

**Platforms Used, Purpose of Use and Effects of Social Media Engagement on
Adolescent Self-Esteem in Selected High Schools of Lemi Kura Sub-City,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.**

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Abstract

This study examined the platforms used and purposes of social media usage, as well as the effects of social media engagement on adolescents' self-esteem in Lami Kura sub-city, Addis Ababa. A convergent parallel mixed-method design was employed, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were collected through standardized self-administered questionnaires, while qualitative data were gathered through key informant interviews. Stratified random sampling ensured representation across public and private schools, with 379 students who had smartphone access randomly selected to complete the survey. Purposive sampling was used to select five key informant teachers to provide nuanced insights into students' social media engagement. Quantitative measures included the Social Media Engagement Scale for Adolescents (SMES-A) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Results indicated that YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and Telegram were the most accessed platforms. Adolescents used social media for academic, social, and recreational purposes. A significant negative correlation was found between social media engagement, particularly the affective and language dimensions, and self-esteem. Teachers expressed concerns about emotional dependency and reduced academic focus linked to social media use. The findings highlight the need for digital literacy programs, context-sensitive interventions, and parental guidance to promote healthier digital habits. The study recommends collaboration among schools, families, and policymakers to encourage balanced social media use that supports adolescents' psychosocial well-being and academic success.

Keywords: social media, self-esteem, adolescent, benefit, teachers, and school.

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Acronym

APA	American Psychological Association
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SD	Standard Deviation
Sig	Significance

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background

Social networking sites have transformed how people communicate, share information, and build relationships worldwide. These web-based platforms allow users to create public or semi-public profiles, connect with others, and participate in interactive content such as posting, commenting, liking, and sharing texts, images, videos, and audio (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Unlike traditional media, which often limits communication to a one-way format, social media platforms encourage real-time, two-way interactions that cross geographic boundaries and promote immediate user participation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

As of 2025, it is estimated that 5.24 billion people, approximately 64% of the global population are active users of social media platforms (Backlinko, 2025). Among these, Facebook remains the most used platform globally, boasting over 3 billion users. YouTube follows closely with 2.5 billion users, reflecting its dominance in video content consumption. Instagram and WhatsApp both have 2 billion users. Platforms such as Snapchat, TikTok, and Telegram have also rapidly grown in popularity, especially among youth, due to their short-form content and instant interaction features (Backlinko, 2025).

Adolescents are among the most active users of social media. These platforms are deeply embedded in their daily routines, shaping their behaviors, perceptions, relationships, and emotional development. A Pew Research Center study found that adolescents often describe their social media use as “almost constant,” particularly on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and

Snapchat (Anderson, Favero, & Gottfried, 2023). For many young users, social media serves multiple roles providing entertainment, a sense of community, emotional support, and avenues for identity exploration. It facilitates social validation through likes, comments, and followers, helping adolescents feel seen and heard in an increasingly digitized society (Nesi, 2020).

Despite these benefits, the widespread use of social media among adolescents raises important concerns, particularly regarding their mental health and self-esteem. While social media can foster connectivity, creativity, and civic engagement (Mahoney & Tang, 2017), it can also expose young people to cyberbullying, unrealistic beauty standards, peer pressure, and harmful comparisons with idealized portrayals of others (Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2017).

Self-esteem is one of the main predictors of psychological well-being, and acquiring an adequate level of self-esteem is essential to adolescent development. In this context, self-esteem, defined as a person's overall evaluation or appraisal of their worth, becomes a critical psychological variable when assessing the impact of social media use. The intersection between social media engagement and adolescent self-esteem is increasingly becoming a major focus of psychological, educational, and public health research globally (Valkenburg & Peter, 2011).

In Ethiopia, although digital penetration is lower than the global average, social media use is growing steadily, especially in urban areas. As of January 2024, there were approximately 24.83 million internet users in Ethiopia, representing 19.4% of the total population an increase of 2.5% from the previous year (Kemp, 2024). The expansion of mobile networks and the availability of affordable smartphones have contributed to increased access among adolescents. Among Ethiopian youth, Telegram has emerged as the most frequently used platform due to its

low data consumption, ease of access, and user-friendly design. Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube also remain popular among urban adolescents (Seyoum, Aschalew, & Meseret, 2023).

Although there is limited formal academic research on the psychological impact of social media in Ethiopia, existing studies suggest concerning trends. Desalegn (2020), in a study conducted at Wolaita Sodo University, found that students primarily used social media for relationship maintenance and entertainment. However, many students reported low self-esteem, suggesting a potential negative impact of prolonged use. The study also revealed gender differences, with male students reporting higher levels of both social media engagement and self-esteem compared to female students, possibly reflecting cultural norms and differential online experiences. Similarly, Getachew (2023) investigated the link between social media usage and self-esteem among adolescents in Addis Ababa and found a weak but negative correlation, indicating that increased social media use might slightly lower self-esteem levels.

Despite global and local interest in the issue, there remains a gap in Ethiopian literature that comprehensively examines the types of social media platforms used, the perceived benefits of usage and how these experiences collectively affect adolescent self-esteem. Adolescents in Ethiopia represent a rapidly digitizing population whose social and psychological development is increasingly shaped by digital experiences. However, most existing research does not account for the diversity of social media engagement types language , affective, and cognitive and their nuanced effects on self-esteem. Therefore, this study seeks to bridge that gap by investigating the platforms most frequently used by adolescents, the purpose of social media use , and the effects of that engagement on their self-esteem.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Adolescence is a transitional stage, characterized by profound physiological, neurological, cognitive, and psychosocial changes. It represents the most significant period of development since infancy, especially due to changes in pubertal and brain growth that influence cognition, emotional regulation, and social relationships. Far from being a period defined solely by risk, adolescence is increasingly recognized as a time of opportunity a stage in which young people can thrive if provided with adequate safety, support, and developmental resources. These changes can lay the foundation for lifelong well-being or, if neglected, contribute to psychosocial difficulties, identity confusion, or social maladjustment (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM], 2019). In this context, understanding adolescence's social and emotional experience is essential.

With the rapid expansion of digital technologies, social media has become a pervasive element in the lives of adolescents globally. Today's youth frequently use platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Telegram, and TikTok not only for entertainment but also for self-expression, social connection, identity exploration, and access to information.

In Ethiopia, in urban settings, internet access and smartphone penetration have grown significantly. As the number of internet users is increasing, representing nearly one-fifth of the total population (Kemp, 2024). Ethiopian adolescents, especially in cities, are active on platforms like Telegram and Facebook, where they engage with both local and global digital content (Seyoum et al., 2023).

This increasing immersion in digital spaces has had a complex influence on adolescent development. Social media platforms, while offering adolescents opportunities to build social

capital, explore identities, and gain peer approval, also present risks. Adolescents are frequently exposed to curated images of idealized lives, popularity metrics, and socially constructed norms that may promote unhealthy comparisons and reliance on external validation. Research by Richards, Caldwell, and Go (2015) found that repeated exposure to idealized portrayals fosters distorted self-concepts, increased social comparison, and dependency on external affirmation, all of which can adversely affect self-esteem. Global studies corroborate these concerns; for example, Finnish research indicates that high social media engagement correlates with poor emotional regulation and lower self-esteem among adolescents (Sinkkonen, Puhakka, & Meriläinen, 2014). Moreover, Seyoum et al. (2023) reported similar effects in Ethiopian youth, highlighting a growing psychosocial concern.

While prior studies have mostly focused on time spent online, scholars are now calling for a deeper exploration of the quality of adolescents' digital interactions. Avci, Baams, and Kretschmer (2025) argue that future research should not merely quantify social media use but should instead investigate the nature of online activities and their psychological consequences.

Despite the global attention to this issue, empirical research in Ethiopia, particularly among high school populations, remains scarce. Existing studies have predominantly focused on university students and relied heavily on quantitative designs, leaving a gap in our understanding of how high school adolescents experience and engage with social media. For instance, Gizaw (2024) found that frequent social media use was associated with lower self-esteem, especially among female students, suggesting possible gendered effects of digital exposure. Desalegn (2020), in a study of Wolaita Sodo University students, noted that while social media was largely used for entertainment and maintaining relationships, it also contributed to low self-esteem due

to constant exposure to idealized content. Likewise, Getachew (2023) revealed a consistent negative relationship between social media usage and self-esteem among high school students in Addis Ababa.

Although these studies offer important insights, their scope and methods limit their applicability to the broader adolescent population. Specifically, they lack qualitative depth and disproportionately focus on university contexts, overlooking the nuanced experiences of high school adolescents, who may be more developmentally vulnerable. Therefore, there is a pressing need for a comprehensive study that examines not only the platforms and purposes of adolescent social media engagement but also how this engagement affects their self-esteem, with particular attention to contextual factors in Ethiopia.

This study aims to fill that gap by exploring the platforms adolescents in selected high schools of Addis Ababa use, the benefits they perceive, and the psychological effects of social media engagement, particularly on their self-esteem. Through a mixed-method approach, combining surveys and qualitative interviews, this research seeks to generate a more nuanced, evidence-based understanding between social media engagement and adolescent self-perception. The findings will contribute to informed interventions and digital literacy efforts tailored to the Ethiopian context, ultimately aiming to safeguard adolescent mental health and support healthy identity development in the digital age.

1.3 Objective of the Study

1.3.1 General objective

The general objective of the study is to investigate purpose of usage, frequently used platforms, and effects of social media engagement on adolescent self-esteem in selected high schools of Lemi Kura Sub-city, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

1.3.2 Specific objective

To identify social media platforms frequently accessed by adolescents

To analyze the purpose of accessing social media among adolescents in the study area

To evaluate the self-esteem of adolescents in the study area

To examine the effects of social media engagement on adolescent self-esteem in the study area

1.4 Research Questions

This study will attempt to address the following fundamental questions.

1. What types of social media platforms are most frequently accessed by adolescents at high school level?
2. What purposes do adolescents in the study area perceive from using social media platforms?
3. What is the level of self-esteem among adolescents attending high schools in the study area?
4. Does social media engagement influence the self-esteem of adolescents in the study area?

1.5 Significance of the Study

With the global rise of the internet and social media use, understanding its effects on adolescents' self-esteem has become increasingly important. As highlighted by the American Psychological Association (2023), social media engagement is a rapidly expanding area of research with implications for multiple stakeholders, including adolescents, parents, educators, caregivers, policymakers, and the technology industry. These groups all play a role in promoting adolescent well-being in a digitally connected world. This study, situated within the Ethiopian context, seeks to contribute to the growing body of knowledge by examining how various social media platforms influence adolescents' self-esteem, the purpose of social media use and the effects of social media engagement on adolescent self-esteem.

The primary beneficiaries of this research are adolescents, who are at the forefront of digital interactions. By identifying the specific types of platforms used, the purposes adolescents associate with social media, and the emotional consequences of social media engagement, this study aims to foster greater self-awareness among adolescents. It will empower them to reflect critically on their online behaviors and adopt more mindful usage patterns that support positive self-image and mental well-being.

According to Seyoum, Aschalew, and Mesert (2023), in Ethiopia's increasingly connected urban areas, where adolescents are becoming more exposed to online platforms such as Telegram and Facebook, many parents lack the tools or understanding to guide their children's digital experiences effectively. By offering insights into the potential risks and rewards of social

media use, this study will help parents adopt more informed, supportive, and protective roles in their children's digital lives.

Educators and school counselors will benefit from this study by gaining access to empirical data on how social media engagement interacts with adolescents' academic motivation, social behavior, and emotional regulation. This knowledge can inform the development of school-based interventions and counseling programs that address online behaviors and self-esteem, ultimately contributing to a more holistic approach to student development.

Policymakers and educational authorities stand to gain actionable insights for shaping evidence-based digital literacy initiatives and mental health policies. The APA (2023) underscores the importance of leveraging research findings to design age-appropriate, culturally relevant guidelines that promote healthy online behavior and psychological resilience. In Ethiopia, where digital media consumption is growing but regulatory and educational frameworks are still emerging, this study provides a crucial foundation for developing localized strategies that support adolescent well-being in digital spaces.

Furthermore, this research offers potential value to technology developers and media platforms, encouraging them to consider adolescent-centered designs and ethical content moderation. Awareness of how social media affects adolescent self-esteem could prompt tech companies to integrate features that promote authenticity, reduce harmful comparisons, and create safer digital environments.

Finally, this study contributes to the academic community and future researchers by addressing a significant gap in the literature related to Ethiopian adolescents. Most existing studies focus on university students in Addis Ababa. The findings can serve as a foundation for future longitudinal or comparative research across regions, helping to shape culturally appropriate models of healthy digital engagement and psychosocial support systems.

In sum, the significance of this study lies in its potential to inform, protect, and empower multiple audiences, from adolescents and families to educators and policy influencers, by offering contextually grounded, research-based insights into the relationship between social media engagement and adolescent self-esteem.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on assessing the effect of social media engagement on the self-esteem of adolescents who are enrolled in the selected high schools within Lemi Kura subcity, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This study is limited to adolescents attending the selected private and public high schools and excludes adolescents who are not attending school. The scope is also limited to adolescents attending high school (age range 14-20) in an urban setting, excluding individuals outside the formal education system or those living in other sub-cities or rural regions. The study intends to provide contextually grounded insights on the psychological impacts of social media engagement among Ethiopian adolescents living in an urban environment by concentrating on this specific geographic and educational setting.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

This study is delimited to high school students attending selected public and private schools within Lemi Kura Sub-city, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It specifically includes adolescents who actively use smartphones to access and interact with various social media platforms, excluding those who do not use smartphones.

Additionally, the research does not address other forms of digital communication devices, nor does it address non-social media applications and platforms. The geographic focus is intentionally restricted to one sub-city within Addis Ababa to enable an in-depth and contextually grounded analysis. While this focused scope may limit the generalizability of findings to adolescents in other regions or non-urban settings. These delimitations were purposefully defined to align with the study's objectives and to ensure methodological clarity within the selected population.

1.8 Operational Definitions of Variables

Adolescents: Refers to students aged between 14-20 years, attending high school levels in selected schools within Lemi Kura Sub-city, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Social Media Platforms: In this study, social media platforms refer to online communication tools described as frequently used by the respondents (adolescents). Which adolescents use to interact, share content, and engage with others.

Self-Esteem: the respondents' total score on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale during the data collection period as measured by the Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSE-10)

Social Media Use: Refers to the level of adolescents' engagement with social media platforms, as measured by the Social Media Engagement Scale (SMES-A).

Purpose of usage: The advantages or positive experiences adolescents report gaining from their social media use.

Social Media Engagement: Refers to adolescent use of social media, encompassing language habits, emotional responses, and cognitive as measured by the Social Media Engagement Scale (SMES-A).

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

2.1 Introduction

Social media has revolutionized global communication, allowing users to create profiles, share content, and establish connections. This has made it an integral part of daily interactions for millions. The digital revolution has affected every facet of society. Because they were born into a world completely different from previous generations, the youngest generation is most affected by these effects (Piotrowski, 2024). Adolescence is a critical stage in human development, marked by rapid emotional, psychological, and social changes (Steinberg, 2014). As social media usage becomes increasingly embedded in daily life, questions surrounding its potential influence on adolescents' self-perception and psychological development have gained growing academic attention.

This chapter reviews relevant literature to provide a conceptual foundation for the current study. It is organized into several thematic sections: a theoretical overview of adolescent development, self-esteem; global and local trends in adolescent social media usage; the dimensions of social media engagement, namely language, affective, and cognitive involvement; the types of platform-based content accessed by adolescents; and the purpose of usage and psychological effects of social media use.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study employs three key theoretical perspectives: Uses and Gratification Theory, Media Dependency Theory, and Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory to understand the dynamic interplay between adolescents' social media engagement and self-esteem. Together,

these frameworks offer a multidimensional lens through which social media use and the resulting psychosocial consequences can be understood.

2.2.1 Uses and Gratification Theory

Contrary to claims that uses and gratifications is not a rigorous scientific theory, some scholars argue that it remains essential for understanding audience behavior in an increasingly digital media landscape. Historically applied to traditional media such as newspapers, radio, and television, the theory has evolved to address how individuals actively choose media to satisfy specific needs in emerging digital contexts. The rise of computer-mediated communication has reaffirmed the relevance of uses and gratifications theory, especially as researchers adapt the model to include key digital-era concepts such as interactivity, hypertextuality, demassification, and asynchronicity. In light of these shifts, future research must incorporate more holistic and interpersonal methodologies to better reflect the multifaceted nature of media use (Ruggiero, 2000).

Mehrad and Tajer (2016) emphasize that the uses and gratifications theory can effectively enhance research in knowledge and information science by helping to identify users' needs, behaviors, and satisfaction levels. The theory distinguishes between active and passive users by evaluating their patterns of engagement and the purposes for which they seek information. This differentiation supports the personalization of information retrieval systems based on user characteristics. The authors also advocate for methodological flexibility, suggesting that researchers employ diverse approaches, including qualitative, experimental, and mixed-methods designs, to develop and test user-centered models. In doing so, they argue that the application of uses and gratifications theory can contribute to a better understanding of the

personal, cultural, and cognitive outcomes associated with media use in information environments.

2.2.2 Media Dependency Theory

Media Dependency Theory, first proposed by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976), complements UGT by emphasizing how individuals' reliance on media varies based on the availability of alternative sources of information and support. The theory posits that the more individuals depend on media to satisfy their cognitive, affective, and language goals, the more significant media's influence on their beliefs, emotions, and actions.

Among adolescents, who are undergoing significant developmental changes, this dependency may be particularly pronounced. Social media platforms serve as both information sources and spaces for emotional expression, social validation, and identity construction. When traditional interpersonal supports are limited or ambiguous, adolescents may become increasingly reliant on digital platforms, heightening social media's impact on their psychological well-being (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976). This theory is thus essential for analyzing the dual nature of media as both empowering and potentially detrimental to adolescent development.

2.2.3 Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory

Erikson's theory of psychosocial development provides a developmental foundation for this study, particularly the stage of identity vs. role confusion, which characterizes adolescence. During this phase, individuals strive to form a cohesive and stable sense of self (Erikson, 1964, as cited in Crain, 2014). Bishop (2013) emphasizes that successful identity development involves integrating past experiences with future aspirations while navigating social, cultural, and gender influences.

In today's digital society, social media platforms offer adolescents virtual spaces to explore and perform identity work. Activities such as creating profiles, joining online communities, and sharing content allow for experimentation with various roles and values. Perez-Torres (2024) observes that these platforms function as "digital social mirrors" where identity is both expressed and shaped through peer interaction. Positive feedback (likes, affirming comments) often enhances adolescents' self-esteem and validates their self-concept, whereas negative feedback or lack of affirmation may undermine their self-worth.

This dual impact aligns with Erikson's notion that unresolved identity conflicts may lead to confusion and low self-esteem. The tension between self-exploration and external validation underscores the complexity of adolescent identity formation in the digital age, where social comparison and peer influence are amplified.

2.3 Adolescent Development

Adolescence represents a pivotal phase in human development, characterized by rapid and multifaceted changes across physical, cognitive, emotional, and social domains. Recognizing the diversity of experiences during this time, researchers often segment adolescence into three distinct stages: early adolescence (approximately ages 10–13), middle adolescence (approximately ages 14–17), and late adolescence (approximately ages 18–21) (Steinberg, 2014).

Early adolescence typically encompasses the onset of puberty, leading to rapid physical growth and hormonal changes. Cognitively, individuals begin to develop more advanced thinking skills, though their reasoning often remains concrete. Emotionally, they may experience heightened sensitivity and a desire for increased independence (Steinberg, 2014)

Middle adolescence is marked by continued physical maturation and a deeper exploration of identity. Cognitive abilities advance, allowing for more abstract thinking and

improved problem-solving skills. Socially, peer relationships become increasingly important, and individuals may begin to form more complex social networks (Steinberg, 2014).

Late adolescence involves the consolidation of identity and preparation for adult roles. Physical development typically concludes, and cognitive functions reach maturity, enabling better decision-making and impulse control. Emotionally, individuals strive for autonomy while maintaining connections with family and peers. According to Stenberg (2014), understanding these stages is crucial for educators, policymakers, and practitioners to provide appropriate support and interventions tailored to the unique needs of adolescents at each phase of their development. Similarly, Dusek and McIntyre (2008) emphasize that adolescence brings about cognitive advances, including the ability to think abstractly and reflect on personal experiences, key elements that support the process of identity formation.

Traditionally, this identity exploration occurred in physical environments such as families, peer groups, and schools. However, in the digital age, adolescents are increasingly engaging in identity work through online spaces. Recent findings highlight that social media platforms have become important venues where adolescents can express themselves, receive feedback, and reshape their self-concept (Avci, Baams, & Kretschmer, 2025). These virtual environments amplify visibility and evaluation, allowing young people to construct and experiment with their identities in front of broader audiences.

The constant exchange of feedback, such as likes, comments, and shares, can play a significant role in shaping how adolescents view themselves. Positive responses may boost self-esteem and reinforce a stable self-image, while negative or limited feedback can lead to feelings of inadequacy or confusion (Avci et al., 2025)

This dynamic reflects the growing influence of social media on adolescent psychosocial development, where personal growth is now influenced not only by close relationships but also by interactions in digital communities.

2.3.1 Adolescents' development and self-esteem

Self-esteem refers to the overall sense of value or worth that a person places on themselves. It is a critical component of adolescent development, influencing emotional well-being, social relationships, and academic performance. Adolescents with high self-esteem tend to feel competent and accepted, whereas those with low self-esteem may struggle with feelings of inferiority, self-doubt, and anxiety (Santrock, 2019).

External feedback, encompassing both positive and negative evaluations, plays a pivotal role in shaping adolescents' self-esteem. Supportive relationships with parents and peers are instrumental in fostering resilience and promoting a positive self-concept. Conversely, experiences of criticism, rejection, or social exclusion can significantly undermine an adolescent's sense of self-worth (Steinberg, 2014; Santrock, 2019).

Recent research underscores the multifaceted impact of social media on adolescents' self-esteem. On one hand, these platforms offer opportunities for self-expression, peer engagement, and the cultivation of social support networks, all of which can bolster an adolescent's self-perception. On the other hand, the pervasive exposure to idealized images and the propensity for social comparison inherent in social media use can adversely affect self-worth. This dual influence highlights the complexity of social media's role in adolescent psychological development (Farooq, Farrukh, & Khan, 2023).

2.3.2. Factors related to self-esteem

Adolescence is a period of heightened sensitivity to external feedback, where social approval and self-evaluation become central to psychological development. According to Steinberg (2014), adolescents become increasingly self-aware and sensitive to how others perceive them. This heightened self-consciousness makes them particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in self-esteem. Peer acceptance, family relationships, and academic performance are consistently identified as core contributors to adolescents' self-evaluations.

Among these factors, gender has been widely studied about self-esteem. Santrock (2019) notes that adolescent girls often report lower self-esteem than boys, a disparity that may be attributed to body image concerns, internalized societal expectations, and more critical self-assessments. Similarly, Steinberg (2014) emphasizes that girls are more likely to internalize feelings of inadequacy, particularly when engaging in social comparison with peers or idealized media portrayals.

The other factor influencing adolescent self-esteem is the use of social media. Research has found a significant positive relationship between social media usage and adolescents' self-image. Adolescents who spend a substantial amount of time engaging with peers on platforms like social media tend to report an improved self-perception. These students often use the internet to enhance their social networks, which contributes to stronger peer connections and elevated self-image (Farooq et al., 2023). The study further explains that students who frequently interact with their online friends tend to experience a boost in their self-image, although this often coincides with a decline in academic performance due to reduced time spent on school-related tasks.

In contrast, excessive or problematic use of the internet, particularly in the form of internet addiction, has been associated with lower levels of self-esteem. As Tumebo (2017) notes,

a strong negative correlation exists between internet addiction and adolescent self-esteem, indicating that individuals with higher levels of internet dependency tend to evaluate themselves more negatively. This finding highlights the dual nature of digital engagement: while moderate use can foster connection and self-worth, overuse may hinder psychological well-being.

Moreover, school transitions play a significant role in shaping adolescents' self-esteem. During early and middle adolescence, students often undergo multiple school shifts, such as moving from elementary to junior high and then to high school. Research has shown that such transitions are associated with a decline in self-esteem. This decrease is attributed to the challenges of adjusting to new social and academic environments. Dusek and McIntyre (2004) reviewed studies by Simmons and Blyth conducted throughout the 1970s and 1980s, which revealed that adolescents experiencing more frequent school transitions were more likely to report diminished self-worth and confidence during these critical developmental periods.

2.4 Global Trends in Adolescent Social Media Engagement

Social media has become an integral part of adolescent life globally. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, and Facebook are now embedded in the daily routines of young people, serving not only as communication tools but also as spaces for identity exploration, peer engagement, and emotional expression (Anderson et al., 2023; Boyd & Ellison, 2007). According to Backlinko (2025), more than 4.9 billion people use social media globally, with adolescents representing a significant proportion of active users. In particular, adolescents are drawn to platforms that support multimedia sharing, quick feedback, and personal expression.

The frequency and intensity of use have raised concerns about the psychological and developmental impact of digital engagement. Adolescents commonly use social media for self-

presentation and social validation, often evaluating their self-worth based on likes, comments, and online interactions (Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2017). The American Psychological Association (2023) has called for careful monitoring of adolescent social media usage due to potential risks to self-esteem, especially in the context of social comparison and online peer pressure.

2.5 Social Media Use in Ethiopia

In the Ethiopian context, social media has become increasingly prevalent, particularly among urban adolescents with access to smartphones and mobile internet. A study by Hussain (2018) on youth in Western Ethiopia found that Facebook, Google+, YouTube, and Wikipedia were among the most frequently accessed platforms by both male and female users, as well as teens and older youth. Twitter, however, showed significant gender variation while 24.6% of male users preferred it, only 8.7% of female users did.

Most youths across categories (males, females, teens, older youth) reported having more than 300 friends on their profiles, although they were members of fewer than 10 online groups. Hussain, (2023) findings also reveal that social media usage peaks during evening hours, followed by afternoon and morning, with late night being the least preferred period.

Another recent study by Seyoum et al. (2023) supports these patterns, identifying Telegram, Facebook, and YouTube as dominant platforms among Ethiopian adolescents. Despite lower average daily screen time (2–4 hours) compared to global trends, usage is habitual, with frequent logins indicating embeddedness in adolescents' social routines.

2.6 Types of Social Media Accessed by adolescent

Adolescents engage with diverse types of content on social media, including entertainment, education, peer updates, inspirational messages, and current events. Globally,

entertainment-related content such as short videos, memes, and music is the most accessed, followed by peer-generated updates and motivational materials (Cinelli, Peruzzi, Schmidt, Villa, Costa, Quattrocioni, & Zollo, 2022).

In Ethiopia, content preference reflects cultural and gendered patterns. Research shows that female adolescents often access entertainment and religious content, while males are more inclined toward political and sports-related content (Seyoum et al., 2023). Platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Telegram are preferred due to their versatility in delivering such content. The visual and interactive nature of these platforms allows adolescents to engage in social learning, share personal experiences, and receive feedback that can affect their self-perceptions (Hussain, 2018).

2.7 Purpose of Social Media Use

Social networking platforms provide adolescents with rich opportunities for identity exploration, self-expression, and peer connectivity. Adolescents often use these platforms to express their thoughts, showcase talents, and participate in online communities, all of which can contribute to stronger self-concepts (Avciet al., 2025). According to Hussain (2018), Ethiopian youth use social media for gaining information from multiple sources, establishing social connections, and enjoying leisure and entertainment, which supports the development of digital literacy and independence.

Social media offers several psychosocial benefits for adolescents. One of the most significant advantages is identity exploration. Through self-disclosure and profile customization, adolescents can present evolving aspects of their identity in ways that reinforce self-confidence (Shapiro & Margolin, 2014). Digital platforms also facilitate peer connection, enabling

adolescents to build relationships with diverse groups and to receive emotional support during critical developmental transitions (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Adolescents in Ethiopia use social media to access educational content, engage with peers, and explore creative outlets. Seyoum et al. (2023) report that many Ethiopian students use YouTube for science demonstrations and language improvement, while Telegram groups are used for academic discussions.

Positive outcomes are more likely when adolescents use social media intentionally for learning, support, and skill development rather than passive consumption or comparison (Piotrowski, 2024).

2.8 Negative Effects of Social Media on Self-Esteem

While social media offers several advantages, it also exposes adolescents to a range of psychological vulnerabilities. Repeated exposure to idealized images, curated lifestyles, and peer comparisons can lead to self-esteem issues, especially when adolescents internalize unattainable standards (Sinkkonen, Puhakka, & Meri, 2013; Crusius et al., 2022).

Ethiopian youth often experience cyberbullying and may engage in risky online behaviors, such as sharing personal content or participating in illegal downloads (Hussain, 2018). These patterns can result in social withdrawal, emotional dependency, and a distorted sense of reality. Tasew (2020) similarly found that social media use among Wolaita Sodo University students was negatively associated with self-esteem, though the relationship was weak and statistically insignificant. The study also revealed gender disparities, with male students reporting higher self-esteem than females, likely influenced by cultural norms and restrictions placed on girls.

Excessive engagement can also result in emotional dependency, wherein adolescents rely on online feedback for validation. This may undermine resilience, reduce face-to-face interactions, and foster anxiety, particularly in response to negative comments or lack of attention (Farooq et al., 2023). In Ethiopia, Dejene et al. (2019) found that high social media use was associated with psychosocial adjustment difficulties among high school students, including low academic motivation and social withdrawal.

Furthermore, platforms that promote appearance-focused content (e.g., beauty challenges) can amplify body dissatisfaction, especially among female adolescents (Shapiro & Margolin, 2014). These effects are intensified in environments lacking digital literacy education or parental guidance.

2.9 Social Media Engagement Dimensions

To better understand the psychological impact of social media, researchers have conceptualized engagement as a multidimensional construct. Ni, Shao, Geng, Qu, Wang, and Niu (2020) developed the Social Media Engagement Scale for Adolescents (SMES-A), which includes language, affective, and cognitive components. This multidimensional model helps clarify how social media use can influence adolescent self-esteem and well-being. Engagement is not uniform; it includes how often and how deeply adolescents use platforms, how emotionally invested they are, and how much they prioritize online interactions over real-life ones.

Hussain (2018) notes that Ethiopian youth often use social media as a "domain of freedom," where they can freely express, create, and connect, suggesting high engagement across all three SMES-A dimensions.

2.9.1 Language engagement

Language engagement refers to the habitual nature of social media use, such as frequent checking, scrolling before bed, or browsing during spare time (Ni et al., 2020). In Ethiopia, adolescents' language engagement is reflected in their evening usage patterns and high friend counts (Hussain, 2018). However, studies also show that such engagement is primarily entertainment-driven, with less focus on academic or developmental outcomes (Tasew, 2020).

2.9.2 Affective engagement

Affective engagement captures the emotional responses elicited by social media use. This includes feelings of satisfaction from likes or distress from lack of attention (Ni et al., 2020). Avci et al., (2025) found that adolescents are particularly sensitive to online feedback, which can influence their mood and self-worth. In the Ethiopian context, Tasew (2020) reported that female students were more likely to experience low self-esteem, potentially due to higher emotional investment in peer interactions online.

2.9.3 Cognitive engagement

Cognitive engagement is defined by the mental prioritization of social media over face-to-face interactions. Adolescents who find online communication more comfortable or meaningful may struggle to engage in offline relationships (Ni et al., 2020). Hussain (2018) observed that Ethiopian youth utilize social media as a platform for self-directed learning and creativity, but also participate in risky or unsupervised content sharing, which may lead to a distorted self-concept and challenges in real-world interpersonal dynamics.

Chapter Three

Research Methods

In this section, the research provides the methodological approach used in the study. By describing the research design, the site of the study, target population, sample, sampling procedure, sampling technique, types of tools used in the data collection procedure, pilot test, procedure of data analysis, and methods of data analysis.

3.1 Study Design

This study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-method research design to explore the platforms used, the purpose of usage, and the effects of social media engagement on adolescents' self-esteem in selected high schools of Lemi Kura Sub-city, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In this design, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously but analyzed separately, and the results were then compared and integrated during the interpretation phase (Creswell, 2014).

In this approach, quantitative and qualitative data are collected during the same phase of the research process. This design enables the researcher to compare and contrast results from both methods, facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

3.2 Study Site

The study was conducted in selected high schools in Lemi Kura Sub-city, which is one of the 11 sub-cities of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It was established in 2020, the sub-city was formed by incorporating areas from the former Bole and Yeka sub-cities to enhance service delivery for residents. It encompasses both public and private high schools, providing a

representative sample. This area was chosen due to its urban characteristics, digital access, and diverse student population, which made it suitable for exploring adolescent digital behavior.

3.3 Target Population

The target population for this study consisted of adolescents enrolled in both private and public high schools within Lemi Kura Sub-city, Addis Ababa, with a specific focus on those who use smartphones and engage with social media platforms. This focus was crucial for capturing the quantitative aspects of social media usage and its influence on adolescent self-esteem.

According to secondary data obtained from the Lemi Kura Sub-city Education Office (2023), the sub-city includes a total of 35 high schools, comprising 25 private and 10 public institutions. These schools collectively enroll 16,802 students in private schools and 13,011 in public schools, summing up to a total population of 29,813 high school students.

In alignment with the convergent parallel mixed-method design, this target population was instrumental in addressing the research objectives through both standardized survey instruments and in-depth qualitative interviews. The study also included key informants, school teachers to complement student responses and provide broader contextual insight into adolescents' digital behaviors from an adult and institutional perspective.

3.4 Sample and Sampling

Sample size determination

According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the sample size for this study was determined using the formula as follows: This sample determination considers the degree of accuracy, confidence interval, and effect size.

Where:

- n: Sample size
- N: Total population size (29,813 both private and public high school students in Lemi Kura Sub-city)
- e: Acceptable sampling error (0.05 for a 95% confidence level)
- χ^2 : Chi-square value (3.841 for a 95% confidence level)
- p: Proportion of the population (assumed to be 0.5 for maximum variability)

By substituting the values:

$$n = 3.841 \times 29,813 \times 0.5 \times (1-0.5) / 0.05^2 \times (29,813-1) + 3.841 \times 0.5 \times (1-0.5)$$

The calculated sample size is approximately 379 students.

For the qualitative component of the study, a purposive sampling technique was used to select key informant teachers who could provide in-depth insights into adolescent social media engagement and self-esteem. A sample of 5 key informants was selected, which is generally sufficient for achieving data saturation in thematic analysis. The inclusion of qualitative data enriches the interpretation of quantitative findings by offering a contextual understanding and exploring nuances not captured through surveys alone.

Sampling Technique

For the quantitative strand, a stratified random sampling approach was used to ensure representation across school types within the Lemi Kura Sub-city. According to data from the Lemi Kura Sub-city Education Office (2023), there are 35 high schools in the area, consisting of 25 private and 10 public institutions. Schools were first stratified by ownership (public and private).

Using a lottery method, three schools were randomly selected: Garan Guri Secondary School and Bori Secondary School (public), and Meraf Secondary School (private). These schools became the study sites for the quantitative component.

Within each selected school, students who self-identified as smartphone users were selected, further stratified by grade level (Grades 9 to 12) and gender to ensure proportional representation. Subsequently, a simple random sampling technique was applied to select students from each stratum among smartphone users.

For the qualitative component, a purposive sampling strategy was employed to select key informant teachers from the same three schools selected for the quantitative strand. These individuals were intentionally chosen based on their professional roles and their direct engagement with students' academic and language development. Their insights provided critical contextual understanding of adolescents' digital practices and the psychosocial implications of social media use.

By integrating stratified and simple random sampling in the quantitative phase with purposive sampling in the qualitative phase, this approach ensured both representative breadth and contextual depth, enhancing the study's validity and relevance.

3.4 Tools of Data Collection

This study employed a mixed-methods approach. The quantitative data were collected through self-report questionnaires, completed by students, which assessed demographic information, social media use, social media engagement, and level of self-esteem. In addition, qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with selected teachers to gain deeper insights into adolescents' social media behaviors and their psychosocial implications.

General information

This portion of the survey is made up of two primary sections that are intended to help the researcher gather general information about the participants. Participants' sociodemographic information, including age, gender, grade level, and school type, is requested in the first portion of the questionnaire. Participants' information on their social media usage habits and the purpose of social media use is gathered in the second section. General data about the participants' social media use, which includes questions about time spent on social media, the commonly used platforms, and participants' purpose of social media use while using platforms

Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSES)

The Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSE-10) is a widely used tool in research worldwide, a recent study examining adolescent social media use and depression reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87 for the RSES, indicating good internal consistency indicating strong reliability (Salceanu, 2025). Additionally, it showed strong overall validity. Making it a widely used tool with good cross-cultural sensitivity on a worldwide level.

Developed by Rosenberg (1965), it consists of ten items; half of the items on the Rosenberg self-esteem scale are positively worded, while the other half are negatively worded. It is arranged in a random setting to reduce respondent bias. Respondents responded in a four-point Likert scale, ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*, to rate the items.

Social Media Engagement Scale (SMES)

The Social Media Engagement Scale for Adolescents (SMES-A), developed by Ni et al. (2020), is a psychometrically validated instrument designed to assess adolescents' engagement with social media across three dimensions: affective, language, and cognitive. These dimensions correspond to emotional responses, observable actions, and thought processes related to social media use. The scale comprises 11 items, distributed as follows: four items for affective engagement, three for language engagement, and four for cognitive engagement. Respondents rate each item on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'.

In terms of reliability, the SMES-A demonstrates strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.804 for affective engagement, 0.798 for language engagement, and 0.709 for cognitive engagement. Test-retest reliability over an eight-week interval yielded coefficients of 0.818, 0.804, and 0.683 for the respective subscales, indicating temporal stability. Additionally, McDonald's omega coefficients were 0.805 for both affective and language engagement, and 0.712 for cognitive engagement, further supporting the scale's reliability.

While the original validation of the SMES-A was conducted among Chinese adolescents, subsequent research has explored its applicability in different cultural contexts. For instance, a study aimed at developing the Thai-Social Media Engagement Scale (T-SMES) adapted the SMES-A framework to assess its suitability for Thai adolescents. This adaptation process

involved evaluating the scale's factor structure and psychometric properties within the Thai cultural setting, demonstrating the SMES-A's potential for cross-cultural applicability.

In the current study, the researcher used the SMES-A to assess social media engagement among adolescents in Ethiopia. This adaptation involved translating the scale into one of the local languages (Amharic), ensuring cultural relevance of the items, and conducting pilot testing to evaluate its reliability and validity within the Ethiopian context. Such adaptations are crucial for accurately capturing the nuances of social media engagement across diverse cultural settings.

Qualitative Tool Key Informant Interview (KII)

To explore the nuanced perspectives of teachers on adolescents' social media behaviors, a semi-structured key informant interview guide was developed, comprising eight open-ended, thematically aligned questions, each complemented by probing prompts to elicit depth and clarity, an approach supported by established qualitative methodology.

3.5 Pilot Test

To evaluate the objectivity and reliability of the data collection tool, a pilot study was carried out with a group of 30 high school students from Ozone High School in Lemi Kura sub-city, Addis Ababa. These students were selected randomly and were active users of social media, reflecting the average characteristics of the intended study population. Since the participants were high school students, the questionnaire was administered in Amharic so they could easily understand the toll. The objective of this preliminary test was to determine whether the items were understandable, appropriately worded, and suitable for the target age group. The pilot study also aimed to identify any confusing or unclear questions that might affect the consistency of responses.

The feedback and data obtained during this process were analyzed to verify the internal consistency of the instrument. The responses of the respondents were scored, and the reliability of the scales, i.e., the Social Media Engagement Scale (SMES-A) and Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale, was computed using SPSS software, version 25.

Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the adapted 11-item Social Media Engagement Scale for Adolescents (SMES-A) during the pilot study. Among the sub scales of affective engagement, the sub-scale has 4 items ($\alpha = .891$), language engagement with 4 items showed good reliability ($\alpha = .809$), and cognitive engagement with 3 items demonstrated acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .688$). The overall 11 item ($\alpha = .87$). These finding indicates the SMES-A is a reliable tool to assess social media engagements among adolescents in the study context. To assess the internal consistency of the 10 item RSES, Cronbach's alpha was used. The pilot study showed good internal consistency ($\alpha = .806$). The finding indicates RSES is a reliable tool to assess the level of self-esteem in the study population.

3.6 Procedure of Data Collection

The data collection process was carried out over one week at the selected schools, with both quantitative and qualitative components. Carefully carried out to maintain validity and trustworthiness.

A total of 379 self-administered questionnaires were distributed to students at the beginning of class sessions, coordinated by the researcher and teacher assistants. Each questionnaire was translated into Amharic to ensure clarity and cultural relevance. Before distribution, the researcher introduced herself, explained the study's aims, and provided detailed guidance, taking approximately five minutes. Students then had 30–40 minutes to complete the

five-point Likert-scale survey (from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”), under supervision to minimize social-desirability bias. Ultimately, all 379 questionnaires were returned, yielding a 100 % response rate.

Purposive sampling identified five key-informant teachers (two female, three male) as interview participants. Teachers were chosen due to their close observation of students, including awareness of their social media behavior through platforms being used for academics like Telegram despite students’ lack of smartphones on the school compound. Data collection occurred in private, quiet settings within the school compound to ensure confidentiality and attentiveness.

An 8-question semi-structured interview guide with probing prompts was employed; interviews were conducted in Amharic, recorded to capture all nuances, and later transcribed verbatim. A back-and-forth (two-pass) transcription approach was used: first, transcribing dialogue word-for-word; then reviewing audio to correct errors and check translation accuracy. Each interview lasted approximately 25 minutes.

Audio recording ensured the completeness of data, allowing for thorough transcription and subsequent analysis. All transcripts and translations were verified for accuracy before coding and thematic analysis, following established qualitative methods.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative data have been analyzed separately. SPSS version 25 was used to enter, clean, and analyze the quantitative data from student surveys. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to examine the demographic characteristics, social media usage

patterns and level of self-esteem among adolescents; using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation. These statistics provided a foundational understanding of general trends within the dataset (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

To examine the relationship between variables, an inferential statistical method was employed. An independent samples t-test was conducted to assess gender differences in self-esteem. Additionally, correlation and regression analyses were performed to explore the relationship between different dimensions of social media engagement and self-esteem scores.

The qualitative data collected from key informant interviews were transcribed and analyzed thematically. A manual coding process was used to identify themes of recurring patterns, key findings, and illustrative quotations. The qualitative data allowed for deeper exploration of teachers, thematic analysis allowed for deeper exploration of teachers' perceptions regarding adolescents' social media behaviors and their effects on their psychosocial well-being (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This study ensured a comprehensive interpretation of data by combining both statistical and thematic analysis techniques, consistent with best practices in educational and social science research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Respondents filled out the questionnaire and participated in the interview once the researcher had obtained their informed consent. Participants also understood the goal of the study were assured that the data they submitted would be kept private and used exclusively for research purposes. Additionally, the participants were advised that they should not disclose their names anywhere on the questionnaire. Respondents are also aware that they are entitled to

receive the research's findings. Finally, participants were advised that they might leave the study at any time if it made them uncomfortable. For the KII, teachers provided a verbal consent, and the interview was conducted in a private setting.

Chapter Four

4. Findings and Analysis

4.1. Introduction

The study's objective is to examine social media engagement and its associated effect on adolescents' self-esteem in selected public and private schools. It mainly focuses on answering questions about content, the purpose of social media use, and the effects of social media engagement on the self-esteem of high school students. Demographic features of sample respondents are described in this chapter, which includes variables of interest such as sex, age, school types and class attending of sample respondents. Moreover, correlation analysis to see the relationship between social media engagement and its effect on adolescent self-esteem, and regression analysis of the effect of each social media engagement domain on adolescent self-esteem are addressed in this chapter. There are also conclusions drawn from quantitative and qualitative data, such as key informant interviews.

4.2 Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 379 questionnaires were distributed and fully completed, meeting. These questionnaires were collected from three schools: one private school and two public schools, ensuring a representative sample of educational settings.

Gender distribution among participants was nearly balanced: 57.3% female (n = 217) and 42.7% male (n = 162), which provides a sound basis for examining gender-related differences in self-esteem.

Age distribution is detailed in Table 1. Using widely accepted developmental stages Middle Adolescence (14–17 years) and Late Adolescence (18–20 years) the majority of participants fell into middle adolescence (62.0%, n = 235), while late adolescents accounted for 36.4% (n = 138). A small number of respondents (1.6%, n = 6) had missing age data. The average age was $M = 17.04$ years ($SD = 1.19$), with ages ranging from 14 to 20. These categories align with standard definitions from developmental frameworks.

Table 1 *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents' Demographic Characteristics*

<i>Variables of interest</i>	<i>Alternatives</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
<i>Sex</i>	Male	162	42.7
	Female	217	57.3
	Total	379	100
<i>Age Bracket</i>	14–17	235	62.0
	18–20	138	36.4
	Missing	6	1.6
	Total	379	100
	<i>Class attending</i>	9 th	57
	10 th ,	78	20.6
	11 th	123	32.5
	12 th	121	31.9
	Total	379	100.0
<i>School Types</i>	Public	108	28.5
	Private	271	71.5
	Total	379	100

Own survey, 2025

Table 1 shows how students were grouped by grade level, which helps to understand their school experience and how they might use social media differently. In this study, there were 57 students (15%) from grade 9, 78 students (20.6%) from grade 10, 123 students (32.5%) from grade 11, and 121 students (31.9%) from grade 12.

Regarding school types, 271 respondents (71.5%) attended public schools, and 108 respondents (28.5%) attended private schools. This distribution reflects our stratified random sampling approach, which first divided schools into public and private strata and then employed a lottery method to select two public and one private school randomly. Within each selected school, students were chosen through simple random sampling, ensuring each student had an equal chance of inclusion. Although the proportions of respondents from each school type do not precisely match the overall distribution of schools in the area, the sample still offers representativeness of the experiences of students from both public and private high schools from which this sample was drawn.

Qualitative Key Informant Demographics

Five teachers from the same three schools selected through purposive sampling for the quantitative strand participated in key informant interviews, enhancing methodological alignment and data integration. These comprised two female teachers (aged 30 and 35) and three male teachers (aged 32, 26, and 25). All informants occupy teaching roles across high school levels, allowing them to reflect on adolescent students at developmental stages. Purposeful selection ensured both gender diversity and age distribution among the informants, strengthening the credibility and transferability of qualitative insights.

4.3. Social Media Use

4.3.1. Types of social media access

The survey findings indicate that the most frequently used platforms among respondents are YouTube (65.5%), TikTok (51.2%), Instagram (50.9%), and Telegram (48.5%). Supported by qualitative findings, KII 5 stated that some students use these platforms to search

for valuable academic content, while others primarily use social media for entertainment, aspiring to become YouTubers or TikTokers.

These platforms are popular due to their rich entertainment options, interactive features, and multimedia content. YouTube stands out for its diverse range of content, including music videos and educational resources. TikTok attracts adolescents with its short-form viral videos, while Instagram is preferred for its visual content, such as photos, stories, and lifestyle posts. Telegram is commonly used for texting, group chats, and information sharing. In contrast, platforms like Facebook (13.0%), Snapchat (19.9%), and WhatsApp (8.2%) are accessed less frequently.

Table 2 *Types of Social Media Platforms Accessed by Students*

Platforms used	Frequency	Cumulative Percentage%
YouTube	247	65.5
TikTok	193	51.2
Instagram	192	50.9
Telegram	183	48.5
Snapchat	75	19.9
Facebook	49	13
WhatsApp	31	8.2
Other Platforms	28	7.4

Note: The sum is greater than the total score as it is a multiple response.

The qualitative result also indicated that students mostly access Instagram, and the content includes music. They love TikTok and most of them have their TikTok account and spend much of time using it. They may also spend time chatting with people using other platforms. regarding types of social media platforms as key informat interview revealed, platforms that students commonly use include TikTok, Telegram, and Instagram. In terms of

content, the students primarily engage in jokes, funny videos, and often share pictures and chat with friends. A 35-year-old KII 1 said the following:

“Electronic devices are not allowed in the school compound, but some students might bring their phones secretly to use. However, since security guards regularly check the school compound, it’s not common to see students accessing social media platforms. Outside of school, students use social media platforms to make TikTok videos, communicate through Telegram groups with friends, and access YouTube videos.”

4.3.2 Social Media Access among Adolescents

Access to social media platforms is widely experienced among young people, including adolescents at the secondary school level. As the sample survey results indicated, a large proportion of respondents (88.7%) responded that they use social media platforms regularly. The remaining 11.3% of sample respondents reported not using social media regularly. However, a small number of students have access to the social media platform but not use it frequently.

Table 3 *Social Media Usage Patterns Among Respondents*

Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Do you regularly use social media platforms?	Yes	336	88.7
	No	43	11.3
Do you spend more than an hour using social media every day?	Yes	301	79.4
	No	78	20.6
If yes, approximately how much time do you spend on social media each day?	1 to 2 hr	113	29.8
	2–3 hr	69	18.2
	More than 3 hr	69	17.7
	I don’t know	130	34.3

Supporting this idea, information from KII indicates that students living in the capital city are part of the dynamic global information era, and inevitably have significant exposure to social media platforms. Regardless of whether this exposure is beneficial or detrimental, their usage of social media is notably high. The forces of globalization compel students to engage with social media frequently.

Regarding social media usage, a 26-year-old male (KII 4) explains the social media usage pattern of students as follows

“Social media is a normal part of students' lives these days, as we can witness from our students, whether we like it or not. It fits well with the current generation's way of life. The role social media plays in the daily life of students largely depends on how they choose to use it, either for entertainment or academic purposes.”

From the above result, it is clear that access to social media platforms is common among high school students. As a KII 3 said,

“Almost all students use social media, but the majority of them engage with it for non-educational purposes. As my guess looking at this ratio, only 10% of students use social media for academic purposes daily, whether to conduct homework or complete assignments. The remaining 90% use social media for non-academic reasons, such as entertainment.”

Regarding the amount of time spent on social media each day, 29.8% of respondents reported spending 1 to 2 hours, 18.2% reported 2 to 3 hours, and 17.7% reported more than 3 hours daily. Interestingly, 34.3% of the participants responded that they "don't know" the exact time they spend on social media. These results confirm that social media is a prominent part of daily life for students in the study. The high level of usage, both in frequency and duration, raises important questions about its effects on self-esteem.

Supporting the above survey finding, as the key KII 5 said, almost all the students spend their time on social media platforms at night after school. Another KII 1 said,

“Although it is difficult to know the exact amount of time students spend while using social media, students spend the majority of their time on their phones using various social media platforms. Most of our students use social media to take pictures, post them, and show new fashion shoes, new hairstyles, or recently painted nails, other than for academic purposes. They are attracted to such kinds of stuff instead of serious educational issues when it comes to social media platform usage. Students say it makes them happy or have fun with friends while posting something on social media, etc. Only a few of them use social media for educational purposes.”

4.3.3. Social Media Engagement levels among adolescents

Language engagement reflects the tendency to use social media habitually or without conscious awareness, particularly for browsing, with higher scores indicating a greater level of language engagement. Affective engagement captures the intensity of emotional reactions, whether positive or negative, triggered by social media use. Cognitive engagement relates to an individual’s mental orientation toward the positive use of social media. A high cognitive engagement score suggests a stronger preference for online social interactions and a tendency to avoid in-person communication (Ni et al., 2020).

Language Engagement

The language engagement is constructed from the following items, which are: Using social media is my daily habit; I browse social media whenever I have time, even if it’s late; I’ll take a look at social media before sleep, and I often use social media to relax.

Table 4 *Language Engagement with Social Media among Adolescents (SMES-A Items)*

No	Behavioural engagement	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev
1	Using social media is my daily habit.	379	3.45	1.274
2	I browse social media whenever I have time.	379	3.63	1.242
3	Even if it's late, I'll take a look at social media before sleep.	379	3.26	1.404
4	I often use social media to relax in habit.	379	3.70	1.284

Own survey, 2025

The overall mean of the above constructs is found to be 3.50 (SD = 0.96), which implies that adolescents generally reported a moderately high level of language engagement, suggesting that the use of social media, particularly browsing, is a common and habitual activity for many of the respondents.

Affective Engagement

The affective engagement is constructed from the following items, which are: I get fulfilled from the attention and comments of others on social media the support and encouragement of others on social media is very important to me, and I am satisfied with the relationship between myself and my friends.

Table 5 *Affective Engagement with Social Media among Adolescents (SMES-A Items)*

No	Affective engagement	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev
1	I get fulfilled from the attention and comments of others on social media	379	2.72	1.367
2	The support and encouragement of others on social media is very important to me.	379	3.11	1.419
3	I am satisfied with the relationship between myself and my friends.	379	3.43	1.322

Own survey, 2025

The overall mean of the above constructs is found to be 3.09 (SD = 1.03), which implies a moderate emotional connection to social media use. The slightly higher standard deviation compared to language engagement reflects greater variability in emotional responses among the students.

Cogitative engagement

The cognitive engagement is constructed from the following items which are; Compared to the real world, social media makes me feel more comfortable; I feel bored when I can't use social media; compared to the real world, I am happier when I socialize on social

Table 6 *Cognitive Engagement with Social Media among Adolescents (SMES-A Items)*

NO	COGITATIVE ENGAGEMENT	OBS.	MEAN	STD. DEV
1	Compared to the real world, social media makes me feel more comfortable.	379	2.98	1.455
2	I feel bored when I can't use social media.	379	2.86	1.402
3	Compared to the real world, I am happier when I socialize on social media.	379	2.85	1.429
4	I feel anxious when I can't use social media.	379	2.38	1.434

Own survey, 2025

The overall mean of the above constructs is found to be 2.77 (SD = 1.10), which implies that cognitive attitudes toward social media were relatively lower among the participants. The larger standard deviation in cognitive engagement suggests more substantial differences between individuals in their preference for online over offline social interactions.

4.3.4. Purpose of social media access

Adolescents in this study used social media for multiple purposes, with quantitative data revealing that 77.6% for learning, 70.7% maintained relationships with friends and family,

52.8% for career-related networking, 49.9% used it for entertainment (e.g., videos, memes), 33.5% for self-expression (e.g., posting photos or thoughts) and 38.3% for socializing and meeting new people.

Table 7 Purpose of Social Media Usage

Purpose of Social Media Usage	Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage%
Keeping in touch with friends and family	No	111	29.3
	Yes	268	70.7
Entertainment (e.g., watching videos, memes)	No	189	49.9
	Yes	189	49.9
Self-expression (e.g., posting pictures, thoughts)	No	252	66.5
	Yes	127	33.5
Socializing and meeting new people	No	234	61.7
	Yes	145	38.3
Learning (e.g., following educational content)	No	85	22.4
	Yes	294	77.6
Career-building (e.g., professional networking)	No	178	47.0
	Yes	200	52.8
Other	No	355	93.7
	Yes	24	6.3

Note: The sum is greater than the total score as it is a multiple response. Own survey, 2025

According to key informants, these findings reflect teachers’ observations supporting the finding that many students do use social media for learning, but not always as their primary purpose.

“Social media can enhance students’ access to educational resources... as Teachers, we often show audiovisual lessons... instead of purchasing expensive lab materials, they use YouTube videos and virtual labs...” (35- year- old female, KII 1).

A different 30-year-old female teacher (KII 3) highlighted the availability of structured academic materials:

“There are many supportive learning materials available on social media that can be very helpful for student education. For instance, exam resources that provide supplementary support beyond what is in student learning textbooks. There are also applications with questions

and answers, which are a good tool for learning when our students make proper use of social media for academic purposes.”

An IT teacher described using advanced technical content:

“I let my students see programming or coding in C++, they can watch it directly on YouTube. This is the first benefit. The second one is that we can show students of grade 11 and grade 12, the 3D and 7D simulations, so that they can see the actual video and learn from it while accessing online.” (35-year-old, KII 1).

Despite these educational uses, another teacher (KII 2) emphasized that that most adolescents primarily use social media for entertainment rather than education. Common platforms include TikTok, Telegram, and Instagram, where content often involves jokes, funny videos, image sharing, and chatting with friends. While some students use these platforms creatively or even monetarily (e.g., building TikTok followings), others simply pass time and seek social interaction:

“Student social media usage is more for entertainment than education. The platforms that students commonly use include TikTok, Telegram, and Instagram. In terms of content, the students primarily engage in jokes, funny videos, and often share pictures and chat with friends. Students get access to various platforms for entertainment and other purposes, including educational purposes. While student social media usage can enable them to connect education with technology effectively, the primary purposes for which students use these platforms are not educational. Instead, they tend to spend most of their time on entertainment, music, and online chatting.” (32-year-old, KII 2)

“Social media is useful for studying, making life flexible, exploring, sharing knowledge, and learning new things. For example, students can learn information that teachers can’t show

them in the classroom from YouTube or other search engines. It allows students to acquire new skills and enables them to be flexible by offering information that teachers can't provide in class. They also use social media to update their skills. Even though social media is not entirely beneficial for students, only a few use it for educational purposes to reference reading materials from YouTube videos and other platforms. Moreover, some students use social media for business purposes. In class, some students write books using social media guidelines, while others create and share physics equations with solutions in slides on YouTube. Teachers encourage and support students to use social media for such business and educational purposes.” (26 year old, KII 4)

Taken together, these findings reveal a complex pattern: while a significant portion of students use social media for learning, with teacher support and motivated exploration, entertainment remains a powerful motivator in actual usage.

4.4. Level of Self-Esteem among Adolescents

In the following sub-section, the researcher tries to see the overall level of self-esteem among adolescents and how adolescents' self-esteem differs with their gender, age, and the grade they are attending. Following that, the next section will present the correlation and regression results of social media engagement and adolescent self-esteem. This enables us to see to what extent adolescents' social media engagement affects their self-esteem for accessing various social media platforms.

4.4.1 Overall level of self-esteem among adolescents

As studies show, excessive use of social media affects adolescent self-esteem significantly.

Table 8 *Level of Self-esteem among High School Adolescents*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness
Total Score of RSES	379	3.00	28.00	18.8311	5.14221	-.570 .125

Own survey, 2025

As shown in the table, descriptive statistics for the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) show that the total score among 379 adolescent participants ranged from 3 to 28, with a mean score of 18.83 (SD = 5.14). This suggests that, on average, participants exhibited a moderate level of self-esteem. The relatively wide range of scores indicates variation in self-esteem levels within the sample, though the average remains around the scale's midpoint. The skewness value of -0.570 indicates a moderate negative skew, suggesting that a larger number of participants scored above the mean, or in other words, tended to report higher self-esteem levels. These findings imply that most adolescents in the study demonstrated moderate to high self-esteem, with fewer individuals falling into the lower range.

Participants noted a marked generational shift in self-esteem, emphasizing that contemporary adolescents display stronger confidence than past students. A 25 yr old male key informant stated, “If we compare students from past times to the current generation, including students in our school, there’s a big difference in their self-esteem.”

4.4.2. Gender and Self-Esteem

Gender is one variable that we can use to measure the self-esteem level of adolescents, whether it is high or low. The following table tries to show us whether adolescents’ self-esteem is different as a result of gender, and the result of the findings is discussed as follows.

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference in self-esteem scores between male and female students. The findings of this study revealed that male students ($M = 19.21$, $SD = 5.35$) scored slightly higher in self-esteem than female students ($M = 18.55$, $SD = 4.98$); however, this difference was not statistically significant, $t(377) = 1.240$, $p = .216$. This suggests that gender does not have a significant influence on adolescent self-esteem within the study population.

4.4.3. Age and adolescent self-esteem level

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between adolescents' age and their self-esteem scores, as measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). The predictor variable was age, and the outcome variable was self-esteem. Results indicated that age accounted for a negligible proportion of the variance in self-esteem scores ($R^2 = 0.003$), suggesting that only 0.3% of the variability in self-esteem could be attributed to age. The slope of the regression ($\beta \approx 0.03$) was very small, indicating a minimal positive association that was not statistically meaningful. These findings demonstrate that age has little to no effect on self-esteem levels among the adolescents in this sample.

4.4.4. Level of Self-esteem across Grade Level

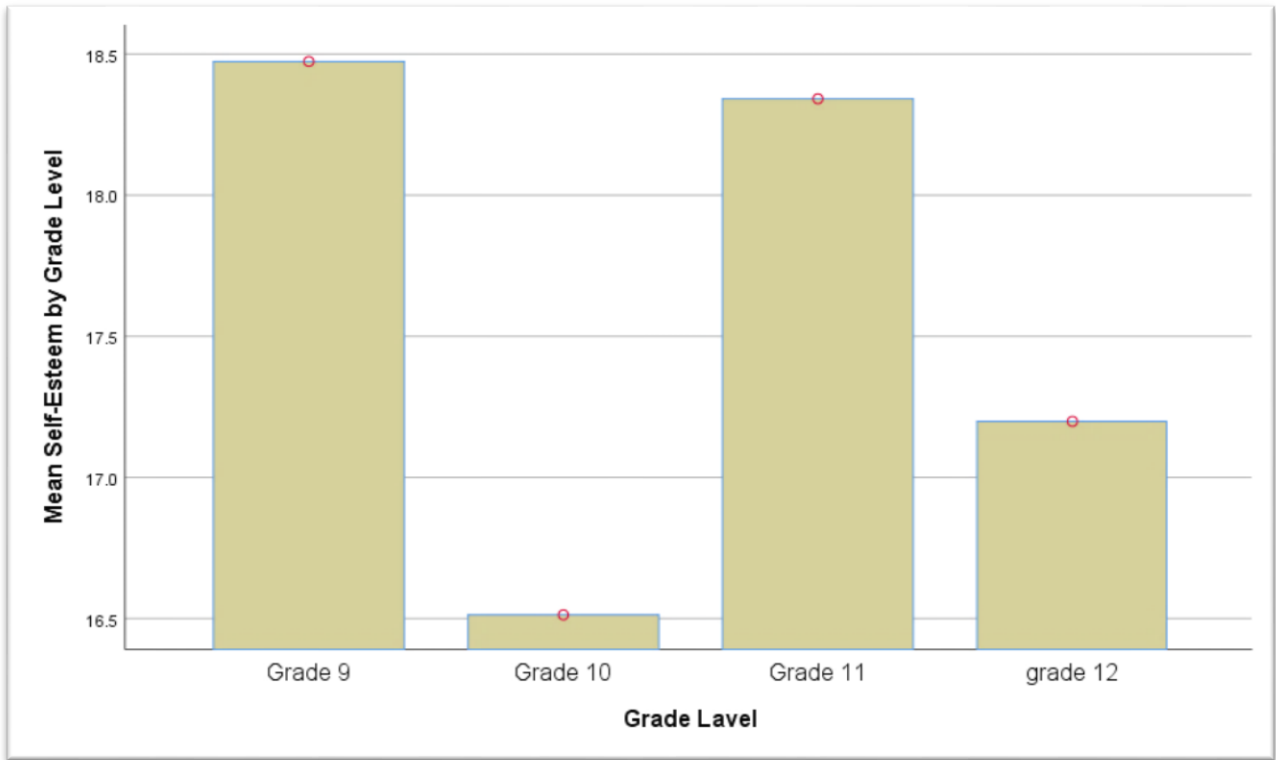


Figure 1 Simple Bar Mean self-esteem by Grade Level

A descriptive comparison of mean self-esteem scores (Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale) across four grade levels showed notable differences. ninth-grade students reported the highest average self-esteem ($M=18.5$), closely followed by eleventh-grade students ($M=18.4$). Tenth-grade students had the lowest mean score ($M=16.6$), and twelfth-grade students exhibited a moderate average ($M=17.1$). These results suggest that self-esteem varies by academic grade, with observable declines during transitional periods, specifically upon entering high school in Grade 10 and again as students approach graduation in Grade 12.

4.5.1. Pearson Correlation factors for social media usage and adolescent level of self-esteem

The concern in the correlation analysis is the interpretation of the correlation coefficient. The descriptive analysis data have helped us understand the perception of sample respondents regarding social media engagement factors that influenced adolescent social media usage. However, the descriptive analysis cannot help understand the direction and strength of the relationship between the list of social media engagement factors and the level of self-esteem. To examine the direction and strength of the relationship between the explanatory variables and the dependent variables, correlation analysis is an appropriate tool. The following table provides a summary of the interpretation of correlation coefficients.

Table 9 *Pearson Correlations between Social Media Engagement and Self-Esteem*

		Total score of RSES	(1)	(2)	(3)
Total score of RSES	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
(1) Language engagement	Pearson Correlation	-.225**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
(2) Affective engagement	Pearson Correlation	-.232**	.382**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
(3) Cognitive engagement	Pearson Correlation	-.157**	.455**	.462**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.000	.000	

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Own survey, 2025

The findings in the study indicate a statistically significant negative correlation between language engagement in social media and self-esteem ($r = -.225$, $p < .01$). The negative correlation between language engagement and self-esteem suggests that as adolescents'

access/usage to social media increases, their self-esteem level decreases significantly. The fact that the Pearson correlation coefficient is negative implies that the language engagement factor has a negative relationship with the adolescent self-esteem level.

Similarly, affective engagement also showed a negative correlation with self-esteem ($r = -.232, p < .01$). The negative correlation between affective engagement and adolescent self-esteem suggested that the more adolescents engage with social media, the more their self-esteem level decreases. The reverse relationship here suggests that adolescents who are emotionally engaged with social media, particularly those who seek feedback and emotional reinforcement from others through online platforms, tend to report lower self-esteem.

Cognitive engagement showed a weaker but statistically significant negative correlation with self-esteem ($r = -.157, p < .01$). Cognitive engagement involves the mental attention adolescents give to social media, including overthinking interactions or preferring online communication to real-world interactions. The weaker correlation suggests that while the impact of cognitive engagement on self-esteem is not as strong as that of language or affective engagement, it still contributes to a decline in self-esteem.

Qualitative results also indicated, excessive use of social media has a negative relationship with adolescent self-esteem, especially if through peer pressure. For instance, schools allow students to create Telegram channels for academic purposes, where they share class materials or help those who missed the last session due to various factors. However, students use this opportunity to engage in inappropriate actions, such as sharing sexual content, nude images, etc. In turn, this affects adolescent self-esteem negatively.

Regarding the negative effect of social media engagement on students' level of self-esteem, one 26-year-old KII 4 teacher says,

“There is harmful content that students are using, like pornography, which can negatively affect students’ self-esteem and their academic performance. This issue requires serious attention, and I believe the government should take action, particularly in schools, by imposing effective regulation of social media usage.”

As the above interview result indicated, adolescent social media engagements are not for academic purposes rather they use it more for entertainment, which affects their self-esteem significantly. Social media engagement affects students ability to express themselves and leads them to develop a depressive personality. As a key KII stated, one of the reasons why this generation is labeled as impudent is highly related to their excessive social media engagement.

As the study findings further indicated, students are quite different and can be easily distinguished on their level of influence by social media usage. Some students are highly influenced and act the way they see various contents from social media, even some bring phrases/words and behavior they have seen into the school compound. There is a significant difference in student self-esteem. Student search for various types of content on social media, that highly influences their life. In this case, they can't be able to differentiate real life from content that seems movies by nature. In turn, this creates confusion among students to differentiate real life from fiction. There is a different personality when students come to school, outside of the school compound, and in the world they find themselves while using social media platform. Majority of them are struggling to compromise their discipline in the school environment since they bring their deviant social media personality into their class, which disrupts the dynamics of their interactions with other students. In sum, the study findings depicted that adolescents’ access to social media has a negative relationship with students’ self-esteem level.

4.5.2. Regression analysis: self-esteem and social media engagement

The correlation analysis has provided insight into the direction and strength of the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. However, we are also interested in understanding how much the explanatory variables influence the dependent variable. To achieve this, regression analysis is appropriate. It is primarily through regression analysis that we can derive key findings and policy implications for recommendations. As previously discussed, regression analysis measures the influence of independent variables on the dependent variable. In the following sub-section, the results of a multiple linear regression analysis conducted to determine how the dimensions of social media engagement—language , affective, and cognitive domains—predict adolescents’ self-esteem, which was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES).

Table 10 *Model Summary of Regression Analysis on Self-esteem*

MODEL SUMMARY						
MODEL	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.275 ^a	.076	.068		4.6722	1.567

Predictors: (Constant), Cognitive engagement, Language engagement, Affective engagement

Dependent Variable: Total Score of RSES

As shown in Table 1, the model produced an R² value of .076, indicating that the three dimensions of social media engagement collectively explain 7.6% of the variance in adolescents’ self-esteem scores. While the proportion of variance explained is modest, it is meaningful and supports further examination of individual predictors. The **Durbin-Watson statistic (1.567)** indicates that residuals are independent, and autocorrelation is not a concern.

Table 11 ANOVA of Regression Analysis on Self-esteem

Anova						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	669.186	3	223.062	10.218	.000 ^b
	Residual	8186.101	375	21.830		
	Total	8855.288	378			

a. Dependent Variable: Total Score of RSES

b. Predictors: (Constant), Cognitive engagement, Language engagement, Affective engagement

Own survey, 2025

The ANOVA test in Table 2 reveals that the overall regression model is statistically significant, $F(3, 375) = 10.218, p < .001$. This indicates that the combined effect of cognitive engagement, language engagement, and affective engagement significantly predicts self-esteem scores among adolescents. The model explains a statistically meaningful proportion of the variance in the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) scores.

A multiple linear regression was conducted to examine how different dimensions of social media engagement **language**, **affective**, and **cognitive** predict adolescents' self-esteem, as measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Table 13 presents the unstandardized and standardized coefficients along with significance levels and confidence intervals for each predictor.

Table 12 Regression Coefficients for Predicting Self-Esteem from Social Media Engagement Dimensions

Beta	Std. Error	Coef.	T	P	95.0% Conf
					Lower Bound

(Constant)	23.714	1.146		20.694	21.460
					00 0
Language engagement	-.926	.337	-.157	-2.748	-1.589
					00 6
Affective engagement	-.949	.324	-.168	-2.930	-1.585
					00 4
Cognitive engagement	-.045	.323	-.008	-.140	-.681
					88 9

Dependent Variable: Total Score of RSES

The overall model was statistically significant ($F(3, 375) = 10.218, p < .001$), and the coefficients revealed that language and affective engagement significantly predicted self-esteem, while cognitive engagement did not.

Language engagement had a negative and statistically significant effect on self-esteem ($B = -0.926, t = -2.748, p = .006$). This indicates that as language engagement (such as frequent checking, liking, or sharing content) increases, self-esteem scores tend to decrease. The standardized coefficient ($Beta = -0.157$) suggests a small effect size. This means the increment adolescent social media engagement by one unit decreases adolescent self-esteem.

Affective engagement, which refers to emotional involvement or attachment to social media use, also had a negative and statistically significant relationship with self-esteem ($B = -0.949, t = -2.930, p = .004$). The Beta value of -0.168 also indicates a smaller negative effect. This means the excessive social media engagement decreases adolescent self-esteem significantly.

Cognitive engagement was not a significant predictor of self-esteem ($B = -0.045, p = .889$). This suggests that how much adolescents intellectually engage with social media content does not have a significant influence on their self-esteem in this sample.

Regarding the impact of social media engagement on adolescent self-esteem key informant result also indicated, excessive use of social media adversely affected adolescent self-esteem in many ways. Students post various stories for view, which sometimes cause critics, such as insulting, shaming, and bullying one another. Regarding the negative impact of one 33 years' KII 1 says;

“There was real story that happened in our school while students using shared telegram group to post stories and compete for beautiful challenges. In this group two female students got involved in extreme rivalry over one male student. After that they started insulting each other with derogatory words. Eventually they began harassing each other with hateful unacceptable words on the group. After the information was heard by school officials they nearly get expelled from their education. But finally, the parents brought the case to court to get them back to school.”

As the above information depicted, after they appear to show themselves on social media some students feels ashamed, and frustrated when someone exposes their privacy due to unwanted competition between them. Then they start to post unnecessary stories of one another. This information leaks when they disagree and disputes happen between them. In fact, teachers don't even know whether students are using social media before the incident. Student also used the platform happily by sharing their stories on the Instagram group to one another. When things get out of control and the conflict leads them to fighting the information reaches to teachers and they bring disputing students to the discipline committee for punishment.

Moreover, students sleep in the middle of class while the teacher is in the room. They use social media overtime and don't go to bed; in turn, this can adversely affect their academic performance in class. Even though it is difficult to put the impact in numbers, in general, the side

effects of social media engagement exceed the benefits. Only a few students are using social media for education or income-generating purposes. However, the majority of the students use social media for entertainment and fun purposes.

As the study finding further depicted, although the benefits of social media usage are undeniable, the side effects outweigh the benefit when it comes to students' access to this platform. The other issue is that students don't study at night. Parents complain about a lack of improvement in their children's overall academic achievement after buying a phone that could help them for educational purposes. However, students use the phone that their parent bought for them for entertainment and other non-academic purposes. There is also the issue of plagiarism. Students sometimes post other author's ideas directly, which can lead to copyright problems. This is common when it comes to assignments and homework-related issues pertaining to the use of social media.

Generally, adolescents use social media requires close guideline from both respective teachers and their parents. If they focus only on one side like entertainment, it may expose them to negative outcomes. Student need to use social media in a balanced way by allocating time for entertainment and educational purposes as needed. Often, when students are given access to computers, they get distracted by entertainment stuff at the expense of education issues. However, with proper guidance, students can develop many skills, such as practicing reading and other educationally supportive contents. Without others' guidance, students may spend much of their time searching for less productive contents other than educational contents.

Chapter Five

Discussions

This chapter presents an integrated discussion of the findings from both quantitative and qualitative strands, structured within a convergent-parallel mixed-methods design. As such, quantitative survey data from 379 students and qualitative insights from five teacher key informants are considered together to provide a comprehensive understanding of adolescents' social media use and its effect on self-esteem in Lemi Kura Sub-city, Addis Ababa.

Adolescent Social Media Platform Access

The findings reveal that adolescents in the study area have a moderate to high level of social media platform usage. YouTube was the most commonly used site, with 65.5% of respondents confirming use of this site; this high prevalence can be explained by its wide variety of content, including music, life vlogs, comedy acts, and academic content. Second in use was TikTok, which was identified as being used by 51.2% of adolescents who participated in the survey; this app has been popular among young people because of its variety of content and short-term videos. Other social media apps commonly used by adolescents include Instagram (50.9%) and Telegram (48.5%). The popularity of these platforms mainly stems from interactivity. For instance, TikTok is famous for its concise video presentations and trending issues, whereas Instagram is mainly used for posting photos and life updates. In contrast, Telegram is used for its ability to promote group discussion, share information, conduct collaborative learning sessions, and provide secure communication.

Less frequently used social media platforms were Facebook (13.0%), Snapchat (19.9%), and WhatsApp (8.2%). The lower engagement of adolescents with Facebook and WhatsApp reflects a global shift of social media usage from text-based or multi-generational platforms in

favor of more dynamic, youth-oriented digital environments (Steinberg, 2014). These patterns are consistent with the uses and gratifications theory, which posits that individuals choose media based on their psychological and social needs (Ruggiero, 2000). For adolescents, social media serves as a tool not only for entertainment but also for social identity construction, peer validation, and emotional engagement. The preference for platforms such as TikTok and Instagram reflects these motives, as these spaces provide immediate feedback through likes, comments, and follower counts.

Qualitative findings from teacher interviews reinforce this interpretation. Teachers acknowledged that while mobile phones are not allowed in the school compound, students often access social media platforms outside school hours. As KII 1 described, students “make TikTok videos, communicate through Telegram, and watch YouTube content mainly for fun.” Another KII remarked that students spend time online using “students mostly use social media platforms for chatting or showing off, rather than using the platforms for educational purposes.” This suggests that while students have access to educational content, entertainment and peer interaction remain their primary motives when it comes to social media usage.

Moreover, although social media platforms like YouTube may offer educational value, the context and intent behind their usage matter. For most students, these platforms are not accessed with the goal of academic purposes; instead, they used it for entertainment and leisure. This underlines a gap between the potential of digital platforms for learning and their actual use among adolescents in practice.

This confirms how teachers know students use social media: not through general assumptions, but via direct observation of device concealment and behavior in school settings, alongside post-school activity reports (e.g., home video-making, messaging).

Purposes of Social Media Usage

The study findings further revealed that social media serves multiple purposes for adolescents beyond entertainment. While a substantial number of students use social media platforms for socializing and entertainment, many also benefit academically, professionally, and personally through content sharing, learning, and skill development.

In this regard, the quantitative results showed that the most commonly reported purpose of social media use was for learning purposes, with 77.6% of participants indicating they use social media to search for educational content. This suggests a growing awareness among adolescents of the academic resources available through digital platforms. In support of this idea, KII 2 depicted that students refer to YouTube videos and online tutorials when classroom explanations are unclear, particularly for subjects like science and mathematics. These findings align with the argument that social media, when properly utilized, can supplement classroom teaching and improve learning outcomes (Ruggiero, 2000).

Furthermore, 70.7% of students reported that they use social media to keep in touch with friends and family, reflecting its role in maintaining social bonds. This function aligns with adolescents' developmental need for peer connection and social validation (Steinberg, 2014). Socializing and meeting new people were also cited as a benefit by 38.3% of students, highlighting the role of these platforms in expanding social circles.

About 52.8% of students acknowledged using social media for career-building and professional development, such as networking, exploring job-related content, and showcasing skills. Platforms like TikTok and YouTube were noted as spaces where adolescent's express creativity through music, art, acting, and humor, which may contribute to informal skill development and potential career paths. In this regard, KII 3 states, "Social media can definitely

enhance students' access to educational resources... and those with creative talents can build careers in the arts through these platforms.”

Interestingly, 49.9% of students cited entertainment such as watching videos or browsing memes as a major benefit, while 33.5% acknowledged using social media for self-expression, including posting pictures, thoughts, or personal content. Although these functions are recreational, they play an important role in identity development and emotional expression during adolescence.

The qualitative findings further supported these claims. Key informant teachers indicated that some students were using social media platforms like Telegram, YouTube, and TikTok to enhance their academic experience and broaden their understanding of subjects. For example, one teacher described how 3D and 7D video simulations from YouTube were used to teach scientific concepts, providing visual and interactive content that traditional classroom settings often cannot offer. Another key informant highlighted that students could learn programming languages such as C++ through step-by-step video tutorials on YouTube.

Moreover, KII reported that some students were creatively using social media for business and innovation. For instance, students were writing books, sharing physics solutions, and developing presentation slides for academic subjects, all with the help of digital tools. These findings reflect the constructive potential of social media when guided by purpose and supported by educators.

Despite these positive outcomes, the qualitative result further emphasized that only a few students are actively using social media for academic or productive purposes. Many students still prioritize entertainment, chatting, and content consumption over learning. While this is consistent with global adolescent behavior, it indicates a need for more intentional guidance and

structured digital literacy programs in schools to encourage balanced and meaningful use of social media.

Level of Self-Esteem among Adolescents

The findings of the study indicated that most adolescents demonstrated moderate to high self-esteem, with slight variations across gender, age, and grade level.

Overall self-esteem among adolescents

The descriptive statistics for the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) showed that participants' total scores ranged from 3 to 28, with a mean score of 18.83 (SD = 5.14). This suggests that most adolescents reported moderate self-esteem, with some variation among students. These findings align with Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, which identifies adolescence as a critical stage of identity formation. According to Erikson (1964, as cited in Crain, 2014), successful navigation of the identity versus role confusion stage leads to a more integrated and confident sense of self. In this study, the moderate-to-high average self-esteem may reflect that many students are progressing successfully through this developmental stage.

This dual effect is supported by recent research while moderate social media engagement can boost self-esteem through connection and support (Farooq et al., 2023), excessive use or reliance on digital feedback may lead to anxiety, self-doubt, or emotional instability (Tumebo, 2017; Degen & Kitzmann, 2024). This also supports findings by Santrock (2011), who emphasizes that positive external validation, particularly from peers and family, plays a crucial role in sustaining adolescent self-esteem. As noted in the qualitative findings,

some students also engage in meaningful learning and skill-building through social media, which may contribute to a stronger sense of competence and self-value.

Gender and adolescent self-esteem

An independent samples t-test revealed no statistically significant difference in self-esteem between male and female students ($p = .216$), although males ($M = 19.21$) had a slightly higher mean score than females ($M = 18.55$). This finding suggests a relative balance in psychosocial development between genders in this study context. This finding contrasts with prior literature that often reports adolescent girls having lower self-esteem than boys, largely due to societal pressures related to appearance and social comparison (Steinberg, 2014). However, the non-significant difference found in this study may be explained by a possible cultural or contextual shift in self-perception norms among adolescents in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Age and adolescent self-esteem

Regression analysis revealed that age had a minimal and statistically insignificant influence on self-esteem levels, explaining only 0.3% of the variance. The slight positive trend suggests a marginal increase in self-esteem with age, though not to a meaningful extent. This finding aligns with literature suggesting that while self-esteem may fluctuate during early adolescence, it generally stabilizes or improves in later years as individuals gain emotional regulation and identity clarity (Steinberg, 2023). Dusek and McIntyre (2008) similarly argue that as cognitive maturity develops, adolescents become more reflective and balanced in their self-evaluations.

Grade level and self-esteem

A comparison of mean self-esteem scores across grade levels revealed that Grade 10 students had the lowest mean scores, while Grades 9 and 11 showed higher levels of self-esteem.

Grade 12 students fell in the mid-range. This pattern may reflect the transitional stress associated with academic milestones and social pressures experienced in Grade 10, such as navigating increased responsibilities. Dusek and McIntyre (2004) cite research by Simmons and Blyth indicating that academic transitions are often linked to temporary drops in self-esteem, as students adjust to new expectations and environments.

Influence of Social Media Engagement on Adolescent Self-Esteem

This section discusses how social media engagement influences adolescents' self-esteem, responding to the research question. The analysis combines findings from the quantitative results (correlation and regression) and qualitative insights from key informants.

The correlation analysis revealed that language , affective, and cognitive engagement with social media were all negatively correlated with adolescents' self-esteem, although at varying strengths. Language engagement such as habitual browsing and bedtime scrolling demonstrated a significant negative relationship ($r = -0.225$, $p < .01$), as did affective engagement, which involves emotional dependence on online feedback ($r = -0.232$, $p < .01$). Cognitive engagement exhibited a weaker but still significant negative correlation ($r = -0.157$, $p < .01$), suggesting that adolescents who mentally prioritize online over offline interactions may experience lower self-esteem than less social media usage. This finding aligns with global research, such as the study conducted in Finland by Sinkkonen et al., (2014), which identified that high levels of online engagement are associated with reduced self-esteem and challenges in emotional regulation. Similarly, Desalegn's (2020) research among university students in Ethiopia found that while many students used social media for entertainment and maintaining relationships, a majority reported low self-esteem, potentially due to repeated exposure to idealized online portrayals.

Further regression analysis showed that language and affective engagement were significant predictors of adolescent self-esteem. Increased habitual and emotional engagement to social media use lower adolescent level of self-esteem. Cognitive engagement, on the other hand, was not a significant predictor, suggesting that simply thinking about or preferring social media engagement does not by itself determine adolescents' self-esteem. These findings align with Uses and Gratification Theory (Ruggiero, 2000), which recognizes that media use for emotional or social needs may have unintended psychological consequences, especially if overused or unbalanced. Similarly, Media Dependency Theory (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976) emphasizes that increased reliance on media heightens its psychological influence.

Qualitative findings support this conclusion. Teachers observed that adolescents often use social media more for entertainment and peer validation than for educational purposes. Several key informants described how social media use caused peer rivalry, online bullying, and sleep deprivation, all of which contributed to emotional distress and lowered their self-esteem. One incident involving female students competing on Telegram for attention and popularity escalated into real-life conflict and disciplinary action, highlighting the emotional risks of unchecked online behavior.

These results are consistent with earlier findings by Farooq et al. (2023), who found that social media can both enhance and undermine adolescents' self-image, depending on the nature and intensity of use. Similarly, Crusius et al. (2022) and Shapiro & Margolin (2014) reported that adolescents exposed to frequent social comparison and feedback loops are more likely to experience emotional volatility and lowered self-worth. In the Ethiopian context, Dejene et al. (2019) also linked high social media use with academic disengagement and psychosocial challenges among students.

Chapter Six

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of the Study

This study aimed to assess the platforms used, the purposes of social media use, and the effects of social media engagement on adolescent self-esteem among selected high school students in Lemi Kura Sub-city, Addis Ababa. Grounded in Uses and Gratification Theory, Media Dependency Theory, and Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, the research adopted a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both quantitative data from 379 student survey participants and qualitative data from five key informant interviews. The primary findings of the study are summarized as follows:

Adolescents frequently accessed platforms such as YouTube (65.5%), TikTok (51.2%), Instagram (50.9%), and Telegram (48.5%). These were mainly used for entertainment, music, chatting, and lifestyle content, while academic usage remained minimal.

Most participants identified purposes such as maintaining contact with peers and family, gaining educational support (e.g., YouTube tutorials), improving language skills, and engaging in self-expression

On the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the mean score of participants was 18.83, indicating a moderate level of self-esteem. There was no statistically significant difference in self-esteem by gender or age, although Grade 10 students showed relatively lower scores compared to other grades.

Quantitative analysis revealed a significant negative relationship between language and affective engagement with social media and adolescent self-esteem. Regression results

further confirmed that frequent, emotionally-driven engagement predicted lower self-esteem. Cognitive engagement, while present, did not significantly affect self-esteem.

Interviews with key informant teachers confirmed that excessive and emotionally invested use of social media was linked to academic underperformance, language challenges, and diminished self-worth. Some adolescents experienced peer conflict and identity confusion due to the pressure of digital interactions.

These findings are supported by existing empirical literature. Farooq et al. (2023) and Dejene et al. (2019) emphasized the risks of overexposure to social media, including low self-esteem and psychosocial adjustment difficulties. Similarly, theories such as Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory explain how adolescents' identity formation is susceptible to external validation, which is often amplified through online interactions.

Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive understanding of how adolescents in Lemi Kura engage with social media, revealing that platforms like YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and Telegram are used for entertainment, social interaction, and lifestyle explorations, yet they also serve critical functions in learning, career preparation, and self-expression. Although these platforms are officially restricted on school premises, educators report covert use and significant off-school engagement, demonstrating how deeply embedded they are in students' daily routines. Quantitative analysis indicates that emotional and language social media usage correlates with reductions in adolescent self-esteem, while qualitative accounts from teachers highlight risks such as peer rivalry, distraction, and identity confusion. Conversely, teachers also shared examples of constructive use: collaborative exam preparation, improved communication skills,

and creative pursuits, These findings affirm that social media's impact is not unanimously negative or positive; rather, its value depends on intentional purpose and adult-led integration.

Recommendation

The findings of the study suggest that adolescents who are heavily reliant on social media for emotional validation or habitual browsing are more likely to experience self-esteem challenges. The researcher suggests the following recommendations derived from the study findings

- Formulating school-level social media usage regulation: Both public and private schools should formulate regulations on purposefully integrating social media into learning. Develop clear policies that designate protected time and platforms, such as study-focused Telegram groups and YouTube tutorial screenings. Teachers should control their respective students under their supervision and give advice on how to use social media platforms for academic purposes and skill development.
- Limit social media access to healthful, purposeful engagement by involving teachers, parents, and authorities. Encourage constructive use through curricular integration, moderated online study groups, and monitored content, leveraging its benefits while minimizing its risks.
- Parents should be equipped with practical strategies such as setting time limits, using parental controls, and modeling balanced behavior, to monitor and gently regulate adolescents' screen time and content at home.
- Introduce digital literacy curricula that help adolescents critically evaluate online content, manage digital identity, recognize cyberbullying, and understand emotional triggers.

Offer school-based workshops or counseling to address the psychosocial effects of habitual or emotional social media use.

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Appendix A
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND BEHAVIOURAL STUDY
SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY,
DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY
Questionnaire Guideline

This questionnaire is prepared to collect data on the research title “**This study is designed to conduct the Platforms used, Purposes of social media usage and Effects of Social Media Engagement on Adolescent Self-esteem.** Your participation is entirely voluntary: you may accept or refuse to participate as you wish. If you are volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked a couple of questions regarding your experience with social media usage. Any information you provide will be kept confidential, meaning it will not be tied directly to you. There will be no mentioning of your name in the report.

Please feel free to share your experiences regarding the social media usage practice.

For more Information, please contact:

Tsion Tsegaye Tel: +251912945554

Thank you for your cooperation!

Instruction I

- Give a response by putting assigned numbers in the box or (√) mark in the appropriate box against each closed-ended item.
- Please, give an appropriate response.

Date: ____/____/____

Section 1. Respondent’s Demographic characteristics

1. Sex of respondent: (1) Male, (2) Female-----
2. Age of respondent _____
3. Grade level: (1) 9th, (2) 10th (3) 11th (4) 12th -----
School type: (1) Public (2) Private -----

Part 2 Question Related to Contents

4. Do you regularly use social media platform?
 - 1) Yes -----
 - 2) No-----
5. If yes, which social media platforms do you use most frequently? (Select all that apply)
 1. Facebook, -----
 2. Instagram-----
 3. YouTube -----
 4. TikTok -----
 5. Snap chat -----
 6. WhatsApp If other (please specify) -----
6. Do you spend more than an hour using social media platform every day?
 1. Yes -----
 2. No-----
7. If yes, approximately how much time do you spend on social media each day?
 1. 1 to 2 hours -----
 2. 2-3 hours -----
 3. More than 3 hours-----
 4. I don’t know -----

8. Do you think that using social media have any benefit or purpose?
1. Yes -----
2. No-----
9. If yes, from the following what are some of the purposes that you gained from social media access? (Apply some or all option)
1. Keeping in touch with friends and family.....
2. Entertainment (e.g., watching videos, browsing memes)
3. Socializing and meeting new people
4. Self-expression (e.g., posting pictures, videos, or thoughts)
5. Learning (e.g., following educational content or news)
6. Career-building (e.g., professional networking) G. Other (please specify).....

Section 3. Question related to Social media (Social Media Usage Scale accessed by adolescents)

Instruction: Give a response by putting a (√) mark in the appropriate space against each closed-ended item.

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements using Social Media Engagement Scale for Adolescents (SMES-A) on scale: “Strongly disagree”, “Disagree”, “Undecided”, “Agree”, “Strongly Agree”						
Items	Language engagement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Using social media is my daily habit.					
2.	I browse social media whenever I have time.					
3.	Even if it’s late, I’ll take a look at social media before sleep.					
4.	I often use social media to relax inhabit.					
	Affective engagement					
5.	I get fulfilled from the attention and comments of others on social media					
7.	The support and encouragement of others on social media is very important to me.					

9.	Using social media, I am satisfied with the relationship between myself and my friends.					
	Cognitive engagement					
10.	Compared to the real world, social media makes me feel more comfortable.					
11.	I feel bored when I can't use social media.					
12.	Compared to the real world, I am happier when I socialize on social media.					
13.	I feel anxious when I can't use social media.					

Part 3 Question Related to Assessing Level of Self-esteem among Adolescent

Instruction: Give a response by putting a (√) mark in the appropriate space against each closed-ended item.

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements using Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE-10) on scale: "Strongly disagree", "Disagree", "Agree", "Strongly Agree"					
Item number	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.				
2.	At times I think I am no good at all.				
3.	I feel that I have a number of good qualities.				
4.	I am able to do things as well as most other people.				
5.	I feel I do not have much to be proud of.				
6.	I certainly feel useless at times.				
7.	I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.				
8.	I wish I could have more respect for myself.				
9.	All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.				
10.	I take a positive attitude toward myself.				

Appendix B

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND BEHAVIOURAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY,
DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY**

Key Informant Interview Guide for Teachers

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. My name is Tsion a student from AAU school of Psychology, I'm here to ask some questions regarding students' use of social media and its effects on their self-esteem and overall behavior. Your responses will contribute to understanding how social media impacts adolescent development and self-esteem.

The interview is expected to take less than 30 minutes, and I would like to record the session to ensure accurate capture of your comments. While I will be taking notes during the interview, recording it will help ensure that no valuable information is missed.

Please remember that you are under no obligation to discuss anything you are uncomfortable with, and you may choose to end the interview at any time. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the study without any consequences.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the interview or its confidentiality, please feel free to ask.

Interview Questions

1. What are your general observations about the students' use of social media?

- A. What kinds of platforms and social media content do they usually use?
- B. How often do they get access to it?
- C. Do you think it is worth using? if so, how?

2. How would you describe the role social media plays in the students' daily lives?

- A. How do students typically engage with social media during school hours?
- B. Have you noticed any differences in social media use between different age groups or genders?

3. What do you think is the perceived benefits and positive impacts of using social media in adolescents?

- A. Can you give specific examples of how students use social media in beneficial ways?
- B. Do you think social media enhances students' access to educational resources? If so, how?
- C. Have students ever shared stories with you about how social media has helped them?

4. In your opinion, are there any positive effects of social media on students?

- A. Have you observed any students gaining skills or knowledge through social media?
- B. Do you think social media fosters creativity or self-expression among students?
- C. Have you seen social media being used as a tool for collaboration or peer support?

5. Have you noticed if social media helps students with learning or social skills? Can you give examples?

- A. Can you recall any students who improved their communication skills through social media?
- B. Have you seen any class activities or assignments where social media was used effectively used?
- C. Do you think students become more socially connected through social media?

6. Do you think social media influences students' self-esteem? How do you see this impact?

- A. Can you describe any noticeable changes in students' confidence related to their social media activity?
- B. Have students ever expressed concerns about their self-worth due to social media comparisons?
- C. Have you seen differences in self-esteem between students who frequently use social media and those who don't?

7. How do you think students' interactions on social media affect their interactions in school?

A. Have you noticed any changes in students' friendships or peer groups due to social media interactions?

B. Have you observed conflicts or misunderstandings that started on social media carrying over into the classroom?

C. Do students seem more confident in social settings because of social media, or do they struggle with face-to-face interactions?

8. Is there anything else you'd like to add about adolescents social media use?

Thank you once again for your participation.