

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA VALIDATION ON THE SELF-ESTEEM OF YOUTHS IN
ABUJA METROPOLIS

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Kelvin-Ugwu Amarachukwu Gabriella, hereby declare that this research work was written by me and has not been submitted or received anywhere for the purpose of acquiring a degree in Mass Communication or any other program.

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CERTIFICATION PAGE

I, Kelvin-Ugwu Amarachukwu Gabriella with the registration number GOU/U22/MAS/483 of the department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Godfrey Okoye University, Ugwuomu-Nike, Enugu State, have satisfactorily completed the requirements for the award of B.Sc. Degree in Mass Communication.

This project is original and has not, to the best of my knowledge, been submitted in part or full for any other certification, diploma or degree program of this or any other university.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my late father, veteran broadcaster Kelvin Ugwu Chidiebere, my role model. Your unending love and belief in me continue to inspire me every passing day. Your support and beautiful memories remain forever in my heart. This project is a manifestation of the motivation he gave me and I will always carry his legacy and name proudly and loudly.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title page

Certification

Dedication



Acknowledgements

Declaration

Table of contents

List of tables

Abstract

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

1.2 Statement of Problem

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.4 Research Questions

1.5 Scope of the Study

1.6 Significance of the Study

1.7 Operational Definition of Terms

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Overview of Social Media

2.1.2 Social Media Validation Defined

2.1.3 The Concept of Self-Esteem

2.1.4 Relationship between Social Media Validation and Self-Esteem

2.2 Empirical Review



2.3 Theoretical Framework

2.3.1 Social Comparison Theory

2.3.2 Sociometer Theory

2.4 Summary of Literature

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

3.2 Population of the Study

3.3 Sample Size

3.4 Sampling Technique

3.5 Description of Research Instruments

3.6 Validity of Research Instrument

3.7 Reliability of Research Instrument

3.8 Method of Data Collection

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

4.2 Discussion of Findings

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction



5.1 Summary of Findings

5.2 Conclusion

5.3 Recommendations

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

References

Appendix I: Questionnaire

Appendix II: Pictures



LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Table 2: Age Bracket of Respondents

Table 3: Employment Status of Respondents

Table 4: Summary Of Research Question One

Table 5: Summary Of Research Question Two

Table 6: Summary Of Research Question Three

Table 7: Summary Of Research Question Four



ABSTRACT

This study sought to examine the influence of social media validation on the self-esteem of youths in Abuja metropolis. The study was carried to find out the extent youths use social media platforms, the level of expectation of validation among youths who post contents, the perception of youths on social media validation and the influence of social media validation on the self-esteem of youths in Abuja metropolis. The study was anchored on the social comparison theory and the sociometer theory; the survey research method was used for the study with a sample size of 368 youths drawn from the population of youths aged 15-30 in Abuja metropolis. The researcher adopted the Cochran formula because the exact population of the study was unknown. The questionnaire was employed as the instrument for data collection and the data collected was analysed using simple tables, frequencies, percentages and mean analysis. The findings of this study revealed with an average mean of 2.8, youths in Abuja metropolis actively use social media and engage with contents, Youths had at a mean value of 2.5 showed a high level of expectation of validation when they post content on social media platforms. Respondents believe that validation indices can influence how youths see and feel about themselves with an average mean value of 3.1 and at a mean value of 2.7 social media validation has a negative influence on the self-esteem of youths in Abuja metropolis. The study concluded that social media validation has more negative implications than positive on the self-esteem of youths. The researcher recommends that social media platforms should implement some restrictions on their apps that reduces the time spent on social media by the users, and youths should be encouraged not to rely on social media validation indices (likes, comments, shares and followers) to build self-esteem or dictate how they should see themselves.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Many facets of how people interact, communicate, and share information have changed as a result of the advancement of digital communication technology. Among these technologies, social media platforms have developed into incredibly powerful platforms that facilitate networks, communication, and information sharing across geographical boundaries. Social media is a hypothetical online marketplace where people, organizations, or companies come together to exchange concepts, viewpoints, experiences, and other things. Social media allows people to share information, build relationships, advertise businesses, and participate in public discourse. According to Abaa (2024), social media platforms have been shown to have a significant influence on how people communicate within their social circle, particularly due to their capacity to establish extensive digital communication networks. As a result, social media is now an essential component of modern society.

In the early days of the digital age, social media platforms like Facebook and X (formerly known as Twitter) were mainly used for news reporting and information distribution. These platforms made it possible for anyone and any media outlet to quickly reach a large audience with news and updates. However, with the emergence of new platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok, it shifted from creating fresh and interesting content to offering users engaging marketing, entertainment,

networking, and digital business (Abaa, 2024). In addition to being a tool for business promotion, social media is now a means of customer interaction, networking, and digital advertising promotion. However, the lack of formal gate keeping protocols also has posed some difficulties. With the use of social media comes the social media problem of cyberbullying, misinformation, disinformation, sleep disruption, and mental health issues. Research has demonstrated that it is possible that digital media interaction can impact behavior patterns of adolescents and young people (Joshua et al., 2024). That said, the broader social and psychological impacts of social media involvement have now garnered the interest of scholars.

One of the main components of social media platforms is user-generated content (UGC). All digital content created and disseminated by users rather than by traditional media outlets is referred to as "user-generated content." Social media platforms make it possible to produce and post publicly accessible content, such as images, videos, reviews, and opinions. Viewers can interact with content by liking, sharing, and commenting on it thanks to this collaborative framework. According to the study, young people are using social media more frequently, especially in urban settings, as a result of the increasing use of social media in daily life (Adepapo et al, 2025). Young people can use these platforms to promote their interests, interact with their peers, and share a portion of their lives.

A culture of participatory media and audience feedback has also resulted from the increase in young people's involvement in content creation. Posts on social media typically receive a variety of forms of interaction, including likes, comments, shares, and followers. These engagement metrics provide hard data on user participation and responses. A cycle of people looking for some sort of validation and recognition

through online interactions has been created by the growing emphasis on these metrics over time (Nnamchi et al, 2024). Therefore, the recognition or support that users receive from other users through interactions within their posts is known as social media validation. Determining an effective strategy can be aided by analyzing the relationship between engagement and the ensuing perceptions of gratitude, recognition, and social inclusion. The relationship between engagement and resulting perceptions of appreciation, acknowledgement, social inclusion can inform an approach to engagement that is effective. Hence, a majority of users become highly motivated to get more likes, comments and followers (Ngban et al., 2026).

A key factor in providing such social validation and feedback is self-esteem. A person's subjective evaluation of their own value, skills, or worth is known as their self-esteem. It's a gauge of confidence and undoubtedly affects people's emotional and psychological behavior. Additionally, self-esteem and mental health are closely related, and mental health is one of the key elements that enhances human wellbeing in general (Jimoh, 2025). Additionally, studies have shown that peer interactions and experiences play a significant role in the development of young people's self-esteem (Bibian & Azeqa, 2024).

Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual manifests and realizes their potential, maintains coping mechanisms with the stress of daily life, is efficient in carrying out their activities, and fulfills their social obligations. Understanding the different psychological conditions that can affect people's mental health is part of knowledge about mental health. Adolescents' mental health has been shown to be impacted by social and environmental factors, including social interactions and family history (Nchua, 2024). Positive mental health is frequently associated with emotional stability, confidence, and high self-esteem. However, mental health issues,

particularly those involving anxiety and depression, can lower people's self-esteem.

People with high self-esteem are likely to take opportunities, speak up and put their views across boldly, and find that they have positive relationships. However, people with low self-esteem can feel uneasy, and lack self-confidence and self-assurance. People of this kind might continuously need others to validate and reassure their feelings of worth and acceptance.

There are multiple reasons that are responsible for self-esteem of an individual. The enhancements of feeling valued due to encouragement, appreciation, recognition and achievements are often very beneficial to strengthening an individual's sense of self or their confidence. But experiences that are negative, like bullying, discrimination and emotional abuse, or exaggerated expectations in society, can adversely affect self-esteem. These negative events could contribute to a lifelong sense of failing and valuelessness. Studies have also indicated that peer influence and digital environment can impact on young people's behaviour and self-perception patterns (Omobolanle, 2025).

With the condition of life as it is now, social media has grown attendance more of a factor affecting youths self esteem. Teens are exposed to pictures, videos, and life styles of popular actors, influencers, and fellow teens through digital media. These images on the computer screen are sometimes distorted views of attractiveness, success and lifestyle. This results in all too constant comparison between real and idealised lives encouraged by online platforms by many young persons. Comparisons to this can affect how they see themselves and their self-worth.

It is found that excessive social media use can lead to body image dissatisfaction



among youth (Nnamchi et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the psychological effects of comparisons can be reinforced by the validation systems found on Facebook and other social networks. In online communities, likes, followers, comments, and shares have come to represent social acceptance. People may feel more confident and appreciated by your audience when you achieve a high level of engagement. On the other hand, they may feel rejected, self-conscious, and discouraged if they have little interaction or receive unfavorable comments. Users may occasionally experience bullying, body shaming, or unfavorable criticism from other online users. One's sense of wellbeing and self-worth can be significantly impacted by such incidents.

Examining social media validation and its connection to self-esteem is crucial since young people are becoming more dependent on digital validation. Nowadays, a lot of young people actively create content on social media with the goal of encouraging positive interactions from their followers. People may feel pressured to post content in a particular way if they want more likes, comments, and followers, and they may evaluate their worth based on those metrics. This is due to the fact that young people's use of social media is quickly becoming psychological and affecting how they see themselves. Therefore, this study looks at the impact of social media on young people's self-esteem in the context of Abuja, the capital of the Federal Capital Territory. Therefore, the focus of this study is the impact of social media on young people's self-esteem in the city of Abuja FCT.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Due to the ease of use of contemporary social media, young people have had to

adapt how they interact, communicate, and look for social acceptance in today's world. Social media platforms allow users to participate in interactive environments where they can share images, videos, and personal experiences while getting likes, comments, shares, and follower counts. These engagement elements, which demonstrate acceptance and recognition from online viewers, are often seen as a form of social validation. Users' trust and interest in digital communication can be increased by this kind of validation, but if users are not engaged, it may cause them to react negatively emotionally. Some young people may experience disappointment, insecurity, and anxiety when their posts are not interesting enough for other users or receive unfavorable comments. As a result, a growing number of young people are facing criticism regarding the detrimental impacts of their reliance on digital validation on their self-esteem, mental health, and social comparison.

Although the psychological problems of these students have recently come to light, there haven't been many studies that provide concrete proof of the influence of peer validation in Abuja. Instead of focusing on the significance of elements like "likes," "shares," "commentaries," or "followers," current research areas on social media use and mental health are focused on the general use of social media and mental health measures. Furthermore, there is little evidence in the literature to back up conclusions about the socio-cultural circumstances of local Abuja youth. Wool-clad ladders must understand how digital engagement metrics impact youths' self-perception and emotional states in the region due to the dearth of context-specific research. Wool-clad ladders are needed to comprehend how digital engagement metrics affect young people's self-perceptions and emotional wellbeing in the area due to the dearth of context-specific research. This research gap is crucial because it must be filled in order to produce empirical data regarding the impact of social

media validation on young people's self-esteem satisfaction in Abuja.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine how social media validation has influenced the esteem of youths in Abuja Metropolis. Meanwhile the specific objectives sets to:

1. determine the level of exposure of youths in Abuja metropolis to social media platforms.
2. determine the level of expectation of validation among youths who post content on social media platforms.
3. examine the perception of youths in Abuja metropolis toward social media validation.
4. examine how social media validation affects the self esteem of youths in Abuja metropolis.

1.4 Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent do youths in Abuja metropolis use social media platforms?
2. What is the level of expectation of validation among youths who post content on social media platforms?
3. What is the perception of youths in Abuja metropolis toward social media validation?
4. How does social media validation influence the self-esteem of youths in Abuja metropolis?



1.6 Scope of the Study

The study is on the effect of validation from social media on the youth's self esteem in Abuja metropolis. The study is done under the following geographical, content and population scope.

The study covers geographically the communities under Abuja Municipal Area Council in the Abuja metropolis of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), NIGERIA. These communities include; Wuse, Garki, Maitama, Asokoro, Gwarinpa etc. The active youth population, the urbanization of the area and availability of internet access to the selected area make it the ideal place to conduct surveys.

As regards content, the study centers on social media validation cues like 'likes', 'comments', 'sharing' and 'followers' on the social networks in the study, namely TikTok and Instagram. The study looks at these indicators, and particularly how they affect the self-esteem of the youth. In terms of the scope of population the study is on youths between the ages of 15 and 30 that live within the metropolis of Abuja. The focus of this study is youths age between 15 to 30 years: individual as defined in the Nigerian National Youth Policy, ages 18 and 35 and the definition contained in the African Youth Charter as ages 15 and 35. This group consists of a high number of social media users who are regularly using validation features on social media.

1.7 Significance of the study

This study will have implications for several groups of stakeholders such as: youths, parents, counsellors and educators, as well as researchers.



Firstly, the study will add to the increasing number of studies looking at the link between social media use and psychological well-being. Based on its findings, this research should help contribute to empirical scholarship on the topic of social media validation and the impact it has on youths' self-esteem in communication studies, psychology, and media studies.

Second, the study will help youth by raising awareness on the possible effects that a social media validation can have on youths self esteem. Research into engagement metrics like likes, comments, and followers could provide insights for young users to foster positive attitudes towards social media and less reliance on digital approval.

Third, the findings of the research will be of benefit to parents and guardians of young people who are worried about youth's online practices. The results could help parents comprehend how social media interactions impact the children's appreciation of themselves and emotional health. This confidence can help them to lead and supervise their kids' social media better.

Fourth, third year research participants will be able to use the results of the study when they become counsellors, therapists, and mental health workers and look back on these experiences. Such patterns can be recognized by professionals, and strategies and interventions can be devised in order to enhance youths' self-esteem and address the psychological implications of using social media.

Lastly, the study will provide a useful reference that can be used for future research into the effects of social media, youth culture and mental health. It will be used as a reference source for other scholars to be used in researching topics related to the study of communication and psychological research.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms



Influence:

Influence refers to the power, ability, or capacity to indirectly change, affect, or sway the behaviour, opinions, or development of people or things.

Social media: This is Web-based content generation, sharing and interaction tools that enable on-line social networking.

Validation:

To recognize or accept the ideas, emotions or behaviours of another person, often received in the form of affirmations or positive feedback from other.

Social Media Validation: Social media validation is the type of validation or approval that users receive because of social media engagements (like, comments, shares, etc.).

Self-Esteem:

Self-esteem is a person's rating of themselves in terms of becoming confident and emotionally healthy, depending on the judgement of their own worth, abilities and value.

Youths:

Youths are young people between the age of 15 and 25 as active users of social media platforms and inhabitants of the Abuja metropolis.

Abuja Metropolis: These refer to the urban areas in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria, that are populated with social, economic and digital activities around districts and area councils in the FCT.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Overview of Social Media

Social media are online communications media that allow users to produce, share, communicate and exchange information using the internet technology. Social media is a web-based environment for people to interact with messages, photos, videos and multimedia files, according to Marano et al. (2025). Social media has revolutionised the way people communicate worldwide and particularly with youths who use these channels for communication, entertainment, educational purposes and for information. One key reason why social media can be considered a new communication tool is that it acts as a platform that enables the users to produce their own content and interact with each other in a continuous online conversation connected to established online communities (Ibardoza et al., 2022). With smartphones and internet services growing in accessibility, social media now offers crucial support worldwide to their growth. Social media allows people to keep social relationships, join in conversations, and use various types of information. Social media has begun to be an integral part of daily living, impacting the way we communicate today, in the present and into the future (Marano et al., 2025; Bozzola et al., 2022).

The roots of social media can be dated as far back as the early Internet

communications era from the late 1990's and early 2000's. As early as 1997, sites like Twitter's Six Degrees enabled individuals to establish profiles and interact with pals by utilizing online communication. This was the time the social interaction shifted to digital: Even though internet access was not yet present in many areas. Later, faster developments in more complex social networking platforms followed the growth of, and were fueled by, the emergence of broadband internet technologies and cell phone devices (Bozzola et al., 2022). Things began to change in the early 2000s when sites like Friendster and MySpace were created, enabling users to socially interact by their customised online portfolio. As internet usage became more common, social media became more significant a vehicle for information, and among youth and adults took first place over other modes of communication. Social media expanded their functionality from being just a networking platform to become platforms for entertainment, marketing, learning and real-time interaction over time (Bozzola et al., 2022; Marano et al., 2025). This shift has helped in the pervasive reach of social media on different human experience areas.

There are various types of social media according to their purpose, mode of communication and format of content sharing. Such sites can be organized in a hierarchical form: Social networking sites – Media sharing sites – Instant messaging sites – Professional networking sites – Discussion forums – Blogging platforms. Social networking web pages are normally created to help users communicate and connect with each other on-line. The instant messaging platforms are primarily targeted at real-time communication; while media sharing platforms are primarily geared towards visual content like photographs and videos. Like other professional networking sites, they also allow users to communicate related to their careers, in addition to sharing knowledge, while other platforms such as discussion forums and

blogging platforms are used for spreading knowledge and public discussions. (Donaldson et al., 2022) There are certain features of each type of platform that create distinct social media affects that impact online communications, relationships, and information exchange.

Facebook is also one of the oldest and most popular social networks. Facebook was created in 2004 by students at Harvard University as a network for university students, but it was meant to grow to connect with the world of students. It's main components include personal pages, friend requests, messaging service, live streaming, groups and content sharing. With Facebook, people can post images, videos, status updates, and links to a lot of people, and can also also participate in the online communities. The multi-faceted structure has made Facebook popular not just for communication, but also for educational and commercial purposes, and entertainment (Dane et al., 2023). The platform is still playing a fundamental role in youth and adult communication habits around the world on digital platforms.

Another social media platform that falls under the category of “Media Sharing Apps” is Instagram. Instagram was created back in 2010 primarily for sharing pictures and videos. Its visual appeal, filters, stories, reels, and ability to like, comment on and chat with people make it a popular app. Instagram allows people to share images of people's lifestyle, fashion trends, innovative ideas, and entertainment posts with multimedia. Kids often use Instagram to engage with friends, watch influencers and get lifestyle and fashion related content. Its visual aspect has been a factor in its popularity with adolescents and young adults (Bozzola et al., 2022; Marano et al., 2025). It's had a huge impact on communication over the internet and consumer habits worldwide.

TikTok is another popular media-sharing application that is mostly a short-form



video-sharing application. The platform was launched in 2016 and has quickly become popular with the young, with its engaging and interactive video format. TikTok permits users to make, edit, and share quick videos jam-packed with sound effects, music, filters and visual editing instruments. Some key features of TikTok are algorithm-generated suggestions, video remixing, hashtags, live streaming, and content discovery systems. The platform has gained huge influence in the fields of entertainment, education, advertising and promotion of fashions among the youngsters. Users use TikTok to create or consume content, follow trends, join challenges and online games, and watch people's creative creation (Bozzola et al., 2022; Marano et al., 2025). The trailer for TikTok shows the new trend in visual communication and participatory media in the digital world. The trailers for the TikTok demonstrate the new trend toward visual communication and participatory media in a digital environment.

Immediate messaging sites additionally fall under the umbrella of "social media. IM sites are one more essential element of "social media" as well. One of the most significant ones is WhatsApp, a 2009 mobile application for instant messaging. It offers functionality like text messaging, voice notes, video calling, chatting in groups, sharing status, swapping files, etc. Unlike traditional communication methods, WhatsApp allows people to connect locally, internationally across all countries and all territories remotely from each other. Likewise, messaging apps like Telegram and Messenger allow for secure online interactions via their secure messaging and multimedia-share functions. In recent years, these types of communication platforms have gained even more significance in the communication process in schools, in business, and in youth communication (Kucharczuk et al., 2022). The fact that they are readily available and easy to use has helped spread their use



throughout the world.

Another important type of social media is professional networking sites and blogging sites. Launched in 2003, LinkedIn is a professional networking website where users post, discuss and share news and information about their work, jobs and successfully completed projects. Blogging platforms, like WordPress and Medium, enable individuals to publish written content and express their views on social, academic and cultural issues. Forums like Reddit offer a place to join the discussion and share information that is related to topics. The exposure to these different modes of digital communication is increasing the ways in which knowledge is shared, professional learning is facilitated, and members of the public can join in on the Internet and social media (Marano et al., 2025). This variety of different social media platforms is, accordingly, a demonstration of the variety of interactions with which digital communication still affects today's social reality.

2.1.2 Social Media Validation Defined

Social media validation is the processes of approval, recognition, or affirmation that individuals experience and/or receive from others while participating in a process of digital networking. Engaging with others on social media often involves social media validation by likes, comments, shares, follows, or reactions, which many users take as a measure of acceptance and popularity. Mano et al. (2025) has defined social media validation as a process where the user gained social approval through their response that comes in after posting their content into social media. Social networking sites have gained a lot of popularity in the recent times, and have drastically enriched digital validation for young people and adolescents. People usually post photos, videos, thoughts and personal experiences with the hope that audiences will like it. Online validation can thus influence users' personal social value



and acceptance in online communities (Tomar & Dubey, 2024; Papageorgiou et al., 2022). As one's life becomes more reliant on engagement indicators, social media validation is becoming extremely crucial to online communication and self-presentation.

Social media validation dates back to the online activation and release of the first social network sites during the late 1990s and early 2000s. The Internet went from being a place for Messaging to a Network of interactive systems that allow users to see comments in their content that were first made available to a public audience. Once popular social networks like MySpace and Facebook began to add profile interactions, comments, and features where users could see the response, these tools allowed people to track fan reactions. As a result of the increase in smartphone use, Internet access and social networking applications, opportunities for digital engagement and seeking validation were even greater among users (Schreurs et al., 2022). Home to the Internet, social media platforms added more functions over time, and these, such as likes, followers, reactions and shares, started to convey some cues of popularity and social recognition. However, the social media validation went beyond communication to become a factor in the emotional state, self-esteem, identity creation and peer relationships of young users over time (Maza et al, 2022). This development has helped make the online approval more important in the current society.

Social media validation primarily deals with the need for acceptance, recognition and approval in digital environment. One way users determine their relevance online is by gauging it by the site's engagement metrics, likes, shares, and other similar metrics. It is the idea that people look for people's opinions and support via online means. Constant validation that is observed on social media can have an impact on the

confidence level, emotional closure and the sense of popularity that users experience (Khan et al., 2022). A response may come across as a smile or divine message to the young, particularly adolescents, making a login into the internet seem like a smile or divine message of social acceptance. Whether a user is engaged or not could thus influence the way he/she experiences him/herself and interacts with other members of the online community. Social media validation has therefore grown as an influential factor of social behaviour and social interaction on the Internet.

Likes are some of the most popular social media indicators of validation. Likes are digital tokens that are used to indicate an approval or appreciation of a piece of content that is spread on the internet. Instagram, Facebook and TikTok are just a few platforms that allow visitors to select "like" on photos, videos, comments and status updates. Likes on a post can often be used as a gauge to check the popularity and approval of a post, which is public. The more likes a post receives, the more attractive, relevant and socially acceptable that post seems to be to young users (Tomar et al., 2024). Sometimes people will choose photos or captions or the style of content as if to get more "likes" from peers. In a nutshell, people who want this kind of 'likes' are aiding to a validation-seeking behavior on the platforms of social networks.

Comments are also a huge factor of social media validation. Written feedback given by audiences to online content is referred to by the term comment. While 'likes' are a more indirect form of communication, comments will make the user give opinions, compliments, criticism, or feel emotions about a post. Positive comments can help establish an acceptance and confidence attitude among users, while negative comments can, in some cases, bring users dissatisfaction and emotional discomfort



(Sharma et al., 2022). A lot of young people listen in when other people comment as they offer in-depth analyses of their looks, character, opinions, as well as lifestyle decisions. Improvisation, then, is an important feature of digital agreements and social engagements in part because of the nature of comments, which tend to be more interactive than answers.

One other way of checking social media validation is through shares. Sharing involves users reposting or sharing digital material through various networks to a greater extent. Audiences deem the content to be important enough to be shared, which they interpret as entertaining and/or valuable or otherwise of social significance. Sharing makes the content more visible, and opens up a larger online community to those who are not connected on a personal level. Repeated exposure to others sharing their posts might give younger users the impression of social recognition and an impact on their online presence, which could be a sign of social and psychological growth (Papageorgiou et al., 2022). Spread content can be more popular and reinforce user's sense of approval and relevance in many cases. Shares, in turn, help to diffuse the influence and validation that is digital.

Followers and followers are other key social media validation signs. Those who follow are users who are subscribed to the content of a content creator, whereas subscribing is done by another user. The follower count is a significant metric in social platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and X that reflects popularity, relevance, and influence in their communities and online lives. Larger followers often are perceived as socially admired or influential from peers (Hatamleh et al., 2023). This can then motivate young people to follow more people in order to become known and credible in the internet. Between adolescents and young adults, the more they follow, the more they were perceived as accepted in society and status online.



Other important indices of social media validation include reactions and views. Reactions are emoticons like smiley faces, crying faces, hugs, surprise, laughter etc., which viewers use to show emotion towards content that they are viewing on the web. Views are more like views, as they indicate how many times users watch content like videos or stories. Views can be artfully interpreted as signifying a community's concerns about the material and their involvement as consumers, with reactions revealing their feelings regarding content. More views can mean more people are interested in the content theme, more users feel it is relevant, and reactions will reveal their emotions about the content. Such cues can influence their sense of presence and belonging in online environments, leading to differing perceptions of their social acceptance or rejection (Mano et al., 2025). Multiple versions of digital feedback exist therefore, the degree of validation that has become entrenched in social networking environments and youth interactions.

2.1.3 The Concept of Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is the general feeling about the worth, value, competence and self-acceptance of the individual. It is an indication of how people feel good, valued, able and content at this time. A high-level of self-esteem is important in psychology because of its effect upon behaviour, emotional stability, interpersonal relationships and mental health. Kotijah et al., (2024) definition of self-esteem is an individual's perception and assessment of themselves and their value in relation to social and external experiences based on internal beliefs. Mano and colleagues (2025) define self-esteem as the global assessment a person carries out about him/herself in terms of competence, appearance, acceptance and social relevance. It is thus clear that self-esteem is one's personal evaluation of self which includes measure of his/her social worth, identity and ability. People with good self-esteem are more

likely to have confidence in their strengths and abilities, while those who don't have good self-esteem might experience feelings of being less than adequate and not trusting themselves. So self-concept is a significant factor in influencing the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of an individual in a social setting.

There are also different perspectives on the definition of self-esteem. Self-esteem has been described in different interpretations. According to Dhingra et al. (2022), self-esteem refers to the inner evaluation which is related to emotional and psychological opinion that people form about their worthiness to be treated respectfully and appreciated. Self-esteem as described by Kotijah et al. (2024) is to be the perception and evaluation of every individual's value, which is formed by internal conviction by social connections. Self-esteem has also been defined as a psychological phenomenon that represents the self-image of strengths and weaknesses, accomplishments and sense of worthiness (Maza et al., 2022). From these definitions, it can be inferred that self-esteem is a reflection of a person both about themselves and from others in their environment. Self-esteem is thus more than personal opinion, and can also depend on family, peer, school and societal expectations. It becomes critically important, therefore, to comprehend the concept of self-esteem to discuss the behavioural and emotional development of youths.

The concept of self-esteem has its historical roots in early psychological and philosophical discussions concerning identity and self-worth. Self-awareness and personal dignity had been laid emphasis by earlier philosophers as a crucial feature in influencing the human behavior. Modern concepts and the exploration of self-esteem, however, has been mostly a twentieth-century phenomenon. Early discussions on self-esteem date back to William James and psychologists who explained that self-esteem was the result of personal achievements as compared to



one's aspirations. Later psychologists extended this ideology through the relationship between social experiences and people's confidence and concept of self-development (Sireli et al., 2023). However, in time self-esteem was discovered as one of the key factors in emotional health, particularly of adolescent and young adults. With the advent of modern research, a greater focus has been given to how environmental factors, peer interactions and digital communication affect self-esteem among youth (Prajapati et al., 2024). The development of social media has continued to extend discussions on self-esteem concerns associated with online self-image and self-formation, and digital validation.

Self-esteem is primarily related to person's self-perception and feelings. It is a reflection of the sense of value which individuals give or credit to identity, ability, appearance, achievements, and relationships. Self-esteem impacts self-confidence, emotional resilience, motivation and social engagement. People who feel good about themselves tend to trust their own skills, are able to handle difficulties more effectively and have better relationships with others (Khan et al., 2025). Those with low self-esteem, on the other hand, may feel afraid of avoid rejection, feel insecure, feel emotional and not have much confidence in their skills. Self-esteem also plays a role in decision-making since people with a high self-esteem make healthier choices, value goals, and reach them. This is why with the concept comes the personal confidence, emotional security, self-respect and the belief in the capability. The knowledge of what 'starve or flattery' means gives some sense of 'what to say/do' in social encounters and how people could be affected.

There are assorted types of self-esteem as per their consistence and kind of personal confidence. One among the major types is high self-esteem where people feel confident with the abilities and have positive thoughts concerning themselves.



Self-esteem individuals are characterized as confidence, emotional stability, optimism, and willingness to social interaction (Kotijah et al., 2024). Low self-esteem is another one where individuals feel inadequate, lack confidence, uncertainty or negative perceptions about themselves. Youth with weak self-confidence can be very sensitive to criticism, and often experience a sense of rejection or inadequacy (Dhingra et al., 2022).

Another significant difference has to do with stable and unstable self-esteem. Stable self-esteem is the same when the testers are positive and when they are negative. Stable self-esteem is a level of consistent self-confidence, even when it is not reinforced by outside feedback and in the event of a setback. People who have a positive self esteem, generally have positive self worth even when facing difficulties. Self esteem, which is unstable, is subject to external factors or to success or acceptance in society (Maza et al., 2022). Likewise, self-esteem is considered by scholars when it appears in an inflated or fragile way, meaning that the person appears confident in his or herself, but is still emotionally sensitive to criticism or rejection. These are individuals who need a great deal from others to gain self-confidence (Mano et al., 2025). These categories illustrate the different ways self-esteem may manifest among individuals.

There are many significant elements to self-esteem that contribute to emotional health and personal identity. An important part of this is self-confidence—self-confidence is, 'I can do it' or 'I think I can do it'. A second is self-respect which is defined as an awareness of and self-worth and self-dignity in relationships and interactions. A consideration of self-acceptance is also a significant factor, as it entails taking ownership of the positive and negative, free from over-evaluation of ideas, and embracing both (Maza, 2022; Kotijah et al., 2024). Other elements of self

esteem are emotional resilience, optimism, independence and confidence in social interactions. Developing adolescents with healthy self-esteem tend to have positive and open attitudes toward problems and increased confidence in reaching their personal objectives. Alternatively, low self-esteem can manifest by low self-confidence, fear of criticism, social withdrawal, and seeking too much dependence on others' evaluation (Sireli et al., 2023). The above qualities suggest the role of self-esteem in personality and conduct.

There are several reasons that can explain self esteem of people. One key factor is family relationships as the support, encouragement and acceptance given by the parents can influence the confidence and emotional security of their child. The nature of family relationship experiences can influence peoples' self-esteem: positive family experiences may help to build positive self-esteem while negative experiences, such as neglect or criticism, can lead to a lowering of peoples' sense of self worth (Prajapati et al., 2024). Peer relationships are also important as a source of self-esteem since friends' acceptance or rejection can impact adolescent's self-evaluation. Further, whatever occurs in educational environments can influence self-esteem, with successful achievements likely to foster self-confidence, whereas repeated failures can amplify self-doubt (Khan et al., 2025).

Body image and appearances are other crucial factors to consider in self esteem. People in their teenage years will judge their worthiness of being attractive and good looking according to the standards set by the society. Therefore, media exposure can impact young people's evaluation of their appearance and social value (Amin et al., 2025). Other factors that can account for differences in self-esteem are personality, socioeconomic status, emotional experiences, and cultural expectations. These factors show that self-esteem is formed as a result of the interaction of an



individual's experiences and the social environments in which he or she lives.

There are various factors which affect the self esteem among young people and particularly during their adolescence. Peer acceptance is crucial because a teen's desire for approval and acceptance from peers and classmates. Positive relationship can build confidence and belonging, and poor relationships can have a negative impact on the child's self-esteem, such as being bullied or excluded (Kotijah et al, 2024). Parent and family support is also relevant to self-esteem as parental and family encouragement can foster emotional security, confidence within a family. College achievement also influences self-esteem as better academic results could elevate one's sense of self-efficacy.

Social comparison is an important factor in youth self-esteem as well. Adolescents often make comparisons between themselves and others in regard to achievement, physical appearance, and lifestyle. The comparisons could affect personal identity satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Papageorgiou et al., 2022; Popat & Tarrant, 2022). However, the increase of social media has magnified those comparisons as ideas of individuals' lives and edited photos are broadcast over the internet. Indeed, nowadays, social media has become an important aspect in the development of youth self-esteem.

There are behavioural and emotional cues from which a positive or negative self-esteem can be determined. People with a high sense of worth are typically self-assured, independent, positive and emotional and are anxious to reach out to others. They tend to be citizens with good self-assuredness and have a positive ability to provide with criticism (Mano et al., 2025). Moreover, adolescents with a high level of self esteem are also persistent in overcoming challenges and tend to possess a healthy interpersonal relationship in general.

At the opposite end, if one has low self-esteem, they may feel insecure, fearful of being unsuccessful, anxious and withdrawn and lack a favourable perception of themselves. Young people whose self-esteem are low may take their approval from others at all times or may feel distressed if criticized or rejected by other people (Dhingra et al., 2022). They may also choose to refrain from challenging because they don't want to fail or they are afraid they will look bad. Such indicators are used to help grasp the relationship between self-esteem and behavior and emotional reactions of the youth.

An individual's feeling of self-esteem is critical in emotional, social and psychologic development. Self-esteem helps confidently, motivates, it helps to resist adverse emotions and improves social life. Adolescents with healthy self-esteem tend to achieve better academic attainment and development of personal objectives; are able to manage disappointments while continuing to strive towards their goals (Maza et al., 2022). Additionally, self-esteem plays a role in the emotional well-being since it is associated with a satisfactory and stable relationship satisfaction among those who are confident.

Low self-esteem, however, can lead to feeling insecure, uneasy, anxious, and withdrawn socially and emotionally. Low self-esteem among adolescents can render them more susceptible to peer pressure and have difficulty finding positive emotional experiences (Sireli et al., 2023). Self esteem thus impacts on behaviour, emotional stability, academic engagement and social interaction. To take into account its significance is an essential part of youth development.

Adolescence is an important developmental period when one's self-esteem is developed and consolidated. Young people are searching for identity, acceptance and recognition from peers and society during the period. Adolescent experiences



have the potential to influence lifelong STEM confidence and self-worth (Prajapati et al., 2024). Adolescents are then likely to be very sensitive to criticism, acceptance and social evaluation; as it is known that these shape their perception of self.

A relationship to self-esteem is also linked to youth development, due to confidence, emotional stability and the fact that these factors are related to participation in society, to educational success and to identity formation. Positive social interactions can boost self-esteem, and negative social interactions such as rejection or criticism can lead to emotional insecurity (Khan et al., 2025). Adolescent years are, then, a critical time to learn about the development of adolescent self-esteem.

There has been a growing linkage between self-esteem and the auspices of social media in the present era in a digital context. Users can get feedback on social networks via likes, comments, shares, follows and reactions. These measures of engagement may be perceived as indicators of popularity, attractiveness and social acceptance by adolescence (Mano et al., 2025). Positive digital feedback can reinforce confidence and sense of belonging, while negative feedback or disengagement can lead to a decrease in confidence and loss of belonging.

The validation that can be achieved through social media access could then impact a youth's self-esteem and personal identity. Very heavy users who are highly emotional to online feedback could be a cause of emotional sensitivity, such as audience response to digital content (Kotijah et al., 2024). Social comparison in online settings can also deepen the sense of inadequacy children feel, as they often compare their age-appropriate feelings of involvement with others of similar age. The comparison of self-esteem issues in online settings can also aggravate this feeling of inadequacy which adolescents have when their engagement is compared to younger peers (Amin et al., 2025). The connections reveal the way that social media

validation can have a bearing on the emotional health and psychological self-evaluation of youths.

In general, the idea of self-esteem is concerned with the self-assessment of value, confidence, competence and social value. Self-esteem has been traced back to the psychological research regarding identity and emotional growth and can manifest itself in several ways including high, low, stable, unstable, and fragile self-esteem. Peer relationship, family support, learning experiences, body image and digital communication play a role in its creation. Self-esteem is a crucial part of identity influencing adolescents' behavior during growing up years, as adolescents actively look for peer acceptance and recognition (Mano et al., 2025). Additionally, social media platforms have almost further consolidated the bond between self esteem and digital validation; this relationship is displayed through the involvement of indicators that can be interpreted as markers of social approval among adolescents. Knowing this relationship is significant for the current study as it will help understand if there is a relation between social media validation that could impact self-esteem among youths.

2.1.4 Relationship between social media validation and self esteem

Social media validation-self-esteem is the link between the validation they get in social media and the way people assess their personal worth, confidence and value. One of the most familiar examples of social media validation is digital engagement metrics like “likes”, comments”, “shares”, “follows”, “reposts”, “mentions” and “reactions” that are associated with online content. By contrast, self-esteem is the self-evaluation the person makes regarding his or her own capabilities, worth, confidence and social contribution. The link between these two ideas is that the messages provided online represent how the teen or young adult is perceived and

accepted in online communities. Social media validation, thus, is a source for external feedback via which individuals can psychologically and socially appraise themselves. This relationship has become a more crucial one in the comprehension of the behavior and emotional growth of the youth in today's society as the use of online communication becomes increasingly fundamental.

Social media validation and self-esteem can also be interpreted psychologically as an interaction where online acceptance impacts on someone's emotional state and perception of self. If adolescents are pursuing a positive line with others on social networking sites, they may feel good about themselves, as feedback online can serve as an indicator of popularity, acceptance or admiration. Social media is a place where adolescents often share thoughts on a daily basis, reveal their views and opinions, showcase their accomplishments and portray their personhood. The feedback they receive from others might therefore shape their perception and uncontroversial view of their attractiveness, competence and relevance to their same-age peers (Mano et al., 2025). Positive experiences can boost confidence, and negative can diminish confidence about self-worth. This connection thus suggests the ways in which youths' emotional states and psychological adjustment are shaped in the context of online interaction.

Positive self-validation in social media can boost self-esteem in adolescents by having them receive positive engagement from their peers and online followers. Actions like likes, positive comments, shares, growing numbers of followers, and reposts can be considered a sort of social stamp of approval in digital communities. Positive feedback from peers (whether in front of others or online) can make adolescents feel satisfied, encouraged and happy about their behavior and the person that they see in the mirror. These experiences could serve to confirm their



sense of being appreciated, admired, and socialized in their peer communities (Dhingra et al., 2022). There is the possibility then that positive social media validation contributes to adolescents' confidence and their perception of themselves. Reliably receiving positive interactions can foster children's learners' confidence in their own skills, looks and social interactions. Digital approval can act as a psychological boost that can have a positive impact on healthy self-esteem (Tomar & Dubey, 2024; Mano, 2025).

A parallel structuring of this relationship is in-between the construct of peer acceptance and that of self-esteem via digital communication. Having an eager need to gain social acceptance and being acknowledged by others is common during the teen years. Adolescents can find such recognition online quickly on social media, by means of indications that they can see attached to posts when they engage with them. Positive comments and supportive reaction can thus reinforce positive perceptions of being included and accepted in the social circles (Mano et al., 2025). Online colleagues that offer appreciation can boost the self-confidence and emotional support of adolescents. These can have positive consequences on their sense of identity, social value, etc. Social media validation is one of the avenues that neighbor validation promotes self-esteem for youth (Maza et al., 2022).

It is also noted that when adolescents receive fewer responses or negative comments in social media, social media validation can also have a negative impact on self-esteem. A lot of young customers publish content believing that they will be getting some kind of recognition from others. Likewise, the lack of likes, comments, or reactions can be seen as rejection or social rejection by the individual. This can cause feelings of disappointment, failure or emotional insecurity. The study by Prajapati et al. (2024) indicates that adolescents might start to doubt about being

attractive, oneself, or about their intelligence and relevance when their online engagement is poor. Bad feedback or internet-side critiques can be liable to worsening discontent and low self-assurance. Such interactions are also known to cause negative self-evaluation and a decrease in self-esteem in young people (Sireli et al., 2023).

Another key pathway social media validation impacts on self-esteem is the concept of social comparison. Social media apps provide children and youth with a carefully curated selection of images, milestones, lifestyle and experiences, shared by peers and influencers. Young people of course compare themselves with the online content dealt with by others in terms of their image, lifestyle, and popularity. The comparison can make adolescents feel inadequate or unhappy with themselves when they believe they are not getting as many likes or follow, or a level of admiration as others (Mano et al., 2025). These can also lead to lower self-esteem as they grow into viewing their own self-value according to their personal profile online in comparison to others. Comparisons with positive results can help build self-confidence while negative ones can leave feelings of inferiority and hurt (Maza et al., 2022). This shows the self-experiences when applied to social comparison are stronger when there is social media validation.

Another aspect of the relationship between social media validation and self-esteem is the expectation of approval. Many adolescents use social networking platforms with the anticipation that their posts will attract attention and positive engagement. Photographs, videos, achievements, and personal updates are often uploaded with expectations of receiving likes, comments, and shares from peers. When expected validation is received, young users may experience emotional satisfaction and increased confidence because such reactions reinforce feelings of acceptance and

relevance (Khan et al., 2025). However, unmet expectations may produce disappointment and self-doubt. Adolescents who consistently seek approval online may become emotionally dependent on audience reactions, making their self-esteem vulnerable to fluctuations in digital feedback (Prajapati et al., 2024). This dependence highlights the psychological influence of validation on self-worth.

Patterns of social media engagement also influence the relationship between validation and self-esteem. Adolescents who spend considerable time on social networking platforms may place greater importance on digital feedback than those with lower levels of online participation. Frequent interaction with likes, comments, and follower counts may increase emotional sensitivity to online approval. Young users who continuously monitor engagement indicators may begin to interpret these metrics as measurements of popularity, acceptance, and personal value (Kotijah et al., 2024). When digital approval becomes central to self-evaluation, self-esteem may become increasingly dependent on social media experiences. Positive interactions may increase confidence, while negative experiences may contribute to emotional instability and insecurity (Popat & Tarrant, 2022; Papageorgiou et al., 2022).

Identity formation among adolescents further explains the relationship between social media validation and self-esteem. Adolescence is a developmental period during which individuals seek recognition, belonging, and acceptance from peers. Social networking platforms provide spaces where adolescents can explore identity and present themselves to audiences through pictures, opinions, achievements, and lifestyle content. Positive validation from peers may strengthen confidence in personal identity and reinforce feelings of social acceptance (Mano et al., 2025). Conversely, criticism or poor engagement may contribute to uncertainty about self-worth and identity. These interactions illustrate how social media validation

becomes integrated into the process of identity development and emotional adjustment among youths (Amin et al., 2025).

Social media validation also enhances the bond between self-esteem and social media. Positive digital engagement can help to bring happiness, confidence, and emotional satisfaction to adolescents as they may view validation as a sign of acceptance and popularity. On the other hand, lack of engagement, criticism, or lack of social connection online can lead to feelings of anxiety, sadness, frustration or inadequacy. Therefore, online feedback can have a strong emotional effect on adolescents since it can shape their self-perception in the social circles, so the emotional response of young people to the feedback becomes important (Khan et al., 2025). Emotional reactions to the digital feedback thus highlight the psychological value of validation and its role in driving young users' self-esteem (Bozzola et al., 2022; Marano et al., 2025).

Offline social experiences, family environment, peer relationships, and one's personality traits could also affect how online social validation relates to one's self-esteem. For some adolescents, having a good support network and feeling good about themselves can mean having less need for digital approval to feel good. Other people, however, who have lower confidence or more susceptible to the emotion may give more weight to the feedback they receive on social media in determining the worth of individuals. Social media, then, is not inherently a party to self-esteem but an extension of the social world, therefore existing social experiences are more influential on self-esteem than social media (Kotijah et al., 2024). The downside of poor digital engagement is worsened by any lack of emotional support and encouragement in the offline world, and the potential downside of emotional support in the digital world is increased emotional sensitivity to validation experiences (Sireli

et al., 2023).

In broader terms, the link between social media confirmation and self-worth is a complicated interaction of on-line validation and self-assessment. In social media platforms, the adolescents can see that they are receiving recognition and affirmation to them and others, because of the likes, comments, shares and follows. Positive experiences or validation can enhance confidence, emotional fulfillment, and sense of belonging, while negative experiences or lack of validation can lead to insecurity and low self-esteem (Mano et al., 2025). This relationship is further influenced by social comparison, peer influence, emotional dependence, identity formation and digital participation. The study of this relationship is still important, as it provides a better understanding of how the online communication environment might affect the emotional health and psychological growth of youths in modern society (Kotijah et al., 2024).

2.2 Review of Empirical Studies

There were a number of empirical studies conducted to investigate the use, credibility and the psychological effects of social media on youth in various contexts. The studies bring in insights regarding the influence that digital interaction has on youth behaviour, perception and self-concept.

The study entitled 'Effects of Social Media Interaction and Validation on self Esteem' was carried out by Khan (2025). Correlational research design methodology was used to check the relations among the independent variables and the dependent which was conducted in different universities of Karachi and Pakistan. A sample of adults (N = 122) was achieved by advertising and using the university network on the web. The Rosenberg self-esteem scale and demographic questionnaire were used for data collection. An organized survey question was used to gather data on

utilization of the social media, the frequency of interaction, validation and the number of hours spent on the media every day. The findings revealed that online validation was positively related to self-esteem and long daily use exhibited a negative connection with self esteem. The study further reveals that social media validation is one of the critical factors involved in self esteem and overuse of social media could have negative consequences.

Balleza et al (2026) investigated on the topic Social Media Validation and its effect on the self esteem of SHS students. A descriptive-correlational research design was used in the study. The respondents were asked to answer a set of 35 item questionnaires. Results of the findings showed that comments and shares were more used than likes and followers by the SHS students to validate their Social Media. In this study, students also made it very clear that they like receiving direct and positive feedback, as it is a manifestation of recognition and relating to them. Overall, the findings show that social media validation significantly affects SHS student's self-esteem.

Ngban, et al. (2026) carried out a study on Social Media, Students' Academic Motivation, And Self-Esteem in Tertiary Institutions in Abuja, Nigeria. The research design used in conducting the research was survey research design while the research location was chosen in tertiary institutions in the FCT. The respondents were undergraduates from selected institutions and the data was gathered from them using the structured questionnaires. It turned out that pupils who had often found their sense of self through social network communication, experienced self-esteem fluctuations. This study also suggested that overuse of the social media involvement indicators could impact students' psychological health.

They (Joshua et al., 2024) did a study on social media influence and peer group on

secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. This study employed descriptive survey research design and the respondents were Secondary school students in FCT. The respondents were students from selected secondary schools and questionnaires of education research experts were used to collect data. The results suggested that children's behaviors are significantly affected when they consume frequently the content of social media and/or the pressure from peers or the sense of being validated by peers. The similarities among the two studies and the current study was investigating social media exposure of youths in Abuja. The distinction is that Joshua et al. were interested in maladaptive behaviour in students, whereas the present study was is to look at the effect of social media validation on self-esteem.

In University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nnamchi, et al. (2024) have studied the relationship between the use of social media and levels of self-esteem in predicting body image dissatisfaction among university students. This study is quantitative which was carried out in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu state. The population involved in the study was undergraduate students from the university and questionnaires were administered to the students as their data collection tool. The results showed that there is significant influence of using social media often and being exposed to ideal bodies on young adult's body image perception and self esteem. The similarity between the two studies and the study in this paper is examining how social media is used and how that use impacts upon self-esteem. The difference is that, Nnamchi et al. conducted their research on body image dissatisfaction by university students while the current study investigated social media validation and self-esteem among youths in Abuja metropolis.

In the study titled "Assessing the Psychological consequences of social media on

self-esteem of youth amid virtual validation" by Mano (2025), the researcher examined how social media affects youth's self-esteem and how virtual validation bolstered the same. The study used survey research design and the young people (15-24 years) of Vellore city were selected as the study population. A total of 100 respondents were sampled using a structured questionnaire elicited information and the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES) was incorporated. The results showed a moderately negative, but statistically significant correlation between virtual validation and self-esteem scores ($r = -0.44$). Dependence on virtual validation was correlated with low levels of self-esteem. The results also highlight the behavioral and emotional "side effects" of virtual validation for youth.

It was discussed by Adepapo, Ekunya and Liadi (2025) that social media has affected the communication skills of adolescents in Abuja, Nigeria. The study was descriptive survey research design with adolescent population of Abuja as the study context. The respondents comprised of the adolescent pupils of selected educational institutions in the metropolis and the data was collected through the use of questionnaires. The findings indicated that the use of social media has significant influence on adolescents' communication behavior and interpersonal interaction. The study also pointed out that violations of self-control norms may happen in the environment generated online, where the youth is looking for recognition and approval from peers. The similarity with the current study is the interest of the social media use of the youths in Abuja. The difference is the aspect being examined – Adepapo et al looked at communication skills and the present study looks at social media validation and self-esteem.

Pamisa et al. (2025) carried out a study on Mirror or Magnifying Glass? Seeking to understand the effect of negative comments on students' self-worth in the context of

social media. First, the method used in the study was the narrative inquiry design and the study was conducted in a context of San Isidro College. A total of 8 participants were selected and criterion sampling method employed, the data was collected through in-depth interviews based on validated questionnaire. The results indicated that negative comments in social media have a great impact on the self-worth of students which results in low self-esteem, insecurities about their appearance, social anxiety and emotional stress.

Nizam (2026) did a study titled digital mirror: social media's effect on the self esteem of the youths. This study used a survey research design involving respondents from secondary schools in the area namely adolescents. A total of participating youths were 12 young people from Selangor and the semi-structured interview method was employed in the data collection. This analysis found that repeated viewing of curated content and idealized viewings resulted in negative comparisons and feelings of inadequacy as well as lowered self-esteem, notably for young female viewers.

Goyal (2026) investigated into the topic of social media validation and self-esteem. This study examines the roles of feedback valence, social comparison and perceived authenticity of online interactions in terms of its impact on self-esteem. Three studies were carried out that investigated the impact of less feedback than others on social media on a user's sense of self. The results suggest that if other adolescents think they are getting more positive reinforcement online, then the extent to which they feel self-esteem may be lowered. The study also indicates that such constant comparisons, whether through questions or comments, can alter young users' perceptions of their social standing without them knowing how it relates to their actual social standing.

One of the studies about the relationship between social media use and mental health problems affecting adolescents in public health center X Cirebon Regency conducted by Rahma et al. (2026). This study aimed to find out the correlation between using social media and mental health problems among adolescents in the working area of Pukesmas. The study was of a correlational design with a cross sectional approach. The study population consisted of 409 adolescents aged 15-19 years while the samples were 80 respondents who were selected by simple random sampling. Initially, data was gathered with questionnaires, then analysed by the Chi-Square test. As greater levels of social media use increased, so did the number of adolescents with mental health issues, the findings show.

The present study will use an online data collection method using a Google Form Questionnaires while the previous studies used on most of cases were physical questionnaires distributed to youths in Abuja metropolis. This is deemed suitable in view of the fact that the target population is digital, and they can easily access the questionnaire online.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework: This gives a conceptual basis to explain the ideas that underlie a research study. It illuminates the interpretative context of the research problem—explicitly, the assumptions and points of view considered from which interpretations have come. A theoretical framework helps the researcher to explain the relationships between variables and also serves as a device to help interpret the findings of the research. The basis for this study is the Comparison Theory of Leon Festinger and the Sociometer Theory of Mark R. Leary. Theories that attempt to explain perceived self in relation to other elements in the social context, as well as psychological processes involving perception of social acceptance and interpersonal

relationships.

2.3.1 Social Comparison Theory

The social comparison theory was first postulated in 1954 by Leon Festinger who argued that people self-evaluate their judgments by comparing themselves with others in their environment to learn and gain insight into their abilities, opinions, and personal traits. The theory is grounded on the idea that people have a natural tendency to judge themselves, and when they can't make a judgment from the set of criteria provided they may compare themselves to others. Social comparison is then a cognitive activity whereby people evaluate their self-worth and social level. The theory suggests that humans are constantly self-evaluating, ongoing processes that occur when people interact with others in their social surroundings (Caliskan et al., 2024). Comparisons can impact attitudes, emotional reactions, and behavioural responses. These comparisons often take place in modern "digital" setting, when people interact online and engage in social media.

The basic concept of the theory is to observe other people to judge yourself. Without objective standards of measuring, people use others who are in some distinctive way similar to them (in social background or characteristics, etc.). Social comparison process thus serve as a tool for evaluating one's own success, attractiveness, and competence (Powdthavee, 2024). These assessments can shape people's perceptions of what they can or cannot do and their social status in their communities. This leads people to find out their performance and behavior compared with others. The theory states that such comparisons are very influential on one's identity and one's psychological wellness.

Social comparison can take various forms as a function of direction of comparison. There is one major type; upward social comparison is when people are comparing



themselves with somebody who seems more successful or more attractive. This kind of comparison could inspire people to enhance their capacities and individual accomplishments. But it can also trigger feelings of dissatisfaction when a person feels they are not as good at something as others (Crusius et al., 2022). The other form is downward social comparison, in which people contrast themselves with somebody they feel less successful or luckier than themselves are. Comparing to previous events can give a sense of satisfaction and confidence in a person's current situation. The different types of comparison show the way that comparing others can have different effects on the person's psychology.

Also significant is the notion that people tend to compare themselves with others who are comparable. The more similar, the more relevant and credible the comparison process will be. Observers are more likely to consider a comparison relevant and accurate when they see people from the same group or compare those who share similar characteristics, interests and abilities (Wheeler, 2024). The comparisons enable them to cultivate honest, appropriate expectations about their social status and prospects. Having similar others thus enhances the psychological impact of social comparison processes. This assumption is one of the reasons why peer groups can be of great importance in the development of self-assessment based on the assumption.

Social comparison opportunities have been broadened by social media in today's society. In digital environments, people are continually flooded with images, achievements, lifestyle depictions from peers and others. These images offer various comparisons for people to make to the others. Social comparisons are often amplified and intensified in an online environment among users and their peers (Tong et al., 2025). The images adolescents and young adults are exposed to are

often carefully selected, and present them with success, beauty, or “coolness”, at least in the eyes of others. Such experiences can impact on an individual's sense of identity and social value.

The psychologic effect of social comparison can range from positive to negative depending on person's interpretation of social comparison experience. A positive view can inspire people to seek to improve themselves and in some cases the wider community. At the same time, negative interpretations can generate feelings of lack of security or unhappiness with personal accomplishment. However, the theory underscores the importance of perception in shaping the emotional impact of comparisons (Caliskan et al., 2024). People who are frequent users of comparison can be more aware of discrimination and in comparison between social figures and understand what is being recognised. The following is a set of reactions to illustrate how perception of difference affects responses to emotion in social contexts.

In the context of social media, the theory also sheds light on why these engagement metrics, like likes, comments, and follower numbers, turn into considerable sources of comparison. Engagement levels, such as likes, comments, and views, are key metrics for determining the popularity and social impact of a post. Likes, comments, and views are important metrics to consider when assessing the popularity and social relevance of a post. These digital measures offer a set of external benchmarks that people measure themselves against others. Such comparisons can shape people's perceptions of social acceptance and self worth (Powdthavee, 2024). 90% of this, therefore, is done as forms of comparison and is part of a social media landscape where they happen every day. This dynamic reflects the psychological experiences the theory outlines: digital communication environments reinforce the psychological mechanisms outlined by the theory.



Social Comparison Theory is relevant in this study as it provides a basis to explain how young people process the validation found in their interactions with social media. Often, adolescents will look and see how much engagement their post has garnered and compare it to what others have received. Such comparisons could affect their social acceptance and personal self-identity. Others might be thinking that they are less socially approved by others if they see that their posts don't get as much interaction as others. This has the potential to affect their emotional state and self-esteem. Hence, the theory is a sound conceptual model and approach to understanding how and why social media perceived validation affects youths' self-esteem.

2.3.2 Sociometer Theory

Mark R. Leary and his colleagues created the concept of sociometer theory in the '90s explaining the social role of self esteem. The theory suggests that self esteem acts as an internal psychological barometer, which many have termed a 'sociometer', that continually measures how well the individual feels accepted or rejected by their peers. Human beings are assumed to have a social or belonging need that requires them positively to interact with other people. Because of this, people are constantly evaluating their surroundings to check out whether or not they feel appreciated by other people. Self esteem thus becomes an internal control system that represents the signal of shifts in relational value and social inclusion/exclusion.

An underlying principle of Sociometer Theory is that changes in self-esteem connect to a person's sense of social acceptance. Positive social signals (approval, recognition, inclusion) to a person boost his sociometer and subsequently raise his self esteem. On the other side, having rejection, criticism, exclusion signalled by others can result in the decreased sense of belongingness and subsequently, low

self-esteem (Liu et al., 2024). This psychological process facilitates people to control their behaviour in a socially desirable manner, thus sustaining interpersonal relationship. Self esteem, which is therefore not necessarily about one's ability to evaluate one's own competence, rather it is an indicator of social status within a group.

The theory also predicts that someone's sensitivity to cues indicating a social group's acceptance varies with sensitivity to rejection. Feedback can be verbal, facial expression, an interpersonal interaction or social recognition. These signals are representing “relational value” for the person amongst peers and members of the community. It has been found that individuals' emotional well being and self evaluation are affected by perceived social support and interpersonal validation (Yıldırım et al., 2024). Positive social support and acceptance from others is interpreted by the person as positive relational feedback and increases their sense of belonging and psychological stability as indicated by their sociometer.

The second key to Sociometer Theory is that emphasis is placed on how interpersonal relationships interact to produce psychological outcomes. This theory suggests that people alter their behaviour when they sense the value of these relationships changing. When a rejection or relational shortcoming is perceived by the sociometer, the individual might change his or her behaviors to regain social acceptance. For example, people can try to engage more in social communication, ask for permission, or adapt their self presentation to become the same as others in a group (Xu et al., 2023). The sociometer mechanism is seen in this behavioural adjustment as a way for the person to make himself feel better in the world, or to prevent being socially excluded.

Social media platforms in today's digital environments have brought new settings



into which sociometer processes have entered. Through social interaction, it is common to have indicators to see if the interaction is approved or not, these indicators can be seen online, for example likes, shares, comments, number of followers, etc. The digital responses act as indicators of social 'fitness' or 'unfitness' in online communities. Becomes, it could turn out that what they're seeing in terms of engagement on their posts is a reflection on their relational value amongst peers. Research has revealed that online social interactions and feedback can have substantial impacts on people's sense of social participation and mental health (Ho et al., 2023). These digital cues, then, also engage the sociometer system and provide the user with a sense of social acceptance in a virtual context.

Social media platforms can be a significant space for socialization and self-expression among teens and young adults. Youth often share opinions, experience and achievements with peers in a digital space. These comments can have an impact on one's opinion of his or her social value and well-being. Positive interactions with others during online communications could lead to a sense of recognition and belonging. On the contrary, insufficient interaction and/or negative feedback can indicate relational dangers that decrease one's perceived social worth and emotional well being. The following are some examples describing how the responses relate to the process of sociometry in a digital communication environment.

The usefulness of Sociometer Theory for the present study is the notion about how youth might respond to feedback provided during social media interactions. Likes, comments, shares, and follower involvement are examples of social validation that can be seen as a sign of social approval in online networks. Youth may see these reactions as acceptance or rejection from other youth. People may feel their posts

get positive response, which may build their sense of relational value and their self esteem. People may feel their posts are getting positive engagement which may boost their sense of relational value and boost their self esteem. On the other hand, if posts are ignored or frowned upon, one could feel there's less social acceptance of them, and this is when the self-esteem problem can be seen. Sociometer theory is therefore a valuable tool for explaining how the validation of social media affects youths' self-esteem in Abuja metropolis.

2.4 Summary of Review of Related Literature

The relevant literature discussed in this chapter is done on the effect of social media validation on the self-esteem of youths. The review was planned in conceptual review, theoretical surrounds and the empirical studies to acquire a general overview of the topic under the review.

The conceptual review was on four major concepts, central to the study. These comprise overview of social media, validation for self in social media platforms, notion of self esteem and connection between social media validation to self esteem. It was found through the review that the use of social media like Instagram and TikTok has become the important platform for youth to interact with each other as well as to share content and seek appreciation from others. It also revealed that metrics of engagement—likes, comments, shares, followers—represent validations which can affect views of social acceptance and personal value for young people. Additionally, the review noted that youth may use social media such that they are expecting to be rewarded when they share content this may lead to a distinct expectation of social media use. The literature furthered highlighted the importance of how youths' self-esteem can be affected at the receipt of approval or recognition

in digital environment.

This study was theoretically supported by Social Comparison Theory and the Sociometer Theory. Social Comparison Theory is a theory that suggests people compare their abilities, opinions and social status to others. With the use of social media, youths might evaluate the amount of feedback their posts get when they can compare with their own peers, affecting levels of self-worth. On the other hand, Sociometer Theory suggests that self-esteem is a psychological instrument inside the person that tracks levels of acceptance or rejection of others, called a "sociometer. These theories then substantiate the understanding of the reasons why youths use social media and how digital validation is potentially a factor in how youth develop confidence.

A review of several empirical studies was conducted regarding social media use, youth behaviour and psychological effects. Exposure to social media has a significant influence on youths' attitudes, behaviors and self-perceptions as seen in the reviewed studies. Several studies suggested that Internet exchanges and feedback from peers affect the identity formation, communication behaviors, and emotions of youths. However, the majority of the reviewed studies included in the scope of the study were related to academic motivation, communication, maladaptive behaviour and body image dissatisfaction. Only a few studies looked at the impact of social media approval on self-esteem of youths particularly in Abuja metropolis.

Thus, this gap in the literature is the insufficient empirical study of the positive role social media validation on the self-esteem of youths (15-25 years) in Abuja metropolis. Moreover, a lot of the previous studies supported the conventional

methods of distributing questionnaires, while in the current study, an online method is used to collect data via Google Forms. This study, therefore attempts to address this deficit by studying the extent of exposure, the youths' expectation of validation, the perception of validation and its effect on the self esteem of youths on social media within the environment of the metropolis of Abuja.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts the survey research design. The choice of this research design is influenced by the nature of the study which aims to examine the influence of social media validation on the self worth disposition among youths. This research design provides the researcher with the accurate description of the respondent's opinion and use of multi variant statistics to analyse the data collected. (Anyanwu 2018).

3.2 Population of Study

The population of this study focused on youths in the area of study; Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). The statistics obtained from World Population Review (2026) reveals that the population of Abuja Municipal Area



Council is at 2,057,985. With the youth's population estimated to be around 60% of the entire population, the population of this study will be calculated using the provided population.

$$\frac{60}{100} \times \frac{2,057,985}{1}$$

=1,234,791

3.3 Sample Size

The sample size for this study was determined using the Australian calculator from the Australian bureau of statistics for the sample size determination. The study's population of 1,234,791 was inputted into the calculator with a confidence level of 95%, proportion of 0.5 and a confidence level of 0.05.

Determine Sample Size

Confidence Level: 95% ▾

Population Size: 1234791

Proportion: 0.5

☒ Confidence Interval: 0.05

Upper: 0.55000

Lower: 0.45000

☐ Standard Error: 0.02551

☐ Relative Standard Error: 5.10

☐ Sample Size: 385

Calculate **Clear**

After substituting the numbers in the Australian calculator, the sample size derived was 385.

3.4 Sampling Technique

This study employed the multi-stage sampling technique which allows for the use of more than two sampling technique in the selection of respondents.

STAGE1: The Federal Capital Territory (FCT) comprises of six area councils often regarded as Local Government Areas (LGA) namely; Abaji, Abuja Municipal, Bwari, Gwagwalada, Kuje and Kwali Area Council. However, the area of this study, Abuja metropolis is mainly administered by the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). AMAC can be described as the most important and urbanized Area Council in the Federal Capital Territory as it was referred to as 'Abuja city' by most people.

STAGE 2: The researcher selected communities within Anuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). The selected communities were chosen because they are regarded as the major and well-known communities. There is also a higher percentage of youths residing in these communities. These communities include;

1. Wuse
2. Garki
3. Nyanya
4. Jabi
5. Asokoro
6. Karu

STAGE 3: The researcher determined the number of questionnaires to be given to each community by dividing the sample size by the number of communities selected.

$$\frac{385}{6}$$

=65

STAGE 4: The researcher distributed the research instrument purposively to participants who are active social media users. The selected participants were selected because they actively post content and engage on social media contents.

Description Of Research Instrument

A well-structured questionnaire served as the instrument for data collection. The questionnaire comprises of two sections; Section A focused on the demographic data of the respondents, while section B focused on the psychographic data which ask the respondents the research questions. The psychographic data of the questionnaire was designed with the four-point Likert scale of; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

Validity of the Research Instrument

The validity of this study was done using face validity. Copies of the research instrument were given to two lecturers in the Department of Mass Communication and two other lecturers from the Department of Psychology to ensure that the questions are clear and precise and that the content of the research instrument covers the topic. In this study, the researcher adopted two scales of validity by subjecting the questionnaire to the correction of the supervisor before subjecting the questionnaire to the reliability test.



Reliability of the Research Instrument.

To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, the researcher conducted a pilot study among 20 youths in Enugu metropolis. The respondents used in the pilot study were not included in the main study and they were chosen because they share similar characteristics with the main respondents. The data obtained from the pilot study was used to determine the instruments' reliability before administering it to the main respondents in Abuja metropolis. The Cronbach's alpha was found acceptable at a value of 0.752.

$$a = \frac{k}{k-1} \left[\frac{\sum s^2y}{s^2x} \right]$$

k = number of items

Summation s^2y = sum of the item variance

s^2x = variance of the total score

a = Cronbach's alpha

Method Of Data Collection

The method of data collection was achieved using a questionnaire. The questionnaires were distributed through face-to-face method and the copies of the questionnaires were collected by the researcher immediately after completion. A research assistant was also employed in the distribution of the questionnaires who also distributed it using face-to-face methods.

Method Of Data Analysis

The method of data analysis employed by this study is the mean analysis and the percentage analysis. The percentage analysis was used to address the demographic

data aspect of the instrument, while the mean analysis was used to analyse the psychographic data.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The presentation and analysis of data obtained from the distribution of questionnaires are the main topics of this chapter. Additionally, a discussion of the data obtained from the responses of the respondents was offered.

4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

The responses gotten from the questionnaire were analysed in this section, the items in the questionnaire were drafted to address the four research questions in the study. In this study, 385 questionnaires were distributed to the various respondents and returned. Out of the 385 questionnaires, 21 questionnaires were found invalid due to selection of multiple options and incomplete selection which leaves the researcher with a total of 364 valid questionnaires. The questionnaire which comprised of close-ended questions and open-ended questions were divided into two sections; section A and B. The section A was made up of items that focused on the demographic data of the respondents while section B answered questions on the psychographic data.



4.1.2 Analysis of Demographic Data

Tables and simple percentages were used to illustrate the data gathered for section A. The data analysed here comprised the age bracket, gender and employment status of the respondents. This was done using items 1, 2 and 3 of the questionnaires. Below is the analysis:

Table 4.1: Gender of Respondents

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
MALE	147	40.4%
FEMALE	217	59.6%
TOTAL	364	100%

The data presented shows that majority of the respondents are females with a percentage of 59.6% with the males at 40.4%.

Table 4.2: Age Bracket of Respondents

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PRCENTAGE %
15-20	110	30.2%

21-26	120	32.9%
27-32	51	14.0%
33 and above	83	22.8%
Total	364	100%

The table above shows that 32.9% of the respondents age bracket was between 21-26 which makes up the majority of the respondents.

Table 4.3: Employment Status of Respondents

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
Undergraduate	174	47.8%
Civil servant	93	25.5%
Self employed	50	13.7%
Unemployed	47	12.9%
Total	364	100%

In this study, the respondents having been analysed according to the employment status revealed that majority of the respondents were undergraduates with 174 amounting to 47.8%

4.1.3 Analysis of Psychographic Data

This section focused on analysing the psychographic data which revolved around the extent in which youths in Abuja metropolis use social media platforms, the level of expectation of validation among youths who post contents on social media platforms, their perception towards social media validation and the influence of social media validation on the self esteem of youths. The questionnaire was developed using the four-point Likert scale, the options are **SA – Strongly Agree, A – Agree, D – Disagree and SD – Strongly Disagree**. The data was also analysed using simple tables and mean analysis.

Criterion mean: 2.5

Decision rule: if the calculated mean is equal or greater than the criterion mean (2.5), then the decision is accepted but if the calculated mean is lower than the criterion mean (2.5), the decision is rejected.

Research Question One: To what extent do youths in Abuja metropolis use social media platforms?

To answer this research question, items number 4 – 8 of the questionnaires were used.

Table 4.4: Summary of Research Question One



OPTIONS	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	MEAN	DECISION
I actively use social media platforms	164	121	40	39	364	3.1	Accepted
I spend more than 3 hours daily on social media	154	115	56	39	364	3.0	Accepted
I rarely post contents on my social media handles or pages	56	66	112	130	364	2.1	Rejected
I actively like, comment and share other people's content on social media	103	153	64	44	364	2.8	Accepted
I follow people's account that I find very interesting	134	141	50	39	364	3.0	Accepted
Average mean						2.8	Accepted

Results from the table above disclosed that with an average mean of 2.8, youths in Abuja metropolis actively use social media validation and engage with contents.

From the open-ended question it was recorded that the commonly used social media platforms among the respondents were **Instagram and TikTok** among many other platforms mentioned.

Research Question Two: What is the level of expectation of validation among youths who post content on social media platforms?

To answer this research question, items number 10-14 of the questionnaire were used

Table 4.5: Summary Of Research Question Two

OPTIONS	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	MEAN	DECISION
I expect a high number of likes whenever I post contents like pictures and videos	99	134	84	47	364	2.7	Accepted
I constantly spend time checking for likes and comments after posting	81	127	100	56	364	2.6	Accepted
I constantly worry about low engagements and losing followers	79	101	120	64	364	2.5	Accepted
Positive comments on either my pictures and videos are not important to me	47	71	137	109	364	2.1	Rejected
I expect increased followers whenever I post on my social media page	91	128	97	48	364	2.7	Accepted
Average mean						2.5	Accepted

Results from the table above show that at an average mean of 2.5, youths expect validation (likes, comments, shares and followers) when they post contents on social media platforms.

Research Question Three: What is the perception of youths in Abuja metropolis

toward social media validation?

To answer this question, items number 15– 20 in the questionnaire were used

Table 4.6: Summary Of Research Question Three

OPTION	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	MEAN	DECISION
I believe youths use social media to not just seek for attention but gain popularity	143	134	47	40	364	3.0	Accepted
Social media validation (likes and comments) has become a norm on social media platforms	167	144	53	0	364	3.3	Accepted
I feel that positive engagements tend to increase a person's confidence and how feel about themselves	154	125	44	41	364	3.0	Accepted
People are judged based on their appearance and contents on social media	132	144	47	41	364	3.0	Accepted
Social media users with a high number of followers are perceived as more popular	165	116	42	41	364	3.1	Accepted

than those who do not							
I believe positive engagements on certain posts can promote unrealistic standards	146	150	68	0	364	3.2	Accepted
Average mean						3.1	Accepted

The above table's analysis shows that respondents believe that validation indices can influence how youths see and feel about themselves with an average mean value of 3.1

Research Question Four: How does social media validation influence the self-esteem of youths in Abuja metropolis?

To answer this question, the items number 21 – 24 in the questionnaire were used

Table 4.7: Summary Of Research Question Four

OPTION	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	MEAN	DECISION
I compare my posts with similar posts that get more engagements	115	123	67	59	364	2.8	Accepted
Posts that do not get enough likes and comments are often deleted from my social media page	94	139	76	55	364	2.7	Accepted
I have changed certain things about myself because of what people have said on social media	98	132	78	56	364	2.7	Accepted

Negative comments on my posts affect how I feel about myself	96	120	88	60	364	2.6	Accepted
Average Mean						2.7	Accepted

As shown by the data analysis in the table above, social media validation has a negative influence on the self-esteem of youths in Abuja metropolis with an average mean of 2.7.

From the open-ended question which employed the respondents to indicate ways social media validation has affected them positively or negatively. A good number of respondents indicated that social media validation has had positive influence on them and pushes them to do better, some respondents indicated that they do not allow the validation indices to affect them however majority of the respondents indicated that the absence of these validation indices has affected them negatively in many ways.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

The section discussed the findings of the study in relation to the research questions raised.

Research Question One: To what extent do youths in Abuja metropolis use social media platforms?

It was discovered that youths in Abuja metropolis actively use social media platforms. They spend more than 3 hours daily on social media, they post constantly on their social media handles or pages, they actively engage (like, comment and

share) with other people's content and they follow people's account that they find very interesting. The researcher is of the opinion that youths who spend more time on social media platforms while also posting and engaging with contents are more likely to be influenced by social media validation.

The study by Nizam (2026) found a significant correlation with the result, noting that frequent exposure to curated content and idealized portrayals leads to negative comparisons, feelings of inadequacy and a decrease in self-esteem, particularly among young women. The study by Joshua, et al. (2024) confirmed that frequent exposure to social media content and peer validation pressures significantly influence behavioural patterns among adolescents in Abuja. Similarly, Rahma et al. disclosed that the higher the level of social media use, the greater the proportion of adolescents experiencing mental health problems. According to Khan (2025), the study revealed that long daily use exhibited a negative connection with self esteem and excessive use of social media may lead to adverse implications. This confirms the study of Nnamchi et al. (2024) who discovered that frequent social media engagement and exposure to idealized images significantly influence body image perception and self-esteem among young adults.

Research Question Two: What is the level of expectation of validation among youths who post content on social media platforms?

The findings here show that youths expect validation (likes, comments, shares and followers) when they post contents on social media platforms. This shows that youths who expect validations when they post contents on social media platforms are easily influenced by these validations. They expect a high number of likes when they post contents, they spend significant amount of time checking for likes and comments after posting, they worry about low engagements are losing followers and

positive comments on their post are also important to them.

Mano (2025) reveals that there is a moderate but statistically significant negative relationship between virtual validation and self-esteem levels indicating that higher dependence on online approval is associated with lower self-esteem. The study by Balleza et al (2026) show that SHS students relied more on comments and shares for social media validation than on likes and followers however the study also disclosed that students highly value direct, positive feedback such as likes, viewing it as a sign of recognition and social interaction. Students who frequently seek validation through social media interactions tend to experience fluctuations in their self-esteem levels according to Ngban, et al. (2026). Ngban, et al. (2026) also disclosed that excessive reliance on social media engagement indicators may influence students' psychological well-being.

Research Question Three: What is the perception of youths in Abuja metropolis toward social media validation?

It was disclosed in the study that respondents believe that validation indices can influence how youths see and feel about themselves. They believe social media validation has become a norm on social media, they believe that people use social media to seek attention and gain popularity, they feel that positive engagements tend to increase a person's confidence and how they feel about themselves, they believe people are judged based on their appearance and contents on social media, they believe that social media users with a high number of followers are perceived as more popular than those who do not and that positive engagements on certain posts can promote unrealistic standards.

The study by Goyal (2026) found a significant correlation with the result, noting that when adolescents perceive that others receive more positive feedback online, their self esteem may decrease. The study also suggests that even without direct negative comments, the ability to constantly compare social approval can shape how young users view their social status. Adepopo et al. (2025) revealed that online interactions often create environments where youths seek recognition and approval from peers.

Research Question Four: How does social media validation influence the self-esteem of youths in Abuja metropolis?

The findings reveal that social media validation has a negative influence on the self-esteem of youths in Abuja metropolis. A good number of respondents agreed that they compare their posts with similar posts that get more engagements, they have changed certain things about myself because of what people have said on social media, they often delete posts that gets little to no likes or comments from their page and negative comments on their posts affect how they feel about themselves.

Khan (2025) noted that social media validation is a very important determinant of self esteem. According to Pamisa et al. (2025), negative comments on social media deeply affects students' self-worth, leading to low self-esteem, social anxiety, appearance-based insecurities and emotional distress. Similarly, Goyal (2026) suggests that even without direct negative comments, the ability to constantly compare social approval can shape how young users view their social status. Balleza et al. (2026) show that social media validation significantly affects SHS student's self-esteem. The findings on this research question contradicts which the finding according to Khan (2025) which revealed that online validation was positively related to self-esteem.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study is to investigate how social media validation affects young people's self-esteem in Abuja. In doing so, four research questions were posed, focusing on the degree to which young people use social media platforms, the degree to which young people who post content expect validation, how young people perceive social media validation, and the impact of social media validation on young people's self-esteem in Abuja.

The respondents actively use social media platforms, according to the analysis of research question one. Additionally, the respondents use these platforms to actively post and interact with content.

The answers to research question two revealed that young people in Abuja had a high degree of expectation of validation; this suggests that most respondents post content (pictures and videos) in the hopes of receiving likes, comments, shares, and more followers.

The respondents' perception of social media validation influences how it affects them, according to the analysis of research question three. The results showed that the respondents thought that the presence of these validations had a positive impact on a person's self-esteem and that their absence could have a negative effect.

The answers to the fourth research question showed that social media validation has more detrimental than beneficial effects. According to the analysis, social media validation has caused young people to feel bad about themselves and even alter

some aspects of who they are.

5.2 Conclusion

Social media validation has been found to have a negative impact on young people's self-esteem in the city of Abuja. According to the study, the lack of social media validation indices (likes, comments, shares, and followers) can cause young people to feel less good about themselves, make changes to certain aspects of themselves, and behave differently. According to the study, negative remarks can also lower a person's self-esteem in addition to the lack of this validation.

The study also showed that the absence of validation is likely to have an impact on young people who anticipate validation in the form of likes, shares, comments, and followers. They frequently spend time looking for likes, anticipate likes, and are always concerned about losing followers and receiving few interactions. The study also discovered a connection between social media usage and social media validation; individuals who actively use social media for extended periods of time are significantly impacted by social media validation.

Even though the study shows how social media validation negatively affects young people's self-esteem in Abuja, it is crucial to figure out how to lessen these detrimental effects on young people's psychological health.

5.3 Recommendations



In line with the findings, the following recommendations are;

1. Social media companies ought to impose some limitations on their apps in order to cut down on the amount of time users spend on social media. Additionally, social media users ought to be informed about the consequences of overusing these platforms. In order to prevent excessive usage, parents and guidance should also keep an eye on their children's or wards' use of social media.
2. It is important to advise young people not to base their self-esteem or self-perception on social media validation indices (likes, comments, shares, and followers). Instead, they ought to be motivated to build their self-worth away from social media.
3. It is important to help young people develop a positive view of social media validation. To lessen the impact, they should be taught not to give these indices as much weight and significance.
4. Mental health campaigns that raise awareness of the risks associated with social media validation ought to be organized. The goal of these campaigns should be to educate young people about the risks associated with social media validation. Once they are aware of these risks, it will be easier for them to avoid it.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

The researcher suggests the following further studies;

1. A study on the influence of social media validation on the self esteem of youths in various locations to determine if the findings are similar across



states and countries.

2. A comparative study on the influence of specific social media platforms; Instagram and TikTok, on the psychological well being of youths
3. A comparative analysis study that investigates the effects of social media validation between male and female youths to determine whether gender influences the experience of validation.

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APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA VALIDATION ON THE SELF ESTEEM OF YOUTHS IN ABUJA METROPOLIS

Section A: Demographic Data

INSTRUCTION: Please tick where appropriate

1. Gender: Male (☐) Female (☐)
2. Age: 15-20 (☐) 21-26 (☐) 27-32 (☐) 33 and above (☐)
3. Educational Level: Undergraduate (☐) Unemployed (☐) Civil servants (☐) Self employed (☐)



Section B: Psychographic Data

INSTRUCTION: From each of the statements, tick the appropriate box that best describes your level of agreement or disagreement

Response Option

SA = STRONGLY AGREE

A = AGREE

D = DISAGREE

SD = STRONGLY DISAGREE

	RQ1. To what extent do youths in Abuja metropolis use social media platforms?				
	Research Items	SA	A	D	SD
1	I actively use social media platforms				
2	I spend more than 3 hours daily on social media				
3	I rarely post contents on my social media handles or pages				
4	I actively like, comment and share other people's content on social media				
5	I follow people's account that I find very interesting				

6. Indicate the social media platform(s) you use often

	RQ2. What is the level of expectation of validation among youths who post content on social media platforms?				
	Research Items	SA	A	D	SD
7	I expect a high number of likes whenever I post contents like pictures and videos				
8	I constantly spend time checking for likes and comments				



	after posting				
9	Positive comments on either my pictures and videos are not important to me				
10	I constantly worry about low engagements and losing followers				
11	I expect increased followers whenever I post on my social media page				

	RQ3. What is the perception of youths in Abuja metropolis toward social media validation?				
	Research Items	SA	A	D	SD
12	I believe youths use social media to not just seek for attention but gain popularity				
13	Social media validation (likes and comments) has become a norm on social media platforms				
14	I feel that positive engagements tend to increase a person's confidence and how feel about themselves				
15	People are judged based on their appearance and contents on social media				
16	Social media users with a high number of followers are perceived as more popular than those who do not				
17	I believe positive engagements on certain posts can promote unrealistic standards				

	RQ4. How does social media validation influence the self-esteem of youths in Abuja metropolis?				
	Research Items	SA	A	D	SD
18	I compare my posts with similar posts that get more engagements				
19	I have changed certain things about myself because of what people have said on social media				
20	Negative comments on my posts affect how I feel about myself				
21	Posts that do not get enough likes and comments are often deleted from my social media page				

22. Kindly describe ways social media validation (likes, comments, shares and followers) affects or has affected you both positively or negatively