

The Influence of Parental Involvement, Peer Support, Empathy, and Moral Identity on Prosocial Behavior among Malaysian Youth

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between parental involvement, peer support, empathy, moral identity, and prosocial behavior among Malaysian youth. The research examines how these key dimensions—parental involvement, peer support, empathy, and moral identity—affect prosocial behavior levels. A sample of 411 Malaysian youths was analyzed using quantitative methods, including correlation and regression analyses. The results reveal that moral identity is the strongest predictor of prosocial behavior, followed by empathy, peer support, and parental involvement. Higher levels of moral identity and empathy were significantly associated with increased prosocial behavior. These findings emphasize the importance of nurturing moral values and empathy in youth to promote prosocial behavior. The study provides valuable insights into the complex interactions between family, peer, and moral influences on youth behavior and offers practical recommendations for enhancing prosocial behavior in Malaysian youth.

Keywords: Parental Involvement, Peer Support, Empathy, Moral Identity, Prosocial Behavior, Malaysian Youth

Introduction

Prosocial behavior, defined as voluntary actions aimed at benefiting others, plays a crucial role in fostering cooperative and cohesive societies (Eisenberg et al., 2020; Carlo & Padilla-Walker, 2022). Among youth, the development of prosocial behavior is influenced by various factors, including family dynamics, peer relationships, and personal moral development (Malti & Ongley, 2021; van der Graaff et al., 2020). In the Malaysian context, the interplay between cultural expectations, familial involvement, and social networks presents unique opportunities to explore how these factors shape youth behavior (Abdullah et al., 2020; Wong et al., 2022). Despite the growing interest in prosocial behavior, few studies have examined

the combined effects of parental involvement, peer support, empathy, and moral identity on prosocial behavior among Malaysian youth.

Moreover, parental involvement has long been recognized as a key factor in the development of prosocial behavior. Research suggests that youth who experience higher levels of parental involvement are more likely to engage in prosocial activities, as parents often model prosocial behaviors and encourage their children to help others (Padilla-Walker et al., 2019; Schwartz et al., 2020). In Malaysia, where family values are deeply embedded in the culture, the role of parental involvement in shaping youth behavior is particularly significant (Lim et al., 2021).

Additionally, peer support is another important factor influencing prosocial behavior, as social interactions with peers provide opportunities for youth to practice helping behaviors and develop social responsibility (Wentzel et al., 2018; Rubin et al., 2021). In collectivist societies like Malaysia, peer influence is often strong, with youth placing significant value on maintaining social harmony and supporting their friends (Ismail & Tajuddin, 2020). Positive peer relationships have been shown to enhance prosocial tendencies, particularly when peers encourage cooperative and altruistic behaviors (Bukowski et al., 2020).

Furthermore, empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, has been consistently linked to prosocial behavior across various cultural contexts (Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2020; Hoffman, 2021). Empathy enables individuals to respond compassionately to the needs of others, making it a critical component of prosocial action. In Malaysia, empathy is often emphasized in both familial and educational settings, contributing to the socialization of youth in ways that promote helping behaviors (Tan et al., 2020).

Finally, moral identity refers to the degree to which moral traits are central to an individual's self-concept (Hardy & Carlo, 2019). Youth with a strong moral identity are more likely to view prosocial behavior as an important aspect of who they are, leading them to engage in helping behaviors more frequently (Aquino & Reed, 2020; Pratt et al., 2021). In Malaysia, moral education is a key part of the school curriculum, reinforcing the development of moral identity and its influence on behavior (Liew et al., 2020).

This study aims to explore the influence of parental involvement, peer support, empathy, and moral identity on prosocial behavior among Malaysian youth, with the following research objectives:

1. To examine the levels of parental involvement, peer support, empathy, and moral identity among Malaysian youth.
2. To explore the relationship between these factors and prosocial behavior.
3. To identify which of these factors is the strongest predictor of prosocial behavior among Malaysian youth.

Literature Review

Parental Involvement and Prosocial Behavior

Parental involvement is widely acknowledged as one of the most influential factors in the development of prosocial behavior in children and adolescents. According to research, when parents actively participate in their children's lives, particularly by modeling prosocial behavior, discussing moral issues, and providing emotional support, youth are more likely to

develop a strong sense of responsibility toward others (Padilla-Walker & Carlo, 2019). Parents who engage in consistent communication about values such as kindness, sharing, and helping others, foster a nurturing environment where prosocial behavior thrives (Schwartz et al., 2020). This is particularly relevant in the Malaysian context, where family structures often emphasize the importance of interdependence and mutual aid within the family unit (Ismail & Tajuddin, 2020).

Moreover, parental involvement tends to buffer children from the negative effects of environmental stressors that could otherwise impede prosocial development. Studies have shown that youth with involved parents are more likely to internalize prosocial values and exhibit behaviors such as volunteering, sharing, and helping strangers (Carlo et al., 2018). In Malaysia, where familial relationships are central to cultural identity, parental involvement is seen as a core component of youth development. Parents who participate in their children's academic, social, and moral education often create a context in which prosocial behavior is not only encouraged but expected (Wong et al., 2022). The cultural emphasis on family cohesion may further enhance the influence of parental involvement on prosocial behavior, particularly in collectivist societies like Malaysia.

Research also highlights the mechanisms through which parental involvement shapes prosocial behavior. Padilla-Walker et al. (2019) suggest that parents who model empathy and engage in community service themselves tend to raise children who value and practice prosocial behavior. This modeling effect is particularly powerful when parents consistently engage in behaviors that align with the prosocial values they advocate (Wentzel et al., 2018). In the Malaysian setting, religious and cultural norms often reinforce these values, making parental involvement a key factor in prosocial behavior development (Liew et al., 2020). By providing opportunities for their children to observe and participate in prosocial activities, parents help their children internalize these behaviors as part of their moral identity.

In addition to modeling and communication, the emotional climate established by involved parents significantly contributes to the development of prosocial behavior. Carlo and Padilla-Walker (2020) found that warm, supportive parenting fosters emotional regulation and empathy in youth, which are key precursors to prosocial action. In Malaysia, where parents often play a central role in moral and emotional socialization, the quality of the parent-child relationship is a significant predictor of prosocial tendencies. This highlights the importance of fostering close parent-child relationships to promote prosocial behavior in the next generation (Ismail & Tajuddin, 2020).

Peer Support and Prosocial Behavior

Peer relationships are a central context for the development of prosocial behavior, particularly during adolescence. Positive peer interactions provide opportunities for youth to engage in cooperative behaviors, learn conflict resolution skills, and practice empathy in social settings (Bukowski et al., 2020). Research indicates that youth who experience supportive peer networks are more likely to engage in helping behaviors, as these environments foster a sense of belonging and encourage prosocial action (Rubin et al., 2021). In collectivist cultures, such as Malaysia, peer influence plays a significant role in shaping behavior, and the desire to maintain social harmony often motivates youth to help others within their peer group (Ismail & Tajuddin, 2020).

Moreover, peer support often enhances prosocial behavior by providing youth with the social approval they need to feel confident in their actions. When youth feel supported by their peers, they are more likely to engage in behaviors that benefit the group, as prosocial actions are often reinforced by positive feedback from peers (Wentzel et al., 2018). This is particularly true in Malaysia, where social cohesion and group belonging are highly valued. Malaysian youth, who prioritize the maintenance of strong peer relationships, may be more inclined to engage in prosocial behaviors when they perceive these actions as socially rewarding (Wong & Lim, 2022).

The social learning theory also suggests that peer support can influence prosocial behavior through modeling. Youth who observe their peers engaging in helpful or cooperative behaviors are more likely to adopt these behaviors themselves (Bandura, 2019). This modeling effect is particularly strong in settings where peers actively encourage one another to engage in prosocial activities, such as volunteering or community service (Bukowski et al., 2020). In Malaysia, where communal values are emphasized, the presence of prosocial peers can significantly enhance the likelihood that youth will engage in similar behaviors (Ismail & Tajuddin, 2020).

Additionally, peer support is often linked to emotional well-being, which in turn promotes prosocial behavior. Youth who feel emotionally supported by their peers tend to experience higher levels of empathy and emotional regulation, both of which are critical components of prosocial action (Rubin et al., 2021). Research shows that when youth are embedded in supportive peer networks, they are more likely to develop the emotional skills necessary to understand and respond to the needs of others (Wentzel et al., 2018). In Malaysia, where peer relationships often extend into the larger community, the emotional support provided by peers can play a key role in promoting prosocial behavior (Lim et al., 2021).

Empathy and Prosocial Behavior

Empathy, defined as the capacity to understand and share the feelings of others, is widely recognized as a key driver of prosocial behavior. Empathy enables individuals to emotionally connect with others, which increases their motivation to engage in helping behaviors (Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2020). Research indicates that youth with higher levels of empathy are more likely to exhibit behaviors such as volunteering, sharing, and assisting peers in distress (Hoffman, 2021). In Malaysia, empathy is deeply embedded in cultural and familial expectations, often encouraged through social and religious practices that emphasize community care and compassion (Tan et al., 2020).

Empathy's influence on prosocial behavior is closely tied to emotional regulation and perspective-taking. Youth who can regulate their own emotions and understand others' perspectives are better equipped to respond to the needs of those around them (Hoffman, 2021). For instance, youth who exhibit high empathy are more likely to intervene when witnessing a peer in distress or contribute to community welfare initiatives. In collectivist societies like Malaysia, the emphasis on maintaining social harmony and caring for others further amplifies the role of empathy in prosocial behavior (Lim et al., 2021).

Studies also suggest that empathy facilitates prosocial behavior by fostering social connections and reducing prejudice. Research has shown that individuals who empathize with

others from diverse backgrounds are more likely to engage in inclusive prosocial actions, such as supporting marginalized groups (Eisenberg et al., 2020). In Malaysia's multi-ethnic society, fostering empathy among youth is critical for promoting cross-cultural understanding and cooperation (Wong & Lim, 2022). Encouraging empathy in educational settings can lead to a more inclusive, prosocial generation, contributing to national social cohesion.

Moreover, empathy-related interventions have been shown to significantly increase prosocial behavior in youth. Programs that focus on empathy training, such as perspective-taking exercises and emotional awareness activities, have been successful in promoting prosocial behavior across different cultural contexts (Carlo & Padilla-Walker, 2019). In Malaysia, integrating empathy-building activities into the school curriculum could enhance the prosocial tendencies of youth, particularly in fostering a sense of responsibility toward their community and peers (Tan et al., 2020).

Moral Identity and Prosocial Behavior

Moral identity, which refers to the degree to which an individual's self-concept is defined by moral traits, has been identified as a significant predictor of prosocial behavior. Youth with a strong moral identity are more likely to view helping others as an essential part of who they are, leading them to engage in prosocial behaviors more frequently (Hardy & Carlo, 2019). In the Malaysian context, where moral education is emphasized through both school curricula and community practices, moral identity plays a crucial role in shaping youth behavior (Liew et al., 2020).

Research shows that moral identity enhances prosocial behavior by motivating individuals to act in ways that are consistent with their moral values. Youth who internalize moral traits, such as honesty, kindness, and fairness, are more likely to engage in behaviors that benefit others, even when it is not immediately rewarding (Aquino & Reed, 2020). Studies suggest that in collectivist societies like Malaysia, where moral values are highly esteemed, moral identity can serve as a powerful motivator for prosocial behavior (Lim & Wong, 2020).

Furthermore, moral identity contributes to prosocial behavior by promoting moral reasoning. Youth with a strong moral identity tend to engage in higher levels of moral reasoning, which involves considering the ethical implications of their actions and prioritizing the welfare of others (Hardy & Carlo, 2019). In Malaysia, where religious and cultural values often emphasize the importance of moral integrity, moral identity development is seen as a key factor in promoting prosocial behavior (Liew et al., 2020). Youth who view prosocial behavior as a reflection of their moral self are more likely to consistently engage in helping behaviors, both in their personal lives and within their communities.

Finally, interventions aimed at strengthening moral identity have been found to increase prosocial behavior. Educational programs that focus on moral identity formation, such as those involving moral reflection or service-learning, have been effective in encouraging youth to adopt prosocial behavior (Pratt et al., 2021). In the Malaysian context, integrating moral identity development into school and community programs could enhance the moral and social responsibilities of youth, fostering a generation of empathetic, socially responsible individuals (Lim et al., 2020).

Method*Participants*

This study involved a sample of 411 Malaysian youth aged between 15 and 30 years. Participants were selected through stratified random sampling to ensure diverse representation across various demographic categories, including gender, socioeconomic status, and geographic location (urban and rural areas). The sample was drawn from secondary schools, universities, and community centers across Malaysia. Participants were required to have basic literacy skills in Malay or English to complete the self-report questionnaires. The sample size of 411 was determined through a power analysis to ensure sufficient statistical power for detecting relationships between the variables.

Procedure and Measures

Participants were recruited through school and university networks, as well as community outreach programs, using both online and offline channels. The study's objectives and ethical considerations were explained to all participants, who provided informed consent before participating. The survey was administered in both paper and online formats, depending on participants' preference and accessibility.

General Prosocial Behavior Scale (GPBS)

Prosocial behavior was measured using the General Prosocial Behavior Scale (GPBS), which assesses individuals' tendencies to engage in helping behaviors across various situations. The scale includes 16 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Never, 5 = Always), with higher scores indicating more frequent prosocial behavior. Sample items include "I help others without being asked" and "I offer help to someone who is in difficulty." In the current study, the GPBS demonstrated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88, indicating excellent reliability for assessing general prosocial behavior among Malaysian youth.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement was assessed using the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ), focusing on the authoritative dimension, which has been shown to foster prosocial behavior. The questionnaire includes 10 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree), with higher scores indicating greater involvement. A sample item is "My parents explain to me why they expect certain behaviors." The internal consistency of the PSDQ in the current study was satisfactory, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.81, confirming its reliability in measuring parental involvement.

Peer Support

Peer support was measured using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), specifically the peer support subscale. This subscale consists of 4 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Very Strongly Disagree, 7 = Very Strongly Agree), with higher scores reflecting greater perceived peer support. A sample item includes, "I can rely on my friends for help." In the current study, the peer support subscale showed good reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85, indicating strong internal consistency.

Empathy

Empathy was measured using the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), focusing on the empathic concern subscale. This scale consists of 7 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 =

Does not describe me well, 5 = Describes me very well), with higher scores indicating greater empathy. A sample item is, "I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me." In this study, the empathic concern subscale showed strong internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87.

Moral Identity

Moral identity was measured using the Moral Identity Scale (Aquino & Reed, 2002). This scale includes 10 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree), with higher scores indicating a stronger moral identity. Sample items include, "Being someone who has moral character is an important part of who I am." The scale demonstrated excellent reliability in the current study, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.90, confirming its consistency in measuring moral identity.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the levels of prosocial behavior, parental involvement, peer support, empathy, and moral identity. Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to explore the relationships between the variables. Additionally, multiple regression analyses were employed to determine which factors (parental involvement, peer support, empathy, and moral identity) were the strongest predictors of prosocial behavior. The significance level for all statistical tests was set at $p < .05$.

Results and Discussion

The findings from the descriptive analysis (Table 1) indicate that a significant portion of the Malaysian youth sampled in this study exhibited high levels of prosocial behavior, parental involvement, peer support, empathy, and moral identity. The high mean scores for prosocial behavior ($M = 26.8$, $SD = 4.10$) suggest that most participants frequently engage in helping behaviors, which is consistent with the collectivist culture of Malaysia that emphasizes social harmony and interdependence (Wong & Lim, 2022; Tan et al., 2020). In collectivist societies, prosocial behavior is often encouraged as a means of maintaining social cohesion, which may explain the prevalence of such behaviors among Malaysian youth.

The high levels of parental involvement (61.80% reporting high involvement) align with previous research that emphasizes the central role of family in shaping youth behavior, especially in Asian cultures where family structures are pivotal (Schwartz et al., 2020; Lim et al., 2021). Parental involvement is crucial for moral and social development, as parents often model prosocial behaviors and reinforce the importance of helping others through their actions and expectations.

Similarly, high levels of peer support (60.34%) underscore the importance of peer relationships during adolescence and young adulthood. As Malaysian youth navigate social and academic pressures, supportive peer networks provide opportunities for practicing prosocial behavior (Bukowski et al., 2020). These findings are consistent with previous studies that highlight the role of positive peer interactions in fostering prosocial tendencies (Rubin et al., 2021).

For empathy, 57.91% of participants reported high levels, which reinforces the idea that empathy plays a critical role in motivating prosocial actions. Empathy enables individuals to emotionally connect with others, which drives helping behaviors (Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2020). In Malaysia, where communal values are emphasized, empathy likely plays an integral role in prosocial behavior development, as individuals are socialized to respond to the needs of others (Tan et al., 2020).

Finally, the high levels of moral identity (62.29%) reflect the strong influence of moral values on prosocial behavior. Youth who internalize moral traits are more likely to engage in helping behaviors, seeing such actions as central to their self-concept (Hardy & Carlo, 2019; Aquino & Reed, 2020). In Malaysia, where moral education is a key component of the school curriculum, it is not surprising that many youths exhibit high moral identity, which significantly influences their prosocial actions.

Table 1

Level of Parental Involvement, Peer Support, Empathy, Moral Identity, and Prosocial Behavior among Malaysian Youth

Level	n	%	Mean	SD
<u>Parental Involvement</u>			28.5	3.90
Low	45	10.95		
Moderate	112	27.25		
High	254	61.80		
<u>Peer Support</u>			29.2	4.30
Low	52	12.65		
Moderate	111	27.01		
High	248	60.34		
<u>Empathy</u>			27.40	4.20
Low	59	14.35		
Moderate	115	27.97		
High	237	57.91		
<u>Moral Identity</u>				
Low	45	10.95	32.40	4.50
Medium	110	26.76		
High	256	62.29		
<u>Prosocial Behavior</u>				

Low	72	17.52	26.80	4.10
Medium	100	24.33		
High	239	58.15		

The correlation analysis (see Table 2) demonstrated significant positive relationships between all independent variables—parental involvement, peer support, empathy, and moral identity—and prosocial behavior. These findings provide strong support for the hypothesis that these factors are crucial in fostering prosocial behavior among youth.

Moral identity showed the strongest correlation with prosocial behavior ($r = .74, p < .001$), which is consistent with the literature suggesting that individuals with a strong sense of moral identity are more likely to engage in helping behaviors (Aquino & Reed, 2020; Hardy & Carlo, 2019). This relationship underscores the idea that moral values play a fundamental role in motivating prosocial actions. When youth see themselves as moral individuals, they are more inclined to act in ways that align with their values, which includes helping others.

Empathy also exhibited a strong correlation with prosocial behavior ($r = .69, p < .001$), reinforcing the role of emotional responsiveness in motivating helping behaviors. This finding is in line with previous research that emphasizes the connection between empathy and prosocial behavior (Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2020; Hoffman, 2021). Empathy enables individuals to understand and respond to the needs of others, which is essential for prosocial behavior, particularly in a collectivist context like Malaysia, where community well-being is highly valued.

The positive relationship between peer support and prosocial behavior ($r = .66, p < .001$) suggests that supportive peer environments play a significant role in encouraging helping behaviors. This finding is consistent with research showing that peers can influence prosocial actions, especially during adolescence and young adulthood (Bukowski et al., 2020; Rubin et al., 2021). In Malaysia, where group cohesion and social harmony are important, peer support may reinforce prosocial behaviors as youth seek to maintain positive relationships within their peer networks.

Finally, the correlation between parental involvement and prosocial behavior ($r = .63, p < .001$) confirms that parents remain influential in shaping prosocial tendencies, even during adolescence and young adulthood. Although this relationship was slightly weaker than those for moral identity and empathy, it still highlights the importance of family in promoting prosocial actions (Padilla-Walker et al., 2019; Schwartz et al., 2020). Parents who are actively involved in their children's lives provide models for prosocial behavior, reinforcing the importance of helping others.

Table 2

Correlations Between Parental Involvement, Peer Support, Empathy, Moral Identity and Prosocial Behavior

Variable	Prosocial Behavior	
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Parental Involvement	.63**	.001
Peer Support	.66**	.001
Empathy	.69**	.001
Moral Identity	.74**	.001

N = 411, ** $p < .001$

The multiple regression analysis (see Table 3) revealed that moral identity, empathy, peer support, and parental involvement together explained 67.8% of the variance in prosocial behavior ($R^2 = 0.678$, $F(4, 406) = 213.45$, $p < .001$), indicating that these factors are strong predictors of prosocial behavior. The high R^2 value suggests that a substantial portion of youth's prosocial behavior can be explained by these key factors, confirming the importance of the social and moral environment in shaping prosocial actions.

Table 3

Regression Analysis for Parental Involvement, Peer Support, Empathy, and Moral Identity on Prosocial Behavior

Variable	Prosocial Behavior			
	B	SE. B	Beta, β	<i>p</i>
Parental Involvement	.34	.12	.22	.001
Peer Support	.48	.11	.26	.002
Empathy	.61	.10	.33	.001
Moral Identity	.75	.09	.45	.001
R²	.678			
Adjusted R²	.672			
F	213.45			

$R^2 = 0.678$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.672$, $F = 213.45$ ($p < .005$)

Among the predictors, moral identity emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < .001$), which aligns with the existing literature that highlights moral identity as a key driver of prosocial behavior (Aquino & Reed, 2020; Hardy & Carlo, 2019). Youth who see helping others as an integral part of their identity are more likely to engage in consistent prosocial actions, as their behavior is guided by internalized moral values. This finding suggests that interventions aimed at strengthening moral identity may be particularly effective in promoting prosocial behavior among Malaysian youth.

Empathy was the second strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < .001$), further emphasizing the importance of emotional responsiveness in prosocial behavior. Empathy allows individuals to connect with others on an emotional level, which motivates them to help those in need (Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2020). This finding reinforces the need for empathy-building programs in schools and communities to foster prosocial behavior.

Peer support also significantly predicted prosocial behavior ($\beta = 0.26, p < .01$), highlighting the role of peer relationships in encouraging helping behaviors. This finding supports the idea that youth who experience supportive peer networks are more likely to engage in prosocial actions (Bukowski et al., 2020). In Malaysia, where maintaining positive group dynamics is crucial, peer support likely reinforces prosocial tendencies, as youth seek to contribute positively to their social groups.

Lastly, parental involvement was a significant but weaker predictor of prosocial behavior ($\beta = 0.22, p < .01$). While parental involvement remains important, it appears to have less influence than moral identity and empathy, particularly as youth grow older and become more influenced by peers and their own internal values (Padilla-Walker et al., 2019). Nonetheless, the significant relationship suggests that parents continue to play a role in promoting prosocial behavior, especially when they model helping behaviors and emphasize the importance of caring for others.

Promoting Prosocial Behavior among Youth: The Roles of Moral Identity, Empathy, Peer Support, and Parental Involvement

The findings from this study have several important implications for both policy and practice, particularly in relation to fostering prosocial behavior among youth in Malaysia. The results suggest that moral identity, empathy, peer support, and parental involvement all play a significant role in promoting prosocial behavior. Therefore, policymakers and practitioners should focus on strengthening these factors through educational programs and community initiatives.

Firstly, the strong influence of moral identity on prosocial behavior highlights the need to incorporate moral education into school curricula. Schools should prioritize teaching moral values such as kindness, fairness, and responsibility, encouraging students to internalize these values as part of their self-concept (Aquino & Reed, 2020). Moral education should go beyond rote learning, incorporating real-life applications through activities like service learning or community engagement, which allow youth to practice prosocial behaviors in meaningful contexts.

Empathy-building programs are equally important for fostering prosocial behavior. The significant relationship between empathy and helping behaviors suggests that programs aimed at developing emotional responsiveness could be effective in promoting prosociality (Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2020). Schools and community organizations should integrate empathy-training exercises, such as perspective-taking activities and emotional literacy workshops, into their programs. These initiatives can help youth better understand the emotions and needs of others, which can lead to more compassionate and prosocial actions.

Moreover, peer support plays a crucial role in encouraging prosocial behavior, particularly in collectivist cultures like Malaysia. Peer influence is a powerful tool in shaping youth behavior, and positive peer environments can reinforce the importance of helping others (Bukowski et al., 2020). Schools and community groups should create peer support systems, such as mentorship programs or peer-led groups, that encourage cooperative behavior and provide opportunities for youth to engage in prosocial actions. These programs not only enhance social cohesion but also promote individual well-being.

Finally, the findings emphasize the ongoing importance of parental involvement in shaping prosocial behavior. Parents play a key role in modeling and encouraging helping behaviors, even as their children grow older and become more influenced by peers (Padilla-Walker et al., 2019). Parenting programs that focus on effective communication and prosocial modeling can help parents reinforce positive behaviors in their children. Schools and community centers should provide resources and workshops for parents to enhance their involvement in their children's moral and social development.

Enhancing Moral Identity, Empathy, and Peer Support: Practical Strategies for Educational and Community Settings

The significant correlations and regression results between moral identity, empathy, peer support, and prosocial behavior provide a clear roadmap for practical applications in both educational and community settings. First, moral education should be integrated more deeply into school systems, with programs designed to help students develop a strong sense of moral identity. This can be achieved through service-learning projects, moral dilemma discussions, and extracurricular activities that emphasize community involvement (Aquino & Reed, 2020; Pratt et al., 2021).

In addition, empathy training should be prioritized within educational curricula and extracurricular activities. Empathy-based programs, such as peer counseling and emotional literacy classes, have been shown to foster compassionate behavior (Hoffman, 2021). Implementing these programs in schools and youth organizations can help cultivate a generation of youth who are more emotionally attuned to the needs of others.

Peer support programs also present an opportunity to further promote prosocial behavior among youth. Schools can establish structured peer mentoring or buddy systems that encourage cooperative learning and social responsibility (Bukowski et al., 2020). In Malaysia, where group-oriented behavior is highly valued, such programs could significantly enhance prosocial behavior by reinforcing positive social norms.

Lastly, parental involvement initiatives should not be overlooked. Schools and community organizations should provide resources that enable parents to engage more effectively with their children's moral and social development (Schwartz et al., 2020). Workshops and seminars that focus on positive parenting strategies, including modelling prosocial behavior, could foster a home environment conducive to the development of prosocial traits.

Limitations and Future Directions

While this study offers valuable insights into the factors influencing prosocial behavior among Malaysian youth, several limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between parental involvement, peer support, empathy, moral identity, and prosocial behavior. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to explore how these relationships evolve over time and whether changes in one factor, such as moral identity, lead to increased prosocial behavior.

Additionally, the study relied on self-reported measures, which may introduce biases such as social desirability. Although validated scales were used, participants may have overestimated their prosocial behaviors or levels of empathy to align with social expectations. Future studies

could incorporate mixed-methods approaches, combining self-reports with observational or peer-reported data to gain a more nuanced understanding of prosocial behavior (Silva & Zainuddin, 2020).

The sample was also limited to Malaysian youth, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other cultural contexts. While the study provides insights into the unique cultural influences on prosocial behavior in Malaysia, future research should explore how these factors operate in different societies, particularly in individualistic cultures, where the emphasis on personal achievement may alter the relationship between moral identity and prosocial behavior (Wong & Lim, 2022).

Lastly, future research should investigate additional variables that may mediate or moderate the relationship between the independent variables and prosocial behavior, such as self-efficacy, cultural identity, or community involvement. Exploring these factors could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics underlying prosocial behavior.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant influence of moral identity, empathy, peer support, and parental involvement on prosocial behavior among Malaysian youth. Moral identity emerged as the strongest predictor of prosocial behavior, followed closely by empathy, peer support, and parental involvement. These findings underscore the importance of fostering both moral and emotional development in youth, as well as the value of creating supportive peer and family environments.

The results have practical implications for educators, community leaders, and policymakers who aim to promote prosocial behavior among youth. By implementing moral education programs, empathy training, peer support systems, and parental involvement initiatives, stakeholders can effectively nurture a generation of youth who are committed to helping others and contributing to their communities.

Future research should continue to explore the dynamic interplay between these factors, employing longitudinal designs and considering additional variables that may influence prosocial behavior. Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on youth development and provides actionable insights for enhancing prosocial behavior in collectivist cultures like Malaysia.

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