UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

MEDIATING ROLE OF EMPATHY IN THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PERSONALITY FACTORS, CULTURAL VALUES AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN RIYADH , SAUDI ARABIA

ALSALMAN ARWA ABDULLAH I

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BERILMU BERBAKTI

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By

ALSALMAN ARWA ABDULLAH I

Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

July 2021

DEDICATION

This is work is dedicated to my dear parents, my beloved and supportive husband, and my lovely children. Thank you for believing in me.

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

MEDIATING ROLE OF EMPATHY IN THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PERSONALITY FACTORS, CULTURAL VALUES AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA

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July 2021

Chairman : **Associate Professor Hanina Halimatusaadiah binti Hamsan, PhD**
Faculty : **Human Ecology**

The level of prosocial behavior among undergraduates may present new challenges to social psychologists. The results of national and global surveys indicate that the rate of prosocial behavior is lower among university students, although little is known about how certain variables contribute to the level of this behavior, particularly in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, considering the importance of empathy as the mediating role between personality factors, cultural values, and prosocial behavior, this study aims to determine the relationship between personality, cultural values, empathy, and prosocial behavior amongst undergraduates in the Riyadh region of Saudi Arabia. It also examines the role of empathy as a mediator in the relationship between personality factors and prosocial behavior. Furthermore, it seeks to determine the role of cultural values in prosocial behavior through empathy.

The current research applied cross-sectional design with correlational analysis. Through a multistage sampling technique, data were collected from 460 university students from King Saud University, Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, and Majmaah University. Personality factors (neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness) as independent variables were assessed by the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) (Goldberg et al., 2006). In addition, cultural values (self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, tradition, conformity, benevolence, and universalism) as independent variables were evaluated by Twenty Item Values Inventory (TWIVI) (Sandy et al., 2017). Finally, empathy as a mediator variable was measured by the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ) (Spreng et al., 2009), while prosocial behavior as a dependent variable was evaluated by Adult Prosocialness Instrument (API) (Caprara et al., 2005). SPSS was used to analyze descriptive statistics, independent sample *t*-test, Pearson correlation coefficient, Hierarchical Multiple Regression Modelling, and mediation

analysis (Process Macro). This study applied three theories/models: Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis, Five-Factor Model, and Values Theory.

The findings showed that there are differences in personality factors, cultural values, empathy, and prosocial behavior according to gender. The findings also indicated a positive relationship between extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness and prosocial behavior. However, neuroticism and prosocial behavior had a negative relationship. Cultural values (self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, tradition, conformity, benevolence, and universalism) showed significant correlations with prosocial behavior. The current study found that empathy had a significant relationship with prosocial behavior. Conscientiousness, agreeableness, tradition, benevolence, and universalism made it possible to predict prosocial behavior. Furthermore, this study showed that empathy mediates the relationship between personality factors (agreeableness and conscientiousness) and prosocial behavior, as well as between cultural values (benevolence and universalism) and prosocial behavior.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that prosocial behavior can be affected by gender, personality factors, cultural values, and empathy. Female undergraduates with higher levels of conscientiousness, agreeableness, universalism, hedonism, and empathy showed high levels of prosocial behavior. Meanwhile, male undergraduates with higher levels of neuroticism, extraversion, tradition, stimulation, and power, and decreased empathy, had low levels of prosocial behavior. Furthermore, undergraduates with extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness acted prosocially. Aside from this, neuroticism had a negative impact on prosocial behavior, while undergraduates who achieved high scores in self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, tradition, conformity, benevolence, and universalism had high levels of prosocial behavior. Finally, empathetic undergraduates behaved more prosocially. Undergraduates who had personality dominance to conscientiousness, and agreeableness and values (benevolence and universalism), tended to be more empathetic and help others.

The study suggests some recommendations for the Ministry of Education, universities, and psychologists to develop the level of prosocial behavior in undergraduates by considering the influence of personality factors, cultural values, and empathy. This study also proposes that universities should obtain information on the personalities of new undergraduates by using a screening test to plan treatment strategies with psychologists for undergraduates who are neurotic. Universities should consider their curricula and teaching by focusing on cultural values that enhance the level of prosocial behavior among undergraduates. This study sheds substantial new light on prosocial behavior among undergraduates in Saudi Arabia.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

PERANAN EMPATI SEBAGAI PERANTARA DALAM HUBUNGAN ANTARA FAKTOR PERSONALITI, , NILAI BUDAYA DAN TINGKAH LAKU PROSOSIAL DALAM KALANGAN MAHASISWA DI RIYADH, ARAB SAUDI

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Tahap tingkah laku prososial dalam kalangan pelajar universiti berkemungkinan akan menimbulkan cabaran baru kepada ahli psikologi sosial. Hasil tinjauan nasional dan global menunjukkan bahawa kadar tingkah laku prososial lebih rendah di kalangan pelajar universiti. Walau bagaimanapun, hanya sedikit maklumat yang diketahui mengenai bagaimana pemboleh ubah menyumbang kepada tahap tingkah laku ini, terutamanya di Arab Saudi. Selain itu, memandangkan pentingnya empati sebagai peranan mediasi antara faktor keperibadian, nilai budaya dan tingkah laku prososial, kajian ini dijalankan untuk menentukan hubungan antara personaliti, nilai budaya, empati, dan tingkah laku prososial di kalangan mahasiswa di wilayah Riyadh Arab Saudi. Kajian ini juga meninjau peranan empati sebagai mediator dalam hubungan antara faktor-faktor keperibadian dan tingkah laku prososial. Selain itu, kajian ini dilakukan bertujuan untuk menentukan peranan nilai budaya dalam tingkah laku prososial melalui empati.

Kajian ini menggunakan reka bentuk keratan rentas bersama analisis korelasi. Melalui teknik pensampelan pelbagai peringkat, data dikumpulkan dari 460 pelajar universiti dari King Saud University, Imam Muhammad bin Saud University dan Majmaah University. Faktor-faktor keperibadian (neurotisme, ekstraversi, kesadaran, kesepakatan, dan keterbukaan) sebagai pemboleh ubah bebas dinilai oleh International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) (Goldberg et al., 2006). Di samping itu, nilai budaya (arahan diri, rangsangan, hedonisme, pencapaian, kekuatan, keselamatan, tradisi, kesepakatan, kebajikan, dan universalisme) sebagai pemboleh ubah bebas dinilai oleh Twenty Item Values Inventory (TWIVI) (Sandy et al., 2017). Selain itu, empati sebagai pemboleh ubah mediator diukur oleh Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ) (Spreng et al., 2009), manakala tingkah laku prososial sebagai pemboleh ubah bersandar dinilai oleh Adult Prosocialness Instrument (API) (Caprara et al., 2005). SPSS digunakan untuk menganalisis statistik deskriptif, ujian t sampel bebas, Pearson correlation

iii

coefficient, Hierarchical Multiple Regression Modelling dan mediation analysis (Proses Makro). Kajian ini mengaplikasikan tiga teori / model: Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis, Five-Factors Model, and Values Theory.

Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa terdapat perbezaan faktor-faktor keperibadian, nilai budaya, empati dan tingkah laku prososial mengikut jantina. Penemuan ini juga menunjukkan hubungan positif antara ekstraversi, kesadaran, kesepakatan, dan keterbukaan, dan tingkah laku prososial. Walaubagaimanapun, neurotisme dan tingkah laku prososial mempunyai hubungan negatif. Nilai budaya (arahan diri, rangsangan, hedonisme, pencapaian, kekuatan, keselamatan, tradisi, kesepakatan, kebajikan, dan universalisme) juga menunjukkan korelasi yang signifikan dengan tingkah laku prososial. Kajian semasa ini juga mendapati bahawa empati mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan tingkah laku prososial. Kesadaran, kesepakatan, tradisi, kebajikan, dan universalisme membolehkan peramalan tingkah laku prososial. Tambahan, kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa empati memediasi hubungan antara faktor-faktor keperibadian (kesepakatan dan kesadaran) dan tingkah laku prososial. Empati juga memediasi hubungan antara nilai budaya (kebajikan dan universalisme) dan tingkah laku prososial.

Berdasarkan penemuan ini, kesimpulan dapat dibuat bahawa tingkah laku prososial dapat dipengaruhi oleh jantina, faktor-faktor keperibadian, nilai budaya dan empati. Pelajar-pelajar perempuan dengan tahap kesadaran, kesepakatan, universalisme, hedonisme, dan empati yang lebih tinggi juga menunjukkan tahap tingkah laku prososial yang tinggi manakala pelajar lelaki yang mempunyai tahap neurotisme, ekstraversi, tradisi, rangsangan, kekuatan dan penurunan empati yang tinggi mempunyai tahap tingkah laku prososial yang rendah. Di samping itu, pelajar-pelajar siswazah yang mempunyai extraversi, kesadaran, kesepakatan, dan keterbukaan bertindak secara pro-sosial. Selain itu, pelajar siswazah neurotik mempunyai kesan negatif terhadap tingkah laku prososial lebih-lebih lagi, siswazah yang memperoleh skor tinggi dalam arah diri, rangsangan, hedonisme, prestasi, kekuatan, keselamatan, tradisi, kesepakatan, kebajikan, dan universalisme ini juga mempunyai tahap tingkah laku prososial yang tinggi. Selain itu, pelajar yang berempati bersikap lebih pro-sosial. Pelajar-pelajar siswazah yang mempunyai dominasi keperibadian terhadap kesadaran, dan kesepakatan dan nilai- nilai (kebajikan dan universalisme) mempunyai kecenderungan untuk lebih bersikap empati dan sikap suka menolong orang lain.

Kajian ini memberi beberapa cadangan untuk Kementerian Pendidikan, universiti, dan pakar-pakar psikologi untuk mengembangkan tahap tingkah laku prososial pelajar siswazah dengan mempertimbangkan pengaruh faktor-faktor keperibadian, nilai budaya dan empati. Kajian ini juga mencadangkan bahawa universiti harus mempunyai maklumat mengenai keperibadian pelajar baru dengan menggunakan ujian saringan untuk merancang strategi rawatan bersama pakar-pakar psikologi untuk pelajar siswazah yang neurotik. Pihak-pihak universiti harus mempertimbangkan kurikulum dan pengajaran mereka dengan menumpukan perhatian pada nilai-nilai kebudayaan yang dapat meningkatkan tahap tingkah laku prososial dalam kalangan pelajar siswazah. Secara substansial, kajian ini telah memberi cahaya baru terhadap tingkah laku prososial dalam kalangan pelajar-pelajar siswazah di Arab Saudi.

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ix

xii

xiii

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

xvi

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

KSU	King Saud University
IMSIU	Imam Mohamad ibn Saud Islamic University
UM	Majmaah University
FD	Faculty of Dentistry
FLT	Faculty of Languages and Translation
FS	Faculty of Science
FM	Faculty of Medicine
FCs	Faculty of Computer Science
FE	Faculty of Education
FBA	Faculty of Business Administration
FL	Faculty of Literature
FM	Faculty of Medicine
PIPI	International Personality Item Pool scale
TwIVI	Twenty Item Values Inventory
TEQ	Toronto Empathy Questionnaire
A P I	Adult Prosocialness Instrument

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Prosocial behavior including cooperating, helping, and volunteering is one of most central subjects of social psychology (Dovidio & Penner, 2004). Recent decades have demonstrated that social psychologists have considered prosocial behavior one of the most significant and positive behaviors, after focusing for many decades on studying negative variables such as aggressive behavior (Eisenberg et al., 2015). Social psychologists pointed out that one of the main reasons for focusing on prosocial behavior is due to an urgent need to help people who are going through difficult circumstances, especially nowadays, when people around the world face challenges related to poverty and hunger, which require help (Beilin, 2013). Additionally, prosocial behavior is a crucial action for the betterment of societies, a fundamental tenet of human nature, and a basic virtue of all individuals (Lam, 2012). However, these actions may distinguish one culture from another. For instance, Islamic countries, such as Kuwait and United Arab Emirates, consider prosocial behavior one of the main behaviors and encourage their individuals to act prosocially (Alrowishd, 2014). Therefore, researchers seek to study and understand prosocial behavior (Batson, 2012).

Prosocial behavior means acts that seek to help several segments of society and are provided by institutions or individuals (Beilin, 2013). Universities as institutions try to play their role in society; as educational institutions they have a great responsibility towards others (Algraibah & Arsheed, 2016). These universities support their students by facilitating the provision of their needs and contributing to charitable activities for the community. The number of these educational centers is increasing. As a developing country, Saudi Arabia has several universities that attract undergraduates (Almalki, 2011). Based on the latest statistics from SMOE (2017), there are 33 public universities in Saudi Arabia, among them public universities King Saud University, Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, and Majmaah University. These universities offer community services in addition to their basic educational role.

Furthermore, the presence of universities is essentially significant for youth. Besides education, university programs have been considered one of the crucial targets that these educational institutions offer youth (Sanders, 1994). For instance, universities provide support for students to improve their prosocial behavior by engaging in activities such as volunteering or helping new students (Algraibah & Arsheed, 2016). As mentioned by Hilbig et al. (2014), undergraduates are the main human force at universities and have a meaningful role at a personal and social level. University students are involved in social activities and make important contributions in their responsibilities towards others, and these activities stimulate and increase their levels of prosocial behavior (Smith et al., 2010). The number of undergraduates is increasing in most countries, including Saudi Arabia (Alsultan, 2009): according a report from

1

Ministry of Education (2018), the number of university students in Saudi Arabia is 1.42 million, representing a 2600% increase over the past four decades. Hence, Saudi Arabia strives the greatest attention to the youth. The Saudi government has a long-term goal, through its 2030 vision, to transform Saudi Arabia into a global leading youth center for volunteering (Matawe, 2018). Young people must make considerable social contributions to societies (Drezner, 2010). Hence, as a developing country, Saudi Arabia is striving to give the greatest attention to youth by involving them in training programs to benefit from their capabilities and skills and try to develop their positive behavior, with several centers in Saudi Arabia that attract young people to provide charitable works to society.

Prosocial behavior is a significant behavior in youth due its effect on social level (Guo et al., 2011). In this positive behavior, young people strive to help peers and others around them to increase the wellbeing of those in need and develop the community. However, there has been a decrease in prosocial behavior in these categories, as they focus on their personal success and achievements (Habashi et al., 2016); evidence in Saudi Arabia found a decrease in the level of prosocial behavior among youth (Alsultan, 2009). This decrease has been precipitated by the effect of several circumstances among undergraduates (Van der Graaff et al., 2018).

Previous research in the context of prosocial behavior concentrated on variables that positively or negatively impact prosocial behavior among undergraduates. Indeed, these studies focused on two main aspects, which implicate effective elements arising from internal factors such as personality factors and empathy, and the rest from external factors such as cultural values. In Saudi Arabia, a decrease in prosocial behavior was reported in 24% of Saudi undergraduates, influenced by different factors (Vision Center for Social Studies, 2014). According to Alrweeta (2007), personality factors affect tendencies toward a particular behavior in Saudi undergraduates. Hilbig et al. (2014) declared that each personality factor has a unique influence, whether positive or negative. In regard to the influence of cultural values, Betancourt et al. (1992) mentioned that values affect the way undergraduates act prosocially or refuse to participate in prosocial behavior. The values obtained by individuals from their culture influence the level of prosocial behavior. Likewise, concerning the role of empathy on prosocial behavior (Bagozzi & Moore, 1994), Eisenberg et al. (2010) explained that the absence of empathy would greatly negatively impact the amount of prosocial behavior, since empathy is the main factor that leads individuals to help others.

Therefore, the present study focuses on the influence of personality factors, cultural values, and empathy on prosocial behavior among undergraduates in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Personality factors make a significant contribution to the behavior and feelings of undergraduate students, and these factors include neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness (Pursell et al., 2008). Each of these factors has consequences for the level of prosocial behavior and demonstrates either a positive or negative relationship to prosocial behavior (Habashi et al., 2016). Cultural values also play an effective role in students' behavior, attitudes, and thinking (Serow, 1991); they include ten values: conformity, tradition, benevolence, universalism, self-

direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, and security. Each of these values has a unique influence on prosocial behavior (Schwartz, 2010). Moreover, a high level of empathy can improve prosocial behavior. In general, empathy manages inner feelings, which in turn control prosocial behavior (Hoffman, 2008).

As mentioned above, this research concentrates on personality factors, cultural values, and empathy, and their contribution to prosocial behavior. This combination has not been studied in previous research, although theories of prosocial behavior explained that. In other words, this research is the first of its type to explore the influence of these three variables on prosocial behavior and apply them to undergraduates in Saudi universities.

1.2   Statement of Problem

Prosocial behavior such as cooperation, sharing, helping, and donating can be seen in everyday life; however, there has been a decline in these actions as people are more selfish and living in individualistic cultures, especially young people (Aflobi, 2014). Research has indicated that countries such as the United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK) have low rates of prosocial behavior, as young people focus on their education and the development of their individual skills and jobs and ignore participation in prosocial behavior. University students who lack prosocial behavior are less cooperative and involved in charitable centers (Batson, 2012). As stated by Twenge et al. (2007), low prosocial behavior has been noted among undergraduates in different cultures, such as Asians, Africans, Americans, and Latinos.

Saudi Arabia has also faced challenges related to weak prosocial behavior among university students. While it has tried to provide volunteer opportunities, Saudi Arabia still has shown deficits in positive behavior (Alobid, 2013). The General Authority for Statistics (2019) has examined the volunteering work among Saudi youth; the survey from the study indicated a decline in volunteerism amongst those aged 15-34, where the proportion of youth volunteers reached 14.3%. Furthermore, the survey investigated the reasons for volunteering: results showed 49% of volunteers did so to improve their skills, 32% for new social relationships, and 19% for the feeling of empathy towards others. Moreover, a report from the Ministry of the Interior (2015) revealed that 95% of crimes in Saudi Arabia were among youth, and those who returned to crime were more aggressive towards others due to the lack prosocial motivation.

Low prosocial behavior is one of the critical factors that impacts undergraduates' attitudes in Saudi Arabia. The lack of prosocial behavior among Saudi undergraduates has led to consequences such as violence and crime, especially since young people have enormous potential and leisure time (Algathmi, 2007). As mentioned by Alshrani (2006), youth who have experienced a decrease in prosocial behavior have also shown ideological extremism, which leads to violence against others, terrorizing and sacrificing others to achieve their targets. As claimed by Connolly et al. (2017), low

3

prosocial behavior among Saudi undergraduates negatively impacts their psychological health; for instance, individuals less involved in prosocial behavior are at risk of depression. Likewise, Alesawi (2002) noted decreasing prosocial behavior among Saudi undergraduates, which in turn affects society's perception of them, as they consider them irresponsible; hence, it limits their social relationships.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to control the negative effects of a lack of prosocial behavior, and this can be addressed by prevention and looking at its causes. Some of the significant factors associated with prosocial behavior are those related to personality. Studies have identified that personality traits contribute 40%-50% to an individual's behavior and feelings (Abuhashim, 2010). The type of personality that characterizes people determines their level of prosocial behavior (Thielmann et al., 2020). According to Xie et al. (2016), some personalities have the characteristics of friendliness, socialness, empathy, and cooperation with others; however, there are individuals who are isolated from others and have negative emotions such as anxiety and mood swings. The former characteristics contribute to increasing positive behavior, while the latter may reduce the level of social behavior (Habashi et al., 2016). In addition, a study in Saudi Arabia by Alhssini (2013) found that personality plays an influential role in the level of prosocial behaviors. However, prosocial behavior is not just affected by personality factors but also by factors such as gender, cultural values, and empathy (Beilin, 2013).

Previous studies show that cultural values are external factors that are also responsible for the level of prosocial behavior and have direct and indirect influence on involvement in social activities (Schwartz, 2010). Evidence indicates the impact of cultural values on prosocial behavior (Irwin, 2009). It is through values that individuals are taught to be concerned with prosocial behavior. For example, societies encourage individuals to self-actualization or to prosocial behavior; the former is conductive to the centrality of individual values while the latter is based on collective values (Penner, 2005). Indeed, individual values limit the amount of prosocial behavior in Saudi undergraduates (Albugami, 2010).

Moreover, the types of personality and cultural values that people uphold will determine the level of empathy that leads to prosocial behavior (Caprara et al., 2012), and the level of empathy has a direct effect on helping behavior (Anderson et al., 2010). As mentioned by Decety et al. (2016), low empathy is the main cause of low prosocial behavior. Arain et al. (2019) found that Saudi medical students are less empathetic with the progression of the academic year, which is attributed to habituation in dealing with sick cases and which negatively impacts their reactions and behavior towards others. In contrast, empathetic people tend to value prosocial behavior (Bekkers, 2010; Davis, 2015). They are friendlier in their dealings with others and more understanding of the feelings of those in need compared to less empathetic individuals who tend to ignore prosocial acts (White, 2014).

4

Gender is another determinant of prosocial behavior (Xiao et al., 2019). According to several societies, gender is an important predictor of prosocial behavior. In some societies, females are prepared to be more social than males (Fabes & Eisenberg, 1998; Eagly & Crowley, 1986). However, Egli (2009) hypothesized that men and women engage in different types of prosocial behavior: women are more likely to participate in prosocial behaviors with a societal dimension, while men are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors that require physical strength. For instance, females are willing to provide emotional support to those in need, and males help in public if such assistance is too risky (Carlo, Houseman, et al., 2003). However, gender differences in prosocial behavior are attributable to differences in cultures (Eisenberg et al., 2015), and research has shown that gender differences in prosocial behavior differ across countries (Carlo, Roche, et al., 2001). Male university students showed more prosocial behavior in America, while by contrast, females showed more prosocial behavior in Nigeria and India (Abdullahahi & Kumar, 2016).

Despite low prosocial behavior among undergraduates in Saudi Arabia, very few researchers have investigated the factors that affect prosocial behavior as in the studies of Albugami (2010) and Alhssini (2013). Research has emphasized prosocial behavior among youth, personality factors, cultural values, and empathy, without linking these variables together. Additionally, few studies in Saudi Arabia have explored the associations between prosocial behavior and the influencing factors on which the present study focuses. Also, it is not known whether empathy mediates the relationships between personality factors, cultural values, and prosocial behavior. Hence, the current study attempts to determine the relationships between personality factors, cultural values, empathy, and prosocial behavior among undergraduates in the Riyadh region, Saudi Arabia. It is important to discover the factors that contribute to improving the level of prosocial behavior of undergraduates. It is an attempt to determine how differences in personality and cultural values contribute to the level of empathy, which in turn determines changes in the amount of social behavior. With this approach, research questions were developed.

1.3 Research Questions

The central question in the current research inquires how personality factors, cultural values, and empathy affect prosocial behavior among undergraduates in the Riyadh region, Saudi Arabia. Based on the problem statement, the following research questions were posed:

1. What are the levels of empathy and prosocial behavior among Saudi undergraduates?

2. What are the types of personality and cultural values among respondents?

3. Are there any differences in personality factors, cultural values, empathy, and prosocial behavior between male and female respondents?

4. Are there any relationships between personality factors, cultural values, empathy, and prosocial behavior?

5. What are the factors that uniquely predict prosocial behavior?

6. Does empathy mediate the relationship between personality factors and prosocial behavior?

7. Does empathy mediate the relationship between cultural values and prosocial behavior?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The key role of prosocial behavior among undergraduates has been investigated in multiple studies (e.g., Afolabi, 2014), as it helps in realizing their prosocial behavior. Undergraduates' prosocial behavior might be enhanced by using the current research that has examined effective factors such as personality factors, cultural values, and empathy that may improve prosocial behavior.

The weakness of prosocial behavior among Saudi undergraduates has led to several consequences, such as antisocial behavior (Connolly et al., 2017), Moreover, they perhaps face behavioral deviancy, such as drugs, particularly since youth comprise the highest percentage of the population of Saudi Arabia, where they represent 36.7% of the population and have great abilities, which if not exploited may lead to negative consequences (Azazi, 2014). Hence, the significance of this study, to raise prosocial behavior among Saudi youth, is beneficial to their personal growth (Matawe, 2018). In other words, high prosocial behavior will improve their social skills and self-esteem. Furthermore, it is important for the development of community. For instance, if individuals help others, the conditions of those in need will improve (Alrowishd, 2014). The purpose of this research is to shed new light on this evidence through an investigation of relationships between personality factors, cultural values, and empathy and prosocial behavior. Indeed, empathy might indirectly contribute to relationships between undergraduates' prosocial behavior, personality, and cultural values. Thus, this study provides a crucial contribution to the mediating role of empathy in the relationships between personality factors and cultural values and prosocial behavior.

Moreover, the findings of the current research promote literature on psychological studies concerning the important role and elements of prosocial behavior. The current research also supports previous research about the significance of prosocial behavior among undergraduates. Furthermore, this study raises awareness of the importance of developing empathy and identifying personality factors and cultural values in their impact on prosocial behavior of undergraduates.

This study provides considerable evidence in connection with important predictors of prosocial behavior. Indeed, it should motivate universities, psychologists, and parents

to better understand undergraduates' prosocial behavior. Additionally, discovering the motives and causes of positive social behavior would control and decrease the negative effects of these causes on prosocial behavior. Finally, the results of this study could help decisionmakers who focus on students' affairs and issues.

Generally, previous research on prosocial behavior has not dealt with Saudi undergraduates. The current study is one the few to focus on undergraduates and has investigate the relationships between personality factors, cultural values, empathy, and prosocial behavior.

1.5 Objective of the Study

This section presents the current study's general objective and specific objectives.

1.5.1 General Objective

The main objective of this study is to identify the relationships between personality factors, cultural values, empathy, and prosocial behavior among Saudi undergraduates.

1.5.2 Specific Objectives

1. To identify the level of empathy and prosocial behavior among Saudi undergraduates.

2. To identify the types of personality (neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness) and cultural values (conformity, tradition, benevolence, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, hedonism, achievement, power, and security) among respondents.

3. To compare the differences between males and females in personality factors, cultural values, empathy, and prosocial behavior.

4. To identify the relationships between personality factors, cultural values, empathy, and prosocial behavior.

5. To determine the main factors that contribute to prosocial behavior.

6. To examine the mediating effect of empathy in the relationship between personality factors and prosocial behavior and in the relationship between cultural values and prosocial behavior.

1.6 Hypotheses

Based on the research question and research objectives of the study, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H_a1: There are significant differences in personality factors (neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness) between males and females.

H_a2: There are significant differences in cultural values (conformity, tradition, benevolence, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, hedonism, achievement, power, and security) between males and females.

H_a3: There is a significant difference in empathy between males and females.

H_a4: There is a significant difference in prosocial behavior between males and females.

H_a5: There is a significant relationship between personality factors (neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientious and openness) and prosocial behavior.

H_a6: There are significant relationships between cultural values (conformity, tradition, benevolence, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, hedonism, achievement, power, and security) and prosocial behavior.

H_a7: There is a positive relationship between empathy and prosocial behavior.

H_a8: Personality factors, cultural values, and empathy would account for unique variance in the prediction of prosocial behavior by controlling for gender.

H_a9: Empathy would mediate the relationships between personality factors and prosocial behavior.

H_a10: Empathy would mediate the relationships between cultural values and prosocial behavior.

1.7 Definition of Terminology

In this section, essential key terms that were applied in this research are conceptually and operationally defined.

1.7.1 Prosocial Behavior

Conceptual Definition:

Prosocial behavior refers to positive behavior that aims to help others and sets positive intentions for help without anticipation of its consequences (Feigin et al., 2014). These

8

behaviors include a broad range of activities, including sharing, comforting, rescuing, and helping (Eisenberg, 2006).

Operational Definition:

In this study, the operational definition of prosocial behavior refers to the score of undergraduates on the Adult Prosocialness Instrument (API), translated by the researcher from the foreign version by Caprara et al. (2005).

1.7.2   Personality Factors

Conceptual Definition:

Personality factors are a set of distinctive traits that appear to individuals through behavior and feeling. Personality also means that others in society notice a difference between several types of characters (Nasir et al., 2011).

Operational Definition:

The operational definition of personality factors in present study refers to the score of undergraduates on the International Personality Item Pool scale (IPIP) as translated by Abuhashim (2010) from the foreign version by Goldberg et al. (2006). This scale was used to evaluate five factors of personality—extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness, and neuroticism—via 50 questions. In general, a high score of extraversion illustrates powerful, sociable, and excited, while individuals with high scores of agreeableness are kind and empathetic. A high score in conscientiousness refers to people who are responsible and reliable. Additionally, a high score in openness indicates creativity and wide interests. On the other hand, a high score in neuroticism denotes nervousness and unhappiness (De Fruyt et al., 2006).

1.7.3   Cultural Values

Conceptual Definition:

Cultural values refer to criteria that define a person's behavior through a set of values that distinguish each culture from another. As stated by Schwartz and Butenko (2014), cultural values comprise individual values such as power and achievement, and collective values like benevolence and universalism.

Operational Definition:

In the current study, cultural values' operational definition refers to the score of undergraduates on the Twenty Item Values Inventory (TwIVI), translated by researcher

from the foreign version by Sandy et al. (2017). This scale was used to evaluate ten elements of values—conformity, tradition, benevolence, universalism, self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, and security—via 20 questions. In general, a high score in conformity indicates restraint in action, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others. A high score in tradition refers to commitment and acceptance of customs and ideas. A high score in benevolence refers to preserving and enhancing the welfare of people with whom one is in need. High scores in universalism mean an understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all individuals; a high score in self-direction illustrates independent thought and action. Individuals with high score in stimulation reflect excitement, novelty, and challenge in life. A high score in hedonism refers to pleasure or sensuous gratification for oneself. Additionally, a high score in achievement indicates personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards. A high score in power displays social status and prestige, control, or dominance over people and resources. Finally, a high score in security reflects safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of the self.

1.7.4 Empathy

Conceptual Definition:

The term empathy is used to describe a wide range of experiences. Researchers define empathy as the ability to sense others' emotions, coupled with the ability to imagine what someone else might be thinking or feeling (Simpson et al., 2003). In Hassenstab et al. (2007), empathy is defined as the ability to sense others' emotions as if they were one's own.

Operational Definition:

Empathy's operational definition in this study refers to score of undergraduates on the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ), translated by the researcher from the foreign version of Spreng et al. (2009).

1.8 Limitations

There are a few limitations associated with this study. Firstly, the location is restricted to public universities in the Riyadh region of Saudi Arabia. Secondly, the respondents of this study are limited to undergraduates. Finally, the study design focused on a cross-sectional design through data collected at one time.

1.9　　　　　Chapter Summary

This chapter started with an introduction to prosocial behavior and related challenges among undergraduates, and continued with a brief review of previous research and statistics and gaps identified in previous studies. The problem statement was followed by sections on the significance of the study, the general and specific objectives, research hypotheses, theoretical and conceptual framework, definition of concepts, and limits of the current study.

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97

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101

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111

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Dear student,

I am a doctoral candidate in social psychology at the faculty of Human Ecology at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). I am conducting a study to examine factors that contributes to prosocial act. Prosocial behavior is a voluntary behavior designed to help others. This action may involve helping other people, donating money to the needy others, join in volunteer program and cooperation. In this study, I am interested to explore the main factors that contribute to this behavior such as personality, empathy, and cultural values particularly among undergraduates in Riyadh Region. It is a great pleasure if you could participate in this study which it may add into the empirical data of prosocial behavior and further help the researcher in suggesting and developing psychological interventions in promoting prosocial behavior.

BIODATA OF STUDENT

Alsalman Arwa Abdullah was born on the 14 May, 1984 in Capital of Saudi, Riyadh. She passed her pre-University education in Riyadh and graduated from high school in 2002. Then, she continued her studies at undergraduate and master levels in the faculty of Education at King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi, and successfully graduated in 2013. After four years of experience in several universities, she began her doctoral studies in 2017, in the field of social psychology at the faculty of Human Ecology, Universiti Putra Malaysia.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Abdullah, A. A., Hamsan, H. H., & Ma'rof, A. A. (2020). Cultural Values and Prosocial Behavior Among Saudi Undergraduates: The Mediating Role of Empathy. *Journal of Critical Reviews*, *7*(13), 1735-1744.

Abdullah, A. A., Hamsan, H. H., & Ma'rof, A. A. (2020). How Do Personality Factors Associate with Prosocial Behavior? The Mediating Role of Empathy. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 10(16),* 206-219.

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