

The Relationship Between Loneliness and Self-Disclosure in Early Adulthood

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Abstract. This study aims to examine the relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure in early adulthood. Early adulthood is a developmental period characterized by the formation of more intimate interpersonal relationships as well as various social, emotional, and academic demands. In this process, loneliness can be a psychological factor related to an individual's ability to disclose themselves to others. This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational design. The participants consisted of 385 young adults aged 18–40 years, recruited using convenience sampling. Data were collected via Google Forms using the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Version 3) and the Self-Disclosure Scale. Data analysis was conducted using simple linear regression. The results indicate a significant negative relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure in early adulthood ($\beta = -0.517$; $t = -11.819$; $p < 0.001$), with a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.267. These findings indicate that higher levels of loneliness are associated with lower levels of self-disclosure, and vice versa. Thus, the research hypothesis stating that there is a negative relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure in early adulthood is supported.

Keywords: Self-disclosure; Loneliness; Early adulthood.

1. Introduction

Early adulthood is a developmental stage characterized by the need to build intimate, stable, and meaningful interpersonal relationships (Dwilianto et al., 2024). During this period, individuals face various social, academic, and emotional demands that can influence how they interact and communicate with others. Rasul (2024), in a study involving students at UIN Malang, reported varying levels of self-disclosure: 17.4% of respondents were categorized as very

conducted by researchers on 50 individuals aged 18–40 showed that the level of self-disclosure was predominantly low.

Self-disclosure is the process by which a person introduces themselves to others by sharing personal information, feelings, and private experiences. It is further stated that this level of self-disclosure serves as an indicator of an individual's psychological well-being; this process allows a person to feel heard, valued, and trusted, which ultimately strengthens emotional bonds in interpersonal relationships (Hindra, 2025).

Self-disclosure refers to any message about oneself that a person communicates to others; each message or unit of a message has the potential to vary in the level of self-disclosure it contains, depending on the perception of the message by the parties involved, encompassing five aspects: amount, valence, honesty, intended, and depth. (Wheeless & Grotz, 1976).

The researchers conducted a preliminary study by distributing a questionnaire to 50 subjects aged 18 to 40; the results indicated a predominantly low level of self-disclosure; this was reinforced by the preliminary survey results, which showed that 58% fell into the low category, 40% into the moderate category, and 2% into the high category. On average, participants reported that they rarely share their personal feelings, failures, or successes with others.

According to a study conducted by Rasul (2024) on students at UIN Malang, levels of self-disclosure varied: 61 respondents (17.4%) fell into the very low category, 175 (49.9%) were in the low category, 111 (31.6%) were in the moderate category, and 4 (1.1%) were in the high category. Based on the data above, it can be said that self-disclosure is very important for individuals; self-disclosure not only helps in building intimate interpersonal relationships but can also help individuals cope with mental health issues. If individuals have a low level of self-disclosure and tend to be withdrawn in social settings, they will find it difficult to express their feelings, thoughts, and personal problems they are facing (Monela, 2023).

Furthermore, loneliness is also one of the psychological factors that influence self-disclosure. Individuals experiencing loneliness tend to seek social interaction (Rasul, 2024). Several previous studies have examined the relationship between loneliness as an independent variable and self-disclosure as a dependent variable. A study by Rasul (2024) examined the relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure among college students using a quantitative approach. The results indicated a negative relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure among college students.

Therefore, the researcher aims to examine the relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure among college students, introducing novelty in terms of the subject and location compared to previous studies, and to review self-disclosure in general among young adults—a developmental phase characterized by the need to build more intimate and stable social relationships.

2. **Method**

This study employs a quantitative research method, in which findings are presented numerically and analyzed using statistical techniques. Quantitative research is used to examine a specific population or sample through systematic data collection and statistical analysis (Sugiyono, 2013). A correlational research design was adopted to test the relationship between two variables: loneliness and self-disclosure. Data were collected using a Likert-scale-based questionnaire. The Likert scale was used to measure participants’ attitudes, opinions, and perceptions regarding the phenomenon under investigation in this study. The questionnaire was distributed online via Google Forms.

Early adulthood begins between the ages of 18 and 40. The population in this study is infinite. This study used a non-probability sample with a convenience sampling method. Using the Lemeshow formula and a 5% margin of error, 385 subjects were selected. Loneliness levels were measured using the UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) Loneliness Scale, Version 3, developed by Russel (1996) and adapted by Pramitha (2018), which covers three aspects: trait loneliness, social desirability loneliness, and loneliness resulting from depression (depression loneliness), with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.922 comprising 19 items. including examples such as “How often do you feel you have no one you can rely on?” and “How often do you feel like part of a friendship group?” (Pramitha, 2018).

This study employs the self-disclosure scale developed by Wheeless and Grotz (1976) and adopted by Miranda (2021), which encompasses five aspects: amount, valence, honesty, intent, and depth. The scale consists of 18 valid items with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.903, featuring examples such as "I share my true self with friends" and "I share accurate information about myself with friends" (Miranda, 2021).

3. **Results and Discussion**

The participants in this study were 385 young adults in Indonesia aged 18–40 years. Participants were recruited using convenience sampling, in which respondents were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate, rather than through random selection. The target population was considered unknown or infinite because the exact number of young adults meeting the study criteria could not be determined. Data collection was conducted via Google Forms and distributed through social media platforms accessible to both the researcher and potential participants. Participants who met the inclusion criteria and completed the questionnaire were included in the final sample. The inclusion criteria were: (1) being a young adult aged 18–40 years and (2) being willing to participate in this study. The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in the following table. Based on Table 2, this study involved a total of 385 respondents. The majority of participants were women, totaling 240 respondents (62.3%), while there were 145 male respondents (37.7%). Thus, female participants constituted the largest proportion of the sample in this study

Table 2. Classification of Respondents by Gender

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Male	145	37.6%
Females	240	62.3%
Total	385	100%

Table 3 Classification of Respondents by Place of Residence

Province	Frequency	Percentage
East Java	185	48.1%
Central Java	36	7.8%
West Java	15	3.9%
Special Region of Yogyakarta	16	3.9%
Jakarta	12	3.1%
Banten	10	2.6%
South Kalimantan	4	1.0%
East Kalimantan	3	0.8%
Central Kalimantan	9	2.3%
West Kalimantan	1	0.3%
Riau Islands	1	0.3%
Bali	7	1.8%
West Nusa Tenggara	7	1.8%
East Nusa Tenggara	3	0.8%
West Sumatra	1	0.3%
South Sumatra	1	0.3%
North Sumatra	1	0.3%
Jambi	3	3.9%
South Sulawesi	15	3.9%
North Sulawesi	2	0.5%
Aceh	2	0.5%
Papua	1	0.3%
Maluku	40	10.4%
North Maluku	9	2.3%
Total	385	100%

Based on Table 3, the respondents in this study are spread across 25 provinces in Indonesia. Of the 385 respondents, the largest proportion came from East Java, namely 185 respondents, followed by Maluku with 40 respondents, Central Java with 36 respondents, and the Special Region of Yogyakarta with 16 respondents. West Java and South Sulawesi each contributed 15 respondents, while Jakarta contributed 12 respondents and Banten contributed 10 respondents. Respondents from other provinces—including North Maluku, Papua, Aceh, North Sulawesi, Jambi, South Sumatra, North Sumatra, West Sumatra, East Nusa Tenggara, West Nusa Tenggara, Bali, Riau Islands, East Kalimantan, West Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, and South Kalimantan—each accounted for less than 3% of the total sample. Overall, this distribution indicates a relatively large concentration of respondents from East Java compared to other provinces.

Table 4 Classification of Respondents by Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18	9	2.3%
19	40	10.4%
20	26	6.8%
21	39	10.1%
22	77	20.0%
23	59	15.3%
24	31	8.1%
25	15	3.9%
26	16	4.2%
27	14	3.6%
28	13	3.4%
29	5	1.3%
30	5	1.3%
31	9	2.3%
32	6	1.6%
33	6	1.6%
34	1	0.3%
35	2	0.5%
36	1	0.3%
37	2	0.5%
38	4	1.0%
39	1	0.3%
40	4	1.0%
Total	385	100%

Based on Table 4, the findings show that of the 385 respondents included in this study, the majority were between the ages of 18 and 25, totaling 275 respondents (71.1%). This was followed by respondents from other age groups, totaling 110 respondents (28.9%). These findings indicate a significant predominance of young adults in the sample, particularly those in the 18–25 age range. The categorization of the loneliness variable showed that 61 (15.8%) respondents had a low level of loneliness, while 253 (65.7%) respondents had a moderate level of loneliness, and 71 (18.4%) respondents had a high level of loneliness. As for the self-disclosure variable, the results showed that 74 (19.2%) respondents had a low level of self-disclosure, while 270 (70.1%) respondents had a moderate levels of self-disclosure, and 41 (10.6%) respondents had high levels. The results of the reliability test for the loneliness scale showed a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.839. Meanwhile, the self-disclosure scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.714.

Based on the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test on the variables of loneliness and self-openness among the 385 respondents, the significance value was 0.001. Since the significance value is <0.05 , this indicates that the data on loneliness and self-openness are not normally distributed. The results of the linearity test showed an F-value of 141.863 with a significance value of 0.001. This significance value is less than n , $P < 0.05$; therefore, it can be concluded that there is a linear relationship between the variables under study.

The test results indicate a significant relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure in early adulthood ($\beta = -0.517$; $t = -11.819$; $p < 0.001$). The negative regression coefficient indicates that the relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure is negative; thus, the higher the level of loneliness, the lower the level of self-disclosure. These results are consistent with the hypothesis proposed in this study, namely that there is a negative relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure in early adulthood. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.267 indicates that the relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure accounts for 26.7% of the variance, while the remaining 73.3% is attributed to other factors. These findings suggest that loneliness plays a role in shaping self-disclosure in early adulthood.

Based on the results of the descriptive analysis, the respondents in this study were predominantly experiencing situational loneliness, which occurs at specific times, such as when they feel they are not receiving enough attention, support, or emotional closeness from others (Russell, 1996). However, these feelings do not persist continuously and do not significantly interfere with social functioning; thus, the respondents still maintain social relationships, though these relationships do not yet fully meet their social and emotional needs as they had hoped. On the other hand, respondents with moderate levels of self-disclosure indicated that they were quite capable of expressing their thoughts, feelings, and personal experiences to others. However, such disclosure was done selectively, taking into account the level of trust, the closeness of the relationship, and the situation at hand. Thus, respondents are not always open with everyone, but they also do not tend to be closed off (Wheeless & Grotz, 1996). This study was also dominated by female respondents, a finding consistent with DeVito's (2016) assertion that gender is one of the factors influencing self-disclosure. In general, women tend to be more open in expressing their thoughts, feelings, and interpersonal experiences than men. This tendency is supported by the results of a meta-analysis by Dindia and Allen (1992), which showed that women engage in slightly higher levels of self-disclosure than men. Meanwhile, respondents with moderate levels of self-disclosure demonstrate a relatively adequate ability to express their thoughts, feelings, and personal experiences to others. However, such self-disclosure tends to be selective and is influenced by factors such as the level of trust, interpersonal closeness, and the specific circumstances in which communication takes place. In other words, respondents are not always open to every person, but also do tend to conceal their personal experiences (Wheeless & Grotz, 1996).

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and data analysis conducted, it can be concluded that there is a negative and statistically significant relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure among young adults. These findings indicate that higher levels of loneliness are associated with lower levels of self-disclosure. Conversely, lower levels of loneliness are associated with higher levels of self-disclosure.

Therefore, the research hypothesis stating that there is a relationship between loneliness and self-disclosure among young adults is accepted. These findings suggest that loneliness is one of the factors associated with self-disclosure, although other factors beyond the scope of this study may also contribute to variations in individual self-disclosure behavior.

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7. Data Availability:

We guarantee that data can be accessed and used at any time by authorized users or systems when needed.

8. Authors' Contributions Statement:

Siti Afifah Rohana: conceptualization, designing the overall research framework, conducting the study, and performing data analysis. Muhammad Mursyidul Azmi: field data collection and validation, and software preparation. Fifi Luthfiyah Maulidah: compiling research results and conducting the literature review. Meanwhile, Lutfi Hidayati Fauziah handled data compilation, documentation of the research process, literature review, as well as manuscript writing, review, and editing.

9. Competing Interest:

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest—whether financial or personal—that could influence the results, process, or interpretation of this study. All stages of the research were conducted independently and objectively, free from any external intervention or interests that might compromise the scientific integrity of this work.

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