

## PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIORS AND IDENTITY STATUSES AMONG ADOLESCENT STUDENTS, ADDIS ABABA ETHIOPIA

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction-** The purpose of this study was to investigate prosocial behavior and identity status of adolescent students in Secondary and Preparatory School.

**Methods-** A self report questionnaire was used to collect data from 137 adolescent students using simple random sampling. Quantitative analyses (both descriptive and inferential statistical) were used to analyze the obtained data.

**Results-** The study shows that most students did not achieve their identity. As compared to male students, female students participated more in overall prosocial behavior. More specifically, female students reported higher involvement in emotional, altruism, anonymous and public prosocial behaviors. There was significant mean difference in prosocial behaviors involvements among students categorized under foreclosure, moratorium, and diffusion and achievement identity statuses. Identity foreclosed students reported highest involvement in emotional, dire, compliant, and public prosocial behaviors. Besides, students who have achieved their identity reported more involvement in altruism and anonymous types of prosocial behaviors. However, students with identity diffusion reported least involvement in all forms of prosocial behaviors.

**Keywords:** Pro-social behavior, Identity Status, Adolescent, Students

### INTRODUCTION

Many scholars define prosocial behaviors as any action that benefits someone who needs help<sup>[1,2]</sup>. Helping others is one of the important actions for positive community functioning. For instance, <sup>[3]</sup> proposed that the purpose of life is giving prosocial services and establishing relationships with others. He argued that parents should socialize and teach their children responsibility through socialization rituals. This shows that Erikson stressed the importance of prosocial behavior for growth and development a given country and it has to be internalized by its citizens.

More importantly, positive community involvement in the form any activity is an important behavior for the development of prosocial behavior during adolescence<sup>[4]</sup>. Besides, being engaged in community activities motivates adolescents to value positive attributes such as kindness, caring and altruism.<sup>[4]</sup> Added that as any other societal values are likely to be changed into some reactions, prosocial values are likely transform into involvement in prosocial activities. Thus, active internalization of prosocial values helps adolescents to engage in voluntary helping activities which can be more facilitated by attentive parenting and school programs<sup>[4]</sup>.

Ethiopians are culturally known for their culture of generosity to help others who have no alternative means of survival other than waiting for help<sup>[5]</sup>. Most studies in Ethiopia describe prosocial behavior in relation to religion in the form of begging<sup>[5, 6]</sup>. In addition, <sup>[7]</sup> investigated attitude of students towards prosocial behavior in Debre Markos Preparatory school. Moreover, <sup>[8]</sup> conducted a study on factors influencing volunteers' helping behavior among Red Cross Society Youth Volunteers in Addis Ababa. Nevertheless, none of these studies explicitly show the prosocial behavior of individual as means of developing social capital and social solidarity.

Equally important to prosocial behaviors, values and tendencies is the development of issue identity development during adolescence. For instance, as to <sup>[9]</sup>, personal identity development is one of the

main social and educational issues. Adolescence is a time of great opportunity and risk. Adolescents may develop the ability to

contribute positively to their own lives and to those of their families and communities<sup>[10]</sup>. Developing a sense of personal identity is one of the primary psychosocial tasks of adolescence. It occurs as individuals, through exploration and commitment, develop a secure and enduring sense of self that encompasses an integrated set of personal interests, values, and goals. Furthermore, personal identity consolidation represents a core developmental asset necessary for the successful transition to adulthood.

Though few, there are studies on identity status among adolescents in high school level of education<sup>[11, 12]</sup>. Both studies show a similar trend that most adolescents had less advanced identity statuses (diffusion and foreclosure).

Finally, identity status contributes to engagement in different prosocial activities. That means, as compared to those individuals who have not achieved their identity status, individuals who have achieved their personal identity demonstrate more prosocial tendencies and thereby likely engage in helping others who need help. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine identity status and prosocial tendencies of adolescent students as well as to compare their prosocial behaviors across their identity status.

Obviously, prosocial behavior intended to benefit others is indispensable to enhance human relationships and smooth functioning of society. In spite of this, much more emphasis has been given to the negative side of humans like aggression, crime and substance abuse, giving little attention to the positive aspects of humans like engaging in prosocial activities that benefit society.

According to <sup>[13]</sup>, social scientists have spent much more time and efforts in studying aggressive behavior than prosocial behavior. For instance, the number of scientific social researches devoted to aggressive behavior is greater than that of prosocial behavior.

However, recently it is recognized that prosocial behavior contributes to the function of society and even has a positive side to the helper.

Globally, for instance, the medias often transmit the harming or “evil” side of human beings in the form of terrorism, war, crime and etc put in other words, the national and the international medias illuminate light to only few of the positive helping behavior of man in rescue or life saving situations, ignoring many of the other prosocial activities which have been made by human beings.

Similarly, though, there are plenty of studies on identity, little is known about the correlation of identity status with other behavioral outcomes. Even, according to [14], most studies which attempt to relate identity status with other behavioral outcomes correlate it with negative behaviors like substance abuse. Of course, researchers like [14] and [15] attempted to show the general relationship of identity status and overall prosocial behavior. However, none of these studies compared the various forms prosocial behavior across the four identity statuses. Rather, they simply showed which identity status is positively or negatively related to prosocial behavior.

### Prosocial Behaviour and Identity Status in Ethiopia Context

The concept of prosocial behavior seems in relation to volunteerism. Even such volunteerism has been practiced among fragmented portion of the society. There are few activities in a form of clubs or association intended to serve the needy. The Ethiopian Red Cross association, volunteers donate offer blood to help others who need it. Even more than 60 % of the blood is collected from schools [16]. Similarly, [9] study focuses on blood donation by Red Cross volunteers and shows that self reward was a significant predictor of donation. This study showed that there was no significant correlation between helping behavior and parental modeling. Here the researcher used a hypothetical dilemma to measure helping behavior of volunteers. But, had the researcher actually observed while volunteers donate blood or money, she might have come with a different finding.

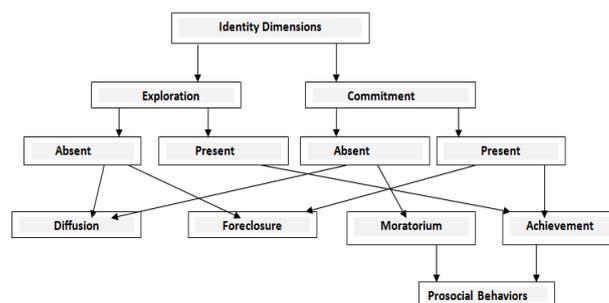
One study by [17] showed a significant sex difference in prosocial behavior, female were more altruistic than males. In addition, this study shows that as age increases, prosocial behavior as increases. Moreover, religiously, children who scored high on religiosity also scored high on altruism [17]. Regarding sex, [8] showed significant mean difference in prosocial attitude between male and female students. As to the study, female students scored more prosocial attitude than male students.

Coming to identity status, age and grade level of high school students increase, most students had foreclosure identity and diffusion identity status while some had moratorium and achievement identity statuses [12].

Even if the interest in the area of prosocial behaviors has long past, it is only recently that scholars, especially advocates of positive psychology, have given due emphasis. Prosocial behavior is any act that benefits others. There are six types of prosocial behavior. These are public prosocial behavior, dire prosocial behavior, altruism prosocial behavior, compliant prosocial behavior, anonymous prosocial behavior and emotional prosocial behavior. The outcome of all of these prosocial behaviors is that a needy receive help. But the helping processes involved each of these prosocial behaviors is different. For instance in public prosocial behavior the helper gives help in front of others so as to gain recognition or some other benefit whereas in altruism the helper gives help to someone who is in need of help without expecting any return.

The issue of identity is also equally important for healthy relationships of individuals in their lives. Identity, as Erikson defined, is a coherent sense of integrated set of personal interests, values and goals. Marcia, who modified Erikson's proposition on identity (identity versus identity confusion), developed a model of identity involving four identity statuses: diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium and achievement based on the presence and absence of exploration and commitment in values, goals and ideologies.

Some scholars conducted researches that show the correlation between identity status and prosocial behavior. The previous research findings by [14, 18, 19, 20] confirmed a negative correlation between identity diffusion and prosocial behavior while a positive correlation between these identity achievement and prosocial behavior. However, these researches showed somewhat inconsistent findings with regard to moratorium identity status. In [14] study, moratorium identity status was negatively correlated to prosocial behavior but the reverse was [14] found in a study conducted by [18].



**Fig 1 Conceptual Framework on the relationship between prosocial behavior and identity statuses**

Coming to Ethiopia, as discussed earlier, different local researchers [5, 6, 7, 8] tried to investigate prosocial behavior in one way or in another. Nevertheless, these researchers did not show how personal identity relates to prosocial behavior. Besides, the Medias in Ethiopia seldom announce help of others to save the life of those in a very serious health condition Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to assess the various forms prosocial behaviors and compare across identity status among adolescent students in Debre-Hial Saint Raguel Secondary and Preparatory School. To achieve this, the following research questions were stated.

- What identity status do students in Debre-Hial Saint Raguel Secondary and Preparatory School have?
- Is there significant difference in overall prosocial behavior between male and female students?
- In which type(s) of prosocial behavior do male and female students significantly differ?
- Is there significant difference in the overall prosocial behavior among students with different identity statuses?
- Is there significant difference in the sub-types of prosocial behavior among students with different identity statuses?

### Methods

#### Study Area

This study was conducted in Debre-Hial Saint Raguel Secondary and Preparatory School. The school is located in Addis Ababa, near Merkato where the capital's main commercial center is found. The school is a private school owned by Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

#### Design

This study employs quantitative descriptive research design. It tries to compare prosocial behaviors across identity statuses among adolescent.

#### Population and Sampling

The total number of students was 968, (secondary level = 473 and preparatory level=495), 150 students were randomly selected from 5 sections (30 participants from each) through simple random sampling technique. This is because; the students were homogenous in their socio-economic levels and religion. All came from parents who are able to pay educational fee and in terms of religion almost all were followers of Orthodox Christianity. Nevertheless, 13 participants failed to complete the questionnaire. Therefore, the responses of 137 participants were used for the analysis. Regarding the sample size, [21] stated that for continuous data the minimum

required sample which is supposed to represent population size 1000 is 106. Therefore, a simple size of 137 is believed to be enough to represent a population of 968. The detailed profile of study participants presented below.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Variables		N	Percent
Sex	Male	63	54
	Female	74	4
	Total	137	100
Age	Middle adolescence (15-17 years)	108	78.83
	Late Adolescence (18-20 years)	29	21.17
	Total	137	100
Educational Level	Secondary	62	45.3
	Preparatory	75	54.7
	Total	137	100

Of the total 137 participants, 54 % were female students while 46 % were males. Coming to respondents' age, 78.83 % were at the stage of middle adolescence whose age ranging from 15-17 years whereas the rest 21.17% were at the stage of late adolescence whose age ranging from 18-20 years. With respect to educational level, Table 1 shows that 45.3 % of participants were attending secondary level of education (grade 10) and the rest 26.5 % and 28.5 % of participants were grade 11 and grade 12 students who were attending preparatory level of education respectively.

#### Instrument

A self report questionnaire having two measures was used to collect data about prosocial behavior and identity statuses of respondents. Prosocial behavior measure; this measure was adopted from [22]. This instrument consists of 32 items in Likert scale. It measures the six sub scales of prosocial behavior such as anonymous, dire, altruism, emotional, public and compliant prosocial behaviors. To check the reliability of the prosocial measure, pilot testing was conducted by selection 20 students. The reliability coefficients of each prosocial subscales were; anonymous 0.65, dire 0.64, altruism 0.60, emotional 0.64, public 0.83 and compliant prosocial behaviors 0.76.

**Table 3: One way ANOVA on Overall Prosocial Behavior across Identity Statuses**

Sources of variation	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	df	F	Sig
Between groups	1255.244	418.415	3	4.26	0.007
With in groups	13061.836	98.209	133		
Total	14317.080		136		

A univariate ANOVA result above shows that there was significant mean difference in overall prosocial behavior among participants with identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium and achievement,  $F(3,133) = 4.26, p < 0.05$ . Beside, the ANCOVA test showed that sex of participants did not covariate in influencing overall prosocial behavior of participants categorized under the four identity statuses ( $F(3, 132) = 4.42, p < 0.05$ ). Since this is a significant difference, it was followed by Schiff Post Hoc test.

**Table 4: Scheff Post Hoc test on Mean Differences in Overall Prosocial by Identity Status**

	Foreclosure	Moratorium	Achievement
Diffusion	7.15*	3.87	5.85
Foreclosure		3.28	1.3
Moratorium			1.97

Identity status measure, Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ) developed by [23] was adapted to measure identity status. It consists of 32 items in Likert scale to assess exploration and commitment dimensions in the areas of occupation, religion, politics, dating and friendship. After the pilot test, the reliability for exploration was found to be 0.70 and for commitment was 0.65. Some amendments were made to few items that have low inter-item correlation. The content validities were checked by professional from social Psychology.

#### Analysis

To analyze the data both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used. Descriptive statistics like mean and percentage were used to analyze demographic variables. Independent samples t-test was used to analyze sex difference in overall prosocial behavior. Besides, in order to compare male and female participants in the six types of prosocial behaviors, Independent samples t-test was used. Moreover, univariate test (one way ANOVA) was computed to examine the overall prosocial behavior among participants categorized under the four identity statuses. Here, Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used computed to control the influence of sex on overall prosocial behavior of participants categorized under foreclosure, moratorium, diffusion and achievement identity status. Finally, a 4x6 Multivariate test (MANOVA) was computed to compare the identity statuses across the six sub types of prosocial behaviors. Alpha level 0.05 was for all significant tests.

#### RESULTS

This section presents findings on, identity statuses, prosocial behaviors. In addition, prosocial behaviors of participants across identity statuses are briefly discussed. Note that only significant results are presented below.

#### Identity status of participant

**Table 2 Identity Statuses of Respondents**

Identity statuses	N	Percent
Diffusion	49	35.80
Foreclosure	40	29.20
Moratorium	25	18.20
Achievement	23	18.20
Total	137	100.00

As Table 2 depicts, 35.80 % of the participants had diffusion identity status. Besides, 29.20 % and 18.20% of the participants had foreclosure and moratorium identity status respectively. Finally, only 18.20 % the participants have achieved their identity.

#### Prosocial Behavior of Participants

Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$

The post hoc test confirmed a significant mean difference in overall prosocial behavior between respondents categorized under diffusion and foreclosure identity status whereas there was no significant mean difference in prosocial tendency between the rest combinations of identity statuses (i.e. foreclosure and moratorium; foreclosure and achievement; moratorium and achievement; diffusion and achievement; diffusion and achievement).

**Table 5: ANCOVA Test on Covariate of sex on Overall Prosocial Behavior across Identity Statuses**

Sources of variation	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	Df	F	Sig
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Between groups	1274.1	424.7	3	4.42	0.005
With in groups	12666.42	95.95	132		
Total	872497		135		

As Table 8 shows there was significant difference in overall prosocial behavior among participants grouped under diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium and achievement ( $F(3,132) = 4.42, p < 0.005$ ), controlling the effect of participants' sex. That means, sex of participants did not have influence on overall prosocial behavior of participants

So far, the overall mean prosocial behavior was compared among participants grouped under the four identity statuses, without comparing types of prosocial behavior across identity statuses. Hence, the following two consecutive tables demonstrate the mean scores on each form of prosocial behaviors among participants categorized under the four identity statuses.

**Table 6: Multivariate (MANOVA) on Subtypes of Prosocial Behaviors across Identity Statuses**

Effect	Value	F	Hyp.df	Error df	Sig
Pillai's Trace	0.26	2.04	18	390	0.007
Wilk's Lambda	0.76	2.07	18	362	0.007
Hotelling's Trace	0.29	2.09	18	380	0.006
Roy's largest Root	0.2	4.33	6	130	0.001

The MANOVA test showed a significant mean difference in the six types of prosocial behaviors among participants with diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium and achievement identity statuses. For instance, using Pillai's Trace, there was significant mean difference in prosocial behaviors among participants who were categorized under the four identity statuses,  $V=0.26, F(18,390) = 2.04, p < 0.05$ . Similarly, the difference was significant using the other MANOVA tests. Since the multivariate test is significant, separate univariate ANOVAs were computed for each prosocial behavior.

**Table 7: Univariate ANOVAs on Sub types of Prosocial Behaviors by Identity Statuses**

Prosocial behaviors	Type III Sum of Squares	Mean squares	df	F	Sig.
Public	190.05	63.35	3	2.73	0.046
Emotional	37.05	12.35	3	1.14	0.335
Dire	83.59	27.86	3	3.38	0.02
Complain	44.64	14.88	3	3.62	0.015
Anonymous	111.73	59.24	3	2.72	0.047
Altruism	121.95	40.65	3	2.48	0.064

The one way ANOVA showed significant difference in public prosocial behaviors ( $F=2.73, p < 0.05$ ), dire ( $F=3.38, p < 0.05$ ), complaint ( $F= 3.62, p < 0.05$ ), and anonymous ( $F=2.72, p < 0.05$ ) types of prosocial behaviors among participants classified in the four identity statuses. However, there was no significant difference in emotional ( $F= 1.14, p > 0.05$ ) and altruism ( $F= 2.48, p > 0.05$ ) prosocial behavior.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate prosocial behavior and identity status of adolescent students in Debre- Hail Saint Raguel secondary and preparatory school.

Only some students (18.20 %) have achieved their identity. Most students had diffusion and foreclosure identity statuses. This is in line with the previous findings [11, 12, 24]. For instance, Archer (1993) [24] found that foreclosure identity status is frequently observed among 17 years old boys and girls high school students and only 19 % achieved their identity

Regarding overall prosocial behavior, there was no significant mean difference between female and male students ( $t = 1.91, p > 0.05$ ). Similarly, [13] study did not show sex difference in levels of prosocial behavior between males and females. However, according to [8]

study there was significant mean difference in prosocial attitude between male and female students and female students scored more prosocial attitude than male students. Of course the present study also showed that the mean score of females (mean= 80.67) was a little bit greater than the mean score of their male counterparts (mean = 77.35). This might be due to the influence of conforming to gender roles that females are more socialized to be nurturing and caring in interpersonal relationships [13].

when we see the sub- types of prosocial behaviors across sex, there was significant mean difference in the emotional prosocial behavior between male and female respondents ( $t=2.38, p < 0.05$ ). Here, the mean emotional prosocial behavior score of females ( $M=15.34$ ) was greater than that of males ( $M=14.01$ ). Similarly, [25, 26] found that females showed higher emotional prosocial behavior than males. But, there was no significant mean difference between male and female students in public ( $t=0.24, p > 0.05$ ), dire ( $t=1.58, p > 0.05$ ), compliant ( $t=0.27, p > 0.05$ ), anonymous ( $t=0.81, p > 0.05$ ) and altruism ( $t=0.30, p > 0.05$ ) prosocial behaviors. Though, the difference is not significant, female students mean scores in public, altruism, dire and anonymous was greater than male students. On the other hand, in case of compliant prosocial behavior, the mean score of male students was greater than their female counterparts. These findings show both consistency and contradiction with the previous research findings. The disagreement between the present and previous studies lies in the case of compliant and public prosocial behaviors. Unlike the present finding, [25] found that female adolescents show more public behavior as compared to male adolescents. Like the previous studies [25], female students mean score on altruistic and emotional prosocial behaviors was greater than that of female students. Such inconsistencies might have been due to difference in the socialization processes in different cultural groups.

Coming to compare overall prosocial behavior across identity statuses, a univariate ANOVA test result showed significant mean difference in prosocial behaviour among students with diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium and achievement identity ( $F=4.26, p < 0.05$ ). The post hoc test only confirmed a significant mean difference in overall prosocial behavior between respondents categorized under diffusion and foreclosure identity statuses. The ANCOVA test showed that sex did not covariate with overall prosocial behavior of participants with the four identity statuses. With respect to the mean differences in each prosocial behavior types among students with various identity statuses, the multivariate analysis (MANOVA) test showed a significant mean difference in prosocial behaviors among participants with diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium and achievement identity statuses ( $V=0.26, F(18,390)=2.04, p < 0.05$ ). In public, emotional, dire and compliant prosocial behaviors, foreclosed participants scored highest followed by identity achieved and moratorium participants respectively. In the case of anonymous and altruistic prosocial behaviors, identity achieved participants mean score was the highest followed by identity foreclosed participants. But, identity diffused participants mean scores on the six prosocial behaviors were found to be the least.

Therefore, there exists both contradiction and agreement between the present study results and previous research in the sub types of prosocial behaviors across identity statuses. All the previous studies [14, 20, 26] showed that identity achieved individuals tend to show better prosocial behaviors as compared to others. However, all the previous studies showed that identity foreclosure and diffusion individuals report low prosocial behavior and their scores were negatively correlated with all types of prosocial behaviors. The inconsistency is that as the present study shows, identities foreclosed participants' mean score on public, emotional, dire and complain prosocial behaviors were found to be high whereas all the previous studies showed that individuals with identity achievement scored highest in prosocial behavior. This disagreement could also be attributed to parental influences and cultural influences on childrearing practices in indoctrinating children about prosocial behaviour. We may also note that commitment, as it is one criterion of identity foreclosure, would contribute more to involve in prosocial activities. However, the agreement of the present study and the previous findings lies on the case of anonymous and

altruistic prosocial behaviors that identity achieved students reported the highest scores as compared to other groups.

## CONCLUSION

Most adolescent students in Debre-Hial Saint Raguel Secondary and Preparatory School did not achieve their identity. As compared to male students, female students reported higher overall prosocial behavior score. A significant mean difference in the emotional prosocial behavior was found between male and female students where females' score surpass over males. In other words, female students reported that they help others in emotionally provocative situation than males do. Though not significant, female students' mean scores in public, altruism, dire, and anonymous was also greater than male students. Much more than male students, female students reported that they help others in front of others (public prosocial behavior), help others without expecting return (altruism prosocial behavior), help others irrespective of who the needy are (anonymous prosocial behavior), and give help when others are in a crises or emergency circumstances (dire prosocial behavior). But in the case of compliant prosocial behavior, male students reported higher than females. That means, as male students reported, they better help others when they are verbally and none verbally requested by the needy. Generally, female students were found to be involved more in overall prosocial behaviours as well as in most types of prosocial behaviors.

In addition there was a significant mean difference in overall prosocial behavior among students with diffusion, foreclosure, and moratorium and achievement identity. Identity foreclosed students reported the highest overall prosocial behaviors as compared to other students with the rest identity status. Identity diffused students were least involved in prosocial behavior. Here sex of students did not influence their involvement overall prosocial behavior among students with the four identity statuses. Regarding differences in each prosocial behavior among students with the four identity statuses, there was significant mean difference. In public, emotional, dire and compliant prosocial behaviors, identity foreclosed students reported the highest mean score followed by identity achieved and moratorium. But students who have achieved their identity obtained highest mean score on anonymous and altruistic prosocial behaviors which is followed by identity foreclosed. From this we may conclude that the commitment identity dimension of identity predicts better involvement in prosocial activities. Finally, identity diffused students reported the least mean scores on all prosocial behaviors types.

## Implications

The present study shows that most students did not achieve identity as they are supposed to reach from developmental perspective. This implies that students who have not yet achieved their identity would not be successful in their future career goals, beliefs and interpersonal relationships for achieving identity is indispensable for healthy psychosocial development.

In addition, as this study shows, female students reported that better involvement in prosocial activities than males. This shows that even irrespective of natural difference in prosocial behaviors exists this much gap between the two sexes.

Moreover, students' identity status made difference in involvement in prosocial behavior. This study shows that students with achievement and foreclosure identity status (who are characterized by commitment) reported more involvement in prosocial activities. This implies that commitment to goals, values and beliefs in religion, political, vocational and dating may be one of the main contributing factors in engagement in prosocial behaviors.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are forewarned

- Since most students did not achieve identity as expected, parents and school teachers support them in searching for their identity.

- Female students were found better in involving in prosocial behaviors than males. Therefore, parents and teachers should socialize males to participant in prosocial as females.
- As the finding shows, students who have made commitment to values, beliefs and goals, engaged more in prosocial actions than those who did not have commitment. Hence, parents and teachers should orient or support them to be committed so that they will tend to involve in activities that benefit their society.
- The Schools of Debre-Hial Raguel Secondary and Preparatory should create mechanism in their extra-curricular activities to promote prosocial values and behaviors among students.

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