

Fostering Pro-Social Behaviour Among The Children

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Abstract

In today's time, everyone is busy fulfilling their own personal needs and hardly has time for anyone. During pandemic time also, there was a fight for survival when many lost their means of livelihood. Where there were people who were busy minting money, there were people who were working for the benefit of the poor and needy. In many cases, the school going children were doing great work by contributing their bit in the social cause. Such acts may appear small but need a lot of courage and a sense of empathy, sharing, donating for the needy ones. Also, since the cases of bullying, aggression are on the rise in schools, the focus should be on inculcating pro-social behaviours in the children as it helps in making them a better responsible citizen of the society who also works for the social cause. This paper intends to highlight the importance and ways of developing prosocial behaviour in school going children.

Keywords: pro-social behaviour, pandemic, social cause, empathy, volunteering, social cause

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I. INTRODUCTION

The pandemic came as an eye-opener for all sections of society; some of the people lost their jobs, some their loved ones, some mental peace etc. In some way or the other every person was affected. While some of the people were busy making money, some struggled to make their ends meet. But in those testing times also, there were people who helped each other.

Everyone contributed their bit in helping others out with whatever means they had. There are numerous examples from our own country where it has been seen that people belonging to different strata have contributed significantly to the social cause. There were school going children also who showed the dedication and the eagerness to help people out by distributing food, masks or medicines, despite knowing that it was a risky task. What prompted them to do so? They were not getting anything in return but they did it voluntarily as it gave them a sense of happiness and contentment by doing so and they felt satisfied by doing the act. This is pro- social behaviour and specifically altruistic behaviour.

II. PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The definition of pro-social behaviour was given by Eisenberg, 1982 (cited by Knickerbocker, n.d.) which elaborates that pro-social behaviour is the act of benefitting others by sharing, volunteering, helping, comforting. Osorio Peña (2009) cited by Lemos et.al (2014) defines pro-social behaviour as "positive social behavior" which is "any action that benefits others and is conducted voluntarily" (Guijo Blanco, 2002 as cited by Lemos et.al, 2014), independently of the motivation that leads to such conduct. Pro-social behaviour is usually done with no benefit in return. People who do social service, teach children voluntarily, share things or donate money to someone who is in need, and volunteer for

various social causes are some examples of prosocial behaviour. Usually there are three types of needs that need to be addressed namely, instrumental needs, unmet desires and emotional distress (Celestine, 2020). Cherry (2020) distinguishes between three types of prosocial behaviour on the basis of why they are produced- proactive, reactive and altruistic. Proactive behaviours are those actions which are carried out for personal benefits, reactive behaviours are performed in response to individual needs and altruistic ones are meant to help others without expecting anything in return.

III. FACTORS INFLUENCING PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Pro-social behaviour development can begin with simple and small gestures by school children in their classroom. There are certain factors that influence development of prosocial behavior among children.

- **Family-** The family is the first place where the child learns everything; from values to feelings of sharing, caring, empathy etc. The influence of parents or the household environment is great and affects the child's overall behaviour which is carried with him/her to the school. When a child observes the caring behaviour of their parents and siblings, he/she imitates or models that behaviour, also called as modelling or observational learning (Social learning theory given by Bandura). Children with parents who discipline with reasoning are more likely to develop prosocial behaviour than parents who resort to punishment to control their kids (Prosocial behaviour, n.d.)
- **Friends** – Studies have shown that children tend to show pro-social behaviour as their friends and feel motivated to do so (egyankosh).

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- **Age and Gender difference-** During childhood, the children show most types of prosocial behaviours till adolescence and such increased behaviours are dependent on factors such as values, sympathy, ability to help others etc. During childhood, girls have been shown to show pro-social behaviour. Women are said to be more prosocial, but tend to help in specific circumstances while men tend to help others when more risk is involved (Prosocial behaviour, n.d.). Such differences can be attributed to the upbringing of girls and boys or their socialization right from the beginning.

Other factors such as religiosity, personality, and the positive mood of the person also have an influence on the portrayal of pro-social behaviour by an individual (egyankosh).

IV. WHY DO PEOPLE ENGAGE IN PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR?

The reason for people indulging in prosocial behaviour ranges from moral values to selfish reasons like expecting similar in return. There are certain theories and hypotheses which suggest the reasons for people showing prosocial behaviour.

One view says that prosocial behaviour is based on Reciprocal Altruism hypothesis given by Trivers (1971 cited by Okasha, 2020), which stresses that we tend to help those from whom we expect that in future we will get helped and thus benefitted as the survival of both individual's genes will be enhanced.

Another theory from the evolutionary point of view known by the name Kin selection theory given by Hamilton (1964 cited by Okasha, 2020) emphasises the preference of those individuals who are related to us to increase their survival.

A Social psychologist Batson, (2011) gave Empathetic-Altruistic hypothesis which states that when one observes someone with some problem or in need then a feeling of empathy arises which leads to the altruistic behaviour (doing something solely to help others without any personal benefit or gain) and thus by helping the person feels good after helping the needy.

Another theory is Genetic Determinism model (Baron, Byrne, & Branscombe, 2007 cited in Social Psychology 214) which elaborates that there is a tendency to help those who are genetically similar or share some similarity with us as by doing so one tends to maximise the survival and passing of similar genes in future generations.

Empathic Joy hypothesis was propounded by Kyle Smith, Jack Keating, and Ezra Stotland (2018) (cited by Batson, 2018) which highlights that on seeing the person in need the feeling of empathy arises and the desire for acting positively towards the needy arises. Thus, one is engaged in coming up with a positive result for the problem of the needy and a sense of joy is achieved.

The fourth view is the Negative- State Relief hypothesis proposed by Cialdini, Darby, & Vincent (1973) (cited by Dolma, 2015) states that the when the negative state of emotion arises such as feeling of sadness etc. then one tends to help others to attenuate the negative feelings and feel positive.

V. IMPORTANCE OF PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

In the present times when we see so much negativity around us, the need arises to promote prosocial behaviour among school children. The lack of feelings in the present generation can be deduced on the basis of incidents of aggression and anger reported from across the world. The qualities such as cooperation, sharing, caring when taught and emphasised in the classroom has shown great benefits.

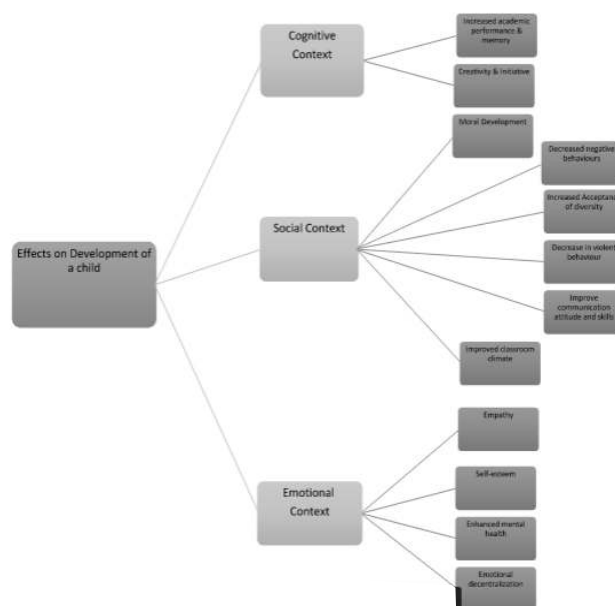


Figure. Chart on Effects of Prosocial behaviour on development of a child

Note:

Adapted from "Promotion of child prosocial behaviour in the school context", by Lemos & Richod, 2014, ResearchGate retrieved May 2022, from

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262004238_Promotion_of_child_prosocial_behavior_in_the_school_context

VI. WAYS OF DEVELOPING PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN

There are certain ways by which school education can help in the development of prosocial behaviour among school going children. Some of the ways are suggested below.

Mares (2017) stressed on the following sources of pro-social behaviour among young children-

- Using fairy tales' motifs – fairy tales depict human strengths or values such as fulfilled wish, help, good deed, etc. which are emphasised and the moral is usually accentuated that good deed done always comes back whenever one needs the most.
- By presenting the behaviour by elders- modelling helps in learning of pro-social behaviour by children. Children follow the behaviour seen in the parents.

- By rewarding or appreciating or recognizing of positive behaviour – the positive behaviour by children should be appreciated by elders at home or by teachers at school to reinforce the positive behaviour shown by them (Morin,2021)
- By volunteering for social cause- Maier et.al (2021) in their study among different age group volunteers inferred that the volunteering during corona pandemic for activities such as sharing or writing about experiences of pandemic times, doing physical activities such as yoga/sports (online), chatting/supporting people to share and listen to people facing stress, difficulties or any task of the university, motivational/positive life quotes to name a few. These volunteering activities were prosocial and the participants felt that it gave a positive direction to daily life as they contributed to something good, felt better after helping others out and were able to manage the times that came ahead during the pandemic.

Three ways have been mentioned by Cathleen Beachboard (2019) in her article in Edutopia to help develop prosocial behaviour among school children-

- Practicing gratitude – A gratitude journal can be maintained and sometimes can be devoted to sharing or writing of things by students about which they are grateful for in a journal; either in a notebook or in a drive folder and going through it from time to time. The students can also write gratitude notes and display them on the board. The students are praised for their acts and if they commit mistakes, the feedback can be given by the teachers to improve upon the writings.
- Acts of kindness – By giving authentic praise and compliments, the students will model such behaviour and give real and authentic compliments to their classmates too and will help in spreading kindness. The students may create cards to welcome new students in school or can be asked to write some positive or motivational quotes/stories on colourful papers and fill in a jar. This jar of joy can be used to cheer up the mood of any classmate, friend or of any patient in a nearby hospital.
- Building empathy through happiness boards - The students can be asked to create happiness boards (online or offline) by making collage showcasing aspirations or goals in their life using images etc. They can share memories when they felt proud of themselves or about someone they admire in their life and the qualities they liked and intended to develop like them. By observing each other's boards, the students can see the qualities shared by their classmates and feel connected and develop a sense of empathy. Teachers can model prosocial behaviours like empathy, kindness, and gratitude as it promotes a child's social and academic success.

VII. CONCLUSION

It can be said that fostering prosocial behaviour is pertinent among school going children. The pro-social behaviour should be incorporated in the school curriculum and made a part of their daily activities where specific desirable behaviours are modelled and or preached through different engaging activities. Such behaviour has tremendous benefits

on children such as an increase in positive self- esteem to cognitive and social benefits. The children develop moral values and come forward to help those in need. Simple acts of sharing and caring can yield great results as they are able to cope up with difficult situations in a better way, accepting the diversity in society. Apart from school, parents can be great role models for their children from whom they can imbibe all the good qualities. Such behaviours are foundations of future proficiencies such as social cohesion, collaboration, harmony among everyone (Chutabhaktikul, 2020). So, teachers, parents, home and school environment can act in cooperation and create responsible and sensitive citizens.

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