CHILD PERSONALITY AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION: PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR PROFILE

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to develop a child's personality profile of prosocial behavior, as well as the profile development by sex. The study was of cross-sectional and descriptive type with a non-probabilistic sample. Six instruments were used: BAS 3 by Silva and Martorell (2001); Prosocial behavior questionnaire for parents and teachers by Weir and Duveen (1981); Scale criminal anti-social behavior by Seisdedos (2001); CABS by Wood, Michelson and Flynn (1978); Scale of Self Concept by Flores, Cortés, Estrada and Campos (2012) and EIS by Garaigordobil (2000). The participants were 89 6th grade students from two conurbated public schools of Merida, Yucatan. The brute data were transformed to z grades in order to obtain a

normal score distribution with a mean value $M = 0$. The study results indicate that the prosocial personality profile of the sample is low; regarding gender, it was found that female participants behaved more prosocially than males.

Key words: personality, childhood, violence, prosocial behavior, public school.

1. INTRODUCTION

The prosocial behavior construct development has undergone changes in its concept definition from the beginning, in fact, there is confusion about the term and has been used invariably as a synonym of altruism, helping behavior or assistance (Gonzalez, 2000). Some authors place prosocial behaviors within the social competence, which is a global assessment of the individual's need to interact in a determined interpersonal context, adding to the social skills, which refer to the specific capacities necessary to perform a task effectively in this context (Castillo, Perez-Salas, Bravo, Cancino, Catalan & Acosta, 2008).

Likewise, prosocial behaviors are considered a dimension of the prosocial competence and foster the development of social skills during childhood. Therefore, the prosocial behavior has a positive impact in the self-worth as well as other's worth, which in turn motivates the child to act in a prosocial way (Lacunza, 2012). Prosocial behaviors are those which encourage solidarity and harmony in interpersonal relationships, producing personal or collective benefits. They are considered prosocial as they don't seek an external reward but rather favor other people or groups, increasing the chances of generating positive feedback in the resultant relationships (Omar, 2009).

On the other hand, when referring to prosocial behavior, the term altruism is usually mentioned; which is defined by the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language (RAE, 2014) as "any task aimed to pursue the other's well-being at owns expense". A better definition of altruism is presented by Lopez (1994, p. 16) who indicates that an altruist behavior is "the

disposition or tendency to the others' well-being which is expressed by various behaviors which benefit others, producing or sustaining positive effects to whom displays or performs them voluntarily with the aim of helping others, without expecting any short term reward". These definitions share the common aspect that such actions have the ultimate aim to benefit other people.

Finally, it can be stated that prosocial behavior is a construct which covers various positive behaviors, such as altruism, donation and solidarity. Therefore, this construct becomes a way to classify actions in favor of the others, distinguishing the intention, situation, context and motive for which such behaviors are displayed; in where altruist behavior is a specific action and the prosocial behavior is the construct which integrates all positive behaviors. Thus, the prosocial behavior will be conceived as a group of behavioral, cognitive and emotional aspects which allow the individual in a specific situation acting in a certain way in favor of another person or group of people (Gonzalez, 2000).

According to research, it has been found that the prosocial behavior construct is formed by: empathy and positive concept of the human being and interpersonal relationships (Lopez, Apodaca, Etxebarria, Fuentes, & Ortiz, 1998); concern for the others, self-control in relationships and leadership (positive dimension), as well as aggressiveness, social retreat and social anxiety/shyness (negative dimension) (Silva & Martorell, 2001); self-image, cognitive and social interaction strategies and emotional stability (Garaigordobil, 2003); empathy and assertiveness (Garaigordobil, 2005); empathy and its affective and cognitive components (Mestre, Tur, Samper, Nacher & Cortes, 2007).

In each of the aforementioned studies, there are some prosocial behavior characteristics which contribute to shaping a profile. Consequently, creating such profile is complicated due to the large number of traits and characteristics that people present according to a contextual need. In the present study, the prosocial behavior profile is determined by the traits of one

positive dimension (Concern for the others, Self-control in social relationships, Leadership, Assertive behavior and Positive self-image) and traits of one negative dimension (Social retreat, Social anxiety/shyness, Antisocial and criminal behavior).

On the other hand, over the last three decades, there has been a growing trend to study new ways of intervening and diminishing social problems by fostering positive behaviors. Among such problems, there is an uncontrolled increase of violence, crime and social differences among individuals. Researchers have mainly focused on intervening in the antisocial behaviors which generate these problems.

However, at the beginning of the 90's decade, the approach shifted to investigating and developing positive behaviors such as help, donation cooperation and altruism (Gonzalez, 2000). It is during this change of perspective when the prosocial behavior concept was developed, in which philosophers, teachers and psychologists became interested and have contributed with their knowledge to define it.

It is from this perspective that psychologists conduct research about the social and educational vision of positive behaviors towards others. Likewise, educational psychology views the prosocial behavior as a means to maintain a better relationship between the individual and his/her classmates. In this context, the professors are the ones who usually recognize these children, noting that they are sociable and adapted to the school setting. As a result, they are usually accepted by their peers, attain a high self-esteem and good relations with their parents, which in turn enhances the child's academic performance (Lacunza, 2012).

There are certain variables such as gender, birth order, family socio-economic situation, school and culture among others, which can influence the development of prosocial behaviors by a formal or informal teaching-learning process in the people's lives (Eisenberg, 1999).

Regarding to *family*, this institution is of vital influence for the development of the gender identity, language, as well as an incipient control of the emotions and basic corporal

processes (Garcia-Cabrero & Flores, 1988). Additionally, the family has influence in the development of the self-concept, motivation and goals and skills for interpersonal relationships (Garcia-Cabrero, 2010). These skills and abilities, which are acquired in the family core, are important to acquire a positive behavior. A research revealed that a father-son relationship has a strong support interaction, where affectiveness, reasoning and rewarding have a positive interrelationship with the knowledge development, self-esteem, social competence, internal control locus and moral behavior which increases positively the child's social skills (Musitu & Gutierrez, 1984). Therefore, it is emphasized that parents role with their children is important since it fosters the transmission and shaping of positive social behavior, increasing its use in various social contexts.

On the other hand, a research made with rural and urban children (Eisenberg, 1999), found that all chores asked to do or decided to do for the family well-being, made the children adopt and engage behaviors in favor of others, and this research concluded that family members of rural zones carry out tasks such as taking care of their siblings, providing food, carrying water, feeding their domestic animals, among others, tend to be more prosocial than children of urban zones where the family encourages conducts of competence, where the children tend to have a selfish behavior. When parents foster each member's responsibilities within the family, it increases the level of commitment and nurtures the creation of strong bonds among the core family members, and therefore, increases the kid's confidence for going through the family context and use these prosocial behaviors in other contextual scope.

Family context is an important factor for developing prosocial behaviors. Parents are the main actors to develop the function of fostering these behaviors, because they are the altruism role models that children see every day. As a result, parents who nurture secure attachment, reinforce prosocial behaviors, function as altruism role models, teach to resolve the harm made to other people, explain and reason about adequate and inadequate moral behavior,

have the highest probability of raising children with prosocial behaviors (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1991; Garaigordobil & Fagoaga, 2006). Adding up to this, the positive interrelationship among siblings, facilitate positive behavior development towards other people.

Furthermore, family context is an important factor to develop prosocial behaviors. Parents are the main actors to fostering such behaviors since they are the altruism role models who children observe frequently. Therefore, parents who foster secure attachment, reinforce prosocial behaviors, play a role model of altruism, teach how to repair damage to other people, give reasons and explanations about morally correct and incorrect behaviors, increase the chances of their children to develop prosocial behaviors (Eisenberg & Fabes,1991).

Another positive institution that acts as a nursery of prosocial behavior is school. The social behavior acquisition, development and engagement depend on the individual and his/her interpersonal relationships influenced by the situation and context where it interacts. These aspects occur since in the daily life, children spend a considerable amount of time in the classrooms, so they are in constant coexistence with classmates, friends, teachers, and authorities figures. Besides, children are in a space different from their family context; therefore, school is the place where a child shapes habits and attitudes that rule his/her personal development, within a continuous stable environment.

As Brofenfrenner (1987) points out: the school is a development system that complements the family microsystem in its socializing role, a facilitator of behavior patterns. Generally, preschool children act in a positive socially manner with others since they look for a rewarding due to his/her deeds and/or –otherwise- try to avoid reprimands or punishments by acting in a less cooperative manner with his/her peers. Likewise, 4-5 aged children tend to justify their prosocial behavior in three ways (Eisenberg, 1999): (1) a motive for an affective relationship, by referring that the other person who is helped likes it or has a relationship; (2)

reason for approval, which relates to their wish of acquiescence with others; and (3) an hedonistic reason or direct reciprocity, related to their own benefit.

Children in primary education tend to prove a kind of motivation towards service and assistance behaviors towards others; probably they have a full consciousness of their deeds. Likewise, they tend to have more altruist behaviors than preschool aged infants, because these behaviors tend to be voluntarily (Eisenberg, 1999).

As a result, these children are more likely to offer a prosocial behavior which is more attached to the proposed definitions by the above-mentioned authors. This assertion agrees with some research about children-peers relationship, confirming that this scenario represents an ideal field for the acquisition and development of prosocial behaviors, since they fulfill themselves in a period of equality and mutual discovery of needs in the daily social exchange. However, when about it comes to adult-child relationship, infants tend to be motivated by the accomplishment and rules obedience.

On the other hand, scholar context gives norms, methods, strategies and techniques that rule teachers as well as students, all the participants in the learning-teaching process bi-directionally contribute with social tools which improve coexistence in the scholar context and it is reinforced at home with their parents' supervision (Lopez, 2011).

Another variable that has influence in the prosocial behavior development is culture. Nowadays, there is more evidence that socio-cultural aspects have a strong influence in people, since they are absorbed in a society where there is an internalization process of values and beliefs. Such social standards are adopted by the communities' members as a consequence of the socialization process (Garaigordobil, 2003).

Stevenson (1991) carried out an analysis of the Chinese and Japanese cultures, and how children adopt prosocial behaviors according to what the society in which they are absorbed gives more value. In this case, in both cultures children are instructed about the importance of

achieving their goals through teamwork and contributing with their skills for the group benefit. In contrast, western cultures give more value to the individual work, which lead to loneliness, lack of group connection, and a low productivity at work or in academic issues.

In Mexico, Díaz-Guerrero (2003) appoints that Mexican culture tends to be more tolerant in its social relationships, in such a way that Mexicans boast of his/her kindness among individuals of a same community; consequently, likes and dislikes can't be expressed among strangers, which can't let them be assertive. These assertions allow glimpsing that some Mexican culture characteristics block the positive behavior development (prosocial) towards others. It is also appointed out that family values, bonds between members, beliefs and attitudes are important guides to establish social relationships. However, family education is occasionally based on the competence among its members, which makes difficult to develop social skills (prosociability).

Regarding the gender, it is mentioned that female students tend to be more emphatic and understanding than male in situations where help is required. However, it has been found that in the case of instrumental help, such as lending a toy, helping in a task or bringing a chair, male students tend to be more prosocial. When it comes to helping in a psychological way like giving solace for the loss of a relative, losing a pet or moral support to someone who lost a valuable item; it has been observed these behaviors are more associated to female students and are more frequent if the person is a friend, relative or class mate (Guijo, 2002).

2. METHOD

2.1 Participants

A total of 89 6th grade students of two conurbated public elementary schools from Merida, Yucatan participated; they presented social marginalization traits. The sample was of non-probabilistic, census type, also known as directed sample, since the selection did not

depend on the use of probabilistic formulas, but was rather based on the research needs and criteria (Hernandez Sampieri, Fernandez Collado & Baptista Lucio, 2010).

2.2 Instruments

To create the prosocial behavior profile, six tests were applied to evaluate the main characteristics which comprise this construct; the tests were:

- Socialization Battery (Silva and Martorell, 2001). This self-evaluation test, allows knowing the child's social behavior profile in five behavior dimensions: Concern for the others, Self-control in social relationships, Social retreat, Social anxiety/shyness, Leadership and Sincerity. The test consisted in 75 items arranged in a Likert scale with four answer options: Never, Sometimes, Frequently and Always.

- Assertive Behavior Scale. This test evaluates through a self-report the type of behavior the child would use in each stated situation. The test consists of 27 items with five answer options of which two are classified as passive, one as assertive and the remaining two as aggressive (Wood, Michelson & Flynn, as cited by Garaigordobil 2004).

- Antisocial-Criminal Behavior Scale A-D (Seisdedos, 2001). It consists of 40 phrases in which different types of antisocial and criminal behaviors are stated; the child has to choose from two types of answers: Yes or No, assigning a respective value of 1 and 0, the total score per scale is of 20 points. The test is divided, from items one to 20 measuring antisocial behavior and from 21 to 40 measuring criminal behavior.

- Prosocial Behavior Questionnaire for Parents and Teachers. These questionnaires consist of 20 statements which make reference to prosocial behaviors of students or children respectively. This instrument allows knowing the perception or evaluation that parents as well as teachers have about the prosocial behavior of the evaluated children. For each statement, three choices of answer are given: Never, Maybe once, Almost always (Weir & Duveen, 1981).

- Self-Concept Scale. It evaluates five self-image aspects: I as a person, as a Son, as a Sibling, as a Friend and as a Student. Each subscale has a listing of 18 words related to the self-concept, with a Likert type format and five squares of decreasing size according to the magnitude they consider to attain from each characteristic (Flores, Cortes, Espadas & Campos, 2012).

- Cognitive Strategies for Social Dilemma Solving Scale. It is an open-ended questionnaire which allows exploring the amount of strategies available to resolve four conflictive social situations. The answers are grouped in three categories: passive, aggressive or assertive (Garaigordobil, 2000).

2.3 Procedure

For the present study, the following actions were taken: (a) the corresponding permission request to the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP); (b) instrument application at the beginning of the school term during the first class hours, with a duration of about 40-45 minutes; (c) grading and coding of the test results; (d) statistical analysis of data; where given the diversity of variables and types of measuring, all scores were converted to z grades and the comparative analysis was performed using an ANOVA from SPSS software, version 19; and (e) presentation of the investigation results to the corresponding authorities.

3. RESULTS

To obtain the prosocial behavior profile in the studied simple, the brute data were transformed to z grades in order to obtain a normal score distribution with a mean value $M = 0$. The scores were distributed between low, medium, medium-high and high which range from positive (+) to negative (-) for each factor of the instruments used in the study.

According to Oses Bargas et al. (2014) and as Table 1 shows, the profile revealed that 6th grade elementary school children present positive values, which indicates that they are doing fine in these characteristics. From these indicators: (a) leadership and social perception

of parents on their children are the highest; (b) the aggressive resolution strategies and self-image as person are in a mid-low level; this means these traits occur regularly but tending to a low level; and (c) finally, concern for the others, self-control in relationships, social anxiety/shyness, assertive behavior, aggressive behavior, self-image as a child and as a friend, are at a low level; this means they attain little of these traits.

On another hand, the following indicators presented negative values, suggesting children own little or nothing of these traits: (a) social retreat and criminal behaviors were the highest, which indicates these traits are not very frequent; (b) antisocial behaviors and passive resolution strategies were at a medium-high level, which means these traits occur with little frequency; (c) Social perception by teachers and self-image as a student were at a medium-low level, in other words, they occur regularly; and (d) finally, sincerity, passive behavior, assertive resolution strategies and self-image as a sibling were at a low level, which means they present some more of these indicators.

Table 1
Prosocial behavior profile of sample

Test	Grade z	Classification
SOCIALIZATION (SELF-REPORT)	1.25	Low
	9.12	Alto
Leadership		
Social retreat	-8.53*	High
Concern for the others	1.05	Low
Self-control in social relationships	1.09	Low
Social anxiety/shyness	2.26	Low
Sincerity	-2.01*	Low
ANTISOCIAL-CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR	-5.41	Medium-high
Criminal behavior	-8.33*	High
Antisocial behavior	-6.94*	Medium-high
PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR		
Social perception parents	9.37	High
Social perception teachers	-2.58*	Medium-low
ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOR	6.31	Medium-high
Assertive	0.03	Low
Passive	-0.73*	Low

Aggressive	0.41		Low
SOCIAL DILEMMA SOLVING			
Passive	-6.66*		Medium-high
Aggressive	4.58		Medium-low
Assertive	-1.50*		Low
SELF-CONCEPT			
I as a person	3.37		Medium-low
I as a student	-2.97*		Medium-low
I as a son	1.48		Low
I as a sibling	-1.85*		Low
I as a friend	1.35		Low

(*) The negative z grade indicates the characteristic is below the established mean value.

To observe the prosocial behavior in terms of participants' gender, one profile for male and another for female students were made, which can be observed on Table 2. All students scored in the low level of distribution for all traits.

Table 2

Prosocial behavior profile by gender

Test	M		Classification
	Boys	Girls	
SOCIALIZATION (SELF-REPORT)	-0.20	0.31	Low
Concern for the others	-0.12	0.19	Low
Self-control in social relationships	-0.23	0.36	Low
Social retreat	-0.11	0.18	Low
Social anxiety/shyness	-0.13	0.19	Low
Leadership	-0.02	0.03	Low
Sincerity	-0.13	0.21	Low
ANTISOCIAL-CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR	0.30	-0.46	Low
Antisocial behavior	0.28	-0.44	Low
Criminal behavior	0.15	-0.23	Low
PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR			
Social perception parents	-0.07	0.11	Low
Social perception teachers	-0.20	0.33	Low
ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOR			
Assertive	-0.09	0.03	Low
Passive	-0.89	-0.35	Low
Aggressive	0.57	-1.13	Low
SELF-CONCEPT			
I as a person	0.09	0.14	Low
I as son	0.05	0.09	Low
I as a sibling	0.03	0.05	Low
I as a friend	0.00	0.00	Low
I as a student	0.00	0.01	Low

SOCIAL DILEMMA SOLVING			
Assertive	-0.10	-0.15	Low
Passive	0.05	-0.08	Low
Aggressive	0.12	-0.18	Low

The results from the analysis of variance can be observed in Table 3. This analysis establishes the differences in prosocial behavior traits by the participants' gender. In general terms, there were significant differences in socialization, indicating that female students attain a larger number of social skills compared to males. In addition, it was found that in the Self-control in social relationships dimension, female participants obtained a mean value $M = 20.71$ and male students obtained $M = 18.71$, which indicates female participants attain more of this dimension than males.

Likewise, there were significant differences in the perception by teachers regarding prosocial behaviors, where males obtained a mean value $M = 39.96$ and females obtained $M = 45.69$, suggesting the teachers' perception of prosocial behaviors is higher for females than for males.

Finally, regarding the antisocial and criminal behavior, there were significant differences in general terms, pointing that male students hold more antisocial behaviors than female. In addition, in the Antisocial Behavior dimension, males obtained a mean value $M = 6.37$ whereas females obtained $M = 3.48$, indicating male students hold more of this dimension than females.

Table 3
Prosocial behavior differences by gender

Test	Indicator	Gender	M	F	P
SOCIALIZATION	Total scores	Male	135.50	5.58	0.02
		Female	146.87		
	Self-control in social relationships	Male	18.71	8.08	0.00
		Female	20.71		
PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR (Teachers)	Total scores	Male	39.96	6.32	0.01
		Female	45.69		
	Total scores	Male	7.38	14.54	0.00
		Female	3.65		

| ANTISOCIAL-CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR | Antisocial behavior | Male | 6.37 | 13.08 | 0.00 |
| | | Female | 3.48 | | |

4. DISCUSSION

The results from this study revealed that from the evaluated traits, leadership proved to be the highest within the sample's general profile. This means children tend to behave as leaders among their peers and with this, be able to display prosocial behaviors. On the other hand, social retreat resulted negative. It could also be observed that children hold a low level of concern for the others, self-control in social relationships, social anxiety/shyness and sincerity; all of these may hinder the sense of sensitiveness and concern for the others. The aforementioned traits are related to nervousness, fear, shame and lack of sincerity of confidence in social relationships. There are studies which reveal that the poor development of these traits hamper the interaction with the context, as noted by Eisenberg (1999) and Guijo (2002).

Students from the sample replied they never or almost never display antisocial behaviors, which means they avoid these deviant conducts; however, males students displayed more of these behaviors tan females, as they usually do antisocial actions such as littering, trespassing and graffiting among other behaviors that affect other people. The National Institute for Educational Assessment and Evaluation (INEE, 2007) confirms that males participate more in violent acts and incur in antisocial conducts compared to females; therefore, the gender variable can be a predictor of these behaviors.

The later agrees with what Guijo (2002) mentions regarding that females tend to be more empathic than males in situations where an expressive character behavior is required, while men are more prosocial in cases where an instrumental character behavior is required.

On another hand, the *parent's perception of their children* regarding prosocial behaviors is elevated, which indicates they have high expectations over the children's deeds within the home and school. However, this perception is contrary to Teachers' perception about the same

children, which contains less prosocial behaviors. It is worth reminding that these two figures (parents and teachers) represent the most significant models during childhood as they foster the development of prosociability as mentioned by Eisenberg (1999) and Gonzalez (2000).

This difference in values between parents and teachers may be determined by the fact that parents as main actors in fostering the prosocial behavior, tend to show a higher expectation of this kind of behavior, compared with the teachers' (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1991; Garaigordobil & Fagoaga, 2006).

In relation to social behaviors in children (assertive, passive and aggressive), they present low levels of these traits and with respect to cognitive resolution strategies for social situations, aggressive strategies are commonly engaged when resolving a conflict. This means that when the moment comes to deal with a conflict situation, children respond in a more aggressive style than a passive or assertive one. Based on these results, it is important to mention that schoolchildren present constraints when socializing as they have difficulties expressing their opinions, don't stand up for their rights, avoid responding directly to a situation and frequently stifle when presented with a situation that requires their participation. These passive behaviors that children adopt towards school, friends and family among others, hinder their social relationships in their context as pointed by Guijo (2002).

Finally, in relation to their self-image, the "I as a person" is the trait they present on a regular basis, whereas the "I as a student" is the most infrequent; however, they have a low self-perception as sons/daughters, siblings and friends. This could imply children don't perceive themselves with the necessary social skills to engage relationships besides their low self-concept and as a student, which can be translated in problems with teachers and peers, hindering their academic performance as mentioned by Guijo (2002).

In the gender differentiated profile, it could be observed that both male and female participants obtained scores within the low level profile. However, female attained more

prosocial traits than males. This agrees with the studies by Eisenberg (1999), Gonzalez (2000) and Guijo (2002), where parents, siblings and teachers tend to grade female students with more prosocial characteristics than males.

Similarly, in the Self-control in social relationships dimension, female participants showed an advantage compared to males. This points that women tend to hold more self-regulated behaviors which foster respectful coexistence with relatives, peers and authorities, and tend to engage rules and social conventions, as opposed to males who attain less of these traits. This findings are similar to indications made by SEP (2009) about girls preferring to share spaces in school with other girls in view of their more calm and respectful behavior when compared to boys who tend to communicate in a more disrespectful and offensive way. Therefore, self-control among peers is a helping factor to a healthy coexistence. This is confirmed by Garaigordobil & Garcia de Galdeano (2006) who report that young boys tend to have more difficulties in social interaction than girls; furthermore, girls have more self-control and leadership and few isolation and social retreat behaviors.

It was also found that professors perceive more prosocial behaviors in female students than in males, which indicates teachers usually see more prosocial behaviors in girls than in boys. This matches what Eisenberg (1999) says, where teachers and peers grade females as more obliging.

Finally, there were no significant differences in passive, assertive and aggressive behaviors in the conflict resolution strategies and the different expressions of the self-concept. It can be concluded that participants show similar traits in males as well as females.

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