AFRICAN JOURNAL of Social & Behavioural Sciences

Volume 16, Number 8 (2026)
Print ISSN: 2141-209X
ISSN-L: 2141-209X
Double-blind peer reviewed

Research Article
DOI: https://doi.org/10.68442/ajsbs/2026/v16i8.030

Self-Evaluation as a Moderator of the Link between Social Media Addiction and Academic Performance among Undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

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Received: 21 September 2026 • **Accepted:** 5 October 2026 • **Published:** 24 October 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examined whether self-evaluation moderates the relationship between social media addiction and academic performance among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey was carried out with 265 psychology undergraduates (183 females and 82 males; mean age = 22.52 years, SD = 5.21) who completed the Social Media Addiction Scale – Student Form and a 14-item self-evaluation scale in an online questionnaire. Academic performance was measured with the cumulative grade point average (CGPA). Moderation was tested with the PROCESS macro (version 4.2) for SPSS. Social media addiction was not significantly related to academic performance, $r = -.07$, $p = .26$, and the regression model was not significant, $F(3, 260) = 0.98$, $p = .404$, $R^2 = .011$. Self-evaluation did not predict academic performance, and the interaction of social media addiction and self-evaluation was not significant, $b = -.006$, $p = .517$. The hypothesis that self-evaluation would moderate the relationship was therefore not supported. The test of the interaction could detect only effects that explained about 3% of the variance, and the sample was a convenience sample from one department, so small effects cannot be ruled out. Self-evaluation should be treated as an untested, and not a proven, buffer against the academic costs of social media addiction. Larger studies with more varied samples are needed before self-evaluation training is offered as a remedy.

Keywords: Self-Evaluation; Social Media Addiction; Academic Performance; Moderation; Undergraduates; Nigeria

Cite this article: Nweke, K. O., Okoyeocha, C. R., Umeatuegbu, A. I., Mabia, C. E., Ndigwe, B. C., & Umeaku, N. N. (2026). Self-evaluation as a moderator of the link between social media addiction and academic performance among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. *African Journal of Social and Behavioural Sciences, 16*(8), 361–367. https://doi.org/10.68442/ajsbs/2026/v16i8.030

Introduction

Academic performance shapes students' prospects, yet it is affected by many factors in modern life. These include personal habits, peer pressure, family support and the resources available to students. One factor that has drawn growing attention is social media use. This study asks whether students' self-evaluation changes the way social media addiction relates to academic performance among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Academic performance is commonly described as the result of students' school achievements, shown through grades, test scores and demonstrated learning (Menéndez-Aller et al., 2021), or as the set of skills and abilities that students display in different areas (Escolano-Pérez & Bestué, 2021). In this study, academic performance means the extent to which a student meets established educational goals, measured here with the cumulative grade point average (CGPA).

Academic performance has lasting consequences. Grade point average has been linked to career success later in life (Steindórsdóttir et al., 2024), and academic performance is associated with health-related quality of life among students (Qi et al., 2020). Doing well also depends on discipline and motivation. As

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social media use becomes part of daily life, its demands on students' time and attention may affect their results.

Social media addiction is usually treated as a behavioural addiction in which people become preoccupied with social networking sites, find it hard to control their use and carry on despite harm to other areas of life (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). Writers on platform design argue that these services are built to hold attention for as long as possible (Mujica et al., 2022). Beyond grades, social media addiction has been linked to poorer health among emerging adults (Yamini & Pujar, 2022). One plausible route to lower grades is lost study time, because study hours have been shown to predict exam outcomes (Asencios-Trujillo et al., 2024).

The evidence on the link between social media addiction and academic performance is mixed. A meta-analysis found a negative association between social networking addiction and the academic achievement of university students (Salari et al., 2025). A study of Bangladeshi university students reported both benefits and drawbacks of social media use, among them a dependence that hindered innovation (Chowdhury, 2025), and Gong et al. (2025) reported that social anxiety and fear of missing out helped to explain the link between social media use and academic performance among college students. In Nigeria, however, James et al. (2026) found only a weak and non-significant relationship between social media addiction and academic performance among 371 undergraduates in Kwara State, and a study of nursing students found no significant association between social media use and grade point average (Zion et al., 2026). Some Nigerian work has also looked for moderators of the link, for example perceived parental control among adolescents in Awka (Dike et al., 2023).

Self-evaluation is the process of comparing one's performance with goals or standards in order to judge progress and identify strengths and weaknesses. It is closely related to self-assessment (Andrade, 2019) and is the self-judgement phase of self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, 2002). Meta-analyses indicate that self-assessment interventions improve academic performance (Karaman, 2021; Yan et al., 2022). Students who engage often with self-assessment resources in online courses tend to do better (Dinç et al., 2024), and formative self-assessment can be supported through peer assessment (Alemdag & Narciss, 2025). Whether self-evaluation also helps students to manage social media use is less clear. Sahranç and Duç Urhun (2021) studied self-regulation processes among university students and found that self-evaluation did not predict social media addiction, and Zixuan (2026) linked social media addiction to implicit self-esteem, which is a more automatic form of self-evaluation.

Taken together, this literature suggests a possibility. Social media addiction may reduce study time and attention, and self-evaluation may help students to notice and correct this. Self-evaluation could therefore weaken a negative link between social media addiction and academic performance. This possibility has not been tested among undergraduates in Nigeria, and the present study examined it among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Statement of the Problem

Earlier studies have examined the relationship between social media use and academic performance, including a meta-analysis of social networking addiction and academic achievement (Salari et al., 2025). Other studies, which are separate from these, have examined self-assessment and academic performance (Karaman, 2021; Yan et al., 2022). What is not known is whether self-evaluation changes the relationship between social media addiction and academic performance among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The study addressed this question through the lens of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986).

Theoretical Framework

Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) holds that behaviour results from the interaction of personal factors, the environment and behaviour itself. People are shaped by their surroundings, but they can also observe their own conduct, judge it against standards and change it. Zimmerman (2002) describes self-regulated learning as a cycle of forethought, performance and self-reflection, with self-evaluation as the judgement of results against goals, and Panadero (2017) shows that it is one of several models of self-

regulated learning. Applied here, social media is an environmental pull on students' time and attention, and self-evaluation is a personal resource that may help a student to notice that pull and counter it. Students who evaluate themselves more should therefore show a weaker link between social media addiction and poor academic performance than students who evaluate themselves less. Social media addiction involves features such as conflict and relapse (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017), so self-evaluation may be a weak counter where addiction is severe.

Hypothesis

Self-evaluation will moderate the relationship between social media addiction and academic performance among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, such that the negative relationship will be weaker among students with higher self-evaluation.

Method

Participants

A total of 265 undergraduates from the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, took part. They were 183 females (69.1%) and 82 males (30.9%), with a mean age of 22.52 years (SD = 5.21). By level of study, 1 participant was in 100 level (0.4%), 143 in 200 level (54.0%), 35 in 300 level (13.2%) and 86 in 400 level (32.5%). The regression analysis had 260 residual degrees of freedom, which implies that 264 cases had complete data.

Instruments

Social media addiction was measured with the Social Media Addiction Scale – Student Form (SMAS-SF; Şahin, 2018). The scale has 29 items in four factors: virtual tolerance, virtual communication, virtual problems and virtual information. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), and the item scores are summed, so that higher scores indicate a greater risk of social media addiction. Cronbach's alpha in the present sample was .87.

Self-evaluation was measured with a 14-item scale based on Zimmerman's (2002) account of self-regulated learning, in which learners judge their progress and performance against goals. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and summed, so that higher scores indicate a stronger tendency to evaluate one's own learning. Example items are "I regularly assess my understanding of the material to ensure I am learning effectively", "I identify specific areas where I need to improve my knowledge or skills" and "I adjust my study strategies based on how well I am performing". Cronbach's alpha in the present sample was .90.

Academic performance was measured with the cumulative grade point average (CGPA), which participants provided in the demographic section of the questionnaire. The CGPA was drawn from the 2021/2022, 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 academic sessions.

Procedure

The two scales and the demographic items were placed in a structured Google Form. The university has 14 faculties, and the Faculty of Social Sciences was selected at random from them. The faculty has five departments (mass communication, political science, sociology, psychology and economics), and the Department of Psychology was chosen for the study. The form was shared on class-level WhatsApp groups for all four levels of study, and 265 students completed it voluntarily. Because the final stage relied on volunteers within one department, the sample is a convenience sample and not a probability sample. Ethical considerations were observed, and participation was voluntary.

Design and Statistics

The study used a cross-sectional correlational design with a moderation analysis. Data were analysed with SPSS version 26 and the PROCESS macro version 4.2 for SPSS (Hayes, 2022), using Model 1 (simple moderation), in which academic performance was regressed on social media addiction, self-evaluation

and their product term. Pearson correlations among the three variables were also computed. Effects were tested at the .05 level with 95% confidence intervals. Tests of interactions have low power in samples of this size (McClelland & Judd, 1993), so a sensitivity analysis was run to find the smallest effect that the interaction test could detect with 80% power.

Results

Table 1 shows the zero-order correlations among the three variables. Social media addiction was negatively but not significantly related to academic performance, $r = -.069$, $p = .263$. Self-evaluation was not significantly related to academic performance, $r = .021$, $p = .734$, or to social media addiction, $r = .038$, $p = .538$.

Table 1. Zero-order correlations of social media addiction, academic performance and self-evaluation

Variable	1	2	3
1. Social media addiction	–		
2. Academic performance	−.069	–	
3. Self-evaluation	.038	.021	–

Note. N = 265. Entries are Pearson correlations. None is significant at the .05 level. The p values were computed from r and N, because the original table did not report them.

Table 2 gives the model summary. The model as a whole was not significant, $F(3, 260) = 0.98$, $p = .404$, and it explained 1.1% of the variance in academic performance, $R^2 = .011$.

Table 2. Model summary of the regression of academic performance on social media addiction, self-evaluation and their interaction

R	R^2	*MSE*	*F*	df_1	df_2	*p*
.106	.011	108.419	0.978	3	260	.404

Note. MSE = mean squared error.

Table 3 gives the coefficients. Neither social media addiction, $b = -.049$, 95% CI [−.130, .031], $p = .230$, nor self-evaluation, $b = .003$, 95% CI [−.180, .185], $p = .975$, predicted academic performance. The interaction of the two was not significant, $b = -.006$, 95% CI [−.026, .013], $p = .517$. The hypothesis that self-evaluation moderates the relationship between social media addiction and academic performance was therefore not supported.

Table 3. Prediction of academic performance by social media addiction, self-evaluation and their interaction

Predictor	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	95% CI
Social media addiction	−.049	.041	−1.20	.230	[−.130, .031]
Self-evaluation	.003	.093	0.03	.975	[−.180, .185]
Social media addiction × self-evaluation	−.006	.010	−0.65	.517	[−.026, .013]

Note. The dependent variable was CGPA. CI = confidence interval. The standard errors of the first two predictors and the t value of the second were derived from the reported coefficients, confidence limits and p values. The standard error, t value and lower confidence limit of the interaction were derived from its reported coefficient, p value and upper limit, because the values given in the original table were inconsistent.

The sensitivity analysis showed that, with 264 cases, the test of the interaction term had 80% power at the .05 level to detect an effect that explained about 3% of the variance in academic performance ($f^2 \approx .03$, between Cohen's, 1988, benchmarks for small and medium effects). In the same way, a correlation of about .17 was the smallest that the sample could detect with 80% power. Smaller effects cannot be ruled out.

Discussion

The study tested whether self-evaluation moderates the relationship between social media addiction and academic performance among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. It did not. Social media addiction had a small negative correlation with academic performance (r = −.069) that was not significant, self-evaluation was unrelated to either variable, and the interaction was negligible (b = −.006, p = .517). The model explained about 1% of the variance in academic performance.

The weak and non-significant association between social media addiction and academic performance differs from the negative association found in a meta-analysis (Salari et al., 2025), but it agrees with studies that found weak or no significant associations (James et al., 2026; Zion et al., 2026). James et al. (2026) reported a multiple correlation of .073 among 371 undergraduates in Kwara State, which is almost the same size as the correlation found here. Several explanations are possible. The direction of the estimate here is negative, as the meta-analysis would predict, and the confidence interval for the regression coefficient runs from a modest negative effect to a small positive one, so the data are compatible with a small negative association that this sample was too small to detect. CGPA may also be a blunt measure, since academic performance depends on prior achievement, course load, finances, health and other factors that were not measured. If students reported their own CGPA, it may be less accurate than an official record. A further possibility is that students use social media for academic purposes as well as for leisure, so that its effects partly offset each other (Chowdhury, 2025).

The absence of moderation also needs comment. Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) leads to the expectation that self-regulatory processes such as self-evaluation help people to manage their conduct, and meta-analyses show that self-assessment interventions improve academic performance (Karaman, 2021; Yan et al., 2022). Those findings concern self-assessment that is taught and practised as part of an intervention. They do not show that students' own report of how often they evaluate themselves will buffer the effect of social media addiction. Sahranç and Duç Urhun (2021) found that self-evaluation did not predict social media addiction, which agrees with the near-zero correlation found here (r = .038).

Two further explanations are worth noting. First, there was very little to moderate. When the main association is close to zero, a moderator has little room to change it. Second, a self-report scale shows how often students say they evaluate their work, and not how accurately they do so, and the accuracy of self-evaluation, which this study did not measure, may matter as much as its frequency (Andrade, 2019). The study also cannot say whether the pattern would differ among students with severe addiction, who were probably few in a general sample.

Implications of the Study

The results do not support the claim that self-evaluation protects academic performance against the effects of social media addiction in this group. Programmes that teach self-evaluation may still be useful in their own right, because self-assessment is linked to better academic performance in many studies (Karaman, 2021; Yan et al., 2022), but they should not be promoted as a remedy for social media addiction on the strength of these data. Among these students, social media addiction was also not a strong predictor of CGPA, so counselling services and academic advisers may need to look at other influences on academic performance as well.

Limitations of the Study

The sample was a convenience sample of volunteers from one department of one university, and 69% of the participants were women, so the results may not apply to other students. The design was cross-sectional, so the study cannot show cause and effect. All measures came from a questionnaire, including CGPA, and no check against official records is reported. The 14-item self-evaluation scale was not validated independently here beyond its internal consistency, and the CGPA scale was not described. Only one participant was in 100 level, and the CGPA of 100-level and 200-level students cannot cover three sessions, so the period covered by the CGPA varied. Finally, the sensitivity analysis shows that the study could detect only moderate-sized interaction effects, so small moderating effects may have gone undetected.

Recommendations

1. Universities may continue to offer workshops on self-evaluation and study skills as part of general academic support, but they should not present them as a treatment for social media addiction until stronger evidence is available.
2. Counselling and support services should remain open to students who struggle with social media addiction, because the possible harms of addiction are not limited to grades.
3. Future studies should use larger and more varied samples, drawn at random from several faculties or universities, so that small interaction effects can be detected, and should use official CGPA records.
4. Future studies should use a validated measure of self-evaluation, and should also assess its accuracy, together with other possible influences on the link such as study time, procrastination, sleep, self-control and parental control.
5. Longitudinal designs should be used to test whether changes in social media addiction are followed by changes in academic performance, and whether self-evaluation alters that sequence.

Conclusion

This study found no evidence that self-evaluation moderates the relationship between social media addiction and academic performance among psychology undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Social media addiction had a small and non-significant negative correlation with CGPA, self-evaluation was unrelated to both variables, and the interaction was negligible. The study cannot rule out small effects, and it rests on a convenience sample from one department and on self-report measures. Self-evaluation should therefore be treated as an untested, and not a proven, buffer, and larger studies are needed before it is recommended as a way of limiting the academic costs of social media addiction.

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