Weiss, 2002) and that positive and negative affect has an impact on helping (Isen & Baron, 1991) and prosocial behaviors (George, 1990).

Method

Participants: The sample of the study consisted of 305 emerging adults (males and females) between the age group of 21-26 years of age with at least a graduation degree and belonging to an upper-middle and higher socio-economic background with an urban domicile.

Tools used in the study: the following measures were used on the participants-

- Pro-socialness Scale for Adults (Caprara, Steca, Zelli & Capanna, 2005)
- This 16-item test examines prosocial behaviour in late adolescence and adulthood on a five-point Likert scale. The sentences cover emotions and activities associated with four different types of deeds: feeling sympathetic towards others, looking out for others, assisting, and sharing.
- Moral Identity Scale (Aquino & Reed, 2002)
- The scale's 10 items gauge the degree to which moral qualities influence a person's sense of self. On a Likert scale with a maximum score of 5, opinions from respondents varied from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5. (strongly agree). It consists of the Symbolization and Internalization subscales.
- Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1983)
- This 28 item scale comprises of 4 sub-scales including perspective-taking, fantasy, personal distress and empathic concern where perspective taking is described as the propensity to unconsciously acquire another person's psychological point of view.

- Woodard Pury Courage Scale: (Woodard & Pury, 2007)
- It is a 23 item scale based on a 5-point likert scale ranging from strongly disagrees to strongly agree. The WPCS can be used to assess the physical, emotional and social courage of the participants beginning from their young adulthood phase. For the present study, on the social courage sub-scale was used.

Results

Table 1.1

Correlational Analyses

	Social Courage	Perspective Taking	Prosocial Behaviour	Moral Identity
Social Courage	1	-0.50	.156**	.560**
Perspective Taking	-	1	.156**	-.006
Prosocial Behaviour	-	-	1	.181**
Moral Identity	-	-	-	1

**Significant at .01 level

It is evident from the above table that social courage has a significant positive correlation with prosocial behavior and moral identity. It is also apparent that perspective taking has a significant positive correlation prosocial behaviour. Prosocial behaviour was found to have a significant positive relationship with moral identity as well. No significant relation was found between social courage and perspective taking.

Table 1.2

Linear Regression with Social Courage as the Predictor Variable and Moral Identity as the Criterion Variable

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	113.306	2.115		53.582	.000
Social Courage	.439	.037	.560	11.770	.000

NOTE: Fit for model R²= 0.314 Adjusted R²= 0.311, F (1,303) = 138.529, p<.000

Table 1.3

Linear Regression with Social Courage as the Predictor Variable and Prosocial behaviour as the Criterion Variable

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	71.583	1.739		41.170	.000
Social Courage	.084	.031	.156	-2.746	.006

NOTE: Fit for model $R^2= 0.24$ Adjusted $R^2= 0.21$, $F(1,303) = 7.542$, $p<.006$

Table 1.4

Linear Regression with Perspective taking as the Predictor Variable and Prosocial behaviour as the Criterion Variable

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	57.967	3.307		17.530	.000
Perspective Taking	.323	.118	.156	2.742	.006

NOTE: Fit for model $R^2= 0.37$ Adjusted $R^2= 0.35$, $F(1,303) = 7.519$, $p<.006$

Table 1.5

Linear Regression with Moral Identity as the Predictor Variable and Prosocial behaviour as the Criterion Variable

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	55.834	3.502		15.946	.000
Moral Identity	.125	.039	.181	3.201	.002

NOTE: Fit for model $R^2= 0.33$ Adjusted $R^2= 0.30$, $F(1,303) = 10.246$, $p<.002$

MEDIATION: Based on the significant correlations and consequent regression analysis, mediation analysis was conducted as follows:

Table 1.6

Mediation analysis of Moral Identity between Social Courage and Prosocial behaviour

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Moral Identity	-.0413	.0223	-.0883	-.0003

X : social courage; Y: prosocial behaviour

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this study was to examine the specific roles of perspective taking, social courage, and moral identity on the prosocial behavior of the participants. The study also acknowledged the mediating impact perspective taking and moral identity had on the relationship between social courage and the prosocial behaviour of the participants through mediation analysis.

Results (table 1.1) indicated that social courage, moral identity and perspective taking had a significant correlation with prosocial behavior ($r=.156, .181$ & $.156$ respectively). However, perspective taking did not have a significant relationship with moral identity and social courage. Regression analysis further revealed that social courage was accountable for 24%, perspective taking was accountable for 37% and moral identity was accountable for 33% variation in the prosocial behavior of the participants.

Social courage involves the ability to stand up for yourself and your beliefs, even in the face of opposition from others. It takes strength to stand up for yourself or others when doing so feels risky. Once achieved, social courage can facilitate a lot of intra and interpersonal virtues such as life satisfaction, ethical decision making and prosocial behaviors (Ayling, D., 2006; Mert et. al., 2022). It is evident that the quality of social courage is not merely exhibited for self-serving purposes but is also aimed at benefitting others, thus justifying the relationship between the two.

Individuals with a well-knit moral identity find it important to perform

behaviors that are congruent with their moral values and structure and being prosocial is an important aspects of the same. Several academics claim that during adolescence or the early stages of adulthood, morality becomes ingrained in a person's conception of themselves (Colby & Damon, 1992; Hardy & Carlo, 2005; Moshman, 2011). Moral identity, the outcome of this integration, may encourage teenagers to take helpful or moral behaviours because they feel obligated to act in ways that are consistent with their moral ideals (Blasi, 1983, 2004; Carlo, 2014). Moreover, research show that teenagers with strong moral identities are more likely to carry out prosocial behaviours like assisting neighbours (Hart, Atkins, & Donnelly, 2006; Hart & Fegley, 1995; Johnston & Krettenauer, 2011).

An alternative point of view, such as that of another person, can be used to better grasp a situation or a subject. This process is known as perspective-taking. When people have this awareness, they are more likely to consider what they can do to help others if they can. Changing one's perspective causes one to feel more emotionally connected to people and more concerned about their well-being.

Mediation analysis of moral identity between social courage and prosocial behaviour indicated that the LLCI (-.0883) and ULCI (-.0003) values do not include a zero in their range thus indicating that moral identity has a statistically significant mediating effect on the relationship between spirituality and self-compassion ($p < 0.05$).

Possessing a moral identity has been identified as being proportionate to the trait of courage in several researches. Both social and personal values are essential to the courage process, as shown by theoretical models that depict courage as a process (Hutchinson et al., 2015; Koerner, 2014; Serkerka & Bagozzi, 2007). Additionally, it has been discovered that moral identity amplifies the influence of antecedents on prosocial conduct (W. Wang et al., 2017). Similar to this, Grover (2014) discovered that employee moral identity improved the link between leader sincerity and employee satisfaction. Moreover, assisting behaviors among employees are favorably correlated with increased employee satisfaction.

Prosocial behavior has been lauded as a valuable virtue by various researchers and philosophers and equal debates have been ongoing about the factors that either produce or maintain prosocial behaviors. The interpersonal aspects that contribute to prosocial behaviour have received less attention than the personal characteristics of an individual, such as spiritual convictions, empathy, and thankfulness. With attention to the

mediating roles provided by perspective taking and moral identity for the same, the current study highlighted the importance social bravery can play in instilling and promoting prosocial behaviours in people. Prosocial behaviour was found to be significantly predicted by social courage, and the relationship between the two was successfully mediated by moral identity. The results of the current study can pave the way for other studies that concentrate on the combined impact that intrapersonal and interpersonal influences might have on instilling virtues in people.

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