

Self-Disclosure, social comparison, and social anxiety among gen z social media users

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ABSTRACT

Social anxiety arises from the fear of being negatively judged by others during specific social activities or situations. This can influence an individual's self-acceptance anxiety, thereby posing a threat to Gen Z when engaging in self-disclosure and social comparison on social media. This study aims to determine whether there is a relationship between self-disclosure and social comparison with social anxiety among Gen Z social media users. This research employs a correlational quantitative method, and the sampling technique used in this study is accidental sampling. The subjects of this study are Generation Z individuals aged 18-25 years, with a population of 247,759 and a sample size of 270. The correlational method used to test the hypothesis in this study employs non-parametric analysis techniques. The research data will be analyzed using the JASP for Windows software. The analysis results from the Spearman Rho correlation coefficient show that the relationship between self-disclosure and social anxiety has a correlation coefficient of 0.033 and a P-Value of 0.590, indicating no significant relationship between self-disclosure and social anxiety. In contrast, the correlation coefficient between social comparison and social anxiety is 0.515, with a P-Value of 0.001, indicating a significant relationship between social comparison and social anxiety. This study contributes specifically to understanding the mechanisms of self-disclosure and social comparison underlying the emergence of social anxiety due to social media use, significantly advancing the field. The implications of this study include enhancing knowledge about self-disclosure and social comparison mechanisms that underlie increased social anxiety caused by social media use.

Keywords: Self-disclosure, Social anxiety, Social comparison

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INTRODUCTION

Social anxiety arises from the fear of being negatively evaluated by others during specific activities or social situations. A study on social anxiety conducted in seven countries found that 22.9% of teenagers in Indonesia experience social anxiety [1]. Social media has

brought significant changes to Generation Z in Indonesia. Generation Z in Indonesia uses social media as the primary tool to communicate with friends, family, and even strangers. While social media can be a positive means of interaction, excessive use can negatively impact the mental health of Gen Z, such as causing social anxiety [2]. The widespread and intensive use of social media among Gen Z impacts anxiety levels. This is because this generation was born and developed alongside rapid digitalization across various aspects and coincided with the birth of several social media platforms, making Generation Z the age group with the longest daily access to social media [3]. Consequently, having social media accounts has become almost mandatory for Gen Z, not only for educational purposes but also as a form of self-existence. The use of social media by Generation Z negatively impacts anxiety stability levels. On social media, we can easily share all kinds of posts that can lead to negative emotions like envy and jealousy, thus affecting the anxiety stability of Generation Z [4]. As a result, they suffer from social anxiety because they frequently compare their posts with those of others, especially if they do not receive the likes or comments they expected [5].

Based on the research conducted by Azka [6], if individuals do not receive the expected number of likes or comments, they will experience social anxiety. Additionally, 39% of teenagers reported experiencing extreme social anxiety or worry due to missing out on significant life events. Furthermore, 32% of teenagers admitted to feeling fearful about not being able to achieve their goals when they see friends or others easily sharing their achievements on social media [6]. Excessive use of social media by Generation Z makes it more difficult for them to manage it and can even lead to psychological disorders [7], [8]. The concept of social anxiety is almost universal, encompassing everything from crippling stress and associated social dysfunction to the fear of social judgment. In more contemporary settings, this naturally involves virtual meetings in addition to face-to-face encounters [9].

According to previous research, students aged 18 to 25 (young adults) in Bandung City tend to use social media more frequently [10]. Social anxiety was present in all respondents categorized as addicts; the majority of these respondents exhibited significant levels of social anxiety, with 31.2% of Bandung students aged 18-25 reported to experience social anxiety [9]. In line with this, another study revealed that 11% of Communication Science students at UMS reported experiencing social anxiety due to social media use, while

the rest experienced social anxiety due to factors other than social media use. From the perspective of consistent social media use, it can be observed that social media influences users' views and behaviors, leading to anxiety [11].

After conducting an initial survey through Google Forms with 8 respondents (3 males and 5 females), the results revealed that two female respondents felt anxious when facing new situations and meeting new people. They feared being disliked or harshly judged, felt burdened, and were worried about making mistakes that would inconvenience others. Additionally, three other female respondents admitted to immediately feeling scared and withdrawing from social situations when meeting new people. The fear they experienced was typically articulated as fear of being compared, underestimated, and unable to express themselves clearly. Conversely, two male respondents reported feeling anxious about public speaking. Moreover, two male respondents felt out of place in their environment due to fear of misspeaking and not being accepted by others. The symptoms experienced by respondents in the initial survey align with the statements of Mareshko and Alden, who noted that social anxiety tends to make individuals feel isolated, struggle to form friendships, and find it difficult to communicate with others [12].

Being in a social environment can cause individuals to feel anxious. Viewing social events as dangerous may result from cognitive biases or distortions, which can lead to social anxiety [13]. It is common for people to experience social anxiety in response to certain circumstances. According to Jefferies & Ungar late adolescents (those aged between 18 and 22) exhibit higher levels of social anxiety compared to other age groups [1]. This occurs because individuals in this age group are completing their education, becoming more independent, moving to more complex environments, and working hard to meet their needs [1]. Social anxiety is defined as a sensation of discomfort that arises in social situations and potentially spreads to other situations, directly causing discomfort to individuals due to the need to interact with strangers, which can make them fear embarrassment [14]. Social anxiety arises from the fear of being negatively judged by others when participating in specific activities or social situations [15]. Social anxiety is a persistent fear of one or more social performance situations, such as public speaking and displaying assertive behavior with different individuals [16].

Adolescents with social anxiety, according to La Greca and López, have fewer close friends and experience less peer acceptance and social support [12]. In this context, self-

disclosure is crucial in interpersonal relationships because it allows individuals to be open about their feelings and thoughts. Self-disclosure is an essential interpersonal process that helps adolescents accomplish important developmental tasks; individuals need to have self-disclosure as a crucial social skill to gain acceptance in their social environment [17]. People may disclose themselves for various reasons, including social control, self-expression, self-clarification, relationship growth, and the desire to be accepted by society [18]. Based on self-disclosure factors, such as the desire to be accepted by society, individuals may reveal information about themselves to enhance social acceptance and likability, which can lead to social anxiety.

This study discusses self-disclosure as a factor influencing social anxiety. Based on the results of dinar's research, there is a significant negative relationship between self-disclosure and social anxiety in individual social media users [19]. Therefore, the higher the level of self-disclosure, the lower the level of social anxiety among students, conversely, the lower the level of self-disclosure, the higher the level of social anxiety among students. Self-disclosure is the ability of an individual to share personal information about themselves with others in an effort to build strong bonds [13]. Previous research suggests that self-disclosure is a process that allows individuals to gradually learn about others to gain detailed personal knowledge about them [18], [20], [21], [22]. Aspects of self-disclosure itself enable individuals to adapt to their environment, feel valued, form identity, self-esteem, and well-being [13]. Then there are dimensions of self-disclosure proposed by Wheelless; including intended disclosure, amount of disclosure, positive/negative disclosure, control of depth disclosure, honesty and accuracy [23].

This study also explains that besides self-disclosure, another factor that can cause social anxiety is social comparison. Research conducted among adolescents at the Mulia Kariya Husada School of Health in South Jakarta shows that social comparison is significantly related to social anxiety. Social anxiety and social comparison are significantly correlated. This indicates that social anxiety plays a role in social comparison, with low social comparison being strongly associated with social anxiety, particularly in terms of social contact. Additionally, the self-evaluation of those experiencing moderate social anxiety can be influenced by individual standards in social comparison [24]. Social comparison is the tendency of individuals to perceive themselves as equal to others or their

environment in terms of ability and opinion to gain an understanding of themselves and their surroundings for self-evaluation purposes [25], [26], [27].

Given the aforementioned phenomena concerning self-disclosure, social comparison, and social anxiety, as well as previous research findings, the researcher is interested in re-investigating the same title with a larger sample size. Based on the phenomena described above, this study aims to determine whether there is a relationship between self-disclosure and social comparison with social anxiety among Gen Z social media users.

METHOD

This study utilized a quantitative correlation method, where the population consisted of Gen Z social media users aged 18 to 25 years, totaling 247,759 individuals. The research sample comprised 270 Gen Z individuals obtained from a 10% significant level table according to Isaac and Michael. Sampling was conducted online using Google Forms and Likert scales. These instruments were distributed through Instagram and WhatsApp platforms, employing an accidental sampling technique. The study connected two variables X, namely Self-Disclosure and Social Comparison, with the variable Y being Social Anxiety.

Firstly, the scale used to measure social anxiety adopted in this study is the Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (SAS-A) translated by Hananninggar, consisting of 18 items covering three aspects: fear of negative evaluation, social avoidance, and feeling tense in new situations or when interacting with strangers or acquaintances, and social avoidance and general tension experienced with known individuals [5]. This scale has a reliability value of 0.958, with item-total correlation indices ranging from 0.5 to 0.89. Sample items from this scale include: "I worry about what others say about me" and "I worry that others won't like me."

Secondly, the self-disclosure scale was adopted from Dimas's study, which references the five dimensions proposed by Wheelless: Intended Disclosure, Amount of Disclosure, Positive/Negative Disclosure, Control of Depth Disclosure, and Honesty and Accuracy [23]. This scale consists of 28 items and has a reliability value of 0.923, with item-total correlations ranging from 0.328 to 0.808 [23]. Examples of items from this scale include: "The information I disclose about myself on social media is done intentionally" and "I rarely express my opinions on social media."

Thirdly, the social comparison scale utilizes the Iowa-Netherlands Comparison

Orientation Scale (INCOM) by Gibbons and Buunk, in its translated version Jannah [25]. This scale encompasses two aspects: ability and opinion, and consists of 8 items. It has a reliability coefficient of 0.805, with item-total correlations ranging from 0.367 to 0.659. Examples of items from this scale include: "I often compare how my family/friends/partner treat me with how others are treated" and "I compare what I do with what others do."

The data processing technique utilized in this study is the Pearson product-moment correlation technique. Prior to hypothesis testing, the researcher conducted assumption testing. The results of the assumption test indicated non-normally distributed data, thus non-parametric correlation tests were subsequently employed using JASP software for Windows.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research employs non-parametric correlation analysis to investigate the relationship between self-disclosure and social comparison with social anxiety among Generation Z social media users. This choice is due to one of the variables showing a Non-Normal distribution during the prerequisite test, rendering it unfit for the product-moment test. Based on the data analysis of this study's hypothesis, the following results were obtained:

Table 1 Assumption Test Results

Variable	Shapiro-Wilk	P-Value	Description
Self-Disclosure	0.991	0.118	Non-Normal
Social Comparison	0.981	0.001	Normal
Social Anxiety	0.973	< .001	Normal

Based on the data in Table 1, it is evident that the variable Self-Disclosure has a significance value of 0.118, Social Comparison has a significance value of 0.001, and Social Anxiety has a significance value of <.001. Thus, it can be concluded that the data are not normally distributed. Therefore, non-parametric correlation analysis is subsequently utilized.

Table 2 Correlation Analysis Results

Spearman's Correlations			
Variable		Spearman's rho	p
Self-Disclosure	- Social Anxiety	0.033	0.590
Comparison	- Social Anxiety	0.515***	< .001

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

As seen in the results presented in Table 2, based on the correlation test results, it is found that there is no significant relationship between self-disclosure and social anxiety among Generation Z social media users (correlation coefficient 0.033, P value = 0.590). This study indicates that there is no significant relationship between the two variables because the p-value of $0.590 > 0.05$. As observed in Table 2, Spearman's analysis reveals a significant correlation (P-Value = $0.001 < 0.05$) between social comparison scores and social anxiety, where higher social comparison scores indicate better positions in social anxiety. However, the effect size is moderate ($r=0.515$). This indicates a relationship between social comparison and social anxiety.

Based on the results of the correlation data analysis, it was found that there is no significant relationship between self-disclosure and social anxiety among Generation Z social media users (correlation coefficient 0.033 with P-Value = 0.590). This finding aligns with previous research, which also indicated that there is no influence of self-disclosure on social anxiety on social media among adolescents. The previous study also showed that adolescent social media users exhibit high levels of both social anxiety and self-disclosure [12]. Additionally, this is supported by other studies that also show no significant relationship between self-disclosure and social anxiety among female university students at University "X" [13]. The relationship between these two variables is very weak and negative. In earlier research, it was found that self-disclosure carries risks, including potentially harmful information, socially unacceptable information, and information that, if widely shared, should remain confidential [12]. However, self-disclosure can also enhance relationships and increase likability.

Previous studies have explained that social anxiety is a natural human phenomenon and a normal reaction to certain situations. However, self-disclosure does not affect social anxiety because other factors, such as body image and self-concept, may have a more significant influence in this study [28], [29]. This study found a negative relationship between social anxiety and body image, indicating that social anxiety decreases with higher

levels of body image [28]. Other research results show that self-concept also plays an important role in this relationship [30]. Among students, there is a significant negative relationship between self-concept and social anxiety [29]. Self-concept is formed by the perception of the environment towards the individual and self-perception. If an individual has a high self-concept, they are less likely to experience social anxiety, and vice versa [30]. This is consistent with previous research findings that also explain that the relationship between self-disclosure and social anxiety among Generation Z social media users depends on various factors [31]. Generation Z tends to engage in self-disclosure through social media [32]. They believe that they can be more expressive when using social media.

Other studies also explain that social media use has a negative impact on the mental health of adolescents [33], particularly affecting Generation Z, who predominantly use social media [4]. This suggests that self-disclosure is not the only factor contributing to social anxiety, and therefore, the level of self-disclosure may not necessarily correlate with the level of social anxiety. Social anxiety is influenced by multiple factors beyond self-disclosure. According to previous research, factors influencing social anxiety include social media usage [34],[35], self-efficacy [36], social support [37], self-confidence [38], and self-esteem [39].

The data analysis results indicate a significant relationship between social comparison and social anxiety, with a value of 9.267 and a significance level of $p = <.001$, suggesting a significant correlation between social comparison and social anxiety. This finding is consistent with prior research, which found a significant relationship between social comparison and social anxiety in adolescents [24]. Other studies have also demonstrated that social comparison induces social anxiety in individuals [40]. Individuals experiencing social anxiety may feel they are doing something embarrassing or perceive others as judging them harshly and critically based on their body image, leading them to be generally reluctant to interact with others [41]. They may feel that others cannot accept them due to perceived differences. However, if individuals have a positive body image, they are less likely to experience difficulty in communicating their thoughts to others, will not feel ashamed, and will not avoid social interactions [41].

This study is consistent with previous research showing that body image has a significant correlation with social anxiety in adolescents [42]. Individuals with high social

anxiety tend to have a very poor perception of themselves compared to others. This highlights the role of social comparison in social anxiety, how low social comparison is strongly linked to social anxiety, especially in social situations, and how thoughts related to social comparison can impact how well individuals with social anxiety view themselves. Additionally, regardless of whether they compare themselves to those who are similar or superior in terms of abilities or skills, individuals with high social anxiety believe they are significantly inferior to others [42].

Generally, individuals engage in social comparison to evaluate their abilities and opinions relative to others [43]. By using others as a reference point for comparison, individuals assess their own abilities and determine whether their attitudes and behaviors are appropriate. Consequently, previous research has shown that among early adult participants using social media, life satisfaction decreases as social comparison behavior increases, and vice versa [44]. On the other hand, social media can exacerbate social anxiety by reinforcing social comparisons and increasing the pressure to meet standards set by others, as well as inducing concerns related to shared content and other anxieties [11]. This aligns with Astuti's 2021 study, which discusses how the continuous intensity of social media use can lead individuals to compare their real-world circumstances with those encountered in the virtual world [45]. The relationship between social comparison by social media users and the intensity of its use is also addressed in this study. Users who spend more than four hours a day on social media become unable to distinguish between what is posted and what is seen there [45].

According to other research, social networking behavior among college students leads to social comparisons that impact social anxiety [40]. This occurs because engaging in social networking behaviors makes individuals more vulnerable to social situations on social media, where social interactions make them more sensitive to others' evaluations. This aligns with previous research indicating that the higher the level of social media use among individuals, the higher the incidence of social comparison behavior [46]. The consequences of social comparison behavior include social anxiety, depression, decreased life satisfaction, body dissatisfaction (negative body image), and reduced self-esteem [46]. Furthermore, another study found a significant relationship between social comparison and body dissatisfaction among early adult in Malang city [47]. Social comparison can also be influenced by various factors, including body image [48], self-esteem [49], and lifestyle [46].

This study has several limitations. First, it does not consider the role of gender differences in the influence of social anxiety. Second, it does not reveal the role of different platforms used by Generation Z in the impact of self-disclosure and social comparison on social anxiety. Therefore, further research should identify factors from other variables that may affect social anxiety, such as self-concept [29] and self-esteem [50].

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that there is no significant relationship between self-disclosure and social anxiety among Generation Z social media users. However, there is a significant relationship between social comparison and social anxiety. Based on the research conducted on 270 respondents, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between social comparison and social anxiety (P-Value = $0.001 < 0.05$), which has a significant impact on social anxiety among Gen Z social media users. Both variables have a positive correlation, meaning that the higher the level of social comparison in individuals, the higher the level of social anxiety experienced by them. The level of self-disclosure may not necessarily be related to social anxiety. Other factors that may influence Gen Z's self-expression, such as self-efficacy and social media usage trends, should also be considered. Based on the research conducted, there are suggestions that researchers can provide. First, for Gen Z individuals experiencing social anxiety, it can be minimized by reducing tendencies to make judgments and comparisons with others. For future research, it is hoped that further exploration of factors causing social anxiety beyond self-disclosure and social comparison variables will be conducted. It is also recommended to reconsider the subjects and questionnaire items to address potential issues and response relevance.

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