

## The Effect of Intimate Friendship on Self-Disclosure Among Gen Z Users of The Close Friend Feature on Instagram

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**Abstract** Close friend is an Instagram feature that individuals use to share posts only with a certain group of people. The selection of the close friend list is based on trust and close friendships. Currently, the close friends feature is more widely used by generation Z as a place to do self-disclosure in the form of photos and videos. This study aims to empirically test the effect of intimate friendship on self-disclosure in Gen Z users of the Instagram close friend feature. This research adopts the quantitative method. Sampling technique used in this study was purposive sampling and data analysis using simple linear regression techniques. The sample in this study consisted of 132 Gen Z with an age range of 14-29 years and actively uploading posts about themselves on Instagram close friends. The results of the simple linear regression analysis showed an F value of 57.104 and Sig. <0.001 ( $p < 0.01$ ) with an R square value of 0.305. From these results, the hypothesis is accepted, namely intimate friendship has a very significant effect on self-disclosure in Gen Z and intimate friendship contributes 30.5% to self-disclosure in Gen Z users of the close friendship feature.

**Keywords:** Gen Z, Intimate friendship, Instagram close friends

## INTRODUCTION

The development of technology has made the internet a new digital function that connects users without limitations of distance, space and time. Millions of people around the world interact via the internet and create social media sites (Sultan, 2020). One of the popular social media in Indonesia is Instagram. In 2018, Instagram released the close friend feature. Users can create a list of close friends, so that photos and videos that have been uploaded can only be seen by certain people. The phenomenon of the close friend feature has recently become a topic of conversation in society, many people from all social status have uploaded their personal stories and videos through the close friend feature but there was a leak of information to the public which caused discussion and pros and cons from the public. In addition, many other cases arise to the surface relate with using a feature called close friend in Instagram, which was intended for close friends only, but the upload was spread the information through another social media. With these phenomena, there are pros and cons for society, especially the younger generation who are more active in using social media to selectively determine the list of close friends who will be included in the close friend feature so that there is no information leakage (Haidir, 2021). Research conducted by Chen, Lam and Lam (2024) shows that 70% of the younger generation uses the close friend feature to upload daily activities, share

problems, strengthen communication, seek help and release negative emotions. The many cases of spreading of personal information even when using the close friends feature have created pros and cons for society, especially the younger generation who are more active in using social media to selectively determine the list of close friends who will be included in the close friend feature so that there is no information leakage (Haidir, 2021). This phenomenon has raised concerns among social media users regarding how far information disclosure needs to be provided through this application and with whom this important information is shared. Especially for generation Z who have become intense internet users lately.

Generation Z is the young generation born between 1995 and 2010 (Prakashyadav & Rai, 2017). According to Wijoyo, Indrawan, Cahyono, Handoyo, and Santamoko (2020), unlike other generations, Gen Z is very intense in communicating online, fluent in technology, and expressive. This makes Gen Z happy to express opinions, activities, and daily problems on social media. The development of Instagram social media has shaped changes in communication behavior in society. When Gen Z wants to upload complaints, feelings, and personal information via Instagram, the close friend feature can be the right choice. With the close friend feature, Gen Z can choose a list of friends who have been known and trusted for a long time. Uploads about personal things such as feelings, ideas, experiences, and thoughts that should not be known to many people but are finally shared through the close friends feature. Disclosure of in-depth matters and personal information, which was previously unknown to others, is also called self-disclosure (Sihombing & Anida, 2022). Self-disclosure is the disclosure of personal information and feelings to others (Wheless & Grotz, 1976). According to them, there are five dimensions of self-disclosure, namely: Intent of disclosure (Individual awareness in expressing feelings, thoughts, and considering the purpose of self-disclosure); Amount of disclosure (Intensity or how often individuals talk about themselves); The positive and negative nature of disclosure (Information provided about the individual, both positive and negative and expressing pleasant or unpleasant things); Honesty and accuracy of disclosure (The accuracy and honesty used by individuals to express themselves or provide information to others about emotions, feelings, behavior, and experience; and General depth of control of disclosure (Individual control indicates the depth of self-disclosure regarding information disclosed to others)

The principle of self-disclosure is to be deliberate and honest, have many goals, such as exchanging information, getting support and strengthening friendships. In addition, self-disclosure occurs in a gradual process when the relationship becomes closer, there is mutual trust, and there is intimate friendship (Rakhmawati, 2019). According to Bickmore (in Riska & Widyastuti, 2019) intimate friendship is a type of friendship that is closer and more trusting so that you can talk openly about your thoughts and feelings and show genuine concern. According to Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2019) intimate friendship has a strong role in self-disclosure. When intimate friendship increases, individuals have a greater intention to make deeper self-disclosure. The close friend feature is the right medium, through this feature Gen Z can choose a list of friends who have been known and trusted for a long time. Self-disclosure that occurs in the close friend feature is influenced by the level of intimate friendship. Intimate friendship develops over time through closeness and compatibility. As the relationship gets closer, the information conveyed will be deeper.

Sharabany (1994) defines intimate friendship as a form of relationship in which individuals seek closeness with others, characterized by a sincere friendship, openness about each other, and mutual trust. According to it, there are eight dimensions of intimate

friendship, namely Honesty and spontaneity (feeling free and comfortable to express everything. As well as honest feedback or opinions on what friends do); Sensitivity and understanding (a sense of empathy or understanding that can be shown by sensitivity and understanding friends); Attachment to the friend (closeness and compatibility that produces feelings of connection with friends); Exclusivity (identifying unique relationships that are not owned by other relationships and preferring this friendship relationship compared to other friendship relationships); Giving and sharing (spending time together, listening to friends' stories, sharing material goods and social support); Sacrifice (prioritizing the interests of friends, readiness to ask for and receive help and accept all the characteristics of friends); Common activities (doing activities together, feeling happy and enjoying time when doing activities with friends); and trust and loyalty (to what extent a friend can be relied on to keep secrets, support, not betray, and defend each other).

Research conducted by Luo and Hancock (2019) says that self-disclosure on social media is influenced by the level of intimate friendship, thus creating a feeling of connection. In addition, research conducted by Rizal and Rizal (2021) concluded that there is a positive relationship between intimate friendship and self-disclosure in college students who use WhatsApp. Research conducted by Jati and Rahayu (2023) found that there is a significant positive relationship between intimate friendship and self-disclosure in early adults who use second Instagram accounts.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which intimate friendship in Gen Z contributes to self-disclosure carried out through the Instagram application using the close friend feature. Where Gen Z is a generation that is fluent in technology and communicates intensely on social media, causing Gen Z to tend to do self-disclosure through Instagram. In previous studies, generally the self-disclosure observed was openness through the platform in general, so in this study a special feature called close friend will be the object of special study. Another fundamental difference is in the intimate friendship variable which is still rarely studied for the phenomenon of the close friends feature on Instagram. Therefore, this study has a hypothesis that there is an influence between intimate friendship and self-disclosure in Gen Z users of the Instagram close friend feature.

## RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the researcher used a quantitative research method. The purposive sampling technique is used to namely the selection of subject groups based on certain characteristics that have a close relationship with previously known population characteristics (Syahrur & Salim, 2014). The criteria for respondents in this study were Gen Z with an age range of 14-29 years and actively uploading posts about themselves on the Instagram close friend feature. Data collection was carried out using a questionnaire with data in the form of identity for demographic data, self-disclosure and intimate friendship assesment scale. The self-disclosure variable was measured using a modified scale by Arwa (2021) based on the dimensions according to Wheelless and Grotz (1976). This scale uses a Likert scale type in its measurement with four alternative answers. The reliability of this scale is 0.859. Meanwhile, the intimate friendship variable was measured using a modified scale by Pohan (2017) based on the dimensions according to Sharabany (1994). All of the assesment scale uses Likert scale type in its measurement with four alternative answers. This study also used the simple linear regression analysis technique to test the effect of intimate friendship as an independent variable (X) on self-

disclosure as a dependent variable (Y). Data analysis was carried out with the SPSS version 29.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The amount of respondents in this study is 132 people consist of 85 female respondents (64.4%) and 47 male respondents (35.6%). The results of the analysis obtained a significance value of  $<0.001$  ( $p < 0.01$ ) and an F value of 57.07. It can be said that there is a very significant influence between intimate friendship on self-disclosure in Gen Z users of the Instagram close friend feature (Table 1). This shows that the hypothesis proposed in this study is accepted

**Table 1.** Hypothesis Test Result

<i>Model</i>		<i>Sum Of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig</i>
1	Regression	2775.999	1	2775.999	57.104	< 0.001
	Residual	6319.721	130	48.613		
	Total	9095.720	131			

Research conducted by Luo and Hancock (2019) says that self-disclosure on social media is influenced by the level of intimate friendship, thus creating a feeling of connection. In addition, research conducted by Rizal and Rizal (2021) concluded that there is a positive relationship between intimate friendship and self-disclosure in college students who use WhatsApp.

The effect of intimate friendship is 30.5% while 69.5% is influenced by other factors outside the study. The results of the simple linear regression test can be seen in Table 2.

**Tabel 2.** Contribution of Variable

<i>Variable</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R Square</i>	<i>Adjust R Square</i>	<i>Std. Error of The Estimate</i>
<i>Intimate Friendship Self-disclosure</i>	0.552	0.305	0.300	6.972

The findings of this study are that intimate friendship has a very significant influence on self-disclosure in Gen Z users of the Instagram close friend feature. Close friendships grow over time. The closer the friendship and the intimacy, the deeper the individual's self-disclosure, because it is based on trust, sincere friendship, and mutual support.

According to Wheelers and Grotz (1976), the dimensions of self-disclosure are, disclosure intention, frequency of disclosure about oneself, positive and negative disclosure characteristics, honesty and accuracy of disclosure, and depth of self-disclosure. Messner and McMurray-Branscombe (2018) state that the depth of self-disclosure includes various dimensions such as emotions, hopes, and dreams. Along with the length of friendship, it creates feelings of trust and comfort. These feelings make friendships exclusive, different from other friendships because they have positive emotional relationships, are willing to sacrifice, are full of empathy and have intimacy in friendship or intimate friendship.

According to Sharabany (1994) there are several dimensions of intimate friendship, namely sincere friendships, being open about each other, and trusting each other. Making friendships exclusive by enjoying time together, getting emotional support, and helping each other. Individuals who have intimate friendships feel free to make broader and deeper self-disclosures because of a sense of trust, empathy, and sensitivity to understand friends.

In intimate friendships, there is a sense of understanding, sensitivity, and acceptance of all the shortcomings of friends, so that when making self-disclosures, individuals feel understood, recognized, cared for, and accepted. When individuals receive positive responses and affirmations, the self-disclosures made tend to be deeper and broader (Berscheid & Regan, 2016). Self-disclosure that occurs through social media is influenced by the level of intimate friendship. The main reason someone makes self-disclosures on social media is to strengthen existing friendships and seek social support (Clark & Green, 2017). Through the close friend feature, users can create a more exclusive list of close friends to express themselves freely through photos and videos that can only be seen by a group of trusted people (Setiawan & Chan, 2022).

This is in line with research conducted by Syafitri, Islamia, & Syafrimen (2021) tested on Instagram user students, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between intimate friendship and self-disclosure. In a study conducted by Costello, Pettit, Helwig, Hunt, Bailey, and Allen (2024) stated that individuals who have quality friendships and intimacy tend to do greater and deeper self-disclosure. In addition, research conducted by Ogba, Onyishi and Chukwuorji (2019) tested on 410 undergraduates in Nigeria, showing that there is a positive relationship between intimate friendship and self-disclosure. In intimate friendship, individuals disclose personal information, feelings and usually interpret responses as caring. This openness and deep personal matters contribute to increasing closer relationships.

Result on Table 3 founds that intimate friendship is in the high category, meaning that the respondents in this study have good friendships. According to Rakhmawati (2019), intimate friendship will be established when the friendship is close so that it creates a sense of comfort and mutual trust. According to Gottman and Parker (in Santrock, 2007), the function of intimate friendship is to provide physical and emotional support, and provide joy.

**Tabel 3.** Empirical Mean of Self-disclosure dan Intimate Friendship

<b>Variables</b>	<b><math>\bar{X}_E</math></b>	<b><math>\bar{X}_H</math></b>	<b><i>Hypothetic Standart Deviation</i></b>	<b>Level</b>
<i>Intimate Friendship</i>	104,50	80	16	High
<i>Self-disclosure</i>	72,40	57,5	11,5	High

Therefore, intimate friendship is very important in friendships, with a sense of trust and sincerity providing an open opportunity to express expressions, feedback, and support that are as they are. As for the calculation of the empirical mean, the self-disclosure variable is in the high category, meaning that the respondents in this study have good self-disclosure. According to Mangundjaya (2022), there are benefits to doing self-disclosure with people who are close and trusted, namely, increasing self-awareness, getting to know other people better, establishing good interpersonal relationships, increasing communication accuracy, avoiding and managing conflict, and reducing stress



Table 4 below provides information that women have a higher level of intimate friendship than men. Compared to men, women have deeper friendships by participating in activities together, listening to stories, sharing items and being sensitive in understanding friends, so that there is closeness and compatibility that results in feelings of connection. According to Nicholson (2015) women tend to be more sensitive to problems experienced by their friends. Intimate friendship in women can be characterized by sharing stories, feelings, and secrets.

**Tabel 4.** Respondent Level of Variables by Age

Age	$\Sigma$	%	<i>Intimate Friendship</i>		<i>Self-disclosure</i>	
			$\bar{X}_E$	Level	$\bar{X}_E$	Level
14-17	16	12.1%	112.13	Very High	80.25	High
18-21	39	29.5%	103.67	High	70.90	High
22-29	77	58.3%	103.35	High	71.53	High
Sum of Respondent	132					

As for the calculation of the description of the self-disclosure variable, women have a higher level of self-disclosure than men. This is in line with research conducted by Farrah, Anastasya, and Julistia (2023) women have a higher level of self-disclosure than men. According to Dow and Wood (2006) the things conveyed in women's friendships are more diverse such as feelings, dreams, regrets, and others. When together, women do more self-disclosure and support each other, while men do more outdoor activities together. By doing activities together, men can express their feelings, moods, and personalities without talking about them directly.

In Table 5, it is known that researchers divided them into three groups, namely 4-5 uploads per week, 6-8 uploads per week, and more than 8 uploads per week which are in the high category.

**Tabel 5.** Level of Variable based on Sum of Friends on Close Friend Feature

Sum of Close Friend	$\Sigma$	%	<i>Intimate Friendship</i>		<i>Self-disclosure</i>	
			$\bar{X}_E$	Level	$\bar{X}_E$	Level
1-10	61	46.2%	107.03	High	73.59	High
11-20	45	34.8%	102.84	High	72.87	High
> 20	26	19.7%	101.46	High	68.81	High
Sum	132					

Currently, the younger generation actively uses the close friend feature as a place to release negative emotions, daily activities, and strengthen communication. According to Ernawati and Suldani (2020), someone can be said to be active if they upload 4-5 times a week on the Instagram story feature.

Based on the results of the hypothesis test, the F value was found to be 57.104 with a significance value of <0.001 ( $p < 0.01$ ), meaning that the hypothesis in this study is accepted, there is a very significant influence between intimate friendship and self-disclosure in Gen Z users of the Instagram close friend feature. In this study, intimate friendship has an influence of 30.5% while 69.5% is influenced by other factors outside the study. Based on the categorization assessment, the empirical mean of the self-disclosure and intimate friendship variables is in the high category. So it is expected for

Gen Z to maintain good friendships, be wiser and limit the information shared through the close friend feature and be more selective in including friends in the close friend feature so that information leakage does not occur. Instagram users are advised to be more careful when uploading personal information and sorting out what is uploaded so that information leakage does not occur.

For further researchers who are interested in researching similar themes, it is recommended to research other factors such as trust, discussion topics, communication media and personality that can influence self-disclosure, as well as expand the discussion on the level of trust that individuals exercise when conducting self-disclosure.

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