Individual Relationship Analysis: A Phenomenon of Using Instagram Second Account

Della Giska Meidiani[1]* , Maulina Larasati Putri[2] , Vera Wijayanti Sutjipto[3]
[1,2,3] Jurusan Ilmu Komunikasi, Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Hukum, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia
*Correspondence E-mail: dellagiskameidiani_1410621026@mhs.unj.ac.id

Abstract. The rapid advancement of technology has significantly transformed the way individuals communicate, particularly through social media platforms. These platforms, often referred to as part of cyberspace, have facilitated seamless and widespread interpersonal interaction. Social media has become a space where various forms of social activity are displayed, including the phenomenon of self-presentation or "showing off. This study employs Social Penetration Theory, which elucidates the process through which interpersonal relationships evolve from superficial exchanges to deeper, more intimate levels of communication. Central to this theory is the concept of self-disclosure, which is considered a driving force in the development of personal relationships. A qualitative research methodology was adopted, utilizing a descriptive phenomenological approach to explore lived experiences and the subjective meanings behind them. Data were collected through a combination of observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that the progression of relational depth among individuals on social media is significantly influenced by the degree of self-disclosure. One notable phenomenon observed is the use of secondary Instagram accounts (often referred to as "second accounts" or "finstas"), which serve as private spaces where users feel more comfortable engaging in authentic self-expression and disclosure.

Keywords: social media, self-disclosure, second account

1. INTRODUCTION

The advancement of modern technology has significantly influenced societal routines, leading to notable changes in daily habits among individuals across various age groups. One prominent shift is the pervasive and continuous use of smartphones, which has become an integral part of everyday life for both children and adults. A primary factor contributing to this behavioral shift is the accessibility of social media platforms via smartphones, enabling real-time, long-distance communication. Among the most widely used platforms are TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter, with Instagram emerging as one of the most popular applications across age demographics. According to data published by We Are Social, Indonesia ranks fourth globally, with approximately 99.9 million active Instagram users. Instagram distinguishes itself by offering a wide range of engaging features that are readily accessible to users without age restrictions, making it popular among children, adolescents, and adults alike. Furthermore, Instagram functions not only as a source of entertainment but also as a platform for social interaction, allowing users to connect, share experiences, and express themselves in diverse ways. Its widespread use underscores the growing significance of digital platforms in shaping modern communication and social behavior.

Users are increasingly drawn to uploading photos and videos that reflect aspects of their lives or interests, utilizing Instagram not only as a medium for self-expression but also as a tool for long-distance communication. The platform facilitates interaction across geographical boundaries, enabling users to connect with others across islands and even international borders. This ability to engage freely via social media is one of the hallmark advantages of rapid technological advancement in the digital age. Social media, often conceptualized as part of cyberspace, serves as a virtual arena where diverse social activities are displayed and performed. One prominent use of social media is as a means of self-presentation, or what can be perceived as "showing off." Individuals' identities are often reflected in their online personas, with Instagram accounts functioning as curated representations of the self. Each user typically adopts a particular thematic focus for their profile. While some users post content related to their daily lives, others use their accounts to showcase specific interests or hobbies, such as photography, fashion, travel, or sports. In many cases, users carefully manage the aesthetic and narrative of their Instagram feeds and Instagram Stories, often engaging in deliberate editing or planning before publishing content. This behavior stems from the belief that a well-maintained Instagram account contributes to the projection of a positive and desirable self-image [1].

Instagram officially offers three types of accounts, each equipped with distinct features: personal accounts, creator accounts, and business accounts. However, in recent years, a new user-driven phenomenon has emerged—namely, the widespread use of "second accounts." As noted previously, some individuals curate their online image carefully, while others use Instagram to share aspects of their everyday lives. In response to this dichotomy, many users have opted to create multiple accounts to serve different purposes. Among the various types of Instagram accounts observed today are: the "main" or "first" account, which is typically used to construct and maintain a favorable public image; the "second account," often reserved for posting more candid, personal, or mundane aspects of daily life; "college accounts," used primarily for academic or institutional purposes; and "dump accounts," where users share miscellaneous content—such as unfiltered or informal photos and videos—that may not conform to their main account's aesthetic but are still considered worth posting. The second account phenomenon is particularly notable for its emphasis on selective visibility and controlled self-disclosure [2]. Users of second accounts often activate Instagram's private account feature, which allows them to restrict who can view their content. This enables individuals to consciously curate their audience, typically granting access only to close friends or individuals with whom they share a particular relationship. In this way, interpersonal

relationships play a significant role in determining access to private content, underscoring the relational dynamics that shape digital self-presentation.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Social Penetration Theory

Social Penetration Theory was developed by psychologists Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor in 1973 to explain the dynamic process through which interpersonal relationships develop and deepen over time. The theory posits that relationships progress from superficial interactions to more intimate levels of communication, with self-disclosure serving as the central mechanism in this process [3]. Altman and Taylor suggest that interpersonal communication evolves gradually, beginning with minimal levels of closeness and advancing toward deeper levels of intimacy as individuals spend more time together. As interaction continues, individuals tend to reveal more about themselves, thereby facilitating the development of emotional closeness.

According to West and Turner, several core assumptions underpin Social Penetration Theory [3]:

1. Relationships progress from superficial to intimate levels.
2. The development of relationships follows systematic and predictable patterns.
3. Relationship development can include stages of depenetration (a decline in intimacy) and eventual dissolution.
4. Self-disclosure is the essential component of relationship development.

Altman and Taylor famously illustrate this theory using the "onion metaphor". In this analogy, a human personality is likened to an onion with multiple layers. The outermost layer represents superficial information shared with acquaintances. As the layers are peeled back, deeper and more personal aspects of the self are revealed, symbolizing increasing intimacy in the relationship. The innermost layer signifies the core self, which is only shared in highly intimate relationships. Self-disclosure—the act of revealing personal information to others—is considered the most influential factor in this relational progression. Altman and Taylor argue that by allowing others access to surface-level characteristics, individuals gradually open up and present their authentic selves, reaching deeper levels of emotional connection. However, intimacy does not develop unilaterally. It requires reciprocity; that is, when one individual discloses personal information, the other must respond in a manner that affirms or reciprocates the openness. If the response is perceived as negative or unwelcoming, the disclosing individual

may experience discomfort and engage in withdrawal or depenetration, thus reversing the intimacy process [4].

2.2. Onion Model

Altman and Taylor (1973) conceptualized human personality as consisting of multiple layers, akin to the layers of an onion, where each layer represents a degree of depth in personal information that can be disclosed during social interactions. According to their model, the deeper the layer that is revealed, the more intimate and vulnerable the information becomes [4]. This conceptual framework is visually represented in Figure 1.
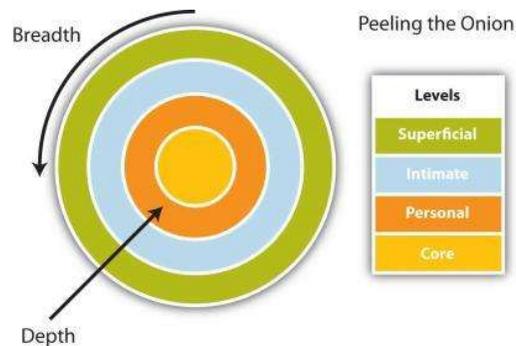

Figure 1. Onion Model

In the context of **Social Penetration Theory**, the **onion model** serves as a metaphor for the process of self-disclosure. It delineates human personality into several layers, each corresponding to different levels of communicative depth;

In the onion model of self-disclosure, human personality is understood as consisting of multiple layers, each representing increasing levels of intimacy in interpersonal communication. The outermost layer contains general and superficial information—such as one's name, place of origin, hobbies, or favorite foods—which individuals typically share early in social interactions, as it involves minimal personal risk. Moving inward, the middle layer encompasses more personal yet still relatively safe information, including general beliefs, mild political opinions, and everyday life experiences; this type of content is usually disclosed once a basic level of trust has been established. The inner layer involves the sharing of more sensitive and emotionally charged topics, such as past trauma, personal insecurities, or family-related issues—information that is revealed only in relationships marked by deeper emotional intimacy and trust. At the center lies the core layer, which represents the most private and protected aspects of an individual's identity. This layer includes fundamental values, deeply held self-

concepts, profound fears, and long-term aspirations. Disclosure at this level is extremely rare and typically occurs only within highly intimate and trusting relationships.

The onion model not only illustrates the stratified nature of human disclosure but also emphasizes the gradual and reciprocal process through which intimacy develops. As trust increases, individuals become more willing to peel away outer layers and share deeper aspects of themselves, thereby fostering closer and more meaningful interpersonal connections.

2.3. Research Method

This study employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach, aiming to systematically and accurately portray the characteristics, contributing factors, and interrelationships among the phenomena under investigation. The data collected are expressed in the form of narrative descriptions and visual representations rather than numerical data. A qualitative approach is particularly suited for exploring complex social phenomena, as it facilitates a deeper understanding of the meanings, experiences, and perspectives of research subjects [5]. The central phenomenon examined in this study is the use of "second accounts" on Instagram, with a particular focus on the levels of interpersonal relationships that emerge within this context. The study seeks to uncover how individuals engage in self-disclosure and relationship-building through these secondary accounts. The conceptual framework that guides this research is illustrated in Figure 2.
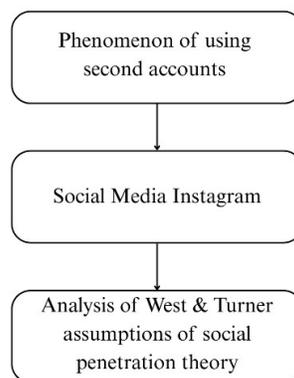

Figure 2. Research thinking framework.

This study employs qualitative descriptive research, using three primary data collection techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation.(1) Observation was conducted by examining user behavior on social media, specifically Instagram, as a form of information and communication technology, to support and complement research findings. (2) Interviews were carried out with three female informants, aged 18 to 22 years, who met the study's criteria of actively using a second Instagram account. These interviews aimed to explore the informants'

self-disclosure practices and the relational dynamics that emerged through their secondary accounts. (3) Documentation served as a supporting technique, involving the collection and analysis of relevant digital content and records from Instagram to validate and enrich the data obtained through observation and interviews [6].

The findings indicate that informants developed different levels of interpersonal relationships through the act of self-disclosure on their second accounts. All three informants reported having used a second Instagram account for approximately four to five years, reflecting a consistent pattern of selective sharing and relationship management within this digital space.

Table 1. Research Informant

Informant	Instagram Account	
	Main account	**Second Account**
AFF	@fad*****fah	@di.l****
SEW	@sabri*****aw	@bon****yy
DGN	@deni*****ska	@ich********ue

This research involved three informants who were active users of second Instagram accounts. They were selected based on their relevant experiences with self-disclosure, specifically the differing ways they expressed themselves on their main versus second accounts. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, which allows for the deliberate selection of participants who meet specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The criteria for inclusion were as follows:

a. actively using social media, particularly Instagram, with at least two accounts (a main account and a second account).

b. using the second account specifically for self-disclosure, rather than merely as a passive or backup account.

c. a willingness to engage in in-depth interviews about their personal experiences with using second accounts for self-expression.

Given that this research explores personal and potentially sensitive experiences within the context of social media use, it adheres strictly to ethical principles in qualitative research, particularly concerning the collection and handling of private digital data. Prior to the interviews, all participants were provided with comprehensive verbal explanations regarding the purpose and scope of the study, and their informed consent was obtained voluntarily. To

ensure participant anonymity and privacy, identifiable information such as real names, Instagram usernames, and any other personal details were replaced with codes or pseudonyms throughout the research process. Furthermore, to safeguard digital privacy, interviews were conducted in private via the Zoom Meeting platform, and both the recordings and transcripts are securely stored with access restricted solely to the researcher.

This ethical approach ensures a careful balance between collecting rich qualitative data and protecting participants' rights, confidentiality, and emotional well-being, particularly within the complex and often vulnerable landscape of digital self-disclosure.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social media is often used as a platform for self-expression, which inherently involves a process of self-disclosure. Self-disclosure serves as a means through which individuals assert their existence, seek to understand their identity, and facilitate interpersonal communication and information exchange. Through the act of disclosing personal information, individuals can construct a clearer self-concept and foster the development of interpersonal relationships. The depth and openness of communication play a crucial role in determining the level of relational intimacy between individuals. In this study, each informant highlighted the distinct roles played by their two Instagram accounts, particularly in terms of usage purpose, comfort in sharing information, and the intended audience. These findings support core principles of self-disclosure theory, which asserts that individuals disclose personal information gradually and selectively, depending on the social context and the degree of trust in their audience.

Generally, the main account functions as a tool for managing a socially acceptable self-image, with content carefully curated and often filtered to reflect strategic self-presentation. The audience of the main account tends to be broad and diverse, including family members, peers, colleagues, and acquaintances—thus encouraging users to avoid posting content that is overly personal, emotionally vulnerable, or potentially controversial. Instead, users favor sharing achievements, socially approved activities, and "safe" content, revealing a conscious effort to exercise self-control in public-facing self-disclosure. This dynamic illustrates how the main account is primarily used to maintain reputation and social identity, a pattern further illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Informant Main Account

| Informant | Main Account | | |
	Privacy settings	Follower Scope	Function
AFF	Public	All known people, close acquaintances	To build and maintain a good image
SEW	Public	All known relations	To represent my "face"
DGN	Public	The scope is wide, including people who are not too close	To show the best side of myself

In contrast, the second account is perceived by informants as a more private, exclusive, and liberating space, free from the social expectations and pressures associated with the main account. Informants reported that the second account provides them with a greater sense of authenticity and emotional freedom, allowing for the expression of personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences that would be deemed inappropriate, too vulnerable, or too intimate for the broader audience of the main account. The audience scope on these second accounts is intentionally narrow and highly selective, typically limited to close friends or individuals who share similar perspectives or life experiences. The practices of self-disclosure observed in this context highlight how both the social environment and the level of trust in one's audience play a crucial role in determining the depth and content of what is shared. These patterns affirm the central claim of Social Penetration Theory—that self-disclosure is a contextual and relational process. The dynamics of communication on second accounts are further illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Informant Second Account

| Informant | Second Account | | |
	Privacy settings	Followers Scope	Function
AFF	Private	People who regularly have a convo, close friends	To upload things about my daily stuff
SEW	Private	People I know and our conversations are related	To freely upload anything that is a bit spammy
DGN	Private	Woman, acquaintance, ever had interaction	To upload things that can satisfy own satisfaction

The informants reported that they primarily use their second Instagram accounts to share content related to their daily lives, including casual or unfiltered moments. A key reason underlying the creation of these secondary accounts is the broad and diverse follower base present on their main accounts, which often includes acquaintances, colleagues, family

members, and others with whom they may not feel comfortable sharing more personal or informal content. All three informants expressed a similar rationale, indicating that they are reluctant to engage in open self-disclosure on their main accounts due to concerns over maintaining a curated personal image. This tendency reflects the strategic management of self-presentation in public-facing digital spaces.

One of the informants, referred to as SEW, articulated this sentiment clearly:

> *"The problem is I don't want it to look noisy on the main account. 'Noisy' meaning posting every day, uploading random things—so my main account has to be neat, aesthetic. Even if it's not super aesthetic, at least it looks tidy. I don't want too many messy posts because that account reflects my image. My followers aren't just college friends, right? So if I post my daily life there, I get uncomfortable thinking people might view me negatively."*

A similar sentiment was expressed by the second informant, AFF, whose reasoning closely aligned with SEW's. AFF emphasized the importance of maintaining a positive image on the main account, particularly because of its broad and heterogeneous audience. This includes not only close friends but also relatives, acquaintances, and individuals with whom he shares more distant or formal relationships. As AFF explained:

> *"In the main account, it's like I want other people to see me a certain way. It's not just friends following me—there are relatives, people I'm not very close with, or people who seem cool but distant. I don't want to look bad in their eyes or my friends' friends. So in my opinion, the main account is more about image management."*

The third informant, DGN, also cited the wide scope of the main account's audience as a primary factor in choosing to create a second account. DGN stated:

> *"Oh, what underlies making a second account is because I'm too lazy to share my main account, because I feel that the scope is too broad."*

These consistent responses across informants reinforce the finding that a key motivation for using second Instagram accounts is the desire to engage in more open self-disclosure within a smaller, more trusted social circle. Second accounts thus serve as controlled environments, offering users a sense of psychological safety and the freedom to express themselves authentically, without the fear of judgment from a broader or more formal audience.

Table 2. Informant pattern on second account

Informant	Reason for Second Account	Response to Follower Requests	Outcome of Interaction
AFF	I use my second account to freely post about various aspects of my daily life, including personal complaints, moments of happiness, and especially updates related to watching Korean movies or dramas.	I typically accept follow requests from individuals with whom I regularly interact in real life, such as college friends, group members, or peers from campus organizations. However, there was an instance when someone I was not particularly close to attempted to follow me twice. Although I felt somewhat uncertain, I eventually decided to accept the request.	Although we were not initially close, he frequently responded to my Instagram Stories (snapgrams) or reacted with emojis. I found it encouraging when someone expressed that they shared similar feelings or experiences. From those interactions, our relationship gradually became closer.
SEW	I prefer not to appear as though I am excessively posting Stories or feed content on my main account. In contrast, my second account functions like a second home; where posting frequently, even daily, feels more acceptable and uninhibited.	If I have met someone several times and find them easy to converse with or generally pleasant, I am likely to accept their follow request. However, if the interaction does not feel mutually engaging or there is a lack of connection, I tend to reconsider before accepting. There have also been instances where individuals outside these criteria requested to be followed back directly, and in such cases, I accepted the request out of politeness, despite initial hesitation.	As a result, the relationship gradually became closer due to frequent interactions, such as replying to each other's Instagram Stories. These brief exchanges often developed into longer conversations and occasionally transitioned to other messaging platforms for more in-depth communication.
DGN	I prefer a more limited and selective circle of followers, consisting exclusively of close friends and female acquaintances.	If we are already close, the follow request is typically accepted without hesitation. However, if there is no prior closeness, the request is usually considered carefully. There have been instances where a person persistently asked to follow, making it difficult to refuse, and ultimately I followed back out of courtesy.	At times, they would respond to my Instagram Stories, although not frequently. Even if the relationship does not become particularly close, it often leads to casual greetings and light interactions.

As presented in Table 4, the table provides a summary of each informant's motivations for creating a second Instagram account, their responses to follower requests, and the nature of

interactions that occur within those accounts. This structured presentation allows for the identification of both common patterns and individual variations in the informants' self-disclosure practices. Overall, the findings reveal that second accounts are widely perceived as safer and more personal digital spaces, in which audience control plays a central role in shaping the level of comfort users feel when sharing emotional or sensitive content. These insights underscore the selective and strategic nature of self-disclosure on social media.

In the following section, the findings will be further analyzed in relation to the core assumptions of Social Penetration Theory, highlighting how varying degrees of intimacy and trust influence disclosure behaviors in digital contexts.

3.1. Relationships progress from not having closeness to being more intimate.

Users of second Instagram accounts generally apply specific criteria when deciding whether to accept a follow request. As revealed through interviews with informants, access to these accounts is typically restricted to close friends or individuals with whom the user shares frequent and meaningful interaction. If a follow request comes from someone outside of this trusted circle, users tend to deliberate carefully before granting access. This pattern was illustrated by AFF, who shared a relevant experience:

> *"It never really happened before, but this person didn't fit the criteria. He's not someone I regularly talk to or hang out with—he was once in a group with me, but not someone I'd call a friend. I only really knew his name. But he followed my second account—twice. I didn't follow back, so he followed again and even DMed me to ask for the account. I was confused because I wasn't close to him at all. I didn't know what kind of person he is, how he behaves, or what his daily life is like. But he still tried to get into my second account space. In the end, I accepted him."*

The informants noted that, in some cases, they initially had no meaningful relationship with certain followers of their second accounts—often knowing only their names and having no prior closeness. However, as in the case of AFF, when it was perceived that the follower expressed genuine interest in getting to know them better, they were eventually granted access. Following this, frequent interaction—often through seemingly simple gestures such as replying to Instagram Stories—gradually led to increased closeness. AFF reflected on this dynamic by stating:

> *"So from there I became close. It's like we often chat on other platforms, like WhatsApp. Sometimes he would ask things like, 'Hey, are you going to campus or not?' It felt like he became closer after entering my second account world. He could see what I was doing daily through my snapgrams, and we ended up knowing each other's interests.*

> *We happened to like the same things. That's what made us close—even though we weren't before. Over time, I also opened up to him more."*

This suggests that access to personal content through the second account can act as a gateway for building deeper interpersonal relationships. A similar sentiment was expressed by SEW, who emphasized the role of mutual interests and repeated interactions in fostering closeness:

> *"Usually we get closer because of replies. At first, they don't know who I am, but then they start liking what I like. There are replies, conversations, and eventually it shifts to WhatsApp. That's how we get close. I learn things about them, and they learn things about me through the second account."*

These accounts illustrate that self-disclosure through second accounts facilitates relational development, particularly when mutual interests emerge and interactions extend across platforms. Although initial connections may be distant, the process of sharing personal content within a trusted space can lead to meaningful social bonds. Based on the experiences of AFF and SEW, it becomes evident that openness, followed by mutual recognition and engagement, can transform casual digital acquaintances into closer relationships.

3.2. The development of systematic and predictable relationships

Interpersonal relationships do not develop randomly, but instead tend to progress through systematic stages, moving from superficial communication to deeper, more intimate exchanges. In the early phases of interaction, conversations typically center on neutral or general topics. As mutual trust increases, both the depth and breadth of self-disclosure gradually expand. This process is reinforced by positive feedback, individuals are more likely to disclose personal information when they receive affirming or encouraging responses. This pattern is consistent with the experience shared by SEW, who explained:

> *"So, there are usually replies and replies, then talk and all sorts of things. Then sometimes I like to move to WhatsApp just like that."*

SEW's narrative illustrates the natural progression of relationship development, from initial, light interactions such as replying to Instagram Stories via direct messages, to more meaningful and sustained conversations carried out through private messaging platforms like WhatsApp. This shift reflects a deepening of communication, which likely stems from the sense of comfort and acceptance established during earlier, less personal interactions. It can therefore be inferred that SEW's relationship development followed a systematic trajectory, consistent with the stages described in Social Penetration Theory, where positive responses at the surface level pave the way for deeper relational engagement.

3.3. Relationship development includes depenetration (withdrawal) and dissolution

While the previous discussion highlights the development and deepening of interpersonal relationships, it is important to recognize that not all relationships evolve smoothly toward greater intimacy. As outlined by Altman and Taylor in Social Penetration Theory, relationships may also experience regression or dissolution, particularly when communication becomes strained or uncomfortable. They liken this process to the structure of a film, which may follow a forward-moving narrative, indicating increasing closeness, or a backward-moving plot, where relationships retract and become more distant.

In practice, a relationship may regress due to unresolved conflicts, discomfort, or differences in perception, which disrupt mutual understanding and emotional connection. This pattern is evident in the experience of SEW, who recounted a situation involving unilateral withdrawal:

> *"We met some people and they followed my second account. If he's cool, I'll accept. But if someone interacts with me and I don't get along with them, I'll think twice about accepting. Most of the time, I don't. But there was someone I accepted because they asked, and I didn't feel comfortable refusing. In the end, I removed them because it made me uncomfortable."*

SEW's account illustrates a clear example of relationship withdrawal, where she chose to limit access to her second account due to discomfort. This type of unilateral disengagement, removing someone after initially accepting them, can be seen as a manifestation of relational depenetration, a stage described in Social Penetration Theory in which individuals reduce intimacy and retract personal access. The decision to remove someone, even without open conflict, reflects a protective response to preserve one's sense of safety and emotional boundaries within a digital space.

3.4 The essence of relationship development is self-disclosure.

The final core assumption of Social Penetration Theory emphasizes that self-disclosure lies at the heart of relationship development. Self-disclosure is defined as the intentional process of revealing personal information to others, typically with the aim of fostering connection or understanding. According to Altman and Taylor, relationships that begin at a superficial level can evolve into closer bonds through progressive acts of self-disclosure.

However, it is important to note that relationship development does not necessarily culminate in deep intimacy. Even increased interaction and social familiarity can be considered forms of relational progression. One of the informants, DGN, shared an experience in which she disclosed personal information to someone she was not initially close to via her second

account. As a result, the relationship became slightly more engaged, though not deeply intimate. DGN explained:

> *"Once, the problem was that many people followed my second account. He kept asking, so I just followed him. I often replied back, but not that frequently. Still, we started greeting each other when we met."*

Although the interaction remained limited in intensity, this example illustrates how even moderate self-disclosure can positively influence relational dynamics. When such disclosures are received positively, they tend to facilitate a shift from unfamiliarity to recognition and comfort, even if the relationship does not progress to the most intimate stage.

Following the thematic analysis of interview data from all three informants, several key themes emerged that capture the nuances of second account usage in the context of self-disclosure. These themes are organized and visually represented in the thematic map shown in Figure 3.
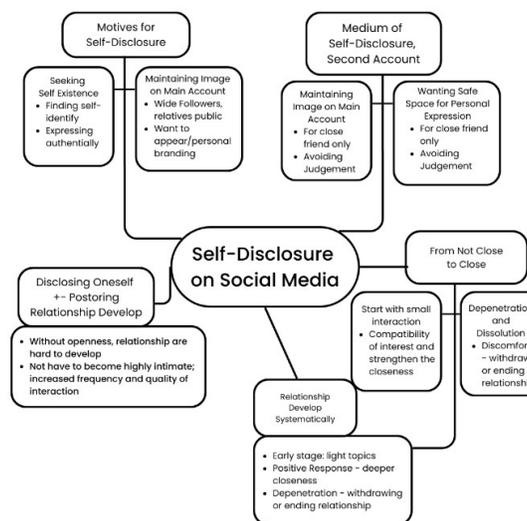

Figure 3. Thematic map

The thematic map presented in Figure 3 is designed to offer a structured representation of how informants perceive and utilize their second Instagram accounts as distinct social spaces, separate from their main accounts. By organizing the findings into core themes, the map allows for a more systematic interpretation of the data, helping to clarify patterns and relationships within the participants' experiences. This thematic organization not only strengthens the coherence of the research findings but also facilitates the integration of empirical insights with the theoretical framework underpinning the study—namely, Social Penetration Theory. Through this approach, the thematic map serves as a visual synthesis that

bridges personal narratives with academic theory, illustrating how second accounts function as controlled environments for selective self-disclosure.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research findings presented earlier, it can be concluded that self-disclosure plays a central role in driving the development of interpersonal relationships. The phenomenon of using a second Instagram account emerges as a strategic practice in which individuals choose to engage in self-disclosure within a more private and controlled digital environment, rather than through their main accounts. These second accounts are typically set to private and are curated to include only trusted or close individuals.

However, the data also reveal instances where individuals who were not initially close to the account owner sought to gain access to the second account. While some participants expressed initial hesitation in accepting such follow requests, over time, mutual acceptance and reciprocal self-disclosure led to greater relational closeness. Through consistent interaction, both parties began to learn about each other's daily lives, preferences, and even discovered shared interests, which in turn fostered deeper and more meaningful interactions.

These findings align with the core assumption of Social Penetration Theory, which posits that self-disclosure is essential for the development of interpersonal closeness. However, it is important to note that self-disclosure does not always result in positive relational outcomes. In some cases, particularly when there are differences in perception or values, self-disclosure can lead to discomfort, which may cause the relationship to regress or dissolve. Thus, while self-disclosure is a powerful mechanism for building relationships, its impact is also context-dependent, shaped by factors such as audience trust, mutual understanding, and emotional compatibility. This study employed a qualitative research approach, which, while offering valuable insights into subjective experiences, meanings, and social contexts, is not without its limitations. These limitations must be acknowledged to provide a balanced understanding of the study's scope and validity:

a. Small sample size, this research involved only three informants, prioritizing depth over breadth. While this approach enables rich, detailed exploration of personal experiences, it limits the ability to statistically represent the broader population.

b. Limited generalizability, given that qualitative data is inherently contextual and specific, the findings may not be readily generalizable to all individuals or settings. The insights are intended to deepen understanding rather than to predict outcomes across diverse populations.

c. Potential bias in interpretation, as qualitative research relies heavily on researcher interpretation, there is a risk of subjective bias influencing the analysis. The researcher's personal background, assumptions, or prior experiences may shape how interview data is understood and presented.

Despite these limitations, the qualitative approach remains well-suited for capturing the complex and nuanced dynamics of self-disclosure on social media, particularly within the context of second account usage.

5. REFERENCES

[1] Saidah, M., & Trianutami, H. (2022). Dramaturgy in Identity Formation on Social Media: A Study on Second Account Ownership on Instagram. *Ultimacomm*, 267-278.

[2] Iloen, A. S., & Kusumiati, R. Y. (2024). Social Media Dynamics: Interpersonal Trust and Self-Disclosure on Instagram Second Accounts. *Jurnal Bimbingan dan Konseling Terapan* , 270-282.

[3] West, R. L., & Turner, L. H. (2020). Introducing Communication Theory Analysis and Application. Mc Grawl Hill.

[4] Altman, I., & Taylor, D. A. (1973). Social Penetration: The Development of Interpersonal Relationships. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

[5] Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2022). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. Los Angeles: SAGE Publication.

[6] Babbie, E. R. (2021). The Practice of Social Research. CENGAGE.

[7] Alwahaishi, S., Al-Ahmadi, M. S., Ali, Z., & Al-Jabri, I. (2024). Self-Disclosure on Social Media: Do Personality Traits Matter? *SAGE Open, 14(2).* https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241255754

[8] Zhang, Xi; Qi, Chengzhu; Wei, Xin; and He, Wei, "Identifying Intimacy of Self-Disclosure: A Design Based on Social Penetration Theory and Deep Learning" (2023). *AMCIS 2023 Proceedings. 7*. https://aisel.aisnet.org/amcis2023/sig_dsa/sig_dsa/7

[9] Low, S. M. P., Bolong, J., Waheed, M., & Wirza, J. (2022). 10-year Systematic Literature Review of Social Penetration in Online Communication. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 12(14),* 29–47.

[10] Nabity-Grover, T., Thatcher, J. B., & Johnston, A. C. (2022). Contextualizing Self-disclosure to the Online Environment: An Assessment of the Literature. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems, 50*, pp-pp. https://doi.org/10.17705/1CAIS.05035

[11] Ozkent Y (2022) Social media usage to share information in communication journals: An analysis of social media activity and article citations. *PLoS ONE 17(2)*: e0263725. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0263725

[12] Ahamed, A. F. M. J., & Gong, W. (2022). What Drives High Penetration Rates Of Social Media? A Qualitative Comparative Analysis Across Countries. Ahamed & Gong / *Journal of Business and Management, 28(1),* 101–130. https://doi.org/10.6347/JBM.202203_28(1).0004

[13] Annisa Nasution, A., & Sukma Wijaya, B. (2023). Social Escape or Concealment of Sins? The Communication Corruption Analysis of the Secondary Social Media Account Use. *Journal Communication Spectrum: Capturing New Perspectives in Communication, 13(2)*, 106–114. https://doi.org/10.36782/jcs.v13i2.2100

[14] Chaidir, J., Haerofiatna, H., Setiani, H., & Ruhiat, Y. (2024). Enhancing organizational and interpersonal communication in multinational companies: The effectiveness of the onion model. *International Journal of Advanced and Applied Sciences, 11(5),* 193–199. https://doi.org/10.21833/ijaas.2024.05.021

[15] Faiza, N. N., & Maryam, W. (2024). Self-Disclosure, social comparison, and social anxiety among gen z social media users. *EMPATHY: Jurnal Fakultas Psikologi, 7(1),* 17–31. https://doi.org/10.26555/empathy.v4i1

[16] Kasmani, M. F., Aziz, A. R. A., & Sawai, R. P. (2022). Self-Disclosure on Social Media and Its Influence on the Well-Being of Youth. Jurnal Komunikasi: *Malaysian Journal of Communication, 38(3),* 272–290. https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2022-3803-17

[17] Novita, S. S., & Jamalullail. (2025). Social Penetration in Digital Spaces: Developing Interpersonal Relationships Through the Bumble Dating App. *International Journal Of Research And Innovation In Social Science (IJRISS), 9(3).* https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS

[18] Sarosija, Y. D. (2024). The Relationship of Self-Disclosure to Relationship Satisfaction in Early Young Adults in Long Distance Relationships. *G-Couns: Jurn al Bimbingan Dan Konseling, 9(1),* 54–63. https://doi.org/10.31316/gcouns.v9i1.6156

[19] Shi, J., & Khoo, Z. (2023). Online health community for change: Analysis of self-disclosure and social networks of users with depression. *Frontiers in Psychology, 14. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1092884*

[20] Syawal, M. S., Dwiandini, A., Khaerunnisa, D. H., & Irwansyah. (2023). Application of Social Penetration Theory to the Development of Romantic Relationships Through Social Media. *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai, 7(3),* 32520–32534.

[21] Chu, H. T., Sun, M., & Crystal, J. L. (2022). Self-disclosure in social media and psychological well-being: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407522111942.

[22] Luo, M., & Hancock, J. T. (2020). Self-disclosure and social media: motivations, mechanisms and psychological well-being. *Current Opinion in Psychology, Volume 31*, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2019.08.019.

[23] Zani, A. A., Norman, A. A., & Ghani, N. A. (2022). Motivating Factors to Self-Disclosure on Social Media: A Systematic Mapping. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, doi: https://doi.org/10.1109/TPC.2022.3184428.