

## **PROSOCIAL MORAL REASONING AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR OF GRADE 10 STUDENTS IN TAMU TOWNSHIP**

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### **Abstract**

The main aim of this study is to explore the prosocial moral reasoning and prosocial behaviour of Grade 10 students in Tamu Township, Sagaing Region. Quantitative research design and descriptive survey method were taken in this study. Total of 636 (male = 301, female = 335) Grade 10 students were selected as participants from four high schools and two high schools (branch) by using simple random sampling technique. As research instruments, prosocial reasoning objective measure (PROM) and prosocial tendencies measure – revised (PTM - R) were adapted and applied. According to the descriptive statistics, the results showed that students' prosocial moral reasoning and prosocial behaviour were satisfactory. Again, independent samples *t* test showed that female students were better in prosocial moral reasoning than males, but no significant difference found in prosocial behaviour by gender. According to locality effect, independent sample *t* test results indicated that urban students were better in prosocial moral reasoning and prosocial behaviour than rural ones. Related to birth order position, ANOVA results indicated that first-born and last-born students were better in prosocial behaviour than only child, but no significant difference was found in prosocial moral reasoning. Moreover, students' prosocial moral reasoning was positively correlated with prosocial behaviour ( $r = .25, p < .01$ ). According to these findings, this study highlights the fact that prosocial moral reasoning may influence the improvement of students' prosocial behaviour.

**Key words:** prosocial moral reasoning, prosocial behaviour, moral reasoning

### **Introduction**

#### **Importance of the Study**

Throughout history, promoting philosophical ideals of moral behaviour have been central concerns in human societies. Soon after people figured out how to write, they began writing about morality, law, and religion. Some people believe that morality originates from cultures and humans learn moral norms from their cultures. Also, in moral psychology, social cognitive theory assumed that learning from society, peers and parent forms morality (cited in Azimpour, Shehni-Yailagh, Esfandiyari, Abdollahi, & Eslamiyeh, 2017). Social learning theory approach also claims that human develop morality by learning rules of acceptable behaviour from their external environment (Strickland, 2001). Concepts of morality emerge very early in young children with an awareness of equality, fairness and rights. As with biological and cognitive development, many processes help to ensure that children become morally competent adults (Killen & Smetana, 2015).

In our contemporary world, people are facing a lot of challenges especially crimes, terrorist attacks, child and spouse abuse, etc., and these miserable may be due to lack of moral reasoning and low prosocial behaviour or lack of social support from the family, relatives, friends and even community. No one can predict what kind of problems will be faced in future years by the present generation of youth. Education in moral values can furnish a yardstick against which any future problems can be measured (cited in Khin Nyunt Nyunt Saw, 2016).

Schools can promote moral development through the climate of the classroom; the discipline used; the curriculum, including moral issues and service learning; opportunities for students to debate moral dilemmas; and school-based programs to decrease aggression (Bohlin, Durwin, & Reese-Weber, 2011). In Myanmar basic education schools, moral lesson periods have been given for a long time. There is no school in Myanmar that does not emphasize the motto

“Morale, Discipline and Wisdom”. In order to improve the development of morale and discipline, the students of basic education schools in Myanmar are nurtured for patriotism, union spirit and willingness to abide by laws, regulations and disciplines (Ministry of Education, 2012).

As children around the world are growing up in more heterogeneous cultures than in the past, parents, teachers, and educators are struggling to determine how best to teach children about morality. They are experiencing discrimination as a result of their gender, ethnicity, religion and other categories. Schools are central to children’s experiences of safety, freedom from victimization, and social exclusion. Students are to be taught Human Rights Education in order to reduce prejudice, discrimination and other undesirable behaviours. Ministry of Education in Myanmar (2012) has introduced Human Rights Education in basic education curriculum since 2004-2005 Academic Years.

In every nation, the role of education is vital in imbibing prosocial behaviour among the students to make them future responsible citizens of the society. When students perform prosocial acts, they will feel contented and satisfied and that will enhance their academic achievement as well. This study will also be supportive in some degree in contributing to the education of adolescents, particularly Grade 10 students in Tamu Township.

### **Aim and purposes of the study**

The main aim is to explore prosocial moral reasoning and prosocial behaviour of Grade 10 students in Tamu Township.

According to specific objectives, the researcher set the following research questions:

1. Are there any significant differences in prosocial moral reasoning and prosocial behaviour by gender, locality of schools and birth order position?
2. Is there any significant relationship between prosocial moral reasoning and prosocial behaviour of students?

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

- Prosocial Moral Reasoning** : the thinking that people display when deciding whether to help, share with, or comfort others when these actions could prove costly to themselves (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010)
- Prosocial Behaviour** : voluntary action that is intended to help or benefit another individual or group of individuals (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989)
- Moral Reasoning** : The process of judging right and wrong and is regarded as the force behind moral action (Kohlberg, 1984)

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **Theories of Moral Reasoning**

Piaget (1932) proposed a two-stage theory of cognitive moral development. Kohlberg (1963), based on Piaget’s idea, developed his own theory of moral reasoning, framing it in three levels, each of which has two stages (cited in Bohlin et al., 2011). Gilligan (1977) suggested care-oriented moral reasoning. Then, Eisenberg continued Gilligan’s outlook with “prosocial moral reasoning” (Eisenberg, Carlo, Murphy, & Van Court, 1995). Eisenberg’s theory of

prosocial moral reasoning is different from the cognitive-developmental perspectives of Piaget and Kohlberg due to its focus on positive justice (Lapsley, 2006). Although Eisenberg's levels refer to prosocial reasoning, many of the outcomes also include actions. She identified five levels of prosocial reasoning:

- Level 1 Hedonistic or self-focused orientation,
- Level 2 Needs orientation,
- Level 3 Approval/interpersonal orientation,
- Level 4 Self-reflective empathetic orientation and
- Level 5 Internalized orientations (cited in Bohlin et al., 2011).

Eisenberg (1986) described that prosocial moral reasoning is different from the construct of prohibitive-oriented reasoning in that levels of prosocial moral reasoning are not viewed as hierarchical, integrated structures or as being universal and invariant in sequence.

### **Theoretical Background of Prosocial Behaviour**

Attention to prosocial behaviour in psychology originated with McDougall (1908) who stated that the fundamental problem of social psychology is the moralization of the individual by the society into which he is born as a creature in which the non-moral and purely egoistic tendencies are so much stronger than any altruistic tendencies. Wispe (1972) defined prosocial behaviour as the opposite of antisocial behaviour, including aggressive behaviour (cited in Eisenberg, 1982). Bierhoff (2002) notes that the terms "helping behaviour", "prosocial behaviour", and "altruism" are frequently used interchangeably. However, they may be distinguished for analytic purposes.

This study is partly based on the theoretical conceptualizations of prosocial tendencies formulated by Carlo and Randall (2002). Six types of prosocial behaviour are –

- a. **Altruistic** – voluntary helping motivated primarily by concern for the needs and welfare of another
- b. **Compliant** – helping others in response to a verbal or non-verbal request
- c. **Emotional** – an orientation towards helping others under emotionally evocative circumstances. Perceived emotional evocativeness might influence the observer's emotional responses.
- d. **Public** – prosocial behaviour conducted in front of an audience are likely to be motivated, at least in part, by the desire to gain the approval and respect of others and enhance one's self-worth
- e. **Anonymous** – helping performed without the knowledge of who helped, and
- f. **Dire** – helping in crisis or emergency situations.

## **Methodology**

### **Sampling**

By simple random sampling technique, 636 Grade 10 students from three rural schools and three urban schools were investigated. The age ranked from 13 to 18. The chosen number of Grade 10 students from Tamu Township was presented in details in the following table.

**Table 1 Distribution of Students in the Sample**

No.	Schools	Types of Schools	Locality of Schools	Number of Students		Total
				Male	Female	
1	School 1	High School (Branch)	Urban	35	25	60
2	School 2	High School	Urban	60	91	151
3	School 3	High School (Branch)	Rural	33	46	79
4	School 4	High School	Rural	39	28	67
5	School 5	High School	Urban	108	109	217
6	School 6	High School	Rural	26	36	62
Total				301	335	636

### Research Method

The quantitative research design and descriptive survey method were taken in this study. Questionnaires were used to elicit information through a descriptive survey.

### Instrumentation

In this study, the researcher used two instruments to investigate the Grade 10 students' prosocial moral reasoning and prosocial behaviour.

Prosocial Moral Reasoning (PROM), developed by Carlo et al. (1992), was used to assess self-report of five subscales of prosocial moral reasoning of the students. Five stories were administered, each containing a conflict between a protagonist's needs and desires and those of others. The participants were asked to read each story and indicate whether he/she should or should not help the needy other or whether he/she was unsure what he/she should do. Participants then were asked to rate on a 4-point Likert scale (cited in Carlo et al., 2003). Cronbach's alpha coefficient value was 0.718.

Prosocial Tendencies Measure (PTM) originally was developed to assess prosocial behaviours of college students by Carlo and Randall (2002). The PTM was modified to use with younger adolescents by Carlo et al., 2003. The four-point Likert scale was used. Negative items were reversely scored. Cronbach's alpha value was 0.629.

### Procedure

For this study, researcher referenced for the related literatures from many journals, theses and dissertations, and reports in education site as much as possible. Then, prosocial moral reasoning objective measure and prosocial tendencies measure – revised were adapted in Myanmar language. Then, editorial review of items by five experts in the field of educational psychology from Sagaing University of Education was done. Some items were repaired according to their suggestions. For pilot testing, 100 Grade 10 students were chosen from BEHS (2), Amarapura. Then, actual testing was started at selected schools in Tamu Township in November.

## Data Analysis and Findings

### Prosocial Moral Reasoning of Grade 10 Students

Descriptive statistics for students' prosocial moral reasoning was shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Students' Prosocial Moral Reasoning**

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Prosocial Moral Reasoning	636	1.67	2.16	1.867	.069

According to the above table, the mean and standard deviation for prosocial moral reasoning were 1.87 and .069; the minimum and maximum scores were 1.67 and 2.16. Based on descriptive analysis, 13.84 % were in the high group, 15.88 % were in the low group and 70.28 were in moderate group. Based on the results, levels of prosocial moral reasoning of students were in the range of acceptable condition.

Prosocial moral reasoning was classified by five subscales: hedonistic, needs, approval, stereotyped and internalized orientation. Descriptive analysis was conducted to reveal the mean and standard deviation of students' prosocial moral reasoning of each subscale. The results can be clearly seen in Table 3.

**Table 3 Descriptive Statistics for Subscales of Prosocial Moral Reasoning**

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Hedonistic	636	.07	.27	.17	.03
Needs	636	.14	.32	.21	.02
Approval	636	.07	.26	.18	.03
Stereotyped	636	.13	.29	.21	.02
Internalized	636	.15	.33	.22	.03

According to Table 3, the mean score of students' internalized prosocial moral reasoning is the highest and the mean score of students' hedonistic prosocial moral reasoning is the lowest. It can be interpreted that students' thoughts were based on internalized reasoning.

**Prosocial Moral Reasoning of Grade 10 Students by Gender**

First, descriptive statistics was conducted to examine whether gender differences exist in the mean scores of students' prosocial moral reasoning (see Table 4).

**Table 4 Results of Independent Samples t test for Prosocial Moral Reasoning by Gender**

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p	MD
Prosocial Moral Reasoning	Male	301	1.86	.066	-2.867**	634	.004	-.02
	Female	335	1.87	.071				

Note: \*\*The mean difference is significant at 0.01 level.

According to Table 4, the result of t test indicated that there was significant difference between male and female students in prosocial moral reasoning.

**Prosocial Moral Reasoning of Grade 10 Students by School Locality**

To examine the local difference, independent sample t test statistics was computed. The results were mentioned in Table 5.

**Table 5 Results of Independent Samples t test for Prosocial Moral Reasoning by School Locality**

Variable	Locality	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p	MD
Prosocial Moral Reasoning	Rural	208	1.85	.065	-3.311**	634	.001	-.02
	Urban	428	1.87	.070				

Note. \*\*The mean difference is significant at 0.01 level.

According to Table 5, significant difference was found by school locality.

### Prosocial Moral Reasoning of Grade 10 Students by Birth Order Position

According to the obtained data, the birth order position of siblings was divided into four groups as only child, first-born, middle-born and last-born. To get more detailed information, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied.

**Table 6 Descriptive Statistics of Prosocial Moral Reasoning by Birth Order Position**

Variable	Birth Order Position	N	Mean	SD
Prosocial Moral Reasoning	Only child	18	1.849	.066
	First-born	158	1.874	.073
	Middle-born	291	1.864	.067
	Last-born	169	1.866	.069

According to Table 6, the mean score of first-born child was the highest and that of only child was the lowest. In order to know more detailed, one-way ANOVA was conducted.

**Table 7 ANOVA Results of Prosocial Moral Reasoning by Birth Order Position**

Prosocial Moral Reasoning	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Group	.017	3	.006	1.162	.324
Within Group	3.012	632	.005		
Total	3.029	635			

Significant difference was not found in students' prosocial moral reasoning by birth order position.

### Prosocial behaviour of Grade 10 students

Descriptive analysis for students' prosocial behaviour was described in Table 8.

**Table 8 Descriptive Statistics of Grade 10 Students' Prosocial Behaviour**

Variable	No. of Items	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Mean %	SD
Prosocial Behaviour	25	53	95	70.97	74.7	6.50

Table 8 showed that the mean and standard deviation were 70.97 and 6.5. Theoretical mean score was 62.5. The minimum and maximum score were 53 and 95. According to these results, prosocial behaviour of students was satisfactory.

Based on the descriptive analysis, 19.18 % students were in the high group, 15.88 % were in the low group and 69.94 were in moderate group. Then, it could be interpreted that the levels of prosocial behaviour of students were in the range of acceptable condition.

Descriptive statistics for the students' prosocial behaviour by its subscales were described in Table 9.

**Table 9 Descriptive Statistics for Subscales of Prosocial Behaviour**

Variables	No. of Items	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Mean %	SD
Altruistic	6	8	23	14.31	59.63%	2.66
Complaint	2	2	8	5.94	74.25%	1.36
Emotional	5	9	20	16.15	80.75%	2.12
Public	4	5	16	11.25	70.31%	2.19
Anonymous	5	5	20	13.78	68.9%	3.04
Dire	3	5	12	9.54	79.5%	1.48

According to Table 9, the mean percent of students' emotional prosocial behaviour is the highest and that of students' altruistic prosocial behaviour is the lowest.

**Prosocial Behaviour of Grade 10 Students by Gender**

In order to find out the difference between male and female students in prosocial behaviour, the mean and standard deviation were calculated.

**Table 10 Results of Independent Sample *t* test for Prosocial Behaviour by Gender**

Variable	Gender	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	MD
Prosocial Behaviour	Male	301	70.63	6.86	-1.269	605.89	.205	-.66
	Female	335	71.29	6.15				

It can be found that there was no significant difference between male and female students in their overall prosocial behaviour.

**Prosocial Behaviour of Grade 10 Students by School Locality**

In order to find out possible differences between rural and urban students' prosocial behaviour, independent samples *t* test was conducted. The result was in Table 11.

**Table 11 Results of Independent Samples *t* test for Local Differences in Prosocial Behaviour**

Variable	Locality	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	MD
Prosocial Behaviour	Rural	208	69.58	6.87	-3.807***	634	.000	-2.07
	Urban	428	71.65	6.21				

Note: \*\*\*The mean difference is significant at 0.001 level.

It can be found that there was significant difference between male and female students in their prosocial behaviour ( $p < .001$ ).

**Prosocial Behaviour of Grade 10 Students by Birth Order Position**

**Table 12 Mean Comparison for Prosocial Behaviour by Birth Order Position**

Variable	Birth Order Position	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Prosocial Behaviour	Only child	18	67.00	5.67
	First-born	158	71.62	6.39
	Middle-born	291	70.71	6.42
	Last-born	169	71.25	6.70

According to the descriptive analysis of prosocial behaviour by birth order position, first-born children had highest mean score and only child had the lowest mean score in prosocial behaviour. To get more detailed information, one-way ANOVA was conducted.

**Table 13 ANOVA Results of Prosocial Behaviour by Birth Order Position**

Prosocial Behaviour	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Group	383.068	3	127.689	3.050*	.028
Within Group	26460.530	632	41.868		
Total	26843.597	635			

Note. \*The mean difference is significant at 0.05 level.

According to the above table, significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) was found in prosocial behaviour by birth order position. To know more detailed, Post Hoc Test was conducted.

**Table 14 Result of Post Hoc Test in Prosocial Behaviour by Birth Order Position**

Variable	Birth Order Position(I)	BirthOrder Position(J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	p
Prosocial Behaviour	Only child	First-born	-4.620*	.022
		Middle-born	-3.711	.086
		Last-born	-4.249*	.041

Note: \*The mean difference is significant at 0.05 level.

According to the Post Hoc Test Result, significant differences were found between only child and students whose birth order was first and last.

### Relationship Between Prosocial Moral Reasoning and Prosocial Behaviour

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to investigate the relationship between prosocial moral reasoning and prosocial behaviour of students. Results of this analysis were mentioned in Table 15.

**Table 15 Correlation Matrix between Prosocial Moral Reasoning and Prosocial Behaviour**

Variables	Altruism	Complaint	Emotional	Public	Anonymous	Dire	PSB
Hedonistic	-.237**	-.259**	-.274**	.088*	-.101*	-.220**	-.308**
Needs	.191**	.120**	.132**	-.099*	.109**	.156**	.199**
Approval	-.207**	-.005	-.069	.172**	-.063	-.117**	-.106**
Stereotyped	.181**	.114**	.145**	-.099*	.052	.166**	.174**
Internalized	.193**	.109**	.164**	-.129**	.049	.113**	.160**
PWAS	.274**	.163**	.219**	-.166**	.093*	.196**	.250**

Note: \*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to Table 15, there was positive correlation between prosocial moral reasoning and prosocial behaviour. Hedonistic reasoning was related negatively to altruistic, complaint, emotional, anonymous, dire and total prosocial behaviours. Approval-oriented reasoning is negatively related to altruism, dire and total prosocial behaviours. Moreover, both hedonistic and approval-oriented reasoning were positively related to public prosocial behaviour.

Needs-oriented, stereotyped, internalized prosocial moral reasoning and PWAS were negatively related to public prosocial behaviour. Needs-oriented, stereotyped and internalized prosocial moral reasoning is positively related to all the other prosocial behaviours, except anonymous prosocial behaviour. In addition, PWAS is positively related to all types of prosocial behaviour.

It may be assumed that public prosocial behaviour is conducted in front of an audience by a desire to gain the approval and respect of others. That is why public prosocial behaviour was negatively correlated to most prosocial moral reasoning; namely need-oriented, stereotyped and internalized prosocial moral reasoning, including PWAS.

## Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestions for Further Research

### Summary of Major Findings and Conclusions

Descriptive analysis indicated that PROM Weighted Average Composite Score (PWAS) of students was 1.87 and standard deviation was .069. Categorizing students' levels into three groups, 13.84% high, 70.28% moderate and 15.88% were in low group respectively. On the other hand, the mean percent on prosocial tendencies measure of students was 70.97 and standard



deviation was 6.5. Categorizing the students' levels into three groups, 19.18% high, 64.94% moderate and 15.88% were in low group respectively. The results showed that most students in this study possessed moderate prosocial moral reasoning and moderate prosocial behaviour.

The result of independent samples *t* test indicated that there was significant difference in prosocial moral reasoning by gender. So, it was found that female students were significantly higher than male students in prosocial moral reasoning. This result is consistent with the findings of Siu, Shek and Lai (2012), Jaffee and Hyde (2000), and Caroli, Falanga and Sagone (2014). On the other hand, significant difference was not found in prosocial behaviour by gender. The results went along with the findings of Boice and Goldman (1981), Siu, Shek and Lai (2012), Lai, Sui and Shek (2015), Abdullahi and Kumar (2016), and Thura Aung (2018).

The result of independent samples *t* test indicated that there was significant difference in prosocial moral reasoning and prosocial behaviour by school locality. So, it could be interpreted that urban students had more prosocial moral reasoning and behaviour than rural students in this study. This finding contradicts the results of Ma, Pei and Jin (2015). These results for school locality differences may depend on the facts that urban students may possess high socio-economic status, and may get good parental support, adequate guidance from teachers, and have opportunity to use full-fledge libraries which are important resources for their cognitive development. These are possible causes of why urban students had better prosocial moral reasoning and prosocial behaviour than rural students.

In this study, the comparison of students' prosocial reasoning among birth order position was explored. Descriptive statistics pointed that the mean score of prosocial reasoning in first-born child was higher than those of students in the rest position. And then, one-way ANOVA result produced that there were no statistically significant differences in prosocial reasoning among different birth order position. On the other hand, there was significant difference in prosocial behaviour by birth order position. Then, Post Hoc test result was that first-born and last-born child's prosocial behaviour was better than only child's. This finding was not congruent with the Schwar's (2012) results that no significant difference was found between the birth order positions on prosocial tendencies measure.

According to the result of Pearson product-moment correlation, prosocial moral reasoning was positively correlated with prosocial behaviour of students. Altruistic prosocial behaviours were related negatively to hedonistic and approval oriented prosocial moral reasoning. Compliant, emotional and dire prosocial behaviours were related positively to needs-oriented, stereotyped and internalized reasoning. In contrast, public prosocial behaviours were positively related to hedonistic and approval-oriented reasoning. These results are in line with the findings of Carlo and Randall (2002).

### **Recommendations**

During childhood, parents mediate children's contact with social institutions, monitor their contacts with peers, and control their participation in cultural practices. The powerful influence of parents on children makes the study of moral socialization in childhood less complex and perhaps less challenging, than the investigation of the factors affecting moral growth in adolescence (Hart & Carlo, 2005). Thus, parents should be role models for their children to socialize positive and desirable social behaviours.

Teachers play a vital role in observing how the children reason prosocially or morally within a classroom setting. For improving students' prosocial moral reasoning, teachers should create the opportunity for students to use library and to read stories of moral exemplars. Moreover, they should understand the behavioral problems of children and study about the ways to improve students' prosociality. So, the teachers need to endeavor to improve students' prosocial moral reasoning and prosocial behaviour in everyday situation. To do this, moral education subject should be taught as an extracurricular subject to improve prosocial moral reasoning and positive social behaviour.

To sum up, both people need different helps in their different aspects during their daily activities. Helping is behaviour what everyone wants. Therefore, both prosocial moral reasoning and prosocial behaviour are very important in teaching-learning process in the classroom. This study will contribute more or less to an important role in the area of social-emotional competence in the warm and friendly classrooms.

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