SOCIAL ANXIETY IN SOCIAL MEDIA USERS: UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF SELF-ESTEEM AND DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

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Abstract

Social anxiety can occur online when individuals use social media. Several factors that are thought to influence social anxiety using social media are self-esteem and demographic factors such as age, gender, and duration of social media use. The aim of this research is to measure empirically whether these variables are determinants of social anxiety using social media. The participants of this research are 164 active social media users who live in the Jakarta Greater Area. The social anxiety scale for social media users and the self-esteem scale are used as research instruments. The data analysis technique used is regression to measure the role of self-esteem on social anxiety using social media. Meanwhile, correlation tests and difference tests were carried out to determine the position of demographic variables in relation to social anxiety using social media. The research results show that age has a significant negative correlation, while the duration of social media use has a significant positive correlation with social anxiety using social media. On the other hand, self-esteem is proven to have an influence on all aspects of social anxiety using social media. The strongest effect appears on interaction anxiety, and the weakest effect appears on privacy content anxiety. The research results also showed that female participants had higher social anxiety using social media than male participants.
Keywords: Demographic variables, self-esteem, social anxiety, social media

Abstrak

Social anxiety dapat terjadi secara online ketika individu menggunakan media sosial. Beberapa faktor yang diduga memengaruhi social anxiety penggunaan media sosial adalah self-esteem dan faktor-factor demografi seperti usia, jenis kelamin, dan durasi penggunaan media sosial. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah mengukur secara empiris apakah variabel-variabel tersebut menjadi determinants dari social anxiety penggunaan media sosial. Partisipan riset ini adalah 164 orang pengguna aktif media sosial yang tinggal di Jakarta Greater Area. Skala social anxiety for social media users dan skala self-esteem digunakan sebagai instrument penelitian. Teknik analisis data yang digunakan adalah regresi untuk mengukur peran self-esteem terhadap social anxiety penggunaan media sosial. Sementara itu, uji korelasi dan uji perbedaan dilakukan untuk mengetahui bagaimana posisi variabel-variabel demografis dalam kaitannya dengan social anxiety penggunaan media sosial. Hasil penelitian memperlihatkan bahwa usia memiliki korelasi negatif yang signifikan, sedangkan durasi penggunaan media sosial memiliki korelasi positif yang signifikan dengan social anxiety penggunaan media sosial. Di sisi lain, self-esteem terbukti memiliki pengaruh terhadap semua aspek social anxiety penggunaan media sosial. Pengaruh terkuat muncul terhadap interaction anxiety, dan pengaruh terlemah muncul terhadap privacy content anxiety. Hasil penelitian juga memperlihatkan partisipan perempuan memiliki social anxiety penggunaan media sosial yang lebih tinggi dibandingkan partisipan pria.
Kata kunci: demographic variables, self-esteem, social anxiety, social media

INTRODUCTION

Expressions of the heart, expressions of emotion, or expressions of opinion are often things that are often found on social media (Aisyah et al., 2022; Hamzah & Putri, 2020; Mustaffa et al., 2018). In many cases, this is often seen as a form of catharsis that is useful for individual mental health (Gondwe & Some, 2020; Marin-Cortes et al., 2022). However, because it is in the public space domain, readers or other people affiliated with the individual concerned can provide various feedback (Ruiz-Ruiz & Izaguirre, 2022). Problems then arise when the feedback given is negative and makes the individual feel uncomfortable (Demirbilek, 2015; Koutamanis et al., 2015).

These various problems have the potential to generate social anxiety in the use of social media. Social anxiety itself is a type of anxiety that occurs when individuals are interacting socially with other people in certain social settings due to the perception that other people will cause interference or discomfort (Alkis et al., 2017; Sackl-Pammer et al., 2019). Social anxiety using social media itself means social anxiety that occurs when individuals interact socially using social media (Alkis et al., 2017). Some of the symptoms that appear in social anxiety are feelings of pressure and discomfort, and also fear regarding existing relationships (Leitenberg, 1990).

Alkis et al. (2017) explained that social anxiety of using social media can be seen from social anxiety related to various uploads on social media, the spread of personal information on social media, newly built interactions with new people on social media, and self-evaluations related other people's perceptions. With various mental health problems due to social anxiety using social media, it is important to understand what are the determinants that can reduce social anxiety.

Several studies have found that one of the internal factors that is thought to predict social anxiety is self-esteem. Self-esteem is a positive or negative attitude towards oneself (Rosenberg, 1965). Meanwhile (Park & Park, 2019) mention self-esteem as a personal psychological characteristic that is assessed by oneself. Individuals with positive self-esteem see themselves as good and valuable figures so they are more able to develop mindsets to reject negative perceptions of the environment and other people towards themselves (Fatima et al., 2017; Holas et al., 2023). In the context of online interaction, positive self-esteem is considered to help individuals not experience social anxiety because of the various negative responses they receive online (Apaolaza et al., 2019; Jiang & Ngien, 2020).

Meanwhile, several demographic variables are also thought to have an influence on social anxiety using social media. For example, chronological age influences maturity and emotional regulation (Herwandha & Prastuti, 2020; Livingstone &

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Isaacowitz, 2021), thereby reducing the possibility of individuals experiencing social anxiety when using social media. Meanwhile, the duration of social media use is also thought to have a relationship with social anxiety using social media. The longer social media is used, the greater the individual's tendency to perceive that the online environment gives him negative feedback so that he experiences online social anxiety (Koutamanis et al., 2015).

On the other hand, gender is also thought to influence social anxiety in using social media. Women are considered more vulnerable to experiencing social anxiety, even in online social relationships. This is because women are more sensitive and affective in building online social relationships so they more easily feel uncomfortable when they receive negative feedback compared to men (Djamasbi & Loiacono, 2008). Women are more susceptible to social comparison so that negative feedback will cause problems with self-esteem and create social anxiety (Nesi & Prinstein, 2015).

Based on this information exposure, the aim of this research is to empirically measure the influence of self-esteem and demographic factors such as age, gender, and duration of social media use on social anxiety using social media.

METHOD

Participants in this research were 164 active social media users with a composition of 93 (56.7%) female participants and 71 (43.3%) male participants. The age range of participants was 18-35 years (M = 25.98; SD = 4.43). Participants live in the Jakarta Greater Area where the majority live in Jakarta.

Social anxiety for social media users was measured using the Social Anxiety Scale for Social Media Users (SAS-SMU) belonging to Alkis et al. (2017). This scale has four aspects, namely shared content anxiety, privacy content anxiety, interaction anxiety, and self-evaluation anxiety. This scale has 21 items. Starting with the phrase "On social media…." then an example of an item is "The possibility of having my private information acquired by others makes me feel anxious". Response categories on this scale range from Never to Always with a score range of 1-5. This scale has a reliability score of α = 0.944.

Self-esteem in this study was measured using Rosenberg's (1965) classic self-esteem scale. This scale is unidimensional and consists of 10 items. An example of this scale is "On the whole, I am satisfied with my self". The response categories for this scale range from Very Unsuitable to Very Suitable with a score range of 1-5. This scale has a reliability of α = 0.911.

The demographic variables in this study are gender, age, and duration of social

media use in one day. The gender and age of participants are known from personal identification. The duration of social media use in a day is also known from the form of personal identity. The options are 0-1 hour, 2-3 hours, 4-5 hours, and above 5 hours a day. The analysis techniques used range from correlation, to regression, as well as comparison of the averages of each variable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic data exposure in Table 1 shows that the majority of participants are female. Most participants live in Jakarta, then Bekasi, Bogor, Depok and Tangerang. Most participants also have three social media, then two social media and so on. When asked about the social media they owned and participants could answer more than one, the answer that appeared most often was WhatsApp, followed by Instagram, Facebook and so on. The majority of participants use social media in a day for 2-3 hours, then 4-5 hours and so on.

The matrix correlations findings show some interesting things. From the perspective of demographic factors, age is negatively correlated with all social anxiety aspects of social media use, and positively correlated with self-esteem. Duration of social media use per day was positively correlated with all aspects of social anxiety using social media, but negatively correlated with age and self-esteem. Self-esteem itself correlates positively with all aspects of social anxiety

using social media. More complete data is shown in Table 2.

Meanwhile, based on Table 3 it can be seen that self-esteem has the strongest prediction on the aspect of interaction anxiety, followed by predictions on self-evaluation anxiety, shared social anxiety and privacy content anxiety. Based on Table 4 it can be seen as well that there are significant differences in all aspects of social anxiety using social media based on gender. Female participants had higher scores in all aspects than male participants. Significant differences can be seen in the aspects of shared social anxiety and interaction anxiety, while differences that are not too striking can be seen in the aspects of self-evaluation anxiety. The graph of these differences is clearly illustrated in Figure 1.

This study found that the younger the participants were, the more susceptible they were to experiencing social anxiety when using social media. Several findings have confirmed that young age is indeed associated with psychopathological conditions such as social anxiety (Jefferies & Ungar, 2020; Peyre et al., 2022). This could be because young age is related to immature and stable emotions (Brose et al., 2013; Carstensen et al., 2011), especially in perceiving how the environment evaluates the behavior displayed (Chaturvedi & Chander, 2010). The older they get, the more mature and stable their emotions are (Carstensen et al., 2020).

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The duration of social media use was also found to be positively correlated with social anxiety in social media users. Several previous findings have confirmed this (Lai et al., 2023; Silmi et al., 2020). This is because communication on social media is also vulnerable to pressure that comes from other people's feedback regarding the individual social media user (Deolankar et al., 2023; Koutamanis et al., 2015). Despite experiencing anxiety about several things including online privacy and potential conflicts in social interactions, it is not easy for some individuals to give up the use of social media considering that social media has become their need and source of appreciation (Jan et al., 2017; Rahma & Setiasih, 2021).

Self-esteem was also found to have a correlation and influence on the four aspects of social anxiety for social media users. This confirms one thing that the feeling of oneself as a significant and valuable person can reduce negative thoughts about how other people might perceive the individual self (Harris & Orth, 2020). Self-esteem affects social anxiety that arises from feeling uncomfortable responding to feedback from things that have been posted on social media (Alkis, Kadirhan, & Sat, 2017; Rahma & Setiasih, 2021; Salim et al., 2017). Positive self-esteem also helps individuals form positive self-assessments of what is displayed on social media, including responding to responses from other people (Alkis, Kadirhan, & Sat, 2017; Rahma & Setiasih, 2021).

Self-esteem also has the strongest influence on interaction anxiety. Interaction anxiety appears in social relationships in cyberspace in people who are unknown before or have just met (Alkis et al., 2017). Cyberspace is always vulnerable to manipulation in social relations. Therefore, individuals with positive self-esteem are usually able to display more alert behavior so they are less anxious when they want to initiate social relationships on social media (He, 2022; C. Ma et al., 2019).

Another interesting finding in this research shows that self-esteem has the least influence on privacy content anxiety. Privacy content anxiety itself is anxiety about the disclosure and spread of personal information on social media (Alkis et al., 2017). This shows that many individuals think that various personal information is often seen as part of a digital identity (Papaioannou et al., 2021). Perceived collectivism towards online self-disclosure actually has the potential to strengthen one's self-esteem (Chen, 2017). Thus, the limitation that being able to become a valuable individual by limiting the dissemination of personal information on social media seems to have shifted.

Meanwhile, female participants had higher social anxiety than male participants. Ma's findings (2022) state that women place more emphasis on building engagement in social relations, including in cyberspace. For women, social relations are a source of social support (Fuhrer & Stansfeld, 2002). As a

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consequence, emotional attachment and feeling intensity are more deeply involved. This has resulted in women having more consideration and being more careful in initiating and building social relations in cyberspace. This is of course somewhat different from men who build more social relations for pragmatic purposes and remain independent, for example, to expand work networks or friendships so they don't place too much importance on emotional attachment (Fuhrer & Stansfeld, 2002; McKenzie et al., 2018).

Table 1. Participant Demographic Data

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	71	43.3%
Female	93	56.7%
Place of residence		
Jakarta	99	60.4%
Bogor	16	9.8%
Depok	12	7.3%
Tangerang	8	4.9%
Bekasi	29	17.7%
Number of active social media		
1	-	-
2	47	28.7%
3	90	54.9%
4	24	14.6%
5	2	1.2%
More than 5	1	0.6%
Social media*		
Facebook	70	14.73%
Instagram	143	30.10%
Telegram	24	5.05%
TikTok	34	7.15%
Twitter (X)	32	6.73%
WhatsApp	162	34.10%
Youtube	10	2.10%
Social media use duration per day		
0-1 hour	25	15.2%
2-3 hours	98	59.8%
4-5 hours	36	22%
More than 5 hours	5	3%

Note: * = Participants are allowed to choose more than one answer

Table 2. Matrix Correlation for All Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
SCA							
PCA	0.801**						
IA	0.899**	0.772**					
SEA	0.829**	0.822**	0.859**				
SE	-0.374**	-0.278**	-0.436**	-0.381**			

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	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Age	-0.740**	-0.677**	-0.721**	-0.725**	0.285**		
Duration	0.717**	0.630**	0.718**	0.618**	-0.228**	-0.586**	
Mean	18.38	13.95	15.75	8.24	37.74	25.98	2.13
SD	5.76	3.24	4.57	1.81	3.24	4.43	0.69

Note: 1 = shared social anxiety (SCA), 2 = privacy content anxiety (PCA), 3 = interaction anxiety (IA),
4 = self-evaluation anxiety (SEA), 5 = self-esteem (SE), 6 = age, 7 = duration
*= $p < .05$, **= $p < .01$

Table 3. Regression Analysis from Self-Esteem to Social Anxiety for Social Media User

	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
SCA	0.140	0.135	5.364	26.427	$p < .01$
PCA	0.077	0.071	3.129	13.541	$p < .01$
IA	0.190	0.185	4.132	37.931	$p < .01$
SEA	0.145	0.140	1.685	27.475	$p < .01$

Note: 1 = SCA (shared social anxiety), 2 = PCA (privacy content anxiety), 3 = IA (interaction anxiety),
4 = SEA (self-evaluation anxiety)

Table 4. Social Anxiety for Social Media User Differences Based on Gender

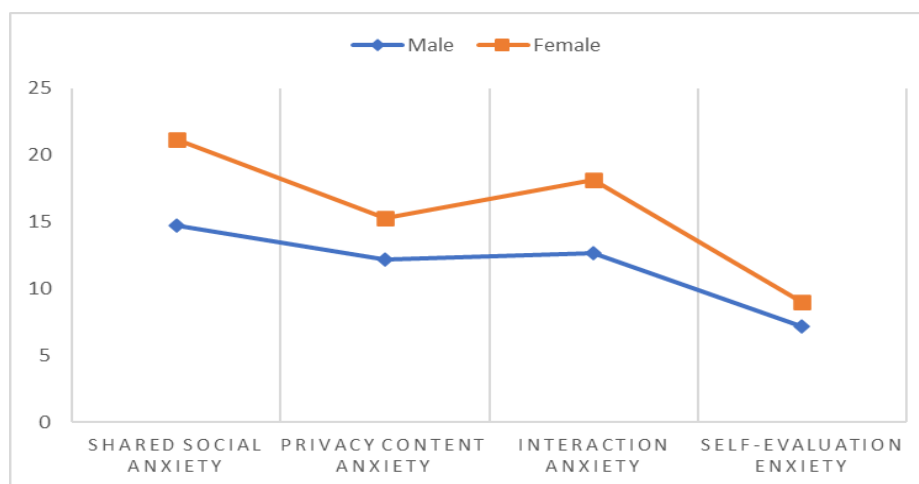| Aspects	Mean (SD)		t	Sig.
	Male	Female		
Shared social anxiety	14.77 ± 3.74	21.16 ± 5.49	-8.471	$p < .01$
Privacy content anxiety	12.17 ± 2.36	15.30 ± 3.18	-6.953	$p < .01$
Interaction anxiety	12.65 ± 3.15	18.12 ± 4.05	-9.402	$p < .01$
Self-evaluation anxiety	7.20 ± 1.26	9.04 ± 1.77	-7.444	$p < .01$

Figure 1. Graphic of Social Anxiety for Social Media User Differences Based on Gender

CONCLUSION

Self-esteem does empirically have a significant influence on social anxiety in the use of social media, especially for aspects of interaction anxiety. Specifically, the role of self-esteem is greater in the online aspect of social relations, compared to other things, including online social privacy. Female participants are more susceptible to experiencing social anxiety using social media because the need to use social media is to build social engagement and seek social support, so they become more careful in conducting online social interaction.

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