

## Utilization of the Tiktok Video Application as a Means of Showing Existence And Self-Disclosure of Teenagers on Social Media



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**ABSTRACT:** Along with the rapid development of technology, the current use of social media by the community is also increasing. One of the social media that is currently on the rise is the TikTok application. TikTok application users come from various backgrounds and ages, including teenagers. Video-based TikTok features accompanied by music, writing, and pictures are considered attractive so that they are liked by teenagers as a means of showing their existence and self-disclosure. TikTok is also currently developing as a way to share information.

The theory applied by the researcher was Alman and Taylor's Social Penetration Theory. In addition to such theory, this paper are supported and strengthened by the concepts of Self-Disclosure, Social Media, Teenagers, TikTok, and also Self-Existence.

This paper was a qualitative descriptive study which applied a qualitative study method. This paper involved several informants namely teenagers who were also the users of the TikTok application. The inclusion criteria here were teenagers who had a TikTok account, were active on TikTok, and used TikTok as part of their existence and self-disclosure.

The results of this study explored the process of self-disclosure and also the existence carried out by the informants in accordance with the stages proposed in the social penetration theory. Informants passed through the stages of self-disclosure sequentially from the orientation stage to the stable stage so that the existence of teenagers in presenting themselves on social media could be observed.

**KEYWORDS:** Self Disclosure, Teenagers, Social Media, TikTok

### INTRODUCTION

Humans are social creatures who exactly need help and interaction with other people. Therefore, communication has a very important role in human life. When we communicate, we can get information and survive. Judy C. Pearson and Paul E. Nelson state that communication has two functions. First, for self-sustainability, self-protection, and standing out of others; and the second, for survival within society and fostering good relations in the community. (Mulyana, 2014).

When we relate or interact with other people, we need self-disclosure, so that the relationship gets closer. Self-disclosure is the process of passing on information about oneself to someone else (Wood, 2009). Self-disclosure is very important in a relationship or communication because by disclosing ourselves, we make it easier for others to evaluate us and we can share everything that we feel and experience. When we start to be open in a relationship, then we can provoke other people to do it too. Morton (in Taylor, Peplau, & Sears, 2009) proposes that self-disclosure can be descriptive or evaluative. Self-disclosure is descriptive when we describe various facts about ourselves that may not have been known by the others, such as occupation, age, name, place of residence. Meanwhile, self-disclosure is evaluative when we describe a series of opinions or feelings and experiences, for example loving for something or someone.

Self-disclosure can be performed in various ways and anywhere. Along with the development of the times and technology, self-disclosure can also be done in various media, and one example which is very popular today is social networking media. Users often use social networking media as a place where they express what they feel and experience. When they disclose themselves on social media, we can see another side of users that we don't see when we meet face to face. The emergence of friendship sites (social media) which are increasingly loved by millions of people in the world is also able to trigger a shift in social values in society, especially among teenagers. Social media has become part of the growing up experience for teenagers (Briggs & Burke, 2006).

Teenagers around the world are so attached to social media. They continue to communicate through social media, even while eating, walking and studying. Time spent on social media is often more than time spent studying or hanging out with family. There are various reasons why social media is so attractive to teenagers, some of which are easy for getting recognition, asking for opinions, growing an image, hobbies and making friends. Talking about teenage problems is inseparable with several aspects

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attached to those such as their age. Regarding the emotional state, they are still unstable, their spirit of work is very high and they have desire to be able to exist and want to be recognized by the surrounding environment (Mahendra, 2017).

One of the social media that is widely used for the self-existence and self-disclosure among teenagers is the TikTok application. TikTok is one of the most popular and in-demand applications in the world. TikTok allows users to create 15-second videos with music, filters, and other creative features. This application was launched by a company from China, ByteDance which first launched an application that has a short duration called Douyin. In just 1 year, Douyin had 100 million users and 1 billion daily video views. Douyin's high popularity made him expanded outside of China under the name of TikTok. According to a report from Sensor Tower, this application was downloaded 700 million times throughout 2019. This allows TikTok to outperform some applications under the auspices of Facebook Inc. This application ranks second after Whatsapp which has 1.5 billion downloads (Pertiwi, 2020).

In Indonesia, in 2018, this application was ranked the best application on the Play store owned by Google. Not only that, TikTok also became the most entertaining application category (Wardani, 2018). In July last year, the application made in China was blocked by the Ministry of Communication and Information (Kominformasi) in mid-2018 since there was negative content, especially for children. Blocking on this application only lasted a week, from 3-10 July 2018 (Pertiwi, 2020).

This application is much-loved by teenagers, small children, and even adults who feel that they need entertainment. The number of young people and adults who make and post videos on various social media platforms makes this application not only more popular, but people who use this application are also popular (Adawiyah, 2020). TikTok has its own characteristics. Videos uploaded by TikTok have a "watermark" in the form of a username that distinguishes them from other applications.

Adolescence is a period of transition from children to adults. In this case, there is development both physically and mentally. There is an age limit generally used by experts namely between 12 to 21 years, which can be grouped to early adolescents with an age range of 12-15 years, middle adolescents with an age range of 15-18 years and late adolescents with an age range of 18-21 years (Marwoko, 2019).

Adolescence is a period of development that will always be passed by individuals. The period of adolescent development is when a person reaches mental, emotional, social, physical maturity, which is a period of individual development during the transition from childhood to adulthood. This results in different characteristics from one another. Changes both physically and psychologically as well as social life bring various problems and challenges (Hurlock, 2011).

In this study, the researcher involved the adolescents who actively used the TikTok application because the teenage period is a period of pleasure to show their existence and openness. Teenagers are very dependent on social media and inseparable from narcissistic and contemporary views. Social media seems to have become an addiction for them. All things in the form of activities or acts, thoughts and feelings are often uploaded by teenagers through their social media. Social media has become part of the growing up experience for teenagers (Briggs & Burke, 2006). This study aims to find out the use of TikTok as a means of self-existence and self-disclosure for teenagers.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Interpersonal Communication**

The definition of interpersonal communication is simply put forward by Onong U. Effendy, namely communication between a communicator and a communicant (Effendy, 2009). Interpersonal communication is also defined as face-to-face communication between people that allows each participant to capture the reactions of others directly, both verbally and non-verbally. The specific form of interpersonal communication is dyadic communication that involves only two people, such as husband and wife, two colleagues, two close friends, teacher-student, and so on, which is characterized by the parties communicating in close proximity; communicating parties send and receive messages simultaneously and spontaneously, both verbally and non-verbally (Hasanah, 2017).

In more detail, Hovland defines interpersonal communication as a state of interaction when a person (the communicator) sends stimuli (usually verbal symbols) to change the behavior of others (the communicant), in a face-to-face event ((Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Interpersonal communication is communication held between two people who are intertwined in a deep psychological atmosphere and usually performed face to face. There are also seven characteristics of interpersonal communication, namely 1). The number of people involved is very small (around 2 or 3 people); 2). The level of physical closeness during communication is intimate to personal; 3). The nature of the feedback is immediate; 4). The communication role is informal; 5). Message customization is specific; 6). The goal and intent of communication is not structured but very social (Solomon & Theiss, 2020). DeVito, (2008) adds that effective interpersonal communication starts with five general qualities that need to be considered, namely openness, empathy, support, positive attitude and equality.

In interpersonal communication, the most important thing is not the intensity in communicating but how the communication is established. To develop a good communication, supporting factors are necessary. Jalaludin Rakhmat (2007) mentions that there

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are several factors that foster interpersonal relationships, including trust, a supportive attitude, and an open attitude. The principle of interpersonal communication is contrary to mass communication. The principles of interpersonal communication are 1). A two-way flow of messages from both the sender and the recipient of the message; 2). Communication takes place in a familiar or more personal atmosphere; 3). Immediate feedback can be obtained; and 4). It is more effectively influence attitudes and behavior (Bannister & Fransella, 2019). From some of the definitions above, it can be concluded that interpersonal communication is communication that occurs between the communicator and the communicant, generally in a face-to-face atmosphere and feedback can be directly observed by the communicator.

From some of the definitions above, it can be concluded that interpersonal communication is communication between individuals and personal in nature, whether it occurs directly (without a podium) or indirectly (through a podium). For example, face-to-face conversations, telephone conversations, cell phones, the Internet, teleconferences, personal correspondence. The focus of observation is the forms and characteristics of relationships, conversations, interactions and characteristics of communicators.

### Self-Disclosure

The most important component in a communication is actually the self, namely the psychological completeness that allows self-reflection to influence the experience of consciousness, which underlies all kinds of perceptions, beliefs, and feelings about oneself and things that can regulate one's own behavior. Linguistically, self means oneself, disclosure is derived from the word closure which means closing or ending. So, disclosure itself has the meaning of openness or being open. Thus, self-disclosure is so called self-revelation, but some experts call it self-disclosure (Leary & MacDonald, 2003).

According to Wei, Russell, & Zakalik, (2005) self-disclosure refers to the individual's verbal communication of personality relevant information, thoughts, and feelings in order to let themselves be known by others. This means that self-disclosure is a verbal communication about an individual's relevant information, thoughts, and feelings conveyed, so that other individuals may know about him/herself.

Barker & Gaut, (2002) suggest that self-disclosure is a person's ability to convey information to others which includes thoughts/opinions, desires, feelings and concerns. Meanwhile, Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietrononaco, (2004) state that self-disclosure includes thoughts, opinions, and feelings. By revealing themselves to others, individuals feel valued, cared for, and trusted by others, so that communication relationships will be more intimate. Just as above opinions, DeVito, (2008) suggests that self-disclosure is the ability to provide information. The information to be conveyed consists of 5 aspects, namely behavior, feelings, desires, motivations, and ideas that are in accordance with the person concerned. The information to be conveyed depends on a person's ability to perform self-disclosure.

In addition, DeVito, (2008) suggests that self-disclosure has several general characteristics, including: (1) self-disclosure is a type of communication about self-information that is generally saved, which is communicated to others, (2) self-disclosure is information regarding knowledge that was previously unknown to others and thus must be communicated, (3) self-disclosure is information about oneself regarding his thoughts, feelings and attitudes, (4) self-disclosure can be specific information. Specific information is a secret that is disclosed to other people privately that is not known by everyone, and (5) self-disclosure involves at least one other individual, therefore self-disclosure is information that must be accepted and understood by other individual(s).

### Social Penetration Theory

Social Penetration Theory was first proposed by Altman and Taylor. According to Altman and Taylor (1987), communication is important in developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships. Some studies do support this idea. Therefore, social penetration theory explains the role of self-disclosure, intimacy, and communication in the development of interpersonal relationship.

Social penetration theory describes self-disclosure as a process of sharing different levels of information which varies from superficial to intimate. Different levels of social penetration are conceptualized in two dimensions namely broad and deep. In this case, depth is related to the level of intimacy in the process of social penetration which will determine a person's comfort in self-disclosure regarding certain aspects of his personality since personal life is not always disclosed openly (Ernala et al., 2018).

In this theory, there are several assumptions (West & Turner, 2010), namely:

- a. Individual relationships proceed from non-intimacy to intimacy. Individual relationships occur from feeling strange to each other to establishing a more intimate and having a closer relationship to each other.
- b. Relationships that develop systematically and predictably.
- c. Relationship development includes de-penetration and its decline can lead to relationship dissolution.
- d. Self-Disclosure is a source of relationship development.

In general, social penetration theory will help people to think about the process of developing a relationship, communication of various types of information (surface, peripheral, intermediary, and central) and behavioral interactions (orientation, exploratory

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affective exchange, affective exchange, and stable exchange). This theory also helps to predict the costs or efforts incurred along with return for which will determine whether a relationship will develop or not (Carpenter & Greene, 2015).

### Self-Existence

According to Dagnun (1992) self-existence is the most important thing in human social life. Existence can be interpreted as something that is not static, meaning that humans are always moving from possibility to reality. There is a change in the process wherein if at the current time something becomes something possible, then in the next day, it will turn into a reality because humans have the freedom to move. Existence means having the courage to take decisive decisions for his life. Consequently, if we can't make decisions and don't dare to act, then we don't exist in the true sense.

Existence or recognition is a condition in which a person wants to be recognized and appreciated by the people around. Existence is flexible and is always sought or pursued by someone, as is the case with the current phenomenon. People assume that having multiple accounts on various social networking sites is the best way to get recognition. A person will feel more proud when he can get a lot of followers on Instagram than having a luxury car (Abidin, 2002).

Karremans, Van Lange, Ouwerkerk, & Kluwer, (2003) formulate several aspects of self-existence as follows:

- a. Perception. It relates to how humans perceive objects in the world. In interacting with the world, it is important for individuals to collect relevant information and study various conditions and situations they encounter.
- b. Recognition of values. It is the state when individuals can understand the qualitative relationship between objects and themselves. In this aspect, individuals are orienting and diverting attention to things outside, namely by establishing relationships with other people, until he finds a harmony between the world and themselves.
- c. Freedom. It is the ability of humans to determine attitudes in themselves and their world, including determining their actions and the direction of their lives. Individuals must be aware of the choices and consequences of what they choose.
- d. Responsibility. In this case, it means the determination to put a decision into action and to be consistent and bear the consequences of such action. Lange (2003) suggests that if individuals can achieve this stage, can love life and find themselves in it, then the four fundamental conditions for fulfilled existence can be met, namely the existence of the individual who recognizes his own life and the challenges thereof.

### METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach and has descriptive characteristics. The first data is collected directly from the source, the researcher becomes part of the main instrument of the analysis, the second data is in the form of words in sentences or pictures that have meaning (Sutopo, 2006).

The type of research used in this study is phenomenology. Phenomenology explains the structure of consciousness in human experience. The phenomenological approach intends to let reality reveal itself naturally. Through "bait question", research subjects are allowed to tell all kinds of dimensions of their experience related to a phenomenon/event (Aspers, 2009). Phenomenological studies assume that every individual experiences a phenomenon with all his consciousness. In other words, the study of phenomenology aims to explore the deepest awareness of the subjects regarding their experiences in an event (Springborg, 2007).

Data collection techniques were conducted by observation and interviews. Interviews are used as a data collection technique if the researcher wants to perform a preliminary study to find problems that must be investigated, but also if the researcher needs to know things from the respondents more deeply (Sugiyono, 2016). Through interviews, researchers will know what is in the minds and hearts of the respondents that cannot be revealed through observation.

### RESULTS

Communication technology that is growing rapidly also influences the attitudes and behavior of the development of social life, especially among teenagers. For millennials, staying at home during the current pandemic era become something that is not easy for them. Therefore, they need activities that can keep them connected to their friends. One of the things that can make today's teens or millennials connect with other friends is social media. In addition to be able to connect communication and socialization of teenagers in cyberspace, social media is also act as a diary or a place to show their daily activities. Of course, self-disclosure in social media is a new symptom of how people use selfies as a form of daily activity. It can even be said that when someone takes a selfie, he feels that he already exists. Selfie photos are often taken in places considered cool.

Various activities are carried out and uploaded by teenagers on social media to be considered cool. What we inform through social media is not only prove that social media becomes the impact of communication technology, but it has also changed ourselves and shown who we are. Based on Turkle's observations, in a certain class activity, participants did not listen to what was being discussed but they surfed social media. They can even be considered "sleeping" with their smartphones.

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The behavior of people who are active on social media with a narcissistic style, frequent status updates, share links to be considered cool is also called Braggadocian Behavior. One of them is narcissism, namely the behavior of paying attention to self excessively. In simple terms, it can also be interpreted as a person who likes to show off to be known by others. Selfie photos/videos means self-taken camera picture uploaded on social media which is expected to be known by others. A person certainly has thoughts and opinions about himself regarding various aspects of life. Every human being can certainly interpret himself, and always give a judgment towards everything in him, for example his strengths and weaknesses. Every human being has the right to appraise himself without exception, including teenagers who use the TikTok application. Teenagers also have the ability to appraise themselves, besides that they can also evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses.

Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted with 3 key informants and 2 supporting informants, it was found that self-existence and self-disclosure using the TikTok application could influence teenager attitudes and behavior and created dependence. The researcher made a conclusion involving four discussion topics, namely, understanding, goals, benefits and motivations obtained by teenagers regarding the use of TikTok. By using the TikTok application, teenagers had an understanding of short video application, application to hone creativity. Furthermore, by using the TikTok application, they believed that they could show their expression and self-existence. The TikTok application could be used as a means of entertainment as well as to bring out the skills (expertise) owned.

Besides that, the goals were entertainment, talent show, self-existence, making friends, following trends, and becoming a TikTok artist. Regarding the benefits of using TikTok, the results showed that such application could increase the level of self-confidence, teenagers did not care what other people say, it could also relieve stress, grow their creativity and encourage them to get out of the comfort zone. These findings are in accordance with the concept expressed by Altman and Taylor (1987) that self-disclosure, intimacy, and communication in the development of interpersonal relationships are important in self-existence.

Existence for teenagers is important in social intercourse. For teenagers, existence is also a symbol that a teenager can commune and have relationships with other people. For a teenager, being exist is a pleasure since existence is often connoted with pleasant things. For example, having a lot of friends and relations, being known by many people, being an important person, and some of the other enjoyments of being a teenager like being able to express themselves freely and do things that have become a trend among other teenagers. Such things have led to lifestyle changes. They try to always exist but sometimes they are too excessive and perform adverse behaviors in self-existence.

Based on the results of the discussion and literature review, the author can explain in detail the problems as the study objects and explain the whole phenomenon of the self-existence of teenagers in TikTok social media. In fact, they could feel the difference between being on social media and being in real life. However, it is undeniable that TikTok social media has a significant role in helping them to develop self-existence in a circle of friends. If they exist and actively use TikTok, they will feel that someone is paying attention and respecting them. It is undeniable that human beings also need recognition from the people around. Actually, TikTok has many benefits. However, it can also have a negative impact on teenagers, and it is basically depends on TikTok users.

Another benefit that may be found through the use of TikTok application is a place of business. TikTok users can build their brand image by uploading their business videos on TikTok. TikTok can also be used as a promotional medium through creativity that can be adapted to business needs.

### **Motivation for Using TikTok Social Media as Self Disclosure**

In this section, the main discussion is about the motivation of TikTok users in conducting self-disclosure. In this case, it was proven that TikTok users conducted self-disclosure due to the following motivations: 1) A place to escape from a bad experience, (2) A place for sharing, (3) Media for self-purification, (4) Seeking emotional support, (5) Documentation medium. Derlega and Grzelak (in Hidayat, 2001) reveal that there are several functions of self-disclosure, namely for expression, self-purification, social legitimacy, social control and relationship development. Three factors had motivated TikTok users involved in this study to conduct self-disclosure through social media. First, the function of self-expression was mostly performed by TikTok users such as a place to escape from problems, a place for sharing information, and also as a documentation medium. Second, TikTok users conducted this self-disclosure for self-purification. Obviously, they need space or a place to know what they were really experiencing based on others' opinion. Third, emotional support for self is included in the function of social validity.

In self-disclosure, it is explained that there are several guidelines for responding to self-disclosure from others, namely using effective and active listening skills, providing support and encouragement to the discloser, maintaining confidentiality, not using other people's self-disclosure to harm them. The principals of social penetration theory define self-disclosure via social networking sites, especially TikTok users, as collective boundaries are set through intimate disclosure of information and enhanced by the visitor's or viewer's ability to add contributions in the form of comments, messages, or video responses.

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### CONCLUSIONS

The researcher made a conclusion involving three discussion topics, namely, understanding, goals and benefits obtained by teenagers regarding the use of TikTok. By using the TikTok application, teenagers had an understanding of short video application, application to hone creativity. Furthermore, by using the TikTok application, they believed that they could show their expression and self-existence. The TikTok application could be used as a means of entertainment as well as to bring out the skills (expertise) owned. Besides that, the goals were entertainment, talent show, self-existence, making friends, following trends, and becoming a TikTok artist. Regarding the benefits of using TikTok, the results showed that such application could increase the level of self-confidence, teenagers did not care what other people say, it could also relieve stress, grow their creativity and encourage them to get out of the comfort zone.

In fact, teenagers really need self-existence in order to express their self-disclosure. However, it must also be performed well and wisely, not excessively. By being wise and careful in using TikTok social media, respecting others and producing good work, in fact teenagers will be able to be proud and confident that they have succeeded in creating a good existence and becoming useful for others.

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