

Loneliness and Self-Disclosure in Generation Z Users of Second Instagram Account

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ABSTRACT

Generation Z is an age group that grew up in the digital era with high intensity use of social media, making platforms like Instagram one of the main means of expressing themselves. One of the growing phenomena is the use of a second Instagram account as a more private and comfortable space to express feelings. However, not all individuals are capable of optimal self-disclosure, which can be influenced by psychological conditions such as loneliness. This study aims to examine the relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure in generation Z users of second Instagram accounts. This research uses a quantitative approach with a correlational design. The research participants were 275 generation Z users of the second Instagram account obtained through purposive sampling techniques. Data collection was carried out using the Revised Self Disclosure Scale (RSDS) and the UCLA Loneliness Scale Version 3. Data analysis used the Pearson correlation test. The results showed that there was a significant negative relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure ($r = -0.303$; $p < 0.001$), with loneliness contributing 9.2% to self-disclosure. These findings show that the higher an individual's level of loneliness, the lower their self-disclosure, and vice versa. It is hoped that this research can contribute to understanding the psychological factors that influence self-disclosure in generation Z, especially in the context of using a second Instagram account.

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INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an integral part of modern society, especially for Generation Z who lives in a digital circle. According to Data Reportal (2025), as much as 143 Indonesians or around 50.2% of the population are social media users with Instagram being one of the most-used social media platform. Data from NapoleonCat (2025) showed that the amount of Instagram users in Indonesia reaches 90,183,200 people, with the 18-34 year age group being one of the biggest group of users. Such condition show that Instagram does not only function as a medium for communications, but also being a space for individuals to showcase their identities, build relations, and to express their thoughts and feelings.

One form of behaviour that appears in using social media is self-disclosure. Wheelless dan Grotz (1976) defines self-disclosure as any message a person communicates about themselves to another. Self-disclosure is not only about the amount of information shared, it also encompasses the will to express oneself, the frequency of expressions, the nature of information shared, honesty, and the depth of information shared. Thus, self-disclosure is important in the formation of interpersonal relationships as it allows individuals to build closeness and gain social support.

Instagram provides various facilities that enable individuals to practice self-disclosure more flexibly. Features such as feeds, stories, reels, and live streaming allow users to express various experiences, ranging from daily activities, moments of happiness, complaints, to feelings of sadness (Johana et al., 2020). The use of social media can also provide a sense of comfort for individuals to convey experiences that are difficult to express in real life.

The phenomenon of self-disclosure becomes even more interesting when it is linked to the use of a second Instagram account. The second account is an additional account that individuals use to present themselves more freely and authentically with an audience that is usually more limited. These accounts can become spaces that are considered more private because users have greater control over who can see the content they share (Sokowati & Manda, 2022). Fatriani (2022) found that 96% of university students who were research subjects had multiple Instagram accounts or more than one account. Meanwhile, Yolanda (2022) has shown that the second account is seen as a more comfortable space for users to express themselves authentically.

Even though the second account provides a more private space, self-disclosure on social media cannot be separated from social and psychological considerations. Individuals still consider privacy, the possibility of negative judgement, and the response from the audience. Zlatolas et al. (2019) showed that self-disclosure on social networks is related to users' perceptions of privacy risks, privacy benefits, trust, and privacy control. Thus, the existence of a second account does not automatically make an individual more open, because the user's psychological condition can still influence this behavior.

One of the psychological conditions that is thought to be related to self-disclosure is loneliness. Bruce et al. (2019) explained that loneliness is an emotional state that arises when individuals do not have the interpersonal relationships they desire. Loneliness can arise when there is a mismatch between the social relationships that the individual currently has and the social relationships that the individual hopes for. In these conditions, individuals can experience feelings of being rejected, isolated, not having meaningful relationships, or not receiving adequate social support.

Loneliness can affect the way individuals interact with their social environment. Individuals who experience loneliness tend to be more sensitive to the possibility of social rejection and negative evaluations from others (Roekel et al., 2016). This condition can cause individuals to be more careful in communicating and disclosing personal information. Mund et al. (2020) showed that higher levels of loneliness were associated with lower levels of self-disclosure in interpersonal relationships.

The relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure has been found in a number of previous studies. Akbar and Abdullah (2021), for example, studied Sumbawa University of Technology students who used Instagram and found a relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure. Zahrabella and Herdajani (2023) also examined the relationship between self-esteem and loneliness and self-disclosure among TikTok content creators in West Jakarta. Another study by Lerisha (2020) discussed the relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure in early adult Tinder users. These studies show that loneliness is relevant to self-disclosure behavior, but the characteristics of the subjects and the context of social media used are different.

Research on the relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure specifically among Generation Z users of second Instagram accounts is still limited. Despite the fact that second accounts have different characteristics from main accounts because they tend to have a more limited audience and allow users to present themselves more selectively. Therefore, this research was conducted to empirically test the relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure in Generation Z users of second Instagram accounts. Based on theoretical studies and previous research, the hypothesis of this research is that there is a negative relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure. This means that the higher the level of loneliness, the lower the level of self-disclosure among Generation Z users of the second Instagram account.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research uses a quantitative approach with a correlational design. A quantitative approach is used to obtain data in the form of numbers which are then analyzed using statistical techniques (Sahir, 2021). A correlational design was used to determine the relationship between loneliness as an independent variable and self-disclosure as a dependent variable.

Self-disclosure in this research refers to the concept of Wheelless and Grotz (1976), which is all forms of information about oneself that is shared with other individuals. Self-disclosure is measured based on five aspects, namely intent to disclose, amount of disclosure, positive/negative nature of disclosure, honesty-accuracy of disclosure, and depth/intimacy of disclosure (Ilma et al., 2020). Loneliness refers to a subjective feeling that arises when individuals do not have interpersonal relationships that match their desires (Bruce et al., 2019). The measurement of loneliness includes three aspects, namely personality, social desirability, and depression (Muawanah & Tentama, 2020).

Participant

The research participants totaled 275 respondents who belonged to Generation Z and had a second Instagram account. Sampling used a non-probability sampling technique with a purposive sampling method. The criteria for participants are individuals who belong to Generation Z, have a second Instagram account, and are male or female.

Respondents consisted of 216 women (78.5%) and 59 men (21.5%), with an age range of 14–29 years. Based on status, most of the respondents were university students, namely 211 people (76.7%). Based on the intensity of use of the second Instagram account, the largest group uses the second account for 1–2 hours per day, consisting of 105 respondents (38.2%). Most respondents have also had a second Instagram account for more than a year, namely 238 people (86.5%).

Research Instrument

Self-disclosure was measured using the Revised Self-Disclosure Scale (RSDS) developed by Wheelless and Grotz (1977). The scale consists of 31 items, with 19 favorable items and 12 unfavorable items. The scale includes five aspects of self-disclosure, namely intent to disclose, amount of disclosure, positive/negative nature of disclosure, honesty-accuracy of disclosure, and depth/intimacy of disclosure. The scale uses seven answer choices with a score of 1–7. The reliability value for each aspect is in the range $\alpha = 0.84$ –0.95.

Loneliness was measured using the UCLA Loneliness Scale Version 3 developed by Russell (1996). The scale consists of 20 items, with 11 favorable items and 9 unfavorable items. The scale includes aspects of personality, social desirability, and depression. Each item uses four answer choices, namely "Never", "Rarely", "Sometimes", and "Always", with a score of 1–4. The scale has high reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha values in the range 0.890–0.940.

Procedure and Data Analysis

Data collection was carried out online using Google Form. The questionnaire contains informed consent, questions for the respondents' identity, as well as items from both research scales. The questionnaire link was distributed via various social media, including Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok and LinkedIn.

Data analysis was carried out using Jamovi version 2.2.5 for Windows. Before testing the hypothesis, an assumption test is carried out which includes a normality test and a linearity test. Since the data met the assumptions of normality and linearity, hypothesis testing was carried out using Pearson correlation coefficient to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

The results of descriptive analysis show that of the 275 respondents, self-disclosure has a minimum empirical score of 109 and a maximum of 217, with a mean value of 145 and a standard deviation of 19.9. Meanwhile, loneliness has a minimum empirical score of 20 and a maximum of 74, with a mean value of 43 and a standard deviation of 10.6. Based on the categorization of empirical data, self-disclosure is mostly in

the medium category. A total of 157 respondents (57%) were in the medium category, 108 respondents (39.3%) were in the high category, and 10 respondents (3.7%) were in the low category. Meanwhile, loneliness was also dominated by the medium category, namely 188 respondents (68%), followed by the low category with 49 respondents (18%) and the high category with 38 respondents (14%).

The normality test using Kolmogorov-Smirnov test shows that the self-disclosure data is normally distributed with a p value = 0.222, while the loneliness data is also normally distributed with a p value = 0.810. Both values are greater than 0.05. Furthermore, the linearity test shows a value of $F = 27.7$ with $p < 0.001$, so the relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure is stated to be linear.

Hypothesis testing using Pearson correlation shows a correlation coefficient of $r = -0.303$ with $p < 0.001$. These results indicate a significant negative relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure. Thus, the research hypothesis is accepted. The negative direction shows that the higher the loneliness experienced by Generation Z users of the second Instagram account, the lower their openness. Conversely, the lower the loneliness, the higher the self-disclosure.

R Square analysis shows a value of 0.092 or 9.2%. This shows that loneliness statistically contributes 9.2% to the variation in self-disclosure, while the other 90.8% is related to other factors not examined in this study.

Additional Analysis

The results of the independent samples t -test show that there are differences in self-disclosure based on gender. Women have an average self-disclosure of 148, while men have an average of 138. This difference is significant with a value of $t = -3.44$ and $p < 0.001$ and the effect size of Cohen's $d = 0.51$ which is in the medium category.

In contrast, no differences were found in levels of loneliness based on gender. Men had an average loneliness of 43.3 (SD = 11.2), while women had an average of 42.9 (SD = 10.4). The test results show $t = 0.307$ and $p = 0.759$ with Cohen's $d = 0.045$, so the difference between the two groups is very small.

Analysis of the relationship between age and loneliness also showed insignificant results. Pearson correlation yielded $r = -0.101$ with $p = 0.093$. This means that age does not have a significant relationship with the level of loneliness in research respondents.

Analysis of aspects of loneliness shows that the three aspects have a negative and significant relationship with self-disclosure. The social desirability aspect has the strongest negative relationship with self-disclosure ($r = -0.309$; $p < 0.001$), followed by the personality aspect ($r = -0.258$; $p < 0.001$), and depression ($r = -0.225$; $p < 0.001$).

Discussion

The main results of the research show that there is a significant negative relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure in Generation Z users of second Instagram accounts. The correlation value $r = -0.303$ indicates that the relationship between the two variables is in a negative direction with the strength of the relationship being relatively low to moderate. These findings show that a second Instagram account as a more private space does not necessarily make individuals who experience loneliness become more open.

These findings are in line with Azzahra (2023) which found a negative influence of loneliness on self-disclosure on social media with a value of $\beta = -0.271$ and $p < 0.05$. Both studies show the same pattern, namely that the higher the loneliness, the lower the individual's tendency to express themselves on social media. This finding is also in line with Chen et al. (2021), which shows that individuals who experience loneliness tend to have lower levels of self-disclosure.

Theoretically, this negative relationship can be explained by the social and cognitive conditions that accompany loneliness. Individuals who feel lonely may experience concerns about social judgment and rejection. Roekel et al. (2016) explained that individuals who experience loneliness show hypersensitivity to social threats and are more affected by negative perceptions in the social environment. This condition can cause individuals to be more careful in conveying personal information, including when using social media.

In the context of a second Instagram account, this condition becomes interesting because the second account basically provides a more private space for individuals. Even though the audience is more limited, individuals can still consider how they are perceived by others. Thus, greater privacy does not necessarily eliminate concerns about social evaluation. Individuals who experience loneliness may continue to limit the information they share because they feel less safe or less confident in interpersonal relationships.

The contribution of loneliness to self-disclosure in this study was 9.2%, while the remaining 90.8% was related to other factors outside the research. These findings indicate that self-disclosure is a complex construct. The need for affiliation, for example, can be a factor related to self-disclosure via social media (Zahra & Kustanti, 2023). In addition, Hasibuan (2023) found a positive relationship between self-esteem and self-disclosure among teenage Instagram users. Online friendships are also reported to be related to self-disclosure in early adult Instagram users (Rahmayanti & Ediati, 2022).

The research results also show that the majority of respondents have a level of self-disclosure in the medium category. This finding is understandable because self-disclosure in the second account does not always mean that the individual discloses all their personal information. Users can still make choices about the information shared, who can see it, and how much information is disclosed. This is in accordance with the concept of Wheelless and Grotz (1976) that view self-disclosure as a communication process that has variations in the amount, depth, honesty and content of the information conveyed.

Analysis of aspects of loneliness provides important findings that social desirability has the strongest negative correlation with self-disclosure. These results indicate that concerns about social acceptance and the evaluation of others are the aspects of loneliness most associated with low self-disclosure. Individuals who are highly concerned about social acceptance may be more selective in sharing personal information because they consider the possibility of a negative response. This finding is in line with research by Pang et al. (2024) which shows that fear of negative evaluation is related to an individual's tendency to self-disclose.

Personality aspects also have a significant negative relationship with self-disclosure. Individuals with closed characteristics, lacking self-confidence, or those who have anxiety in social interactions can experience obstacles in conveying personal experiences and feelings. This finding is in line with research by Shi et al. (2024) which shows that loneliness is related to interpersonal sensitivity and difficulties in interpersonal communication.

Meanwhile, aspects of depression also have a significant negative relationship with self-disclosure. Individuals who experience feelings of sadness, loss of enthusiasm, or withdrawal tendencies may have lower motivation to communicate with others. Achterbergh et al. (2020) shows that loneliness and depression are related to an individual's tendency to withdraw from social interactions and limit disclosure of emotional conditions to others.

The results of the analysis based on gender show that women have a higher level of self-disclosure than men. This finding is in line with research by Carbone et al. (2024) which shows that there are gender differences in self-disclosure behavior, with women showing a higher tendency to reveal certain information than men. However, no differences were found in levels of loneliness based on gender. These results are in line with Fikrie et al. (2019) and Febriani (2021), who show that loneliness can be experienced by men and women at relatively the same level.

The finding of no significant relationship between age and loneliness indicates that feelings of loneliness are not solely determined by increasing age. These findings are in line with research by Buecker et al. (2022) which shows that age is not significantly related to loneliness after considering various factors related to the individual's living conditions.

Overall, the research results show that a second Instagram account can be a space for Generation Z to self-disclose, but the level of openness is still influenced by the individual's psychological condition. Loneliness is one of the factors related to an individual's tendency to limit their self-disclosure. Thus, understanding second Instagram account users requires considering not only social media characteristics but also their psychological condition and social relationships.

This research has several limitations. Firstly, the sample distribution based on gender was not balanced because 78.5% of respondents were women and only 21.5% were men. These conditions can limit the representativeness of the sample. Secondly, data collection was carried out online via Google Form so that researchers could not directly monitor the respondents' seriousness in filling out the questionnaire. Lastly, there are limitations to the clarity of the dimensional structure of the loneliness measurement tool used, so further study is needed regarding the structure of the construct and its dimensions.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that there is a significant negative relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure in Generation Z users of second Instagram accounts. The results of Pearson correlation analysis obtained a value of $r = -0.303$ with $p < 0.001$. This means that the higher the level of loneliness, the lower the level of self-disclosure. Conversely, the lower the level of loneliness, the higher the level of self-disclosure.

Loneliness statistically contributes 9.2% to the variation in self-disclosure, while the other 90.8% is related to other factors outside the research. Additional analyses showed that women had higher levels of self-disclosure than men, but there were no differences in levels of loneliness by gender. Age also did not show a significant relationship with levels of loneliness.

At the aspect level, all aspects of loneliness, namely personality, social desirability, and depression, have a significant negative relationship with self-disclosure. The social desirability aspect shows the strongest relationship. These findings confirm that concerns about social acceptance and evaluation are an important aspect related to individuals' tendencies to limit their self-disclosure.

Thus, using a second Instagram account as a more private space does not automatically increase self-disclosure. Psychological conditions, especially loneliness, remain one of the factors related to self-disclosure behavior in Generation Z.

Generation Z users of the second Instagram account are advised to use the account wisely by considering psychological conditions and social acceptance in self-disclosure. Further research is recommended to examine other factors outside of loneliness that can influence self-disclosure and expand participant characteristics to obtain more diverse results.

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