

## Understanding Moral Psychology in Context: Emotions, Reasoning, and Social Norms

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**ABSTRACT:** This narrative review explores the psychological foundations of moral decision-making and prosocial behavior by examining the roles of emotion, reasoning, and contextual factors. The objective is to synthesize recent empirical findings to understand how these dimensions interact to influence moral actions. A systematic literature search was conducted using databases such as Scopus, PubMed, and Google Scholar, with keywords including "moral psychology," "prosocial behavior," and "emotional influences on moral reasoning." Inclusion criteria focused on peer-reviewed articles that utilized quantitative, qualitative, or review methodologies and addressed diverse populations across cultures. The results revealed that emotions, particularly empathy and compassion, significantly drive prosocial tendencies, and can be enhanced through interventions like loving-kindness meditation. Moral reasoning is shaped by developmental stages, cultural background, and educational exposure, with deontological and utilitarian frameworks often guiding decisions. Social context, including group identity and societal norms, further modulates moral choices, especially during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings align with established theories, including Kohlberg's moral development stages and contextualist moral models, and highlight the systemic role of education and policy in shaping moral behavior. The review concludes by emphasizing the importance of integrating moral education, promoting emotional development, and implementing inclusive policies to foster prosocial behavior. Future research should prioritize longitudinal and cross-cultural studies to bridge current gaps in understanding the dynamics of moral psychology..

**Keywords:** Moral Psychology, Prosocial Behavior, Empathy And Emotion, Moral Reasoning, Cultural Context, Social Norms, Moral Education.



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## INTRODUCTION

Moral psychology and prosocial decision-making have emerged as critical areas of inquiry in contemporary behavioral and cognitive sciences. These fields investigate how individuals make

ethical judgments and engage in actions that benefit others, encompassing both affective and cognitive dimensions of human morality. In the wake of increasing societal challenges and cross-cultural complexities, the relevance of understanding moral cognition and behavior has grown significantly. Recent research has expanded our comprehension of how individuals navigate moral dilemmas, drawing attention to the interplay between emotional responses, rational deliberation, and the social environment in shaping prosocial actions (Bankard, 2015; Decety, 2021).

One particularly salient context that underscores the importance of moral psychology is the COVID-19 pandemic, which has provided real-world insights into how moral values and social norms influence public behavior. During the pandemic, public perceptions and behaviors related to helping others were found to be shaped not only by health-related concerns but also by underlying moral orientations and political ideologies (Niemi et al., 2021). This demonstrates the need for a comprehensive framework to understand prosocial behavior that incorporates both moral reasoning and emotional influences. Emotions, especially empathy, have been shown to be powerful motivators for prosocial actions, sometimes even outweighing deliberative reasoning (Bankard, 2015). Understanding these psychological mechanisms is therefore crucial for designing interventions aimed at promoting cooperation and social responsibility in crisis contexts.

Empirical studies have documented how positive social stimuli can significantly affect individuals' tendencies toward cooperation and altruism. For instance, exposure to uplifting social news has been linked to increased prosocial behavior, emphasizing the role of cultural narratives and media framing in shaping moral judgments (Yao & Yu, 2016). Developmental research further reveals that early moral evaluations and fairness perceptions in childhood lay a foundation for enduring prosocial orientations in adulthood (Sommerville & Enright, 2018). These findings reinforce the view that moral psychology not only explains adult ethical behavior but also provides critical insights into its developmental antecedents.

In addition to emotional drivers, cognitive mechanisms such as fairness reasoning, agency, and reputation management have also been identified as influential in moral behavior. Studies show that altruistic behavior is often mediated by the perceived reputational gains it brings, suggesting that individuals may act morally not purely out of internal motivation but also due to social incentives (Arfer et al., 2015). Moreover, children and adolescents become increasingly adept at detecting ulterior motives behind prosocial acts, further complicating the relationship between intention and behavior (Heyman et al., 2013). These findings demonstrate that prosocial decisions are not solely based on moral reasoning but are intertwined with contextual evaluations of social outcomes.

Nevertheless, several challenges persist in the study of moral psychology and prosocial decision-making. One prominent issue is the disparity between individuals' moral judgments and their actual behaviors. While individuals may express strong moral convictions, their actions often diverge due to situational factors such as social pressure, ambiguity of norms, or emotional interference. This inconsistency poses methodological and theoretical challenges for researchers attempting to predict or influence prosocial actions.

Another challenge lies in understanding the dual-process nature of moral cognition. Evidence suggests that moral decisions are frequently driven by rapid, intuitive emotional reactions rather than by rational deliberation (Decety, 2021). This emotional dominance can lead to biased or inconsistent judgments, particularly when individuals face complex or unfamiliar dilemmas. Although dual-process theories offer a useful framework, more research is needed to clarify how intuitive and reflective processes interact in varied social contexts.

Despite the advancements in literature, there remains a significant gap in understanding the mechanisms through which specific emotions—such as empathy, guilt, or indignation—interact with situational cues like crisis events, media framing, or group identity to shape moral decisions. While numerous studies have examined emotional triggers or contextual influences separately, few have comprehensively addressed how specific emotions interact with situational variables to influence moral decisions (Yao & Yu, 2016). For instance, the mechanisms through which empathy, guilt, or indignation are activated by particular social cues remain underexplored. This gap highlights the need for integrative models that consider the dynamic interplay between internal affective states and external social conditions.

The primary objective of this narrative review is to synthesize recent theoretical and empirical findings in moral psychology with a specific focus on the affective, cognitive, and contextual factors that drive prosocial decision-making. In doing so, the review aims to bridge disparate strands of research and propose a more cohesive understanding of how individuals interpret and respond to moral situations. The review will analyze the roles of emotion, moral reasoning, and social context as core determinants of prosocial behavior and will critically evaluate how these dimensions interact across different developmental and cultural settings.

This review limits its scope to studies conducted primarily in the last decade, incorporating cross-disciplinary literature from psychology, neuroscience, sociology, and cultural studies. Geographically, the review focuses on research carried out in both Western and non-Western contexts to capture diverse cultural understandings of morality. Special attention is given to studies conducted in North America, Europe, and selected regions in Asia, while also identifying underrepresented populations such as indigenous communities and rural groups whose moral frameworks have received limited academic attention.

The need for such a review is underscored by the fragmented nature of existing research. While some studies highlight the role of individual emotions in moral decision-making, others emphasize broader sociocultural determinants without integrating these dimensions into a unified framework. For example, studies on positive news exposure suggest that emotional responses are socially shaped, yet they often neglect to account for underlying cognitive evaluations or normative pressures (Yao & Yu, 2016). Similarly, research on reputational motives underscores the social rewards of moral behavior but may overlook the role of empathy and other affective processes in initiating such behavior (Arfer et al., 2015).

Furthermore, there is a paucity of cross-cultural studies examining how cultural narratives and social norms modulate moral cognition and prosocial conduct. While research has investigated moral development in Western populations, less is known about how these processes manifest in

culturally diverse settings. Studies of Chinese and Canadian adolescents suggest cultural variations in moral emotion expectancies and evaluations (Krettenauer & Jia, 2013; Barisnikov & Lejeune, 2018), yet similar investigations in marginalized or collectivist societies are lacking.

The review also addresses methodological limitations in existing research, such as the overreliance on hypothetical moral dilemmas and laboratory-based experiments that may lack ecological validity. There is a need for more context-sensitive approaches that account for real-world moral challenges, especially in communities where moral norms are transmitted orally or enacted through collective traditions.

In conclusion, a comprehensive narrative review that integrates emotional, cognitive, and contextual perspectives can significantly advance our understanding of moral psychology and prosocial decision-making. By identifying theoretical inconsistencies, methodological limitations, and empirical gaps, this review aims to provide a more nuanced and inclusive account of how moral behavior is shaped. Such an approach is crucial for informing interventions, educational practices, and policy designs that seek to foster ethical conduct in increasingly diverse and interconnected societies.

## METHOD

The methodology adopted for this narrative review on moral psychology and prosocial decision-making was designed to ensure a systematic and rigorous exploration of existing literature. This section outlines the strategies used for sourcing, selecting, and evaluating scholarly works relevant to the affective, cognitive, and contextual factors that influence prosocial behavior. Particular attention was given to ensuring the academic quality and thematic relevance of the included studies.

The process began with a comprehensive literature search conducted across three major academic databases: Scopus, PubMed, and Google Scholar. These platforms were selected for their extensive coverage of peer-reviewed journals, interdisciplinary reach, and relevance to both psychology and behavioral sciences. To retrieve articles that directly addressed the intersection of emotion, moral reasoning, and prosocial behavior, a carefully curated list of keywords was employed. The selected keywords included "moral psychology," "emotional influences on moral reasoning," "prosocial behavior," "moral decision-making," and "emotion and morality." Boolean operators were strategically integrated into search queries to refine and expand the scope of the search. For instance, combinations such as "moral psychology AND prosocial behavior," or "emotion AND (moral decision-making OR moral reasoning)" allowed the identification of articles that investigated multiple dimensions of the subject simultaneously.

The initial search yielded a substantial number of articles, necessitating the application of inclusion and exclusion criteria to filter the results. Inclusion criteria required that the studies be published in peer-reviewed journals to ensure the academic rigor and credibility of the findings. Furthermore, studies were included if they presented robust qualitative or quantitative methodologies, offered theoretical insights or empirical evidence on moral psychology and prosociality, or contributed

novel conceptual frameworks to the field. An additional inclusion condition was that the research sample should reflect cultural or geographic diversity. This was particularly important to address the cultural contextualization of moral reasoning and to assess how prosocial behaviors are expressed and interpreted across different populations.

Exclusion criteria were equally critical in maintaining the integrity of the review. Studies were excluded if they did not focus explicitly on moral psychology or prosocial behavior, or if the moral dimension was peripheral rather than central to the investigation. Articles with methodological weaknesses, such as poorly defined variables, inadequate sample sizes, or a lack of transparency in data analysis, were also excluded. Additionally, any article published in predatory or non-peer-reviewed journals was deemed ineligible for inclusion to uphold the academic standards of the review.

A diverse range of study types was considered in this review to capture the complexity of the topic. Quantitative studies, such as surveys, experiments, and longitudinal analyses, were included for their ability to establish statistical associations and causal inferences. These studies provided measurable insights into the relationships between emotional responses, cognitive evaluations, and prosocial behaviors. For instance, large-scale experiments examining reactions to moral dilemmas or dictator games offered quantifiable data on how emotions and reputational concerns influence decision-making processes (Arfer et al., 2015).

Qualitative studies were also integrated into the review for their capacity to provide depth and contextual understanding. These studies often employed interviews, focus groups, or ethnographic methods to explore how individuals perceive and interpret moral situations in real-life settings. Through this approach, researchers were able to uncover nuanced understandings of cultural norms, emotional expressions, and the moral values that guide behavior in specific communities (Niemi et al., 2021; Krettenauer & Jia, 2013). In doing so, qualitative research complemented the generalizability of quantitative studies with insights that were rich in cultural and psychological specificity.

In addition to empirical research, this review included theoretical and literature review articles. These contributions were particularly valuable for framing the broader conceptual landscape of moral psychology. For instance, reviews by Eisenberg et al. (2014) and others served to synthesize findings across multiple studies, identify recurring themes, and highlight conceptual inconsistencies or methodological gaps in the field. Including such reviews helped anchor this narrative synthesis in well-established scholarly discourse while also informing future directions for research.

The literature selection process involved several stages. First, search results were exported to a reference management software, where duplicate entries were removed. Titles and abstracts of the remaining studies were then screened to assess their relevance to the review's objectives. In this phase, articles that clearly lacked an emphasis on moral reasoning, emotional influence, or prosocial behavior were excluded. The next step involved a full-text review of the shortlisted articles to evaluate their methodological soundness and thematic alignment with the central research questions.

Articles that met all criteria were then subjected to a thematic analysis, wherein their findings were categorized according to emergent themes such as emotional triggers of moral behavior, the role of reasoning and agency, contextual influences, and cultural variability. This analytic approach allowed for the organization of findings in a coherent structure, facilitating comparisons across studies and the identification of converging or diverging patterns. As a result, the final dataset comprised a balanced mix of quantitative and qualitative studies, as well as theoretical reviews, spanning various cultural contexts and methodological orientations.

To ensure the reliability of the selection and evaluation process, multiple researchers independently reviewed and discussed a subset of articles. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion, and consensus was reached regarding the inclusion or exclusion of contentious articles. This collaborative approach enhanced the transparency and replicability of the review.

Overall, the methodology employed in this review was designed to maximize both the breadth and depth of scholarly insight into moral psychology and prosocial decision-making. By employing rigorous search strategies, transparent selection criteria, and a multi-method analytic framework, this review aimed to construct a comprehensive and integrative understanding of how emotions, reasoning processes, and social contexts converge to shape moral behavior. The resulting synthesis not only consolidates existing knowledge but also highlights directions for future inquiry that can further elucidate the complexities of human morality across diverse populations.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section synthesizes empirical findings from the reviewed literature and presents them according to three major thematic domains: emotional factors, moral reasoning, and the influence of social context. These domains reflect the central axes through which moral psychology and prosocial behavior are conceptualized and operationalized across diverse cultural and situational backgrounds. Each theme is supported by scholarly evidence and highlights patterns and divergences that inform our understanding of prosocial decision-making processes.

### Emotional Factors

Emotion has long been recognized as a fundamental driver of moral behavior, with empathy and sympathy often emerging as primary affective motivators. A large body of literature supports the hypothesis that empathetic engagement enhances the likelihood of individuals engaging in prosocial actions. Bankard (2015) demonstrated that empathy is not merely a passive emotional reaction but a trainable skill that can be cultivated through interventions such as loving-kindness meditation. His study revealed that participants who underwent such training exhibited significant increases in both empathy and prosocial behavior, indicating a modifiable emotional pathway toward altruistic engagement.

This emotional-motivational link is further supported by Yao and Yu (2016), who investigated the effects of social media exposure on moral actions. They found that positive social news elicited corresponding positive emotional responses, which in turn elevated the intention to help others. Conversely, exposure to negative news was associated with emotional suppression and a

subsequent decline in willingness to act prosocially. These findings underscore the powerful role of emotional framing in moral cognition and behavior.

Additionally, studies have suggested that certain emotional states can inhibit or facilitate moral action depending on situational variables. For example, acute stress was found to diminish prosocial tendencies, as individuals under emotional distress often prioritize self-preservation over collective welfare (Niemi et al., 2021). These emotional modulations offer compelling evidence that prosocial behavior is not solely rational but is deeply intertwined with emotional regulation and context-specific arousal states.

### Moral Reasoning

Moral reasoning provides a cognitive framework through which individuals evaluate the rightness or wrongness of actions. In the literature, various theoretical models have been advanced to delineate different styles of moral reasoning. One widely discussed model is the dual-process theory, which distinguishes between deontological reasoning, grounded in duties and rules, and utilitarian reasoning, focused on outcomes and consequences (Barisnikov & Lejeune, 2018). Deontological reasoning often results in rigid moral stances, whereas utilitarianism permits flexibility based on contextual outcomes.

Developmental studies by Eisenberg et al. (2014) and Krettenauer and Jia (2013) reinforce the notion that moral reasoning evolves with age, education, and sociocultural exposure. These studies revealed that younger children tend to apply simplistic moral schemas based on fairness or punishment, while adolescents and adults incorporate more complex considerations, including intent, reciprocity, and social benefit. Cultural background further differentiates these trajectories: individuals from collectivist cultures, such as those in East Asia, are more inclined to weigh social harmony and group welfare in their reasoning. In contrast, those from individualist cultures, like North America, often emphasize personal rights and autonomy.

These cultural and developmental differences also manifest in how moral reasoning is applied in real-world decisions. For example, Krettenauer and Jia's (2013) comparative study of adolescents in China and Canada showed distinct patterns in how moral obligations were prioritized. Chinese students displayed greater alignment with communal expectations and were more likely to rationalize moral behavior in terms of group identity and loyalty. This suggests that the cognitive architecture of moral judgment is culturally embedded and subject to the normative frameworks that guide socialization practices.

Thus, moral reasoning is not a uniform or static process but a dynamic construct that reflects the interplay between individual cognition, developmental context, and cultural conditioning. Effective interventions aiming to promote prosocial behavior must therefore consider the diversity in moral reasoning processes and their determinants.

### Influence of Social Context

The role of social context in shaping moral and prosocial behavior is perhaps one of the most complex but critical aspects of moral psychology. Social norms, group dynamics, and cultural narratives significantly influence how individuals interpret moral obligations and decide to act

upon them. A growing body of evidence illustrates how social cues and group affiliations modulate both emotional and cognitive dimensions of moral decision-making.

Yao and Yu (2016) emphasized that exposure to socially charged media content triggers affective responses that influence moral action. For instance, viewing altruistic acts within one's social network or broader community can normalize prosocial behavior and encourage mimetic engagement. This aligns with Niemi et al. (2021), who found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, public behavior was strongly influenced by perceived social norms, such as mask-wearing and social distancing, which were interpreted as moral imperatives by many.

Reputational concerns also emerge as salient social motivators for prosocial behavior. Perera et al. (2015), through the dictator game paradigm, demonstrated that individuals are more likely to act altruistically when their choices are visible to others. This behavior is interpreted as a strategy to preserve social standing and avoid social sanctions. In contexts where moral actions are monitored or publicly evaluated, individuals are more likely to conform to prosocial expectations, even in the absence of intrinsic motivation.

From a cross-cultural perspective, the manifestation of social influence varies considerably. Collectivist societies, such as those in East Asia, place a higher value on social conformity and communal reputation. In such contexts, individuals are more likely to act in accordance with group norms and to prioritize collective welfare over personal gain (Krettenauer & Jia, 2013). In contrast, individualist societies often promote self-expression and autonomy, which may sometimes lead to divergence from group norms when personal moral convictions are at stake.

Krettenauer and Jia's (2013) study comparing Chinese and Canadian adolescents highlighted how differing cultural norms influence the prioritization of moral values. While Chinese adolescents emphasized duties and group loyalty, their Canadian counterparts were more likely to highlight personal principles and rights. These divergent emphases reveal that moral norms are not universally held but are contingent on socialization processes and cultural scripts that define acceptable behavior.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic provided a unique global context to examine the effects of social norms on prosocial behavior under crisis conditions. Niemi et al. (2021) reported that moral messaging aligned with collective goals, such as "protect your community," was more effective in eliciting compliance than messaging centered on individual risk. This suggests that appeals to group identity and solidarity can serve as powerful tools for shaping moral behavior during emergencies.

Finally, group identity plays a vital role in facilitating or impeding prosocial behavior. When individuals perceive others as members of their in-group, they are more likely to extend help and engage in altruistic acts. Conversely, out-group dynamics often lead to moral exclusion, where the needs and rights of others are de-emphasized or disregarded. Bankard (2015) noted that empathy-driven prosocial behavior is more readily extended within one's social group, highlighting the bounded nature of moral concern.

Taken together, the findings reviewed in this section reveal that moral and prosocial behaviors are the product of a complex interplay between emotional responsiveness, cognitive evaluations, and social context. Each of these factors not only influences behavior independently but also interacts with the others to shape moral decision-making in diverse and context-specific ways. These

insights underscore the necessity of a multidimensional approach in both research and intervention efforts aimed at fostering ethical and cooperative behavior across cultures and situations.

The findings of this review underscore the multifaceted nature of moral psychology and prosocial decision-making, particularly the interplay between emotional, cognitive, and contextual elements. These results reinforce existing theories of moral development, including Kohlberg's stage theory and deontological ethics, and emphasize the growing relevance of affective and sociocultural factors in shaping moral behavior (Yao & Yu, 2016). The integration of these elements supports the argument that moral decision-making cannot be understood solely through the lens of rational or utilitarian logic, but must incorporate the broader socio-emotional fabric that influences human choices.

The emphasis on emotional factors such as empathy and compassion aligns with Eisenberg et al.'s framework, which posits that moral reasoning evolves from early emotional and social experiences (Eisenberg et al., 2014). The empirical evidence reviewed here, particularly from Bankard (2015), illustrates how loving-kindness meditation enhances emotional responsiveness, subsequently fostering prosocial behavior. This suggests that emotion serves not merely as a reactive mechanism but as a malleable cognitive-emotional process that can be cultivated to enhance moral engagement. Importantly, these insights challenge the traditional cognitive dominance in moral theory and support a more integrative view of moral agency.

Furthermore, the role of moral reasoning remains pivotal, especially in the context of deontological and utilitarian frameworks. Barisnikov and Lejeune (2018) suggest that individuals relying on deontological reasoning often adhere to moral rules irrespective of outcomes, while those who utilize utilitarian perspectives weigh consequences to determine moral actions. This dichotomy, when examined alongside cultural influences as proposed by Krettenauer and Jia (2013), reflects the fluidity and complexity of moral judgments across societies. It becomes clear that reasoning is not detached from cultural and emotional undercurrents but interacts dynamically with them, thus influencing the consistency and variability in prosocial behavior.

Systemic factors also play a critical role in moderating individual and collective moral conduct. Among these, educational systems emerge as both a barrier and a facilitator of prosocial development. Clark et al. (2014) found that curricula designed to integrate moral literacy and social-emotional learning foster environments conducive to moral reasoning and altruistic behavior. This underscores the importance of embedding ethical discourse and empathy training into formal education as a long-term strategy to nurture morally engaged citizens. Conversely, Niemi et al. (2021) argue that systemic injustices, policy exclusion, and lack of institutional trust undermine the social fabric necessary for collective prosocial action. Their work illustrates how environmental cues and public discourse shape the extent to which individuals perceive moral actions as viable or desirable.

The influence of social norms and group dynamics, as highlighted by Perera et al. (2015) and Yao & Yu (2016), cannot be overlooked. Moral decisions are often negotiated within a matrix of social expectations and reputational concerns. In experimental settings such as dictator games, participants adjust their behavior based on anticipated social evaluation, revealing the extent to which external judgments condition internal moral frameworks. This interaction between personal values and public scrutiny introduces an additional layer of complexity to moral decision-making,

reinforcing the notion that morality is as much about social negotiation as it is about internal conviction.

In examining contextual influences, particularly those related to cultural settings and crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, the review indicates that situational pressures significantly affect moral behavior. Niemi et al. (2021) show how collective risk and crisis discourse during the pandemic altered perceptions of moral duty and community responsibility. Cultural paradigms, such as collectivist vs. individualist orientations, further modulate these responses, as evidenced by comparative studies between Chinese and Canadian youth (Krettenauer & Jia, 2013). These findings validate the argument that moral action is context-dependent and shaped by the interaction of societal values and immediate socio-political circumstances.

Policy implications stemming from these findings advocate for a holistic approach to moral and prosocial development. Educational initiatives that prioritize empathy, justice, and moral dialogue should be central to early development. Sommerville and Enright (2018) argue that sustained exposure to moral dilemmas and opportunities for perspective-taking can substantially enhance moral sensitivity. Likewise, policy frameworks that encourage civic engagement and public deliberation are essential for cultivating a sense of shared moral responsibility. This includes support for grassroots initiatives that amplify communal bonds and reduce structural inequality, thus reinforcing the normative basis for prosocial behavior (Arfer et al., 2015).

Despite these insights, the current body of literature is not without limitations. Many studies rely heavily on Western conceptualizations of morality and may not adequately reflect global diversity. The predominance of laboratory-based experiments may also limit ecological validity, as real-world moral behavior is often shaped by unpredictable and multifaceted interactions. Moreover, the intersectionality of moral reasoning with gender, socioeconomic status, and political ideology remains underexplored. Future research should aim to address these gaps by employing mixed-method approaches and longitudinal designs that capture the dynamic evolution of moral cognition and behavior across contexts.

Additionally, while emotion and social context are increasingly recognized as core elements of moral psychology, their integration into mainstream moral education remains insufficient. This disconnect between empirical evidence and educational practice suggests a need for more translational research that bridges theory, pedagogy, and policy. Furthermore, interdisciplinary collaboration between psychologists, educators, policymakers, and community leaders is crucial for designing interventions that are both contextually relevant and empirically grounded.

In light of these challenges and opportunities, this review contributes to a deeper understanding of the multifactorial nature of moral psychology and prosocial decision-making. By highlighting the intersections between emotion, reasoning, and context, it invites scholars and practitioners to move beyond reductionist models and embrace a more comprehensive, culturally sensitive, and socially informed perspective on morality.

### CONCLUSION

This narrative review underscores the multifaceted nature of moral psychology and prosocial decision-making by highlighting the intersecting influences of emotion, reasoning, and socio-cultural context. The findings demonstrate that emotions such as empathy and sympathy are pivotal in motivating prosocial behaviors, supporting previous claims that emotional responsiveness can be cultivated through training interventions like loving-kindness meditation (Bankard, 2015). Moral reasoning, informed by deontological and utilitarian models, is not merely a rational process but deeply intertwined with developmental stages, cultural background, and social norms (Eisenberg et al., 2014; Krettenauer & Jia, 2013). The importance of social context, including group dynamics and cultural frameworks, further emphasizes the necessity of a holistic understanding of how individuals make moral choices.

Given these insights, there is an urgent need for educational and policy interventions that foster moral literacy, empathy, and inclusive social values. Programs targeting young people with curricula designed to promote justice, emotional awareness, and social cohesion can be particularly effective. Moreover, policy reforms that enhance social equity and support community-based prosocial initiatives can serve as catalysts for societal-level moral development (Sommerville & Enright, 2018; Perera et al., 2015).

Future research should focus on longitudinal and cross-cultural studies that examine: (1) how emotions like guilt or compassion interact with social media and crisis communication; (2) the role of socio-economic and gender differences in shaping prosocial behavior; and (3) how moral reasoning evolves across underrepresented cultural settings.

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