

**Digital Altruism and Social Intelligence Relationship among youth: Case of
Addis Ababa University**

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Digital Altruism and Social Intelligence Relationship among youth: Case of Addis

Ababa University

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Award of the degree of Master of Social Psychology

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Declaration

I undersigned hereby declare that the thesis ‘Digital Altruism and Social Intelligence Relationship among youth: Case of Addis Ababa University’ is my original work and has not been submitted and presented in any other University and that all sources of materials used for the thesis have been properly acknowledged.

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Certification

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Betelhem Tesfaye titled ‘Digital Altruism & Social Intelligence Relationship among youths: Case of Addis Ababa’ submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Master of Arts in Social Psychology complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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Acronyms

AAU: Addis Ababa University

APA: American Psychological Association

DA: Digital Altruism

CompSAT: Social Awareness Component

CompSST: Social Skill Component

CompSIP: Social Information Process

SM: Social Media

SA: Social Awareness

SIP: Social Information Processing

SI: Social Intelligence

SS: Social Skill

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social

Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between digital altruism and components of social intelligence that are social skills, social awareness, and social information processing among undergraduate students at Addis Ababa University. Grounded in the growing intersection between prosocial behaviour and digital interaction, the study utilized a quantitative approach, collecting data from 115 undergraduate social work students through structured questionnaires. Descriptive statistics used to analyse demographic variables, while Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression were employed to examine the analytical power of each component of social intelligence on digital altruism. The findings reveal that social skills and social awareness are significant positive predictors of digital altruism, supporting the first two hypotheses. However, social information processing did not show statistically significant relationship with digital altruism, suggesting its influence may be mediated by other psychological or contextual variables. The study also found that most participants were between in their 20 - 22 years old, female students are more likely than male students to engage in digital altruism, and students in later years of university exhibit higher levels of digital altruism than those in earlier years. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube primarily for entertainment and educational purposes use. These results contribute to the understanding of how different aspects of social intelligence shape prosocial behaviours in digital contexts. It highlights the importance of nurturing social emotional competencies in youth as a way of promoting ethical and empathetic digital engagement. The study concludes with recommendations for educators, policymakers, and digital platform developers to integrate social intelligence training into university curricula and digital literacy programs.

Chapter one

1. Introduction

This section provides a brief overview of background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, Hypothesis of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, operational definition of key terms.

1.1 Background

Altruism is commonly defined as selfless concern for the wellbeing of others, often involving actions that benefit others at a personal cost (Sam, 2013) In psychological research, altruistic behaviours has been linked to emotional regulation, decision-making, and resilience. For example, compassion training has been found to activate areas of the brain involved in emotion and mood regulation, helping individuals manage empathic distress and strengthening resilience (Tania et al., 2014)

There is also a connection between youth & prosocial behaviours. Young individuals are always trying to figure out where they fit into the world and what their purpose is in society as they mature and develop. (Tania et al., 2014) Their search for these issues and the formation of a sense of meaning and purpose are facilitated by altruism. (Christoph et al., 2019) Furthermore, young people's values and attitudes can be greatly influenced by prosocial activities. They are more motivated to adopt altruistic behaviours and attitudes when they witness them and practice them. To conclude as (Brown, 2023) argues, teaching altruism among youth cultivates selflessness and compassion, ultimately contributing to the betterment of society.

The rise of digital media has significantly influenced how altruism is expressed, giving rise to the concept of digital altruism. Digital altruism refers to voluntary prosocial behaviours conducted online, including sharing educational resources, offering emotional support, or disseminating helpful information (Erreygers, 2018). As digital technologies become embedded in daily life, particularly among youth, altruistic behaviours increasingly takes place through internet based tools such as messaging services and social networks Notably over 59% of social media users are aged between 18 and 34 (Larson, 2024), making youth a particularly relevant demographic for exploring this phenomenon. The role of the digital environment has

grown in the last several years concerning young people's social relationship development and, consequently, their prosocial conduct (Uhls, 2017).

The integration of technology into education has further improved digital altruism. Students often use digital platforms not only for learning but also to share notes, explain academic concepts, or support their peers' acts driven not solely by academic motivation, but also by a desire to help others. (Sunil, 2023) Digital altruism in educational contexts strengthens community bonds and promotes civic engagement, aligning with broader social development goals (Jafry, 2023)

In this thesis I refer to "digital altruism" as the intentional act of individuals engaging in online behaviours driven by a genuine desire to help others or contribute positively to digital communities, without expecting direct personal benefits through actions such as sharing valuable information, providing emotional support in online forums or volunteering digital resources through online platforms.

Closely related to this is the concept of social intelligence, first introduced by Edward Thorndike in 1920, which he defined as "the ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls to act wisely in human relations" (Richard, et al., 2016) Modern definitions describe social intelligence as the ability to perceive and interpret social cues, empathize with others, and navigate complex social interactions (Comstock, 2022).

Globally and in Ethiopia, studies on digital altruism and social intelligence are still emerging. While research abroad highlights online prosocial behaviour, particularly in academic and community building contexts (Erreygers, 2018; Sunil, 2023), there is limited localized research exploring these dynamics in our country context. This presents a gap in understanding how Ethiopian youth, particularly university students, experience and express altruism in digital environments.

In light of these considerations, the present research explored the connection between social intelligence and digital altruism, focusing on their influence on the behaviours and development of students at Addis Ababa University. The results offer meaningful insights that contribute to ongoing local and international discourse concerning youth conduct in the digital era.

1.2 Statement of the problem

In recent years, the rapid digitalization of communication and social life has reshaped how students express altruistic behaviour. The way university students use digital platforms reflects and shapes their social values, including altruism, which in the online aspect is referred to as digital altruism. Digital altruism includes voluntary actions taken online to help others without expecting personal gain such as sharing knowledge, offering emotional support, or contributing to community discussions (Li et al., 2018). Understanding the drivers of such behaviour particularly in a university setting where peer interaction is very high and knowledge exchange is frequent is essential in a time when access to technology and digital culture is expanding rapidly.

Among the psychological traits associated with online altruism, social intelligence has gained attention. Social intelligence refers to the capacity to understand and manage interpersonal relationships effectively (Goleman, 2006) It includes empathy, emotional self regulation, and the ability to navigate complex social environments. High social intelligence may influence whether a student chooses to engage in digital altruism, especially in educational settings that emphasize collaboration and peer support.

Although international studies have explored how empathy and social awareness contribute to digital citizenship, the relationship between social intelligence and digital altruism remains under examined, particularly in the Ethiopian context. For instance, Ma (2014) in his study “Knowledge sharing and social media: Altruism, perceived online attachment motivation and perceived online relationship commitment” found that altruism significantly influences knowledge sharing behaviour in online academic environments. His study emphasized that individuals with a higher sense of altruism are more committed to fostering online relationships and more willing to share knowledge, highlighting the behavioural relevance of altruistic motivations in digital settings. However, Ma’s research did not focus on how social intelligence moderates or predicts such altruistic digital behaviour an area my study intends to investigate.

Furthermore, studies such as by (Ruiying et al., 2017) and (Merlin & Parpakar , 2024) have shown that interpersonal competencies like empathy and emotional understanding key components of social intelligence positively affect online altruistic actions. These studies suggest that users who are socially aware are more motivated to participate in digital prosocial activities, such as offering help in academic forums or emotionally supporting peers during online discussions. These findings are significant in educational contexts where collaborative learning and peer feedback are essential.

In Ethiopia, where digital access has grown rapidly in recent years, youth have become increasingly engaged on platforms such as Facebook, Telegram, and TikTok. Yet, the quality and nature of their online engagement have received limited academic attention. According to Behailu, (2021) investigation on social media literacy levels among students, He found that students generally have low social media literacy, particularly in areas like ethical awareness and media evaluation. Factors such as geographical background, digital media exposure, and socio economic status were identified as influencing social media literacy. These findings are relevant to understanding how social intelligence may affect digital altruism, as students with higher social media literacy are more likely to engage in positive online behaviours.

In Ethiopia context (Wodaje & Bonsa, 2019) research examines how social media usage impacts the study habits of students at Oda Bultum University. The study revealed that students spend significant time on platforms like Facebook and YouTube, often at the expense of their academic responsibilities. This behaviour underscores the importance of social intelligence in managing online activities and highlights the potential for digital altruism to be fostered through improved self regulation and awareness.

The limited exploration of digital altruism and social intelligence in Ethiopian higher education is a missed opportunity for both academic research and policy development. As Ethiopia's Ministry of Education continues to integrate digital tools into university learning environments, understanding the behavioural patterns of students particularly their motivations to share, support, and collaborate can offer valuable insights. For instance, promoting digital altruism could enhance peer led learning, reduce academic competition, and encourage civic responsibility online. But without knowing the role of social intelligence in facilitating these behaviours, such interventions may lack focus and impact.

Moreover, in a socio-economic context where many students are first generation digital users, social intelligence might play a crucial role in how they navigate digital spaces, including how they contribute positively to their communities. Unlike in highly digitalized nations where exposure to online culture begins early, Ethiopian students often encounter the internet in more structured academic settings. This gives institutions a unique opportunity to shape online behaviour through programs that enhance both digital literacy and social emotional learning.

Given these gaps, this study investigates the relationship between social intelligence and digital altruism among students in the School of Social Work at Addis Ababa University. This group represents a population particularly relevant to the study of altruism and social behaviour, as

their field of study inherently deals with community support, empathy, and public service. By focusing on this specific academic population, the research aims to produce insights that are both theoretically rich and practically applicable to the Ethiopian higher education system.

In conclusion, although international research, such as that by (Ma, 2014) and Li et al. (2018), has begun to unpack the dynamics of altruistic behaviour in digital spaces, there remains a significant gap in understanding how social intelligence affects digital altruism among university students in Ethiopia. As digital interaction becomes central to educational and civic life, examining this relationship is both timely and necessary.

1.3 Objective of the study

1.3.1 General Objective

- To assess the relationship between digital Altruism and social intelligence and its impact on youths

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- To examine the relationship between digital altruism and components of social intelligence (social skills, social awareness, and social information processing) among students at Addis Ababa University.

1.4 Hypothesis of the Study

To address objectives the following hypotheses are formulated

H₁: There is a significant relationship between digital altruism and the social skills component of social intelligence among students at Addis Ababa University.

H₂: There is significant relationship between digital altruism and the social awareness component of social intelligence among students at Addis Ababa University.

H₃: There is a significant relationship between digital altruism and the social information processing component of social intelligence among students at Addis Ababa University.

Hypotheses were included in this study to provide a clear and structured basis for the statistical analysis. Since the study aimed to examine the relationships between digital altruism and the components of social intelligence using correlation and regression, formulating hypotheses helped guide the testing process. The hypotheses were stated in a non-directional form because there was not enough consistent evidence in the existing literature to confidently predict the

direction of the relationships. This approach allows the data to speak for itself without assuming a positive or negative association in advance.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Potentially this study can fill the insufficient scholarly attention given to being observed in the area with a focus on Digital Altruism and social intelligence, enabling scholars in the field to promote digital altruism and social intelligence in the study area.

the suggestions will also inform policy and decision makers in the country to create effective ways of addressing the social media usage role in the study area. It will also allow the government and other policymakers to adopt effective measures to enhance social media, particularly digital altruism and its role in social intelligence in the study population.

Generally this study seeks to offer meaningful insights into how young people behave, think, and are affected when they engage in seemingly altruistic acts on social media. These insights can inform the creation of more impactful strategies for promoting social activism and promoting positive societal change among youth.

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance

The phenomenon of digital altruism among youths has significant theoretical implications for our understanding of the impact of technology on human behaviour. This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of digital altruism among youth by examining its relationship with social intelligence components. It adds to the academic literature on how digital technology influences social behaviours and psychological processes, enriching existing theories on prosocial behaviour and social cognition in digital contexts. The findings help clarify conceptual links between digital altruism and social intelligence, providing a foundation for further research in this emerging field.

1.5.2 Practical Significance

The findings of this research carry significant real-world relevance for teachers, decision-makers, and professionals working in youth development. understanding the link between digital altruism and social intelligence can help design interventions that promote prosocial behaviours among university students. In an increasingly digital world, encouraging acts of altruism on social media can foster a more supportive and collaborative positive online environment.

The findings can help Addis Ababa University develop programs and workshops that enhance empathy, social awareness, and meaningful peer to peer engagement through digital platforms. These insights can also guide mental health professionals and academic advisors in supporting student well being and community building. Overall, the study supports the development of socially responsible digital communities among Ethiopian youth and beyond.

1.5.3 Scope of the Study

This study was delimited to examining the relationship between digital altruism and the components of social intelligence namely social awareness, social skills, and social information processing among undergraduate Social Work students at Addis Ababa University. The research focused specifically on students enrolled in the undergraduate Social Work program during the 2017 EC academic year.

The study used self report questionnaires adapted from established tools, including the Altruistic Personality Scale and the Tromsø Social Intelligence Scale. It did not include students from other departments, postgraduate programs, or universities. As such, the findings are context specific, reflecting the perspectives and behaviours of a particular academic group within a defined institutional setting.

Moreover, the research was conducted within a specified timeframe, and the data reflect the social and digital experiences of students during that period. Therefore, the results may not be generalizable to other populations, institutions, or timeframes. The scope of the study was limited to assessing associations between the selected variables and did not attempt to establish causality or long-term behavioural patterns.

1.5.4 Operational Definition

Digital Altruism: Digital altruism refers to the frequency of altruistic behaviours performed by individuals in digital environments. It is measured using the Altruistic Personality Scale (Rushton et al., 1981), a 5-point Likert scale from. The scale assesses how often participants engage in prosocial actions, adapted here to include online altruistic acts such as sharing helpful information or supporting others on social media.

Digital Altruist: A digital altruist is an individual who scores above a certain threshold on the Digital Altruism measure, indicating they engage in occasional or frequent digital prosocial behaviours. This is operationally identified through their responses on the Altruistic Personality Scale adapted for digital contexts.

Social Intelligence: Social intelligence is the ability to perceive, understand, and manage social interactions effectively. It is measured by the Tromsø Social Intelligence Scale (Silvera et al., 2001), which includes 21 items rated on a 7 point Likert scale from. This scale assesses three components of social intelligence:

Social Awareness: Measured through items assessing the ability to recognize and understand others' emotions, feelings, and social needs.

Social Skills: Measured through items evaluating an individual's ability to communicate and behave effectively in social situations.

Social Information Processing: Measured through items assessing the capacity to regulate emotional distress and manage complex social interactions appropriately.

Social media: Social media use is operationalized as self reported frequency and duration of engagement with online platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok. Data was collected through questionnaire items asking participants to indicate their usage patterns.

Reciprocity Norm: The reciprocity norm is defined as the expectation that individuals help others with the anticipation of receiving help in return in the future. This concept was assessed indirectly through questionnaire items related to prosocial attitudes and behaviours within the Altruistic Personality Scale and adapted items reflecting digital contexts.

Chapter Two

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to Altruism and social media

American Psychology Association describes altruism as a behavior that benefits another individual at a cost to oneself. (APA, 2015). When one person participates in altruistic activities, it immediately motivates another and quickly spreads throughout a network of people (Linden, 2017). In the research paper of Jonah (2012) “What Makes Online Content Viral” The result shows that strongly favorable emotional response is must for content to become viral. The Autor has also said a lot of popular social cause campaigns intentionally work sensitive material that provokes anger, and compassion. Another prominent perspective by Cervi contributes to the current discussion over the prevalence of positive versus negative content sharing. opposite to popular belief, which holds that people like to spread bad news more than positive news, the findings show that positive news spreads more widely (Cervi, 2023).

Recent research in developmental psychology emphasizes that adolescents and young adults are particularly responsive to social interactions in digital spaces. According to Crone & Elly (2018), the adolescent brain undergoes neurobiological changes that heighten sensitivity to social feedback, especially in online environments. This sensitivity extends into young adulthood, where peer validation, social approval, and the visibility of social actions online play a significant role in shaping behavior.

While earlier developmental stages such as preadolescence show increased dopamine activity in areas like the ventral striatum, associated with reward processing (Somerville et al., 2013), similar reward seeking mechanisms remain active during university years. The Authors also said these neurological patterns help explain why prosocial digital behaviors such as sharing helpful content or showing support for others may be particularly reinforcing among university students. Such behaviors, known as digital altruism, may not only satisfy the need for social approval but also reflect deeper components of social intelligence, such as empathy, social awareness, and effective communication (Goleman, 2006) Thus, understanding how young adults engage in altruistic actions online offers important insight into how social intelligence is both expressed and reinforced in digital contexts. (Goleman, 2006)

2.2 Concepts and definitions

Social Media

Social media refers to a collection of internet-based platforms and tools that allow individuals and groups to create, share, and exchange information in virtual communities and networks. These platforms enable real-time interaction, user generated content, and the formation of personal and professional relationships across geographic boundaries (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) Also, key features of social media include communication, multimedia content sharing, and customizable privacy settings (Kietzmann et al.,2011).

Social media plays a transformative role in communication and cultural dynamics by fostering global connectivity, emotional support, and collective identity (boyd, 2014) In addition to personal use, social media has become a critical tool for businesses in marketing, customer service, and brand building (Tuten & Solomon , 2018)

Digital Altruism

Digital altruism refers to prosocial behaviours carried out online, where individuals help others without expecting material rewards or reciprocation. These behaviours include sharing helpful resources, offering emotional support in online communities, donating to charitable causes through digital platforms, and encouraging inclusive and respectful communication. (Michelle & Yan Li , 2011)

According to (Salah, 2023) article review it highlights the value of encouraging prosocial conduct in "digital altruism," and offers tips on how to make good online space. It strengthens interpersonal bonds and contributes to the creation of healthy online communities. However, challenges to digital altruism include online harassment, social comparison, and digital fatigue (Nesi et al., 2020)

Wallace (1999) initially recognized the idea of "digital altruism," by pointing out that individuals can assist one another in both modest and significant ways when they use the internet. The term "digital altruism" was also used by Grant (2008), who used it to describe a variety of actions, including leaving encouraging remarks on social media, contributing knowledge in an online forum, joining an online petition, and clicking to make a financial donation.

Katherine (2023) article's conclusion stressed the importance of comprehending online altruism since it is an instance of how the internet can truly foster deep, sympathetic relationships

between complete strangers. It is not a substitute for other types of altruism rather; it is their complement. It demonstrates to us how the internet can give people a sense of belonging to something greater and change the world by delivering practical solutions to people. The article assesses the meaning of altruism and how it differs from the other altruism types by using in depth & mixed method study.

More individuals than ever before are able to participate in charitable deeds thanks to the rise of digital altruism, which gives people access to charitable causes at any time and from any location even the comforts of home.

Social Intelligence

Social intelligence refers to an individual's ability to understand and manage interpersonal relationships, navigate social environments, and respond appropriately to social cues. It plays a critical role in emotional awareness, empathy, and prosocial behaviour (Goleman, 2006).

The term social intelligence was first introduced by Edward L. Thorndike in 1920, who defined it as “the ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls to act wisely in human relations” (Thorndike, 1920, as cited in Goleman, 2006). Thorndike categorized intelligence into three domains, abstract intelligence related to ideas, mechanical intelligence related to objects, and social intelligence related to people.

Silvera (2001) further developed the construct by identifying three main components: **Social Skills:** The capacity to manage social situations effectively and engage appropriately with others. **Social Awareness:** The ability to perceive and understand others’ emotions, intentions, and perspectives. **Social Information Processing:** The cognitive and emotional ability to interpret social cues and regulate emotional responses in social contexts. The different aspects of social intelligence are linked to altruistic behaviours in different ways and play a crucial role in assessing how socially intelligent an adult is. (Silvera, 2001).

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of social intelligence in predicting positive interpersonal behavior. For instance, (Mikaeili & Ahmadi , 2022) found that social intelligence significantly predicted students' behavioral tendencies, especially in managing emotional responses and reducing high risk behaviors. This supports the understanding that individuals with high social intelligence are more likely to exhibit prosocial behaviors and build healthier relationships both online and offline. Thus, social intelligence serves as a foundational construct for understanding how individuals form meaningful connections and contribute to prosocial digital environments.

2.3 Theories

2.3.1 Theories of Altruism

Digital altruism involves the use of social media platforms to express and promote positive character traits and moral values. It is about recognizing the difference made in one's life based on the knowledge consumed and shared online. Digital altruism represents a modern form of selfless behaviours that takes place on social media platforms. It's been a vital tool essential tools for everyday communication, allowing individuals to exchange information, ask for assistance & offer support to others. (Salah, 2023) Researchers have long debated the motivations behind altruistic behaviours, and several theories help explain why individuals might engage in selfless acts even in virtual settings.

a) The social-exchange theory

The social exchange theory guesses that altruism only exists when the benefits compensate the costs. **Social exchange theory** is a primary method for analysing social interaction and social structure, according to this perspective, social structures are networks of interconnected interactions, and social relations are the costs and benefits that are shared during contact.

This theory suggests that altruistic behaviour is not entirely selfless but motivated by a desire to maximize rewards and minimize costs (Blau, 1964). Individuals weigh the potential benefits (e.g., social approval, emotional satisfaction) against the possible costs (for example, time, effort) before choosing to help. If the perceived benefits outweigh the costs, helping behaviour is more likely to occur (Homans, 1961). In digital spaces, this may include sharing a post to gain likes or offering online support in exchange for future social capital.

Social Exchange Theory says that people's actions can be seen as the outcome of their attempts to weigh the pros and cons of interacting with the environment and society. A person will act in a certain way if they think they can gain more from the activity than they would lose by doing it. On the other hand, the conduct won't be carried out if the person believes that the costs will exceed the benefits. The scales would tip in favour of get ahead a lesser worth to any social exchange if someone does not value upholding relationships or is mistrustful and does not expect others to fulfil their end of the bargain. (Jonason, 2015)

b) Empathy altruism Hypothesis

The Empathy Altruism Hypothesis, introduced by Batson (1988) suggests that when people feel empathy for others, they are motivated to help, regardless of any personal benefit. Empathy based altruism is considered genuinely selfless. In classic experiments, Batson and colleagues demonstrated that people who felt empathic concern were more likely to help even when it was easier to avoid doing so (Batson et al., 1981)

In the “Five studies testing two new egoistic alternatives to the empathy altruism hypothesis” research paper by (Batson, Five studies testing two new egoistic alternatives to the empathy-altruism hypothesis, 1988) acknowledges that people occasionally lend a hand out of self-interest. He was interested in figuring out how to differentiate between intentions, as was his colleagues. Students were required to listen to radio program cassettes in one experiment. During one of the interviews, a woman called Carol discussed her challenges, including the fact that she was falling behind in class, and her horrific car accident in which she fractured both of her legs. A letter asking the student to meet with her and discuss lecture notes was distributed to the students who were listening to this specific interview.

By instructing one group (high empathy level) to attempt to concentrate on how she was feeling and the other group (low empathy level) to not worry about that, the experimenters were able to alter the participants' level of empathy. The cost of not helping was also changed by the experimenters: Carol was supposed to finish the class at home for the low cost group, while the high cost group was informed that she would be in their psychology class when she returned to school. The results supported the empathy altruism, those in the high empathy group were nearly to assist her in any situation, while people in the low empathy group did out of self-interest because they saw her in class every day and felt bad if they did not (Batson, Five studies testing two new egoistic alternatives to the empathy-altruism hypothesis, 1988).

Although empathy driven altruism is often seen as prosocial and morally commendable, research has shown that it can have both positive and negative outcomes for the altruist. According to Batson's Empathy Altruism Hypothesis, when individuals feel empathy for someone, they are motivated to help that person for their benefit, even at a personal cost (Batson, Five studies testing two new egoistic alternatives to the empathy-altruism hypothesis, 1988) . However, this empathetic concern does not always result in behaviour that is beneficial in the long term. Some studies suggest that people high in empathy may engage in helping behaviours that prioritize the immediate emotional needs of others, even when such actions

could be counterproductive or detrimental in the broader context (Batson, 2011). In some cases, acting on empathy can lead individuals to neglect their own well being or make decisions that are emotionally driven rather than rational. This dual nature of empathy highlights the complexity of altruistic behaviour and supports ongoing debate about whether human altruism is always truly selfless or sometimes influenced by emotional biases.

This theory is particularly relevant in the digital context, where users can be emotionally affected by posts or videos and choose to respond with support or aid, not because of direct reciprocity, but due to empathic concern.

c) The reciprocity norm

According to the American psychology Association The reciprocity norm is “A process of exchanging things with other people to gain a mutual benefit. The norm of reciprocity sometimes referred to as the rule of reciprocity is a social norm where, if someone does something for you, you then feel obligated to return the favour”. Research indicates that, while reciprocity may initially cause people to make a charitable donation, this response reduces over time. (Chuan, 2017).

Individuals that practice reciprocity can accomplish tasks that they could not accomplish alone. Individuals cannot achieve as much as they could when they collaborate or trade services. As there is always room for imbalance or even abuse, reciprocity is not necessarily an equal exchange. Studies have indicated that when someone does something modest for you, individuals are frequently willing to do a correspondingly larger favour for you. (Leonora et al., 2016)

On other studies of Burger et al., (2009) on the norm reciprocity, the findings imply that the decision to repay Favours is heavily influenced by internalized social norms. Receiving a favour back can make you feel good about yourself, while not getting a favour back can make you criticize yourself. On the same studies it states that groups of people and societies would probably survive if there was “an inherited tendency to return Favours” rather than operate only in one's own best interests. This type of inherited trait could function without self-presentation concerns, similar to internalized social norms. Their findings show that, in this situation, people might decide to act morally and repay a favour giver without considering whether or not they will be liked by others. (Burger et al., 2009).

2.3.2 The Social Intelligence Theories

Social intelligence refers to the capacity to interact successfully with others in personal, professional, and social settings. Research has linked SI to improved leadership skills, job performance, and overall life satisfaction. Full understanding of SI includes examining its multiple levels, from neural networks to traits to behavioural manifestations as competencies. SI can be developed in children and adults.

The social intelligence hypothesis (SIH) is a popular hypothesis that purports to explain the evolution of large brains and sophisticated cognitive abilities. The SIH proposes that social complexity is cognitively demanding and is thus the key selective pressure affecting brain size and, by extension, intelligence (Dunbar, 1998). It was originally developed to explain the large brains and intelligent behaviours of primates compared to other animals.

The social intelligence hypothesis proposes that complex social interactions such as politics, romantic relationships, family dynamics, conflicts, cooperation, reciprocity & altruism played a crucial role in the evolution of larger human brains, often called "executive brains." To add more this hypothesis suggests that these expanded brains now enable us to navigate complex social environments effectively. According to this view, the challenges of group living have driven the development of intelligence, with social intelligence evolving as an adaptation to manage complicated social situations and to acquire and maintain social influence within groups. (Holekamp, 2006)

2.4. Theoretical framework

This study primarily draws on the Empathy Altruism Hypothesis, which suggests that altruistic behaviour is driven by empathic concern for others (Batson, 1988). Since digital altruism involves prosocial behaviour in online environments, and this study measures social intelligence particularly empathy, social awareness, and social information processing the empathy based framework is most appropriate. Additionally, the Reciprocity Norm supports the idea that youths may engage in digital altruism based on mutual expectations of support (Burger et al., 2009). These theories provide a psychological and sociological lens through which digital altruism can be interpreted and understood in the context of social media use among students

2.5 Empirical Review

Digital altruism has emerged as a distinct form of prosocial behaviour facilitated by social media platforms. Several empirical studies have investigated how young people engage in altruistic acts online and how factors like age, social media use, and personal traits such as social intelligence. (Pfattheicher, 2021)

For instance, Chaikovska (2020) carried out empirical and statistical methods research of 107 students, which revealed that young people often consider principles of fairness and moral judgment when deciding whether to help others online. Many respondents expressed a belief that help should be extended based on the perceived deservingness of the recipient for example, “I help others because they deserve it due to the way they act.” This indicates that digital altruism is not only driven by impulse but also shaped by ethical evaluations and value-based reasoning.

Expanding the understanding of contextual variables, Zhu et al., (2020) conducted a large-scale study with 495 Chinese adolescents to explore how self-presentation on social networking sites influences online altruistic behaviour. The study revealed that adolescents who actively manage and project their self-image in digital spaces were more likely to engage in prosocial acts, such as offering support or sharing beneficial content with others. Moreover, the findings indicated that this relationship was mediated by social ability cognition, implying that adolescents who believed they possessed strong social skills were more confident in expressing altruism online. Interestingly, the study found that privacy concerns did not significantly moderate this effect, highlighting that self-presentation was a stronger predictor of altruistic behaviour than digital privacy awareness in this population.

Furthermore, in the realm of digital gaming communities, Wang (2008) examined the prosocial tendencies in Taiwan. The original sample comprised 405 participants. of them 402 fully completed the questionnaire. Their research demonstrated that altruistic behaviour in virtual gaming environments such as helping teammates, offering guidance to new players, and sharing in game resources was significantly associated with the participants’ offline altruistic tendencies. This suggests that prosocial traits are not isolated to physical contexts but rather extend into digital environments, reinforcing the continuity between real world values and online behaviour.

2.3 Research gap

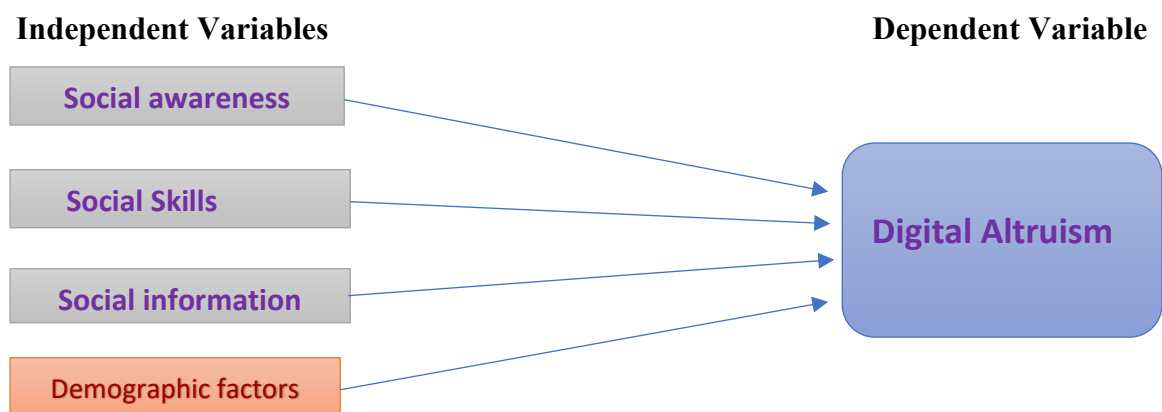
The fast integration of digital technology and social media into the lives of young people in the 21st century has reshaped the human communications. From Face book to TikTok, social media platforms have ushered in an era in which communication and information exchange are not limited by physical or temporal limits. This communication revolution has created new opportunities and difficulties, notably for the development of social intelligence among youth. (boyd, 2014)

Digital altruism, often defined as voluntary prosocial actions carried out through digital platforms without expecting direct personal gain, is a relatively new concept in the field of social psychology (Salah, 2023). While scholars have acknowledged that social media can enhance connectedness and allow users to provide emotional and informational support to others (Zhu et al., 2020), the relationship between digital altruism and social intelligence remains underexplored, especially in Africa contexts. Similarly previous studies, such as those by Wang (2008) have found that social factors like empathy and online engagement influence altruistic behaviour among adolescents.

The present study therefore focusses on digital altruism among university students by examining how components on social intelligence such as social skills, social awareness & social information processing relate to altruistic behaviours exhibited through social media platforms, including the sharing of supportive messages, helpful information, and educational resources

2.4 Conceptual framework of the study

FIGURE 1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY



Chapter Three

3. Research Method

This chapter presents the research design, the target population, the sample size, the sampling technique, data collection instruments, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Setting

Addis Ababa University (AAU), which was established in 1950 as the University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA), is the oldest and the largest higher learning and research institution in Ethiopia. Since its inception, the University has been the leading center in teaching learning, research, and community services. At present, 10 colleges, 3 institutes that run both teaching and research, and 8 other research institutes that predominantly conduct research. These academic units boast 55 departments, 12 centers, 12 schools, and 2 teaching hospitals. (Addis Ababa University , 2025).

The study was conducted on regular undergraduate students in School of Social Work with a focus on those currently enrolled in their respective academic year. Because as they are likely to be involved with both the concepts of altruism and social intelligence. Social work education emphasizes empathy, ethical responsibility, community service, and interpersonal skills all of which are closely tied to the dimensions of social intelligence and altruistic behaviour. Students in this field are often involved in helping professions, advocacy, and digital awareness campaigns, making them more likely to encounter or participate in digital altruistic actions. Their academic training and practical exposure to social issues make them mainly relevant for exploring the association between digital altruism and social intelligence.

3.2 Research Approach

The research approach for this study was a quantitative research approach using a deductive method. A quantitative approach was selected because the research seeks to measure the relationship between digital altruism and social intelligence using numerical data collected through structured questionnaires. Quantitative methods allow for statistical analysis, generalization to a larger population, and objective measurement of the variables involved.

The deductive approach was appropriate because the study is grounded in established theories such as the Social Exchange Theory, Empathy Altruism Hypothesis, and Reciprocity Norm. Based on these theories, specific hypotheses were developed and then tested through structured survey or questionnaires administered to the students.

3.3 Research Design

The proposed research design for this study was a cross-sectional explanatory study. Cross-sectional studies are research that analyses the variables in different contexts under the same period (Collis & Hussey, 2021). Cross-sectional design as observational research can analyse data of variables collected at on given point of time across the sample population. It is chosen because it will enable the researcher to collect data from the study population (William et al, 2006). The explanatory aspect of the design was usedd to discover the influence of the independent variable (digital altruism) on the dependent variables (social skills, social awareness, and social information processing) among youth students.

3.4 Target Population and Sampling Technique

Creating a sampling plan involves several key steps, including defining the target population, choosing an appropriate sampling technique & deciding on the number of participants to include. (Sirwan, 2024)

3.4.1 Target Population

The target population for this study includes all regular undergraduate students enrolled in the School of Social Work at Addis Ababa University. The selection of Social Work students is based on their academic exposure to social engagement, interpersonal interaction, and community service factors discussed in the research setting section. A total of 203 students are enrolled in the 2017 E.C academic year which 99 male & 104 female according to data from the Registrar Office, AAU (2024/2025).

3.4.2 Sampling Technique

The study was conducted at the School of Social Work in A.A.U. This study utilized proportionate stratified sampling as its sampling method. Proportionate stratified sampling is a probability sampling technique by divid the entire population into different subgroups or strata, and then randomly selects the final subjects proportionally from the different strata (Makwana et al., 2023). The purpose of using stratification was not to compare academic years directly but to maintain sampling accuracy and proportional representation. This approach helped minimize sampling bias and ensured that each year level contributed fairly to the overall analysis of the relationship between social intelligence and digital altruism.

The stratified sampling used was divide the target population into three sub populations, 2nd year, 3rd year, and 4th year, that are individually more homogeneous than the total population or into strata and select items from each stratum to constitute a sample. The research used a simple random sampling to select the sample from each stratum.

3.4.3 Sample size

Given the study population indicated above, the sample size for the study was calculated Yamane's simplified formula to determine the sample size with 95% confidence level (Israel, 2009) Where N=population, n= sample size and e= level of precision

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N \times (e^2)}$$

$$n = \frac{203}{1 + 203 (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{203}{1 + 203 (0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{203}{1 + 0.5075}$$

$$n = \frac{203}{1.507}$$

$$n \approx 134.70$$

Rounding up to the nearest whole number, therefore, a total number of 135 respondents were selected. This sampling method was used because the study has a finite population size and gives a reasonable amount of sample size that can be studied in a population.

TABLE 1 THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS BY YEAR ATTENDEE IN THE STUDY POPULATION 2016 E.C

	Strata	No of population	Proportionate Ratio	A sample size of each strata
1	Second Year	71	71/203x 135	47
2	Third year	67	67/203 x 135	44
3	Fourth year	65	65/203 x135	43
	Total	203	134	134

3.5 Type of Data and Tools of Data Collection

This study applied both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected from a representative sample of the target population using a structured, self-administered questionnaire. whereas secondary data required for the study collected through document search and examination resulting in the literature review. The questionnaire used in this study was adapted from existing standardized tools, not developed. The instruments were originally developed in English, and the questionnaire was administered in English as the medium of instruction at Addis Ababa University is English. No translation was required. However, to ensure clarity and cultural relevance, a pilot test was conducted, and minor wording adjustments were made.

The opening section of the questionnaire focuses on collecting demographic and general background details, including age, gender, attendance year, the social media platforms that are frequently used the main purpose of using social media, and time spent on social media every day of the respondent's responses.

The instruments used in this study were adapted from standardized scales to suit the specific context of digital altruism and social intelligence among youth. The Altruistic Personality Scale developed by Rushton et al. (1981) was adapted by modifying items to reflect altruistic behaviors specifically occurring in digital or social media contexts with a 5 point Likert scale ranging from Never (1) to Very Often (5). Similarly, the Tromsø Social Intelligence Scale by Silvera et al. (2001) was used with minor wording adjustments to ensure relevance to online social interactions. with Likert scale focusing on three factors: social information processing, social skills, and social awareness. The scale ranges from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7).

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

The study used a structured, self-administered questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. Before the actual data collection, a pilot test conducted with a small group of students (5–10% of the sample) to test the clarity, reliability, and relevance of the items. Feedback from the pilot was used to refine the questionnaire.

Once the instrument is finalized, data was collected from undergraduate students at the School of Social Work, Addis Ababa University. Participants were selected using a stratified random sampling method to ensure representation across academic years. The questionnaires were

distributed in person and, where feasible, through online platforms to maximize accessibility. I was available to answer questions and provide clarifications during the data collection period. All data collection activities were conducted after obtaining permission from the university's research ethics review board and any other relevant administrative bodies.

3.7 Research Variable

Digital altruism is the main outcome variable, while the three components of social intelligence social skills, social awareness, and social information processing are treated as predictor variables. Additionally, demographic variables such as gender, time spent on social media were considered as control variables to better understand their influence on the relationship between the main constructs

3.8 Model Specification

The model framed for the study is presented below. Several authors used this model in different settings (Nair S 2023, Rushton, et al 1981, Silvera et al, 2001). The model, therefore, will be **Digital altruism = a + β_1 social information processing + β_2 social skills + social awareness + e_i** Where a - is a constant β_1 -3 - is the coefficient, e_i - the error term

3.9 Data Analysis

The data collected through the structured questionnaire was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, employing SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, was utilized to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents and provide a general overview of responses related to digital altruism and the components of social intelligence.

To examine the relationships between digital altruism and the three components of social intelligence, Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to assess the strength and direction of their associations. Furthermore, multiple linear regression analysis employed to determine the predictive power of social skills, social awareness, and social information processing on digital altruism, both individually and collectively. The use of multiple linear regression allows the simultaneous inclusion of all three variables social skills, social awareness, and social information processing enabling a comprehensive understanding among university students.

3.10 Reliability and Validity of the Instrument

To assess the reliability of the questionnaire, internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (α). A Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 or higher was considered acceptable, indicating good consistency among the items within each scale. The reliability analysis was conducted using pilot test data collected from a small sample (approximately 10%) of the target population specifically, students from the School of Social Work who were not included in the final study sample.

Regarding validity, two types were examined to ensure the instrument accurately measured the intended constructs. Face validity was established by consulting experts in the fields of social psychology and social work, who reviewed the questionnaire to confirm that it appeared to measure digital altruism and social intelligence appropriately. Content validity was ensured by carefully aligning each questionnaire item with the theoretical dimensions of digital altruism and social intelligence as identified in the literature, thus covering all relevant aspects comprehensively.

To further ensure both reliability and validity, a *pre-test (pilot test)* was conducted with a small sample 10%, the study population not included in the final data collection. The pre-test help identify ambiguous questions, assess the clarity and flow of the items, and detect any issues in how respondents interpret the questions. Based on this feedback, necessary modifications were made to improve the instrument prior to full scale data collection.

3.11 Ethical Consideration

This study was conducted in strict adherence to ethical standards in social science research, particularly in line with the ethical principles of the American Psychological Association (APA). Prior to data collection, Formal permission was required from the registrar's office and relevant academic coordinators to approach students as participants. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after they were provided with clear and comprehensive information regarding the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, their right to refuse or withdraw at any point without any consequences, and how their data would be used. This information was provided both orally and in writing on the consent form. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, no identifying information such as

names or student IDs was collected. All data were handled with strict confidentiality and were used solely for the purpose of academic research.

The completed questionnaires were stored securely and accessible only to the researcher. Additionally, responses were reported in aggregate form to protect individual identities. The study did not involve any physical, emotional, or psychological risks to the participants. Participants were assured that their academic standing or access to university services would not be affected by their participation or refusal to participate in the research.

Chapter Four

4. Findings

This chapter presents the results of the study in detail. The findings are organized according to the research objectives and hypotheses, based on the data analysis procedures outlined in Chapter Three. The chapter begins with descriptive statistics that summarize the demographic characteristics of the 115 participants, followed by descriptive analysis of the main study variables. Next, the reliability of the scales used to measure digital altruism and social intelligence is assessed to evaluate internal consistency. This is followed by inferential statistical analyses. To examine the bivariate relationships between digital altruism and each of the three components of social intelligence (social skills, social awareness, and social information processing), Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated. These correlations provide insight into the strength and direction of linear associations between two continuous variables. To further assess predictive relationships, multiple linear regression analyses were conducted to determine the extent to which the three components of social intelligence predict digital altruism, both collectively and individually. Where appropriate, demographic variables such as gender and year of study were included as control variables to account for potential confounding effects. Prior to running inferential tests, normality of the data was assessed through visual inspection of histograms for each key study variable. The distributions appeared approximately normal, supporting the use of parametric tests. The histograms are included in Appendix 2.

All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 25. The findings are presented in relation to the research questions and hypotheses, with emphasis on the strength, direction, and statistical significance of the relationships identified.

4.1 Background Characteristics of Study Participants

The study was conducted with a sample of 115 undergraduate social work students. The age distribution shows that most participants are young adults, primarily between the ages of 20 and 22. Specifically, 25.4% of the students are 20 years old, 23.0% are 21, and 22.2% are 22 years old. Collectively, these groups make up approximately 70.6% of the sample, indicating a predominantly young demographic.

The youngest participant is 19 years old (5.6%), while the oldest is 26 years old (4.8%). The data suggests that the sample mainly consists of students in the early years of their undergraduate studies, which is typical for this academic level. 56 were female (44.4%) and 59 were male (46.8%), reflecting a fairly balanced gender composition. This balanced gender distribution enhances the representativeness of the data, allowing for more comprehensive analysis of responses across different genders. The distribution indicates that the findings can be considered reflective of both male and female perspectives within the targeted population.

The distribution of respondents according to their year of attendance as shown in Table 3, a large portion of the sample are in their second year of study, comprising 44 respondents or 34.9% of the total sample. Third-year students accounted for 41 respondents (32.5%), while fourth-year students numbered 30 respondents (23.8%) This distribution indicates a predominance of students in their second and third years, which may influence the generalizability of the findings across different academic levels. The varied representation across attendance years provides a comprehensive perspective on the experiences and viewpoints of students at different stages of their academic journey.

TABLE 2 SUMMARY OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Variable	Label	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	19	7	5.6
	20	32	25.4
	21	29	23.3
	22	28	22.2
	23	10	7.9
	24	2	1.6
	25	1	.8
	26	6	4.8
Gender	Female	56	44.4
	Male	59	46.8
Attendance Year	2 nd year	44	39.9
	3 rd year	41	32.5
	4 th year	30	23.8

4.1.1 Participants' Social Media Usage Characteristics

In addition to demographic characteristics, the study assessed participants social media usage behaviour, including their most frequently used platform, primary purpose for using social media, and the amount of time spent daily. These variables were included to provide contextual insights relevant to the digital environments in which participants may engage in altruistic

TABLE 3 SUMMARIZES THE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES ACROSS THESE THREE USAGE CATEGORIES.

Variable	Label	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Frequently used social media	TikTok	67	27.7
	Instagram	59	24.4
	YouTube	59	24.4
	Telegram	16	6.6
	Facebook	13	5.4
	Twitter	4	1.7
Purpose of Social Media Usage	Education	56	27.7
	Entertainment	79	39.1
	Professional	29	14.4
	Personal	38	18.8
Time spent on social media	1 - 2 hours	26	20.6
	2 - 3 hours	31	24.6
	3 - 4 hours	21	16.7
	4 - 5 hours	10	7.9
	Less than 1 hour	10	7.9
	More than 5 hours	17	13.5

The data presented in table 3 highlights the social media platforms most frequently used by participants, providing insights into their digital engagement patterns. The table summarizes the frequency and percentage of responses related to the use of various social media platforms. Among the platforms surveyed, TikTok emerged as the most frequently used social media platform, with 67 responses accounting for 27.7% of the total cases. This indicates a significant preference for TikTok among the participants, reflecting its growing popularity and influence on social media engagement. Instagram and YouTube are closely linked in usage, each with 59 responses, representing 24.4% of the sample. The nearly identical response rates suggest that these platforms are equally prominent in the participants' social media routines. Both platforms are well-known for visual content sharing and have robust user engagement, which may explain their high usage rates. Telegram and Facebook follow, with 16 (6.6%) and 13 (5.4%) responses respectively. Telegram's messaging and content-sharing features appear to be less central but still relevant, while Facebook's usage is comparatively lower within this sample. Twitter and Snapchat have lower response rates, with 4 (1.7%) and 24 (9.9%) responses respectively. Although Twitter's usage is minimal, Snapchat's higher response rate suggests a place but notable presence among the participants.

The most dominant purpose for using social media among participants is entertainment, with 79 responses accounting for 39.1% of the cases. This indicates that a significant portion of users primarily turn to social media to consume or enjoy entertainment content, which aligns with the global trend of social media as a primary source of leisure and entertainment.

Following entertainment, education emerges as a notable purpose, with 56 responses representing 27.7%. Although lower than entertainment, a substantial segment of participants utilizes social media for educational purposes, reflecting the platform's role in knowledge sharing and learning activities. The data shows that personal social relationships are also a significant motivation, with 38 responses (18.8%), and professional uses account for 29 responses (14.4%). These figures suggest that social media serves as a vital tool for maintaining personal connections and establishing professional networks. Notably, entertainment and education comprise the majority of usage motivations, cumulatively representing over two thirds of the responses. This emphasizes the multifunctional role of social media in both leisure and learning contexts for the users. The prominence of entertainment as the primary purpose underscores the importance of visual and multimedia content in engaging users. The significant educational use indicates that social media is not solely for recreation but also serves as a

platform for learning and information dissemination. The substantial engagement in social relationships highlights the social connectivity aspect of these platforms.

The distribution of time spent daily on social media shows a significant portion of participants (20.6%) dedicating 1-2 hours, and another substantial group (24.6%) spending 2-3 hours. A notable portion (16.7%) report spending 3-4 hours, while smaller groups spend less than 1 hour (7.9%), 4-5 hours (7.9%), or more than 5 hours (13.5%). This data suggests a wide range of engagement levels, with a concentration of participants spending between 1 and 3 hours daily.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics for Components of Social Intelligence and Digital Altruism

The descriptive statistics presented on Table 4 offer a comprehensive overview of Digital Altruism and Social Intelligence components (CMS) based on a sample of 115 participants with their mean and standard deviation.

TABLE 4 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR COMPONENTS OF SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE AND DIGITAL ALTRUISM

	N	Mean	Std. deviation
Digital_Altruism	115	32.81	10.788
Social Awareness comp	115	33.9217	11.10646
Social Skill Comp	115	27.08	5.098
Social information processing	115	24.31	6.791

The descriptive statistics for the variables Digital Altruism, Social Awareness (compSAT1), Social Skill (compSST2), and Social Information Processing (compSIPT3) provide insights into their central tendencies and variability among the 115 respondents. For Digital Altruism, scores with a mean of 32.81 and a standard deviation of 10.79. This suggests varied levels of digital altruistic behaviours among participants. Although no specific interpretation thresholds were established in advance, the mean score and standard deviation indicate that respondents demonstrated differing degrees of engagement in altruism within digital platforms.

Social Awareness (compSAT1) scores ranged from 15 to 93, with a mean of 33.92 and a standard deviation of 11.11. The distribution showed high positive skewness (skewness = 2.395) and peakedness (kurtosis = 9.842), indicating that most participants scored at the lower end of the scale, with a small number of participants scoring substantially higher than the rest. Due to the non-normal distribution of this variable, interpretation using the empirical rule (mean \pm 1 SD) is not appropriate.

Social Skill (compSST2) scores with a mean of 27.08. The results indicate variation in social skills across participants. Social Information Processing (compSIPT3) scores with a mean of 24.31. Similar to the other variables, this also indicates a wide range of abilities in processing social information among the students.

4.2.1 Result of the Digital Altruism

Based on the frequency data and the importance of the questions, it is evident that certain online helping behaviors are more prevalent than others. Notably, question 8, which pertains to donating blood via online campaigns, shows that the majority of respondents (65.9%) have never engaged in this activity, with only a small fraction indicating they have done so very often. This suggests that online blood donation campaigns are less frequently utilized or accessible among the participants. On the other hand, question 1, concerning sharing helpful information like study guides or articles in online forums, demonstrates a relatively higher engagement, with 20.6% never participating and 25.4% engaging more than once. This indicates that sharing educational resources is a relatively common form of online support. Question 2, responding to strangers' questions on social media, also shows a some level of engagement, with 30.2% never responding but 27.8% doing so more than once.

Furthermore, questions related to emotional support (question 4) and sharing mental health resources (question 7) reveal that while a significant portion of respondents have not frequently engaged in these activities, there is still notable participation, emphasizing that online emotional and mental health support is an important but less practiced activity. Overall, the data suggests that sharing informational content and providing emotional support are the most common forms of online helping behaviors among respondents, whereas activities like donating blood or supporting marginalized groups through online movements are less frequently undertaken. This highlights the varying levels of engagement across different types of online helping behaviors, with informational and emotional support being more accessible and commonly practiced. (See Table 5)

TABLE 5 RESULT OF THE DIGITAL ALTRUISM

Scale: 1= Never, 2= Once, 3= More than once, 4= Often, 5 =Very Often

Items	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
I have shared helpful information (e.g., study guides, articles) in online groups or forums.	26 20.6 %	21 16.7 %	32 25.4	24 19 %	12 9.5%	2.78	1.296
I have responded to a stranger's question on a social media platform.	38 30.2 %	26 20.6%	35 27.8 %	8 6.3%	8 6.3%	2.32	1.203
I have donated money to online charitable causes	51 40.5%	21 16.7%	27 21.4%	11 8.7%	5 4%	2.11	1.2
I have supported someone emotionally online %	30 23.8%	14 11.1%	32 25.4 %	28 22.2%	10 7.9%	3.03	3.025
I have promoted positive social campaigns or awareness posts on social media.	32 25.4 %	13 10.3 %	31 24.6%	28 22.2%	11 8.7%	2.77	1.346
I have donated goods or clothes to a charity cause initiated by online campaigns	52 41.3%	17 13.5%	22 17.5 %	14 11.1%	8 6.3%	2.26	1.409
I have shared mental health resources or motivational content online to help others.	45 35.7%	20 15.9 %	26 20.6%	12 9.5%	12 9.5%	2.36	1.365
I have donated blood via online Campaign	8 65.9%	37 5.6%	13 10.3 %	6 4.8%	6 4.8%	1.65	1.185
I have joined digital volunteer activities (e.g., tutoring, translation, advocacy).	41 32.5%	18 14.3%	23 18.3%	14 11.1%	17 13.5%	2.88	2.938
I have participated in online movements or causes to help a marginalized group	42 33.3 %	19 15.1 %	25 19.8%	20 15.9%	9 7.1%	2.4	1.345
I have used my social media to connect someone in need with a helpful person or service.	18 14.3 %	33 26.2 %	34 27%	16 12.7%	14 11.1%	2.78	1.227
I have lent a valuable digital resource (e.g., e-book, academic article, software access) to an online peer I didn't know well	34 27%	20 15.9%	33 26.2%	16 12.7%	12 9.5%	2.58	1.324
I have helped an online classmate I didn't know well by explaining a concept or sharing digital academic materials	32 25.4%	9 7.1%	33 26.2	26 20.6%	15 11.9%	2.85	1.391

TABLE 6 CORRELATIONS ANALYSIS BETWEEN SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE COMPONENTS & DIGITAL ALTRUISM

4.3 Correlations analysis between Social Intelligence components & Digital Altruism

Digital_Alturism	Pearson Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	115			
Social Awareness	Pearson Correlation	.287			
comp	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002			
	N	115			
Social Skill Comp	Pearson Correlation	.237	.244		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.009		
	N	115	115	115	
Social information	Pearson Correlation	-.123	.014	.034	
processing	Sig. (2-tailed)	.191	.883	.720	
	N	115	115	115	115

The present analysis investigates the relationships between digital altruism and various social competence variables, including social awareness, social skills, and social information processing. The data reveal meaningful associations that shed light on how digital altruism correlates with different facets of social functioning. digital altruism exhibits a moderate, positive, and statistically significant correlation with social awareness ($r = 0.287$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that individuals who demonstrate higher levels of digital altruism tend to possess greater social awareness, indicating an enhanced ability to perceive and understand social cues within digital environments. Similarly, digital altruism is positively associated with social skills ($r = 0.237$, $p < 0.05$), implying that those who engage in altruistic behaviours online are also more proficient in social interactions and communication skills.

In contrast, the relationship between digital altruism and social information processing appears negligible, with a correlation coefficient of -0.123 that is not statistically significant ($p = 0.191$). This indicates that digital altruism does not have a meaningful connection with how individuals process social information, suggesting that the tendency for altruistic behaviors online may operate independently of social information processing abilities. Further examination reveals that social awareness and social skills are positively correlated ($r = 0.244$, $p < 0.01$), reinforcing the notion that these social intelligence components are interconnected.

However, neither social awareness nor social skills show significant correlations with social information processing, emphasizing that these constructs may function independently within the social intelligence components.

4.4 Regression Analysis of Digital Altruism and Social intelligence components

TABLE 7 REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF DIGITAL ALTRUISM AND SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE COMPONENTS

	R	Rsquare	Adjusted R ²	F	Sig.	Standardized beta	t	Sig.
	.360 ^a	.129	.106	5.498	.001			
Constant							3.068	.003
compSAT1						.244	2.672	.009
compSST2						.182	1.992	.049
compSIPT3						-.132	-1.493	.138

a. Dependent Variable: Digital_Altruism

b. Predictors (Constant) CompSIPT3, CompSAT1, CompSST2

The regression analysis conducted to examine the predictors of digital altruism provides valuable insights into the relationship between social competencies and altruistic online behaviors. The model incorporates three predictors: social awareness (compSAT1), social skills (compSST2), and social information processing (compSIPT3), with the goal of understanding their combined and individual contributions to digital altruism.

The model summary indicates that the overall regression explains approximately 12.9% of the variance in digital altruism, as reflected by an R-squared value of 0.129. The adjusted R-squared, which accounts for the number of predictors relative to sample size, is slightly lower at 0.106. These figures suggest that while the model has some explanatory power, a significant portion of variability in digital altruism remains unaccounted for by these social intelligence variables, implying the influence of other factors not included in this model. This indicates that other psychological contextual or technological factors such as empathy, moral reasoning, digital literacy, and online community engagement may also play a role in influencing digital altruistic behaviours.

Multiple linear regression was performed to assess the three components of social intelligence Social Awareness (compSAT1), Social Skills (compSST2), and Social Information Processing (compSIPT3) predict levels of Digital Altruism.

The overall model was found to be statistically significant $F=5.498, p = .001$ indicating that the set of predictors explains a portion of the variance in digital altruism. The model accounted for approximately 12.9% of the variance in digital altruism scores ($R^2=0.129$)

As shown in table 6, the regression coefficients indicate that social awareness was a significant positive predictor of digital altruism ($B = 0.237, \beta = 0.244, p = .009$), Second social Skills also contributed significantly to the prediction ($B = 0.385, \beta = 0.182, p = .049$) However, social Information processing did not significantly predict digital altruism ($B = -0.210, \beta = -0.132, p = .138$) These findings suggest that higher levels of social awareness and social skills are associated with greater digital altruistic behaviours, while social information processing does not show a significant direct effect in this model.

4.5 Regression Analysis of Digital Altruism and Demographic factors

TABLE 8 REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF DIGITAL ALTRUISM AND DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

	R	Rsquare	Adjusted R ²	F	Sig.	Standardized beta	t	Sig.
Constant	.377 ^a	.142	.119	6.121	.001 ^b		.584	.560
Age						.038	358	.721
Gender						.200	2.001	.048
Attendance_Year						.229	2.233	.028

a. Dependent Variable: Digital_Alturism

b. Predictors (Constant), Attendance_Year, Gender, Age

A multiple linear regression was conducted to examine whether demographic factors age, gender, and year of study significantly predict digital altruism among students. The model was statistically significant, $F(3, 111) = 6.121, p = .001$, and accounted for approximately 14.2% of the variance in digital altruism ($R^2 = .142$). The analysis showed that gender ($\beta = .200, p = .048$) and attendance year ($\beta = .229, p = .028$) were statistically significant predictors of digital

altruism, whereas age ($\beta = .038, p = .721$) was not. These results suggest that female students are more likely than male students to engage in digital altruism. Likewise, students in later years of university showed higher levels of digital altruism than those in earlier years.

4.6 Hypothesis Test

H1: The analysis revealed a positive and significant link between digital altruism and the social skills component of social intelligence. This hypothesis is supported by the results. The social skills component (compSST2) was a significant predictor of digital altruism ($\beta = .182, p = .049$). The beta value ($\beta = .182$) indicates that, holding other variables constant, a one standard deviation increase in social skills is associated with a .182 standard deviation increase in digital altruism. This suggests that students with stronger social skills tend to be more likely to engage in digital altruistic behaviors such as helping peers or sharing educational resources.

H2: a strong and statistically meaningful associations between digital altruism and the social awareness component of social intelligence. This hypothesis is also supported. The social awareness component (compSAT1) showed a significant positive association with digital altruism ($\beta = .244, p = .009$). Students who are more aware of others' emotions and needs are more inclined to act altruistically in digital contexts.

H3: Finding indicate a positive and significant relationship between digital altruism and the social information processing component of social intelligence. this hypothesis is not supported. The social information processing component (compSIPT3) did not significantly predict digital altruism ($\beta = -.132, p = .138$).

Chapter Five

5. DISCUSSIONS

This chapter provides an analysis and interpretation of the results in Chapter Four, linking them with existing literature & research objectives, hypotheses. The discussion includes both demographic characteristics of the study participants and inferential statistical results examining the relationship between digital altruism and the components of social intelligence

5.1 Discussion of Background Characteristics

5.1.1 Age

The study revealed that most student in the study were young adults between the ages of 20 and 22. This finding reflects the typical age distribution of undergraduate students and supports earlier research suggesting that emerging adults are highly active on social media and likely to engage in prosocial online behavior (Beyens, 2020). This demographic is particularly relevant when investigating digital altruism, as younger users often exhibit greater digital connectivity and responsiveness. However from the result indicates that age was not statistically significant predictors of digital altruism ($\beta = .038$, $p = .721$).

5.1.2 Gender Distribution

The sample included 56 female and 59 male respondents, indicating a relatively balanced gender representation. Gender balance in the sample enhances the generalizability of the findings and supports comparative interpretations of social intelligence and altruism across genders, as noted in previous studies. Analysis revealed that gender ($\beta = .200$, $p = .048$). These results suggest that female students are more likely than male students to engage in digital altruism.

5.1.3 Year of Attendance

Participants were distributed fairly evenly across academic years, with a majority in the second (34.9%) and third (32.5%) years of study. This diversity of academic experience may influence the level of social intelligence and digital engagement. Third year students, for instance, may have more developed social skills and awareness due to increased academic and social exposure. The analysis found that attendance year ($\beta = .229$, $p = .028$) were statistically

significant predictors of digital altruism the result suggest that students in later years of university exhibit higher levels of digital altruism than those in earlier years

5.1.4 Frequently Used Social Media Platforms

TikTok (27.7%) emerged as the most frequently used platform, followed by Instagram and YouTube (24.4% each). These platforms emphasize visual and interactive content, which has been found to promote emotional expression and empathy two key elements of altruistic behaviours (Wang Y. G., 2022)

5.1.5 Purpose of Social Media Use

Entertainment (39.1%) and education (27.7%) were the leading purposes for social media use, followed by maintaining personal and professional relationships. These findings suggest that students utilize social media for both hedonic and utilitarian purposes, aligning with research that social media can support both social learning and prosocial interaction (Greenhow, 2016)(Greenhow & Lewin, 2016).

5.1.6 On average time spent on Social Media

Participants reported varied social media usage, with a majority spending between 1 to 3 hours daily. This trend is consistent with global data indicating that university students are frequent users of social media platforms, which may facilitate opportunities for digital altruism (Kuss, 2017)

5.2 Discussion of Inferential Analysis and Hypotheses Testing

5.2.1 Dicussions of Infernetal Analysis

The multiple linear regression model used in the analysis showed that the three predictors collectively accounted for 12.9% of the variance in digital altruism ($R^2 = 0.129$), with a statistically significant model fit ($F(3, 111) = 5.498, p = .001$). This indicates that social intelligence components moderately influence students' engagement in digital altruistic behaviors. Among the three predictors: Social Awareness (compSAT1) had a significant positive relationship with digital altruism ($B = .237, p = .009$) and Social Skills (compSST2) also showed a significant positive effect ($B = .385, p = .049$). then Social Information Processing (compSIPT3) did not significantly predict digital altruism ($B = -.210, p = .138$).

5.2.2 Discussion of Hypotheses

H1: Social Skills and Digital Altruism - The social skills component (compSAT1) significantly predicted digital altruism ($\beta = .244, p = .009$) This supports Hypothesis 1 & is consistent with literature suggesting that individuals with strong social skills are more likely to engage in helping behaviours online (Riggio et al., 2008) The ability to communicate effectively, empathize with others, and resolve conflicts can facilitate digital prosocial acts. However, the strength of the relationship in the current study is somewhat lower than what has been reported in studies conducted in Western contexts. This may be attributed to cultural or contextual differences; for instance, students at Addis Ababa University may use digital platforms more passively or for academic purposes, limiting the opportunities or motivation for socially skilled interactions to translate into altruistic behaviour online.

H2: Social Awareness & Digital Altruism - Social awareness (compSST2) also had a significant positive effect ($\beta = .182, p = .049$), confirming Hypothesis 2. This finding aligns with prior studies emphasizing the role of perspective taking and emotional understanding in promoting online altruism by Decety, (2014) Students who can recognize others' emotions and needs are more inclined to engage in supportive digital behaviours. Also research by Kabakç et al., (2020) who found that empathetic awareness plays a crucial role in encouraging supportive online behaviours, such as emotional support and social advocacy. Interestingly, the relatively strong association found in this study may reflect the communal and interdependent nature of Ethiopian social norms, where being agreed to others' needs is culturally reinforced. It may also reflect that students who are socially aware may more actively interpret distress or need on digital platforms, prompting them to help. Compared to studies in more individualistic cultures, where emotional cues may be more easily ignored in digital spaces, the effect here may be stronger due to the cultural value placed on group welfare and community sensitivity.

H3: Social Information Processing & Digital Altruism - The relationship between social information processing (compSIPT3) and digital altruism was not statistically significant ($\beta = -.132$, $p = .138$). This result does not support Hypothesis 3. One possible explanation is that the cognitive evaluation of social cues in online contexts may not directly translate into altruistic action unless paired with emotional and interpersonal competencies. Although previous theoretical frameworks such as those by Crick et al., (1994).) emphasized the role of cognitive interpretation of social cues in behaviours, this study suggests that, in digital contexts, cognitive processing alone may not be sufficient to stimulate altruistic action. Emotional and interpersonal elements may play a more immediate role. One possible explanation is that while the ability to interpret online social information is important, it may not by itself trigger altruistic behavior unless coupled with emotional sensitivity or motivation to act. In other words, recognizing someone's need online cognitive understanding does not necessarily lead to helping behavior unless the person also feels empathy or is socially motivated. This could suggest that emotional and interpersonal components of social intelligence such as awareness and skills play a more direct role in driving digital altruism than purely cognitive evaluation. Moreover, digital contexts often provide limited or ambiguous cues compared to face to face settings, which may make information processing less effective in triggering altruistic responses. Cultural or language factors may also play a role in limiting the clarity of online cues in Ethiopian university settings.

Chapeter Six

6. Conclusion & Recommendation

This study set out to examine the relationship between digital altruism and components of social intelligence namely, social awareness, social skills, and social information processing among students at Addis Ababa University. The results of the multiple regression analysis indicated that social awareness and social skills significantly predicted digital altruism, whereas social information processing did not show a statistically significant effect. These findings suggest that emotional and interpersonal components of social intelligence are more influential than cognitive processing abilities in shaping students' altruistic behavior in digital contexts.

The study also aimed to explore students' social media behaviors. Descriptive analysis showed that most students use platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, with an average daily use of 1–3 hours. While entertainment was the most commonly cited reason, many students also reported using social media for educational purposes and building professional networks. This dual purpose usage highlights the complex role social media plays in students' lives.

In addition to the core findings, the miscellaneous responses collected from participants offered valuable qualitative insight into the perceived impacts of social media. While students acknowledged positive outcomes such as improved communication and information access, they also reported negative consequences, including difficulty sleeping, procrastination, and time mismanagement. These experiences reflect the need to balance the benefits of digital connectivity with strategies for healthy and responsible media use.

In summary, the study concludes that:

- Social awareness and social skills positively contribute to digital altruism, aligning with the hypotheses.
- Social information processing does not significantly predict digital altruism, indicating that cognitive processing alone may not drive altruistic digital behavior.
- Students' social media habits are multifaceted, with both educational value and risks.
- The miscellaneous findings highlight important real world challenges and coping strategies related to digital wellbeing.

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance digital altruism and promote healthy digital engagement among university students:

- A. Promote social intelligence training: Given the strong influence of social awareness and social skills on digital altruism, universities should offer training programs to develop these capacities. Activities may include peer mentoring, group based learning, leadership workshops, and emotional intelligence development, all of which foster empathy, collaboration, and prosocial behavior in both offline and online settings.

- B. Integrate social media into academic life: Since students are already using social media for education and professional development, departments can connect this interest by incorporating digital platforms into academic activities. Instructors may assign media based projects, use educational content from platforms like YouTube, or create online collaborative spaces for students to work together meaningfully.

- C. Address digital wellbeing and negative impacts: In light of student feedback regarding sleep problems, procrastination, and time mismanagement, departments should conduct regular seminars or workshops on digital wellbeing, time management, and healthy media habits. These sessions could be implemented in collaboration with counseling centers and student support services.

- D. Support self-regulation strategies: Students reported personal efforts to manage their screen time, such as setting reminders, working in separate environments, or storing devices away during study periods. These individual strategies reflect a level of self-awareness that should be encouraged and reinforced. Institutions could offer templates or tools for students to create personalized digital wellbeing plans.

- E. Use departmental roles for student support: Students suggested that departments could play a more active role in managing digital challenges by offering counseling services and organizing extracurricular activities. These suggestions should be taken into account and implemented through structured support programs and student engagement initiatives.

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Appendix

Appendix 1.

Dear participant, thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey, your response will contribute valuable insights to this study. The questionnaire is to complete academic research in the Social Psychology Master's Program at Addis Ababa University, to assess the relationship of Digital Altruism and social intelligence on youths among university students in Addis Ababa.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation

Part One: General Information

1. Age (Years)

- 18 19
 20 21
 22 23
 24 25
 26 > 26

2. Gender

- Male Female

3. Attendance year

- 2nd year 3rd year 4th year

4. which social media platforms you frequently use

- Tiktok Instagram
Facebook Snapchat
Linkedin Twitter
Youtube Other (Please mention)

5. Main purpose of using social media

- Entertainment
Education
Professional Social Relationships
Personal Social Relationships

6. On average, how much time do you spend on social media per day?

- Less than 1 hour
- 1 – 2 hours
- 2 – 3 hours
- 3 – 4 hours
- 4 – 5 hours
- More than 5 hours
- I'm not sure / I don't keep track

Part Two: Survey Questions:

Dear Participants, please select the category that conforms to the frequency with which you have carried out the following acts.

Scale: 1= Never, 2= Once, 3= More than once, 4= Often, 5 =Very Often

Digital Altruism

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	I have shared helpful information (e.g., study guides, articles) in online groups or forums.					
2	I have responded to a stranger's question on a social media platform.					
3	I have donated money to online charitable causes or crowd funding campaigns					
4	I have supported someone emotionally online (e.g., offering words of encouragement, listening).					
5	I have promoted positive social campaigns or awareness posts on social media.					
6	I have donated goods or clothes to a charity cause initiated by online campaigns					
7	I have shared mental health resources or motivational content online to help others.					
8	I have donated blood via online campaign					
9	I have joined digital volunteer activities (e.g., tutoring, translation, advocacy).					
10	I have participated in online movements or causes to help a marginalized group.					
11	I have used my social media to connect someone in need with a helpful person or service.					
12	I have lent a valuable digital resource (e.g., e-book, academic article, software access) to an online peer I didn't know well					
13	I have helped an online classmate I didn't know well by explaining a concept or sharing digital academic materials (e.g., notes, slides, links) when I had better knowledge.					

Dear Participants, please indicate how well each statement describes you.

Scale: 1=Describes me extremely poorly, 2=Describes me very poorly, 3=Describes me poorly, 4=Describes me neither poorly nor well (Neutral), 5=Describes me well, 6= Describes me very well, 7=Describes me extremely well

Social Intelligence

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	I can predict other people’s behavior.							
2	I know how my actions will make others feel.							
3	I understand other people’s feelings.							
4	I understand other people’s wishes.							
5	I can often understand what others are trying to accomplish without them saying anything.							
6	I can predict how others will react to my behavior.							
7	I can often understand what others really mean through their expressions or body language.							
8	I often feel uncertain around new people I don’t know.							
9	I fit in easily in social situations.							
10	I am good at entering new situations and meeting people for the first time.							
11	I have a hard time getting along with other people.							
12	It takes a long time for me to get to know others well.							
13	I am good at getting on good terms with new people.							
14	I frequently have problems finding good conversation topics.							
15	I often feel that it is difficult to understand others’ choices.							
16	People often surprise me with the things they do.							
17	Other people become angry with me without me being able to explain why.							
18	It seems people are often angry or irritated when I say what I think.							
19	I find people unpredictable.							
20	I have often hurt others without realizing it.							
21	I am often surprised by others’ reactions to what I do.							

Part Three: Miscellaneous questions

3.1 What are the Negative Effects of Social Media Usage on your daily y Lives?

- Sleeping Difficulty
- Procrastinating daily work
- Lack of self-confidence when comparing academic achievements with other students
- Failure to manage time
- Affects students' ability to focus and pay attention to academic tasks
- other

3.2 What are the Positive Effects of Social Media Usage on your Daily Lives?

- Join the online community to share scientific material & discuss
- Follow the latest developments & trends in the field of student studies
- Platform to showcase their academic achievement

3.3 What steps are taking to control the usage of social media by your department?

- Monitor and control internet access on campus specifically for entertainment platforms after 12 pm
- Organize seminars on self-regulation and time management specific to the use of social media
- Encourage physical social activity
- Provide counseling services to promote mental health
- Limit the number of assignments given to students each week

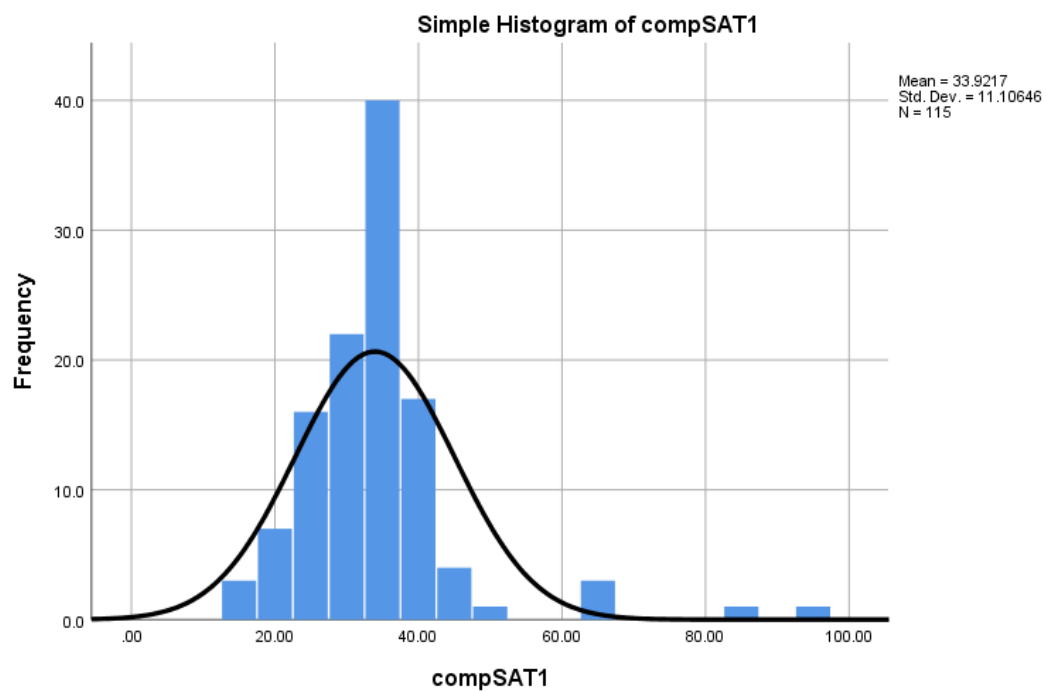
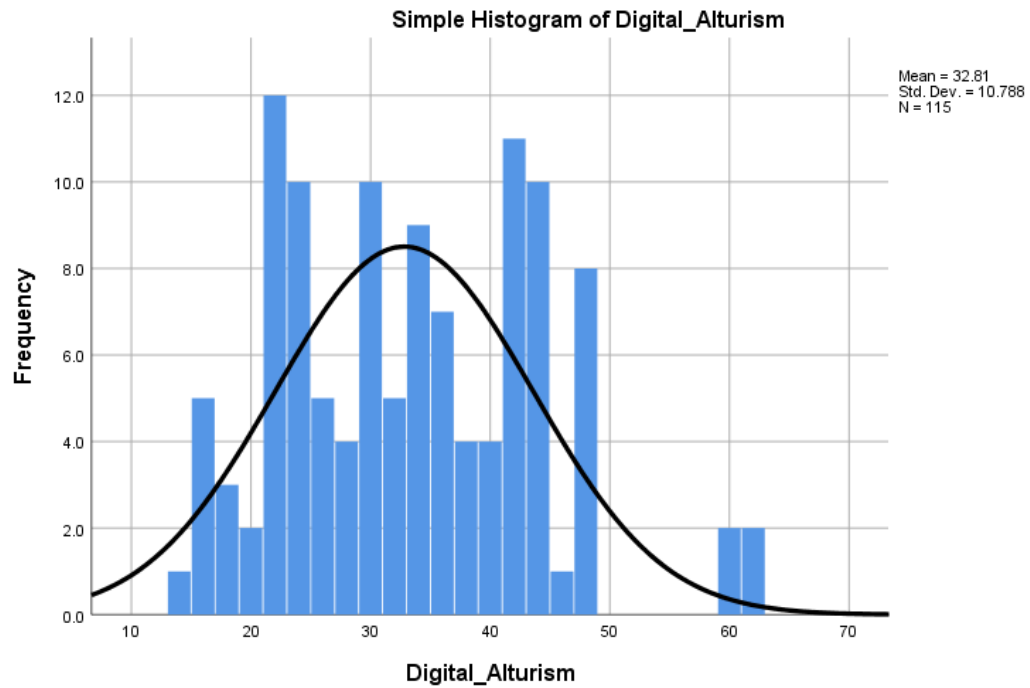
3.4 What steps are taking to control the usage of social media to avoid academic fatigue by you?

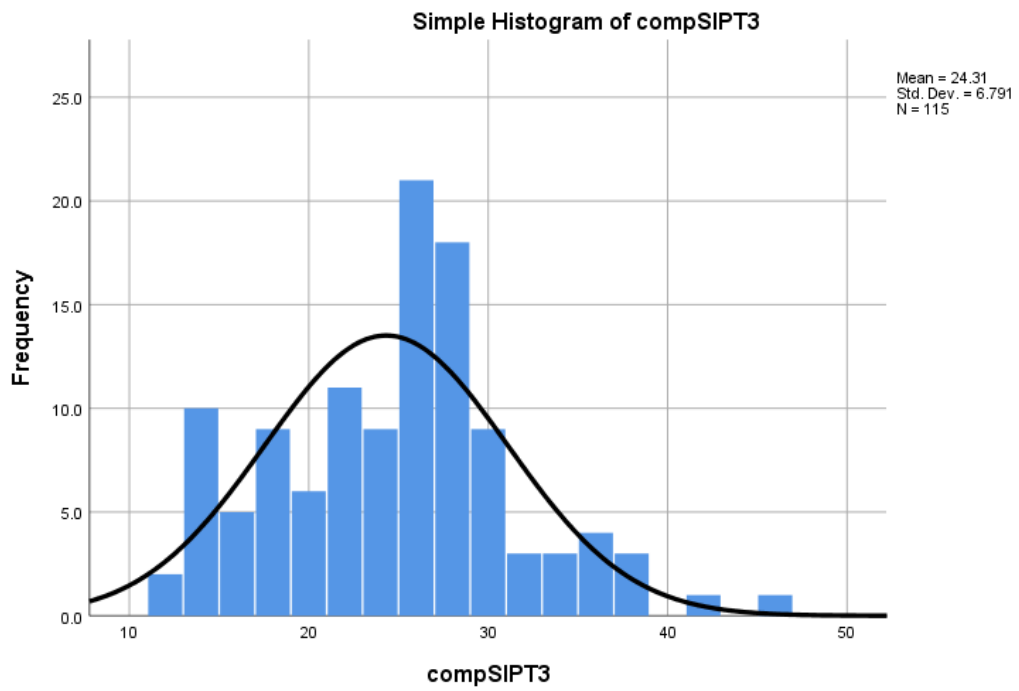
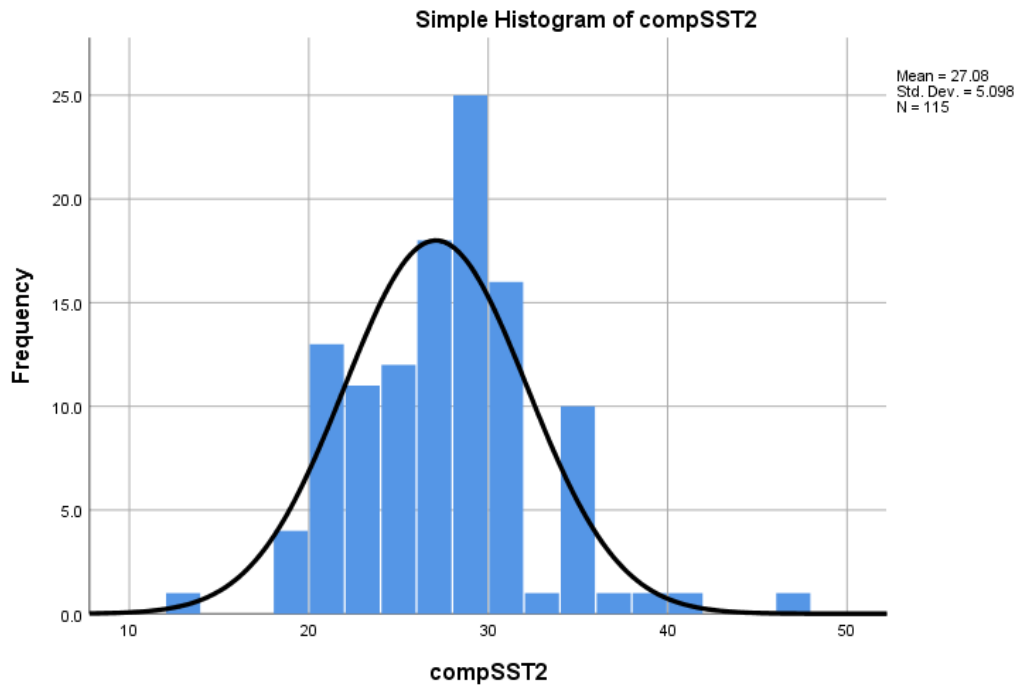
- Store electronic devices during learning sessions
- provide a specific workspace or study area that is free from social media distractions
- Set reminder alarms on student devices to limit access to social media during study time
- Avoid using social media 10 minutes before bedtime to ensure that you are not careless with time
- Others (Mention).....

3.5 Any other comments

Thank you for your cooperation

Appendix 2. Test of Normality





Appendix 3

Table 2. Reliability indices (alpha) of the scales in pilot study

Scale	Alpha	No of Items
DA Questionnaires	.744	13
SI Questionnaires	.713	21