

# The Effects of Social Media on Altruism

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**Abstract** - Altruistic behaviors varied on a spectrum, and commonly characterized as showing generous tendencies, kindness, or helpfulness not for any personal intentions or done based on the intrinsic motivation for better goods. This notion of supporting each other unconditionally is prevalent, as demonstrated that humans are interdependent on each other. This innate trait has been passed down through the survival process. Our research shows that the media hatred received is correlated to the altruism presence in adolescents. Adding to, the concept of group polarization, which indicates that people of shared opinions will support each other's ideas, also stimulate antisocial opinions. This empirical research integrated social exchange theory and the various theoretical models of incentives to analyze several important factors affecting prosocial behaviors in virtual communities. Our results are available at <https://github.com/nguyen-huong/altruism>.

**Key Words** – virtual communities, altruism, prosocial behaviors

## INTRODUCTION

The evolution of the growing technology and the prevalence of social media contributes to the diverse fundament in which people communicate and obtain information in modern communities. Modern virtual communities emerge with new applications where experiences of all ages are mediated by social screen applications. Experimenting altruistic levels through prosocial—including empathy, cooperativeness and altruism—behaviors, it is evident that the capacity to recognize and interpret emotions in others in adolescents is a fundamental building in social cognition. The social and emotional experiences today often heavily involve electronic media, which contribute greatly to how exposure to screen media impacts cognitive development.

Altruism is defined as an increased state of personal well-being when you have an accepting and concerning mindset for others' well-being. Essentially, you are happy because others are happy. Stimulated not only through charity, altruistic behaviors are seen day to day from social interactions to positive thoughts. It helps combat anxiety and reaps a strong mindset.

It is highly debatable whether true altruism really exists, as argued in studies like the Fehr and Fischbacher, 2003. Intrinsic motivations are complex, and such motivations can be hard to infer that someone has acted out of purely altruistic motives. All courses of actions conclude consequences for other people as well, and to an extent, most of us care about those other people. It is more difficult to find evidence against that suggestion than one might have thought. Others might have argued that pure altruists are essentially egoists because, intrinsically, they find helping to reward and therefore they are exercising their personal interest because helping others makes them feel great. However, this argument is deemed as dubious because it presents that the denial that altruism exists should be regarded with as much suspicion as this contrary denial rather than looking at the situational scope of behaviors. More than anything, understanding these factors will help discern altruism existence and the arises if altruism represents a trait with a strong genetic impact or if it is a learned behavior.

## METHODOLOGY

Forty volunteered participants are invited to fill out a two-part survey to identify the most popular social media platforms they interacted with on a 1-5 scale, how often they use these platforms, and their personal evaluations on how prosocial the chosen platforms are. Other associated factors such as age and gender are being evaluated also.

How often did you upload photo(s) or picture(s)? \*

1 2 3 4 5

Not frequent (1 time or less per month)      Very frequent (1 time or more a day)

How often did you chat, post a comment, or share a post? \*

1 2 3 4 5

Not frequent (1 time or less per month)      Very frequent (1 time or more a day)

How often did you use these platforms? \*

1 2 3 4 5

Not frequent (1 time or less per month)      Very frequent (1 time or more a day)

Figure 1. Sample of Media Frequency Questions

Participants age from 15 to 25 are asked to answer questions most truthfully to their best abilities. All responses are anonymous, and responses were given the opportunity to get excluded from the study if desired. Data is collected to be generated for self-reported measures, the Altruistic Personality Scale and the Big Five Model of Personality (Agreeableness). Specifically, the altruism features within the global trait of Agreeableness and the index of the Altruistic Personality Scale, which measures the frequency of prosocial engagement, are used to identify altruistic tendencies. Altruistic index is calculated after adding all cumulative prosocial responses (ex. Feel others emotion), and is subtracted from antisocial responses (ex. Am not interested in sympathizing with others).

Figure 2. Sample of Altruistic Personality Index Questions

## RESULTS AND SIGNIFICANCE

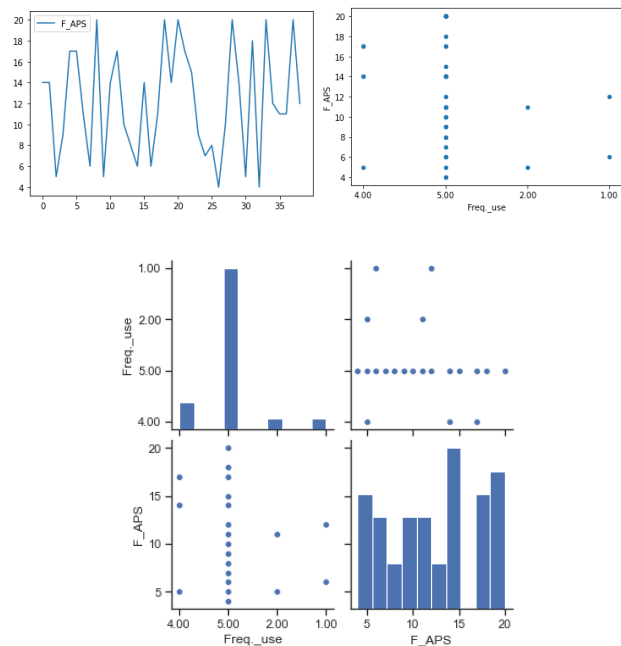
Our findings present when students exercise altruistically, the scope of effects can stretch beyond increasing well-being for at risk adolescents, but it may provide a way to break the cycle of toxic healing process—channeling anger and low self-pity with feelings of worth. This innate trait that has been passed down through the evolution process. Because of group selection, people have always had a better chance of survival when living with others than being alone. It seems likely that those that are cooperative with others had a chance of surviving as the fittest. However, altruism is rather behaviorally learned than inherited; and therefore, it is also logical for egoism to be a result of subconscious learning from social media platforms. As their reflexive behaviors are continually reinforced by likes and shares, the dopamine levels rush to the brain.

	Age	Gender	Total	Freq_use	F_Freq_%	APS1	APS2	APS3	APS4	F_APS	F_APS_%
0	15-20	Female	2	4	26.67%	4	4	5	1	14	70.00%
1	15-20	Female	3	5	33.33%	5	3	1	5	14	70.00%
2	15-20	Female	1	2	13.33%	1	1	2	1	5	25.00%
3	15-20	Female	1	5	33.33%	1	3	1	4	9	45.00%
4	>25	Female	1	5	33.33%	5	5	4	3	17	85.00%

Table 1. Data head of the Research

As ordained as a social behavior, altruism can be linked to socio-cognitive, emotional motivation, and behavioral processes located in the brain, influenced by nature and nurture interconnectedly. As aforementioned, interpersonal exchange and group interactions are environments that contribute to its establishment. Based on

results accumulated from analyzing the prosocial and sharing behaviors of collected class participants, we found that altruism cannot predict knowledge sharing behaviors, despite that there is a slightly negative relationship and a 0.389 variance. However, altruism is concluded to be influenced by the perceived security attachment, antisocial/prosocial reinforcement within the communities, including genetic impact. We also found that the prosocial and sharing willingness is the most important factor on virtual community knowledge sharing behaviors compared with altruism and its proclivity.



Graph 1. Subplots on The Tendency of Media Usage Frequency to Altruistic Personality Scale Index

Through this, we conclude that a third-party altruistic helping, such as the frequency of prosocial media usage and punishment, can activate parts of the prefrontal cortex and reward system of the brain. From our results, as evaluated based on trust, reciprocity and altruism according to the Altruistic Personality Scale and the Big Five Agreeableness Index, we found that the variance between altruistic sharing willingness and viewing prosocial media (rank based on participants' evaluations) are latent to altruism. On the contrary, adolescents within the age of 15 to 20 groups that are exposed to antisocial media argumentation are prone to the seemingly incompatibility with altruism inverse, such as the lack of incompetence in differentiating core emotions. The value of prosocial exchanges within the virtual community lies in a stronger emphasis and maintenance of a common interest, as that is the basis of how most social media environments are formed.

## FUTURE STUDIES AND DISCUSSION

This research aims to analyze the relationships between sharing behaviors in virtual communities from the perspective of the empathy-altruism hypothesis. Our

empirical analysis model aims to identify this relationship by identifying the incentive involved in adolescents and human computer interaction behaviors. To an extent, our research is limited until further verification and experiments. Our survey data collected was limited due to size and gender constraints.

Prior studies have indicated that the associated difference between the male and female brains varied in altruistically helping others, as suggested in the Wright & Li, 2011 . Further research should expand the source as well as the universality of the survey to represent a broader generalization of the study.

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