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MANIFESTATIONS

OF SUPPORT TO OTHERS IN THE COURSE OF THE PANDEMIC CRISIS IN PANAMA

MANIFESTACIONES DE APOYO A OTRAS PERSONAS DURANTE LA CRISIS DE LA PANDEMIA EN PANAMÁ

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 quarantine, its effects and impact, not only escalated into a slowed down global economic growth but also the modification of people's values and its manifestations. The purpose of this article is to reveal the manifestations of help and support to others, whether prosocial behaviors or simple solidarity, that developed from the crisis situation brought by the pandemic in the Republic of Panama. This article delivers quantifiable descriptions on the association of demographic data and prosocial actions performed by a sample of 502 survey participants during the time of the pandemic. Results suggest that social interaction in the form of emotional accompaniment and food provision were the most commonly performed prosocial actions during this period in general. According to sex, women were more inclined to offer advice and provide mentorship, while men were more inclined to offer making repairs. There is a statistically significant association between actions and levels of education where those with university degrees are mostly represented when it comes to giving money and paying off bills.

Keywords: Prosocial actions; Solidarity; Prosocial behavior; Pandemic; COVID-19; Panama

RESUMEN

La cuarentena por el Covid-19, sus efectos e impacto, no solo desaceleraron el crecimiento económico global, sino que también contribuyó a la modificación y manifestación de los valores de las personas. El propósito de este artículo es revelar las manifestaciones de ayuda y apoyo a los demás, ya sean comportamientos prosociales o solidaridad simple, que se desarrollaron a partir de la situación de crisis traída por la pandemia en la República de Panamá. Este artículo ofrece descripciones cuantificables sobre la asociación de datos demográficos y acciones prosociales realizadas por una muestra

de 502 participantes de una encuesta aplicada durante el tiempo de la pandemia. Los resultados sugieren que la interacción social en forma de acompañamiento emocional y provisión de alimentos fueron las acciones prosociales más comúnmente realizadas durante este período en general. Según el sexo, las mujeres estaban más inclinadas a ofrecer consejos y proporcionar tutoría, mientras que los hombres estaban más inclinados a ofrecer reparaciones. Existe una asociación estadísticamente significativa entre las acciones prosociales y los niveles de educación, donde aquellos con títulos universitarios están en su mayoría representados principalmente cuando se trata de dar dinero y pagar facturas.

Palabras clave: Acciones prosociales; Solidaridad; Conducta prosocial; Pandemia; COVID-19; Panamá

INTRODUCTION

The recent COVID-19 pandemic that emerged at the end of 2019 developed into an international transcendent experience provoked by life events; going from a health emergency to a prolonged social crisis also related to structural issues of vulnerability, informality, poverty, and inequality. The social crisis has not subsided despite the economic recovery in 2021, as evidenced by the fact that poverty levels have remained higher than they were prior to the pandemic. The crisis has also brought attention to the vulnerability of middle-class individuals (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2022). Quarantine, its effects and impact, not only escalated into a slowed down global economic growth but also a modification of values and its manifestations (Barsallo Alvarado et al., 2022) reflection on scientific evidence obtained in relation to other areas of knowledge is required. The purpose of the article was to explore and analyze social perceptions of values in crisis situations. A correlational hypothesis is proposed, according to which it is demonstrated that, as societies' levels of economic and personal security vary, so do their perceptions of their values and the importance they assign to them. The methodology used was quantitative and correlational, with data obtained through online surveys distributed on social media platforms from June to October 2020, with the participation of 502 adults aged 18 and over. The main results showed that respect was perceived as the most necessary value to face the crisis by women and men and across age groups, while happiness and cultural diversity were the least important in relation to gender and age variables. Schools and households appeared to be the places identified as the most significant foci of values education, not the religious communities to which the participants belonged. However, the results related to religious affiliation revealed that the younger generation (18–30-year-olds but also in the decrease of

opportunities for regular social interactions, including offering assistance, sharing, and giving. The purpose of this writing is to reveal the observation of manifestations of help, support to others or the so called prosocial behaviors, which developed from a crisis situations during the pandemic in the Republic of Panama.

The pandemic revealed and reaffirmed positive and negative feelings, behaviors, and practices that would not be commonly displayed, as ethical principles and values in general were positioned within the framework of the inequities that emerged at the time. People were asked to limit their physical interactions with others, stay inside their homes, and reduce both face to face professional and personal ties. The strategy proved to be successful but the cost of isolation on mental health was high (Orben et al., 2020)we describe literature from a variety of domains that highlight how social deprivation in adolescence might have far-reaching consequences. Human studies have shown the importance of peer acceptance and peer influence in adolescence. Animal research has shown that social deprivation and isolation have unique effects on brain and behaviour in adolescence compared with other stages of life. However, the decrease in adolescent face-to-face contact might be less detrimental due to widespread access to digital forms of social interaction through technologies such as social media. The findings reviewed highlight how physical distancing might have a disproportionate effect on an age group for whom peer interaction is a vital aspect of development.”,“author”:[{“dropping-particle”：“”,“family”：“Orben”,“given”：“Amy”,“non-dropping-particle”：“”,“parse-names”：false,“suffix”：“”},{“dropping-particle”：“”,“family”：“Tomova”,“given”：“Livia”,“non-dropping-particle”：“”,“parse-names”：false,“suffix”：“”},{“dropping-particle”：“”,“family”：“Blakemore”,“given”：“Sarah Jayne”,“non-dropping-particle”：“”,“parse-names”：false,“suffix”：“”}],“container-title”：“The Lancet, Child and Adolescent Health”,“id”：“ITEM-1”,“issue”：“8”,“issued”：{“date-parts”：[[“2020”,“8”,“1”]]},“page”：“634-640”,“publisher”：“Elsevier B.V.”,“title”：“The effects of social deprivation on adolescent development and mental health”,“type”：“article-journal”,“volume”：“4”,“uris”：[“http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uid=6d31cbd7-dbb9-36cb-9521-919a5f31855c”]},{“mendeley”：{“formattedCitation”：“(Orben et al., 2020. Contrastingly, anxiety, depression, and psychological stress have increased globally.

Every society is a moral society because men cannot coexist without agreeing and cooperating. Nonetheless, ethical principles and moral values, which are daily under attack, were situated within the confines of justice,

freedom, and love during the Pandemic. The pandemic left us with the manifestation of a collective moral crisis in economic and labor aspects affecting our overall well-being. It has caused us to reflect on what is correct and incorrect, bad and good behavior, ethical and anti-ethical behavior, and its benefits and penalties. The lockdown time allowed us to recognize that the only way to move ahead of the lockdown burden was to aid one another. As a result, we rethought our daily lives and extended our arms and imagination beyond the distance and resilience and a desire to meaningfully help others and the community. All happened while exercising our empathy, compassion, and joy in times of uncertainty for the sake of our communities.

Panama, the country in which this study takes place, is part of Latin America. It is situated in Central America connecting north and south of the American Continent. It is considered a middle-income country in terms of GDP, and after the recuperating from the pandemic, it is considered the country with greater and faster economic growth in the region, exhibiting a high income with regards to the GNI per capita. However, there is a great inequality gap where social classes are not consolidated. Moreover, despite being a country with a high incoming grade through the service sector, it maintains high levels of labor informality.

Prosocial behavior

Psychology has a rich tradition of studying prosocial behavior, and researchers have proposed a diverse set of definitions for the concept. Overall, prosocial behavior is defined as a voluntary behavior with the intention to benefit another. It is also defined as “the involving costs for the self and resulting in benefits for others. Where prosocial behavior benefits others but confers net costs to the person committing it, prosocial behavior becomes altruism” (Wittek & Bekkers, 2015). Prosocial behaviors range between political and economic interests at a macro level through psychological implications at a micro level (Simpson & Willer, 2015). It is described by acts of kindness, compassion, helping behaviors, altruism, cooperation, and caregiving. Prosocial behavior is seen as desirable and it is a central part of morality and it is shaped by individual, cultural and societal characteristics. Prosocial behaviors can be carried out by individuals or groups, and they can be directed at an individual or a group of people, but also at much larger entities such as organizations, communities, countries, or the society as a whole (Smith et al., 2023).

In fact, the concept of prosociality is a multidimensional construct that can take many different forms often used as synonyms to altruism, cooperation, kindness, empathy,

etc. (Smith et al., 2023) and their definitions could overlap or exhibit slight differences (Bolino & Grant, 2016). The concept of prosociality is used as a comprehensive term that refers to a wide range of actions, attitudes and motivations that serve others or are concerned with their welfare (Bailey et al., 2021). This has to do with the multidisciplinary approach that researchers have had to the uses of the term, each in their own discipline. However, the concept of prosociality has its scientific roots in psychology. Typical examples of prosociality include volunteering, sharing toys, treats or food with friends, instrumental help and emotionally supporting others in distress. Prosocial behavior can include a variety of observable behaviors (e.g., sharing, comforting, cooperating, and showing compassion) that may be elicited by different motivations, they may be associated to different emotions (e.g., empathy, sympathy, or distress), and based on different cognitions.

Empathy is considered as the emotion that provides both the foundation for prosocial development and the mechanism for social influence over behavior. Prosocial behavior and empathy emerge at early stages in life and develop until adulthood. The increase in prosocial behaviors with age is attributed to developmental increases in cognitive abilities associated with detecting others' needs and determining ways to help, in empathy-related responding, and in the moral understanding of the importance of helping others.

Indeed, studies show that it has been difficult to determine the particular developmental course of prosocial behavior. For instance, it has been found that prosocial behavior increases with age, but that the increases vary in size depending on the methodological aspects of each study. When studying the development of children's prosocial behaviors, it matters whether the observed child population comes from a high or a low socio-economic status background. Similarly, prosociality seen as voluntary actions and practices towards the benefit of others can also be called simple support and can be understood as ways of acting guided by internalized values and goals. In addition to situational and individualistic factors, there are some characteristics that can impact prosocial behavior such as culture, sex, and religion. Other studies have indicated a positive relationship between prosocial behavior and religion (Moulin-Stožek et al., 2018). Research suggests that while women and men both engage in prosocial behaviors, women tend to engage in more communal and relational prosocial behaviors whereas men tend to engage in more agentic prosocial behaviors.

In describing prosocial behaviors, three major classes have been outlined: aiding another person, contributing to a group, and following a socially valued rule. Researchers

have used several methods for assessing and comparing these different kinds of prosocial behaviors across populations, including asking people how they would respond to hypothetical scenarios.

Solidarity, empathy and other aspects

Sociology explains prosocial behaviors as one dimension of moral behavior (Salgado et al., 2019) that come in different forms such as informing, sharing, teaching, comforting, and helping among others (Jensen, 2016), and exhibit interpersonal processes such as relationships, shared values, altruism, cooperation and solidarity among others (Simpson & Willer, 2015). Understanding prosocial behaviors toward acquaintances, neighbors, and community members from a sociological perspective offers the chance to understand society more fully because processes that determine a person's need for or willingness toward helping others may also be influenced by factors such as gender, age, and education levels. Pure altruism is one of the characteristics that have emerged during this period of pandemic crisis. Altruism, also referred to as cooperative behavior, is a term used to define any costly behavior that not only benefits others, but also includes the actor (Jensen, 2016). However, altruism can also be interpreted as being selfish while expecting that the own actions make the actor feel good about it and not for the mere purpose of helping others.

From a point of view of social facts and interaction in groups, it is said that the construction of social solidarity does not arise from altruism elements, but from a collective social behavior that is not purely motivated by a moralistic or loving issue. Thus, the socialization processes that lead to prosocial personality development and the internalization of norms are the main areas of study in the development of solidarity. On the contrary, it would be driven by an issue from the construction of a unifying element and goes hand in hand with elements of compensation and social satisfaction as remuneration and satisfaction. It is important to understand it from the sociological point of view because human motivations go beyond psychological motivation and that is linked to other elements such as organic solidarity and mechanical solidarity. Both types of solidarity have an explanatory function. Mechanical solidarity arises in primitive or archaic societies where values such as empathy or group connection start from the identification of a similarity that would be mediated by the proximity of social empathy and that would not necessarily be connected by affection or reason, but by issues that arise mechanically. It arises where there is a strong state of collective consciousness. This state of collective consciousness is different from the common consciousness

that has a different reality, because it persists over time and serves to unite groups of groups.

On the other hand, organic solidarity arises in advanced societies, and its process is established through a strong state of consciousness and the social division of labor where each subject identifies their function and role in the collective system. Contrastingly, collective consciousness resides in individuals as a product of human similarities as their strength and independence become greater the more pronounced are the analogies of individuals in society. In these spaces of collective consciousness, solidarity or support and construction of empathy in social ties are developed independently to what individual consciousness would be.

The sociologist Emile Durkheim identified that in the factors where solidarity was more developed organically, ties of empathy were established by rewards. The author stated that advanced societies, which are increasingly distinguished by organic solidarity, represent the values of moral progress, which highlights values of equality, freedom, fraternity and justice. However, all these forms of expression of solidarity in organized societies through a division of labor can be altered in one way or another, due to social abrupt such as a pandemic, a war or a catastrophe in general. The principle of well-being and survival would always be linked to subsequent facts and actions and in the thought of the community would be suited by mechanical consciousness.

In an analysis of the pandemic period in Panama, Gandásegui (2020) alleged that social inequality and fear were the main contributors to the pandemic, as they reflected the social distrust between uncertainty and confidence in worldwide state institutions. This happened where institutional systems are less favored by the issue of power and justice, implying an unfavorable situation for less favored classes in global societies and especially in Panama.

During the pandemic in Panama, levels of distrust raised because of corruption evidenced by the poor administration of health services as inequality and distrust are going hand in corruption. On this issue, Gandásegui (2020) states that in countries where inequality distrusts are very marked, this is very common. Then, one might wonder if the concept of mass unity—whether organic or mechanical—would be vulnerable in situations like the pandemic, given that, in both cases, we have limitations based on our identities as members of society and the roles we assign to citizens with their rewards as a collective consciousness.

Being supportive does not imply helping others for mere altruism, well-being and purely conceived solidarity. Almost everyone has used the word “solidarity” to

characterize and encourage collective actions of collaboration among citizens in an attempt to deal with the effects of the pandemic. As a result, the concept of solidarity has been used colloquially as an empirical norm for motivation and justification of its application (Puyol González, 2022). However, non-rational, empathic and primitive elements of action and social facts have also been involved and the pandemic has demonstrated it.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The collected data for this article belongs to the dataset from a larger study in the project "Perception of Panamanian Citizens on the Incidence of Values during the Crisis." [Percepción de los ciudadanos panameños sobre la incidencia de valores ante la crisis]. This is the third article for this project.

The aim of the study was to examine the perspectives of Panamanian citizens in relation to their values and their relationship with the variables that affect how they behave during crises. With this study, we expect not only to offer data on the ideas and behaviors Panamanians performed during the said period, but also gather some recommendations that contribute to the reflection on how people conduct themselves during crisis situations.

In this particular article, we approach the manifestation of support or prosocial actions during the COVID pandemic started in 2020. The development of this article is guided by a fundamental question:

1. How have you individually sought to support/help your neighbor in times of crisis?

The collected data for the study included fundamental demographic variables such as gender, age, nationality, work status and educational level. It also compiles a set of aid actions that the respondents stated could have been imparted to their neighbors during the pandemic.

Because of the country's lockdown situation at the time of conducting this study, data was collected more conveniently via the online survey method, for which a questionnaire-type instrument was designed, prepared on an online platform, and distributed via social networks (i.e., WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram) between June and October 2020. The use of this method allowed us to better reach the population to be surveyed, achieve probabilistic sampling using the snowball technique, and facilitate their access by allowing them to use their own mobile devices to complete the survey, proving to be an effective way to have a large volume of information in a short time (Cuenca & Schettini, 2020).

This study used an interdisciplinary approach with the help of quantitative statistical descriptions describing totals and percentages in order to enrich the possible associations of the variables studied. Hence, the goal of this article is to deliver quantifiable descriptions of participant demographics and identify topic-related factors in tables providing statistical results. An analysis of association between variables was performed, specifically each prosocial action carried out during the pandemic and each of the demographic variables, with the goal of characterizing people based on demographic variables such as age, gender, and academic level. Association measured between two variables was achieved, requiring that the values of one variable were related in some way to the values of the other (Altman & Krzywinski, 2015). In the data processing, each of the prosocial actions was considered a dichotomous variable (yes/no), while in the demographic variables, only the sex variable (woman/man) is dichotomous and the others are polychotomous, or have more categories. This was measured using SPSS21.0 and Microsoft Excel and represented in resumed contingency tables using cross tabulation and Chi-square test.

The sample

The final sample was represented by 502 adult Panamanians, of whom 32.8% were men and 67.2% were women. The average age of the participants was 33.1 years (32.6 men and 33.3 women). (Table 1)

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the sample.

Demographic characteristics		No.	Per-cent	Male	Female
Sex	Male	184	32.8	-	-
	Female	377	67.2	-	-
Age	18-30	298	53.1	18.0	35.1
	31-40	107	19.1	6.1	13.0
	41-50	103	18.4	5.5	12.8
	51-60	41	7.3	2.9	4.5
	61-70	9	1.6	0.2	1.4
	71 +	3	0.5	0.2	0.4
Work status	Unemployed	207	36.9	40.2	34.5
	Formal worker	245	43.7	39.1	45.9
	Entrepreneur	116	20.7	17.4	16.7
	Informal worker	18	3.2	3.3	2.9
Education Level	Post-graduate	137	24.4	21.7	25.7
	University	319	56.9	59.8	55.4
	High school	105	18.7	18.5	18.8

Source: the authors

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Survey participants were asked how they had individually sought to support or contribute to their neighbors in times of crisis, given that the participants previously identified different types of crises even during the pandemic. Their responses showed that among the activities to help others carried out during the current crisis, the diversity of actions could be evidenced, where the main one was emotional accompaniment (46.9%), probably multi-causal such as the loss of relatives, economic hardship, loneliness, anxiety, and others, caused by the forced confinement (total quarantine) to which the population was subjected. Following this, citizen participation was observed in providing tangible elements such as: food or supermarkets (40.8%) and money (35.8%) given the high unemployment rate that triggered the total quarantine dictated by the government as a tactic to safeguard the population from the spread of COVID-19. (Table 2).

Table 2. Support to others in need during the crisis.

Actions	No.	%
Emotional accompaniment	263	46.9
Food or supermarkets	229	40.8
Food	201	35.8
Free mentoring	190	33.9
Giving advice	189	33.7
Paying bills (services)	160	28.5
Transportation or doing errands	104	18.5
Fixing things	30	5.3
Other	39	7.0
None	30	5.3

Source: the authors

Manifestations of vicious human acts are more noticeable in our times. The global crisis in various areas of human life demands that we turn our gaze towards values. Not so in an abstract and empty way, but as that which gives meaning, dignifies, and guides human action. In this sense, we can assert that crisis situations in general and the recent COVID-19 pandemic have provided people with an opportunity to show their support for their neighbors in need while performing a prosocial act. However, the performance of prosocial behaviors took an interesting turn during this period. Hence, prosocial initiatives have the potential to be implemented quickly and widely because prosocial acts can be flexibly carried out in many situations and frequently at little to no cost. (Miles et al., 2021) According to Martela & Ryan (2016) but most prior experimental studies have involved actual or potential face-to-face contact with the beneficiary. To establish that it is prosocial behavior itself, and not only an increased sense of social relatedness to the recipient that improves well-being, participants (n = 76, prosocial behaviors appear to elicit happy feelings and positive emotions even when carried out remotely, making them the best response to the current crisis.

Table 3. Support actions carried out by Panamanians according to sex.

Actions	Men		Women	Total	Chi-squared	p Value
Give money	Count	69	157	226	1.03	0.3099
	percentage	12.5%	28.4%	40.9%		
Food or buying groceries	Count	75	185	260	3.78	0.0517
	percentage	13.6%	33.5%	47.1%		
Transportation or doing errands	Count	39	77	116	0.03	0.867
	percentage	7.1%	13.9%	21.0%		
Paying bills (services)	Count	49	124	173	2.46	0.1166
	percentage	8.9%	22.5%	31.3%		

Emotional accompaniment	Count	89	213	302	3.7	0.0545
	percentage	16.1%	38.6%	54.7%		
Giving advice	Count	82	132	214	4.52	0.0336
	percentage	14.9%	23.9%	38.8%		
Free mentoring/tutoring	Count	82	133	215	0.04	0.0391
	percentage	14.9%	24.1%	38.9%		
Fixing things	Count	20	11	31	14.79	0.0001
	percentage	3.6%	2.0%	5.6%		
None	Count	12	20	32	0.32	0.5744
	percentage	2.2%	3.6%	5.8%		
Total	Count	182	370	552		
	percentage	33.0%	67.0%	100.0%		

Source: the authors

Data shows statistically significant differences between men and women's responses when it comes to offering advice, providing mentorship, and men carrying out repairs ($p < 0.05$), as shown in Table 3. These findings are congruent with previous research claiming that prosocial behavior differs between men and women. However, there are gender differences in prosocial acts performance as these acts are dynamic and depend on the context in which they are performed (Olsson et al., 2021).

Above 50% of the participants of all age groups showed a marked interest in offering emotional accompaniment. These findings, which are congruent with literature that support the relevance of addressing how values in different societies during times of crisis inform behaviors. Literature suggests that the pandemic put a significant burden and responsibility on the younger adult generation exhibiting loneliness and anxiety (Sweijen et al., 2022). Younger generations as referred to age groups show that as intergenerational relationships may be affected by societal conditions along the life course. As argued by (Barsallo Alvarado et al., 2022) reflection on scientific evidence obtained in relation to other areas of knowledge is required. The purpose of the article was to explore and analyze social perceptions of values in crisis situations. A correlational hypothesis is proposed, according to which it is demonstrated that, as societies' levels of economic and personal security vary, so do their perceptions of their values and the importance they assign to them. The methodology used was quantitative and correlational, with data obtained through online surveys distributed on social media platforms from June to October 2020, with the participation of 502 adults aged 18 and over. The main results showed that respect was perceived as the most necessary value to face the crisis by women and men and across age groups, while happiness and cultural diversity were the least important in relation to gender and age variables. Schools and households appeared to be the places identified as the most significant foci of values education, not the religious communities to which the participants belonged. However, the results related to religious affiliation revealed that the younger generation (18–30-year-olds, new generations are more committed or feel more responsible to helping those in need as a result of conventional values expressed among their society. However, values complement a person's desire with a sense of obligation by taking into account their desire to do good deeds for others and act in accordance with the accepted norm. And even, if these learned values were no longer a part of their own culture, they can still recognize them in others' actions and examples. This is shown in Table 4, where the younger age group show the most hits on their performance of support. The older age groups (51-60 and 61+) expressed a very low performance of support actions.

Table 4. Support actions carried out by Panamanians according to age group.

Support actions carried out by Panamanians	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61 +	Total count	Chi-squared	p Value
Money	80 27.2%	62 59.0%	53 52.0%	22 56.4%	9 75.0%	226	51.9	0.000

Food or buying groceries	130 44.2%	57 54.3%	48 47.1%	21 53.8%	4 33.3%	260	4.781	0.310
Transportation or doing errands	54 18.4%	33 31.4%	23 22.5%	4 10.3%	2 16.7%	116	11.103	0.025
Paying bills (services)	79 26.9%	46 43.8%	29 28.4%	16 41.0%	3 25.0%	173	12.642	0.013
Emotional accompaniment	160 54.4%	60 57.1%	54 52.9	20 51.3%	8 66.7%	302	1.267	0.867
Giving advice	116 39.5%	44 41.9%	33 32.4%	15 38.5%	6 50.0%	214	2.901	0.574
Mentoring/tutoring	115 39.1%	45 42.9%	34 33.3%	15 38.5%	6 50.0%	215	1.834	0.766
Fixing things	15 5.1%	6 5.7%	8 7.8%	2 5.1%	0 0.0%	31	1.834	0.766
None	28 9.5%	1 1.0%	2 2.0%	1 2.6%	0 0.0%	32	16.224	0.003
Total count	294	105	102	39	12	552		

Source: the authors

According to the results presented in Table 4, statistically significant differences from one of the ages groups regarding the rest were found in support actions such as giving money ($p < 0.01$), transportation or doing errands ($p < 0.05$), paying bills ($p < 0.05$), and none ($p < 0.01$). According to the association of support actions and age, the table indicates a statistically significant relationship between actions related to money, transportation, paying bills, and none. For instance, in the first activity (giving money), older ages predominate, whereas in the other activities, youngest ages participation is suggested to be higher (table 4). Research suggest that prosocial behaviors are promoted by financial tools that appear to be more accessible to older ages (Bailey et al., 2021). However, we argue that been of older age does not guarantee financial freedom.

The long-term confinement experienced during the pandemic period may have amplified feelings of anxiety and acts of violence in loneliness and within family. The younger generations also experienced these types of feelings. Research suggest that older adults are more emotionally stable while facing daily life situations. However, this study showed emotional accompaniment (Table 4) as the most practiced support action by the younger age group, showing the understanding of the need of social interaction to alleviate the negative symptoms of confinement and insecurities. This was followed by also choosing providing food or buying groceries, giving advice and mentoring. The 31-40 and 41-50 age groups sustain the same first choice followed by giving money and providing food or buying groceries.

In table 5, it is observed that there are statistically significant differences with respect to the academic level, with regard to money ($p < 0.01$), Paying Bills ($p < 0.05$), and none ($p < 0.05$). According to participants' academic backgrounds, there is evidence of a statistically significant association between actions and levels of education; those with university degrees are mostly represented when it comes to having money and paying off bills (table 5). As far as can be seen, this behavior is similar as one gets older. This may be because older people tend to have higher levels of education and, consequently, better economic circumstances that allow them to support others financially and pay off their debts out of a sense of solidarity with unanticipated events that affected the global population in one way or another.

Table 5. Support actions carried out by Panamanians according to education level.

Actions		High School	University	Post-graduate	Total	Chi-squared	p Value
Money	Count	19	118	89	226	57.0	0.000
	percentage	3.4%	21.4%	16.1%	40.9%		
Food or buying groceries	Count	42	144	74	260	5.07	0.079
	percentage	7.6%	26.1%	13.4%	47.1%		

Transportation or doing errands	Count	18	71	27	116	1.34	0.511
	percentage	3.3%	12.9%	4.9%	21.0%		
Paying bills (services)	Count	29	90	54	173	6.24	0.044
	percentage	5.3%	16.3%	9.8%	31.3%		
Emotional accompaniment	Count	56	173	73	302	0.046	0.977
	percentage	10.1%	31.3%	13.2%	54.7%		
Giving advice	Count	35	125	54	214	1.224	0.542
	percentage	6.3%	22.6%	9.8%	38.8%		
Mentoring/tutoring	Count	36	125	54	215	0.853	0.653
	percentage	6.5%	22.6%	9.8%	38.9%		
Fixing things	Count	6	20	5	31	1.276	0.528
	percentage	1.1%	3.6%	0.9%	5.6%		
None	Count	7	23	2	32	6.134	0.047
	percentage	1.3%	4.2%	0.4%	5.8%		
Total	Count	103	314	135	552		
	percentage	18.7%	56.9%	24.5%	100.0%		

Source: the authors

Research suggests that support actions are the basic expression of an attitude of understanding the need of others. Thus, prosocial support in form of giving money or shopping can also have positive effects on anxiety and the belief that one's life is valuable, indicating that prosocial behavior may have some therapeutic potential.

CONCLUSIONS

The present work explores the manifestation of support or prosocial actions performed by Panamanians during the COVID pandemic 2020. The aim was to survey how individuals sought to support others during this time.

During the pandemic there were limited opportunities for social in-person interaction due to lockdowns and therefore, a decrease in prosocial actions attempts (van der Groep et al., 2020). However, our exploration of these solidarity or prosocial actions revealed that emotional accompaniment and financial support for food were the most popular ways of getting involved and contribute in helping those in need as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

In relation to the participant's educational level, emotional accompaniment appears to be the most chosen prosocial action performed for those with high school and university studies. However, those participants with post-graduate studies chose to give money. All three educational level groups picked giving food or buying groceries as their second choice.

Given that most societies aspire to live in a world of contentment and cooperation, civil society, academics, and researchers anticipate that people will act in prosocial ways to foster social progress and peace. Thus, prosocial behavior helps people feel good about themselves and helps society advance peacefully. A significant portion of participants across all age groups—more than 50%—showed a strong interest in providing emotional accompaniment, demonstrating the importance of discussing how different societies' values shape behavior during times of crisis both locally and globally. This is especially true for the Panamanian context. Due to the lack of local research on the topic in Panama, we hope that these findings will encourage further investigation on actions performed as prosocial behavior, the factors that provoke its changes and the impact it has in the country.

Limitations of the Study

This study contributes to a better understanding of how Panamanians' had individually sought to support or contribute to their neighbors in times of crisis. However, there are still some limitations to consider.

The sample used for this study contained some imbalances. In terms of the respondents' ages, 54% were between the ages of 18 and 30, while the remaining 46% were spread out among the other age groups. The results can't be

generalized due to the gender disparity, which is characterized by a predominance of female respondents. Despite the size of the sample, future research should consider the impact of additional factors not covered in this article. The survey used for this study was distributed online in the year 2020, during lockdown, as ordered by the Panamanian Government. It is possible that the level of balanced participation would have been higher in other cases.

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