

Social Support Mediates the Relationship Between Prosocial Motivation and Psychological Well-being



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Background

- Other-oriented values, such as communal motivation, is associated with better psychological wellbeing (Crocker et al., 2017).
- Compassionate behaviors toward others may be related to increased psychological wellbeing by increasing the availability of social support (Cosley et al., 2010; Sheldon & Cooper, 2008).
- Giving social support has been linked to an increase in love, trust, and relationship satisfaction (Cutrona, 1996).
- Receiving support has been shown to predict increased positive affect, life satisfaction, and lower depression and anxiety (Clark & Lemay, 2010; Reis et al., 2000).
- However, few studies have examined the values underlying the receipt and provision of social support, such as prosocial motivations.
- **Prosocial Motivations** is defined as values placed on prioritizing family over the self, having a sense of obligation to close others, and engaging in self-sacrificing behaviors with the goal of helping others.

Methods

Study 1: Cross-sectional

266 Latinx and European American college students from a university in California completed an online survey.

Study 2: longitudinal design

213 Chinese international college students from a university in the Northeast completed two online surveys spaced four months apart.

Measures:

- Brief Collectivism Questionnaire prosocial motivations subscale (Lui & Rollock, 2018)
- Satisfaction with Life scale (Deiner et al., 1985)
- DASS depression subscale (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995)
- Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson et al., 1988) positive affect subscale
- Two-Way Social Support scale (Shakespeare-Finch et al., 2011)

Current Study

The objective of these two studies was to examine whether the cross-sectional (Study 1) and prospective (Study 2) relationships between prosocial motivations and psychological well-being were mediated by the receipt and provision of social support. Study 1 further examined whether the link between prosocial motivations and life satisfaction were moderated by ethnic group.

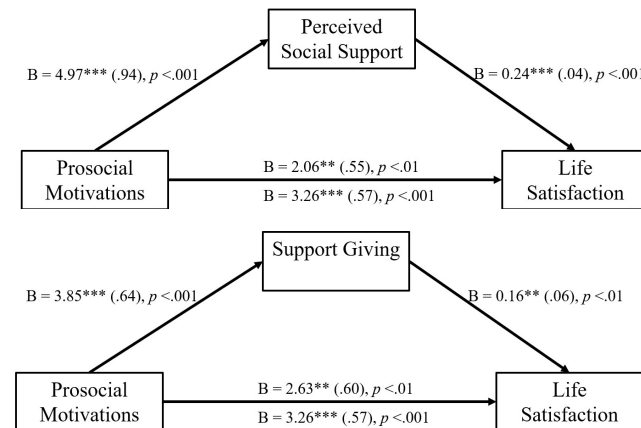


Figure 1. Study 1 Mediations. Model controls for age, gender, and ethnicity. B coefficients above and below the line is the direct and total effect, respectively.

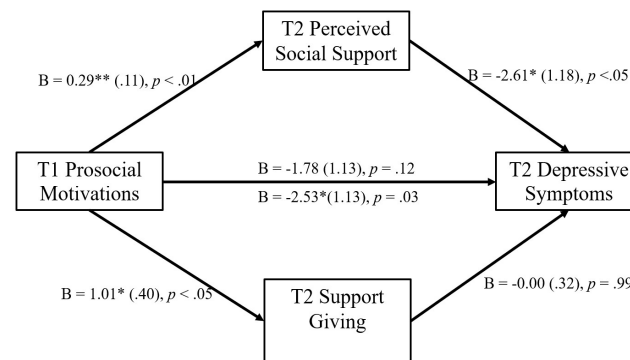


Figure 2. Study 2 Mediations. Model controls for age, gender, T1 support giving, T1 perceived social support, and T1 life satisfaction. B coefficients above and below the line is the direct and total effect, respectively.

Results

- In Study 1, prosocial motivations was associated with higher perceived social support ($B = 4.97$, $SE = .94$, $p < .001$) and support giving ($B = 3.85$, $SE = .64$, $p < .001$), which in turn was associated with higher life satisfaction ($Bs = .24$ and $.16$, $SEs = .04$ and $.06$, $ps < .01$, respectively). The indirect effects of social support receipt (point estimate = 1.20, 95% CI = [.69, 1.82]) and support giving (point estimate = .63, 95% CI = [.17, 1.17]) were significant.
- Study 2 found that T1 prosocial motivation was associated with higher T2 support giving ($B = .101$, $SE = .40$, $p < .05$), controlling for T1 support giving, and with higher T2 social support ($B = .29$, $SE = .11$, $p < .01$), controlling for T1 social support. T1 Prosocial motivation was also associated with increased T2 positive affect ($B = .20$, $SE = .07$, $p < .01$), life satisfaction ($B = 1.47$, $SE = 0.15$, $p < .05$), and marginally lower T2 depressive symptoms ($B = -0.85$, $SE = -0.12$, $p = .06$).
- However, the indirect effect for positive affect was not significant, both for support giving and receipt (point estimates = -0.008 and 0.03, 95% CIs [-0.05, 0.03] and [-0.05, 0.10], respectively), nor for life satisfaction (point estimates = -0.10 and 0.69, 95% CIs [-0.46, 0.18] and [-0.34, 1.58], respectively) or for depressive symptoms (point estimates = -0.03 and -0.28, 95% CIs [-0.30, 0.24] and [-0.83, 0.11], respectively).

Discussion

- Study 1 found support for the mediating roles of social support receipt and provision, but it was not replicated in the longitudinal model. Ethnicity did not moderate the prosocial motivation – life satisfaction link.
- In Study 2, we found evidence for the prospective relations between prosocial motivations and support giving and receipt. However, the indirect effects were not significant.
- Together, our findings point to the importance of studying prosocial motivations as a critical indicator of psychological well-being.