

The Relationship Between Secure Attachment Style and Self-Disclosure in Late Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between secure attachment style and self-disclosure among late adolescents in Jakarta, Indonesia (N = 170). The findings indicate a statistically significant yet weak positive correlation between the two variables ($r(168) = .151$, $p = .050$). This suggests that higher levels of secure attachment tend to be associated with increased self-disclosure; however, the magnitude of this association is limited and does not consistently reach a high level of openness. Conversely, lower levels of secure attachment do not necessarily correspond to lower self-disclosure, as the observed relationship is correlational rather than causal and may be influenced by other internal and external factors. Overall, secure attachment style is related to adolescents' self-disclosure, but it should not be regarded as the sole determinant of openness during late adolescence.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Human development unfolds through a sequence of psychosocial stages, one of which is late adolescence, a period characterized by the transition from childhood to adulthood, identity exploration, and increasingly complex social relationships. During this phase, psychological well-being and interpersonal functioning are strongly influenced by secure attachment and self-disclosure, both of which play a central role in shaping adolescents' social adjustment and emotional health [1], [2].

Attachment Theory posits that a sense of security is formed through consistent parental responsiveness, warmth, and emotional availability, which become the foundation for later relational patterns [3], [4]. Secure attachment developed in childhood is reflected in confidence, effective emotion regulation, and the ability to form healthy interpersonal relationships in adolescence and beyond [5], [6]. Individuals with secure attachment are also more likely to employ adaptive emotion regulation strategies, such as seeking social support,

problem-solving, and positive reappraisal, which enhance coping effectiveness and goal attainment [7].

Secure attachment is conceptually and empirically linked to self-disclosure, understood as the selective and context-sensitive sharing of personal information with others [8], [9]. Self-disclosure is a core component of interpersonal communication and encompasses several qualitative aspects, including amount, valence, honesty, and relational closeness [10], [11]. Developmentally, self-disclosure is rooted in Erikson's stage of identity versus role confusion, which precedes the intimacy versus isolation stage in early adulthood. Successful identity formation in late adolescence supports emotional openness and the capacity to engage in meaningful disclosure, which in turn facilitates the development of intimacy in subsequent relationships [12], [13]. Empirical findings indicate that stronger identity-related competencies are associated with higher levels of interpersonal intimacy over time, highlighting the developmental continuity between identity formation and self-disclosure [14], [15].

In contemporary social contexts, particularly among late adolescents, digital communication environments have intensified challenges related to self-disclosure. Social media platforms often encourage impulsive emotional expression and validation-seeking behaviors, as illustrated by viral trends such as public confessions of personal shame on TikTok [16], [17]. These patterns underscore how limited emotion regulation and insecure relational foundations may contribute to maladaptive disclosure, especially in online settings. Healthy self-disclosure, therefore, is not only essential for strengthening interpersonal relationships but also functions as a protective coping mechanism that reduces psychological distress and prevents negative social consequences [18], [19].

Within the Indonesian family context, attachment patterns and parenting practices remain critical determinants of adolescents' social and emotional development. Secure attachment provides a foundation for empathy, emotional regulation, and positive peer relationships [19]. In contrast, unmet emotional needs related to safety, affection, and closeness may result in insecure attachment patterns, which are associated with anxiety, low social trust, and difficulties in forming healthy emotional bonds in later relationships [20]. As the family continues to function as the primary socialization environment during the transition to adulthood, early attachment experiences play a decisive role in adolescents' adaptive social functioning [21].

Empirical studies have demonstrated associations between secure attachment style and adolescents' social and emotional functioning. Farrah, Nata, and Dwiyani (2023) reported high levels of self-disclosure among late-adolescent female TikTok users, particularly in dimensions related to honesty and determination. Zhang, Li, and Zhao (2022) found that attachment style is significantly associated with adolescent self-disclosure, with emotion regulation acting as a partial mediator. Other research showed that secure attachment among social media users is linked to adaptive coping strategies that support healthier patterns of self-disclosure [22], [23], [24].

Despite this growing body of research, important gaps remain. Existing studies often emphasize online populations, focus on specific platforms, or examine attachment in relation to academic or general psychosocial outcomes rather than directly testing the relationship

between secure attachment style and self-disclosure as measured by standardized instruments. Moreover, empirical research that simultaneously operationalizes secure attachment using the Attachment Style Questionnaire–Short Form (ASQ-SF) and self-disclosure using the Self-Disclosure Scale by Wheelless and Grotz remains limited, particularly among late adolescents aged 18–21 in urban Indonesian settings such as Jakarta. Consequently, there is insufficient evidence clarifying how secure attachment relates to overall self-disclosure tendencies in this specific developmental and cultural context.

Based on these considerations, the present study aims to examine the relationship between secure attachment style and self-disclosure among late adolescents aged 18–21, including final-year high school students and early-semester university students in Jakarta [25], [26]. By addressing this specific population and employing established measurement instruments, the study seeks to provide more precise empirical evidence on attachment and self-disclosure in Indonesian late adolescence.

2. METHOD

Type of Research

This study adopts a quantitative correlational approach to empirically examine the statistical association between secure attachment style (independent variable) and self-disclosure (dependent variable) among late adolescents. The design is non-experimental, as no intervention or manipulation is applied; the analysis focuses solely on naturally occurring variations between variables. The strength and direction of the relationship are analyzed using correlation analysis. The Pearson Product-Moment correlation is employed as the primary analysis because the data are measured on an interval scale and meet the assumptions of normality, as outlined in methodological guidelines [27].

Operational Definition of Secure Attachment Style

Secure attachment style is operationalized using the Attachment Style Questionnaire–Short Form (ASQ-SF). Classification is based on a composite rule: participants are categorized as having a secure attachment style if they obtain a score above the sample median on the Confidence dimension and scores below the sample median on all insecure dimensions, namely Discomfort with Closeness, Relationships as Secondary, Need for Approval, and Preoccupation with Relationships. Median-based cutoffs are applied to ensure consistency in classification within the sample distribution and to allow replication across similar populations.

Sampling Technique and Participant Criteria

The sampling strategy uses purposive sampling, selecting participants who meet predefined criteria relevant to the research objectives. Eligible participants are late adolescents aged 18–21 years who are active college students or final-year high school students, and who have resided in the Jakarta area for at least 6 months. Recruitment is conducted through online platforms, including WhatsApp groups, Instagram, and student community networks. Individuals outside the specified age range, not currently enrolled as students, or not residing in Jakarta are excluded. No material or monetary incentives are

provided to participants. This approach is selected to ensure alignment between participant characteristics and the psychosocial constructs under investigation [27].

Research Setting and Instruments

The research is conducted in Jakarta using an online data collection setting. Questionnaires are distributed digitally via a survey link shared through social media and communication groups. Measurement instruments include the Attachment Style Questionnaire–Short Form (ASQ-SF) to assess attachment style and the Self-Disclosure Scale developed by Wheelless and Grotz (1976). Data management and statistical analysis are performed using Jamovi software version 2.7.11.

Data Processing and Analysis Techniques

Self-disclosure is analyzed using total scale scores and dimensional scores representing frequency, depth, accuracy, intention, and the positive and negative aspects of disclosure. All scale dimensions are subjected to reliability testing prior to analysis. Data normality is assessed using the Shapiro–Wilk test, which is applied consistently because the sample size is below 200. Correlation analysis is conducted using Pearson’s correlation coefficient as the primary test. When normality assumptions are not met for either variable, Spearman’s rho is additionally reported as a robustness check to support the stability of the findings. Differences between relevant groups are examined using appropriate comparative tests based on data distribution.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Participant Criteria

Participants in this study were late adolescents, both male and female, aged 18 to 21. The second characteristic was that the subjects were active students. Furthermore, the subjects resided in Jakarta. The researcher did not limit participation to a specific school or university, so all students from any school or university were eligible to participate. This criterion was chosen because this age group is in a crucial phase of establishing healthy intimate relationships and a stable sense of identity, and participants were expected to be able to understand and complete the questionnaire.

Based on data from 170 participants, the largest age group was 20-year-olds (54 participants, 31.8%), followed by 18- and 19-year-olds (41 participants each, 24.1%), with the smallest group being 21-year-olds (34 participants, 20.0%). In terms of education and activity status, most participants were 5th–6th semester university students (51 participants, 30.0%), followed by both 1st–2nd and 3rd–4th semester students (42 participants each, 24.7%). At the same time, the smallest groups were 12th-grade high school students and 8th-grade junior high students (1 participant each, 0.6%), as well as workers (2 participants, 1.2%). Most participants lived in North Jakarta (41 participants, 24.1%), followed by West Jakarta (37 participants, 21.8%), Central and East Jakarta (31 participants each, 18.2%), with the fewest residing in South Jakarta (30 participants, 17.6%). Regarding closest relationships, the majority reported parents as their closest figures (83 participants, 48.8%), followed by friends and romantic partners (29 participants each, 17.1%). Most participants

lived with their parents (87 participants, 51.2%), while 62 (36.5%) lived independently and 21 (12.4%) lived with extended family. Finally, parents were also the most frequently chosen confidants (63 participants, 37.1%), followed by friends (46 participants, 27.1%) and romantic partners (40 participants, 23.5%), indicating that parents and friends remain the primary trusted sources for sharing personal experiences.

Table 1. Participant Overview

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	87	51.2
Male	83	48.8
Total	170	100
Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18 years old	41	24.1
19 years old	41	24.1
20 years old	54	31.8
21 years old	34	20.0
Total	170	100
Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
5th–6th Semester College Student	51	30.0
1st–2nd Semester College Student	42	24.7
3rd–4th Semester College Student	42	24.7
7th–8th Semester College Student	31	18.2
Worker	2	1.2
12th Grade High School Student	1	0.6
8th Grade Junior High School Student	1	0.6
Total	170	100
Domicile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
North Jakarta	41	24.1
West Jakarta	37	21.8
Central Jakarta	31	18.2
East Jakarta	31	18.2
South Jakarta	30	17.6
Total	170	100
Closest Relationship	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Parents	83	48.8
Friends	29	17.1
Partner	29	17.1
Extended family (cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc.)	15	8.8
Siblings	14	8.2
Total	170	100
Living Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Living with parents	87	51.2
Living alone (boarding house/apartment/own house)	62	36.5
Living with extended family	21	12.4
Total	170	100
Storytelling Preference	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Parents	63	37.1
Friends	46	27.1
Partner	40	23.5
Extended family (cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc.)	11	6.5
Siblings	10	5.9
Total	170	100

Main Data Analysis

Assumption Test

This study used the Shapiro-Wilk Test for normality because the sample size was less than 200 ($N = 170$). Data are considered normally distributed if the significance value (p) is greater than 0.05. The results of the normality test indicate that for the secure attachment style variable (Total X1), the p -value is $<.001$, indicating $p < 0.05$. Thus, the secure attachment style variable is not normally distributed. For the self-disclosure variable (Total Y), the p -value is 0.661, meaning $p > 0.05$. Therefore, the self-disclosure variable is normally distributed. Although one of the variables is not normally distributed, Pearson correlation analysis was still used because the large sample size ($N = 170$) means that violations of normality do not significantly affect the test's robustness.

Table 2. Results of the Normality Test for Secure Attachment Style and Self-Disclosure Variables

Variable	p	Description
Secure Attachment Style	$< .001$	Not Normal
Self-Disclosure	0.661	Normal

Hypothesis Analysis

Hypothesis analysis was conducted to determine whether there is a relationship between secure attachment style and self-disclosure in late adolescence. This study used a medium-sized sample ($N = 170$) and interval-scale data. Pearson correlation analysis was used to analyze the relationship between variables. The analysis showed a positive correlation between secure attachment style and self-disclosure. The correlation coefficient obtained was $r(170) = 0.151$, $p = 0.050$ (< 0.05), indicating a statistically significant relationship. This finding indicates that the higher the participants' secure attachment style, the higher their level of self-disclosure. Although the correlation is categorized as weak (Privitera, 2015), the direction of the relationship still supports the research hypothesis: a positive relationship between the two variables.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Test Results between Secure Attachment Style and Self-Disclosure

Variable	r	p	Description
Secure Attachment Style & Self-Disclosure	0.151	0.050	Significant, Weak Positive Correlation

Additional Data Analysis

Self-Disclosure Difference Test Based on Closest Relationship

The researcher conducted additional analyses to determine whether self-disclosure levels differed across the closest relationship categories. The difference test was conducted using the Kruskal-Wallis Test, which is appropriate for non-normal data and more than two groups. The test results showed a significant value of $p = 0.290$, meaning $p > 0.05$. Therefore, it can be concluded that there are no differences in self-disclosure across the closest relationships. The above description is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of the Self-Disclosure Difference Test Based on Closest Relationship

Variable	p	Description
Self-Disclosure reviewed from the Closest Relationships	0.290	There is no difference

Self-Disclosure Difference Test Based on Residence Status

Researchers conducted additional analyses to determine whether there was a difference in self-disclosure by residence status. With more than two groups, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used, and the results showed a p-value of 0.590 ($p > 0.05$), indicating no difference in self-disclosure based on residence status. The above explanation is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of the Self-Disclosure Difference Test Based on Residence Status

Variable	p	Description
Self-Disclosure reviewed from the perspective of Residence Status	0.590	There is no difference

Self-Disclosure Difference Test Based on Storytelling Preference

The researcher conducted additional analyses to determine whether self-disclosure differed by storytelling preference. Given that the data were not normally distributed and consisted of more than two groups, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used. The test results showed a p-value of 0.274, indicating $p > 0.05$. Therefore, it can be concluded that there were no differences in self-disclosure across storytelling preferences. The above explanation is shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Results of Self-Disclosure Difference Test Based on Storytelling Preference

Variable	p	Description
Self-Disclosure reviewed from the perspective of Storytelling Preferences	0.274	There is no difference

Discussion

Research consistently indicates a positive association between secure attachment style and self-disclosure in late adolescence [13], suggesting that adolescents with higher attachment security tend to display more adaptive patterns of sharing personal information. This relationship reflects a general tendency rather than a deterministic rule: secure attachment does not automatically produce high self-disclosure, nor does lower attachment security inevitably lead to restricted disclosure [28]. Accordingly, secure attachment should be understood as a facilitating factor that contributes to, but does not solely determine, how adolescents disclose personal experiences.

From a theoretical and empirical standpoint, the mechanism underlying this relationship lies primarily in the confidence dimension of secure attachment. Adolescents who perceive themselves as worthy of care and who trust others are more capable of regulating emotions and engaging in open interpersonal communication [29]. These characteristics support adaptive self-disclosure, as reflected in overall SDS scores, indicating

a balanced capacity to share thoughts and feelings while remaining sensitive to relational context and personal boundaries [30].

These findings align with classical attachment theory, which emphasizes the protective role of secure attachment in socio-emotional development [31], [32]. Secure attachment equips adolescents with emotional regulation skills, interpersonal trust, and relational stability, all of which indirectly support self-disclosure during a developmental period characterized by identity exploration and increasing intimacy [33]. However, variability in self-disclosure persists even among individuals with similar levels of attachment security, as situational demands, relational norms, and individual differences also shape disclosure behavior. This explains why some securely attached adolescents disclose selectively, whereas others are more open, depending on contextual needs.

The practical implications of these findings highlight the importance of cultivating secure attachment through warm, consistent, and responsive communication within families and educational environments [34]. Interventions targeting adolescents should incorporate social-emotional learning that strengthens trust, emotional regulation, and effective communication skills. Although self-disclosure in digital contexts is increasingly relevant, it should be acknowledged that this study does not directly assess online disclosure behavior. Therefore, the implications of social media use remain inferential and require further empirical investigation [35].

Several limitations must be noted. The sample is confined to late adolescents aged 18–21, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other age groups. The reliance on self-report measures introduces the potential for social desirability bias [22]. Moreover, the correlational design precludes causal conclusions regarding the influence of secure attachment on self-disclosure. Despite these limitations, the findings provide empirical support for a positive relationship between secure attachment style and self-disclosure in late adolescence, while reinforcing the view that self-disclosure is a multifactorial process influenced by both internal and external factors [13].

4. CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of secure attachment style and self-disclosure in late adolescence, it can be concluded that there is a significant, but weak, relationship between the two variables. This indicates that as secure attachment increases, self-disclosure tends to increase, although the rate of increase is not always the same or reaches a very high level. Conversely, if the level of secure attachment style is low, this does not necessarily mean that the level of self-disclosure is also low, as the relationship between the two is not causal and can still be influenced by other factors. It can be said that a secure attachment style is related to self-disclosure, but this relationship is correlational and does not determine the level of self-disclosure.

Recommendations

1. Recommendations Related to Theoretical Benefits

Several theoretical suggestions for further research are: (a) this study can serve as a reference in the development of developmental psychology and social psychology, particularly regarding the relationship between secure attachment style and self-disclosure; (b) the researcher recommends conducting more specific research on the influence of secure attachment dimensions on self-disclosure dimensions in late adolescence; (c) The researcher also recommends research on the role of environmental factors, such as peer support or social media, on late adolescent self-disclosure; (d) further research can explore mediating or moderating mechanisms, such as emotional regulation or trust in parents, in the relationship between secure attachment and self-disclosure; and (e) the researcher suggests further development or validation of self-disclosure and attachment style measurement tools that are appropriate to the characteristics of Indonesian adolescents.

2. Suggestions Related to Practical Benefits

Practical suggestions that can be provided include: (a) parents are expected to improve warm, responsive, and consistent communication with their children, so that adolescents feel safe to express themselves in a healthy manner; (b) educators and counselors can develop learning programs or workshops that focus on communication skills, emotional regulation, and self-disclosure in adolescents; (c) college students or late adolescents are advised to use social media wisely when sharing personal information to maintain healthy self-disclosure and prevent oversharing; (d) universities or educational institutions can hold seminars or activities that discuss the development of interpersonal skills, emotional management, and healthy digital media use. and (e) environmental support, both from family and peers, needs to be provided so that late adolescents can build safe, healthy and adaptive interpersonal relationships, thereby improving their overall psychological well-being.

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