

The Moderating Role of Social Support in Relationships Self-Disclosure and Loneliness in Adolescents: A Systematic Literature Review

Amaliah Cindy E. Rahim¹, Yulinda Khairunnisa Belung², Diah Karmiyati³

^{1,2,3} Fakultas Psikologi, Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia

Email: ¹amaliahrahim18@gmail.com, ²khairunnisabelung99@gmail.com, ³diah@umm.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Adolescents are a group that is vulnerable to experiencing feelings of loneliness. Loneliness in adolescents is influenced by two factors: trigger factors and predisposing factors. These are difficulties in establishing social relationships and the neglect of adolescent self-disclosure. This condition suggests that inadequate social interaction and lack of emotional support can increase the risk of loneliness in adolescents. Therefore, it is important to understand and address these factors as essential to supporting the overall health and well-being of adolescents. The aim of this study was to determine whether social support plays an important moderating role in the relationship between self-disclosure and loneliness in adolescents. Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was used as a method to find results showing that social support plays an important moderating role in the relationship between self-disclosure and loneliness in adolescents. The number of journals that have been reviewed is 12 out of 293 after the selection stage was carried out. The study's results showed that social support had a significant role in moderating the relationship between self-disclosure and loneliness. This research provides valuable insights and intervention strategies that can be applied in adolescent education and development to reduce loneliness through increased social support and effective self-disclosure.

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Correspondence:

Amaliah Cindy E. Rahim

Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang

Email: amaliahrahim18@gmail.com



BACKGROUND

Adolescence is a transition phase from childhood to adulthood that is full of various challenges and intense pressure. At this time, adolescents are faced with rapid and dramatic social changes in their lives (laursen & hartl, 2013). For example, adolescents who want freedom begin to create space between themselves and their parents so that they are not involved in their social lives (laursen & hartl, 2013). This often becomes a problem because they want to be independent, but they do not have a balance with strong relationships with other groups, so this causes them to feel socially isolated (garvin, 2018). During the adolescent development period, there is an increase that can be caused by the changes that occur and the possibility of individuals experiencing loneliness (laursen & hartl, 2013).

Loneliness refers to a negative emotional experience when individuals have fewer social connections or lower-quality relationships than they would like (Eccles & Qualter, 2021). There are two types of loneliness: emotional loneliness, which is caused by a lack of intimate relationships with other individuals, and social loneliness, which is caused when someone feels disengaged from society. Even though these two things are different, they both have a relationship with social groups (Agusti & Leonardi, 2015). Adolescents tend to feel lonely, so the prevalence of loneliness among teenagers is quite high (Stickley et al., 2013). Estimates of the prevalence of loneliness among adolescents range from 6.7% to 19.8% (e.g., Costa Rica: 6.7%; Peru: 10.5%; Bolivia: 10.9%; Jamaica: 19.5%; Morocco: 19.8%; Uruguay: 7.1%; Indonesia: 9.6%; Philippines: 14.2%; Thailand: 7.9%) (Surkalim et al., 2022).

The first factor that influences loneliness is the trigger factor, where feelings of loneliness can arise due to changes in social relationships that do not meet individual expectations, such as the loss of a loved one, separation, or failure in a romantic relationship. This event is caused by physical separation, meaning that satisfaction in the relationship can decrease due to a lack of social skills. The second factor is the predisposing factor, where loneliness is triggered by personal circumstances, situations, and culture. According to Peplau & Perlman, when individuals find it difficult to create closeness in social relationships, they may feel reluctant to show themselves to others, which becomes resistance, so it is important to create relationships by providing personal information or openness so that loneliness is not prone to occur (Pospos et al., 2022).

Self-disclosure is an important communication channel between individuals and the outside world. This is a must for adolescent growth. Self-disclosure will have an impact on an individual's social adaptation. Individuals must have positive self-disclosure to have effective communication with the outside world (Chen et al., 2021). Self-disclosure is an integral part of creating and maintaining intimacy in social relationships due to feelings of loneliness (Derlaga, V. J., & Berg, 1987). Research states that if someone has a slightly lower level of self-disclosure, they will experience obstacles in building social relationships because self-disclosure plays an important role in establishing closeness for social interaction (Rhodes, 2014). Individuals

who do not want to open to other individuals and have little personal knowledge about other groups may experience relationship dissatisfaction, thereby increasing their vulnerability to feelings of loneliness.

Previous research has shown that self-disclosure can reduce the loneliness a person feels. This self-disclosure can take the form of feelings, thoughts, and personal experiences that allow for a level of social support that is felt as life satisfaction and reduces depression (R. Zhang, 2017). Another study revealed that social support can provide a direct or indirect mediating effect on online self-disclosure, reducing adolescents' levels of loneliness (Lee et al., 2013).

Based on the explanation above, the author is interested in finding out whether there is a relationship between self-disclosure and loneliness in adolescents, with the moderating role of social support. The importance of self-disclosure to each person is a factor that influences loneliness. In addition, the presence of social support becomes role involvement, or influences the strength in increasing and decreasing the results of the relationship between the two variables.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses the systematic literature review (SLR) method. SLR is the process of collecting data based on predetermined inclusion criteria with the aim of answering specific research questions through a systematic procedure during the stages of search, identification, evaluation, synthesis, analysis, and description of the results of several relevant studies (Mengist et al., 2020). The review planning was made by the authors (YKB, ACER, and DK), starting with creating research questions using the SPIDER formulation (sample, phenomenon of interest, design, evaluation, and research type).

The following questions were asked in conducting this review: Does social support play an important moderating role in the relationship between self-disclosure and loneliness in adolescents? The literature search was limited to articles published in the last 10 years, from 2013 to 2023, using the keywords self-disclosure, loneliness, social support, and adolescents. Article searches were carried out in several databases: Springer, Sagepub, Google Scholar, Pubmed.gov, and APA PsycInfo. The author determines the limitations of this review: the journal discusses the relationship between self-disclosure and loneliness in adolescents, which plays a moderating role in social support; the subject is adolescents; and the journal is in English.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Searching journals using keywords produces 293 search results. Next, the journals that have been obtained are checked for duplication via Rayyan and Mendeley applications. The author screened all journals that had gone through a duplication process based on the title and abstract and then selected them again based on the full text of the journal.

After selecting 293 journals, 12 journals were obtained according to the predetermined inclusion criteria. PRISMA

graph for the journal selection flow can be seen in Figure 1 below.

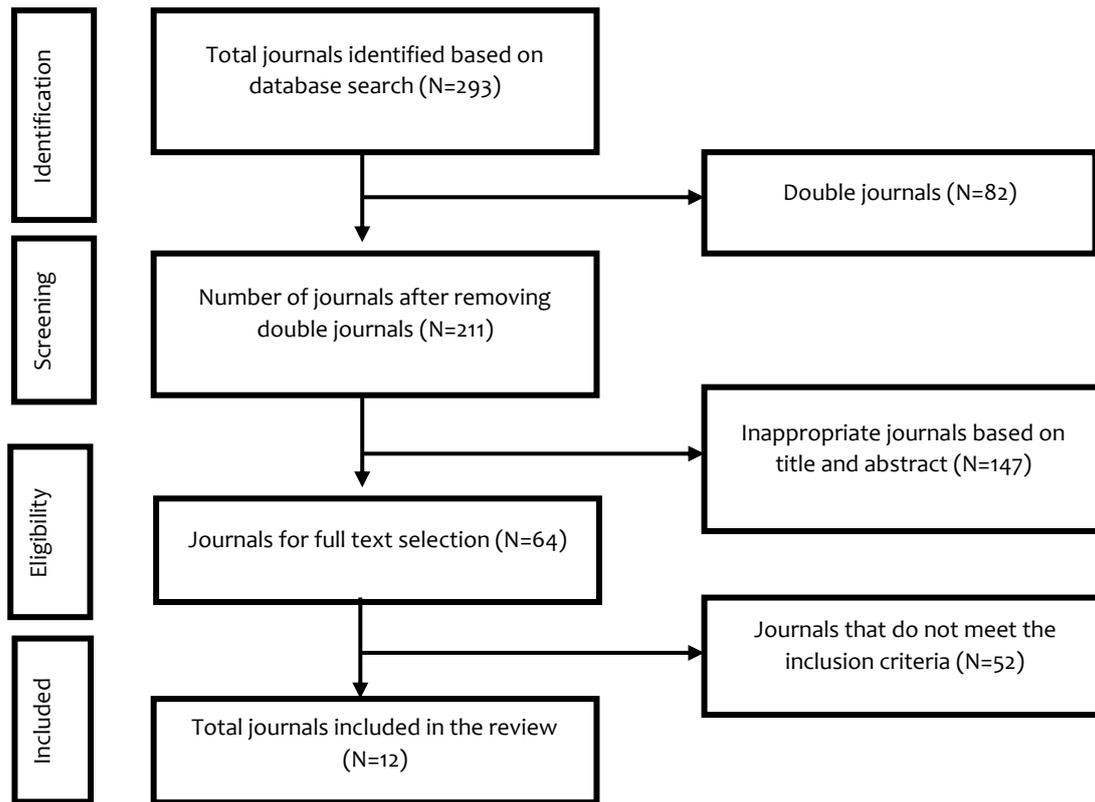


Figure 1. PRISMA graph for journal selection flow

From the results of 12 journal screenings, first, there are 3 journals that explain that social support has a moderating and mediating effect on the relationship between self-disclosure and loneliness in adolescents; second, there are 4 journals that explain self-disclosure as a predictor of loneliness in adolescents; and third, there are 6 journals that explain that there are other predictors such as

cyber victimization, peer relationships, Facebook, and others that can reduce or increase the relationship between self-disclosure and loneliness in adolescents. Apart from that, there are aspects of loneliness that allow adolescents to express themselves. The journal summary results obtained can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Table of journal summary results that have been reviewed

Researchers	Subject	Predictor	Loneliness Aspect
Wei et al. (2018)	The subjects were 250 students from three different universities in China.	The mediating effect of social support on the relationship between self-disclosure and loneliness. According to the results of the mediation effect, the more an individual expresses a high sense of self and the presence of social support for him, the lower the individual's loneliness.	Many students express themselves on the internet because they do not receive recognition according to their expectations, so they feel lonely.
Karsay et al. (2019)	The subjects were 833 people with a minimum age of 16 years.	Using the internet to express oneself online can predict high levels of loneliness.	The presence of social comparison, depression, and psychological well-being stress
Lisitsa et al. (2020)	The subjects were 1,674 people, with a minimum age of 18 years, who used social media.	Low social support makes individuals connect more of their interactions with the world through social media to reduce loneliness.	The lack of interaction with social groups during the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered feelings of loneliness.
Sanecka (2021)	The subjects were 212 students aged 18 years and studying at various universities in Poland.	Increased self-disclosure online can reduce loneliness.	Lack of self-confidence and hopelessness
Liu & Liu (2022)	The subjects were 1,317 adolescents in China aged 13–17 years.	Social support can predict depressive symptoms directly and indirectly by increasing	Depression, then withdraw from social environments

Quynh & Nguyen (2023)	The subjects were 980 adolescents from Vietnam (648 girls and 332 boys) and aged 16 years.	loneliness and reducing the sense of meaning in life. Negative self-disclosure predicts loneliness. The indirect effect of self-disclosure on loneliness through cyber victimization is important. These results indicate that cyber victimization mediates the relationship between self-disclosure and loneliness among adolescents.	Emotional experiences become negative when individuals have few social relationships.
Chen et al. (2021)	The subjects were 830 Chinese adolescents (men: 47.5%, mean 14.25 years; and women: 52.05%, mean 14.19 years; age range 12–15).	The relationship between adolescent self-disclosure and loneliness during COVID-19 and the mediating role of peer relationships In the time of COVID-19, adolescent self-disclosure influenced loneliness through peer relationships. The level of self-disclosure can significantly predict loneliness through peer relationships because peer relationships play a complete mediating role.	Changes in interaction patterns during the pandemic have caused various phenomena, including difficulty opening and a lack of direct interaction with peers.
Fitriani & Azzahro (2022)	The subjects were overseas students who were pursuing higher education, with a sample of 91 students.	Self-disclosure does not have a significant relationship with loneliness among overseas students. However, family support has a significant positive relationship with loneliness.	They cannot adapt to the environment, so they use social media to express themselves.
Václavíková & Dikáčová (2018)	The subjects were young Facebook users. It has been conducted on a sample of 132 participants (64 men and 68 women).	Loneliness can make individuals spend more time on Facebook, and there is a positive and significant relationship with loneliness.	The lonelier an individual feels, the less interaction there is with the surrounding environment.
Lin et al. (2022)	The subjects were 390 undergraduate students who were active users of social networking sites.	Using social media can overcome loneliness by expressing yourself. Social media users have high levels of social support and low levels of loneliness.	Loneliness and low self-esteem lead to mental problems such as depression and suicide.
Lee et al. (2013)	The subjects consisted of 141 women and 124 men.	Loneliness has a direct negative impact on well-being but a positive effect on self-disclosure. Meanwhile, self-disclosure positively influences social support. Self-disclosure has no impact on well-being. Social support positively influences well-being.	Self-presentation on social media can avoid boredom.
Bone et al. (2022)	The subjects were 11,780 adolescents aged 11–21 years from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health, a nationally representative cohort study.	Non-involvement in extracurricular arts activities is not related to loneliness; however, involvement can increase social support.	The large number of social interactions and relationships that exist can increase social support.

DISCUSSION

The results of the journal screening provided information that, from the 12 journals, loneliness occurred due to several factors such as depression, lack of interaction with the surrounding environment, difficulty adapting, and not receiving recognition according to what they expected. Russell (1996) explained that loneliness is an individual's subjective feeling caused by a lack of close relationships. This condition can be a temporary state resulting from drastic changes in an individual's social life. Emotional loneliness arises due to a failure to establish attachment in relationships and to integrate socially. Loneliness is a common thing, and everyone has experienced it throughout their life, (Qualter et al., 2015). including adolescents.

In line with the research of Sagita et al. (2022) said that loneliness in adolescents is influenced by social interaction,

where the lower the social interaction with other people or peers, the lonelier the individual is. This became not easy when the earth was hit by the Covid-19 pandemic, where it changed all lives such as work, school, and travel activities, which led to changes in human interaction patterns, particularly among teens. There are numerous things that must be done online to make interactions with others less heated (Rhodes, 2014). This can fulfill the criteria for loneliness: emotional loneliness and social loneliness. This often causes deep sadness and, in some cases, makes a person experience an unstable mental state, decreased psychological well-being, and even depression (Hawes et al., 2024).

To deal with this loneliness, adolescents disclose themselves to friends, parents, and on social media networks. This often results in individuals experiencing an

addiction to using social media (Zhang et al., 2018). Self-disclosure through social media is more popular and appropriate for the circumstances because the internet provides a large social network and a variety of communication options (Sharifpoor et al., 2017). This self-disclosure can enable adolescents to express their emotions, share information about what activities they are doing or have done, what they are feeling, and even post photos or videos that show their existence. This can make other people comment and/or just like the post, thereby triggering interaction (Václavíková & Dikáčková, 2018).

Research by Quynh & Nguyen (2023) shows that self-disclosure on social media affects the level of loneliness in adolescents. Activities such as openly sharing personal experiences, thoughts, and feelings can expand adolescents' social networks, but they also lead to a higher tendency to experience loneliness. Over-disclosure on social media can increase exposure to negative interactions or cyber victimization, which can increase levels of loneliness due to feelings of lack of support or understanding from others.

Piko et al. (2022) indicated that there are several factors related to depressive symptoms among college students, such as loneliness, lack of satisfaction with life, sharing negative information, and deep self-disclosure on social media. Teens who experience loneliness or feel dissatisfied with their lives tend to experience depressive symptoms more often. So, there needs to be self-control in the use of social media related to the disclosure of personal information to support emotional and social well-being.

The results of a study by Chen et al. (2021) show that adolescents' self-disclosure can increase their loneliness through peer relationships, which means that the higher self-disclosure that adolescents have, the more likely their loneliness, which is mediated by the relationship quality with their peers. Peer relationships not only serve as a place to share and get emotional support, but they also play a significant role in managing and moderating the psychological impact of social experiences during the long-term isolation period caused by the pandemic. This study highlights the importance of understanding the dynamics of peer relationships in the context of substantial social changes such as the pandemic, which can make more effective interventions to support the mental well-being of adolescents in these difficult times.

Self-disclosure, like other things, can have adverse consequences. When an upload on a social media website does not receive likes or positive feedback from netizens, the person may feel inferior and begin comparing themselves to others (Karsay et al., 2019). This does not cause loneliness to decrease, but rather makes the individual increasingly withdraw from their social environment. The social environment plays a role in the relationship between self-disclosure and loneliness. Self-disclosure, carried out positively and honestly by individuals, can increase social support. This is because honest self-disclosure has the ability to establish long-term relationships between adolescents and their surroundings (Kim & Lee, 2011). It can provide social support through interactions (Bone et al., 2023). can be more

adaptable (Widodo, 2013; Sari, 2017) reducing the misery caused by adolescent loneliness (Lin et al., 2022). As a result, social support appears to moderate the link between self-disclosure and loneliness.

CONCLUSION

Loneliness is the feeling of an individual who is emotionally depressed because they are less connected to social relationships. Loneliness is influenced by social support. Insufficient self-disclosure can contribute to increased feelings of loneliness. This means that individuals who feel lonely tend to experience obstacles in expressing themselves. With the involvement of adequate social support, individuals can feel more comfortable and safe sharing their feelings, thoughts, and experiences. Social support can help reduce levels of loneliness and improve the quality of social interactions, thereby facilitating easier self-disclosure. This underscores the importance of social support as a moderation that helps overcome loneliness through increased communication and positive social relationships.

Psychological pressure, which refers to anxiety, depression, and fear of feeling lonely, may occur due to a lack of optimal self-disclosure. Self-disclosure can predict feelings, and the effect of self-disclosure on well-being is very dependent on the ability of an event to be induced. This means that expressing positive emotions can make individuals feel more positive, and expressing negative emotions can make individuals feel more negative. Adolescents who express themselves negatively can face challenges and resistance due to a sense of rejection, resulting in loneliness. As a result, social support can help minimize loneliness in adolescents by encouraging self-disclosure.

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