

# A STUDY OF PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND SELF CONCEPT OF ADOLESCENTS

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## ABSTRACT

*Adolescence is a vital period in social development, because adolescents can be easily influenced by the people they develop close relationships with. At the stage of adolescence peer groups offer the opportunity to develop social skills such as empathy, sharing, and leadership. A number of family characteristics are also related to the development of prosocial and antisocial behaviour in children and adolescents. Prosocial behaviour is aimed to establish positive, empathic, co-operative and socially responsible relationships in order to benefit others. Prosocial behaviour fosters positive traits that are beneficial for children and society. Similarly their self-concept begins being much more complex and tangible than it was when they were children. Self-concept reflects how an adolescent evaluates himself or herself in domains (or areas) in which he or she considers success as important. Previous empirical evidence reveals that acting in a prosocial and altruistic manner could increase someone's self-concept. So the researchers have conducted the study of prosocial behaviour and self concept in Male and Female Adolescents, and also to identify the relationship between prosocial behaviour and self concept. The findings of the study have revealed that overall self concept of adolescents was found to be average and favourable and there was no significant difference found between self concept of male and female adolescents. The Prosocial Behaviour of adolescents was average and favourable and there was significant difference found between prosocial behaviour of male and female adolescents. There was significant relationship found between prosocial behaviour and self concept of adolescents.*

*Keywords: Prosocial Behaviour, Self Concept, Adolescents.*

## INTRODUCTION

Prosocial Behaviour is defined as behaviour directed toward promoting the well-being of another. Behaviour such as caring, helping, sharing and volunteering is encompassed under the category of prosocial behaviour. Prosocial behaviour may originate and be motivated by concern about the welfare of others and the rights of others. Prosocial behaviour is central to human social functioning. Prosocial behaviour fosters positive traits that are beneficial for children and society. Encouraging prosocial behaviour may also require decreasing or eliminating undesirable social behaviours. Helping behaviour in humans ranges from generous selfless acts to ignoring real needs. Social psychologists became more interested and concerned with the factors associated with helping behaviour. Several factors are involved in whether or not someone chooses to help

another individual in different situations. The amalgamation of psychobiological and social influences affects prosocial behaviour. A multitude of Environmental forces may influence prosocial behaviour, for example: siblings and peers (Hastings, Utendale, & Sullivan, 2007); close friends, especially if the affective quality of the friendship is high. Prosocial behaviour increases when parents are warm, supportive, responsive, and sensitive to their children's needs. In contrast, less prosocial behaviour is found among children whose parents are authoritarian, strict, or punitive (Hastings et al., 2007).

Prompting youth to engage in kind acts, however, may have benefits beyond personal happiness, as prosocial behaviour predicts Academic achievement and Social acceptance in adolescents. The dearth of work on enhancing happiness and prosociality in youth, coupled with evidence of their many benefits, highlights the

desirability of extending research to this age group. Like all stages of human development, adolescence is an important stage. During adolescence, teens often struggle with their body changes, mood swings and social issues. The end of this developmental period is tied more so to social and emotional factors and can be somewhat ambiguous. Adolescence is a vital period in social development because adolescents can be easily influenced by the people they develop close relationships with. The relationship Adolescents have with their peers, family, and members of their social sphere play a vital role in the social development of an adolescent. Two major socialising agents in children's lives: the family environment and formal Educational institutions; it is the family in its function a primary socializer of the child that predominates in the first five years of life; middle childhood by contrast is characterized by 'a child's readiness for school, being self-assured and interested; knowing what kind of behaviour is expected, being able to wait, to follow directions, and getting along with other children. Despite changing family roles during adolescence, the home environment and parents are still important for the behaviours and choices of adolescents. As an adolescent's social sphere develops rapidly, they distinguish the differences between friends and acquaintances, and they often become heavily and emotionally invested with friends.

Relationships are vital in the social development of an adolescent due to the extreme influence peers can have over an individual. Peer groups offer members the opportunity to develop social skills such as empathy, sharing, and leadership. A number of studies support that prosocial orientation and behaviour appear in early childhood and peak in late childhood or early adolescence. Empathy, perspective taking (or role taking), and prosocial moral reasoning are generally identified as key competencies which develop rapidly in adolescence and support the development of a prosocial orientation. Along with these emotional development, adolescence involves establishing a realistic and coherent sense of identity in the context of relating to others and learning to cope with stress and

manage emotions (Sanrock, 2001), processes that are life-long issues for most people. Identity refers to more than just how adolescents see themselves right now; it also includes what has been termed the "possible self" what individuals might become and who they would like to become.

Identity includes two concepts. First is self-concept: the set of beliefs one has about oneself. Second is self-esteem, which involves evaluating how one feels about one's self-concept. Adolescents are trying to improve self-esteem, but helping adolescents to improve their self-concepts in specific valued areas is both doable and contributes to global self-esteem in the long run. A child may not realize how she can be nice and not nice at the same time, but an adolescent can. Adolescents are also much more focused on the way they are viewed by others, which can affect their self-esteem and self-concept. Previous empirical evidence reveals that acting in a prosocial and altruistic manner could increase someone's self-concept. According to such perspective, the increase of self-concept is considered as the main reward that an individual receives for helping others.

### **Need for the Study**

Prosocial thoughts and feelings may be defined as a sense of responsibility for other individuals, and a higher likelihood of experiencing empathy both affectively (emotionally) and cognitively. Biological and environmental perspectives on the origins of the emotions and behaviours, comprises prosocial development and the early experimental approaches to demonstrating how children's prosocial behavior could be shaped through adults' actions. Authors then evaluate the roles of various agents of socialization, including parents, siblings, peers, teachers, community and culture, in the development of prosocial characteristics (Scorfield, John, Martin & McGuffin, 2006; Carlo, et.al, 2007). Prosocial behavior in childhood often begins with questions of sharing and fairness. What is important developmentally is, that the child has developed a belief that sharing is an obligatory part of a social relationship and involves a question of right and wrong. Additionally, children's prosocial behavior is typically more centered

on interest in friends and concern for approval, whereas adolescents begin to develop reasoning that is more concerned with abstract principles such as guilt and positive affect. Parents can set examples that children carry into their interactions and communication with peers, but parents can not be present during all of their children's peer exchanges. There may be sex differences in prosocial behaviour, particularly as youths move into adolescence (Scorfield, John, Martin & McGuffin, 2006; Torregrosa, Ingles and Fernandez, 2011) Several studies have shown the benefits of volunteering and other prosocial behaviors on self-esteem, life satisfaction, and overall mental health. Since choices made during adolescent years can influence later life, high levels of self-awareness and self-control during mid-adolescence will lead to better decisions during the transition to adulthood. By early adolescence, children are more likely to compare themselves with others and to understand that others are making comparisons and judgments about them; they also begin to place higher value on these judgments (Carlo, Fabes, Laible & Kupanoff, 1999). Thus, the looking glass self starts to have a larger role in self-concept. Studies reviewed to see the relationship of prosocial behaviour and other variables like self concept, self esteem, stress perception, empathy and aggression etc. (Pakaslahti, Karjalainen, Jarvinen, 2002; Queija, Oliva & Parra, 2006; Gayla, 1989; Taylor, Kean and Malanchuk, 2007). Girls with high capacity for empathy were considered prosocial by their classmates; they had a high positive global self-concept. There was also significant correlation between self-concept and cooperative behavior (Cauley & Tyler, 1989). Low correlation and negative relationship exists between prosocial behaviour and stress perception (Alber and Thilagavathy, 2014). Some studies on correlation was also done to compare on gender bases and one study showed that females scored significantly higher in both affective and cognitive components of empathy, and in prosocial responding (Garaigordobil, 2009). These reviews had given the guidelines for future research on prosocial development to include a broader array of authentic behaviours of young adolescents. And after

reviewing these studies the researchers studied the prosocial behaviour at early adolescents and compared the behaviour gender wise. Also the researchers studied the relationship between one of the variable self concept and prosocial behaviour if there is any.

## Objectives of the Study

1. To study the self concept of adolescents.
2. To study the self concept of adolescents on various dimensions.
3. To compare the self concept of male and female adolescents.
4. To study the prosocial behaviour of adolescents.
5. To compare the prosocial behaviour of male and female adolescents.
6. To assess the relationship between prosocial behaviour and self concept in adolescents.
7. To assess the relationship between prosocial behaviour and self concept in male adolescents.
8. To assess the relationship between prosocial behaviour and self concept in female adolescents.

## Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between self concept of male and female adolescents.
2. There is no significant difference between the prosocial behaviour of male and female adolescents.
3. There is no significant relationship between prosocial behaviour and self concept of adolescents.
4. There is no significant relationship between prosocial behaviour and self concept of male adolescents.
5. There is no significant relationship between prosocial behaviour and self concept of female adolescents.

## Method, Samples, Tools used for the Study

The method of the study was Correlational Study. The population for the study was Adolescents of age group 12 – 14 years residing in Delhi. Sample compromised of 100 students both male and female from classes 7th, 8th and 9th classes. The sampling technique used in this research is Random sampling.

Two tools were administered to the samples:

1. Children's Self Concept Scale (CSCS) by Dr. S.P. Ahluwalia. The test contains 80 items in all with 'Yes' or 'No' responses. The six sub scales which are included in the self concept scale – Behaviour, Intellectual and School status, Physical appearance and attributes-Anxiety, Popularity, Happiness and Satisfaction.

2. Self made Rating Scale for Prosocial Behaviour which is having 22 Items on 3 point rating scale (Never, Sometimes and Always) to assess the Prosocial Behaviour of adolescents. There was no particular dimension for this tool. This tool has been framed by pooling items of many scales (i.e. Prosocial Tendencies Measure (PTM), by Johnson et al., 1989 and Rushton et al., 1981, Prosocial Orientation Questionnaire (POQ) by Cheung, Ma & Shek, 1998, Teenage Inventory of Social Skills (TISS) by Inderbitzen & Foster, 1992 and Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) by Goodman, 1997).

### Data Collection

The researchers collected the data face to face through paper pencil test from the selected schools by giving proper instructions to the students.

### Analysis of Results

The mass data collected through the use of tools, was systematized and organized in the tabular form. Then data was analyzed quantitatively. Frequency distribution, t- test and Pearson correlation was used for analyzing the data.

### Objective 1: To study the self concept of adolescents

This objective was concerned with the study of self concept of adolescents. Table 1 shows the details of descriptive statistics for overall self concept.

Self concept of male and female adolescents has been studied and analyzed. Table 1 showed that the overall self concept of adolescents was average and favourable. 45% of adolescents have Average Self Concept and 55%

S.No.	Class Interval	Description	Percentage (%)
1	0-27	Unfavourable	0
2	27- 54	Average	45
3	54-80	Favourable	55

Table 1. Details of Overall Self Concept of adolescents

of adolescents have Favourable self concept. None of the adolescents were found to have unfavourable self concept.

### Objective 2: To study the self concept of adolescents on various dimensions

Table 2 revealed the self concept of adolescents on various dimensions, and Figure 1 shows the Dimension of self concept There are six dimensions in the scale used.

- 1) To study the self concept dimension-Behaviour
- 2) To study the self concept dimension-Intellectual and School status.
- 3) To study the self concept dimension-Physical Appearance and Attributes.
- 4) To study the self concept dimension-Anxiety.
- 5) To study the self concept dimension-Popularity.
- 6) To study the self concept dimension-Happiness and Satisfaction.

Table 2 revealed that the students have high self concept on the dimension, Intellectual and school status i.e. mean value 13.66 and lowest self concept was on dimension Happiness and Satisfaction i.e. mean value 7.32. Along with this, the self concept of various dimensions exist in hierarchy of Behaviour, Physical Appearance and Attributes, Popularity and Anxiety respectively.

### Objective 3: To compare the self concept of male and

Dimensions of Self Concept	Sum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Behaviour	985	10.26	2.23
Intellectual and School status	1311	13.66	2.77
Physical Appearance and Attributes	807	8.41	2.23
Anxiety	735	7.66	2.28
Popularity	801	8.34	1.92
Happiness and Satisfaction	703	7.32	1.59

Table 2. Details of various dimensions of self concept

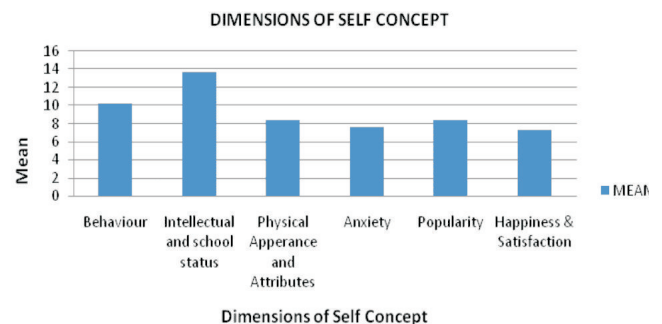


Figure 1. Dimensions of Self Concept

## female adolescents

This objective was concerned with the study of difference between self concept between male and female adolescents. To test this objective, null hypothesis was formed and t- test was applied for testing this hypothesis.

Table 3 revealed Mean, S.D. and t- value comparing self concept of male and female adolescents. The t- value (0.67) is not significant at 0.05 level. Therefore we can say that there was no significant difference found between self concept of male and female adolescents and null hypothesis is accepted at 0.05 level of significance. On the basis of this, it can be interpreted that male and female have equal self concept at early adolescent stage. There was no gender variation in the self concept of adolescents.

### Objective 4: To study the prosocial behaviour of adolescents

This objective was concerned with the study of prosocial behaviour of adolescents. Table 4 showed the details of descriptive statistics for overall prosocial behaviour and Figure 2 shows the Prosocial Behavior of Adolescents.

Table 4 showed that the Prosocial Behaviour of adolescents was average and favourable. 32.29% of adolescents have Average Prosocial Behaviour and

GENDER	N	Mean	S.D.	t
Male	50	56.14	9.67	0.67*
Female	46	54.91	8.24	

\* p < 0.05 ( Not Significant at 0.05 level )

Table 3. t- value-comparing the self concept of male and female adolescents

S.No.	Class Interval	Description	Percentage%
1	0-14	Unfavourable	0
2	15-29	Average	32.29
3	30-44	Favourable	67.70

Table 4. Details of overall Prosocial Behaviour of adolescents

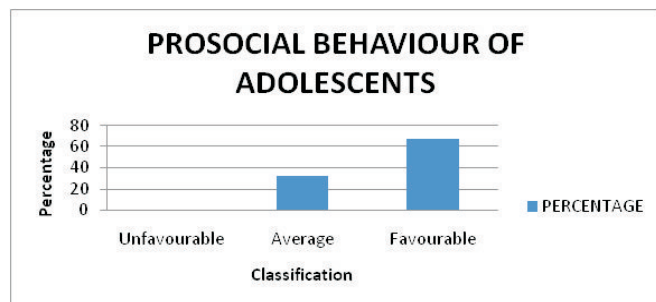


Figure 2. Prosocial Behaviour of Adolescents

67.70% of adolescents have Favourable Prosocial Behaviour. None of the adolescents were found to have unfavourable prosocial behaviour. Alber and Thilagavathy (2014) found that the pro-social behaviour of higher secondary students is average, but in this study more percentage was found to be in favourable prosocial behaviour, and it can be said that adolescents can have favourable prosocial behaviour.

### Objective 5: To compare the prosocial behaviour of male and female adolescents

Table 5 revealed Mean, S.D. and t- value comparing prosocial behaviour of male and female adolescents. The t- value (2.03) is significant at 0.05 level. Therefore we can say that there was significant difference found between prosocial behaviour of male and female adolescents and null hypothesis is rejected at 0.05 level of significance. On the basis of this it can be interpreted that male and female have different prosocial behaviour at early adolescent stage. There was gender variation in prosocial behaviour of adolescents. Gayla (1989) found that females scored significantly higher in prosocial responding. But in this study, males have more prosocial behaviour as the mean value is more than females.

### Objective 6: To assess the relationship between prosocial behaviour and self concept in adolescents.

Table 6 revealed that the value of 'r' is 0.2383 which is less than the p value and significant at 0.05 level of significance. Although positive correlation exists, as the value of r is between +1 to -1, the relationship between two variables, self concept and prosocial behavior is weak. Therefore it shows there is significant relationship between prosocial behaviour and self concept of adolescents and null hypothesis was rejected at 0.05

GENDER	N	Mean	S.D.	t
Male	50	32.36	5.28	2.03*
Female	46	30.37	4.30	

\* p > 0.05 (Significant at 0.05 level )

Table 5. t- value-comparing the prosocial behaviour of male and female adolescents

Variable	N	Correlation Coefficient
Self Concept	96	0.2383*
Prosocial Behaviour	96	

\*p < 0.05 (Significant at 0.05 level )

Table 6. Prosocial behaviour and self concept in adolescents

level of significance.

As shown graphically in the scatter plot diagram Figure 3, the values of self concept and prosocial behavior is lying almost in a straight line and no linear relation exists between the two variables. Cauley & Tyler (1989) indicated a significant correlation between self-concept and cooperative behavior. Gayla (1989) found that Identity and self-esteem had virtually no effect on prosocial responding. Huang (2011) found moral self-concept does not affect prosocial behavior.

**Objective 7: To assess the relationship between prosocial behaviour and self concept in male adolescents.**

From Table 7 it was revealed that the value of  $r$  is 0.34 which is less than the  $p$  value and significant at 0.05 level of significance. Although positive correlation exists, as the value of  $r$  is between +1 to -1, the relationship between two variables self concept and prosocial behavior of male adolescents is weak. Therefore we can say that there was significant relationship found between prosocial behaviour and self concept of male adolescents and null hypothesis is rejected at 0.05 level of significance. Review of studies showed mixed results, that sometimes girls and sometime boys have greater prosocial behavior.

**Objective 8: To assess the relationship between prosocial behaviour and self concept in female adolescents.**

From Table 8, it was revealed that the value of  $r$  is 0.062 which is more than the  $p$  value and not significant at 0.05 level of significance. Although positive correlation exists, as the value of  $r$  is between +1 to -1, the relationship

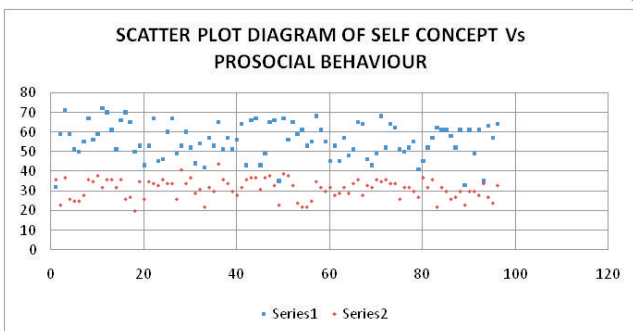


Figure 3. Scatter Plot Diagram of Self Concept Vs Prosocial Behaviour

between two variables self concept and prosocial behavior of female adolescents is very weak. Therefore we can say that there was significant relationship found between prosocial behaviour and self concept of female adolescents and null hypothesis is rejected at 0.05 level of significance.

### Findings of the Study

Overall self concept of adolescents was found to be average and favourable, and none of the adolescents were found to have Unfavourable self concept. Among the various dimensions of self concept, the students have high self concept on the dimension, Intellectual and school status and lowest self concept was on dimension Happiness and Satisfaction. The difference between self concept of male and female was studied and it was found that there was no significant difference. The Prosocial Behaviour of adolescents was average and favourable. 32.29% of adolescents have average Prosocial Behaviour and 67.70% of adolescents have favourable Prosocial Behaviour and there was significant difference found between prosocial behaviour of male and female adolescents. The correlation of self concept and prosocial behavior was significant in adolescents. Along with this the results prove that there was a significant relationship between both the variables i.e. self concept and prosocial behaviour in male and female adolescents.

### Educational Implications of the Study

Findings of the study can have multiple implications in the field of education. This study will be highly useful to schools. They can encourage prosocial behaviour through school wide programs designed to teach and

Variable (in male adolescents)	N	Correlation Coefficient
Self Concept	50	
Prosocial Behaviour	50	0.34*

\* $p < 0.05$  (Significant at 0.05 level )

Table 7. Prosocial behaviour and self concept in male adolescents

Variable (in female adolescents)	N	Correlation Coefficient
Self Concept	46	
Prosocial Behaviour	46	0.062*

\* $p < 0.05$  (Significant at 0.05 level )

Table 8. Prosocial behaviour and self concept in female adolescents

model social skills. Educators can create a wide culture in which each student will get the opportunity to see prosocial behaviours modelled by other students and by adults. Teachers can be trained to integrate value instruction into classroom management. Allowing students to participate in class decision making can promote understanding of democratic values, respect for others' opinions, and social responsibility. Co-operative behavior should be encouraged by assigning academic tasks in the classroom to pairs or small groups of students that may promote the students' ability to work together toward common goals. Many adults inside the school, including teachers, school administrators, cafeteria workers, and school bus drivers, can model caring and respectful behaviour. Schools can encourage prosocial behavior by using consistent positive disciplinary practices and extrinsic rewards might keep a lid on negative behavior, but will not necessarily promote prosocial behavior. Praise the adolescent's accomplishments in specific domains and provide feedback to the adolescent which will play role in producing positive outcomes.

### Suggestions for Further Research

After completion of the present study, the researchers feel that the area of their study is very fertile and worthwhile. There is a lot of scope of researching in this field, but due to time bound it was not possible to go into depth. So after this study, some researches can be undertaken to assess the factors which influence the prosocial behavior, identify the origin of the prosocial behavior, study role of the family and school environment in developing self concept of a child and study the antisocial behaviour of adolescents. Also longitudinal studies can be done at different stages of adolescents for studying prosocial behavior, and some other variables can be added for further research.

### Delimitations

There were few limitations of the study like age group is 12-14 years, only 100 students of two schools were taken as sample and variable is gender only.

### Conclusion

The prosociality in an individual is very important during the growing stage. This is because prosocial behaviour is the foundation of social interaction with in family, peers, and friends. It also encourages helping behaviour to be nurtured in humans. An adolescent's social sphere develops rapidly as they distinguish the differences between friends and acquaintances, they often become heavily emotionally invested in friends. Relationships are vital in the social development of an adolescent due to the extreme influence peers can have over an individual. These relationships become vital because they begin to help the adolescent understand the concept of personalities, how they form and why a person has that specific type of personality. Peer groups offer opportunities to the member to develop social skills such as empathy, sharing, and leadership. Adolescents whose best friends display prosocial behaviors also tend to engage in such behaviors themselves. Therefore, social behaviour of adolescence is so significant, and should be discussed in the study and in future research.

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