

## Self Disclosure on Personal Information Openness in Establishing Virtual Rental Relationships on Telegram

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**ABSTRAK:** Fenomena jasa sewa pacar yang awalnya muncul di Jepang kini berkembang di Indonesia dengan adanya globalisasi dan didukung dengan perkembangan teknologi. Namun, bentuk sewa-menyewa ini sekarang sudah berkembang sehingga orang tidak lagi hanya menyewa pacar tetapi bisa keluarga, teman, saudara, *cosplay*, bahkan hubungan yang tidak pernah terpikirkan sebelumnya. Bentuk hubungan yang terjadi dalam relasi rental virtual ini mampu berkembang menjadi ruang afeksi yang intim dan bermakna, meskipun bersifat transaksional. Adanya aplikasi Telegram memberikan keunggulan fitur komunitas, bot, form, dan *group chat* berskala besar. Penelitian ini menemukan komunitas rental khusus pengguna yang ingin mencari jasa rental se Indonesia. Penelitian ini berfokus pada *self disclosure* tentang keterbukaan informasi pribadi dalam menjalin *virtual rental relationship* di Telegram. Melalui pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus, penelitian ini mendapat dua informan yang tergabung dalam komunitas rental dan sedang menjalin sesi rental dengan *partner*. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa motivasi, strategi bertahap, variasi topik, dampak, dan resiko dari *self disclosure* sangat mempengaruhi bagaimana informan melakukan keterbukaan diri, serta seberapa banyak dan dalam informasi pribadi diberikan.

**Kata kunci:** informasi pribadi, komunikasi interpersonal, pengungkapan diri, telegram, hubungan kontrak virtual

**ABSTRACT:** The phenomenon of boyfriend or girlfriend rental services, which initially emerged in Japan, has now expanded to Indonesia, driven by globalization and advances in technology. However, this rental concept has evolved beyond just hiring a boyfriend or girlfriend—it now includes the option to rent family members, friends, siblings, *cosplay* partners, and even types of relationships previously unimaginable. Within these virtual rental relationships, interactions can develop into emotionally intimate and meaningful connections, despite their transactional nature. Telegram, as a platform, offers advantages such as large-scale community features, bots, customizable forms, and group chats, which support the growth of this practice. This study identifies specific rental communities on Telegram that cater to users seeking rental services across Indonesia. The research focuses on the process of *self disclosure*, particularly how individuals share personal information within the context of virtual rental relationships on Telegram. Using a qualitative case study approach, this study involved two informants who are active members of rental communities and are currently occupied in rental sessions with *partner(s)*. The findings reveal that motivation, gradual strategy, topic variation, emotional impact and risks all significantly influence how *self disclosure* is carried out, as well as how much and how deep personal information is shared.

**Keywords:** interpersonal communication, personal information, self disclosure, virtual rental relationship, telegram

## INTRODUCTION

Since humans are social beings, forming relationships with other people requires emotional intimacy and affection. The need to be heard, appreciated, loved, and have interpersonal attachments is an inseparable part of fulfilling human life as a whole. According to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, people pursue the satisfaction of social needs and self actualization after their physiological and safety needs are fulfilled.

These needs can come from family, friends, partners, or communities. However, as technology evolves and social changes occur, new ways of fulfilling relational needs emerge, one of which is the rental relationship service. This phenomenon first appeared in Japan under the terms レンタル彼氏 (Rentaru Kareshi, rented boyfriend) and レンタル彼女 (Rentaru Kanojo, rented girlfriend). The relationships formed are not based on love or emotional commitment but on a transactional agreement within a certain period, with behaviors mimicking real romantic relationships.

This phenomenon then spread to other countries including Indonesia, and underwent modifications based on cultural and technological contexts. In Indonesia, the rental relationship service has evolved into a virtual rental relationship, which is an interpersonal contract-based relationship conducted online without physical meetings. Users can not only rent partners but also rent other figures such as parents, siblings, or friends, all of which take place virtually via Telegram.

Telegram has become the dominant platform for this practice as it offers channels, groups, bots, and anonymous messaging or so called "menfess", enabling rental communities to form with large memberships. Rental communities serve as virtual spaces where thousands of Indonesian users connect to seek or offer rental services. The relationships formed within these communities are not just functional but also involve deep emotional interactions and interpersonal communication.

One of the most prominent aspects of communication in these rental relationships is self disclosure. Self disclosure is the act of sharing personal information, often confidential, with others in interpersonal communication contexts. Within the virtual rental relationship on Telegram, this disclosure happens between two individuals

who were previously unknown to each other, in an anonymous, temporary, and transaction-based setting.

The dynamics of this disclosure are particularly interesting to study because, even though these relationships are not built on love, long-term commitment, or blooded relationship, the communication that occurs still carries emotional depth. Individuals consciously choose to reveal their identity, personal experiences, emotions, and emotional needs to their rental partner, whom they often encounter only virtually and for a short period.

This study focuses on two female informants who have firsthand experience in virtual rental relationships on telegram. The first informant is a customer who rents two talents to act as parental figures to fill an emotional void caused by a traumatic childhood. The second informant is a woman who rents a female talent as a partner to fulfill emotional and sexual expression needs that she cannot obtain in her real-life relationship. Both use anonymous accounts on Telegram and actively participate in rental communities.

Previous studies have examined self disclosure in long distance relationships, romantic relationships during the pandemic, and the rented boyfriend/girlfriend phenomenon as a form of self actualization. However, no study has specifically explored how personal information disclosure occurs within virtual rental relationships on Telegram, which are anonymous, fast-paced, and physically unreal. Telegram itself is not a dating app but a digital communication platform modified by users into a new social space for building role-based and emotionally driven relationships.

In this context, the researcher aims to explore the dynamics of self disclosure in interactions between individuals within virtual rental relationships. These dynamics include the form, intensity, motivation, boundaries, and challenges individuals face in revealing personal information to someone they only know through anonymized digital media. This phenomenon is significant because it illustrates how humans develop communication strategies in unconventional environments to meet real relational needs.

Therefore, based on the background presented, this study aims to examine and understand the process of self disclosure related

to personal information openness in virtual rental relationships on Telegram. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach and case study method to gain deeper insights into how individuals engage in interpersonal communication that contains self disclosure elements in a virtual and transactional relationship.

Through this study's findings, it is hoped that theoretical contributions will be made toward the development of interpersonal communication studies in digital spaces, particularly in pseudo-relationships based on anonymity and transactions. Practically, this research also provides an understanding of the risks, boundaries, and complexities of communication that evolve amid the growing trend of digital relationships in Indonesia

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal Communication is the process of interaction between two or more individuals who are interdependent, both verbally and non-verbally (DeVito, 2016). This form of communication enables active dialogue, where messages are transmitted and responded to directly, fostering mutual understanding and strengthening social relationships.

In interpersonal communication, each party not only acts as a communication delivering messages, but also as a recipient who interprets and responds. DeVito (2016) describes this as dyadic relational communications, where interaction occurs repeatedly to establish understanding and build stronger connections.

Errors in interpersonal communication often arise when the recipient interprets the message differently from the sender's original intent. Such misinterpretations may stem from message ambiguity or communication barriers known as noise (Supratiknya, 1995). Hence, the success of interpersonal communication heavily depends on the clarity of the message delivery and the effectiveness of feedback provided.

Interpersonal communication serves several primary purposes, as outlined by DeVito (2016): learning, relating, assisting, influencing, and

playing. Each of these objectives contributes to how individuals develop social relationships and gain deeper self awareness.

### Self Disclosure in Communication Studies

Self disclosure is the communication process in which an individual shares personal information with others (DeVito, 2016). This openness not only reflects how individuals express themselves but also how they build trust and intimacy in social relationships.

According to Johnson (1990), self disclosure involves revealing thoughts, feelings, and experiences, often of a confidential nature or previously unknown to others. IN an interpersonal communication context, self disclosure functions to strengthen relationships and enhance mutual understanding. However, self disclosure levels are not always uniform—several factors influence one's decision to share certain information, including trust in the recipient, comfort, and supportive social conditions.

Altman & Taylor's (1973) Social Penetration Theory illustrates the self disclosure process as layers resembling an onion, where information shared becomes deeper as intimacy increases between individuals. The theory consists of four stages: 1) Orientation – Disclosure is very limited and covers only general information. 2) Exploratory Affective Exchange – More specific information starts to be revealed. 3) Affective Exchange – Conversations become deeper and reflect personal aspects. 4) Stable Exchange – Communication has reached a level of trust and closeness.

Self disclosure also serves key functions, such as expressing emotions, clarifying thoughts, managing social interactions, and fostering intimacy with others (Derlega & Grzelak in Ningsih, 2015).

### Anonymity in Communication

Anonymity refers to a state in which an individual's identity is concealed or not directly disclosed in a social interaction (Pavlicek, 2005). In online communication, anonymity is often viewed as a factor that allows individuals to speak more freely without facing social repercussions present in face-to-face conversations.

Anonymity in digital communication creates opportunities for individuals to share opinions or emotions they might struggle to express

openly. However, anonymity also comes with risks—it can encourage irresponsible behaviours such as spreading misinformation or online harassment (flaming). Lapidot-Lefler & Barak (2012) argue that anonymity, invisibility, and the absence of eye contact in digital communication amplify online disinhibition effects, making individuals more inclined to disclose information openly.

This phenomenon influences how individuals build social relationships, particularly in virtual environments that facilitate openness without real identity constraints.

### **Online Self Disclosure in Virtual Rental Relationships**

In the digital world, self disclosure occurs not only in conventional social interactions but also in virtual rental relationships, such as those found in rental partner communities on Telegram.

Bazarova & Choi (2014) state that online self disclosure represents how individuals share personal information through computer-mediated communication, where openness may be influenced by anonymity and audience control. Individuals involved in rental relationships tend to exhibit different disclosure patterns that conventional relationships, often feeling more comfortable sharing openly because they are not bound by long-term commitments or emotional consequences.

On Telegram, self disclosure begins when individuals join rental communities and share information about themselves with other members though anonymous menfess. As communication progresses with a rental partner, self disclosure becomes crucial in fostering comfort and familiarity, even though the relationship itself is not based on romantic feelings.

Additionally, Attachment Theory by Bowlby (1969, as cited in Darling & Storebo, 2024) explains that humans psychologically seek attachment bonds that provide a sense of security. In online communication, the urge to share personal information often arises as a means of seeking social validation, forming relationships, or expressing emotions (Bazarova & Choi, 2014).

Overall, self disclosure within Telegram's virtual rental relationships enables individuals to engage in more intimate interactions despite anonymity. A high level of self disclosure can

strengthen closeness with rental partners, although these relationships remain transactional rather emotionally profound.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study method, which aims to explore a phenomenon-in-depth within a specific environment. According to Raco (2010), the case study method is used to understand a unique and specific case with a higher level of exploration compared to other research methods.

In this research, the case study focuses on rental communities on Telegra. The study is supported by informants who are members of these rental communities and have either previously engaged in or are currently involved in rental relationships. This method allows the researcher to gain broader perspectives on how self disclosure occurs in digital communication and how individuals manage their openness within rental relationships.

### **Research Subject and Object**

The subjects of this study are individuals who are part of rental communities on the Telegram platform and have engaged in rental relationships at least three times with the same partner. These individuals have firsthand experience in communicating with rental [partners and participating in self disclosure during their interactions.

The object of the study is self disclosure carried out by members of rental communities as part of their interpersonal communication with rental partners. The researcher seeks to understand patterns of openness in these relationships as well as the factors influencing such interactions.

### **Types of Data Source**

The research utilizes primary data and secondary data:

#### **Primary Data**

The primary data is obtained directly through interviews and observation of interactions from the informant and talents in Telegram. The researcher chose the informants based on the criteria set to help fulfilling information on how self disclosure

on personal information openness in virtual rental relationships on Telegram.

The criteria for informants are: 1) Have been an active member of a Rental Community on Telegram. 2) Having engaged in a rental relationship at least three times with the same partner. 3) Willing to participate in a VIP session for 3 days. 4) Doing the session since January 2025.

### Secondary Data

For additional information in this study, the researcher also collects data from books, journals, articles, previous study, and researcher's pre-observation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings and analysis are presented in this section to discuss how self disclosure regarding personal information openness in virtual rental relationships on Telegram. Informant interviews and documentation of interactions with rental partners were used to gather the data. To understand how self disclosure and personal information openness in this context, these results were described and then analyzed subjectively.

### Motivations - The Needs of Figures

In the context of virtual rental relationships on Telegram, the motivation for doing disclosure is closely linked to profound and deeply personal emotional needs. Both informants, Isaline and Lune, see these relationships as a means of re-establishing emotional ties that they haven't had in the real world rather than just entertainment or social experiment. In this sense, self disclosure serves as a bridge to psychological void, whether in the form of past wounds or unmet affection needs.

Isaline, the first informant, revealed that her primary motivation for renting a rental partner—specifically a parental figure (father and mother)—stems from the relational emptiness she has experienced since childhood. Her background, shaped by trauma—parental divorce, physical abuse, anxiety disorders, and loneliness during adolescence—led to a strong need for a caregiver who could provide emotional refuge.

"I want to be taught resilience. I want to understand calmness, even if only for a moment. I also want to have a relationship with my parents because I have never experienced it. I want someone who listens to their child's stories, reminds them of anything, and nurtures them as a parent should. Someone who is soft-spoken, who speaks well, gently, and—what else—who responds without judgment. Someone who always strives for their child's happiness and doesn't want them to feel sad. If they are sad, they ask why. Someone whose patience is as vast as the ocean, who provides a sense of security. Because having a child who is a bit rebellious and fussy requires someone extremely patient and communicative" (Informant 1)

For Isaline, rental relationships are not just contractual interactions or role-playing; they are a way to recreate a version of a relationship she has never had—one that is nurturing, patient, and nonjudgmental. Statements such as "I want someone who nurtures," "doesn't judge," "has patience as vast as the ocean," and "I want to understand what peace feels like, even just for a moment" reflect the intense emotional drive behind her openness.

Self disclosure becomes a kind of "gateway" to forming a bond that feels safe and personal. By opening up, Isaline not only conveys who she is but also implicitly reveals wounds that have yet to heal. She seeks to be heard without fear of being misunderstood and to be treated like a child who is loved—not as an object, not as a client, but as an individual deserving of care. This indicates that disclosure in this context is highly reflective and deeply meaningful.

Such needs can be linked to Bowlby's Attachment Theory (1969), which explains that humans have a fundamental need for emotional attachment to figures who provide security. When this need is unmet in childhood, individuals may seek substitutes or reconstruct these relationships in adulthood—even in digital spaces such as virtual rental.

Conversely, Lune, the second informant, is motivated more by affection needs and emotional balance. She admitted to renting a female talent because she lacks emotional validation from her

real-life partner, who is distant and non-verbal. In her real relationship, she does not receive simple gestures of affection, such as “good morning” or “have a great day,” which she finds significant. As a result, Lune uses rental relationships as an alternative channel for fulfilling her verbal-affective needs, she feels more comfortable sharing stories with women, believing they are more responsive and open to emotions—something she does not experience with her partner.

"I'm looking for someone funny and obedient. I love to be with the submissive one, because I'm a dominant. Because I'm renting for vulgar purposes, so I want someone who's blunt and likes to talk about it. Other than that, I like someone who is caring, enjoys storytelling, talkative, and loves 'pukis' (hug and kiss). Soft-spoken is fine, and speaking like a baby is okay too. The overall vibe should be bubbly and a ray of sunshine." (Informant 2)

Lune's openness to rental partners is not merely a spontaneous act of expression but a conscious choice to fill an emotional void. She even mentions that she prefers talents who are “talkative, soft-spoken, and bubbly,” illustrating her need for interactions that are lighthearted, warm, and full of positive energy. In this regard, self disclosure becomes a kind of “serious play” –intended to create enjoyable yet personal relational experiences.

Additionally, Lune exhibits a motivation to express her dominant side. She explicitly states that she seeks a rental partner who is submissive, communicative, and open to emotional, even sexual discussion. In this context, self disclosure serves as a tool for constructing relationships that align with her desired role dynamics. Even in crafting her Telegram profile, Lune presents herself as “firm and mature,” creating a digital identity that aligns with her relational aspirations. This phenomenon can be linked to Exhibition Theory by Hogan (2010), which explains that digital identities are strategically constructed through visual elements, language style, and persona symbolism.

Although the motivations of both informants differ—Isaline seeking emotional caregiving and Lune seeking romantic affection and

identity exploration—both utilize self disclosure as a means of reconstructing relationships that feel safe and warm.

### **Gradual Self Disclosure Strategies**

Self disclosure in virtual rental relationships on Telegram is not a spontaneous or reckless process. On the contrary, the personal information shared by informants occurs consciously and gradually. This process involves a deliberate and structured approach to interpersonal communication that is based on time, emotional comfort, and the conversation partner's response. As the informants, Isaline and Lune both show that their self disclosure combines a desire to share with an evaluation of the dynamics of ongoing communication.

For example, Isaline explained that she opted to observe and keep quiet during her first two sessions with her rental parents. Because she was trying to read the talents' characters, she refrained from sharing personal experiences right away. After noticing that her rental parents were understanding, patient, and nonjudgemental, she started to open up in the third session. This demonstrates that her disclosure was heavily reliant on the reactions she got and was not just motivated by an inner desire to open up. She considers her rental parents' emotional preparedness before expressing more intense emotions, as evidenced by her statement, “I want to see their response first” (Informant 1).

The gradual process emphasizes how mutual emotional comfort and openness are inextricably linked in rental relationships. Isaline preframed her personal stories with statements like “Can I tell you something?” By acting as emotional conduits, these expressions enable her to gauge how well her rental parents will accept and comprehend her disclosure. This framing as a feedforward approach, which reflects caution and growing trust, is more than just a courteous gesture; it is a crucial communication tactic.

Lune, on the other hand, got into the rental relationship with the specific goal of telling stories. She said that another reason she rented a talent was so she could have a place to be herself, which she couldn't do in real life relationships. But even though Lune was open, she didn't tell everything right away. She still thought about the mood and how her partner had responded. She

waited for the ‘right moment.’ particularly when she sensed that her partner was not too exhausted or was in a calm emotional state. This indicates that, despite being faster to open up, Lune still recognized the importance of timing and sensitivity in communication.

Both informants demonstrate that self disclosure is never entirely random or devoid of emotional logic. There is an underlying process of building trust, creating safety, and observing responses that serves as the foundation. When responses align with emotional expectations, openness continues; conversely, if they do not, the disclosure process may pause or be withheld.

The gradual self disclosure strategies employed by informants are analyzed using the Johari Window Theory by Luft and Ingham (1995). Self disclosure expands the open area, but this expansion only occurs when individuals feel safe and accepted. Isaline and Lune gradually revealed their hidden areas, only when they perceived that their conversational partners were empathetic and trustworthy. This signifies that disclosure is not solely dictated by personal will but also by external factors within the interaction dynamic.

in a relationship, the other tends to do the same. The deeper the disclosure, the stronger the bond formed. Isaline noted that she only started sharing with her rental parents exhibited warmth and relaxed communication. Similarly, Lune felt more comfortable when her talent was responsive and actively engaged in asking questions.

Even in relationships that are more affective or role-play oriented, such as NSFW (Not Safe For Work) interactions, gradual disclosure remains present, although in a different form. Lune, for example, revealed her dominant persona and sexual preferences more quickly, feeling that this role and relationship required a certain level of intimacy and honesty. However, she still directed her openness strategically, adjusting to her conversational partner’s interaction style. She observed reactions and determined whether to deepen the conversation or hold back based on those responses.

Overall, the self disclosure strategies used by the informants show that they have emotional intelligence and know how important it is to build healthy relationships, even in virtual and transactional settings. Neither informant disclosed randomly; instead, they adjusted to the context, the partner’s behavior, and the purpose of the interaction. In this context, openness encompasses not only the courage to share one’s story but also a finely attuned interpersonal intuition regarding when, to whom, and to what extent to disclose information. This is a complicated, personal, and emotionally charged process of building relationships, which is very different from the idea that virtual rental relationships are shallow or just for role-playing.

Overall, the self disclosure strategies exhibited by the informants reflect emotional intelligence and an awareness of the importance of building healthy relationships, even in virtual and transactional settings. Neither informant disclosed recklessly; rather, they adapted to the situation, the conversational partner’s character, and the interaction’s intent. In this context, openness is not merely about courage in storytelling—it is also about finely tuned interpersonal intuition: knowing when to disclose, whom to disclose to, and to what extent. This is a complex, personal, and emotionally calculated relational process, far removed from

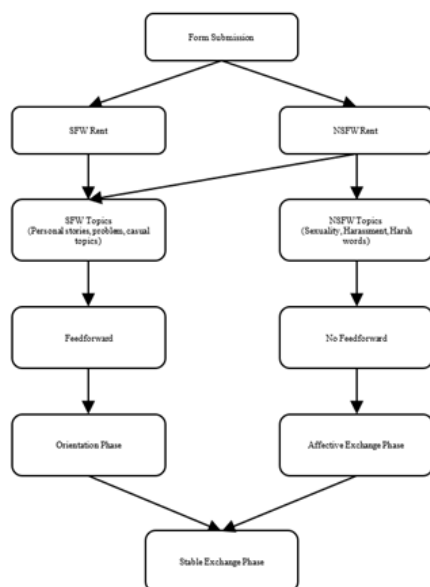


Figure 1. Gradual Self Disclosure Strategy in Virtual Rental Relationships (Source: Researcher’s Construction, 2025)

Additionally, the reciprocal effect, known as the dyadic effect, as explained by DeVito (2016), plays a crucial role. When one person opens up

the assumption that virtual rental relationships are inherently shallow or purely role-play-based.

### Variations in Self Disclosure Topics

Self disclosure in virtual rental relationships on Telegram varies not only in its delivery but also the breadth and depth of the topics discussed. This difference shows that even relationships based on renting can lead to meaningful conversations instead of just small talk or routine exchanges. The depth and breadth of the topic shared by informants indicate that their openness is not superficial but rather a reflection of profound emotional, affective, and existential needs.

Isaline has a habit of slowly revealing a lot of different things. She starts with easy topics like her favorite food, hobbies, what she does every day, and so on. But as she gets to know and trust her rental parents better, she starts to share more personal stories, like painful memories from her childhood, problems with friends, feeling of not being good enough, and problems with anxiety and loneliness. This process shows that Isaline is structured when it comes to self disclosure. She starts by setting the mood and then slowly reveals different parts of her life.

Isaline's discussions range from surface-level to extreme personal topics. In this context, she demonstrates both depth (emotional intensity) and breadth (variety of topics) in her self disclosure, as explained by Altman and Taylor's Social Penetration (1973). Her willingness to share extremely painful and emotional experiences that are rarely talked about in real life shows depth, while the variety of topics brings up her rental relationship shows breadth. She shares how she grew up without affectionate gestures, lacked healthy communication with her parents, and even faced moments where she lost the meaning of life. This proves that even within rental spaces, relationships can evolve toward profound personal openness.

Specifically, in relationships where the talent plays a parental role, the topics discussed by Isaline carry deep emotional significance. She speaks about how she wants to be addressed, how she wants to be comforted during panic situations, and how her 'parents' should respond when she shares fears or failures. These discussions are not merely stories—they represent a reconstruction of

an ideal caregiving experience in her mind. When she mentions that she was never given space to cry, never able to speak out due to fear of being hurt, these narratives do not just reflect her past, but also serve as the foundation for the relationships she seeks now. Thus, her self disclosure topics are always affective, driven by a need for validation, and are not merely casual venting.

On the other hand, Lune exhibits a different pattern of self disclosure. Rather than discussing a wide range of topics, she focuses on a few highly deep and direct subjects. Since her rental relationship with female talents is framed around affection and NSFW interactions, the topics she raises are centered on relationship dynamics, emotional expressions, and explorations of sexual or romantic roles. In these conversations, Lune reveals her need to feel wanted, to feel dominant, and to be loved through expressive and affectionate communication. She discusses longing, emotional trauma linked to her experience in romantic relationships, and the dominant-submissive dynamic that emotionally fulfills her.

Lune states that she feels comfortable opening up about these topics because her hired talent has a soft, expressive communication style that never makes her feel judged. She even mentions that a talent who can match her conversational style makes her open up faster, allowing her topics to become more deeply personal and sensitive. Thus, her self disclosure depth is extremely high, even though her breadth is limited.

The depth of topics disclosed by Lune is closely linked to the trust she builds with her talent. She feels free to discuss things she could never talk about with her real-life partner. Even in more intimate NSFW contexts, Lune demonstrates that self-disclosure is not merely about sexuality, but also about how she wants to be emotionally treated. This indicates that even when explicit topics arise, they fundamentally stem from affection, recognition, and emotional attachment needs.

Both informants show a keen awareness that every topic they disclose must align with the conversational partner's response. They do not reveal everything at once—instead, deeply personal topics only emerge when they sense warmth and openness from the talent. Thus, topic variation in self-disclosure is not just about content but

also about timing, context, and the emotional atmosphere being cultivated.

Interestingly, the data also suggests that topic selection is strongly tied to the identity each informant aims to construct. Isaline wishes to be a nurturing yet affectionate 'child', while Lune wants to embody a dominant yet caring and mature persona. Consequently, the topics they discuss—whether trauma, affection, parental roles, or sexual attachment—are always framed within the structure of how they shape their identities within rental relationships. The researcher connects this phenomenon to Exhibition Theory by Hogan (2010), which explains that digital identity is curated strategically—the chosen stories and the way they are communicated contribute to constructing the persona individuals wish to present to others.

Thus, the variation in self-disclosure topics among informants is deeply intertwined with emotional dynamics, personal needs, communication strategies, and identity formation in virtual spaces. Although conducted within a service-based relationship, the conversations that unfold can encompass deeply personal and emotional matters. This proves that rental spaces, when approached with genuine openness and empathetic communication, can become valid and meaningful relational arenas, where individuals are not merely heard but also recognized—through the stories they choose to share.

### **The Impact of Self Disclosure on Relationships**

Self-disclosure in the context of virtual rental relationships significantly affects the quality and direction of the relationships formed. Although these interactions are structurally temporary, paid, and roleplay-based, the analysis reveals that the informants' personal disclosures foster deep emotional intimacy. A relationship initially built within a service framework can evolve into an emotionally close and empathetic bond—a transformation strongly influenced by the continuous deepening of personal disclosure.

Isaline shared that after opening up about her pressured childhood, her interaction with her rental partner changed. What was once formal and awkward became more fluid, personal, and a "temporary home." "I feel closer, happier every day. They don't just see me as a customer. They already

see me as their child." (Informant 1). Her disclosure created space for warmth, and the response she received reinforced her trust, encouraging her to share more. She described feeling "they see me as their child," not just like a client. She was not only respected but also understood.

This shift in how she felt positioned within the relationship is crucial. Although rental relationships are often associated with temporary interactions, in Isaline's case, they fostered emotional attachment. She noted that her rental partner never reacted negatively when she shared her "dark thoughts" and instead appreciated her honesty. This acceptance made her feel heard, transforming the interaction into a healing space. In other words, the impact of self-disclosure for Isaline was the formation of a relationship rooted in acceptance, validation, and emotional security—things she deeply needed but had never found in real life.

Lune experienced a similar dynamic. In the context of her NSFW rental relationship with a female talent, self-disclosure reinforced emotional intimacy—not just sexual intimacy. When she opened up about past relationship wounds, real-life loneliness, and her need for emotional support, her rental partner responded with softness and empathy. Lune admitted that after such disclosure, her relationship with the talent felt closer and more genuine. She described it as "being pampered, cared for, and emotionally involved," rather than just being served.

"I feel relieved. I can keep things to myself, but I can also talk to someone. For certain things, I usually won't share. Especially with people I know, I have a habit of not telling them and might only talk about it once the problem is resolved. But it feels heavy not to share. That's why I turn to rental—to be able to talk. Because I see my girl as a neutral person, so she won't judge me or anything. It makes me feel relieved." (Informant 2)

In this thesis, the researcher connects these findings to the Interpersonal Process of Intimacy by Reis & Shaver (1988, as cited in Castellani, 2006), which states that self-disclosure and empathic responses are key components in

forming interpersonal intimacy. The relationship between informants and rental talents is not merely an exchange of words, but a bond built on mutual care. When a person reveals their vulnerability and receives a nonjudgmental response, the sense of connection naturally emerges—becoming the foundation for meaningful relationships.

The impact of self-disclosure is also evident in how informants perceive their rental relationships. Initially, they viewed them as a service, but over time, the emotional closeness formed led them to see these relationships differently. Isaline stated that she felt as though she truly had parents, while Lune admitted that she had felt “real affection” toward her rental talent. This proves that even without formal bonds or long-term commitment, virtual relationships formed through self-disclosure can result in genuine emotional depth.

Interestingly, the positive effects of self-disclosure persist beyond the rental sessions. Isaline mentioned that even though her interaction with a particular talent had ended, she still carried the comfort she had felt. Some of the messages she received remained with her as reminders that someone had truly listened. Lune, too, found that experiencing affectionate responses helped her feel more confident expressing emotions outside her rental relationships. This illustrates that well-received openness does not only build temporary interpersonal relationships—it also impacts internal emotional processing, helping individuals feel more whole and worthy of being heard.

Thus, it can be concluded that self-disclosure in virtual relationships does not merely sustain conversation—it creates emotionally valid relationships. When someone dares to open up and their partner responds with empathy and full emotional presence, the resulting relationship becomes deeply meaningful. Even within a service-based context like rental relationships, these interactions can far exceed initial expectations—becoming a space for emotional growth, healing, and a sense of belonging.

### **Risks of Self Disclosure**

Self-disclosure is a key element in the formation of interpersonal relationships, including within the context of virtual rental relationships. However,

openness also carries potential risks that cannot be overlooked, both psychologically and socially. In relationships built through rental systems, such as on Telegram, emotional disclosure still creates opportunities for individuals to experience vulnerability. The risks involved may include regret over oversharing, anxiety about negative reactions, and concerns about personal information being misunderstood or even misused.

DeVito (2011) notes that the process of self-disclosure always involves potential dangers, including worry about exposure or rejection and concern about misunderstanding. These risks are evident in Isaline’s experience, as she is extremely cautious about revealing personal aspects of herself. She states, “I’ve often felt hesitant. Afraid of being seen as excessive, overly dramatic, like I know too much. Also afraid of being too honest or too TMI.” (Informant 1). This concern reflects her sensitivity toward how she might be perceived by others and her anxiety about social stigma surrounding the stories she shares.

It is not only the content of her stories that Isaline considers but also how they will be received and interpreted. She even expresses that she has felt oversharing and worries whether her openness might burden her conversational partner. She manages this risk by creating emotional distance, as shown in her statement: “If they don’t respond much, I take a little step back to give them time to process too.” This strategy reflects an internal risk management approach, where she regulates the rhythm of disclosure carefully rather than withdrawing entirely.

Isaline also experienced emotional conflict when she felt that her rental partner’s response was patronizing and intrusive. She stated, “As a people-pleaser, I was quite annoyed reading it. But after rereading it (in a more stable state), I could see that part of it was valid.” This emotional reaction highlights a tension between wanting to be accepted and maintaining control over her feelings. Emotional regulation through time and reflection plays a key role in evaluating interpersonal interactions more objectively.

Furthermore, Isaline maintains ethical considerations in her self-disclosure by avoiding mentions of her friends’ identities when sharing friendship dynamics. This demonstrates boundary

management as an external risk control strategy—not only protecting herself but also ensuring the comfort and privacy of third parties involved in her narratives.

Unlike Isaline, Lune exhibits a more confident and expressive approach to openness. She considers self-disclosure as part of the purpose behind hiring a talent. She states, “I’m the type of person who prefers talking to someone who doesn’t know me at all... once I rent, I just start sharing.” Nonetheless, she still maintains privacy by avoiding specific names or sensitive data, saying, “As long as I don’t mention names, I think it’s completely fine.” This indicates that despite being more open, Lune has a clear risk management strategy.

However, emotional involvement still leads to vulnerability, such as when Lune feels uncomfortable after her rental partner talks about interactions with other female friends. She admits, “I don’t know, but it just feels uneasy... somewhere between jealousy or envy.” This demonstrates that emotional attachment, even within rental-based relationships, can trigger real psychological effects.

Additionally, Lune is assertive in setting boundaries. When her rental partner uses harsh words, she immediately calls them out, saying, “If they use harsh words even once, I will definitely call them out.” (Informant 2). This reflects direct interpersonal risk management, where she protects her comfort through open communication rather than withdrawing.

Altman and Taylor (1973), in Social Penetration Theory, emphasize that the deeper one’s self-disclosure, the greater the risks involved. In this study, both Isaline and Lune are fully aware of these risks and have developed their own management styles. Isaline tends to be reflective and cautious, whereas Lune is assertive and confident. However, both strive to create a safe space for themselves. Self-disclosure continues, but with emotional regulation strategies and information boundaries aligned with personal values and relationship dynamics.

### **The Role of Communication Media: Telegram**

Communication media do not merely function as technical channels for message exchange; they also shape the atmosphere, structure, and direction of personal openness. In the context of virtual rental

relationships examined in this study, Telegram is not just a conversation platform—it acts as a functional and symbolic space that facilitates self-disclosure. Telegram becomes a “safe private space,” where individuals feel free to express their deepest selves without fear of social pressure from the real world.

Both Isaline and Lune recognize that Telegram grants them full control over their communication process. There is no need to show their face, no obligation to reveal their real identity from the outset, and no requirement to display physical expressions that might be emotionally burdensome. Telegram, in this case, provides an anonymity layer that allows them to write more honestly and openly.

Isaline mentions that she feels safer sharing on Telegram because she does not need to interact face-to-face. In many moments, she can pause, reflect on her words, then continue her emotional story without feeling rushed. She also finds that communicating via chat allows her expressions to be more structured, controlled, and profound. Telegram’s private chat feature—without time limits or expectations for immediate responses—provides a comfortable space for composing emotionally rich sentences without fear of being interrupted or cut off. In some sessions, Isaline even prefers using voice notes as an alternative form of self-disclosure, feeling that her voice conveys her emotions without needing to show facial expressions.

On the other hand, Lune expresses that Telegram provides the right space to craft the identity she desires. Through her username, bio, language style, and even emojis or stickers, she feels able to create a version of herself that suits the role she needs at the moment. In NSFW interactions, Telegram offers flexible features that accommodate the dominant-submissive relationship dynamics she seeks. Even before a session begins, Lune can choose talents based on preference forms, review their profiles, and ensure that her digital identity aligns with the expectations she desires.

The researcher links this phenomenon to Exhibition Theory by Hogan (2010), which explains that social media (including Telegram) enables users to curate and present their identities strategically. Identity is not solely displayed through a name or profile picture but is also shaped through chosen narratives, discussion topics, and enacted roles.

Isaline mentions that she prefers being addressed in a way that makes her feel like a “cherished child,” while Lune constructs a dominant-mature persona in her bio to cultivate the impression she wants to convey. All of this constitutes a form of identity curation—possible due to the flexibility of the platform.

Additionally, the structured rental service system through Telegram strongly influences the flow of self-disclosure. The process of filling out forms, selecting talents based on desired traits, and engaging in private chat spaces creates a clear framework for setting relationship expectations. Users are aware that these relationships are role-based, but within that structure, there remains space for deep personalization. In several cases, relationships that begin with specific role-based interactions evolve into broader emotional connections because the conversational atmosphere becomes comfortable and profound.

Thus, the role of communication media in this study is not merely technical—it is relational. Telegram functions as a space that shapes the atmosphere for openness: a safe, flexible, and emotionally supportive space tailored to individual comfort. This is not just about a messaging app; it is about how the medium serves as a bridge between emotional needs and the reality that not everyone can establish healthy relationships in the real world. In all these aspects, Telegram proves to be more than just a communication tool—it fosters and strengthens warm and meaningful interpersonal relationships, even within a rental-based system.

### **Researcher’s Interpretation**

Field findings indicate that the process of self-disclosure in virtual rental relationships on Telegram cannot be separated from the psychological, social, and cultural dynamics experienced by individuals. The two informants in this study, both female, demonstrate that the disclosure of personal information via Telegram is a tangible strategy for emotional survival in a social environment that does not provide a safe space for self-expression.

First, virtual spaces like Telegram serve as alternative safe havens for individuals who do not receive emotional support from their real-world environment. Isaline, who has experienced emotional abuse since childhood and grew up in a

fragmented family, uses her rental relationship with ‘rental parents’ as a substitute for the presence of warm and accepting parental figures. Lune, on the other hand, feels more accepted in same-sex rental relationships despite hiding her bisexual identity. In her situation, emotional actualization is made possible through digital platforms that are not available in the real world.

Second, self-disclosure is a survival strategy. Isaline finds that confiding in her rental parents helps her deal with feelings of alienation and prevent self-harm. Opening up to a female talent allows Lune to feel loved and cared for, which also helps her fight off impulses to run away and harm herself. In this context, self-disclosure is an affirmative action that preserves mental stability, self-validation, and emotional existence rather than just telling stories.

Third, people can freely express their identities, experiences, and emotional scars thanks to Telegram’s anonymity. Without worrying about social criticism, stigma, or cultural pressures, anonymity allows people to create a more honest alternative identity. This encourages unrestrained self-disclosure that is not constrained by strict social norms.

Fourth, compared to relationships in real life, relationships formed through rental communities frequently show a higher level of intimacy. Despite being transactional, these exchanges develop into sincere, emotionally encouraging bonds. In their virtual relationships, Lune and Isaline both feel more accepted, heard, and understood. This illustrates even in the absence of physical presence, new relationship models in the digital age can provide genuine closeness.

Fifth, there are still risks like jealousy, oversharing, and emotional dependency even though these relationships offer emotional comfort. Both informants show that they are aware of these risks and are managing them by establishing boundaries for communication and making time for their own healing. This demonstrates that interpersonal negotiations and emotional control abilities can be developed even in virtual relationships.

## CONCLUSION

Self disclosure in virtual rental relationships on Telegram is a meaningful and complex interpersonal communication process that involves social, technological, and psychological factors. It is clear from the experiences of the informants that sharing personal information in online rental relationships serves as a way to satisfy emotional needs that are not satisfied in real life relationships rather than just being a way to vent.

The motivation of needing affection, self validation, and emotional support is what drives self disclosure. According to both informants, virtual relationships offer a sense of safety that is unavailable in real life relationships. With its private chat, identity control, and anonymity feature, Telegram enables users to develop emotional intimacy on par with or even greater than traditional relationships.

Self disclosure happens gradually and carefully, and is not done randomly. The informants differentiate topic depth according to type of relationship (NSFW/SFW) and initiate communication using strategies like feedforward. The relationship's progression from casual to sharing intense personal topics like trauma, sex orientation, and other sensitive experience reflects the breadth and depth of the topics.

Findings also reveal that self disclosure yields positive effects, including emotional intimacy, a sense of acceptance, and therapeutic benefits. In some cases, rental relationships even develop into pure relationships, characterized by emotional connection rather than social obligation.

However, self disclosure is not without risks. Relationship dynamics still include worries about oversharing, fear of judgment, and potential misuse of personal information. By maintaining their anonymity, screening information, and carefully examining rental partners' answers, informants reduce these risks.

The entire process shows that Telegram is more than just a platform for communication; it's a digital emotional connection space that allows for private and secure self expression. In this regard, digital technology provides a different space for refusing restricted social norms that impede emotional transparency.

Self disclosure of personal information in

virtual rental relationships on Telegram is therefore not only a storytelling communication technique but also an emotional survival tactic in the digital age. Even though there are a number of ways to reveal personal information, including a feedforward approach, different topics, how people interact, and limiting disclosure while also being aware of the risks and limitations, all of these factors have impacts on the self disclosure process.

## SUGGESTIONS

This research offers an initial understanding of self disclosure within virtual rental relationships, although it is limited to two informants with specific backgrounds. Future studies are encouraged to involve a larger number of participants with diverse backgrounds. Future studies are encouraged to involve a larger number of participants with diverse characteristics, including gender, age, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic background, to identify broader patterns of disclosure. In addition, theoretical frameworks such as Social Information Processing Theory, Computer-Mediated Communication, and Communication Privacy Management may be applied to enrich the analysis of how individuals negotiate between privacy and openness in digital communication.

Also, users of virtual rental services need to be aware that self disclosure in digital relationships may involve deeply personal content and lead to emotional attachment. Therefore, it is essential for individuals to recognize their own boundaries and manage their emotional openness wisely. At the same time, the general public—particularly younger generations—should be equipped with emotional safety literacy in digital interactions, including how to practice healthy openness, avoid emotional manipulation, and identify red flags in online relationships.

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