



Social Support as a Key Factor in Understanding Social Anxiety Among Generation Z

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Abstract:

Social anxiety is a common problem among Generation Z, characterized by fear of negative evaluation, difficulty in social interactions, and a tendency to avoid social situations. Social support is believed to help reduce social anxiety by providing a sense of security, acceptance, and emotional support. This study aims to examine the effect of social support on social anxiety among Generation Z in JABODETABEK. Using a quantitative approach with simple linear regression analysis, this study involved 150 respondents selected through incidental sampling. This study used the Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (SAS-A) and the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) as measuring instruments. The findings of the study showed that social support had a significant negative effect on social anxiety. Among the various sources of support, support from significant others had the strongest impact, at 16.8%, compared to support from friends and family. These findings emphasize the role of significant others in preventing and reducing social anxiety in Generation Z.

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Introduction

Generation Z, encompassing individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (Firamadhina & Krisnani, 2021), currently represents the largest population cohort in Indonesia, accounting for 27.94% of the total population according to the 2020 BPS census (Putri & Hapsari, 2024). This generation has grown up amid rapid technological advancement and the proliferation of the internet, resulting in highly developed digital literacy and the ability to access information swiftly through digital devices. However, their extensive exposure to the digital world has also rendered them more susceptible to emotional distress and mental health issues compared to previous generations (Phangadi, 2019, as cited in Abdulah et al., 2023). According to Istya et al. (2024), common psychological problems among Generation Z include stress, depression, anxiety disorders, and excessive worry, all of which have garnered increasing attention in recent discussions surrounding mental health.

Anxiety is a natural emotional response experienced by individuals when confronted with perceived threats or danger (Alfian & Nurafriansyah, 2020). Social anxiety specifically refers to the fear of negative evaluation by others in various social interactions. This condition often leads individuals to feel awkward, fear embarrassment, or avoid social situations altogether (Nurhasanah et al., 2022). Social anxiety is a complex condition influenced by both biological and environmental factors. Some individuals may possess a genetic predisposition that makes them more vulnerable to social anxiety. Additionally, negative social experiences such as bullying, rejection, or trauma in the surrounding environment can increase the likelihood of developing this disorder (Oktaviawati & Sa'adah, 2024, as cited in Regina, 2025). Research by Faiza & Maryam (2024) revealed that 22.9% of adolescents in Indonesia experience social anxiety. Their study demonstrated that excessive use of social media poses significant risks to the mental health of Generation Z, particularly by exacerbating social anxiety through pressures to conform, unrealistic social comparisons, and exposure to content that negatively influences self-perception and social functioning. This phenomenon is closely linked to individuals' tendencies to

compare themselves with others on social media, which can lead to feelings of anxiety, diminished self-confidence, and decreased psychological well-being. Thus, social anxiety in Generation Z is shaped not only by external influences such as social media but also by inherent personal tendencies and life experiences.

La Greca & Lopez (1998) describe social anxiety as a persistent fear of social situations and anxiety over being judged by others, such as concerns about being embarrassed, humiliated, or evaluated negatively (Ekajaya & Jufriadi, 2019). Wittchen & Fehm (2003) further explain that the adverse effects of social anxiety are reflected in reduced subjective well-being and quality of life, impaired social functioning, and obstacles to career advancement (Khurnia Swasti et al., 2020). To mitigate these impacts, social support is essential, as it can reduce behavioral difficulties experienced during social interactions, including anxiety, depression, and feelings of shame (LaRocco, as cited in Setyowati & Indrawati, 2022).

Social support is defined as a process of interaction that enables individuals to feel accepted, loved, and valued by those close to them, such as family members, friends, romantic partners, or others with whom they share an emotional bond (Weiss, as cited in NST et al., 2022). This support may take the form of emotional, informational, or practical assistance and plays a crucial role in helping individuals cope with life stressors, including social anxiety (Hermanus et al., 2023). The presence of social support has been shown to alleviate stress and aid in individual adaptation to new environments by reducing the intensity of psychological pressure and reframing stressful situations (Suardiman, 2011, as cited in Ratu et al., 2021).

Sula & Kristianingsih (2022) confirmed that support from family and peers helps university students manage academic pressure and enhances their self-confidence. Their findings showed that higher levels of social support were associated with lower levels of academic anxiety during practical examinations. Similarly, research by Kholifah (2016) found a significant negative relationship between peer involvement and social anxiety. Greater engagement with peers correlated with lower levels of social anxiety among adolescents. Peer involvement constitutes a vital source of social support, as peers often provide psychological, informational, and practical

support to individuals experiencing social anxiety. Such support may take the form of specific actions, shared information, or tangible aid that fosters feelings of worth, affection, and being cared for (Setyowati & Indrawati, 2022).

Although previous research has extensively examined social support and anxiety, few studies have specifically focused on social anxiety among Generation Z. In this study, social anxiety is conceptualized as excessive fear and worry in social situations, often leading to avoidance behaviors and difficulty engaging in direct interpersonal interactions. Generation Z possesses unique characteristics, particularly their deep integration with digital technologies and shifting patterns of social interaction. These contextual factors highlight a significant research gap, as the forms and quality of social support received by this generation may differ considerably from those examined in earlier studies involving other populations. Therefore, this study aims to bridge this gap by specifically examining the influence of social support on social anxiety in Generation Z.

Method

This study employed a quantitative method with an explanatory approach, aiming to examine the effect of social support on social anxiety. The data analysis technique used was simple linear regression. The participants in this study were individuals from Generation Z, defined within the context of this research as individuals aged between 18 and 27 years residing in the Greater Jakarta metropolitan area (JABODETABEK: Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi).

Due to the unknown total population of Generation Z within the target area, the sampling technique used was incidental sampling, whereby participants were selected based on accessibility and fulfillment of the inclusion criteria. The minimum required number of participants was determined using G*Power software, which indicated that at least 89 respondents were needed. In practice, data were successfully collected from 150 respondents.

The research instruments consisted of two validated and reliable psychological scales. To measure social anxiety, the *Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents* (SAS-A)

developed by La Greca and Lopez (1998) was used, which had been adapted into Indonesian by Apriliana and Suranta (2019). This scale consists of 11 items encompassing three dimensions: *Fear of Negative Evaluation* (FNE), *Social Avoidance and Distress – General* (SAD-G), and *Social Avoidance and Distress – New* (SAD-N). Sample items include: “I’m afraid that others will not like me” for FNE; “It is hard for me to ask others to do things for me” for SAD-G; and “I feel nervous when I meet new people” for SAD-N.

Construct validity testing using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) yielded a Chi-Square value of 67.0 ($p < 0.001$), RMSEA of 0.713, CFI of 0.953, and TLI of 0.932. The scale also demonstrated good reliability, with a coefficient of 0.843. These results indicate that the SAS-A is a valid and reliable instrument for measuring social anxiety in this study.

To measure social support, the *Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support* (MSPSS) developed by Zimet et al. (1988) was used, adapted by Sulistiani et al. (2022). The MSPSS consists of 12 items covering three dimensions: support from family, friends, and a significant other. Sample items include: “I get the emotional help and support I need from my family” for family support; “I can count on my friends when things go wrong” for friend support; and “There is a special person with whom I can share joys and sorrows” for significant other support.

CFA results for this instrument yielded a Chi-Square value of 104, RMSEA of 0.684, CFI of 0.982, and TLI of 0.976. The MSPSS also showed excellent reliability, with a coefficient of 0.934. Thus, both instruments used in this study were deemed suitable for measuring the research variables.

Data analysis was conducted in two stages: descriptive analysis to characterize the sample, and inferential analysis to examine the relationship between variables. Classical assumption tests included normality testing (Kolmogorov–Smirnov), heteroscedasticity testing (Glejser), and linearity testing (ANOVA). Hypothesis testing was performed using simple linear regression to assess the influence of social support on social anxiety in Generation Z.

The research procedure began with the development of a questionnaire based on the identified research variables: social support and social anxiety. The questionnaire was adapted from previously validated and reliable instruments. It was distributed online via Google Forms to facilitate wide and efficient data collection. Using incidental sampling through social media platforms, responses were gathered from a total of 150 participants. The collected data were then analyzed to assess validity, reliability, correlation, and simple regression to determine the effect of social support on social anxiety.

Result

This study involved 150 respondents categorized as members of Generation Z, aged between 18 and 27 years. In terms of gender, the majority of participants were female (n = 122), while the remaining were male (n = 28). The most common age among participants was 21 years (n = 43), followed by 22 years (n = 37), and 23 years (n = 20). Regarding place of residence, most respondents lived in Jakarta (n = 57), followed by Tangerang (n = 37) and Bogor (n = 30).

In terms of educational background, the majority of participants had completed senior high school or an equivalent level (n = 100), followed by undergraduate education (n = 49), with only a small portion having pursued postgraduate education (n = 1). Regarding employment status, most respondents were students (n = 107), while others were employed full-time (n = 31), part-time (n = 8), or identified as freelancers, entrepreneurs, or unemployed (n = 4).

In relation to social media use, the most frequently used platform was TikTok (n = 53), followed by Twitter/X (n = 51), and Instagram (n = 41). With respect to duration of daily social media usage, the majority reported using social media for more than three hours per day (n = 75), while 71 respondents reported using it for one to three hours daily. These findings indicate that the participants in this study were predominantly young, digitally active individuals, currently engaged in secondary or higher education, and largely residing in the Jakarta area.

Table 1.
Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	n	%
Gender		
Male	28	18.7%
Female	122	81.3%
Age		
19	9	6.0%
20	13	8.7%
21	43	28.7%
22	37	24.7%
23	20	13.3%
24	11	7.3%
25	9	6.0%
26	6	4.0%
27	2	1.3%
Residence		
Bekasi	18	12.0%
Bogor	30	20.0%
Depok	8	5.3%
Jakarta	57	38.0%
Tangerang	37	24.7%
Educational Attainment		
High school or equivalent	100	66.7%
Bachelor's degree	49	32.7%
Master's degree	1	0.7%
Employment Status		
Student	107	71.3%
Full-time employee	31	20.7%
Part-time employee	8	5.3%
Freelancer	1	0.7%
Student and worker	1	0.7%
Unemployed	1	0.7%
Entrepreneur	1	0.7%

Most Frequently Used Social Media		
Facebook	2	1.3%
Instagram	41	27.3%
TikTok	53	35.3%
Twitter/X	51	34.0%
WhatsApp	1	0.7%
YouTube	2	1.3%
Social Media Usage Duration per Day		
< 1 hour	4	2.7%
1–3 hours	71	47.0%
> 3 hours	75	50.0%

Social anxiety was measured using the Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (SAS-A). The scale yielded scores ranging from 20 to 52, with a mean of 39.30 and a standard deviation of 7.26. Based on score categorization, 26.7% of participants were classified as having low social anxiety, 26.7% as moderate, 24% as high, and 22.7% as very high. These findings suggest a fairly even distribution of social anxiety levels, with a tendency toward lower to moderate levels.

Table 2.
Social Anxiety Categorization

Category	n	%
Low	40	26.7%
Moderate	40	26.7%
High	36	24.0%
Very High	34	22.7%

Perceived social support was assessed using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), with scores ranging from 19 to 78. The mean score was 52.90 (SD = 16.885). The distribution across categories showed that 26.7% of respondents perceived high support, 26% moderate, 24.7% low, and 22.7% very high support. These results indicate that the majority of participants reported relatively high levels of perceived social support.

Table 3.
Social Support Categorization

Category	n	%
Low	37	24.7%
Moderate	39	26.0%
High	40	26.7%
Very High	34	22.7%

Classical assumption testing indicated that the data met all the assumptions required for linear regression. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test yielded a significance value of 0.200 ($p > 0.05$), indicating normally distributed data. Glejser's test found no heteroscedasticity, and linearity tests confirmed a linear relationship between social anxiety and all dimensions of social support.

Correlation analyses revealed significant negative relationships between each type of social support (family, friends, significant other) and social anxiety ($p < 0.001$). These findings were reinforced by simple linear regression analyses, which demonstrated that all three forms of social support significantly and negatively predicted social anxiety.

Table 4.
Correlation Test Results

Variabel	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)
Social Anxiety*Family Support	-.331**	.000
Social Anxiety*Friend Support	-.371**	.000
Social Anxiety*Significant Other Support	-.395**	.000

Based on the results of simple linear regression analyses for each type of social support in relation to social anxiety, all three forms—family support, friend support, and significant other support—were found to have statistically significant effects. The analysis revealed that family support had an R value of 0.345, with an R-squared of 0.119 and an adjusted R-squared of 0.113. This indicates that family support accounts for 11.3% of the variance in social anxiety. The regression coefficient (β) was -0.345 with a significance level of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), suggesting a significant negative relationship between family support and social anxiety.

Similarly, friend support yielded an R value of 0.362, an R-squared of 0.131, and an adjusted R-squared of 0.125. This implies that friend support contributes 12.5% to the reduction of social anxiety, with a β value of -0.362 and a significance level of 0.000. These findings suggest that higher levels of support from friends are associated with lower levels of social anxiety.

Among the three sources of support, significant other support had the strongest impact, with an R value of 0.410, an R-squared of 0.168, and an adjusted R-squared of 0.163. This type of support accounted for 16.3% of the variance in social anxiety, with a regression coefficient of -0.410 and a significance value of 0.000.

In summary, all three forms of social support demonstrated significant negative effects on social anxiety. These results suggest that the greater the social support an individual receives, the lower the level of social anxiety they experience.

Table 7.
Regression Results

Predictor	R	R²	Adj. R²	β	F	Sig.
Family Support	0.345	0.119	0.113	-0.345	26.061	0.000
Friend Support	0.362	0.131	0.125	-0.362	30.523	0.000
Significant Other Support	0.410	0.168	0.163	-0.410	46.073	0.000

To examine the relationships between each dimension of social support and social anxiety, a dimensional correlation analysis was conducted. All dimensions of social anxiety

were found to have negative correlations with dimensions of social support. *Fear of Negative Evaluation* (FNE) showed significant negative correlations with family support ($r = -0.273$), friend support ($r = -0.283$), and support from a significant other ($r = -0.312$). Additionally, *Social Avoidance and Distress – General* (SAD-G) was significantly negatively correlated with friend support ($r = -0.202$) and significant other support ($r = -0.223$). Meanwhile, *Social Avoidance and Distress – New* (SAD-N) demonstrated significant negative correlations with all forms of social support: family support ($r = -0.460$), friend support ($r = -0.410$), and significant other support ($r = -0.418$). These findings indicate that higher levels of perceived social support are associated with lower levels of social anxiety.

Table 8.

Correlations Between Social Anxiety and Social Support Dimensions

	FNE	SAD-G	SAD-N	DK	DT	DOS
FNE	1.000	.460**	.433**	-.273**	-.283**	-.312**
SAD-G	.460**	1.000	.466**	-.137	-.202*	-.223**
SAD-N	.433**	.466**	1.000	-.460**	-.410**	-.418**

Note: ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Discussion

Overall, this study found that social support has a significant negative influence on social anxiety among Generation Z individuals in the Greater Jakarta area (JABODETABEK). The higher the support received from family, friends, and significant others, the lower the level of social anxiety experienced. Interestingly, among the three sources of social support, support from significant others (such as a romantic partner or a close friend) had the greatest effect in reducing social anxiety, accounting for 16.8% of the variance. This finding contributes new insight, as previous studies have tended to emphasize the importance of family and peer support.

These results reinforce the theory of Johnson & Johnson (1991, as cited in Sari et al., 2018), which posits that social support—in the form of care and acceptance—enhances individual well-being. The findings are also consistent with prior research by Pebriyani et al. (2020), Ismail et al. (2023),

and Wardani et al. (2023), all of which demonstrated a negative correlation between social support and anxiety levels. However, this study stands out in highlighting the dominant role of significant others as a source of support—an aspect that has received relatively little attention in past research. This suggests that emotionally intimate relationships may carry a stronger emotional dimension in reducing social anxiety.

The study also found that each source of support plays a different role depending on the context. Support from family tends to be more dominant in helping individuals navigate new social situations, while support from significant others proves to be more effective in reducing overall social anxiety—particularly anxiety related to fear of negative evaluation. This finding aligns with Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, specifically the early adulthood stage, in which individuals strive to form meaningful intimate relationships in order to avoid isolation (Myers, 2010, as cited in Catartika et al., 2021).

This alignment becomes more evident in the context of this study, as the participants were Generation Z individuals aged 18–27 years—an age range representing the transition from adolescence to early adulthood. According to Nash and Murray (2010), this transitional period can be both full of opportunities and fraught with pressure. Some individuals may feel enthusiastic about taking on new challenges and becoming more independent, while others may struggle due to a lack of preparedness for adult life, which can negatively impact their psychological well-being (Habibie et al., 2019).

When individuals are unable to adapt effectively, they are at greater risk of experiencing stress, anxiety, diminished motivation, and even self-doubt (Rosalinda & Michael, 2019). During this developmental stage, the presence of a significant other—be it a romantic partner or a close confidant—can serve as a crucial source of emotional support. Such support not only fosters feelings of acceptance and appreciation, but also provides a foundation for building self-confidence and coping with social pressures. Thus, support from significant others plays a vital role in fostering healthy intimacy and preventing the sense of isolation that can exacerbate social anxiety.

In addition to social factors such as support from family, friends, and significant others, other elements also contribute to an individual's level of social anxiety. These include biological

factors, past traumatic experiences, and the broader social environment, as discussed in Durand (2006, as cited in Faulia et al., 2023).

Biological predispositions to anxiety may influence an individual's vulnerability to social anxiety, while previous traumatic social interactions may intensify its severity.

A key contribution of this study lies in its emphasis on support from significant others—including romantic partners or members of communities based on shared interests or experiences—as an important factor in alleviating social anxiety. This is consistent with the findings of Achmad (2024), which highlight communities as a significant source of mental support.

Through this perspective, the study not only reinforces existing theoretical frameworks but also broadens the scope of relevant sources of social support to better match the characteristics of Generation Z, who are more open and digitally connected. These findings may contribute to the advancement of social psychology and mental health interventions, particularly in developing more personalized and contextual approaches to reducing social anxiety among Generation Z.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate a significant negative relationship between social support and social anxiety, with support from family, friends, and significant others all contributing to this effect. Family support accounted for 11.9% of the variance, suggesting that higher levels of family support are associated with lower levels of social anxiety. Support from friends also showed a significant negative influence, accounting for 13.1%, while support from significant others had the strongest effect, contributing 16.8%.

These findings collectively demonstrate that the higher the perceived social support, the lower the level of social anxiety experienced by members of Generation Z. However, it is important to acknowledge that other factors beyond social support also contribute to social anxiety. Therefore, this study highlights the critical role of significant others and broader social environments in preventing and reducing social anxiety among Generation Z individuals.

Suggestions

Future research is recommended to use a more balanced sample in terms of gender and demographic background to obtain results that are more representative and generalizable. It is also advisable to explore other factors that may influence social anxiety, such as personality traits, life experiences, cultural background, and the increasing influence of social media in the daily lives of Generation Z.

The findings on the role of support from significant others highlight the importance of meaningful relationships in reducing social anxiety, even though their impact may be relatively smaller compared to other factors. Therefore, warm emotional support, open communication, and the active presence of close individuals are essential for those experiencing social anxiety. Mental health professionals are also encouraged to develop psychological interventions tailored to the needs of younger generations, such as cognitive behavioral therapy or social skills training, to help individuals manage anxiety more effectively.

This study implies that social support—particularly from close relationships—plays a crucial role in maintaining the mental health of Generation Z. Hence, the results of this research may serve as a foundation for the development of preventive programs and interventions that emphasize the importance of positive interpersonal relationships in family, peer, educational, and community settings. Furthermore, these findings can inform mental health professionals, educational institutions, and policymakers in designing services or programs that are more attuned to the social and emotional dynamics of Generation Z.

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