



Correlation of Happiness and the distinct forms of Prosocial Behavior



Fatima I. Santoyo Vargas, College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences

Mentor: Rachel M Baumsteiger
Kellogg Honors College Capstone Project 2023

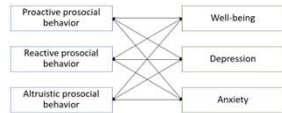
Introduction

- Research shows that engaging in prosocial behavior can promote emotional well-being. (Kumar and Epley, 2022) Prosocial behavior is characterized as a form of acts that benefit other people, and ourselves which is rarely recognized.
- Nelson(2016) established that those who contributed to Prosocial behavior experience relative improvement in flourishing among those prompted to do acts of kindness meaning, increases in positive emotions and decreases in negative emotions.
- According to Nostrand and Ojanen (2018), the assumption that prosocial behavior has to do with a more altruistic and reactive prosocial behavior approach rather than the possibility of a proactive prosocial behavior. Traditionally, prosocial behaviors are conceptualized and assessed as a unidimensional construct, but recent research suggests they include various distinct forms:
 - Proactive (instrumental, self-benefiting)
 - Reactive (in response to an individual in need)
 - Altruistic (beneficial to others without expectation of personal gain) functions

Purpose & Hypothesis

The current study is focused on identifying whether the different aspects of prosocial behavior (Reactive, Altruistic, or Proactive) correlates with better mental health.

- Hypothesis 1**
University students who perform more prosocial behavior are more likely to have better positive mental health than those who don't.
- Hypothesis 2**
Those who participate in more Proactive form of Prosocial behavior have higher levels of happiness than those who do more Reactive behavior.



Materials & Methods

Participants:

Approximately 150 undergraduate students from Cal Poly Pomona will be assessed. All participants were recruited via SONA, a cloud-based management website. Participants will be surveyed via Qualtrics and with the use of a 5-point Linkert scale from "definitely not like me" to "definitely like me."

Procedures:

Participants will be directed via SONA to Qualtrics where they sign a consent form, fill out a demographic survey and complete these following materials:

- Aggressive and Prosocial Behavior to measure prosociality (Boxer, P., Tisak, M. S., & Goldstein, S. E. (2004), to measure the distinct forms of prosocial behavior
- 8-item short-form of the Centre for Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale (CES-D)
- (Miles, Andiappan, Upenieks, Orfanidis, 2022) to measure depression
- Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale-Anxiety (HADS-A) scale(Miles, Andiappan, Upenieks, Orfanidis, 2022) to measure anxiety
- Subjective Happiness scale (Lyubomirsk and Lepper, 1999) to measure their overall happiness

Potential Results

- This study has not yet been conducted. However, if this study follows in the footsteps of the literature before it like Kumar & Epley's(2023) study, it is expected that prosocial behavior will lead to happiness.
- Correlations will be computed between the three types of prosocial behavior (proactive, reactive, and altruistic) and each measure of mental health (well-being, depression, and anxiety)
- Unlike previous studies, this study focuses on figuring out the distinct forms of prosocial behaviors. It is expected that there will be a significant correlation between reactive and altruistic prosocial behaviors and happiness compared to proactive prosocial behaviors.
- Using findings from Kumar, A., & Epley, N (2023), we will building upon how significant prosocial behaviors but more focus on the specific forms of prosocial behaviors.



Discussion

While there is no data yet for the current study, our expectation is that the finding will be consistent and supported by previous studies in regards of positive impact prosocial behavior has on mental health. We believe that there will be significance in all two of our hypotheses, particularly that:

- doing more proactive prosocial behavior contributes to higher level of happiness
- those who perform more prosocial behavior have overall better mental health

Significance & Implications

This research could contribute to a deeper understanding on how prosocial behavior can have an affect on overall mental being. In terms of breaking down the different forms of prosocial behavior, studying the impact each has on our overall well being can be significant in providing information for others on what they can do to increase happiness for example. I believe this study can open doors in how participating more in prosocial behavior not only impacts the receiver but also the giver in such acts of kindness.

Summary & Conclusion

Potential Limitations:

- Limited sample demographics
- Additional factors contributing to causes of happiness or well being

Suggestion for future studies:

- To provide a measure that can contribute to all of the aspects of happiness with prosocial behavior
- Provide more variables that can correlate with the distinct forms of prosocial behavior besides happiness.

References

- Boxer, P., Tisak, M. S., & Goldstein, S. E. (2004). Is it bad to be good? An exploration of aggressive and prosocial behavior subtypes in adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 33(2), 91-100.
- Findley-Van Nostrand, D., & Ojanen, T. (2018). Forms of Prosocial Behaviors are Differentially Linked to Social Goals and Peer Status in Adolescents. *The Journal of genetic psychology*, 179(6), 329-342. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221325.2018.1518894>
- Kumar, A., & Epley, N. (2023). A little good goes an unexpectedly long way: Underestimating the positive impact of kindness on recipients. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 152(1), 236-252. <https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0001271>
- Lyubomirsky, S., & Lepper, H. S. (1999). A measure of subjective happiness: Preliminary reliability and construct validation. *Social Indicators Research*, 46(2), 137-155.
- Miles, A., Andiappan, M., Upenieks, L., & Orfanidis, C. (2022). Using prosocial behavior to safeguard mental health and foster emotional well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic: A registered report of a randomized trial. *PLoS one*, 17(7), e0272152.
- Nelson, S. K., Layous, K., Cole, S. W., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2016). Do unto others or treat yourself? The effects of prosocial and self-focused behavior on psychological flourishing. *Emotion*, 16(6), 850-861. <https://doi-org.proxy.library.cpp.edu/10.1037/emo0000178.supp> (Supplemental)

Acknowledgments

Contact

For more information, please contact Fatima Santoyo at fis@cpp.edu

