

## Gen z confiding: the role of anonymity and loneliness in the self-disclosure among chatgpt users

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**Abstract:** *This study aims to determine the effect of anonymity and loneliness on self-disclosure. This study employs quantitative research techniques and a causal-based research design. The research respondents are Generation Z users of ChatGPT as a medium for confiding, with a total of 204 respondents determined using the Cohen formula. Data were collected using a Likert-based psychological scale distributed through Google Forms. The instruments used included the Revised Self-Disclosure Scale, Perceived Anonymity Scale, and UCLA Loneliness Scale. Data processing techniques in this study consist of a normality test, a linearity test, and a multiple linear regression test, with data processing conducted using SPSS version 26,0 for Windows. The results showed that anonymity had a significant effect on self-disclosure among Gen Z ChatGPT users ( $p = 0,009$ ). In addition, loneliness also had a significant relationship with self-disclosure ( $p = 0,000$ ). Simultaneously, both variables significantly influenced self-disclosure ( $p = 0,000$ ). The higher the sense of anonymity and loneliness felt by an individual, the greater their tendency to be open in expressing themselves.*

**Keywords:** *anonymity; chatgpt; gen z; loneliness; self-disclosure.*

**Abstract:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh dari anonimitas dan kesepian terhadap *self-disclosure*. Penelitian ini menggunakan teknik penelitian kuantitatif dan jenis penelitian berbasis kausalitas. Dalam penelitian kuantitatif menggunakan responden penelitian yaitu Generasi Z pengguna ChatGPT sebagai media curhat, dengan jumlah responden sebanyak 204 orang yang ditentukan menggunakan rumus Cohen. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan skala psikologi berbasis *likert* yang disebarakan melalui *Google Form*. Instrumen yang digunakan meliputi *Revised Self-Disclosure Scale*, *Perceived Anonymity Scale*, dan *UCLA Loneliness Scale*. Teknik analisis data dalam penelitian ini meliputi uji normalitas, uji linearitas, serta uji regresi linier berganda, pengolahan data menggunakan SPSS versi 26,0 *for Windows*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa anonimitas berpengaruh signifikan terhadap *self-disclosure* pada Gen Z pengguna ChatGPT ( $p = 0,009$ ). Selain itu, kesepian juga memiliki hubungan signifikan dengan *self-disclosure* ( $p = 0,000$ ). Secara simultan, kedua variabel tersebut berpengaruh signifikan terhadap *self-disclosure* ( $p = 0,000$ ). Dengan Semakin tinggi rasa anonimitas dan kesepian yang dirasakan seseorang, semakin besar kecenderungannya untuk terbuka dalam mengungkapkan diri.

**Kata kunci:** anonimitas; chatgpt; gen z; kesepian; pengungkapan diri.

## INTRODUCTION

Currently, the number of internet users in Indonesia is constantly growing every year. Based on the latest report from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII, 2025), by 2025 around 79% of Indonesia's 278,696,200 population will be internet users. Of this total, 34,40% of internet users are Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012. This is a higher percentage than any other generation. Generation Z grew up in a technology-driven era, are familiar with digital devices, and have easy access to information (Alghamdy, 2023). They prefer to communicate through digital media rather than direct social interaction (Laor, 2022).

As technology advances, Generation Z is beginning to utilize Artificial intelligence (AI) to share their feelings. As many as 10% of Generation Z prefer to confide in AI rather than humans (Agrar, 2024). AI refers to artificial intelligence systems designed to understand human thought processes and mimic human behavior (Sobron & Lubis, 2021). One widely used AI is ChatGPT, which serves as a tool to assist in daily activities such as completing tasks, coding, or creating stories. As it continues to develop, Generation Z has increasingly used ChatGPT as a means to share stories and express their feelings, creating a new phenomenon among the public (Norsely et al., 2023).

Human interaction with AI, particularly ChatGPT, has evolved into an intriguing relationship. Users feel free to express their feelings without worrying about social stigma, making self-disclosure an important aspect of these interactions (Papneja & Yadav 2025). According to Wheelless and Grotz self-disclosure is the process of revealing personal information, either in writing or verbally, which includes ideas, feelings, and behavior (Sakinah, 2021).

Self-disclosure occurs not only in face-to-face relationships but also through the internet. Rains and Brunner (Kristanti & Eva, 2022) argue that communication and interaction on social media reflect an individual's self-disclosure process. In an online context, self-disclosure can provide emotional satisfaction, intimacy, and relief

(Pramesti & Dewi, 2022). ChatGPT provides a safe space for individuals to share openly without fear of judgment, allowing them to engage in self-disclosure and discuss personal issues more freely (Norsely et al., 2023).

Based on the results of written interviews with 15 Gen Zers in January 2025, it was found that respondents tended to open up to ChatGPT when they needed a safe space to share their personal feelings. Respondents felt more comfortable and freer to express themselves because their privacy and identity were unknown. Most respondents recounted family conflicts or unpleasant emotional experiences and used ChatGPT to seek understanding and validation without fear of judgment.

In line with the interview results, one of the factors that influences self-disclosure is anonymity, which is known to encourage individuals to be more open in expressing themselves online (Ma, Hancock & Naaman, 2016). Hite et al., (Pramesti & Dewi, 2022) define anonymity as an individual's perception of the extent to which their personal identity is unknown or unrecognizable to others.

Anonymity in digital communication plays an pivotal role in creating a sense of security for individuals to share their personal stories (Thiodanu & Sari, 2020). Research by Papneja and Yadav (2025) has found that anonymity can make individuals more open and honest in self-disclosure, especially when interacting with conversational technologies such as AI. A high level of anonymity encourages people to feel more confident and free to express themselves on online platforms (Rini & Manalu, 2020). Research by Pramesti and Dewi (2022) also shows a significant influence of anonymity on online self-disclosure. This is further reinforced by findings from Saputra (2023), which reveal that the higher a person's level of anonymity, the more self-disclosure they engage in.

In addition to anonymity, loneliness is also a contributing factor in self-disclosure (Gayatri & Bajirani, 2024). Gen Zers and millennials tend to feel lonelier than previous generations (Gamal, 2023). According to an article from

Newport Academy (Adyatama, 2020), approximately 73% of Gen Z feel lonely and isolated. Research indicates that loneliness can increase a person's likelihood of disclosing personal information online (Ulfah & Aviani, 2023).

Loneliness can be understood as an emotional state that arises when individuals feel socially isolated and do not derive satisfaction from their interpersonal relationships. According to Russell (Nuraini & Laksmiwati, 2024), loneliness is defined as emotional disruption, such as gloominess, loss of motivation, feeling of uselessness, sadness, and focusing on failure and other conditions. It emerges due to individual dissatisfaction with their environment and social life. Russell (Ainunsiah, Wulandari & Yusaputra, 2023) also identifies three aspects of loneliness, namely the desire for social acceptance (social desirability), loneliness as an innate trait (trait loneliness), and loneliness associated with depression (depression-related loneliness).

Loneliness plays an important role in encouraging individuals to be more open and share their feelings online, especially through platforms such as ChatGPT (Fiesa, 2024). One of the psychological effects of loneliness is the loss or absence of social interaction, leading individuals to express this condition through the internet (Ariani et al., 2020). Research conducted by Nuraini and Satwika (2023) found that a person's level of self-disclosure increases in proportion to their level of loneliness.

The urgency of this research was highlighted by the growing phenomenon of Gen Z choosing to express their feelings through AI platforms such as ChatGPT, which offer anonymity and quick responses but may reduce the quality of direct social interaction (Norsely et al., 2023). This study sought to update previous research, which had generally examined self-disclosure on social media platforms such as Twitter (Pramesti & Dewi, 2022), Instagram (Akbar & Abdullah, 2021), and TikTok (Asari & Mukhoyaroh, 2024). Research examining self-disclosure on AI-based platforms such as ChatGPT, characterized by high anonymity and minimal social judgment, has remained limited. Furthermore, the relationship between

anonymity and loneliness in relation to self-disclosure when interacting with AI has not been widely discussed, and this study attempted to address that gap.

Based on the above phenomena and theoretical studies, the purpose of this research was to fill gaps in previous studies and contribute new insights into understanding Gen Z's tendency to share their feelings anonymously through AI technology. Therefore, this study aimed to explore more deeply the phenomenon of self-disclosure among Gen Z in their use of ChatGPT as a confidant. Thus, this study hypothesized that anonymity and loneliness had both partial and simultaneous effects on self-disclosure.

## **METHODS**

This study employed quantitative research methods with a causality-based research design. The characteristics of the respondents in this study were Gen Z, users of ChatGPT as a medium of confiding, with birth years ranging from 1997 to 2012. Since the population was unknown, the researchers used Cohen's formula, which considers significance level, effect size, and statistical power, to determine the minimum sample size. The calculation indicated that 204 respondents were required (Cohen, 1992). This number was considered sufficient to obtain the necessary research data. The sampling method used was non-probability sampling with a convenience sampling technique. Data were collected using psychological assessment instruments with Likert scales, distributed through Google Forms.

Three psychological scales were used in this study. The first instrument, the Revised Self-Disclosure Scale (RSDS) developed by Wheelless & Grotz (1976), consisted of 16 items measured using five different aspects, namely intention, amount, positive-negative disclosure, depth control, and honesty-accuracy. This scale used a 1-5 Likert response format. The second scale used was Perceived Anonymity (PA) developed by Hite, Voelker, & Robertson (2014), consisting of 5 unidimensional items, each evaluating the single construct of anonymity. This scale used five response options based on the Likert score. The third

instrument was UCLA Loneliness Scale (Version 3) by Russell (1996), which consisted of 20 items measuring three dimensions: loneliness as a trait, loneliness influenced by social desire, and loneliness related to depression. This scale used a 4-point Likert response format.

Item analysis was conducted using item-total correlation ( $r_{ix}$ ). Items were considered valid if they had a correlation value greater than 0,25 at the 5% significance level. Reliability testing employed Cronbach Alpha, with  $\alpha > 0,70$  indicating acceptable reliability.

Table 1. Reliability and Validity of Instruments

Scale	Number of Items	Corrected total items	Criteria	Cronbach's Alpha	Criteria
Revised Self-Disclosure	16	0,352- 0,755	Valid (>0,25)	0,875	Reliable (>0,70)
Perceived Anonymity	5	0,621- 0,910	Valid (>0,25)	0,874	Reliable (>0,70)
UCLA Loneliness Scale	20	0,360- 0,683	Valid (>0,25)	0,861	Reliable (>0,70)

The data analysis techniques used in this study were normality tests and linearity tests. In testing the hypothesis, multiple linear regression analysis was used to ensure that the data were valid, reliable, normal, and linear. The analysis included partial tests (t-tests) and simultaneous tests

(F-tests). The researchers also used an additional analysis, namely the coefficient of determination test, to measure the extent to which the independent variables (X) affected the dependent variable (Y). All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 26,0 for Windows 64-b.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The characteristics of the respondents in this study were Gen Z individuals who used ChatGPT as a medium for confiding, with birth years ranging from 1997 to 2012. The

number of respondents was determined using Cohen's formula, which resulted in a total of 204 respondents.

Table 2. Demography

Demography	Category	N.	%
Gender	Male	76	37,3%
	Female	128	62,7%
Year of Birth	1997 –2002	75	36,8%
	2003 –2008	123	60,3%
	2009 –2012	6	2,9%
Employment Status	Employed	108	52,9%
	Unemployed	96	47,1%

Based on the table above, female respondents dominated this study, with 128 respondents (62,7%) of the total sample. By year of birth, the 2003–2008 range had the

most respondents, totaling 123 individuals (60,3%). In terms of employment status, the majority were unemployed, with 108 respondents (52,9%).

**1. Normality test**

Normality tests were used to determine whether the independent and dependent variables were normally

distributed. The test was conducted using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov method, in which the data were considered normal if

the significance value (sig) was greater than 0,05.

Table 3. Normality Test

<i>One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test</i>	
Sig.	>0,05
Asymp sig. (2-tailed)	0,200

Based on the results of the normality test using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, the significance value was 0,200 > 0,05, which means that all research data were normally distributed.

**2. Linearity Test**

The linearity test aims to ensure that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables is linear. The relationship is considered linear if the significance value of the deviation from linearity is  $\geq 0,05$ .

Table 4. Linearity Test

<i>Anova Table</i>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Deviation from linearity (Sig.)</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Anonymity	0,087	>0,05
Loneliness	0,077	>0,05

The results of the linearity test showed a significance value for the deviation from linearity of 0,087 > 0,05 for the anonymity variable toward self-disclosure and 0,077 > 0,05 for the loneliness variable toward self-disclosure, which means there is a linear relationship between the variables.

**3. Multiple Regression Test**

The partial test (t-test) is used to examine the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable, while the simultaneous test (F-test) is used to assess the effect of both variables together. Both tests are considered significant if the significance value (sig) < 0,05.

Table 5. Multiple Regression Hypothesis Test Results

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Anonymity	0,009
Loneliness	0,000
The Anonymity and Loneliness-Self-Disclosure	0,000

The results of the partial test (t-test) show that anonymity (p = 0,009) and loneliness (p = 0,000) have a significant effect on self-disclosure among Gen Z ChatGPT users. This means that the higher the levels of anonymity and loneliness felt, the greater the tendency for individuals to open up through ChatGPT. In addition, the results of the simultaneous test (F-test), with a p-value of 0,000, indicate that anonymity and loneliness together have a significant effect on self-disclosure, suggesting that both variables are important factors that encourage Gen Z users to view ChatGPT as a safe space for self-disclosure.

**4. Results of the coefficient of determination**

The coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) indicates how much the independent variables explain the dependent variable. Its value ranges from 0 to 1; the higher the R<sup>2</sup>,

the stronger the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

Table 6. Results of The Coefficient of Determination

Variable	R Square
Anonymity	0,191
Loneliness	0,063
Anonymity and Loneliness	0,204

The partial coefficient of determination (R Square) for the anonymity variable was 0,191, indicating that 19,1% of the variation in self-disclosure can be explained by anonymity. Meanwhile, the partial coefficient of determination (R Square) for the loneliness variable was 0,063, indicating that 6,3% of the variation in self-disclosure can be explained by loneliness. Simultaneously, an R Square value of 0,204 was obtained, indicating that 20,4% of the variation in self-disclosure can be explained by anonymity and loneliness together, while the remaining 79,6% is explained by other variables not examined in this study.

Based on the results of the hypothesis testing, it was found that loneliness and anonymity have an influence on self-disclosure among Gen Z users of ChatGPT as a medium for confiding, both partially and simultaneously. The results show that anonymity and loneliness together have a significant effect on self-disclosure among Gen Z ChatGPT users. These findings confirm that both variables interact to create psychological conditions that encourage individuals to be more emotionally open. The combination of a sense of security provided by anonymity and the emotional needs arising from loneliness makes Gen Z users feel more comfortable expressing themselves.

These results are consistent with the findings of Asari and Mukhoyaroh (2024), who reported that anonymity and loneliness contribute to self-disclosure on social media. However, this study expands that understanding by introducing a new context—interaction with ChatGPT as an artificial intelligence-based platform that offers complete anonymity and freedom from social pressure. This environment creates a psychological space that is safer and more conducive to users' self-disclosure.

Partially, anonymity was found to have a significant effect on self-disclosure. This is in line with the study of Clark-Gordon et al., (2019), which states that anonymity in online communication increases the level of self-disclosure, as individuals feel freer and less bound by social norms that typically restrict openness. Pramesti and Dewi (2022) also found that anonymity on public social media, such as Twitter, encourages self-disclosure because individuals feel protected from social judgment.

However, the present study differs in that ChatGPT provides a more personal and private form of anonymity compared to social media. The relevance of these findings can be explained through the concept of the online disinhibition effect proposed by Suler (Haqie, Hapsari, & Karsiyati, 2024), which states that anonymity in online communication makes it easier for people to open up. In the context of ChatGPT, this is evident when users feel that their identity is hidden and free from judgment, allowing them to express their thoughts and feelings more openly and honestly.

Meanwhile loneliness was also found to have a significant effect on self-disclosure. These findings support the results of studies by Ariani et al., (2020) and Cahyani, Syaikhah, and Irawatie (2022), which explain that loneliness drives individuals to seek emotional compensation through online communication.

However, this study reveals a new dimension by showing that interactions with AI such as ChatGPT can serve as an effective means of emotional coping for lonely individuals. Unlike earlier studies that highlight human interaction on platforms such as Instagram (Akbar & Abdullah, 2021), this study shows that interaction with AI such as ChatGPT can also be an effective means of emotional

coping.

This is further supported by Li, Wang, Li, and Xu (2023) who found that chatbots create a sense of psychological security for lonely individuals, enabling them to express themselves without fear of judgment. Thus, this study not only supports previous findings but also expands the understanding that ChatGPT can serve as a safe emotional space that encourages more profound self-disclosure, especially among Gen Z users.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the results of research on Gen Z confiding: the role of anonymity and loneliness in the self-disclosure among ChatGPT users, it can be concluded that both independent variables, namely anonymity and loneliness, have a significant influence, both partially and simultaneously, on self-disclosure. The findings show that the higher the level of anonymity individuals experience, the greater their tendency to express themselves openly. This occurs because anonymity provides a sense of security, protection from social judgment, and reduces the risk of stigma.

Meanwhile, loneliness also emerges as a key driver for individuals to engage in self-disclosure, functioning as a form of compensation for the lack of social relationships and the need for emotional support. Simultaneously, the two variables contributed 41,6% to the increase in self-disclosure, with the remaining percentage influenced by other factors not examined in this study.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that psychology practitioners and counselors consider utilizing AI-based technologies such as ChatGPT as supportive tools in counseling processes, particularly for individuals experiencing loneliness or difficulty opening up. This platform can act as an initial bridge for individuals to express their feelings before seeking professional help. For users or the general public, this study offers a new understanding that interactions with AI are not only informative but can also help reduce emotional barriers, enabling individuals to express themselves safely

and without fear of judgment.

This study was limited to only two independent variables, namely anonymity and loneliness. Therefore, further research is recommended to add or use other variables that also have the potential to influence self-disclosure, such as trust in technology, perceived empathy, or levels of social anxiety.

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