



## Prosocial Behavior of Boarding and Non-Boarding Students: A Comparative Analysis in the Context of Religious Higher Education

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### Abstract

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Prosocial behavior is an important indicator of students' social development and is often assumed to be influenced by their residential environment. This study aims to examine the differences in prosocial behavior between boarding and non-boarding students in the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at UIN Syekh Wasil Kediri. Boarding in this study refers to students living in Islamic boarding schools or religious dormitories. The study used a comparative, quantitative approach with a sample of 224 students, comprising 112 boarding and 112 non-boarding students. Data were collected using a prosocial behavior scale and analyzed using an independent samples t-test. The results showed no significant differences in prosocial behavior between boarding and non-boarding students. The small effect size indicates that residential status is not strong enough to explain variations in students' prosocial behavior. These findings emphasize that prosocial behavior needs to be understood in terms of the quality of social experiences, relational support, and the internalization of values, rather than solely in terms of residential category.

## INTRODUCTION

Prosocial behavior is an important indicator in the formation of students' social character. This behavior reflects an individual's tendency to help, share, cooperate, and consider the welfare of others in their social life. In the Indonesian context, values such as cooperation and caring have long been part of society's social identity. However, social

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change, globalization, and shifting interaction patterns among the younger generation pose challenges to the loss of these values (Purba et al., 2022; Suroso et al., 2023). The development of social interaction spaces, including digital interactions, has also expanded the forms of prosocial behavior in late adolescence and early adulthood (Hui et al., 2024; van de Groep et al., 2026). Therefore, prosocial behavior can be understood not only as a moral issue, but also as a psychological and contextual issue that is important to study in higher education environments.

Conceptually, prosocial behavior is understood as voluntary actions aimed at providing benefits to others, even though the individual must bear certain personal consequences (Caserta et al., 2023). This behavior not only reflects altruistic actions but also involves empathy, self-regulation, and the internalization of social norms (Pamungkas & Wilantika, 2025). In developmental psychology, prosocial behavior encompasses sharing, helping, cooperation, honesty, generosity, and concern for the rights and welfare of others (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989). Recent studies also position prosociality as a multidimensional concept encompassing developmental processes, psychological mechanisms, and social contexts that enable individuals to care for and benefit others (Carlo et al., 2023; Malti & Davidov, 2023). Thus, prosocial behavior can be positioned as a social competence that develops through the interaction between personal factors and the social environment.

One relevant theoretical framework for explaining the formation of prosocial behavior is Bandura's social cognitive theory. This theory emphasizes that individual behavior is shaped through the reciprocal interaction of personal, behavioral, and environmental factors; the environment provides behavioral models, social norms, and reinforcement systems that individuals can observe and internalize (Bandura, 1986). In this research, boarding and non-boarding environments can be understood as distinct social contexts that provide distinct social learning experiences. Boarding students, as used in this study, refer to students living in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) or religious dormitories, and are in a more collective, structured, and value-infused environment. In contrast, non-boarding students have greater autonomy in managing their activities, social relationships, and daily interaction patterns. This difference could theoretically influence students' opportunities to observe prosocial models, receive social reinforcement, and internalize norms of helping behavior (Li et al., 2023).

Studies on boarding systems indicate that dormitory living can shape social behavior through close interactions, regular activities, and structured collective norms (Li et al., 2023). Other studies also indicate that the educational social climate, social support, and psychological safety are associated with increased prosocial behavior in college students (Lyu, 2024; Peng et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2025). However, these findings also demonstrate that environmental influences do not operate in isolation. Dispositional and relational factors, such as empathy, moral identity, family support, and peer support, also determine how individuals respond to their social environment (Yao & Li, 2024).

In the context of higher education, this issue becomes more complex because students are in the early adulthood phase, characterized by increased independence, self-

regulation, and autonomous decision-making. In this phase, social behavior is shaped not only by external structures but also by the values internalized within the individual. This means that, even though the residential environment provides a different social structure, students' prosocial behavior is not necessarily determined solely by their boarding or non-boarding status. Students in religious higher education institutions also receive relatively similar academic experiences, curricula, and value development. This condition allows for the internalization of prosocial values that originate not only from their residence but also from the academic culture, social relationships, and religious experiences within the educational institution. This is in line with research by (Hui et al., 2024; Padilla-Walker & Van der Graaff, 2022; van de Groep et al., 2026), which shows that prosocial behavior in late adolescence and early adulthood develops through the expansion of social contexts, both in direct relationships and in broader social spaces.

Although numerous studies have shown that prosocial behavior is related to individual and relational factors such as empathy, moral identity, social support, sense of security, and the social climate of education (Peng et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2025), few studies have specifically examined whether residential status is strong enough to differentiate students' prosocial behavior within the same higher education context. While boarding and non-boarding status are often assumed to represent differences in social environments, these categories do not necessarily reflect the quality of social experiences, the intensity of relationships, and the process of value internalization experienced by students. Therefore, comparing boarding and non-boarding students within the same study program and university has important methodological value, as the curriculum, academic culture, and institutional context are more closely controlled. Therefore, this study not only examines differences between groups but also assesses the extent to which residential status can be used as a contextual indicator in explaining variations in students' prosocial behavior.

Based on the description, this study aims to examine the differences in prosocial behavior between boarding and non-boarding students in the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at UIN Syekh Wasil Kediri. In this study, the term boarding refers to students who live in Islamic boarding schools or religious dormitories. In contrast, non-boarding refers to students who do not live in such dormitory systems. In line with this objective, the proposed hypothesis is that there are differences in prosocial behavior between boarding and non-boarding students. By comparing two groups of students in the same study program and university, this study is expected to clarify whether residential status is sufficiently sensitive as a contextual indicator in explaining variations in student prosocial behavior.

## **METHOD**

This study used a quantitative, comparative design. This design was chosen to examine differences in prosocial behavior between students attending Islamic boarding schools and those attending non-boarding schools. Analysis was conducted using an independent samples t-test.

The study population was all 1,304 active students in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Study Program at UIN Syekh Wasil Kediri. The sample was drawn using a purposive sampling technique with the following criteria: (1) active students in at least their second semester, (2) aged 18–23, and (3) living in an Islamic boarding school or non-boarding school for at least one year. The total sample size was 224 students. The research sample comprised 224 students: 112 boarding and 112 non-boarding. This number was obtained using the Isaac-Michael formula, with a 5% margin of error.

**Table 1. Prosocial Behavior Blueprint**

No	Indicator	sub-indicators	Item		Number of questions
			Favourable	Unfavourable	
1	Sharing	Share feelings/ experiences with others.	2	2	10
		listening to other people's complaints.	3	3	
2	Helping	Lighten the burden of others who are having difficulties.	2	3	9
		Helping without discriminating against the people being helped.	2	2	
3	Donating	Donate money to people affected by a disaster.	2	2	8
		Donate goods/ clothes to people in need.	2	2	
4	Cooperative	Mutual help	2	3	9
		Participation/ involvement	2	2	
5	Honesty	Be honest with yourself.	2	2	8
		Do not cheat on other people.	2	2	
6	Generosity	Like to share	3	2	9
		Give something to someone else	2	2	
7	Consider the rights and welfare of others	Give other people the opportunity to be entitled	2	2	8
		Taking care of other people's feelings	2	2	
<b>Total</b>					<b>61</b>

The sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique because this study required participants with specific characteristics consistent with the research objectives. These, namely, active students in Islamic Religious Education, could be clearly classified by residential status. The distribution of participants was balanced across both groups to

allow for proportional comparisons between boarding and non-boarding students and to reduce the possibility of bias due to differences in group size.

The research instrument used the Mussen and Eisenberg prosocial behavior scale, adapted from (Dayakisni & Hudaniah, 2009). This scale encompasses seven aspects of prosocial behavior: sharing, helping, donating, cooperation, honesty, generosity, and consideration for others' rights and welfare. The scale is constructed in a Likert format with four response alternatives: very appropriate, appropriate, inappropriate, and very inappropriate, and consists of favorable and unfavorable items. Initially, the instrument consisted of 63 statements, which were then tested for validity and reliability on respondents with characteristics similar to those of the study subjects. This procedure aligns with the principles of scale development, which emphasize construct clarity, dimension elaboration, item development, and empirical testing before the instrument is used in the main study (Boateng et al., 2018). Details of the aspects and item distribution are presented in Table 1.

Validity testing was conducted using Pearson's Product-Moment correlation at the 5% significance level, with an  $r$  table value of 0.361; an item is declared valid if the calculated  $r$  exceeds this value. The test results showed that 48 items were deemed valid, and 13 were discarded for failing to meet the validity criteria. Invalid items were removed and not used in the main data collection. Next, the instrument's reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. The instrument is considered reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha value is greater than 0.60. The reliability test results showed that the 48 valid items had a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.964; the prosocial behavior scale was deemed reliable and suitable for use in the study.

Data were analyzed using an independent samples t-test to determine differences in prosocial behavior between boarding and non-boarding students. Prior to hypothesis testing, the data were first tested for normality and homogeneity of variance. The normality test was used to assess the distribution of data within each group, and the homogeneity test was conducted using Levene's Test to assess equality of variances between groups. In addition to the significance value, this study also reports the effect size using Cohen's  $d$  to determine the strength of the difference between groups in a practical manner.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The data analysis began with a presentation of descriptive statistics on students' prosocial behavior based on their residential status. The descriptive results indicated that boarding students had slightly higher average prosocial behavior scores than non-boarding students. A summary of the descriptive statistics is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 shows that boarding students' prosocial behavior scores ranged from 121 to 183, with a mean of 154.78 and a standard deviation of 12.83. Meanwhile, non-boarding students had scores ranging from 114 to 179, with a mean of 151.32 and a standard deviation of 13.91. Descriptively, boarding students had a slightly higher

average prosocial behavior score than non-boarding students. However, this difference in average scores still needs to be tested inferentially using an independent samples t-test to determine whether it is statistically significant.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Prosocial Behavior of Boarding and Non-Boarding Students**

Group	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Boarding	112	121	183	154,78	12,83
Non-boarding	112	114	179	151,32	13,91

Before testing for differences, the data were first tested for normality and homogeneity of variance. Normality tests were performed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov results indicated that the data in the boarding ( $p = 0.166$ ) and non-boarding ( $p = 0.200$ ) groups were normally distributed. Meanwhile, the Shapiro–Wilk test results showed that the boarding group had a significance value below 0.05 ( $p = 0.022$ ), while the non-boarding group still showed a normal distribution ( $p = 0.139$ ). Thus, the results of the normality test indicated that the distribution was not entirely uniform. However, because the sample sizes in each group were relatively large and balanced, and the variances of both groups were homogeneous, the independent samples t-test analysis can still be used with caution.

**Table 3. Results of Normality and Homogeneity of Variance Tests**

assumption test	Group	Statistic	df	p
Kolmogorov–Smirnov	Boarding	0,075	112	0,166
Kolmogorov–Smirnov	Non-boarding	0,060	112	0,200
Shapiro–Wilk	Boarding	0,973	112	0,022
Shapiro–Wilk	Non-boarding	0,982	112	0,139
Levene’s Test	Boarding–Non-boarding	0,535	1; 222	0,465

Based on Table 3, the inconsistency in the normality results should be interpreted with caution. Given the relatively large and balanced sample size in each group ( $n = 112$ ), the independent samples t-test can still be used because parametric tests are relatively robust to mild deviations from normality in large samples. Furthermore, Levene's Test results indicate that the variances of both groups are homogeneous,  $F(1,222) = 0.54$ ,  $p = 0.465$ . Therefore, the t-test interpretation is carried out using the assumption of equal variances.

**Table 4. Results of the Independent Samples t-test of Prosocial Behavior Based on Residential Status**

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.	
Result	Based on Mean	.535	1	222	.465
	Based on Median	.573	1	222	.450
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.573	1	220.714	.450
	Based on the trimmed mean	.556	1	222	.457

Based on Table 4, the results of the independent samples t-test indicate no significant difference in prosocial behavior between boarding and non-boarding students,  $t(222) = 1.93$ ,  $p = 0.055$ . Although descriptively, boarding students had a higher average prosocial behavior score than non-boarding students, the difference was not strong enough to be declared significant at the 5% level. This is further supported by the 95% confidence interval, which ranged from -0.07 to 6.98, indicating that the mean difference still crossed zero.

Furthermore, Cohen's  $d$  value of 0.26 indicates that the strength of the difference between the two groups was small. Thus, the difference in prosocial behavior between boarding and non-boarding students was not statistically supported and had a small effect size in practical terms. This finding indicates that residential status is not strong enough to explain variations in student prosocial behavior.

### **Discussion**

The main findings of this study indicate that residential status, namely boarding and non-boarding, is not yet a strong differentiating factor in students' prosocial behavior. This finding indicates that the residential category is insufficient to explain variations in student prosociality in the context of religious higher education. In developmental studies, prosocial behavior is viewed as the result of a multidimensional process involving moral development, empathy, social orientation, and relational experiences across various life contexts (Carlo et al., 2023; Padilla-Walker & Van der Graaff, 2022). Thus, boarding and non-boarding status seem more appropriately understood as markers of early social context, rather than as single factors directly determining students' prosocial behavior. This reading is important so that the discussion does not stop at the presence or absence of differences, but moves on to the question of why these differences do not emerge strongly.

Conceptually, the boarding school environment supports the development of prosocial behavior by providing collective living, normative familiarization, social supervision, and opportunities for more intensive interaction. In social cognitive theory, the environment provides behavioral models, social reinforcement, and learning opportunities through observation (Bandura, 1986). A study by (Li et al., 2023) also showed that the boarding system can be associated with prosocial behavior when it includes teacher support, peer support, trust, and involvement in shared activities. However, the results of this study indicate that being in a boarding environment alone is not enough to produce meaningful prosocial differences compared to non-boarding students. This means that what needs to be considered is not only whether students live in a boarding system, but also the extent to which the environment truly provides high-quality social experiences, supportive relationships, and a meaningful process of internalizing values.

The quality of these social experiences needs to be understood in the context that all research participants came from the same study program and university. Both boarding and non-boarding students were within the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) academic

environment of UIN Syekh Wasil Kediri, thus they received relatively similar exposure to the curriculum, religious values, academic culture, and educational experiences. This similarity in context can narrow the gap in prosociality between the two groups, as prosocial behavior is shaped not only by housing but also by learning experiences, classroom interactions, academic activities, and institutional culture. (Hudson & Brandenberger, 2023) showed that campus experiences, including community involvement, are related to the development of students' moral and prosocial responsibilities. Therefore, the lack of big differences between boarding and non-boarding students can be understood as the possibility of a relatively similar space for value formation outside the residential environment.

If shared institutional contexts help reduce intergroup differences, then explanations for prosocial behavior need to focus on factors more closely related to students' personal and relational experiences. Recent research suggests that social support can predict students' prosocial behavior through positive affect and family support (Huang et al., 2023). Furthermore, (Pang et al., 2022) found that different types of empathy were associated with students' prosocial behavior through gratitude, while (Peng et al., 2024) showed that empathy influenced prosociality through moral identity and psychological safety. These factors were not directly measured in this study and therefore cannot be concluded as causal. However, these findings help explain why residential status as a general category is not strong enough to differentiate student prosociality. In other words, prosocial behavior is more closely related to the quality of relationships, empathy, and the internalization of values experienced by students than to their boarding or non-boarding status.

The close relationship between prosocial behavior, relationship quality, and the internalization of values is also reflected in the distribution of prosocial behavior categories across both groups. The majority of boarding and non-boarding students fall into the middle category, so residential status does not exhibit a starkly contrasting pattern of prosociality. This finding is understandable because during late adolescence and the transition to adulthood, prosocial behavior develops through a variety of social experiences rather than a single dominant context. (Memmott-Elison et al., 2020) demonstrated that prosocial behavior is related to adolescents' social and psychological adjustment, while (Cirimele et al., 2024) emphasized that prosocial development occurs gradually across diverse relationship contexts. (Rahal & Singh, 2024) study of college students also demonstrated that providing emotional support in daily life is related to social role fulfilment and emotional well-being. Thus, the relatively similar categorical patterns in this study reinforce the interpretation that student prosociality is better understood as the result of a broad accumulation of social experiences rather than solely as a function of boarding or non-boarding status.

If extensive social experiences shape students' prosociality, then the discrepancy between this study's results and those of several previous studies may be explained by differences in how the social context was measured. (Zhou et al., 2025) showed that classroom climate is related to students' prosocial behavior through expectations of social

feedback and self-monitoring. Research by (Li et al., 2023) showed that boarding can be associated with prosociality when accompanied by teacher support, peer support, trust, and engagement in shared activities. Furthermore, (Wu & Zhang, 2022) showed that close teacher-student relationships and the fulfillment of relatedness needs also play a role in prosocial behavior. A key difference is that those studies measured the quality of the social climate and relationships more directly, whereas this study compared residential status as a social category. Therefore, the results of this study indicate that the boarding/non-boarding categories are not sufficiently sensitive to capture the quality of social experiences that truly shape students' prosocial behavior.

Because the boarding/non-boarding categories are not sufficiently sensitive to capture the quality of students' social experiences, the practical implication of this study is the need to direct reinforcement of prosocial behavior toward more direct and meaningful experiences. In the context of religious higher education, prosocial development cannot be achieved solely through housing arrangements; it must be strengthened through socio-religious activities, community involvement, moral reflection, and structured helping experiences. (Fang & Huang, 2023) demonstrated that moral elevation is related to students' prosocial behavior through perceived social support and is reinforced by moral identity. (Geng et al., 2022) also demonstrated that student involvement in volunteer activities is related to public interest orientation and contextual social experiences, while (Lyu, 2024) found that perceived social support is related to students' prosocial behavior through a sense of meaning in life. Therefore, developing students' prosociality is better directed toward creating social experiences that foster a sense of connection, meaning, and tangible opportunities to benefit others.

This strengthening direction also clarifies the conceptual contribution of this study: residential status should be understood as a still-limited contextual indicator. These findings do not negate the role of the environment but rather suggest that it should be analyzed through more specific mechanisms, such as social support, empathy, moral identity, sense of security, and peer support. (Peng et al., 2024) showed that empathy is related to students' prosocial behavior through moral identity and is influenced by psychological safety. (Wang et al., 2024) also confirmed, through a meta-analysis, that social support is positively related to prosocial behavior, while (Yao & Li, 2024) showed that peer support can be related to prosocial behavior through certain psychological mechanisms. Therefore, further research is needed to examine mediator or moderator variables more closely related to students' social experiences, such as relationship quality, empathy, moral identity, social support, length of stay in boarding school, and involvement in socio-religious activities. With this direction, the non-significant findings in this study still have scientific value because they clarify the explanatory limits of residential status in understanding students' prosocial behavior.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study aimed to examine differences in prosocial behavior between boarding and non-boarding students in the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at UIN

Syekh Wasil Kediri. The analysis revealed no significant differences in prosocial behavior between the two groups, and the small effect size suggests that residential status is not strong enough to explain variation in student prosocial behavior in practice. This finding indicates that boarding and non-boarding status cannot be treated as the primary differentiating factors in prosocial behavior, particularly in the context of religious higher education, which has a relatively similar curriculum, academic culture, and institutional values. Theoretically, this study contributes to the study of social psychology and educational psychology by demonstrating that the residential environment should be understood not merely as an administrative category, but also through the quality of social experiences, relational support, the internalization of values, and student engagement in meaningful social activities.

This study has limitations because it only compares residential status as boarding and non-boarding categories. Therefore, it does not directly measure relationship quality, intensity of social interactions, length of stay in the boarding school, peer support, empathy, moral identity, or student engagement in socio-religious activities. Furthermore, the study was conducted in a single study program and university, so generalization of the findings should be done with caution. Future research is recommended to involve a broader range of university contexts and to examine mediator or moderator variables more closely related to the development of prosocial behavior, such as empathy, social support, social climate, moral identity, the quality of the boarding experience, and student involvement in socio-religious activities.

## **DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS**

In the preparation of this manuscript, the authors utilized Scopus AI to assist with finding relevant articles on the topic. All outputs were subsequently reviewed and revised by the authors, who assume full responsibility for the final content of the publication.

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