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The Role of Self-Efficacy and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy in Forming Prosocial Behaviour

Rosmawati Mohamad Rasit and Siti Zuhrah Che Ab Razab

Abstract

Prosocial value can be associated with the positive behaviours that are commonly practised in the socio-surrounding of a civilised community, for example, the action of helping, loving and developing empathy with each other. The formation of the prosocial behaviour also has a connection with one's self-efficacy. The individual's mastery of his or her self-efficacy can contribute to the differences in how he or she is behaving. All of the ethical values in every religion explain life as revolving around helping one another and living peacefully in society. The effort of helping based on the concerns towards other people could be the motivational factors that are closely related to the prosocial behaviour. Having positive personality traits and then backed with a sound religious belief ingrain the necessary moral compass that guides a person into behaving in ways that are considered society-friendly. Meanwhile, media roles depending on the content are capable of propagating decent values among the larger mass. Generally speaking, these factors are sufficient in educating and nurturing normal individuals to attain better self-efficacy. However, on an earnest ground considering individuals who suffer from a low level of self-efficacy, which resulted in antisocial behaviour, a more structured and empirical psychological intervention needs to be administered.

Keywords: prosocial, behaviour, self-efficacy, religion, community

1. Introduction

Self-efficacy is a trait where one can make a sound judgement about his or her own decision. An individual who trusts him or herself is considered of having good self-efficacy. Therefore, self-efficacy is a crucial factor in creating a harmonious society through the demonstration of ethical behaviour. Bandura [1] argues that an individual who possesses a high level of self-efficacy can achieve personal success as well as behave positively. On the contrary, a person with a low level of self-efficacy is less successful and less confident in achieving the goals set. According to Eisenberg et al. [2], the existence of the *perceived self-efficacy* as a factor in social learning cognitive is related to the *emphatic* efficacy perception, which is also related to prosocial behaviour. Thus, self-efficacy serves as a critical factor in how far a person can involve him or herself with the feedback from other people.

However, every person has a different personality trait. The diversity of human personality becomes the determiners of prosocial behaviour. Penner et al. [3]

suggest that those who have a prosocial personality have more readiness to help others and are more emphatic. Based on a study by Penner et al. [3], the *Helpfulness* factor serves as the predictor that explains prosocial behaviour better than the *Other-oriented Empathy* factor. Penner et al. [3] argumentation involves *helping*, which has a strong link with self-efficacy than the environmental skills mastery. This link explains that someone who is consistently involved in prosocial behaviour does so because he or she is doing something for him or herself, not only because of his or her contributions to others.

Meanwhile, according to Norenzayan and Shariff [4], a society that practices a more religious life tends to behave more prosocially due to the understanding of the concept of God. The studies on the relationship between prosocial behaviour and religion explain about the religious influence on the prosocial value in a society such as simplifying a behaviour that can benefit others [4], teaching about compassion [5], volunteering to help as well as acting non-aggressively [6] when coming into contact with the daily routine.

According to NICE Guideline on Diagnosis, Assessment and Management of Harmful Drinking and Alcohol Dependence published by the British Psychological Society and the Royal College of Psychiatrists, NICE [7], psychological interventions consist of a broad spectrum that is subjected to the underpinning theoretical models. They are classified under several approaches such as behavioural, cognitive, psychodynamic, humanistic, systemic, motivational, disease, and social and environmental. In relation to nurturing higher level of self-efficacy among individuals who suffer from low-level self-efficacy so that they can behave more prosocially, cognitive behavioural therapy is considered as a two-in-one approach to address the issues based on the assumptions that cognition has a significant influence on humans' emotional and behavioural impediment [8]. This section centres on a brief discussion on psychological intervention, particularly cognitive behavioural therapy, which is one of the intervention approaches that are empirically supported and evidence-based to see convincing results [9].

2. Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a concept that can be linked to the extent of control that a person has over the situation in his or her life. A person with a high level of self-efficacy is someone who thinks positively, charismatic, courageous and persistence. Therefore, self-efficacy becomes a factor that leads to the behaviour of a person. Bandura [10] discusses the concept of self-efficacy, which also influences behaviour. Self-efficacy can be explained as a person's trust or judgement on the faculty and competence of his or herself to carry out actions to achieve specific goals set [1, 10–12].

In other words, self-efficacy is the inherent belief of the extent of the ability to act based on the faculty within oneself. Self-efficacy can influence a person's performance achievement [10] whether it is at a peak or otherwise. It means the level of self-efficacy is capable of influencing more excellent contribution to work performance compared to those with a low level of self-efficacy. This self-competence becomes a crucial factor in the cognitive, motivation and health aspect formation process [1]. The individuals who have a high level of self-efficacy exhibit characteristics of those among the successful and consistent in their strategic planning.

Therefore, we can see that individuals with high self-efficacy possess the determination and readiness to sacrifice for the benefit of others. They reason and can accept challenges with high determination. It is the opposite of individuals with low self-efficacy. They will avoid doing strenuous work and always see life challenges
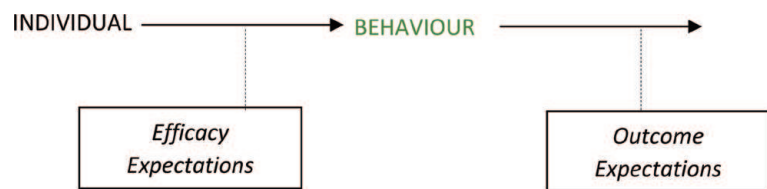
Figure 1.
Diagram of the representation of the differences between efficacy expectations and outcome expectations.
Source: Bandura [1].

as problems that haunt their lives. These individuals are incapable of accepting the burden, and in life, they often end up in despair. They are incapable of controlling themselves with negative thoughts and blame others for what has happened in their life. According to Bandura [1], the capability to master good cognitive and thinking skills will enable the control of matters that can affect one's life.

Bandura [1] differentiates between *efficacy expectations* and *outcome expectations* (**Figure 1**). Bandura [1] places self-efficacy as efficacy expectations. *Efficacy expectations* involve the perception towards the ability of the self in determining the expected actions. Meanwhile, *outcome expectations* serve as self-estimation regarding the behaviours performed that will result in specific outcomes. Through *efficacy expectations*, an individual is capable of evaluating an action performed whether it is good, bad, precise or otherwise. *Efficacy expectations* portray the ideal self-evaluation that can be achieved, whereas the *outcome expectations* achievement depends on an individual's endurance in ensuring that the wish is fulfilled [1]. This mean, an individual can have realistic *efficacy expectations*, which is hoped can be materialised; however, the *outcome expectations* will become unrealistic if the hope is too high from the actual expected results.

Therefore, an individual with high-efficacy expectations is confident in being able to carry out actions that are suitable for the situational demands. Meanwhile, the realistic outcome expectations that are aligned with the faculty of the self will cause the individual to work hard and is capable of achieving the goals set. Self-efficacy becomes the mediator that can determine individuals' behaviour, whereas the individuals play the role of controlling actions through self-control assessment. The self-control mechanism enables a person to set realistic *outcome expectations* that are aligned with their ability and faculty. Self-efficacy is closely linked to excellence in achieving good performance, which is assessed as cognitive determinants. Muhammad Awais [13] argues about self-efficacy that it is capable of providing the measurement regarding one's personality aspect that involves motivation and trust. Meanwhile, according to Eklund et al. [14], individuals who have a high level of self-efficacy have better prosocial value and are more popular.

3. Prosocial behaviour

Helpfulness trait has become the practice of today's society. The need to offer help is not limited to those we know but also strangers. Similarly, the caring attitude towards other people's welfare in a sincere manner that hopes for nothing in return has become a social practice within societal life environment. These traits form a prosocial value that leads to prosocial behaviour. According to Hastings et al. [15], prosocial behaviour is a form of behaviour that is voluntarily performed in the attempt to benefit others. It is a response that is performed proactively and reactively towards other people's needs in the attempt to promote healthier social life. Therefore, volunteering activities should be nurtured as a society's responsibility

towards a healthy and prosperous life. It can also encourage social responsibility in shaping prosocial attitude among the local community.

Prosocial behaviour is a positive behaviour that is the opposite of the antisocial behaviour as the negative behaviour. Prosocial behaviour relies on the belief that an individual is part of a local community in which they need mutual help, support and love for one another [16, 17]. Therefore, an individual who practices prosocial behaviour that the community encourages will feel the sense of acceptance from his or her community group. It is because humans prefer giving help to the members of their group compared to strangers. Thus, the cultural difference can also cause some of the individuals having less tendency towards helping and putting their trust in strangers.

As the consequences, collective culture exists, which leads to egocentrism within a society. An egocentric society cares less for those who are outside of their group. This condition causes the antisocial behaviour and reduces the tendency of prosocial behaviour in the society. Fiedler et al. [18] argue about this situation where cultural differences can influence prosocial behaviour. *In-group favouritism* sees groups that share a similar identity as more straightforward to be helped compared to the out-group. According to Carlo and Randall [19], prosocial behaviour has two central concepts, which are the readiness to help and altruism.

Similarly, prosocial behaviour introduced by Penner et al. [20] through the development of *Prosocial Personality Battery* (PSB) to discuss two fundamental factor structures; *Other-oriented Empathy* and *Helpfulness*. The first factor; *Other-oriented Empathy* explains the cognitive and affective domain through the dimension of *social responsibility*, *mutual moral reasoning*, *other-oriented reasoning*, *empathic concern* and also *perspective taking*. Meanwhile, the second factor; *Helpfulness* relates to behavioural tendency through self-reported altruism and personal distress [3, 20–22].

Among the key aspects that have become the essence of focus in the discussion regarding prosocial behaviour are the causes and motives behind the formation of prosocial behaviour. The questions that arose through the discussion by Baron et al. [16], among others, to look at the motives, about how far an individual is involved in helping the needy and the situational and personal factors that cause the exposure of prosocial behaviour to a person. A low level of empathy as well as prosocial behaviour is said to contribute to the rejection of prosocial behaviour [17]. This condition shows that prosocial behaviour is linked to the voluntary actions to help others.

At the same time, individuals who provide the helping awareness are those with a high level of empathy. The present emotional, personal and situational influences are among the pulling factors of the existence of prosocial behaviour. The readiness to help among individuals largely depends on the existence of emotional effects, which involved the empathy aspect. When an individual possesses empathy, he or she will place him or herself in other people's shoes. Other people's misfortunes become the encouragement to the readiness to help among them. The help is as an effort to share emotions.

However, according to Carlo and Randall [19], a crowd situational factor makes an individual to have less tendency to behave prosocially. This condition shows that the sense of responsibility and readiness to help will decrease when they assume that other people can help. Each one hopes that there will be someone else who will help and take the responsibility. In today's globalisation challenges, this situation commonly occurs, which creates pluralistic ignorance when the crowd sees things that are unrelated to them. For example, the circumstances and mishaps within a society like wars, murders, robberies, deaths and missing persons received a cold shoulder and ignored on the social media. It is even more so if the circumstances befall on strangers. This scenario also leads to the news posts and shares on the social media that are lacking in empathy. Therefore, we must encourage the society,

especially the Y generation to always behave prosocially in life. The dissemination of the caring and helpfulness culture within the identity of a society must be done especially concerning emergency circumstances. The society should be educated with awareness and with commitment in a good social environment to continue the prosocial behaviour.

Prosocial development is also associated with behaviourism and social learning theory [2] founded by Albert Bandura and his colleagues. Eisenberg et al. [2] argue using the social learning theory by presenting *internal cognitive* process as the critical role in behaviour influence. Therefore, impersonation is a critical process to achieve the socialisation standard of an individual's moral behaviour. Meanwhile, altruism is closely related to prosocial behaviour that can be described as an essential motive by voluntarily helping others without expecting anything in return [16, 20]. Altruism supports the prosocial concept as a motivational drive to unselfish behaviour to help others with sincerity and honesty. Therefore, an altruistic attitude is an attitude that prioritises the interests of others without expecting rewards in return.

From the aspect of readiness to help, the study of Carlo and Randall [19] states that compares to women, men are more fearless in offering help whether to those they know or strangers. The tendency to behave prosocially among men is higher from the aspect of exhibiting heroism, whereas women tend to help in the aspect of care, education and commitment. The arguments by Carlo and Randall [19] justify the different traits and characters between men and women. These gender differences produce different actions. Men tend to exhibit masculine actions such as daring to take the risk, being protective and having physical strength. On the contrary, women tend to exhibit more feminine actions such as loving and caring in giving a long-term commitment. Therefore, the gender differences resulted in different prosocial behaviours between men and women.

The studies on prosocial behaviour have also attracted the attention of the media scholars and researchers such as Gentile et al. [23], Wilson [24], Strasburger et al. [25] and Yates [26]. According to Wilson [23], if the media such as television and films expose children to the antisocial behaviours such as aggressiveness, then the same media should also be able to expose them to prosocial behaviour. Therefore, by giving instructions and controls especially to children regarding the choice of the media program, that should be able to help them become a more critical consumer towards the media content. It can encourage prosocial benefits from the time they spend in front of the television screen and other media devices such as films and the Internet.

Based on the previous studies, there were many studies on prosocial behaviours that are linked to media roles [24–27]. However, the group of people that the researchers often choose to be the subjects linked to prosocial behaviours are children and adolescent [23–25, 28, 29]. According to Dumova [27] based on social cognitive theory, children who are exposed to prosocial models and educational media content are more influenced by such prosocial behaviour during the interaction with their peers.

Strasburger et al. [25] state that researchers who are studying about prosocial learning through media often place the assumption where the media characters that portray traits such as kindness, mutual cooperation, responsible and unselfishness give the examples for children, especially for them to learn and imitate such behaviour. The study by Ostrov et al. [28] proves the existence of the link between media exposure and prosocial behaviour. In a longitudinal study conducted over 2 years, Ostrov et al. [28] examined the patterns and patents of change and development on the same sample that consisted of early kindergarten children, their parents and principals.

Ostrov et al. [28] study on the media exposure role is seen as for whether contributing to aggression as well as prosocial behaviour. The study on television programs as an interactive model contributes to positive learning through prosocial

behaviour [26, 27]. Similarly, the television drama acts as 'facilitator' in forming prosocial behaviour [30]. Hence, in addition to having a link and relationship with violence and aggression affecting the behaviour of the audience, the television should also play its role in exposing the audience to prosocial behaviour. It can give benefits to the audience and the society.

The study by Udornpim and Singhal [31] highlights a character in a Japanese soap opera named 'Oshin' as a media role model among its audience in Thailand. In the outcomes of the study, Udornpim and Singhal [31] found that 'Oshin' presents a character who has traits such as perseverance, strong-willed and think positively as well as a willingness to help her family members who need aids. In the study, Udornpim and Singhal [31] have discussed 23 prosocial values, which among those are tolerance, independence, responsibility, mutual helpfulness, caring, forgiveness, gratefulness, diligence, high aspiration and love. The 'Oshin' character becomes a positive role model for the audience and illustrates how they could learn about prosocial values through the drama. Wallbank's [32] study also highlights the media model 'Robin Hood' in the discussion on the comparison between the antisocial and prosocial behaviour.

Meanwhile, Muller and Donnerstein [29] conducted two experimental studies on prosocial behaviour by screening an arousal film form and by using *the excitation transfer model*. The study by Muller and Donnerstein [29] on the subjects consisting of college students (male) aims to see the outcomes either from the aspect of positive and neutral behaviour. The subjects watched either the arousing erotic film or the controlled film that does not have the arousing erotic elements. The findings show that the *arousal* film can increase the subjects' punitive behaviour. Whereas, the subjects who watched the film that is absent from the arousing erotic elements show a more positive attitude [29]. Meanwhile, the correlation studies conducted by Gentile et al. [23] show a positive association between prosocial behaviour with *prosocial gaming exposure*.

The formation of prosocial behaviour is also associated with self-efficacy of individuals involved. Individual domination over self-efficacy can contribute to the differences in how he or she behaves. Carlo et al. [33] study measures prosocial behaviour based on social cognitive theory through the role of self-efficacy to prove the characteristics of the adolescent respondents in showing prosocial behaviour.

Carlo et al. [33] study found that there were differences in the types of prosocial behaviour among early and middle adolescents. Whereas, through the *prosocial agency* [34], humans can act as agents who set goals and behave following their personal and standard values that have been outlined based on their capability. It shows the contribution of self-efficacy and values to prosocial behaviour as discussed by Caprara and Steca [35].

4. Prosocial values and self-efficacy of religious society

The religious doctrine can be understood as a belief in God or magical and divine power such as deities [36, 37]. Preston et al. [37] and Hardy and Carlo [5] link religion to values and morals that exist within a society, while Saroglou et al. [6], as well as Norenzayan and Shariff [4], argue that religion is a part of a culture that set the values for people who practise religious life with prosocial standards. The definition of the concept of value depends on a few aspects, which originate from different fields such as political science, social sciences or religion. Whereas, Rokeach [38] sees the link between value with attitude and belief. The concept of value refers to the belief and attitude of an individual to translate it into a form of behaviour [38] whether the process produces something better or otherwise.

Whereas, the value from the Islamic point of view sees the relationship with Allah as the path of life in deciding [39], which includes ethical (*akhlak*) values (behaviour, beliefs and religion) and morality [40]. The appropriateness of every decision is based on the lifetime value that centres on the Islamic shariah. Syed Muhammad Naquib [39] also associates the concept of value with civility (*adab*). *Adab* in Islam centres on ethics, norms and morality.

Social and moral values are crucial as they are the root of well-being and harmony for a religious society. Noble values within a religion explain life that revolves around helping each other and living in peacefulness. Hence, religious prosociality values are in proximity with the noble values taught to a religious society [4]. There are studies on the prosocial behaviour that are viewed from the religious perspective, which becomes the catalyst for a high prosocial tendency within a society [4–6, 41]. Meanwhile, the study by Hardy and Carlo [5] proves that religiosity (the level of religious life) has a significant positive relationship with social behaviour predictor factors; kindness, compliant and altruistic values (prioritising other people's interests).

However, according to Malhotra [41], the link between religion and behaviour is closely related to the context of religious norms, especially for Christians who consider Sunday as the day to meet God. Therefore, most Christians behave more prosocially when the behaviour is linked to religious norms through religious importance on specific days (religious salience). The factor of religious belief is the driving force for a society to behave prosocially. According to Batara et al. [42], a society where its religious value is high is more willing to help others. Whereas, Sasaki et al. [43] argue that individuals with high religious value are better in their prosocial behaviour. However, according to Sasaki et al. [43], the religious influence on prosocial behaviour differs regarding an individual's acceptance. Even though religious factors contribute to prosocial behaviour, but undeniably there are other factors in the development of prosocial behaviour.

Prosocial behaviour is also aligned with the teachings of Islam that aim to encourage the society to practise noble values in life [44]. Islam as a religion that promotes peace and helpfulness accepts prosocial value as a decent value. It is because a religious society places a high emphasis on good religious values such as helpfulness, love and forgiveness. For Muslims, religion refers to Islam as *ad-deen* that can be explained as the submission to Allah as a way of life through the reinforcement of faith (*aqidah*) of the oneness of Allah, worships (*ibadah*), dealings (*muamalah*) and Islamic ethics (*akhlaq*).

In the same way with self-efficacy as a personal belief that influences an individual to behave in a certain way. According to Sania and Amena [45], self-efficacy has a significant association with religious belief. It means individuals who have self-efficacy awareness will be able to control better the actions and situations they meet. In the context of a society that holds onto a religious belief, self-efficacy fulfils the personal needs of an individual who believes and trusts in his or her capability. This belief leads to the ability and the faculty of the individual in assuming the responsibilities given unto him or her. The success in carrying out the responsibilities leads to outstanding human characteristics. A successful being is a balanced person between the physical and internal aspects of the self, which include self-confidence, goodwill and humbleness as well as consistently positive about success. However, according to Noornajihan [46], self-efficacy from the Islamic perspective is unlimited to only the belief that exists within the individual's self but also associated with the relationship with the Almighty Creator. Every Muslim believes in the oneness and the power of Allah as the Almighty Creator in the occurrence of everything.

5. Cognitive behaviour therapy: a psychological intervention influencing the formation of prosocial behaviour

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is a universal expression that originated from the cognitive model of affective disorders, which comprises of many approaches that are based on the postulation that cognition significantly influences emotion and behavioural impediment, and it also offers a wide range of evidence-based cognitive and behavioural techniques and therapies [7, 8]. Moghaddam and Dawson [8] added that despite the general assumption that cognition controls emotion and behaviour, the approaches in CBT have different emphasis, to name a few such as level of analysis (for example, situation-based versus person-based), levels of cognition (for example, prompt thoughts versus underlying central viewpoints) and problem-specificity (for instance, trans-diagnostic versus disorder-specific). Therefore, CBT involves a concerted effort between clients and therapists using a shared configuration to attain the treatment targets [7].

This concerted effort is idiographic in nature as it centres on customised therapy approach that best fits the patients' individual's conditions and needs. The customised intervention is built based on case formulation. According to Persons [9], case formulation is an empirically supported therapy (EST) in providing psychological treatment that is evidence-based that allows flexibility in addressing the patients' unique needs and also functions as guidelines for therapists in the decision-making process, especially in clinical treatment. Persons [9] further explained that an all-inclusive case formulation logically and coherently binds all of the following elements, which are (1) description of patient's symptoms, disorders and problems, (2) suggestion of hypotheses regarding the mechanisms that cause the disorders and problems and (3) suggestion of the latest outcomes of the present disorders and problems as well as the roots of the mechanisms. In cognitive behavioural therapy, a therapist begins a case formulation by obtaining a diagnosis through the collection of assessment facts. He or she then structures the diagnosis into the individualised formulation of the case and uses it to facilitate the task of designing a therapeutic strategy. Patient's consent is necessary before the treatment begins, and once it starts, the formulation will serve as decision-making guidelines for the therapist. This collaborative treatment enables the therapist to collect critical data in observing the treatment progress. It also allows the therapist to make the necessary adjustment [9].

Negative social exchanges refer to the unwelcome and unsympathetic exchanges among members of a social network [47]. The examples of the negative social exchanges are neglect, rejection, insensitivity, interference and unwanted advice (Brooks and Dunkel Schetter, 2011; Newsom et al., 2005; Rook, 1998 in Silva et al., 2016 [47]). It is an ironic social exchange where members of a social network assume that they are behaving helpfully, but in the actual sense, they are not (Oku and Keith, 1998 in Silva et al., 2016 [47]). Research indicates that negative social exchange negatively influences health [47], therefore about self-efficacy and development of prosocial behaviour, the negative social exchange could pose a threat in promoting higher level self-efficacy among people with low of self-efficacy and behaving antisocially.

6. Conclusions

The concept of self-efficacy explains the attitude of individuals who believe in themselves. It becomes the catalyst for the rational cognitive process in shaping the behaviour of an individual. Hence, self-efficacy that is inherent

in each person can shape a reasonable and mature prosocial value in a society. If a society has a high self-efficacy, then the condition of the society to change to a better state is also high. There is, however, a challenge in having positive-minded individuals with high self-efficacy. In dealing with the reality of life, humans are often tested with different trials and tribulations whether they are personal, family, academic or workplace problems. People with good self-efficacy accept the trials and tribulations as a challenge. However, if an individual accepts the pitfalls negatively, then they will not put efforts to overcome them. Even more so, they will see the problems as difficulties that decrease their motivation.

Academic scholars often relate the relationship between the level of self-efficacy with positivism that contributes to the formation of individuals' prosocial behaviour. Individuals who have a decent self-efficacy level will see the world with utmost positivism. They can translate such positivism through the proper behaviour that is inherent in themselves. They have positive ways of thinking that project a fair view among those who are around them. Thus, the readiness to help and love for each other exists as the essential elements in prosocial behaviour.

This condition is also associated with the role of religion that encourages its society to practice tolerance and kindness to others. A society that is educated with positive actions such as being helpful with one another, loving as well as having an emphatic soul, interacts easier within a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere. A society that has a prosocial personality tends to behave positively more easily. Therefore, the efforts to help based on the concern towards other people become the motivational factor that is closely associated with prosocial behaviour. Prosocial behaviour is a positive behaviour that can contribute towards better societal change. A decent societal community is those who are complementing each other, living peacefully without disagreement as well as respecting different views among them. All the religions in this world promote peace and safety, which supports prosocial value. The attitudes such as helpfulness, respect and love are the requisite of religious society that leads towards the reinforcement of prosocial behaviour through self-efficacy.

Thus, having the data of patient's negative social exchanges at the start of the treatment allows a therapist to customise the intervention through the formation of a precise and unique psychological intervention that is sensitive towards the patient's most fragile areas and the ones that need to be addressed promptly. This idiographic customisation allows a better understanding of the kind of negative social exchanges that could hinder the attainment of a higher level of self-efficacy. The recognition will help the therapist to strategically facilitate the alteration of the patient's thought process into becoming more harmonious, which resulted in better self-efficacy level that later helps an individual behaves more prosocially.

Acknowledgements

Conflict of interest

I have no conflict of interest and yes I have read and understood the guidelines on copyright.

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