

Effects of Socioeconomic Status on Online Prosocial Behavior: The Mediating Role of Social Self-efficacy and the Moderating Role of Moral Identity

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Abstract: Based on the theory of human-situation interaction, social cognition and moral identity, this study explores the influence and mechanism of college students' socioeconomic status on online prosocial behavior. The results of the questionnaire survey on 513 college students are as follows: After controlling for gender and other factors, socioeconomic status has a significant positive predictive effect on online prosocial behavior; The mediating effect of social and economic status on social self-efficacy indirectly affects network prosocial behavior. Its direct effect on online prosocial behavior is mediated by moral identity. The results reveal the ways in which socioeconomic status affects college students' online prosocial behavior, and the conditions under which the influence is stronger or weaker, which helps college students to correctly understand their own socioeconomic status, social self-efficacy and moral identity level, and has implications for guiding them to timely implement online prosocial behavior.

Keywords: Social and Economic Status, Online Prosocial Behavior, Social Self-efficacy, Moral Identity.

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of China's society, the unbalanced development of urban and rural areas, the imperfect welfare system and medical and health security system, the high housing prices, prices bring great mental pressure to people. The difference of material and life and the difference of cognition and concept of different stratum groups lead to the difference of behavior and attitude. Prosocial behavior is an important basis for establishing a good relationship in interpersonal communication, and is of great significance for adapting to society and having a healthy personal life. Individuals of different social classes will also show different tendencies of prosocial behavior [16,29]. At the same time, the rapid development of the Internet has changed individual behavior patterns, and prosocial behaviors have also been carried forward by virtue of the advantages of the Internet [10]. College students, as the main force of the network society, play an important role in building a mutually helpful and positive network cultural atmosphere. In recent years, the relationship between social economic status and online prosocial behavior has been paid more and more attention by researchers, but the relevant research results are inconsistent. Some scholars believe that people from lower classes will exhibit more prosocial behaviors [26]. The opposite view is that people of higher classes have more prosocial behaviors than people of lower classes [12,21] because people of higher classes have more resources. As early as the early 1990s, Jadin, T_ Gnambs, T & Batinic, B. [21], on the basis of summarizing existing studies, put forward the idea that individuals' self-efficacy feelings are affected by their socioeconomic status. Later, this idea was confirmed by studies based on subjects in many countries. Moral Identity, as a cognitive mechanism of moral self-regulation, will also affect an individual's online prosocial behavior. An individual's moral and moral identity reflects an individual's pursuit of morality and identification degree, so

an individual with a higher level of moral identity will exhibit more prosocial behaviors [20]. Therefore, in order to further clarify the relationship between the above factors and college students' online prosocial behavior, this study intends to further explore the mechanism of social self-efficacy (psychological state) and moral identity (personality trait) in the relationship between social and economic status and college students' online prosocial behavior on the basis of exploring the relationship between them.

1.1. The Relationship between Social and Economic Status and Online Prosocial Behavior

Under the influence of politics, economy, system and culture, social and economic status refers to the difference in rank caused by the difference in objective social resources such as educational background, income and occupation, as well as the difference in social status perceived by people when comparing with others [7,8]. A large number of literatures have pointed out that the concept of socioeconomic status includes two parts, subjective and objective. Some scholars believe that: due to different social resources occupied by individuals, different socio-economic status is formed, that is, objective socio-economic status; Some other scholars believe that socioeconomic status is the perception of one's own society when compared with others, namely subjective socioeconomic status [22,25]. Most early studies believed that low socioeconomic status groups would exhibit more online prosocial behaviors [8,27]. Due to the poor living environment and the uncertainty and difficulty of facing unknown risks, low socioeconomic status groups are more sensitive to external information and rarely solve problems alone, so they need to establish good interpersonal relationships in order to support each other [19]. Studies have shown that compared with low-class people, high-class people have a higher degree of integration in community groups and are more active in volunteering activities [14,25].

In addition, the important tool for the implementation of online prosocial behavior is network equipment, and some groups with low socioeconomic status do not even meet this condition, thus limiting their implementation of this behavior. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that socioeconomic status can positively predict online prosocial behavior (H1).

1.2. The Mediating Role of Social Self-efficacy

Smith proposed in 2000 that social self-efficacy is people's confident belief in their social ability to handle interpersonal relationships [15]. Studies have confirmed that there is a close relationship between family factors and self-efficacy, and socioeconomic status is an important part of family environment [9,24]. High socioeconomic status can provide a better family environment for children, and a good family environment can make individuals receive more support and attention. Higher self-efficacy means that individuals believe they have a stronger ability to solve problems and are therefore more likely to engage in prosocial behavior. Studies have shown that students with low family socioeconomic status will have a level of self-efficacy similar to their socioeconomic status [10,17], while a good family environment makes teenagers feel more concerned and supported, and thus have a higher sense of self-efficacy, which indicates that individuals have a higher ability to solve problems [13,28]. As a result, they are more likely to act helpfully.

Studies have found that self-efficacy is significantly correlated with online prosocial behaviors, and individuals with high self-efficacy will exhibit more prosocial behaviors such as sharing, helping others, and comforting [27,29]. The study of Falanga et al. [6] confirmed that helping behavior is closely related to self-efficacy. Social self-efficacy can steadily affect behavior patterns, and individuals with high self-efficacy will show more helping behaviors. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that socioeconomic status may indirectly influence online prosocial behavior through the mediating effect of social self-efficacy (H2).

1.3. The Moderating Effect of Moral Identity

Moral identity was formally proposed by Blasi in 1984, also known as "moral identity". He believed that moral identity is the integration of moral concepts and personal identity, a form of social identity pursued by life, and the ultimate realization of the unity of knowledge and action [12]. Studies have shown that moral identity has a good positive predictive effect on prosocial behavior [23]. People with high moral identity will show a higher prosocial tendency in life, and they have a stronger desire to engage in rescue, volunteer service, organizational citizenship, charitable donation and other behaviors, and thus less anti-social behaviors such as aggression. A large number of studies have shown that socioeconomic status is an important factor affecting the physical and mental development of individuals, and people with low socioeconomic status are more likely to have psychological problems [11,18]. Due to family economic difficulties, they will feel anxiety and depression, which will seriously affect the social emotional development of individuals, and they will feel more social injustice and be more prone to negative emotions. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that moral identity may play a moderating role in the relationship between socioeconomic status and online prosocial behavior (H3).

In summary, this study aims to explore the influence of

socioeconomic status on college students' online prosocial behavior and its mediating and regulating mechanism. Based on previous studies, this study hypothesized that social self-efficacy plays an intermediary role in the influence of socioeconomic status on college students' online prosocial behavior, and that the direct effect of socioeconomic status on online prosocial behavior is moderated by the level of moral identity of college students. For the specific situation of the moderating effect, the research hypothesized that compared with individuals with low level of moral identity, The direct effect was stronger in adolescents with high levels of moral identity. Suppose the model looks like Figure 1.

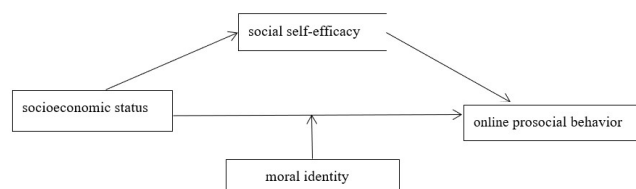


Figure 1. The mediating role of social self-efficacy and the moderating role of moral identity

2. The Effect of Socioeconomic Status on Online Prosocial Behavior: Related Research

2.1. Purpose

This study will conduct a preliminary exploration of the relationship between socioeconomic status and prosocial behavior. It is assumed that socioeconomic status can significantly and positively predict prosocial behavior, and then further investigate whether social self-efficacy plays a mediating role in the influence of subjective socioeconomic status on online prosocial behavior. Whether moral identity plays a moderating role in the influence of subjective socioeconomic status on online prosocial behavior.

2.2. Methods

2.2.1. Subjects

Using random sampling method, the questionnaire was distributed online through the questionnaire star platform and offline. The social and economic status, social self-efficacy, moral identity and online prosocial behavior of 350 college students were investigated. A total of 333 valid questionnaires were collected (95.14%). Among them, 141 were male (42.34%) and 192 were female (57.66%). The urban population was 152 (45.6%) and the rural population was 181 (54.4%). There were 59 freshmen (17.7%), 69 sophomores (20.7%), 119 juniors (35.7%), and 86 seniors (25.8%). All subjects were aged between 18 and 23 years old (M=20.65, SD=1.195).

2.2.2. Tools

(1) Socioeconomic status scale

In this study, the education level and family income of the subjects were tested as the objective data of socio-economic status.

the MacArthur Scale of Subjective socioeconomic status (SES) was used to measure the subjective socioeconomic status. The participants were shown a picture of 10 rungs of the ladder. The lowest rung represented the living standards of the people at the bottom, who were the least educated, the least paid and the worst off. The highest rung represented the living standards of the people at the top, who were respected,

the most educated, the most paid and the most comfortable. The ladder from low to high represents a life of increasing wealth. The subjects need to choose according to their own situation and compare which level they are on the ladder. And select the corresponding number. The selected number will be used as an indicator of the subject's subjective socioeconomic status, and the higher the score, the higher the subject's subjective socioeconomic status.

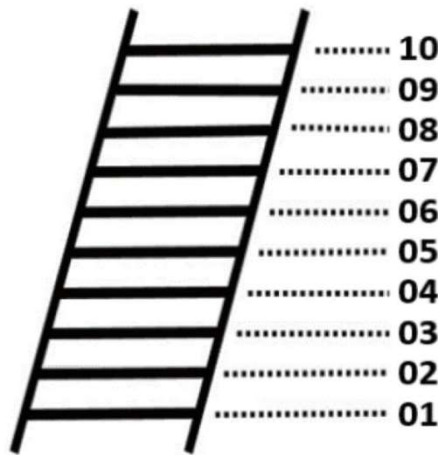


Figure 2. MacArthur scale of subjective socioeconomic status

(2) Social self-efficacy scale

The Chinese version of the Scale of Social Self-efficacy jointly compiled by Smith and Betz (2000), revised by Meng Hui et al. (2007), was adopted. The scale consisted of 25 questions and was scored by 5 points. 1 means "not at all confident" and 5 means "completely confident." A higher score indicates a higher sense of social self-efficacy. For example: "How confident are you that you can find friends to spend the weekend with?" "How confident are you that you can share an interesting experience with a group of people from the past?" In this study, the Cronbach's α coefficient of this scale was 0.93, indicating good reliability.

(3) Moral identification scale

The Moral Identity Questionnaire, revised by Lisa Xu in 2011, has 21 questions, including 12 explicit dimensions and 9 internalized dimensions, and is scored on a 5-point scale, where 1 means "completely inconsistent" and 5 means "completely consistent". For example: "Some of the things I

do in my free time (hobbies, etc.) clearly show that I have these qualities"; "In my studies and work, others know that I have these qualities." According to the question, the subjects choose the number that is consistent with their actual situation. The higher the score, the higher the level of moral identity of the subjects. In this study, the Cronbach's α coefficient of this scale was 0.92, indicating high reliability.

(4) Online prosocial behavior scale

This study adopted the online altruism behavior scale for college students, which was compiled by Zheng Xianliang in 2010. The scale included four dimensions of online reminder, online support, online guidance and online sharing, with a total of 26 questions. The scale was scored on a 4-point scale, with 1 indicating "totally inconsistent" and 4 indicating "completely consistent". The number of online prosocial behaviors also increased. For example: "To discuss issues and express personal opinions in the forum"; "Sharing experiences, experiences and insights from your own life with others online". The internal consistency coefficient of this scale is high, reaching 0.952, so most of the measures of online prosocial behavior of college students in China use this scale. In this study, the Cronbach's α coefficient of this scale was 0.94, indicating good reliability.

2.3. Results and Analysis

2.3.1. Common Method Deviation Test

The questionnaire survey method was adopted in this study. Since all scales were issued at one time, common method bias may occur. The common method bias test was conducted on all original data. Harman single factor test results showed that there were 10 factors with eigenvalue greater than 1, among which the variance explained by the first factor was 16.58%, lower than 40%. Therefore, the common method deviation of this study is within a reasonable range, and the research results have strong credibility.

2.3.2. Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation Matrix of Each Variable

The results of descriptive statistics and correlation analysis showed that (see Table 1) : subjective socioeconomic status was significantly positively correlated with objective socioeconomic status, social self-efficacy and online prosocial behavior; Social self-efficacy is positively correlated with online prosocial behavior and moral identity. There is a significant positive correlation between moral identity and online prosocial behavior.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlational analysis

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
Subjective SES	5.183	1.167	1				
Objective SES	3.048	0.536	0.262**	1			
Social self-efficacy	2.842	0.507	0.145**	0.080	1		
Moral identity	3.061	0.427	0.086	0.114*	0.278**	1	
Online prosocial behavior	2.662	0.446	0.408**	0.118*	0.246**	0.342**	1

Note. SES=socioeconomic status, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

2.3.3. The Relationship between Socioeconomic Status and Online Prosocial Behavior: A Moderated Mediation Model Test

First, Model4 in the SPSS macro compiled by Hayes was used to test the mediating effect of social self-efficacy on the relationship between socioeconomic status and online prosocial behavior under the condition of controlling gender, age, grade and residence register. The results (see Table 2 and 3) show that socioeconomic status has a significant predictive

effect on online prosocial behavior ($B=0.42$, $t=7.23$, $p < 0.001$), and the direct predictive effect of socioeconomic status on online prosocial behavior is still significant after adding mediating variables ($B=0.39$, $t=6.72$, $p < 0.001$). The positive prediction effect of socioeconomic status on social self-efficacy was significant ($B=0.18$, $t=2.79$, $p < 0.01$), and the positive prediction effect of social self-efficacy on online prosocial behavior was also significant ($B=0.19$, $t=3.71$, $p < 0.001$). In addition, the upper and lower limits of the

bootstrap 95% confidence interval for the direct effect of socioeconomic status on online prosocial behavior and the mediating effect of social self-efficacy do not include 0 (see Table 3), indicating that socioeconomic status can not only directly predict online prosocial behavior, And it can predict

the online prosocial behavior through the mediating effect of social self-efficacy. The direct effect (0.40) and the intermediate effect (0.03) accounted for 92.16% and 7.84% of the total effect (0.43), respectively.

Table 2. The mediating role of social self-efficacy

Regression equation(N=333)		Fitting index			Coefficient significance		95% confidence interval	
Outcome variable	Predictor variable	R	R ²	F	B	t	LLCI	ULCI
Online prosocial behavior		0.41	0.17	13.52				
	Sex				0.06	1.13	-0.0442	0.1636
	Grade				0.11	0.46	-0.5669	0.3827
	Age				-0.09	-0.38	-0.3646	0.5848
	Location				0.01	0.15	-0.1040	0.1216
	Subjective SES				0.42	7.23***	0.3063	0.5353
Social self-efficacy		0.18	0.03	2.12				
	Sex				0.09	1.59	-0.0213	0.2033
	Grade				0.03	0.13	-0.5116	0.5150
	Age				0.04	0.01	-0.4803	0.5461
	Location				-0.01	-0.15	-0.1315	0.1125
	Subjective SES				0.18	2.79**	0.0515	0.2990
Online prosocial behavior		0.45	0.2	14				
	Sex				0.04	0.82	-0.0595	0.1451
	Grade				0.02	0.44	-0.5582	0.3733
	Age				-0.09	-0.39	-0.3618	0.5697
	Location				0.01	0.19	-0.1001	0.1213
	Social self-efficacy				0.19	3.71***	0.0874	0.2849
	Online prosocial behavior				0.39	6.72***	0.2746	0.5018

Note. SES=socioeconomic status, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table 3. Breakdown table of total effect, indirect effect and direct effect

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	Effect ratio
Total effect	0.43	0.05	0.32	0.54	
Direct effect	0.40	0.05	0.29	0.50	92.16%
Indirect effects of social Self-efficacy	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.07	7.84%

Then, Model5 in the SPSS macro prepared by Hayes (Model5 assumes that the direct effect is moderated, which is consistent with the theoretical model of this study) is used to test the moderated mediation model under the condition of controlling gender, age, grade and domiciles. The results (see Table 4 and Table 5) show that after adding moral identity into the model, the product term of socioeconomic status and moral identity has a significant predictive effect on online prosocial behavior (online prosocial behavior: B=0.0589, t=2.6759, p < 0.01), indicating that moral identity can regulate the predictive effect of socioeconomic status on online prosocial behavior. Further simple slope analysis showed (see Figure 3) that socioeconomic status of the subjects with a high

level of moral identity (M + 1SD) had a significant positive predictive effect on online prosocial behavior (simple slope=0.0407, t=0.5069, p < 0.001). For subjects with a low level of moral identity (M-1SD), although socioeconomic status also has a positive predictive effect on online prosocial behavior (simple slope=0.2745, t=0.3580, p < 0.001), its predictive effect is small, indicating that with the decrease of individual moral identity level, social and economic status can be improved. The predictive effect of socioeconomic status on online prosocial behavior showed a gradually decreasing trend (see Table 5), that is, as the level of moral identity of the subjects decreased, socioeconomic status was less likely to induce their online prosocial behavior.

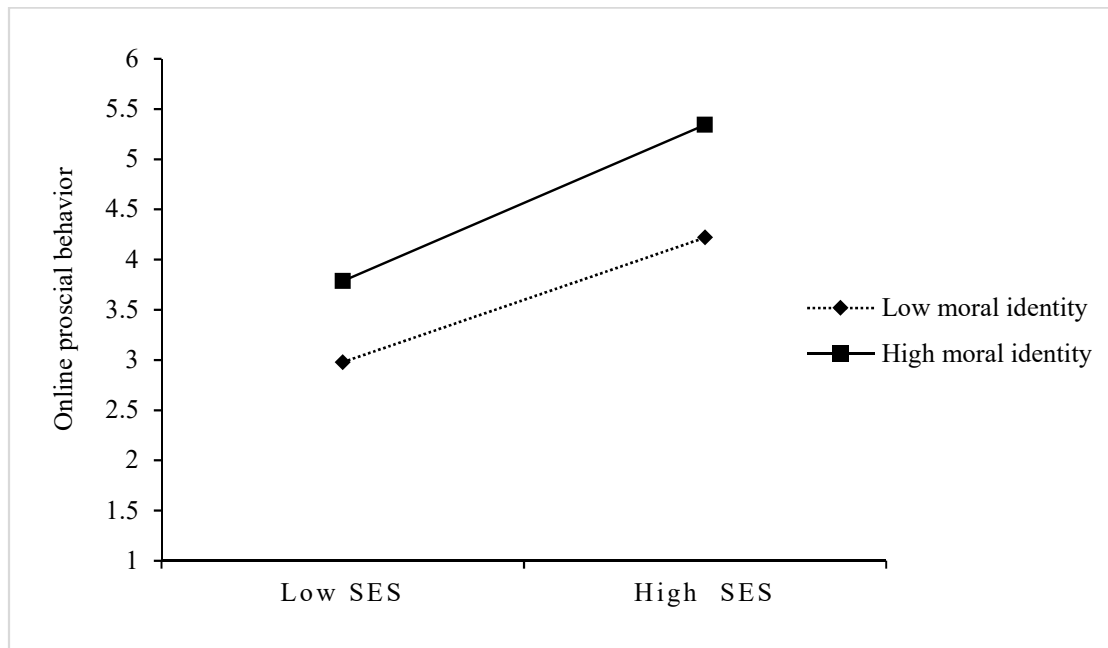
Table 4. Analysis of the moderating effect of moral identity on the influence of SES on online prosocial behavior

index	coeff	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	0.0135	0.0521	0.2586	0.7961	-0.0891	0.116
SES	0.1169	0.0522	2.2395	0.0258	0.0142	0.2196
Moral identity	0.3144	0.055	5.7116	<0.001	0.2061	0.4227
Interaction	0.1576	0.0589	2.6759	0.0078	0.2734	0.0417

Note. SES=socioeconomic status

Table 5. The moderating effect of moral identification on the influence of social and economic status on online prosocial behavior

	Moral identity	Effect	SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
	<i>M-1SD</i>	2.63	0.0523	0.0145	0.102
Direct action	<i>M</i>	3.06	0.0223	0.0014	0.0525
	<i>M+1SD</i>	3.49	0.0078	0.0198	0.0308

**Figure 3.** The moderating effect of moral identity on the relationship between SES and online prosocial behavior

3. Discussion

Based on previous studies, social cognitive theory and moral identity theory, this study constructs a moderated mediation model from the perspective of helping behavior decision theory, taking social self-efficacy as the mediating variable and moral identity as the moderating variable. It not only clarifies how socioeconomic status affects college students' online prosocial behavior (the mediating role of social self-efficacy), but also makes it clear how social self-efficacy affects college students' online prosocial behavior. They also responded to the question of under what conditions socioeconomic status has a more significant effect on online prosocial behavior (the moderating effect of moral identity).

3.1. Socioeconomic Status and Internet Prosocial Behavior

The results of this study show that people with high socioeconomic status engage in more online prosocial behaviors, which is consistent with hypothesis 1. It is also consistent with previous studies [3,17]. From the perspective of social cognition, it is proposed that people in different living environments will form relatively stable cognitive styles. Specifically, people with high socioeconomic status

tend to be solipsistic because they have more social resources, higher education, occupation and income, etc. They will combine problems with their actual efforts and be more confident in their abilities. When they think about problems, they attribute more to themselves, and when they deal with problems, it is easier and more convenient because they have more resources [5-6].

3.2. The Mediating Role of Social Self-efficacy

This study shows that people with high socioeconomic status have more social self-efficacy, which has an impact on online prosocial behavior, consistent with hypothesis 2. Studies have found that social self-efficacy can significantly positively predict online prosocial behaviors, which is consistent with previous domestic and foreign studies [1]. This study also concluded that social self-efficacy mediated the effect of socioeconomic status on online prosocial behavior, similar to the results of Zheng Xianliang and Zhao Wei [30]. It also supports the theory of prosocial behavior, that is, individuals have the intention to help others under many circumstances, but due to their insufficient conditions or uncertainty about their ability, individuals are prevented from implementing online prosocial behaviors. In addition, this result also supports the human-situation interaction

theory [2-3], which examines people and the environment as a whole and believes that the environment will affect people's psychology and then individual behavior. In this study, social economic status is an important environmental factor, and social self-efficacy corresponds to the factor of mediating psychology. Online prosocial behavior corresponds to individual behavior. The more resources an individual has and the more contact with the society, the higher the sense of self-efficacy will be formed. Individuals will take the initiative to socialize and participate in various activities, while people with high socioeconomic status will have more platforms and resources for them to socialize, thus they can have more contact with social online information and choose whether to implement online prosocial behaviors. In summary, high socioeconomic status enhances social self-efficacy, and people with high social self-efficacy show high levels of online prosocial behavior.

3.3. The Moderating Effect of Moral Identity

The results show that moral identity can regulate the direct chain of social economic status-online prosocial behavior. Consistent with hypothesis 3.

Moral identity is the key mechanism for transforming moral cognition into moral behavior, and a large number of studies have confirmed that moral identity will promote the generation of prosocial behavior, they will pay more attention to the people in the moral group and less attention to the people in the external group [4], and they will do more behaviors consistent with the social moral norms and help others for the sake of social recognition. A large number of empirical studies have also shown that moral identity has a significant positive impact on individuals engaged in prosocial behaviors such as donation, charity and volunteer service [5,6]. The improvement of moral identity can help individuals to have good morals and conduct good moral behaviors. People with high social and economic status have more knowledge and social resources, which will promote the social activities of individuals, and is also the key internal mechanism for the occurrence of prosocial behaviors of individuals on the Internet. Therefore, social and economic status can more influence individuals with high moral identity and implement online prosocial behavior.

4. Conclusion

Social economic status has a positive predictive effect on online prosocial behavior, social self-efficacy plays an intermediary role between the two, and moral identity has a moderating effect on the direct chain of "social economic status-online prosocial behavior".

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