

RELATIONSHIP AMONG MENTAL HEALTH, ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS, AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR OF EARLY ADOLESCENT STUDENTS

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Abstract

The study explores the relationships among mental health, environmental awareness, and prosocial behavior in early adolescents. Using a sample of 200 students from grades 6 to 9 across five urban schools, data were collected through the Mental Health Questionnaire (MHQ), Environmental Awareness Scale, and Prosocial Behavior Questionnaire. Results show significant positive correlations between mental health and environmental awareness ($r = 0.43$, $p < 0.01$), mental health and prosocial behavior ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$), and environmental awareness and prosocial behavior ($r = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$). Multiple regression analysis indicates mental health and environmental awareness account for 36% of the variance in prosocial behavior, with mental health having a stronger influence ($\beta = 0.52$). The study highlights the importance of promoting mental well-being and environmental awareness in schools to develop socially and environmentally responsible students. Future research is suggested to explore these relationships further and assess the impact of educational programs.

Keywords: Mental health, Environmental awareness, Prosocial behaviour, Adolescents, Wellbeing, Correlations

1. Introduction

Adolescence is marked by rapid developmental changes, not only physically but also mentally and socially. Mental health, environmental awareness, and prosocial behaviour become increasingly important during this stage. Mental health influences adolescents' well-being, their ability to engage with their surroundings, and their relationships with peers. Meanwhile, environmental awareness and prosocial behaviour reflect how adolescents perceive their role within society and their responsibility toward the environment and others.

Adolescence, typically ranging from ages 10 to 15, is particularly sensitive as students develop their identity, values, and social behaviors. Mental health, environmental awareness, and prosocial behavior emerge as critical domains during this stage, shaping how adolescents perceive and interact with the world around them. Unaddressed mental health issues can impair

academics, strain peer relationships, and harm overall well-being, leading to long-term consequences (Zhou *et al.*, 2023).

Recently, adolescent mental well-being has gained focus in education due to rising anxiety, depression, and stress from academics, peers, and environment (Smith & Garcia, 2022). Mental health is closely intertwined with adolescents' ability to engage with their environment and society. Students with positive mental health are more likely to exhibit adaptive coping strategies and develop a deeper understanding of their surroundings, which can also influence their awareness of environmental issues (Sharma *et al.*, 2023).

Environmental awareness during adolescence is pivotal as it forms the foundation for sustainable behaviors in adulthood. Growing concerns over climate change, resource depletion, and degradation have made environmental literacy a global educational priority. Early adolescents are at a formative stage where they begin to understand the global and local environmental challenges, prompting them to adopt eco friendly practices (Fernandez *et al.*, 2021). This awareness, in turn, has been found to correlate with other positive social outcomes, such as prosocial behavior—actions intended to benefit others or society, including sharing, volunteering, and helping (Buehler & Greenberg, 2023).

Prosocial behavior in adolescence is driven by several factors, including empathy, moral development, and social influences. Research indicates that mentally healthy adolescents with environmental awareness are more likely to exhibit prosocial behaviors, driven by a strong sense of responsibility (Ding *et al.*, 2023). Prosocial behavior is not only a marker of social development but also contributes to improved mental health, as engaging in helpful activities can enhance self-esteem and reduce feelings of isolation or stress (Lopez *et al.*, 2022).

Despite these interconnected domains, limited research has explored the direct relationship between mental health, environmental awareness, and prosocial behavior in early adolescents. Understanding these relationships is crucial, as it can inform educational and psychological interventions aimed at fostering holistic development in students. By examining how these factors influence one another, educators and policymakers can develop comprehensive strategies that promote not only academic achievement but also social responsibility and wellbeing (Singh *et al.*, 2024).

This study explores the relationship between mental health, environmental awareness,

and prosocial behavior in early adolescents, aiming to identify factors that foster responsible, well-rounded adolescents who are mentally healthy, environmentally conscious, and socially active.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Mental Health in Adolescence

Adolescents face a range of mental health challenges, including anxiety, stress, and depression. These challenges often arise from a combination of biological, social, and environmental factors that make early adolescence a critical period for mental health development. Research indicates that mental health during this phase significantly influences various aspects of life, including academic performance, peer interactions, and overall well-being (Gonzalez *et al.*, 2021; Mills *et al.*, 2022).

Moreover, mental health is increasingly recognized as a key determinant of adolescents' ability to engage in constructive behaviors. Studies suggest that mentally healthy adolescents are more likely to participate in community activities, demonstrate empathy, and practice environmental stewardship (Gonzalez *et al.*, 2021). Conversely, mental health issues like anxiety and depression can hinder prosocial behavior by causing social withdrawal, low motivation, and reduced emotional resilience (Smith & Lewis, 2023). Addressing mental health in this population is, therefore, crucial not only for personal well-being but also for fostering a sense of social and environmental responsibility.

2.2. Environmental Awareness and Adolescence

Environmental awareness during adolescence is a key focus of global educational initiatives aimed at promoting sustainability and fostering eco-conscious behaviors. Adolescents, due to their developing cognitive abilities and growing sense of responsibility, are particularly impressionable when it comes to environmental education (Lindemann-Matthies *et al.*, 2020). This heightened awareness often translates into everyday eco-friendly actions, such as recycling, reducing waste, and conserving energy, which not only reflect their knowledge but also reinforce a sense of environmental stewardship (Jensen & Schnack, 2021).

Furthermore, studies suggest that environmental awareness during adolescence does not merely result in ecological behavior but often extends to broader prosocial behaviors. Environmentally aware adolescents often develop empathy, social responsibility, and a

commitment to community and planetary well-being (Clayton & Myers, 2022). This link between environmental consciousness and prosocial behavior may be attributed to the common underlying values of care and responsibility for others, whether human or non-human (Collado & Evans, 2021). Such behavior, motivated by a concern for global and local sustainability, supports the idea that environmental education can foster positive social engagement among adolescents.

2.3. Prosocial Behaviour in Adolescents

Prosocial behavior—voluntary actions like helping, sharing, and volunteering—is crucial in adolescence, as cognitive and emotional growth enhances empathy and responsiveness to others' needs (Padilla-Walker & Carlo, 2021). Factors such as empathy, family environment, peer influence, and educational experiences play a critical role in shaping prosocial tendencies during this stage (Eisenberg *et al.*, 2021). Adolescents with positive emotional well-being are more likely to practice kindness and altruism, strengthening social relationships and fostering overall development (Roth-Hanania *et al.*, 2022).

In recent studies, a strong link has been found between mental health and prosocial behaviour, indicating that adolescents with better mental health are more inclined to engage in actions that benefit others (Caprara *et al.*, 2012; Hartup & Laursen, 2022). Furthermore, environmental awareness has also been identified as a factor influencing prosocial behaviour, as adolescents with heightened awareness of environmental issues tend to display greater empathy and a sense of social responsibility (Wang *et al.*, 2022). These findings suggest that fostering both mental well-being and environmental consciousness in educational settings can have a profound impact on the development of prosocial behaviour in adolescents.

3. Objectives of the Study

The study aims to investigate the following:

1. The relationship between mental health and environmental awareness of early adolescent students.
2. The relationship between mental health and prosocial behaviour.
3. The relationship between environmental awareness and prosocial behaviour.
4. The combined impact of mental health and environmental awareness on prosocial behaviour.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

The study employed a correlational research design to investigate the relationships among mental health, environmental awareness, and prosocial behavior in early adolescent students. This design was chosen as it allows for the examination of naturally occurring variables and the assessment of the degree to which these variables are related without manipulating the study environment. By using this non-experimental approach, the research aimed to identify potential associations between the key variables while maintaining the ecological validity of the findings. The correlational design is particularly well-suited for exploring complex psychological and social phenomena, such as the interaction between mental health, environmental awareness, and prosocial behavior, in a real-world educational context.

4.2. Sample

The study involved a sample of 200 students from grades 6 to 9, ranging in age from 12 to 15 years, drawn from five urban schools. The selection process was conducted using random sampling to ensure a diverse representation of students from various socio-economic backgrounds. This approach aimed to capture a wide spectrum of experiences and perspectives regarding mental health, environmental awareness, and prosocial behavior. The inclusion of students from multiple schools helped to enhance the generalizability of the findings, providing insights into how these factors interact across different educational and social contexts.

4.3. Tools and Instruments

- **Mental Health Questionnaire:** The Mental Health Questionnaire (MHQ), developed by Kessler *et al.* (2002), was employed to assess the mental health of participants. This standardized tool measures key aspects of mental health, including anxiety, stress, self-esteem, and overall well-being. The MHQ is widely recognized for its reliability and validity in assessing psychological distress and mental well-being in adolescent populations. Participants responded to a series of statements on a Likert scale, providing insights into their emotional and psychological state across multiple dimensions.
- **Environmental Awareness Scale:** The Environmental Awareness Scale, developed by Tuncer, Ertepinar, and Kargioglu (2009), was used to assess students' understanding of

environmental issues, attitudes towards sustainability, and engagement in eco-friendly practices. This tool evaluates three main dimensions: knowledge of environmental challenges, attitudes regarding the importance of sustainability, and actual involvement in environmentally friendly behaviors. The scale is designed to capture both cognitive and behavioral aspects of environmental awareness, providing a comprehensive measure of students' eco-consciousness. Responses are typically gathered through a combination of multiple-choice questions, Likert scale ratings, and behavioral checklists, offering insights into students' environmental attitudes and practices.

- **Prosocial Behaviour Questionnaire:** The Prosocial Behaviour Questionnaire, also known as the Prosocial Behaviour Scale, developed by Eisenberg *et al.* (2006), was utilized to measure various aspects of prosocial behavior among participants. This validated questionnaire assesses key dimensions of prosociality, including empathy, helping behavior, and social responsibility. It captures how individuals respond to others' needs, their tendency to engage in altruistic actions, and their sense of obligation towards societal well-being. The scale employs a range of question formats to gauge participants' attitudes and behaviors in real-life social contexts. Its validity and reliability make it a widely used tool for understanding prosocial tendencies in diverse populations.

4.4. Procedure

Data collection was carried out during school hours to ensure that participation did not interfere with students' regular academic activities. The process was conducted in a controlled and supervised environment within the participating schools. Students were asked to complete three questionnaires: the Mental Health Questionnaire, the Environmental Awareness Scale, and the Prosocial Behaviour Questionnaire. Each questionnaire was administered separately, with students given approximately 30 minutes to complete each one. To facilitate the process, trained facilitators were present to oversee the administration of the questionnaires, ensuring that students understood the instructions and could ask questions if needed. The facilitators also ensured that the environment remained conducive to focused and honest responses, and that all data collected was handled confidentially. This procedure aimed to maintain the reliability of the responses and ensure that students could complete the questionnaires comfortably and accurately.

4.5. Data Analysis

Pearson's correlation and other techniques analyzed links between mental health, environmental awareness, and prosocial behavior.

Pearson's Correlation Coefficient: Pearson's correlation assessed the strength and direction of relationships among mental health, environmental awareness, and prosocial behavior.

Multiple Regression Analysis: To further investigate the predictive relationships, multiple regression analysis was conducted. This analysis aimed to determine the extent to which mental health and environmental awareness could predict levels of prosocial behavior among the students. By controlling for potential confounding variables, the regression analysis provided a clearer understanding of how mental health and environmental awareness contribute to prosocial behavior.

These statistical techniques were chosen to provide a comprehensive view of the interplay between the variables and to identify significant predictors of prosocial behavior, enhancing the study's understanding of these complex relationships. Multiple regression analysis assessed how mental health and environmental awareness predict prosocial behavior.

5. Results and discussion

5.1. Correlation between Mental Health and Environmental Awareness

A significant positive correlation was identified between mental health and environmental awareness ($r = 0.43$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that students who exhibited higher levels of mental health also demonstrated greater knowledge and awareness regarding environmental issues. Specifically, students with better mental health reported a stronger understanding of environmental challenges and a more positive attitude towards sustainability. This finding suggests that improved mental well-being may be associated with a heightened sensitivity to environmental issues, reflecting a broader capacity for engagement with both personal and global concerns.

Recent research supports the idea that mental health can influence various aspects of cognitive and emotional functioning, including how individuals engage with environmental issues. For example, Lee *et al.* (2023) found that Individuals with higher mental resilience were more likely to engage in environmentally responsible behaviors and demonstrate strong environmental stewardship. This suggests that good mental health enhances awareness and

concern for environmental issues (Lee *et al.*, 2023).

Additionally, mental health affects overall life satisfaction and emotional stability, which can influence one's environmental attitudes. Research by Smith and Jones (2022) indicates that individuals with robust mental health are often more optimistic and motivated. These traits can enhance their engagement with global challenges, including environmental issues. For example, students with better mental health may have more cognitive resources available to consider and act on environmental problems, thereby showing higher levels of environmental awareness and concern (Smith & Jones, 2022).

The positive correlation found in this study suggests that improving mental well-being might also boost environmental consciousness. If students' mental health is supported, it could lead to an increased capacity for understanding and addressing environmental issues. This implies that integrating mental health support into environmental education could be beneficial. By addressing both mental well-being and environmental education concurrently, educators and policymakers can foster a generation that is not only mentally resilient but also more aware and proactive about environmental challenges (Smith & Jones, 2022).

5.2. Correlation between Mental Health and Prosocial Behaviour

A moderately strong positive correlation was found between mental health and prosocial behaviour ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates Mentally healthy students are more likely to engage in prosocial actions like helping others and community service. The positive relationship suggests that improved mental well-being is associated with a greater propensity for empathetic and altruistic behaviors. Students who reported better mental health demonstrated a stronger inclination towards actions that benefit others, reflecting an enhanced capacity for social responsibility and empathy.

Recent research supports this connection by emphasizing how mental health can influence one's propensity to act in ways that benefit others. For instance, a study by Brown and Johnson (2023) found that mentally well individuals are likelier to volunteer and help others. This correlation may be attributed to the fact that good mental health often enhances emotional stability and empathy, which are crucial for prosocial actions (Brown & Johnson, 2023).

Mentally healthy individuals handle stress better, enhancing their interactions with

others. Research by Miller *et al.* (2022) shows that those who manage their mental health effectively are more likely to demonstrate kindness and empathy, leading to increased prosocial behavior. This implies that the emotional and psychological resources gained from good mental health contribute to a greater willingness and ability to help others (Miller *et al.*, 2022).

Furthermore, the positive relationship between mental health and prosocial behavior underscores the importance of mental well-being in developing social responsibility and empathy. Students who are emotionally healthy are better positioned to engage in and sustain behaviors that support and benefit others, reflecting a more profound capacity for social engagement. This finding suggests that interventions aimed at improving mental health could also enhance students' prosocial tendencies, fostering a more compassionate and supportive community (Brown & Johnson, 2023).

5.3. Correlation between Environmental Awareness and Prosocial Behaviour

A significant positive correlation was found between environmental awareness and prosocial behaviour ($r = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$). Students with higher environmental awareness are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors. The relationship suggests that an increased understanding of environmental issues and a commitment to sustainability are associated with a greater tendency to perform actions that benefit others and contribute positively to society. This finding highlights the potential for environmental education to foster not only ecological responsibility but also broader prosocial tendencies among students.

Recent research supports this relationship, emphasizing that a strong understanding of environmental issues can enhance prosocial tendencies. For instance, research by White *et al.* (2023) found that environmentally conscious individuals are more likely to engage in community activities and exhibit prosocial behavior. This may be because environmental awareness often fosters a sense of global responsibility and interconnectedness, which can translate into actions that support and benefit others (White *et al.*, 2023).

Moreover, environmental education has been shown to have broader effects beyond just ecological understanding. Studies such as those by Clark and Roberts (2022) suggest that environmental education programs foster prosocial behavior by highlighting the impact of actions on the environment and community. This indicates that environmental awareness not only promotes ecological responsibility but also nurtures a broader sense of social

responsibility and empathy (Clark & Roberts, 2022).

The correlation between environmental awareness and prosocial behavior highlights the potential benefits of integrating environmental education into school curricula. By fostering a deeper understanding of environmental issues, educators can also cultivate prosocial behaviors, creating students who are not only more aware of their ecological impact but also more inclined to engage in positive social actions. This finding underscores the value of promoting environmental awareness as a means of enhancing both ecological and social responsibility among students (White *et al.*, 2023).

5.4. Predictive Role of Mental Health and Environmental Awareness on Prosocial Behaviour

Multiple regression analysis indicated that mental health and environmental awareness collectively accounted for 36% of the variance in prosocial behaviour ($R^2 = 0.36$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that these two factors combined significantly contribute to understanding the variability in students' prosocial actions. Among the predictors, mental health had a stronger influence on prosocial behaviour ($\beta = 0.52$) compared to environmental awareness ($\beta = 0.29$). This finding underscores the prominent role of mental health in fostering prosocial behavior. Mentally healthy students are more likely to exhibit altruism, supporting research linking well-being to positive social outcomes. Improved mental health significantly predicted increased engagement in prosocial behaviors, suggesting that psychological resilience and emotional stability are critical for encouraging altruistic actions (Martin *et al.*, 2023).

Conversely, while environmental awareness also contributes to prosocial behavior, its influence is somewhat less pronounced compared to mental health. This suggests that while understanding and commitment to environmental issues do encourage prosocial actions, they are not as significant a predictor as mental well-being. Research by Green and Roberts (2022) supports this by demonstrating that while environmental consciousness enhances social responsibility, it is often the emotional and psychological aspects of mental health that drive more consistent prosocial behaviors (Green & Roberts, 2022).

The results highlight the importance of addressing both mental health and environmental awareness in promoting prosocial behavior. Educators and policymakers should consider integrating mental health support into educational programs alongside environmental

education. By doing so, they can leverage the combined benefits of both factors to foster a more compassionate and socially responsible student population. This dual approach can help enhance students' overall well-being and their commitment to prosocial actions, reflecting the intricate interplay between mental health and environmental awareness in shaping altruistic behaviors (Martin *et al.*, 2023).

6. Conclusion

This study highlights the link between mental health, environmental awareness, and prosocial behavior in adolescents. Findings suggest that better mental health and environmental awareness promote positive social actions, fostering emotionally resilient, socially, and environmentally responsible individuals. The results highlight the importance of educational interventions that integrate mental health support with environmental education. Such programs could cultivate a generation of adolescents who are equipped to handle personal challenges while contributing positively to society and the environment. Moreover, the stronger influence of mental health on prosocial behaviour underscores the need for mental health resources in schools to ensure students' emotional and social development. Further research is recommended to explore the mechanisms underlying these relationships, particularly how mental health interventions and environmental education together shape prosocial tendencies. Longitudinal studies could also investigate the lasting impact of these factors on adolescent development, helping educators and policymakers design more effective programs that address both individual well-being and societal contributions.

7. Future scope of this study

Future research could also explore the mechanisms underlying these associations, such as how specific aspects of mental health or types of environmental education might differentially impact prosocial behaviours. Investigating the effectiveness of targeted interventions that address both mental health and environmental awareness in educational settings could provide practical strategies for schools to implement. Overall, continued research in these areas has the potential to inform policy and educational practices, contributing to the development of programs that support the mental well-being and environmental responsibility of future generations.

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