# Empathy as a predictor of prosocial behavior and the penalization of acts: a cross-cultural comparison of Argentina and Spain

**Abstract**

Empathy is very relevant to sociomoral development, especially in relation to prosociality and the penalization of acts as faults and crimes (sociomoral judgment). The objective of this research paper was to test whether empathy is a predictor of prosociality and the penalty of acts among young people in Argentina and Spain. The Argentinian sample comprised 215 high school and university students (67 males; average age 18.57, *SD* = 0.81). The Spanish sample comprised 199 university students (50 males; average age 20.48, *SD* = 2.75). The proposed theoretical model showed good results in both countries. In addition, the multigroup analysis showed that the proposed model is invariable in Argentina and Spain. Although empathy was observed to predict prosocial conduct more than the penalization of acts, the predictive power of empathy is significant for both dependent variables. Thus, the importance of empathy in morality is supported. This statement is valid in both Spanish-speaking countries, indicating that empathy is a human process that extends beyond cultural differences.

**Keywords**: empathy, prosociality, penalization of acts, young people

## Introduction

Empathy has acquired immense relevance, both as an individual variable of development and in relation to other variables, such as sociomoral development and prosociality (Caprara, 2005; Eisenberg & Strayer, 1992; Hoffman, 1992, 2000; Martí-Vilar, 2010; Roche, 2010). Recent research has shown the value of empathy as a mediating variable of moral conduct. These studies confirmed the predictive power of empathy on prosocial conduct and the penalization of acts (Rodriguez & Moreno, 2016).

Empathy can be considered the ability to understand the perspective or feelings of another person and to insert oneself into another person's position. One of the most commonly used definitions of empathy is an "emotional reaction elicited by and congruent with the emotional state of another person and that is identical or very similar to what the other person is feeling or could expect to feel" (Sánchez-Queija, Oliva & Parra, 2006, p.260, see also Martí-Vilar & Lousado, 2010). Empathy is the spark of human concern for others and the adhesive that renders social life possible (Hoffman, 2001). Eisenberg and Strayer (1992) affirm that empathy implies sharing the emotion perceived in the other person, i.e., feeling along with the other person.

Approaches to studying empathy have followed two main paths (Hoffman, 2001; Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972): one path stresses the importance of the cognitive aspect of empathic processes and understanding empathy as the cognitive conscience of the internal states of other people, i.e., their thoughts, feelings, perceptions, intentions, etc.; the second path stresses the affective aspect and understanding empathy as a vicarious emotional response to the emotional experience perceived in others. In addition to these paths in the study of empathy (cognitive and affective paths), multidimensional models of empathy have been developed. According to the Davis

model (1980, 1983), empathy involves the cognitive processes of comprehension and adoption of perspective, the affective process of sympathy and experiences of feelings that are coherent with the experiences of the other person. A more recent model proposed by Decety and Jackson (2004) distinguishes among the following four components of empathy: affective interchange, self-awareness, perspective-taking and emotional regulation. Gerdes and Segal (2009) claim that the affective and cognitive processes of empathy should lead to empathic action, i.e., helpful or prosocial actions. This approach to empathy has led to the development of new instruments for the measurement of empathy, such as the New Spanish Empathy Questionnaire for Children and Early Adolescents (Richaud, Lemos, Mesurado & Oros, 2017), which measures the following dimensions: emotional contagion, self-other awareness, perspective-taking, emotional regulation, and empathic action.

*Empathy and prosociality*

Prosociality comprises behaviors that help or benefit other people regardless of the intentions for giving help (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998). Prosociality aims to support another person by satisfying a physical or emotional need that the other person may have. The main difference between prosocial conduct and altruism is that a person performing prosocial conduct may intend to obtain something in return; thus, all altruistic conduct is prosocial, but not all prosocial conduct is necessarily altruistic (Auné, Blum, Abal, Lozzia & Attorresi, 2014). However, Roche Olivar (2010) refers to the absence of extrinsic or material reward in prosocial conduct, which encompasses various types of helpful actions, such as physical help, giving things, verbal comfort, positive appreciation of the other person, and solidarity.

In addition, studies investigating prosocial conduct and social competence consider these constructs two main equal elements. The results of these studies indicate

that there is a correlation between prosocial conduct and social competence; high levels of prosocial conduct are positively related to appropriate social abilities as a part of social competence (Lorente, Martí-Vilar & Puchol-Fraile, 2015).

Hoffman (2001) states that empathic distress is a motive for prosocial action because, in general, we help someone who is in a situation of distress, pain, danger or another type of anguish (Hoffman, 2001). The empirical studies performed by Mestre, Samper and Frías (2002) in Spain have shown the role of empathy as a modulating factor of aggressive and prosocial conduct. Empathy, including both its cognitive component (understanding the other person) and, especially, its emotional component (worrying about the other person), appears to be the main motivator of prosocial conduct. The results of these studies show the predictive power of empathy in relation to prosocial conduct and its inhibiting power in relation to aggressive conduct. More recent studies involving the Spanish population found a positive correlation among the variables of prosocial conduct, empathy, self-efficacy and responsibility (Gutiérrez, Escartí & Baños, 2011). These results agree with those reported by Tur-Porcar, Llorca, Malonda, Samper and Mestre (2016), who found a positive correlation between prosocial conduct and empathy. In addition, empirical evidence from Argentina (Moreno & Fernández, 2011) in the adolescent population supports the theory that empathy predicts prosocial attitudes when the target/victim has to address his or her offenders by inhibiting aggressive attitudes towards them.

*Empathy and moral judgment*

David Hume (1751, cited in Hoffman, 2001) expressed the idea that empathy influences moral judgment; however, Hume does not use the term empathy but rather refers to emotionality, such as feelings of attraction or aversion, that provokes particular behaviors. The authors' idea is that we support acts that increase our well-being and

condemn acts are could be hurtful. Martin Hoffman (2001) states that if the subject empathizes with others, he or she must consider or condemn those acts that help or hurt others. Unless we are insensitive, we feel outraged when someone intentionally imposes suffering on others. Thus, empathy provides the criteria for the definitive validation of moral judgments (Hoffman, 2001).

There is no universal agreement regarding moral principles. However, the ethics of care and justice stand out because they are often considered universal moral principles in Western society. Hoffman describe the ethics of care as follows: "It includes concern for the well-being of others – their need for food, shelter, avoidance of pain, self-respecto – and helping those in need or distress" (Hoffman, 2001, p.222-223). Underlying the principle of justice, we find the following two abstractions: impartiality (principles are applied equally to all) and reciprocity between actions and results (Hoffman, 2001).

Empathy is related to both principles (Hoffman, 2001). The connection between empathic distress and the ethics of care is direct and obvious. The ethics of care is a natural expression that stems from empathic distress in specific situations originating from the general idea that one must always help people in need. The ethics of care is not a particular act but an abstraction and a moral imperative as follows: we must always consider others. Thus, empathy and the ethics of care are independent but congruent, mutually supporting each other to help others. The moral principle of care strengthens empathic distress and results in helping other people. However, the connection between empathy and the principle of justice is not as obvious as the above case. Justice involves society's criteria for assigning resources (distributive justice) and punishment (punitive or penal justice). Regarding punitive or penal justice, it seems probable that the punishment for certain offenses is influenced by the degree to which people empathize

with the victims, while anger is generated against the perpetrators of these crimes. In turn, anguish can be affected by the age, gender, and ethnic origins of the victims and perpetrators. Therefore, empathy can influence punitive justice (Hoffman, 2001). A particular form of moral judgment is the penalization of acts, which constitutes a moral judgment in estimating the seriousness of an act and, thus, the degree of the penalty for an act considered a moral transgression or crime (Rodriguez, Mesurado & Moreno, 2018).

Empathy is essential for judging because it is necessary for a person to consider the perspective of others while making the judgment. Concerning faults and crimes, it has been theorized that empathy is essential for judges to function because they need to feel empathy to make fair judgments and issue implacable verdicts (Slote, 2013). This empathic attitude directed harmonically towards all those who could possibly be affected enables good judicial action by the judge if empathy is understood both affectively and cognitively (Samamé, 2016).

The topic of empathy and its relationship with moral judgment have been investigated in various stages of the life cycle, and these variables appear to be positively related, although evidence is conflicting (Bezerra, Santos & Fernandes, 2018; Ortega, Cacho, López-Goñi & Tirapu-Ustárroz, 2014; Yugueroa, Esquerdaa, Viñas, Soler-Gonzaleza & Pifarréa, 2018). The theme of the penalization of acts as faults and crimes has been studied by considering simple and conditional judgments. Simple judgments are subjective estimates of some attribute of psychological significance (such as the degree of penalization) that are assessed for a stimulus (an act or an action) without the stimulus being surrounded by any other contextual elements of psychological stimulation. An example of a simple judgment is stealing a book (López Alonso, 1977, 1978; Rimoldi & López Alonso, 1973). In general, it has been observed

that a nonjuridical population is penalized according to the damages more than according to the assets safeguarded by the law. Thus, for example, the theft of a van would be more strongly penalized if that van was the owner's only mode of transportation for work; in contrast, the penalty would be less severe if the van belonged to a well-to-do person (Horas, 1981). This example shows the importance of empathy in the penalization of acts in the nonjuridical population because this population focuses more on the damages caused to the victim. Judges and the juridical population are expected to focus more on the law than the damage caused.

*Cross-cultural comparison*

A main focus of transcultural psychology has been the study of the classification of societies according to the predominance of the individual versus the group on the "individualism-collectivism" axis (Triandis, 1980). In their work, Carballeira, González and Marrero (2014) analyze the incidence and determinants of well-being in two societies, i.e., Mexican and Spanish, that a priori are similar in terms of their language and idiosyncrasies but are characterized by the formation of more strongly cohesive groups in the former case and the formation of bonds between people that are less intense and more heavily influenced by the characteristics of individualistic societies in the latter case (Hofstede, 1999).

In the present study, although Argentina and Spain are also similar a priori, Spain is more heavily influenced by individualist factors than Argentina, which, as a Latin American country, has idiosyncrasies similar to those of Mexico. Thus, we aim to investigate the proposed model in a country with a collectivist influence and another country with an individualist influence.

In another empirical study, Muratori, Zubieta, Ubillos, González and Bobowik (2015) explain that while Spain and Argentina have a common cultural past, these

countries exhibit differences. Spain appears to be a more hierarchical society than Argentina. In turn, Argentina exhibits a higher score in masculinity and competitiveness, while Spain exhibits a higher score in consensus, harmony and concern for the less powerful (see Hoftede, 2015 cited in Muratori et al. 2015). According to these authors, these similarities and differences render an intercultural study feasible.

*Present study*

Previous studies have demonstrated that empathy is a predictor of prosociality and the penalty of acts among young people in Argentina (Rodriguez & Moreno, 2016). Similar studies have also been carried out in Spain (Esparza, 2017).

Very few intercultural studies concerning these themes have been carried out while comparing Argentinian and Spanish populations. However, Mesurado and colleagues (2014) studied low-income adolescents in Argentina, Spain and Colombia. In this investigation, it was shown that Argentinian adolescents received higher prosocial conduct and empathy scores than Spanish adolescents. Furthermore, in this study, it was shown that empathy led to prosocial conduct in the three countries included in the study. However, no studies comparing Argentina and Spain have been performed to investigate the penalization of acts as faults and crimes. Studies related to this topic that involve a comparison including one of the countries involved in this study are intercultural studies investigating delinquency and offenses committed by young people in the United States and Argentina (De Fleur, 1966; David & Scott, 1973). For example, David and Scott (1973) found that four of the five most common offenses in Argentina involved violence against persons or goods; in contrast, in the United States, three of the five most common offenses did not involve violence.

Due to the scarcity of such intercultural studies concerning the themes of empathy, prosociality and the penalization of acts, this research paper intends to make a contribution along these lines. This study aims to evaluate the relationship among empathy, prosociality and the penalty of acts as faults and crimes based on a theoretical model and carry out a comparison of young people in Argentina and Spain. In the proposed model, empathy is a predictive variable, while prosociality and the penalization of acts as faults and crimes are variables that depend on the model. As a result of the theoretical developments and cited empirical evidence, this study supports the hypothesis that empathy is a good predictor of both prosocial behavior and the penalization of acts in both countries.

Notably, this study is carried out in adolescents and young people because most developmental psychologists emphasize the importance of adolescence in the consolidation of the moral values that the subject has internalized since childhood. The apex of this development and the possibility of moral autonomy is found during adolescence (Furter, 1968, Rodriguez el at., 2018).

## Methods

*Participants: Argentinian sample*

For the Argentinian sample, a total of 216 students were contacted in the classrooms of the Faculty of Pontific Catholic University of Argentina and public and private secondary schools of Entre Ríos and Buenos Aires, Argentina. In each classroom it was explained what the test consisted of. Those who completed the paper questionnaire completed it in the classroom and those who completed the online questionnaire completed it at another time and place. The Argentinian final sample comprised 215 intermediate-level university students (67 males and 148 females). The average age was

18.57 years with a standard deviation of 0.81. All students belonged to public and private schools and private universities. The research participants in the sample were from the provinces of Entre Ríos and Buenos Aires.

*Participants: Spanish sample*

For the Spanish sample, a total of 247 students were contacted in the classrooms of the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Valencia (Spain). The total number of students enrolled is approximately 2800 students. In each classroom it was explained what the test consisted of and some lists were provided so that those students interested in participating selected the time in which they wanted to take the test. Those who agreed to participate took the test in a classroom of the same faculty enabled with 30 computers. The response time of the online questionnaires was approximately 15 minutes. One of the researchers was always present in the room.

The Spanish final sample comprised 199 university students (50 males and 149 females). The average age was 20.48 years with a standard deviation of 2.75. The research participants were studying to obtain a psychology degree at the Universitat de València.

*Ethical procedures*

In Argentina, interviews were held with the personnel of the corresponding educational institutions to obtain permission to carry out the research. In Spain, an application was submitted to the ethics committee for research on humans at the university at which the data were collected, and the application was approved. Informed consent was obtained according to the current legislation of both Argentina and Spain. The samples were obtained by questionnaires completed online and personal group reporting in the classrooms of the education establishments. Full confidentiality of the data obtained during the research was assured.

*Instruments*

To measure empathy, we used the *Cuestionario de Evaluación de la Empatía* (Questionnaire to Evaluate Empathy) developed by Garaigordobil (2000), which was based on the questionnaire of dispositional empathy developed by Merhabian and Epstein (1972). This questionnaire consists of 22 items concerning empathic feelings, and a direct score of the empathic capacity of the individual is obtained. In the original version, there are two options for the answers as follows: yes or no. In the present study, a Likert-type measurement scale was used with the following 5 options: 1, in total disagreement; 2, in disagreement; 3, neither in disagreement nor in agreement; 4, in agreement; and 5, in total agreement. The questionnaire includes items, such as "*When I see someone crying, I have the urge to cry"* and *"When I see that a person is sick, I feel sad"*. To examine the reliability of the *Cuestionario de Evaluación de la Empatía* (Questionnaire to Evaluate Empathy), Cronbach's alpha was calculated. In the Argentinian sample, Cronbach's alpha was .82, and in the Spanish sample, Cronbach's alpha was .83.

To measure prosocial conduct, we used the *Escala de Prosocialidad* (Scale of Prosociality) developed by Caprara, Steca, Zelli and Capanna (2005), which was based on the scale of prosocial conduct for children developed by Caprara and Pastorelli (1993) for adaptation to the Argentinian population by Rodriguez, Mesurado, Oñate, Guerra y Menghi (2017). This scale measures adolescent and adult prosocial conduct related to helping, confidence and sympathy (variables in the scale for children), and this measurement discriminates between subjects who are mainly prosocial and those who are not by means of the total score. This scale consists of 16 items, and the answers are provided on a Likert-type scale with 5 options ranging from "never/almost never" to "always/almost always". Regarding the internal consistency of the instrument, the

original authors reported a Cronbach alpha of .91 (Caprara, Steca, Zelli & Capanna, 2005). This scale includes items, such as "*I am available for volunteer activities to help those who are in need"* and *"I try to console those who are sad"*. To examine the reliability of the *Escala de Prosocialidad* (Scale of Prosociality), Cronbach's alpha was calculated. In the Argentinian sample, Cronbach's alpha was .86, and in the Spanish sample, Cronbach's alpha was .88.

To estimate the penalization of acts as faults and crimes, we used the *Escala de Penalización de Faltas y Delitos* (Scale of Penalization of Faults and Crimes) developed by Rimoldi and López Alonso (1973, also see López Alonso, 1977), which was based on a list of delinquent acts originally obtained from Sellin and Wolfgang and used by H. Donnelly to measure psychological variables (Moreno, 1991). This instrument consists of the following two scales: a simple judgment scale and a conditional judgment scale. In the scale of simple judgments, the subjects must evaluate the seriousness of a single act committed by a person without any reference to the perpetrator of the act, thus judging only the act without any personal or circumstantial references (Moreno, 1991). The subject must assign one of the following options to each act: 1, it is not a misdemeanor or an offense; 2, it is a misdemeanor or a mild offense; 3, it is a fairly serious misdemeanor or offense; 4, it is a very serious misdemeanor or offense; or 5, it is an extremely serious misdemeanor or offense. For the purposes of this research paper, only the scale of simple judgments was used. This scale includes items, such as "*A thief kills a person to rob him", "Drinking beer in excess", "Consuming cocaine"*, and *"Robbing a museum of art"*. To examine the reliability of the *Escala de Penalización de Faltas y Delitos* (Scale of Penalization of Faults and Crimes), Cronbach's alpha was calculated. In the Argentinian sample, Cronbach's alpha was .91, and in the Spanish sample, Cronbach's alpha was .90.

## Results

*Study of the model in the two countries*

Table 1 displays the means, standard deviations and correlations of empathy, prosocial behavior and the penalization of acts.

Table 1

This study hypothesized that empathy promotes both prosocial behavior and the penalization of acts as faults and crimes among undergraduate students. To test this theoretical model, structural equation modeling was conducted in each country, i.e., Argentina and Spain. In assessing the model fit, we utilized the indexes of fit suggested by Kline (1998), including $\chi^2$, the ratio of the chi-square statistic to the degrees of freedom ($\chi^2$/df), and the root mean square residual (RMR), and supplemented the model with the following indexes: goodness of fit index (GFI) and comparative fit index (CFI). The GFI and CFI values varies between 0 and 1.0, and values of .95 and above are considered to indicate a good model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1995, 1999). The results indicated that the theoretical model fits the data very well in both countries (for Argentina: $\chi^2$ = 6.37, df = 1, p = .01, $\chi^2$/ df = 6.37, GFI = .98, CFI = .95 and RMR = .02; for Spain: $\chi^2$ = 1.36, df = 1, p = .24, $\chi^2$/ df = 1.36, GFI = .99, CFI = .99 and RMR = .004).

*Comparison of the model in the two countries*

We used a multiple group analysis to test whether the model was invariant across Argentina and Spain. We analyzed and compared a series of nested models by examining the change in the model $\chi^2$ and CFI values.

The comparison of the models did not result in statistically significant $\chi^2$ differences in Model 1 vs Model 2 (indicating configural invariance), and Model 2 vs Model 3 (indicating metric invariance). The configural invariance suggest that the model structure is invariant across Argentina and Spain, and the metric invariance suggest that participant from both countries responded to the variables in the same way (Milfont & Fischer, 2010). However, the models resulted in statistically significant $\chi^2$ differences in Model 3 vs Model 4, which mean the scalar invariance cannot be confirmed (see Table 2). Cheung and Rensvold (2002) suggest that a difference in the CFI of less than or equal to .01 is an indicator that the constrained parameters are invariant, so this procedure also confirm the configural and metric invariance of the model but not the scalar invariance. Consequently, the results indicate a partial invariance in the model suggesting cultural differences (see Table 2). These results are consistent with those from the observed means analysis, the Spanish students scored higher on the empathy ($t$ value = 6.55, $p \leq .001$, $\eta^2 = .09$) and prosocial behavior ($t$ value = 10.33, $p \leq .001$, $\eta^2 = .21$) measures than the Argentinian students, whereas the Argentinian students scored higher than the Spanish students on the penalization of acts as faults and crimes ($t$ value = 8.45, $p \leq .001$, $\eta^2 = .15$).

Table 2

The theoretical model of each country is depicted in Figure 1. As shown in Figure 1, the influence of empathy on prosocial behavior and the penalization of acts is statistically significant in both countries. The model explains 52% and 36% of the variance in prosocial behaviors in Spain and Argentina, respectively. Finally, the model

explains 13% and 9% of the variance in the penalization of acts in Spain and Argentina, respectively.

Figure 1.

**Discussion**

This research paper aimed to test whether empathy is a predictor of prosociality and the penalty of acts among young people in Argentina and Spain. The originality of this study lies in the comparison of the two abovementioned countries because although earlier studies have analyzed similar models (Esparza, 2017; Moreno & Rodriguez, 2016), no study performed such a comparison. In this study it was found that the results fit the model in both countries, and the results were similar to those reported in the studies carried out by Rodriguez and Moreno (2016) and Esparza (2017).

First, notably, empathy acts as a strong predictor of prosocial conduct in both countries. This finding is consistent with the studies carried out by Mesurado et al. (2014). They found that empathy promoted prosocial conduct in Argentinian, Spanish and Colombian adolescents. This finding coincides with research conducted in Western countries, Eastern European countries and East Asian countries showing that the key role of empathy is a mediator of prosocial behavior (Prot et al., 2014).

Therefore, notably, the differences in empathy could explain 52% and 36% of the differences in prosocial conduct in the Spanish population and Argentinian population, respectively, representing a high predictive power. This result coincides with the results of various studies showing this relationship between empathy and prosociality (Esparza, 2017; Gutiérrez, Escartí & Baños, 2011; Hoffman, 2001; Mestre,

Samper & Frías, 2002; Moreno & Fernández, 2011; Rodriguez & Moreno, 2016; Tur-Porcar et al., 2016).

Additionally, the regression indexes indicate that the predictive power of empathy with respect to the penalizations of acts as faults and crimes is 13% in the Spanish population and 9% in the Argentinian population. This level of predictive power is also found in the studies carried out by Rodriguez and Moreno (2016) and Esparza (2017). This result coincides with the idea of the importance of empathy in moral judgment, specifically in the penalization of acts (Hoffman, 2001; Samamé, 2016; Slote, 2013).

Therefore, although it can be observed that empathy is a strong predictor of prosocial conduct and the penalization of acts as faults and crimes, the predictive power of empathy is significant for both dependent variables, confirming the hypothesis put forward in this study. Thus, the importance of empathy in morality was further demonstrated in terms of both prosocial behavior and moral judgment concretely in the penalization of acts. This affirmation applies to both Spanish-speaking countries.

Studies have mentioned that cultural differences represent an important factor in evaluating differences in prosocial behavior (Luria, Cnaan & Boehm, 2014). The present study considered the individualist influence in Spain and the collectivist influence in Argentina. Based on these differences, it is possible that empathy is a better predictor of both dependent variables in Spain because they are individualized variables, whereas in Argentina, other variables could influence prosocial behavior and the penalization of acts based on the more collectivist influence. The present study did not consider other cultural variables that could have enriched the analysis of the results, which is a limitation of this study. Future research considering this subject comparing Argentina and Spain should consider other cultural variables.

One limitation of this study is the use of self-report measures, which only show the self-perception of the subject in terms of the variables studied. Future studies could incorporate other types of measurements. In addition, empathy was measured without considering its cognitive and affective aspects (multidimensional variable). This study used a measure of dispositional empathy (Merhabian & Epstein, 1972), which is linked to the affective aspect of empathy but does not cover the cognitive aspect. Future studies should include a measurement of both affective and cognitive empathy. Future studies should also consider these distinctions when assessing empathy. Another limitation of the present study is that no comparisons of gender were performed. Future studies should incorporate this variable to assess the possible differences.

Future research should replicate the model in other countries. In addition, research examining age should be carried out to observe the changes that may occur in the predictability of this theoretical model after morality becomes more concrete.

**Conflicts of interest**

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there are no conflicts of interest.

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Table 1.

*Summary of intercorrelations, means and standard deviations for scores on empathy, prosocial behavior and penalization of acts by country.*

| Variables | Empathy | Prosocial behaviour | Penalization of acts | M | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Empathy | - | .62** | .21** | 3.85 | 0.45 |
| Prosocial behaviour | .71** | - | .26** | 3.63 | 0.61 |
| Penalization of acts | .43** | .26** | - | 2.81 | 0.57 |
| M | 4.13 | 4.18 | 2.38 | | |
| SD | 0.41 | 0.46 | 0.45 | | |

Note: Intercorrelations for Argentinian participants are presented above the diagonal, and intercorrelations for the Spanish participants are presented below the diagonal. Means and standard deviations for Argentinian students are presented in the vertical columns and Means and standard deviations for the Spanish students are presented in the horizontal rows.

** $p<.01$

Table 2.

*Fit indexes for theoretical model invariance tests across two countries (multiple group analysis)*

| | $\chi^2$ | df | *p* | $\chi^2$/ df | GFI | AGFI | CFI | RMSEA | $\Delta\chi^2$ | $\Delta\chi^2$/df | ΔCFI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model 1 | 7.73 | 2 | *.02* | 3.87 | .99 | .93 | .98 | .08 | | | |
| Model 2 | 11.99 | 4 | *.02* | 2.99 | .98 | .94 | .97 | .07 | 4.26 | 2 | .01 |
| Model 3 | 13.37 | 5 | *.02* | 2.67 | .98 | .95 | .97 | .06 | 1.38 | 1 | - |
| Model 4 | 62.35 | 7 | *.00* | 8.91 | .91 | .84 | .81 | .14 | 48.98* | 2 | .16 |

Model 1 (configural invariance), Model 2 (metric invariance), Model 3 (scalar invariance) and Model 4 (error variance invariance)

* p<.05

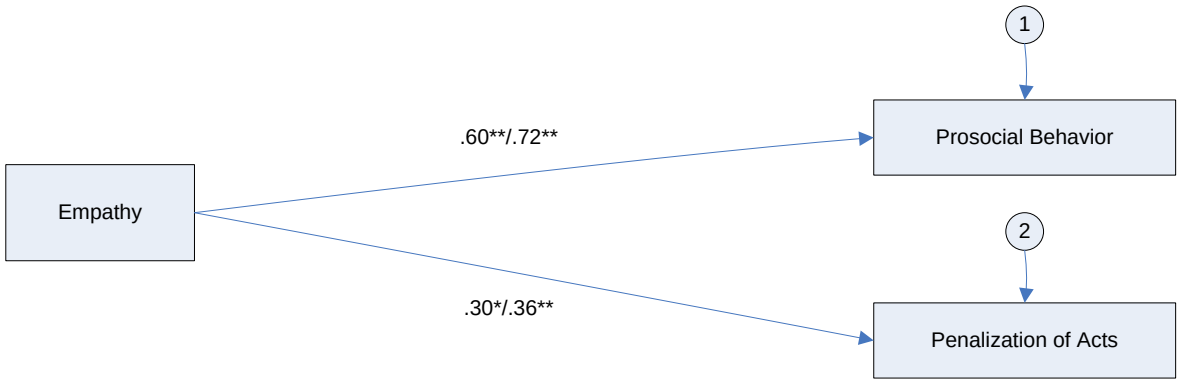


*Figure 1*. Theoretical model

Note: The influence of empathy on prosocial behavior and penalization of acts. The first path values correspond to the Argentinian sample and the second path values corresponds to the Spanish sample.

* $p<.01$ ** $p<.001$