BETWEEN SUPPORT AND DISCRIMINATION: HOW SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTS AFFECT STUDENT SELF-CONFIDENCE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to see how social discrimination and social support impact the level of self-confidence of college students in the digital era. Social discrimination (frequency of experience, type, intensity of emotional impact, perception of injustice, duration of exposure), social support (frequency of interaction, emotional, informational, and instrumental support, online quality, and frequency), and self- confidence (academic confidence, social self-esteem, ability to overcome challenges, self-expression rather than social discrimination) were measured through a Likert scale-based questionnaire, using a quantitative survey method with a sample of 106 students. Social discrimination had no significant effect on self-confidence, while social support had a positive and significant effect on self-confidence ($\beta= 0.589$, $p < 0.05$). With no autocorrelation or multicollinearity issues, the regression model explained 30.2% of the variation in self-confidence. The conclusion shows how important social support is to increase students' self-confidence in the digital era.

Keywords: **Social Discrimination, Social Support, Student Self-Confidence, Digital Era**
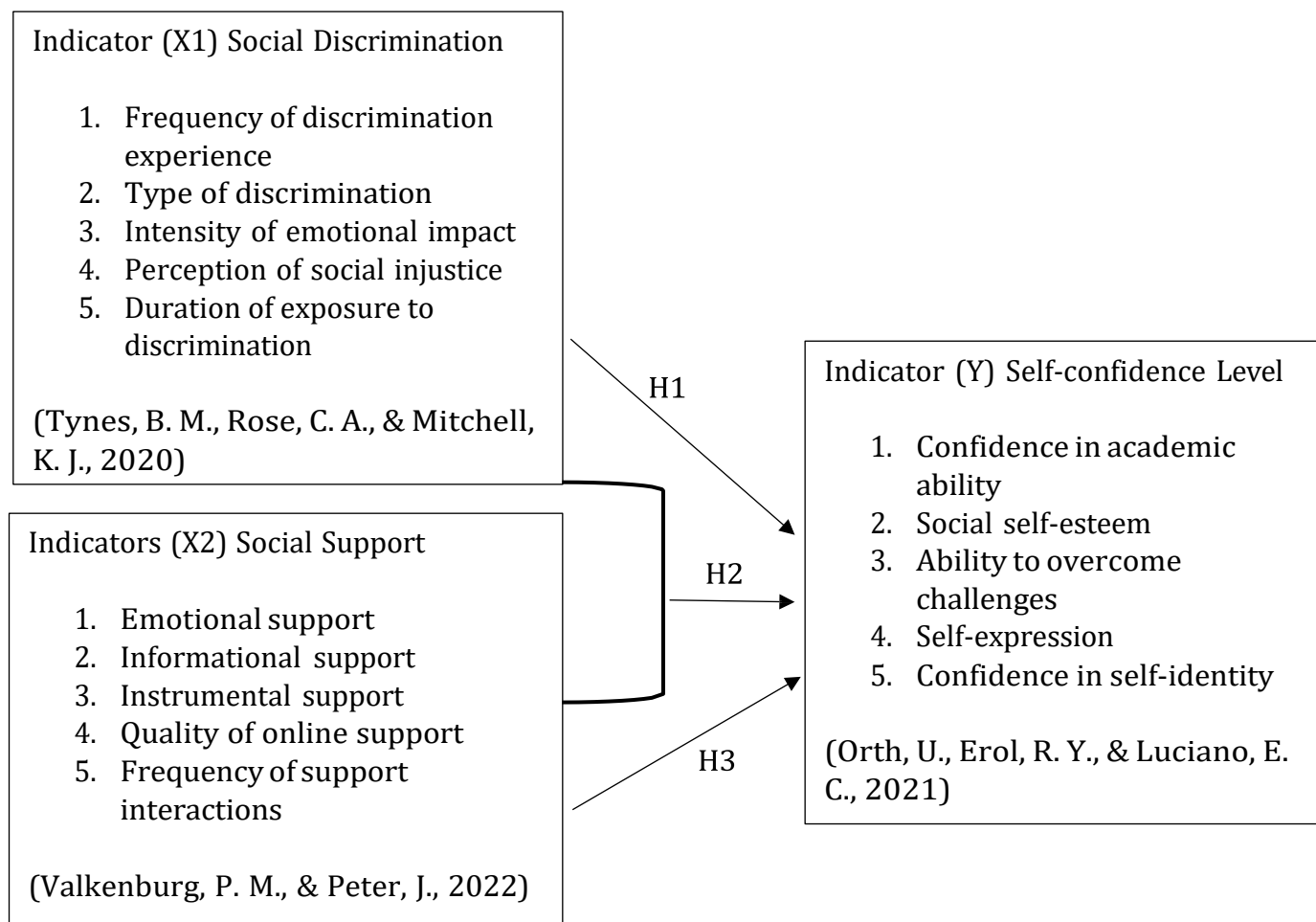
Introduction

The digital age has changed the way of social interaction, and college students at a young age often face psychological problems on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and Twitter. Social discrimination is the main problem. It can appear in the form of cyberbullying, gender stereotyping, or racial discrimination reinforced by digital platform algorithms (Hinduja & Patchin, 2023). Social discrimination is defined as unfair treatment based on personal characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. It can lead to long-term stress and decreased self-esteem (Tynes et al., 2020). In today's digital age, this phenomenon is exacerbated by online anonymity, college students often experience repeated exposure without sufficient protection mechanisms, which impacts their mental health (Yang et al., 2021).

Conversely, adverse impacts can be mitigated by social support. According to Valkenburg & Peter (2022), social support refers to emotional, informational, and instrumental assistance provided by social networks. This help can be obtained in

the digital age through online interactions, such as support groups on apps or virtual communities. Studies show that strong social support can help college students become more resilient and face social and academic challenges (Liu et al., 2022). However, there is a dilemma in that amid the increased use of social media, social discrimination is more easily spread, which impacts college students' self-confidence. Negative online experiences, which can lead to social isolation and decreased academic performance, often interfere with self-confidence, which is a psychological construct that includes beliefs in self-ability and self-esteem (Orth et al., 2021).

The effect of social discrimination (X1) and social support (X2) on the level of self-confidence (Y) of students in the digital era is the purpose of this study. Specifically, this study tests the hypothesis that social discrimination has a negative impact on self- confidence, while social support has a positive impact. This research is relevant due to its focus on university students as a population because university students often face difficult life transitions, where these psychological factors are amplified or weakened by the digital age. This research is important because it adds to the still- growing digital social psychology literature. For example, previous research has shown that adolescent depression and anxiety are related to online discrimination (Hinduja & Patchin, 2023), while the fact that social support provided through social media has the potential to form networks that support positive identity formation (Yang et al., 2021). However, students lack understanding of the relationship between these two variables, especially in developing countries such as Indonesia, where there are many digital resources but a lack of regulation.

Additionally, the journal is practically relevant as the results can be used in the creation of educational and mental health interventions. Universities can incorporate online support programs to boost students' confidence, while national policies can encourage digital literacy to reduce inequality. As a result, this research not only improves academic knowledge but also helps students to be better in an era where digital interactions are commonplace.

Framework of thinking

Indicator (X1) Social Discrimination		Indicator (Y) Self-confidence Level

Cobb's (1976) social support theory, which states that social support helps people cope with stress and get better psychologically, is based on this research Cohen and Wills (1985) extended this theory by modeling the buffering hypothesis, which suggests that social support serves as a protection against negative stress effects such as discrimination. In the digital age, social support can be obtained through online interactions, such as emotional support from virtual friends or information from online communities, which helps build positive identity and resilience (Valkenburg & Peter, 2022). Recent research has shown that online social support, especially in dealing with academic challenges, is positively correlated with adolescents' self- confidence. However, amidst the increased use of social media, this support is often selective and can be amplified by platform algorithms, which affect the quality of interactions (Yang et al., 2021).

However, Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory is the basis of social discrimination theory, which explains how discrimination based on social groups can cause stress and insecurity. This phenomenon is exacerbated in the digital world by cyber victimization, where students are discriminated against through online comments, stereotyping, or virtual exclusion (Hinduja & Patchin, 2023). Empirical studies show that anxiety and depression brought about by social discrimination

increase anxiety and depression, which in turn decreases self-confidence (Tynes et al., 2020). A recent study conducted by Yang et al. (2021) found that college students who frequently experience discrimination on social media are more likely to experience a decrease in their own self-confidence, especially if they do not have an offline support network.
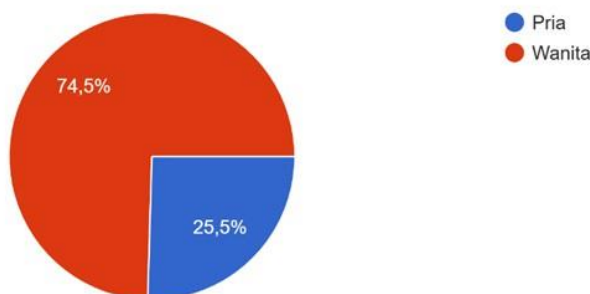
The literature review emphasizes the relationship between these two variables. For example, social support can reduce the effects of discrimination. This was seen in a study conducted by Liu et al. (2022), who found that college students who had strong social support were better able to cope with academic stress caused by online discrimination. However, there are differences in the studies. Most studies focused on general adolescents, not college students in the digital age. Studies also did not include specific metrics such as length of exposure to discrimination or quality of online support (Orth et al., 2021). By testing models of social support as a mediator or moderator of social discrimination, this study seeks to address these differences. This review formed the research hypothesis, Social discrimination (X1) negatively impacts the confidence level (Y) of college students in the digital age, as it causes stress and lack of confidence, and Social support (X2) positively impacts the confidence level (Y), as there is a stronger connection in the digital world. According to this model, variables X1 and X2 interact with each other, and in one situation, the negative effects of discrimination can be reduced by social support. Therefore, this study helps develop social psychology theory in a digital environment, with consequences for evidence-based interventions.

Method

This study uses a quantitative method with a survey approach to test a multiple regression model. The population in this study is all students at Pamulang universities, while the sample was purposively selected from 106 people who actively use social media. Data were collected through an online questionnaire using a 1 to 5 Likert scale. The questionnaire included indicators such as social discrimination, which covered frequency of experience, type, intensity of emotional impact, perception of injustice, duration of exposure (based on Tynes et al., 2020), social support consisting of emotional, informational, and instrumental support, quality of online interaction, and frequency of interaction (Valkenburg & Peter, 2022), as well as self-confidence covering academic confidence, social self-esteem, ability to overcome challenges, self-expression, and identity confidence (Orth et al., 2021). To ensure the quality of the instruments, validity and reliability were tested using Cronbach's Alpha with a value of more than 0.609. Data analysis was performed using SPSS for multiple regression tests, t-tests, F-tests, determination coefficients, and diagnostic tests for multicollinearity (VIF) and autocorrelation (Durbin-Watson).
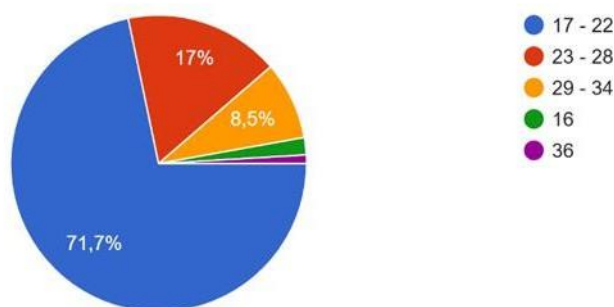
Results

Jenis Kelamin

106 jawaban

Source: Processed data

Figure 1. Respondent Gender

The sample was dominated by women (74.5%) compared to men (25.5%), suggesting the study is more representative of the experiences of women who may be more vulnerable to social discrimination in the digital age (such as gender stereotyping or cyberbullying), thus affecting self-confidence. Social support could be more effective for women to build resilience, reflecting the trends of Indonesian university students.

Usia

106 jawaban

Source: Processed data

Figure 2. Respondent Age

The majority of respondents were aged 17-22 years old (71.7%), corresponding to young students who are intensely exposed to digital, making them vulnerable to social discrimination (e.g. body shaming) that lowers self-confidence. Social support from peers is crucial in this group. The 23-34 years group (17% and 8.5%) may be more mature, with outliers of 16 years (2 people) and 36 years (1 person) showing sample

variation. This distribution supports the focus on young students in the digital age.

Table 1. Multiple Regression

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	19.558	2.893		6.759	.000					
	Social Discrimination	-.087	.067	-.118	-1.298	.197	.134	-.127	-.107	.818	1.223
	Social Support	.575	.089	.589	6.473	.000	.539	.538	.533	.818	1.223

a. Dependent Variable: Level Of Self-Confidence

The results of multiple regression analysis show that the social support variable has a significant positive effect on the level of self-confidence, with a regression coefficient of 0.575 and a significance value of 0.000 (p < 0.05). This indicates that the more social support a person receives, the higher their level of self-confidence. In contrast, the social discrimination variable does not have a significant influence on the level of self-confidence, with a negative regression coefficient of -0.087 and a significance value of 0.197 (p> 0.05). Both independent variables have Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values below 5 (1,223), indicating that there is no significant multicollinearity problem in the model.

Table 2. Simple Regression Relationship Between X1 and Y

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	35.253	1.864		18.914	.000					
	Social Discrimination	.099	.072	.134	1.374	.172	.134	.134	.134	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Level Of Self-Confidence

Source: Processed data

The simple regression results show that the social discrimination variable (X1) does not affect the level of self-confidence (Y). This is indicated by a significance value of 0.172 > 0.05, and a regression coefficient of 0.099 indicating a positive relationship between the level of self-confidence and social discrimination, but this relationship is not statistically significant. This suggests that social discrimination cannot be used as a strong predictor to determine how confident the sample under study is.

Table 3. Simple Regression Relationship Between X2 and Y

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	19.188	2.889		6.642	.000					
	Social Support	.526	.081	.539	6.525	.000	.539	.539	.539	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Level Of Self-Confidence

Source: Processed data

The regression results between social support (X2) and self-confidence level (Y) show

a significant effect with a significance value of 0.000 <0.05. With a positive regression coefficient of 0.526, the results show that the higher one's social support, the higher the level of self-confidence. The beta value of 0.539 indicates that there is a fairly strong correlation. Therefore, social support can be considered a positive and important variable that indicates the level of self-confidence.

Table 4. t test

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	19.558	2.893		6.759	.000
	Social Discrimination	-.087	.067	-.118	-1.298	.197
	Social Support	.575	.089	.589	6.473	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Level Of Self-Confidence

Source: Processed data

In this table, the social support variable has a positive and significant influence on the level of self-confidence (B = 0.575, t = 6.473, p = 0.000). In contrast, the social discrimination variable has a negative but insignificant influence on the level of self-confidence (B = -0.087; t = -1.298; p = 0.197). This suggests that the more social support a person receives, the higher his or her level of self-confidence.

Table 5. F test

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1697.890	2	848.945	22.267	.000[b]
	Residual	3927.015	103	38.126		
	Total	5624.906	105			

a. Dependent Variable: Level Of Self-Confidence

b. Predictors: (Constant), Social Support, Social Discrimination

Source: Processed data

The results of the analysis show an F value of 22,267 and a significance value (Sig.) of 0.000. This indicates that there is a significant influence between the predictor variables and the level of self-confidence, the p-value <0.05 indicates that at least one of the predictor variables is able to explain well the variability of the level of self- confidence.

Table 6. Coefficient of Determination test

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.549[a]	.302	.288	6.175	1.726

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social Support, Social Discrimination

b. Dependent Variable: Level Of Self-Confidence

Source: Processed data

The coefficient of determination test results show an R value of 0.549, with an R-Square value of 0.302, which indicates that the model built can explain about 30.2% of the variation in self-confidence levels through the Social Support and Social Discrimination variables. The adjusted R-Square value of 0.288 indicates that, despite the adjustment in the number of variables, the model is still quite good. Therefore, although the effect is significant, there remains 69.8% of additional variables that are not explained in this model.

Discussion

The findings indicate that social support significantly increases students' self-confidence in the digital age, in line with Cobb's (1976) theoretical framework and previous studies such as Valkenburg & Peter (2022), which emphasize the role of online support in helping to build resilience. Conversely, social discrimination has no significant impact, possibly because students have strong coping mechanisms or infrequent experiences. These results support the second hypothesis but reject the first, thereby filling a gap in research on digital interactions. From a scientific perspective, these results reinforce social support theory in the digital context, while practically, universities are encouraged to develop online support programs. Limitations in this study include a limited sample and possible bias in self-reports; future research needs to use a longitudinal approach to evaluate long-term impacts.

Conclusion

This study shows that social support has a positive and significant impact on students' self-confidence in the current digital era, while social discrimination has no significant effect. The contribution of this study strengthens empirical evidence regarding the role of social support in student psychology and provides practical guidance for educational interventions such as online support training. Some limitations of this study include a small sample size and a cross-sectional research design. For further research, it is recommended to use a mixed-method approach and pay attention to student groups that are vulnerable to discrimination.

Acknowledgments

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