

**PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR, EMPATHY, INTERPERSONAL AND TRUST BELIEFS ON PEERS DURING ADOLESCENCE: STUDY OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH A SAMPLE OF 181 PORTUGUESE ADOLESCENTS OF THE 3RD CYCLE (7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> AND 9<sup>th</sup> YEARS OF SCHOOLING)**

**Graciete Franco-Borges**

Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação  
da Universidade de Coimbra  
francoborges@fpce.uc.pt

**Maria de Fátima Sousa Ramos**

Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação  
da Universidade de Coimbra

**Maria da Luz Vale-Dias**

Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação  
da Universidade de Coimbra

**Piedade Vaz-Rebello**

Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação  
da Universidade de Coimbra

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**ABSTRACT**

The optimization of interpersonal relationships on school context requires an early cooperation' awareness through mutual aid, particularly through the promotion of pro-social behavior, which protect personal and collective cooperation and well-being. Given that the adolescence period is a relevant phase for personal identity construction and social development, the school's investment on pro-social behaviors acquires a significant relevance on adolescents' development and personal well-being. In fact, the constant society mutation demands the recurrent confrontation of new challenges, whose overcoming rests on developmental interpersonal skills' repertoire that promote psychosocial adjustment and perceived quality of life (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2005). These competencies can be conceptualized as *competences for life*, since they play a relevant role on adaptation to different contexts, favoring progressive adjustment throughout life (Remédios, 2010). The present study aimed to contribute to the exploration of the association between the *interpersonal trust 'level* on others, the *empathy'level* and the pro-social behaviors frequency among adolescents.

**Keywords:** pro-social behavior; empathy; interpersonal trust beliefs on peers

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**RESEARCH' OBJECTIVES**

The interpersonal relationship 'optimization on school context requires an early advantages' awareness of cooperation and mutual aid with the pairs/ colleagues, in order to promote pro-social behavior, collective cooperation and well-being. Considering that adolescence period is a relevant phase for personal identity construction and social development, the school's investment on pro-social behaviors acquires a significant relevance on adolescents' development and personal well-being. In fact, the constant society mutation demands recurrent confrontation with new challenges, who's overcoming requires skills' repertoire on interpersonal relationships, in order to promote psychosocial adjustment to contexts' life and consequent quality of welfare (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2005). These competencies may to be conceptualized as *competences for life*, since they play a relevant role on personal adaptation to different contexts, favoring progressive adjustment throughout life (Remédios, 2010). The present study aimed to verify the association between the *interpersonal trust* on the closest colleague, the *empathy* and the *pro-social behavior*.

**SAMPLE/PARTICIPANTS**

The sample embrace 181 Portuguese students: 66 from the 7<sup>th</sup> grade school, 65 from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and 50 from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade - 98 males (54%) and 83 females (45.9%) – cf. Table 1

Table 1. Sample Participants

Age	Amostra Total
Average	13,80
DP	1,264
Minimum	11
Maximum	19

**METHODOLOGY- INSTRUMENTS**

The target variables were collectively collected on the classroom context, through the following instruments:

*Sociobiographic Questionnaire - Portuguese adaptation of the Personal Data Form Rohner, 2008*);

*Generalized Trust Belief Scale for Adolescents - CGA-A (Vale-Dias & Franco-Borges, 2014) – Portuguese adaptation of Generalized Trust Beliefs (Randall & at. all, 2010);*

*Basic Empathy Scale - BES (Nobre-Lima, Rijo & Matias, 2011);*

4) Experimental Portuguese version of *Prosocial Behavior Scale* (Pastorelli et al., 1997);

**MAIN RESULTS**

Considering previous data (Auné *et al.*, 2014) it was confirmed that the adolescents' *girls* are more likely to invest on long-term interpersonal relationships and to show greater involvement and concern about their colleagues' academic difficulties, revealing a higher prosocial behavior than the adolescents'boys (Auné *et al.*, 2014);

Considering empathy as the main antecedent of pro-social behavior - given its underlying characteristics - namely the understanding and concern levels with close others - it was expected and verified that adolescents' empathy levels are positively associated to pro-social behavior.

Given previous literature (Marques, 2014, Rotenberg et al., 2005; Rotenberg, 2010a), it was expected that *empathy' levels* and *interpersonal trust on peers* are predictors of prosocial behavior, which has been confirmed.

4) Considering previous verification that female adolescents are more likely to manifest prosocial behaviors than boys (Poletto et al., 2009), it was analyzed the differentiation of the following variables according to sex: H1b): Pro-Social Behavior; H1b) Empathy; and H1c) Interpersonal Trust on pairs, being higher near the girls.

5) Previous research has already pointed to the predictor value of Empathy (Rotenberg et al., 2005; Rotenberg, 2010<sub>a</sub>; Marques, 2014) and *Interpersonal Trust* on the others.

Table 1. Sample' Distribucion by age

Age	Sample
Average	13,80
DP	1,264
Minimus	11
<b>Máximo</b>	<b>19</b>

## MAIN CONCLUSIONS

The optimization of interpersonal relationships on school context requires early awareness of the added value of cooperation and mutual help among adolescents and teachers, in particular through the promotion of pro-social behavior and mutual cooperation among all, particularly by encouraging proactive behavior and / or cooperation. Considering that adolescence is a relevant period for identity' construction, namely through positive interpersonal relationships and a responsive context directed to mutual cooperation and well-being on the school and at home contexts, it seems pertinent to invest on others and their wellbeing.

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